

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE

OF THE WORKERS LEAGUE FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

EVALUATION OF TWO ARTICLES

- 1. PANNEKOEK: "Why the Failure of the Working Class"**
- 2. CILIGA: "A Talk with Lenin in Stalin's Prison"**

—ARTHUR BURKE

DOCUMENTS IN THE PROGRAMMATIC DISCUSSION OF THE BRITISH SOCIALIST WORKERS LEAGUE

MANIFESTO OF THE S. W. L.

A MINORITY POSITION

—ARTHUR PRIEST

THESES ON TROTSKYISM

- Reply on: (1) THE GREAT MAN THEORY OF HISTORY**
(2) THE CLASS NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN STATE

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POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE is designed to serve as a supplementary organ to THE BULLETIN of the Workers League for a Revolutionary Party. POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE contains discussion articles on important issues, polemics on our position both pro and con, and letters of political interest from groups abroad and in the United States.

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* DOCUMENTS IN THE PROGRAMMATIC DISCUSSION *
* OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS LEAGUE *

INTRODUCTION:

We conclude here the programmatic discussion with the Socialist Workers League of Great Britain with the publication of three documents. Below we present in order: 1)- "MANIFESTO FOR A NEW WORKERS' PARTY" by the S.W.L., 2) - "A MINORITY POSITION WITHIN THE SOCIALIST WORKERS LEAGUE" by Arthur Priest, 3)- "THESES ON TROTSKYISM" contributed to the S.W.L. discussion by the W.L.R.P.

The most prominent feature of the S.W.L. Manifesto is its general avoidance of the central problem facing the workers in this epoch. This main problem is the bureaucratic development of the October Revolution and the predominance of the Stalinist force within the international working class. The S.W.L. Manifesto restates the general positions advanced by the left wing of the Second International up to the October Revolution and disposes of the Stalinist problem in a few brief incorrect comments. Today it is not sufficient to proclaim that one is opposed to imperialist war, that he will practice revolutionary defeatism, and that he advocates the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and proletarian power. At this historical moment much more is needed to establish a revolutionary position. The chief problem hinges on the bureaucratic regime rising on the crest of the first successful proletarian revolution. This is not an academic question but a burning issue since the forces involved in that development dominate the advanced workers in the international working class movement. Unless the workers learn the story of the post October development in Russia, the genesis and role of the Stalinist system and its political satellites, they will not be able to build a revolutionary party and cast out the opportunists betraying the masses.

In the S.W.L. Manifesto the present-day Stalinist force is identified with reformism, except in form. The Manifesto says of the original C.P. of Great Britain that it "has long since ceased to be a revolutionary party", implying therefore that the C.P. was at one time revolutionary. It speaks of the Stalinist party as formerly having a "centrist" line. The period in which this "Centrist" line operated is not identified. Centrism is a wing of Social Democracy arising on the soil of imperialist states. The Stalin force is no more "reformist" today than it was "centrist" yesterday. In this respect, Arthur Priest adopts a correct approach to the question. Socially, the Stalin force is based on the bureaucratized stratified property in Russia. Centrism and Reformism (Social Democracy) are based on bourgeois private property relations and the bourgeois state. In basic ideology, the Stalin international identifies itself with the October Revolution whereas Social Democracy explicitly repudiates that revolution. The Stalin international clothes itself with the mantle of Lenin while Social Democracy claims Kautsky and bourgeois democracy. Even in mode of operation the Stalin zigzag system has been demonstrated to be a phenomenon inherent in the Stalinist development. Social Democracy never went to the extent of Stalinist ultra leftist zigzags which features putsches and adventurist attacks on the bourgeois state machinery. It is only when the Stalinists are in an ultra right zigzag that the methods and line seem to parallel Social Democracy. In social origin, economic attachment, ideology, and mode of operation, the Stalin force and the Social Democracy are distinctly different.

The Trotsky movement is incorrectly defined as Centrism by the S.W.L. On this point, the document of Arthur Priest correctly highlights the fundamental distinction between Trotskyism and Centrism. The special roots of Centrism are in capitalism and its political orbit revolves around Social Democracy. The present Trotsky force originated as a distinct tendency in the Stalinist development in Russia and remains attached to the Stalin movement. The reader

will find our position elaborated more fully in the Theses on Trotskyism.

Now for a number of specific points raised in the S.W.L. Manifesto.

A) The S.W.L. stands on the Thesis of the "Second World War." It has not understood the present stage of imperialism and its relationship to the form of property inaugurated by the October Revolution. This epoch of imperialism is characterized by the temporary subordination of inter-imperialist rivalries and their replacement with fundamental political unity of the world imperialists to extirpate any trace of the proletarian revolution in Russia. Along these lines, after long preparation, the military arm of German imperialism was organized as a battering ram to open up Russia to capitalist exploitation. To cover up its fundamental unity from the masses, the imperialists organized a sham war among themselves and a real war by the Nazi armies against Russia. When the Nazi force failed to accomplish its military objective in Russia, the imperialist policy makers reorganized their strategic line so as to prepare the basis for an Anglo-American attack on Russia to do what the Nazi army was unable to accomplish. A policy was established to open the door to Stalin in Europe and Asia through a series of secret imperialist deals with Stalin from 1943 to 1945. The upshot of this seemingly paradoxical policy was to bring the Russian force squarely up against the Anglo-American forces in the East and West. Stalin was allowed temporary territorial expansion but as a result the imperialists gained a significant propaganda base for building up a war atmosphere against Russia. Stalin's territorial acquisitions and his bureaucratic terrorist rule marked him as an expansionist power in fact and gave the Anglo-American imperialists a powerful ideological weapon to break down the prestige won by Stalin as a consequence of the defeat of the Nazis in Russia and to establish Stalin as a threat to "peace." The diplomatic campaign along this line has been going on in increasing intensity since the termination of the war situation. The diplomatic phase is inescapably giving way to the military stage. The terrible explosion being prepared is the responsibility of both Stalin and the imperialists and is covered up by every political force which is directly or indirectly attached to the Soviet bureaucracy or to imperialism.

The key to fighting the war development lies in the understanding of how it has been brought about. The S.W.L. cannot present this understanding because it stands on the Imperialist-Social Democratic-Stalinist-Trotskyist thesis of the "Second World War."

Furthermore, by lumping under the present war development, the imperialist antagonism to the form of economy existing in Russia, and the inter-imperialist antagonism of the American and British capitalists, the S.W.L. blurs the main issue leading to the war development. The main feature is the contradiction between world capitalism, based on private property, and the Soviet Union based on socialized property. The inter-imperialist antagonisms have not been eliminated nor can they be as long as the imperialist system lasts. However, the inter-imperialist contradictions are subordinated in this historical epoch to the antagonism between capitalist private property as a whole in the imperialist world and socialized property in the Stalin-ruled sphere. The reader will find extensive material on the development of the world situation from the inception of the "Second World War" to the present phase, discussed, traced, and analyzed in some detail in our BULLETIN issued over this period.

B) The S.W.L. speaks of the Soviet Union as a degenerated Workers State. This implies that the Soviet Union was at one time a healthy Workers State which later degenerated. The S.W.L. makes this point clear in section 5 of

its Manifesto where it fixes the beginning point of degeneration with the ascendancy of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Stalinist bureaucracy is blamed for the destruction of Soviet democracy and for introducing a policy of concessions to the bourgeois elements.

We must confess to having harbored this illusion ourselves for many years. However, in the course of investigating the origin of the Stalinist development we have recently discovered that the bureaucratic basis was laid in the Workers State at its very origin under the Lenin-Trotsky leadership. The administrative apparatus of the Workers State was organized by a system of appointments from above instead of elections by the workers from below. Officials were appointed for an indefinite period to all intents and purposes, since no stipulation was ever made for term of office. Individual dictators were appointed to rule the factories, and a policy of bribery was introduced to attract specialists, thus dividing them from the workers. The workers did not control but were controlled by the new bureaucratic stratum. The political leaders were placed in charge of administrative functions, with high pay established for this favored element. Recall of officials was exercised only from above, not from below by the workers as would have been the case in a healthy development.

By 1922 Lenin made the admission that the Bolshevik leaders, including himself, had become bureaucratized, and in 1923 he acknowledged that the Soviet apparatus was really the old Tsarist apparatus adjusted to the Soviet needs. With a reactionary policy of building domestic power, the policy pursued internationally could not be revolutionary. Instead of the historic interests of the world proletariat being the guiding line, the concern of the leadership was directed toward preserving the power of the bureaucratic stratum in Russia. The Stalin clique simply took over a going bureaucratic concern, tightened it up, and eventually completed the centralization of power. We might note here that the policy of "concessions", mentioned by the S.W.L. in its Manifesto, was introduced by the Lenin-Trotsky leadership, not Stalin. As a matter of fact, there has been more statification of property under Stalin than under his predecessors. Stalin's power rests on this socialized property which it is in his bureaucratic interest to extend so long as he can use it to expand the power and revenue of the bureaucracy.

C) Not grasping the central question of our epoch, the orientation of the S.W.L. for the building of a party is not based on correct grounds. The task is conditioned by the period in which we live. The need today is to expose and defeat the opportunist forces, primarily the Stalinist bureaucracy, which controls the main bulk of the advanced workers and prevents a revolutionary struggle against capitalism. Only with the winning of the advanced workers can the ground be cleared for a revolutionary party and the revolutionary masses freed to overthrow their oppressors. The S.W.L. wants to leap over this necessary beginning step and address itself to the wide masses directly. This naive illusion will divert the energies of the advanced workers following the lead of the S.W.L. and leave unexposed the opportunist forces who already have the ear of the masses.

The S.W.L. Manifesto as a whole stands on all the basic Left-Trotskyite positions as advocated for years in this country by such organizations as the Revolutionary Workers League. (Oehler-Stamm) We evaluate the S.W.L. Manifesto as a Left-Trotsky platform. With the document of Arthur Priest, the comrades of the W.L.R.P. are in substantial agreement. We think the line of orientation posed in this document provides the correct foundation for the building of a revolutionary party in Britain.

Editorial Committee
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE
May 1947.

* MANIFESTO FOR A NEW WORKERS' PARTY *

Reprinted From:

WORKERS' REVIEW of the Socialist Workers League of Gt. Britain, Vol. I No. I
JAN.-MARCH, 1947

1. CLASS STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITALISM

The emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself. It can only be achieved by fighting the class struggle on all fronts against the capitalist class and its state. The most regular manifestation of this class struggle is at the place of work, i.e., in the factories, mines, docks, depots, etc. It is here that the militant struggle of the workers is of the greatest importance. Without the development of the most active day to day struggle of the organized workers in defense of their wages, & conditions, there can be no advance towards the abolishing of the capitalist system of private profit. The working class with its victory over the capitalist class through social revolution will usher in a transition society on the road to communism.

2. THE PARLIAMENTARY STRUGGLE

Parliament is a definite form of State order. It is one of the instruments of oppression and suppression in the hands of the ruling capitalist class. It cannot serve as a form of workers' government during the transition period from capitalism to communism. Nevertheless, the revolutionary workers' organization is not opposed to participation in parliamentary activity as a matter of principle. It participates in the parliamentary field, conscious all the time of the fact that the emancipation of the working class cannot be achieved through parliament, even if it secures a parliamentary majority and is able to form a cabinet. It does not enter bourgeois cabinets, nor participate in any coalition government, for to do so would be to take responsibility for the acts of the capitalist state apparatus. Entry into such cabinets is the highest form of class collaboration. Participation in the parliamentary field, in electoral campaigns, representation in parliament itself must be used as a forum to reach the masses, in order to expose the shams of the capitalist class and their agents within the ranks of the working class. In such electoral campaigns it does not give its support- full or conditional- to the candidates of any other political parties, but only to its own candidates. To give support to the candidates of other parties, is to take responsibility for their actions. As a field of activity it is auxiliary to the mass struggle of the workers, i.e., demonstrations, strikes, etc., against the capitalist class and the capitalist state.

3. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALIST OPPRESSION

(a) Oppression of the colonial peoples. One of the main bulwarks of capitalism is its exploitation of the colonial and mandatory territories. The super-profits obtained by the capitalist class from the colonial markets enable capitalism to bribe sections of the working class at home, thereby splitting the ranks of the working class. The struggle of the colonial peoples against imperialism and against their own bourgeoisie- for their complete independence- is therefore not only in the interests of the colonial peoples themselves, but also in the interests of the British working class. There can be no effective struggle against British Imperialism without, at the same time, the active support and assistance of the British working class. In this struggle for complete freedom and independence, the colonial capitalist class can play no independent role, they are subordinated to one or another of the dominant imperialist powers, nor can they in the present decay stage of British Imperialism overtake and pass British capitalism. The colonial capitalist class cannot therefore solve the problems of their own bourgeois revolution, i.e.,

* Please see correction of typographical error - page 10, bottom.

industrialisation, land reform, etc. The colonial capitalist class is therefore unable to fight imperialism as a whole. In this situation the colonial capitalist class fears the colonial masses far more than it does British Imperialism and will betray the masses to British Imperialism rather than face a social revolution. British Imperialism can only be defeated by the workers revolution in the colonial countries, aided and assisted by the British working class. The only force within the colonial countries capable of leading the whole struggle of the masses against British Imperialism and at the same time against the colonial capitalist class- is the colonial working class. The revolutionary workers' organisation in this country can therefore only give its political and material aid to the revolutionary vanguard in the colonial countries and the masses.

(b) Oppression of workers in defeated imperialist countries.

The British working class as part of the international working class has nothing to gain by the military occupation, political and economic control of the "defeated" nations, such as Germany, Italy, etc. We must fight for the unconditional and immediate withdrawal of all occupation forces which are being used to prevent revolution. We must aid the working class of the "defeated" nations in the task of rebuilding their own independent working class organisations, trade unions, workers' councils, the revolutionary party, in order that they can organise the struggle against capitalism in their own countries and against the oppressing imperialist powers.

4. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR.

Imperialist war is the inevitable outcome of the capitalist system of society; it arises out of the competition between the various imperialist powers for markets and "spheres" of influence to which they can export goods and capital and secure sources of raw material. In such wars there is no fundamental economic difference between the so-called "democratic" capitalist powers and "fascist" capitalist powers- all imperialist wars are fought in the interests of capitalism- on the one side to win "spheres of influence", on the other to retain them.

In the event of an imperialist war breaking out, as revolutionaries, we call upon the workers on both sides to intensify the class struggle against capitalism and to turn the "imperialist war" into "civil war" against our "own" capitalist class and the "enemy" capitalist class. The strategy of revolutionaries on both sides in an imperialist war will be to work for the military defeat of their "own" armed forces, even if this means the temporary "victory" of the "enemy" armed forces. Only on the basis of the policy of revolutionary defeatism can the working class, under the leadership of its vanguard revolutionary party, turn the imperialist war into civil war against the whole capitalist class. Whether or not the nation involved in an imperialist war is a "democracy" or "fascist dictatorship," or "opposed to the S.U." makes no fundamental difference to the above strategy. The class collaborationists who support their own ruling class in peace or war and call for the "defence of the motherland" are opportunists of the very worst kind, for they split the ranks of the international working class and undermine its solidarity.

In the event of imperialist war on the Soviet Union, we support the Soviet Union against world capitalism. In such a war it will be a struggle between a Workers' State, despite its degeneration, and world capitalism. But support for the Soviet Union as a Workers' State and support- political and material- to the Stalinist bureaucracy are two entirely different things. The policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy is in direct opposition to the needs of effectively defending the Soviet Union. The effective defence of the Soviet Union depends upon the world working class, including the Russian working class and

can only be achieved by extending the October revolution to other countries and by the re-establishment within the Soviet Union of workers democracy, political, economic and military, and by the removal of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The THIRD WORLD WAR is in the course of preparation. The elimination of German and Japanese Imperialism by decreasing the number of world powers has accentuated the rivalries which exist between world capitalism on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other. At the same time it has increased the rivalry which exists between the U.S.A. and British Imperialism.

So long as capitalism exists in the world, so long will there be imperialist war. No organisation such as the United Nations Organisation can prevent the outbreak of such a third "atomic" war. Only the overthrow of world capitalism by the world working class through social revolution and the establishment of world socialism can finally abolish imperialist war for ever.

5. CHARACTER OF THE SOVIET UNION

The Russian state to-day is a degenerated workers' state moving back towards capitalism. The Revolution of November, 1917, ushered in a form of society unique in the history of mankind. A transition society between capitalism and socialism. With the establishment of the ascendancy of the Stalinist bureaucracy, through the destruction of Soviet democracy, the Soviet Union instead of making a progressive climb towards a socialist society (as marxists we of course do not expect a straight ascent) started on a policy of concessions, economic and political to the bourgeois elements within the Soviet Union and to the imperialist bourgeoisie without. The bureaucratic dictatorship over the workers can only be eliminated forcibly, through a political revolution which will destroy the bureaucratic dictatorship and resuscitate workers' democracy.

6. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM

Fascism is that form of capitalist dictatorship which has developed since the 1914-18 war. The fascist organisations basing themselves on a demagogic appeal to the "masses of the people" as distinct from the workers or capitalists, developed a mass basis among the ruined and demoralised petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie vacillating between the working class and capitalist class and lacking a homogenous outlook will, failing bold and decisive leadership by the working class inevitably succumb to fascism. So long as capitalist society exists so long will the capitalist class in times of severe economic crisis require fascist organisations to destroy the working class organisations and prepare for war.

7. ROLE OF THE EXISTING PARTIES IN THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT.

Reformism is the political weapon of the capitalist class within the ranks of the working class. Through reforms, the capitalist class hopes to keep the workers divided by playing off one section of workers against another. The reformists who advocate a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism thereby support the capitalist class in their efforts to avoid the revolution, the only way in which socialism can be achieved.

The Labour Party is the major reformist party in Gt. Britain to-day. It is a party which, although composed of a majority of workers, serves the interests of the petty bourgeois strata and objectively the interests of the capitalist class. The Labour Government is not a Socialist Government and

its policy cannot lead to the elimination of capitalism. Its plans for the "nationalisation" of certain industries and services, in which private shareholding is transformed into bondholding in state directed industries, does not alter the fundamental character of the capitalist profit system. These "nationalisation" schemes are means whereby certain inefficient capitalist industries and services can be re-organised in order to benefit capitalism as a whole. In its defence of the capitalist system, the Labour Party and trade union leadership advocate a policy of more production of commodities for export to compete with rival capitalist countries such as the U.S.A., in the world market. In order to obtain this production of export commodities for the benefit of the capitalist class, it tries to prevent the workers from fighting for higher wages, shorter hours of work, etc., in order to keep the price of these commodities as low as possible, in order to compete in the world market with advantage.

In the interest of British capitalism, the Labour Government endeavors to hold on to the colonial countries in order to obtain cheap raw materials and labour and as a preferential market for its export commodities, goods and capital. At the same time its foreign policy is geared to the task of preserving "spheres of influence," markets, etc., in order to protect the interests of British Imperialism against rival countries.

The Labour Government cannot solve the problem of periodic economic crises, for British capitalism is a part of world capitalism. It cannot therefore solve the problem of full employment, higher wages and working conditions, better social services, etc., within the framework of the present decaying capitalist system.

Its policy therefore is equally reactionary and anti-working class at HOME and ABROAD. Support for the Labour Party and Labour Party Government-whether it be full support, or conditional support- is not in the interests of the working class. The working class must be won away from the influence of the reformist leadership of the Labour Party and trade unions, and those parties which support it.

The Communist Party formed in 1920 as a section of the third international has long since ceased to be a revolutionary party. A party whose social composition is mainly working class, it is nevertheless, an appendage of the Russian bureaucracy and its policy is not conditioned by the interests of the workers in Gt. Britain, but by the supposed interests of the Soviet Union. Its policy has fluctuated from left to right and from right to left, reflecting the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

To-day, it has moved to the right from its former centrist position and plays a reformist role within the ranks of the working class, e.g., it supports the Labour Government, it denies the necessity for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, it supports the reformists "no-strike" policy and increased production drive to swell the profits of the capitalist class, etc. When it does, on occasions, adopt an apparently left revolutionary line, it does so to regain its lost prestige, regain its influence among the workers, in order to more effectively divert them into reactionary channels at a later stage. As a political party it differs from the traditional social reformism of the Labour Party in form only, in content its line serves the interests of the capitalist class, as do the reformists and centrists. In the sharp class struggles ahead it will adopt a counter-revolutionary line, like the Communist Parties in other countries have done, and are doing, e.g., Poland, Italy, Greece, etc. Undemocratic in character, it offers no hope of retransformation into a revolutionary party.

The Independent Labour Party is a centrist organisation, i.e., it vacillates between reformism and marxism, with its basic roots in reformism. It combines revolutionary phrases with reformist actions. Its political line is not based upon marxism, for it combines within its ranks members with divergent political opinions on fundamental aspects of working class policy. Objectively, like reformism, centrism serves the interests of the capitalist class.

The Revolutionary Communist Party (Trotskyists) is also a centrist organisation. It does however claim to be a marxist organisation, but it has revised marxism on a number of fundamental issues, such as the role of the party, the question of revolutionary defeatism in time of war, the role of Social Democracy, etc. To-day, basing itself on the false position of the role of social democracy, it has as its perspective its own liquidation as an independent revolutionary organisation into the ranks of the Labour Party. It is a party which cannot be reformed and its membership must be won for a revolutionary marxian organisation.

Other political organisations, such as the anarchists, syndicalists, libertarian communists, have their roots in the petty bourgeoisie. They are sectarian in principle though they are often militant in form. Basing themselves upon humanitarianism, as distinct from scientific principles they view the state and the political superstructure of the state as the main obstacles in the way of the emancipation of the working class, and not the mode of production. They deny for example, the need to enter into the parliamentary struggle for the purpose of exposing the capitalist class. They deny the necessity for the working class to organise a Workers' State to temporarily supersede the Capitalist State.

9. WEAPONS OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE- THE TRADE UNIONS.

The trade unions having been built up by the working class in the course of the class struggle cannot be left in the hands of the present reactionary reformist leaders, who are pursuing a line of class-collaboration with the capitalists and the capitalist state. The trade unions belong to the working class and they must be transformed into militant organisations, free from class-collaboration, actively conducting the struggle in defence of the economic and political demands of the working class. Objectively they must fight for the victory of the working class over the capitalist class.

For this purpose, we must organise the building of a new "Majority" rank and file movement in all industries, embracing all workers, men women and youth, irrespective of the unions they belong to, in order to intensify the struggle against the capitalist class by the organisation of strike action at the point of production, under the leadership of democratically elected shop stewards.

Workers must regain full control of their unions by removing all officials collaborating with the capitalists, by the re-institution of democratic union procedure and election of officials and by including the right of recall of all officials at any time.

Workers in action in any industry or service require not only solidarity within their own ranks, but the active support and co-operation of all other organised workers, particularly in those industries having direct connections with themselves. Any section of workers contemplating action against their employers cannot afford to act in isolation from workers in allied industries and services.

Workers must fight for the re-organisation and unification of the trade union movement on the basis of industrial unionism, i.e., one union for each industry, organising all workers in that industry, irrespective of craft, with the place of work as the basic unit of organisation. This co-ordination must be accomplished in order that the struggle against the capitalist class can be carried out with the maximum effect.

9. WEAPONS OF CLASS STRUGGLE- WORKERS COUNCILS.

The revolutionary workers' party cannot take the masses into its organisational fold and it cannot utilize this most powerful social force without some proper organisational channels. Under capitalism the most effective weapons are the industrial unions and in a period of revolution, although the unions play an increasingly important role, the Workers' Councils, springing up at the time as the higher form of proletarian organisation to become the decisive organs through which the vanguard party functions as a guide to the class. Workers' Councils are not "created" by the revolutionaries. Like the unions, they are the products of the new conditions of the social revolution. When the objective conditions are ripe, the revolutionaries take the initiative in organising and developing these instruments.

After power is seized, the Workers' Councils, composed of delegates directly elected from the factories, etc., become the ruling organs of the state. Nevertheless, marxists make no fetish of Workers' Councils, just as they make no fetish of any organisational form. Under the domination of the revisionists, the Councils may under certain circumstances, be obstacles to revolution.

Workers' Councils (Soviets) which are merely a mechanical bloc of parties with the membership of these parties making up the total membership of the Soviets are fatal caricatures. The Soviets of Workers, Soldiers, take on different forms, spring up through different channels, etc., but no matter what the forms are they must embrace the decisive sections of the workers in the given spheres of economic life. The Soviets are primarily industrial rather than geographic in their structure, although they can have an element of the geographic in their structure. Freedom of political expression in the revolutionary period must be maintained. The Soviets, through their administrative bodies must maintain control of the economic life, the armed forces and the general function of society if the proletariat is to become the ruler of society.

In periods of revolution, the Soviets are a dual form of state in opposition to the bourgeois state. As such the Soviets must endeavor to remove those officials who enter bourgeois governments, no matter what form they take, coalition, "labour" or workers governments. The leaders of the Soviets must be allowed to rule only through the Soviets.

10. WEAPONS OF CLASS STRUGGLE- THE WORKERS' PARTY.

The independent, marxian, revolutionary workers' party is the vanguard of the whole working class, combining within its ranks, the most active, class conscious workers. It has no interests other than the interests of the working class. In order to serve these interests it must be international in programme and organisation and politically and organisationally independent of all other parties. It is organised on the basis of democratic centralism, allowing the fullest democratic discussion in arriving at all its policies, but unified in carrying out the decisions, once agreed to.

The Socialist Workers' League is not yet the party. It is a propaganda

organisation for the building of such a party. The question of transforming the League into a Party is not merely a question of numbers, it is a question of developing our influence among the workers in the course of the class struggle, not only by making correct theoretical analyses of the various problems confronting the working class, but by the concrete application of our theory in the struggles of the working class and our active help, participation and leadership in these struggles.

11. WEAPONS OF CLASS STRUGGLE- THE INTERNATIONAL

An urgent need of the international working class is the building of a New Communist (4th) International, which at the moment does not exist.

It is an essential part of our activity to help build such an international organisation, to give leadership to the working class of the world. We are developing our contact with the revolutionary workers' organisations in other countries and through mutual discussion of the problems confronting the working class, to help bring together these forces for the building of a New Communist International.

12. GOVERNMENT OF WORKERS' COUNCILS IN GT. BRITAIN AND THE WORLD WORKERS' STATE.

We call upon all militant workers to join with us in building a "Majority" rank and file movement in all industries and in waging the class struggle by the trade unions against the capitalist class.

We call upon all militant workers to help us build through the Socialist Workers' League, a new, independent, marxian, revolutionary workers' party.

We call upon all militant workers to join us in the struggle against capitalism and fight for the establishment through workers' revolution of a:

GOVERNMENT OF WORKERS' COUNCILS IN GT. BRITAIN

and in association with the revolutionary workers in every country for the establishment of the:

WORLD WORKERS' STATE.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION MATERIAL ON

The Socialist Workers League of Great Britain?

SEND FOR

previous issues of POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE

Issue # 2 -- "On Building a Revolutionary Movement in Britain."

Issue # 3 -- "England: The Road to a Marxist Policy"

* Correction of typographical error from Page 4, line 10.
Full sentence should read as follows:

"Without the development of the most active day to day struggle of the organized workers in defense of their wages, hours of work and conditions of employment, there can be no advance towards the abolishing of the capitalist system of private profit."

* A MINORITY POSITION WITHIN THE SOCIALIST WORKERS LEAGUE *

(1). TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS LEAGUE

Dear Comrades,

Our organization is the only organization in Britain that is calling for the formation of a new revolutionary workers party against all the existing opportunist parties. Unfortunately our group has a number of anti-Marxist positions and as it must be our aim to win the workers on the basis of Marxism, not left-Trotskyism, we must first discard these false positions before the real task of building a revolutionary group in Britain can go forward. Towards that end I submit this document.

Arthur Priest
3/24/47

(2). A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE S.W.L. LINE ON THE C.P.

The section of the manifesto of the S.W.L. dealing with the role of the C.P. contains a serious political error and a number of misleading phrases. While we can agree with the first paragraph, the second must be quoted in full before examination:

"To-day, it has moved to the right from its former centrist position and plays a reformist role within the ranks of the working class, e.g., it supports the Labour Government, it denies the necessity for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, it supports the reformists "no-strike" policy and increased production drive to swell the profits of the capitalist class etc. When it does, on occasions, adopt an apparently left revolutionary line, it does so to regain its lost prestige, regain its influence among the workers, in order to more effectively divert them into reactionary channels at a later stage. As a political party it differs from the traditional social reformism of the Labour Party in form only, in content its line serves the interests of the capitalist class, as do the reformists and centrists. In the sharp class struggles ahead it will adopt a counter-revolutionary line, like the Communist Parties in other countries have done and are doing, e.g., Poland, Italy, Greece, etc. Undemocratic in character it offers no hope of re-transformation into a revolutionary party."

In the first line of this paragraph reference is made to the former "centrist" position of the C.P. In the correct Marxist interpretation of the term, the C.P. was never a Centrist party, although Trotsky has been guilty of using this term to represent it. Centrism rose as a political tendency during the growth of Social Reformism and acts as a safety valve in leading the revolutionary workers back to Social Reformism. The C.P. arose as the product of the 1917 revolution and has degenerated into the foreign agency of the Soviet bureaucracy.

In a later sentence it is stated that the C.P. "differs from the traditional reformism of the Labour Party in form only." This is an entirely false statement because it is obvious to any worker who has knowledge of the C.P. that it also differs from the Labour Party in its origin, in its history, in its tradition and also in its organization which is not based upon the Parliamentary machine as is the Labour Party. It also has a different historical function. Stalinism is in fact often in contradiction to Social Democracy in many fields.

However, by far the most important political error in this paragraph

relative to the C.P. is the statement that "in content its line serves the interests of the capitalist class." Let us make no mistake about this major political error, in CONTENT the line of the C.P. in every country serves first and foremost the INTERESTS OF THE STALINIST SOVIET BUREAUCRACY and only in so far as their interests coincide (as counter-revolutionary forces) does the C.P. also, incidentally, serve the interests of capitalism in Britain and the U.S.A.

No one can doubt that in the present situation the C.P. fulfills a role of support to Social Democracy in Britain, it supports the Labour Party. No one can doubt that in America the C.P. acts in a role of support to Wall Street capitalism. However the C.P. does not thus become either a reformist or an open capitalist party. Let those who believe the C.P. to be a reformist party explain why the Daily Worker supports the Soviet adversaries of the reformist Ernest Bevin's foreign policy at every meeting of the "big three." A correct formulation of the C.P. as a political party is to characterise it as:

The strongest counter-revolutionary force in world politics. The instrument within the international working class of the Stalinist bureaucracy whose interest it reflects.

I would replace the last paragraph of the Manifesto of the S.W.L. dealing with the C.P. with the following:

Today the British C.P. plays a role of support to reformism within the ranks of the working class, it supports the Labour Government on main domestic policy and in no way gives a revolutionary lead to the workers. When it has on occasions adopted a "left" revolutionary line it has done so in the interests of the soviet bureaucracy in order to direct the revolutionary struggle into the counter-revolutionary interests of Stalinism. For the same reason, in the present situation the C.P. carries out a role of support for Social Reformism, because this is in the best interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. The Communist Parties represent the strongest counter-revolutionary force in world politics. They are the instrument within the international working class of the Stalinist soviet bureaucracy whose interests they reflect.

(3). ON THE CHARACTER OF THE SOVIET STATE

The Manifesto of the S.W.L. does not sufficiently outline the character of the Soviet Russian Workers State and the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy. A correct position on the character of the Soviet State must start from the evaluation that it is a proletarian state. Unless we are to fall into the trap of Shachtman in declaring it to be an entirely new type of state which is neither proletarian or bourgeois, we must characterise it as either a workers state or a capitalist state. Our Manifesto correctly formulates it as a workers state moving back towards capitalism.

Under Stalinist direction the ideological disarmament of the Russian proletariat has proceeded apace towards bourgeois ideology. Without the overthrow of the Stalinist usurpers of workers power by political revolution it is only a question of time before the upper stratum of the bureaucracy convert their steadily accumulating private wealth into capital, and the reversion to capitalism will be completed.

Until that reversion takes place the Stalinist bureaucracy depends upon the EXISTING economy and property relations of the transitional workers state for the very life blood which it sucks. In fact the bureaucracy is prepared

to wage war against foreign capitalism which would restore the pre-1917 property relations. The bureaucracy requires the reversion to capitalism to be under its own control and it will withstand any "infiltration" by foreign imperialism as long as it is in a position to do so. Until the ideological ground has been sufficiently prepared and the historical scene set for the reversion to capitalism, the bureaucracy will continue to fight for the maintenance of existing property relations because it is upon their basis, the basis of a workers state, that the bureaucracy lives.

The Soviet workers state consists of two classes as Lenin correctly pointed out in 1921:

"For the first time in history a state exists in which there are only TWO CLASSES the proletariat and the peasantry."

The peasantry is the petit-bourgeoisie and there are even embryonic bourgeois elements present in the form of Kulaks and merchants who have accumulated vast sums in the "free" markets of Russia. This bears out the Marxist thesis that every society carries within its womb the seeds of the next. Within the womb of the Russian workers state lie also the seeds of a classless socialist society, only workers revolution can germinate them. Otherwise the dark forces of capitalist reaction will once more be brought forth onto the soil of the U.S.S.R.

Under the post-1917 property relations in Russia there exist the peasant class and the working class and embryonic bourgeoisie in the form of Kulaks and merchants. The bureaucracy itself arose on the basis of the new state created by the 1917 revolution. The class basis of the bureaucracy is the socialised property in the Soviet Union from which it derives its power and its revenue, while at the same time it prepares the ideological ground for the reversion of the workers state to capitalism where its upper stratum would become the new capitalist class.

(4). THE ROLE OF THE TROTSKYISTS

The manifesto of the S.W.L. incorrectly formulates the R.C.P. which is a Trotskyist organisation, as "centrist." Centrism arose on the soil of imperialist countries before the Russian revolution. Trotskyism arose as a branch of Stalinism which itself grew out of the soil of the first workers state.

Calling the Trotskyists centrists blurs the distinction between Social Democracy and Stalinism which we have already drawn attention to in this document. To call the Trotskyists centrists distorts the historical origins of Trotskyism and its basic attachment to the Stalinist system. Trotskyism is the left cover for Stalinism whereas Centrism is the left cover for Social Democracy. When war breaks out between the U.S.S.R. and imperialism, the social democrats and centrists will call out again for support for "their" imperialists. The Stalinist and Trotskyist parties will call for defence of Stalin and the bureaucracy.

The role of the Trotskyist branch is to lead the leftward moving worker back to the main trunk of Stalinism.

The only organisation which has published irrefutable evidence of the role of Trotskyism as a branch of Stalinism (dating back to before the death of Lenin) is the Workers League for a Revolutionary Party U.S.A. (Marlenites

The result of their researches, which are available in Britain, into the history, origins and growth of Trotskyism should become the main plank of every Marxist organisation's arsenal against the Trotskyist opportunists.

(5). THE ORIENTATION OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS LEAGUE

The false political line pursued by our organisation in relation to Stalinism and Trotskyism causes the whole question of the orientation of our organisation (which naturally flows from the political line) to be false.

However honestly subjectively the S.W.L. may be directed against Stalinism and Trotskyism the position is that on these questions the S.W.L. objectively aids the opportunist forces by spreading an incorrect line relative to the Stalinist and Trotskyist counter-revolutionaries.

The Oehlerite-"mass line" adopted by the S.W.L. is the direct opposite of Leninist teaching:

"Hence, those who accuse the Russian Social-Democrats of being narrow minded, of trying to ignore the mass of the toilers and to interest themselves entirely in the factory workers, are profoundly mistaken. On the contrary, agitation among the advanced strata of the proletariat is the surest and ONLY way to rouse (in proportion as the movement expands) the whole of the Russian proletariat." (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. I p. 499 My capitals-A.P.)

"Opportunism is our principal enemy. Opportunism in the upper ranks of the working class movement is not proletarian socialism, but bourgeois socialism. Practice has shown that the active people in the working class movement who adhere to the opportunist trend are better defenders of the bourgeoisie, than the bourgeoisie itself. Without their leadership of the workers, the bourgeoisie could not have remained in power. This is where our principal enemy is; and we must conquer this enemy.... This is our main task." (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. X p. 196 My emphasis-A.P.)

The main obstacle in the path of building a revolutionary party in Britain lies in the fact that the advanced workers lie in the grip of the opportunist Trotskyist and Stalinist parties. Only by orientating our policy towards winning these advanced workers to a correct revolutionary programme can we build the revolutionary party of the British workers.

The S.W.L. has not yet developed a sufficiently politically educated membership to embark upon the revolutionary leadership of the masses. Instead of devoting the major portion of its efforts towards "industrial" activity it should first carry out the role of political education of its members and such other workers as it can attract.

When the group has been thus developed and has formulated a more rounded Marxist programme it can turn to revolutionary propaganda among the advanced workers, mainly in the Trotskyist and Stalinist parties. Having won the best of the advanced workers from the opportunist forces which held them back we can turn to revolutionary agitation among the masses of the workers- giving leadership in the struggle for the Socialist Revolution.

Under present circumstances, to call for a "majority movement" of the workers on the industrial plane while the POLITICAL leadership lies in the grip of the Labour and Stalinist fakirs, is to call for the creation of a mass rank and file movement to hand over to the opportunist betrayers. No comrades, our first task is to expose in the eyes of the advanced workers the opportunist leaders who are holding them back from revolutionary advancement.

* THESES ON TROTSKYISM *

Editorial Note:

The following Theses which generalize the documentary material that we have been presenting for years in our publications on the nature of the Trotsky movement, was contributed by one of our members to the S.W.L. Manifesto discussion.

1. From 1903 to 1917 Trotsky stood between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, inclining toward the former organizationally. His theory of permanent revolution was a historic contribution to Marxism and was correct as against the Menshevik line for a bourgeois revolution to be led by the bourgeoisie and supported by the proletariat and the Lenin utopia of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. However, Trotsky in this epoch tried to unite Bolshevism and Menshevism and when that failed organized a bloc against the Bolsheviks. (The August Bloc of 1912.) With the outbreak of the World War of 1914 Trotsky developed a left centrist position. He rejected the Lenin line of revolutionary defeatism and advocated the formula of "neither victory nor defeat." While breaking from the open social-chauvinists, Trotsky was opposed to any split from the centrists and collaborated with them in Nashe Slovo. While thus confused on many fundamental points, evidence indicates Trotsky as a subjective revolutionist. In 1917 he went over to the Bolsheviks who in turn adopted the perspective of the dictatorship of the proletariat. As a Bolshevik, Trotsky played a leading part in the October Revolution.
2. Trotskyism became a distinct current in the international working class movement in the epoch of Stalinism. The international Trotsky movement was founded and based on the Trotsky line and policy which grew out of the post-October development in the Russian C.P. It is this particular portion of history which make up the system of ideas around which the present-day Trotsky movement is organized.
3. The post-October development in Russia took the line of bureaucratic centralization of power in the hands of the top leadership of the R.C.P. This was a usurpation of power from the Russian workers who constituted the propelling force in the October overturn. By 1921 a plot within the top leadership for the concentration of power came into view with the Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev "Troika" as the leading conspirators. The unique feature of this particular conspiracy was the context of the Workers State; otherwise the elements characteristic of plots for power were present- deception of the masses, intrigue, secrecy, frame-up and murder. All fostering the bureaucratic development in Russia paved the path for the victory of Stalinism. The Soviet Union became converted into a happy hunting ground for bureaucratic careerism.
4. Present-day Trotskyism began as an effort on Trotsky's part to become incorporated in the Stalin Troika. Trotsky was in a unique position in this period. In prestige he towered above all the other leaders and ranked second only to Lenin in the eyes of the revolutionary workers. When the sick Lenin decided on a policy of ousting Stalin from his position of leadership he naturally turned to Trotsky for assistance and support. In March 1923 Trotsky gave Lenin the impression that he would support the line of removing Stalin but instead, reneged on his pledges and collaborated with the Stalin clique. Trotsky operated to deceive the Russian masses by concealing Lenin's line for the ousting of Stalin and prevented any knowledge of the existence of the Stalinist conspiracy for power to leak out among the workers.
5. The trail of Trotsky's renegacy to the Russian masses can be traced from

certain outstanding marks:

- a) His presence at a meeting of the Politburo on Jan. 24, 1923 which deliberated on ways and means of suppressing Lenin's article on the center of Stalin's wire-pulling, the Workers and Peasants Inspection.
 - b) His assurance to Kamenov in March 1923 that he was for retaining the status quo and opposed any shake-up in the Stalin apparatus.
 - c) His report as spokesman for the Stalinist Central Committee to the All-Ukrainian Congress in April 1923 where he got the congress to praise the work of the Stalin gang. The Stalin counter-revolutionary nest was labelled by Trotsky as our Bolshevik Central Committee. The task Lenin posed for the 12th Congress of opening a fight against the policies of the Stalin clique was hidden from the uninformed workers by Trotsky who lied that the Stalin clique was acting in accord with Lenin's line.
 - d) At the 12th Congress, held a few days after the VII All-Ukrainian Conference, Trotsky voted to suppress Lenin's anti-Stalin documents and voted for all the fraudulent Stalinist resolutions. The ousted Georgian leaders, Mdivani, Tsintsadze, and others who were the victims of a veritable Stalin pogrom were knifed in the back by Trotsky who lined up with Stalin.
 - e) His concealment from the Russian masses of Stalin's astounding proposal to send poison to Lenin and his 16 year long silence on the mysterious circumstances of Lenin's death.
 - f) In May 1924 Trotsky collaborated at the 13th Congress of the R.C.P. to put over the "Lenin levy" which flooded the Bolshevik party with a quarter million Stalinist recruits and assured the latter a firm base for his bureaucratic machinations.
 - g) After Stalin peddled his theoretical fraud of "Socialism in One Country" Trotsky publicly stated in Jan. 1925 that he had no program to counter to that of the Stalinist C.C.
 - h) When some information about Lenin's suppressed Testament and the Stalin concealment of other Lenin documents was made public by the then politically confused Max Eastman, Trotsky slandered the latter, characterized the true facts as lies, and shielded Stalin from any exposure.
 - i) Toward the end of 1925 and early 1926 Trotsky tried to escape from politics by a "political holiday" and continued mum about the crimes perpetrated every day on the Russian and world masses who were given no holiday from counter-revolutionary Stalinist politics.
 - j) In 1926 Trotsky got together with the two Stalinist scoundrels, Zinoviev and Kamenev, and horse-traded away his own theory of permanent revolution as the price for the unprincipled bloc.
 - k) In his statement of Oct. 16, 1926 Trotsky called for submission to Stalinist discipline, and called for the dissolution of all opposition fractions in Russia and elsewhere. This same line was continued until Stalin was strong enough to expel his "loyal opposition" altogether.
6. The Stalinist centralization of bureaucratic power could only be effected through crushing the revolutionary advance of the international proletariat since this advance meant annihilation of all forms of oppression, including Stalinism. In the field of international Stalinist politics Trotsky left

a similar tell-tale trail of collaboration with the Stalin traitors:

- a) Concealed the Sun-Yat-Sen-Joffe communique of Jan. 1923 which disavowed the line of proletarian revolution for China.
- b) Helped put over the betrayal of the German Revolution of Sept.-Oct. 1923 by pushing the coalition of the German Stalinist leaders with the Social Democrats. He palmed off this piece of treachery as a proletarian government and compared it to the Bolshevik coalition with the Left SR's established on the basis of Soviet Power. Although he knew the bribed German Stalinist flunkys were selling out the workers he painted them publicly as a truly revolutionary leadership leading the German masses to victory.
- c) In 1924 he publicly announced support to the Stalinist fraud about "revolutionizing" the Kuomintang party of China and praised the entry of the misled Chinese revolutionary workers into that counter-revolutionary trap.
- d) In 1925 he supported the creation of the Anglo-Russian Committee and helped put over the betrayal of the British General Strike in 1926 by pretending that the Stalin band was transferring the methods of Bolshevism on the British soil.
- e) In his repudiation of permanent revolution, he blocked up with the criminal Zinoviev-Kamenev line for China and from 1925 to 1927 through the conclusion of the Chinese betrayal by the Left Kuomintangists at Wuhan, supported the policy of adhering to the Kuomintang.

Thus in all spheres Trotsky assisted the Stalin clique to consolidate the bureaucratic power and to betray the Russian and world proletariat.

7. The Stalin Troika aimed to centralize power in their own clutches by tearing down the other leading figures of the Soviet State. The physical elimination of Lenin left Trotsky the main figure in the Soviet Union. As a consequence the Trio launched a machination against their former collaborator and made him the chief scapegoat of a fraudulent polemic. They concealed Trotsky's real crime of participation in the Stalinist bureaucratic plot and cooked up inventions of Trotsky's "under-estimation of the peasantry," "menshevism" and other fictitious crimes. Polemics became converted by the Stalin crew into a camouflage for the building and extension of the bureaucratic power of the top leadership. Later, Trotsky also used polemics to suit his own factional needs and pretended that a "theory" (Socialism in One Country) was the basis of Stalinism. Trotsky used this as a device to conceal his own participation in the Stalin conspiracy which was organized as a conscious plot for material power and came into view as early as 1921.

8. By virtue of Trotsky's direct participation in the Stalinist conspiracy for the usurpation of power and his resultant tie to Stalinism, the Trotsky movement remains a satellite in the Stalinist political system. The Trotsky leaders, involved in the Stalin-Trotsky crimes, dread a proletarian overthrow of Stalinism because such an overthrow would bring to light the true story of the Stalinist rise and the identity of the guilty participants who consciously fostered that development. The guilt of Trotsky and the Trotsky leaders means that they must combat any possibility toward a proletarian squaring of accounts which would be the product of a truly revolutionary proletarian movement. For their own self defense they must protect Stalinism and they will lead the workers into the Stalinist noose to the bitter end.

9. The unbreakable historical chains which binds Trotskyism to Stalinism was evidenced after Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union where he no longer could plead the alibi of organizational discipline to Stalin's gangster machine.

Yet Trotsky in this period organized his international followers as a "fraction" of the Stalinern, lied that the latter was a revolutionary organization and made believe that the Stalinist bandits were simply "confused" revolutionists whose policies were a result of a misunderstanding of Marxism. The fact that the Stalin criminals knew Marxism very well and precisely because of that feared and dreaded it was kept hidden by Trotsky who was in a position to know the truth at first hand. The Trotsky workers were organized as recruiting sergeants for Stalinism and during elections when the workers are more politically inclined than at other periods, urged electoral support to the Stalinist candidates who were painted as representatives of the working class.

10. After Stalin brought about the victory of Hitlerism, Trotsky could no longer palm off the Stalin organizations as revolutionary bodies and get this pro-Stalinist fraud accepted. Thus in 1933 he issued a call for a Fourth International. However, the Stalin leadership was then preparing a switch to the ultra right beginning with a proposition for a non-aggression pact with the Social Democracy. Trotsky then followed the Stalinist lead by ordering his international followers into the Social Democracy, the old "stinking corpse" and broke up the 4th International development throughout the world.

Trotsky proposed a Blum-Cachin Ministry for France and supported a Negrin-Hernandez government when that was actually concretized in Spain during the Civil War in that country. By 1938 when the Trotsky movement was once more "independent" Trotsky continued in line with Stalinist ultra-rightism. Thus the Trotsky leaders called for the creation of Labor Parties where they didn't exist and for electoral support to this agency of the bourgeoisie where it did exist. Stalinist candidates were also supported and at this moment the Trotsky movement is calling for S.P.-C.P. governments in all European countries where the workers are in revolutionary ferment.

11. Trotskyite "criticism" of Stalinism began in the fall of 1923 when the Stalin clique moved against Trotsky. At that time Trotsky confined his self-protective outbursts to the closed walls of the Stalin C.C. while publicly supporting and defending every Stalinist crime before the masses. After Trotsky was expelled his "criticism" of Stalin naturally had to be public but this continued as a cover for the concrete political support to Stalinism in deeds. This line became celebrated as the policy of "critical support." The criticism is always a theoretical self-protective device which fools the workers into imagining a principled divergence while the actual support remains as the basic unalterable policy. Such is also the line of Social Democracy in relation to imperialism.

12. Trotskyite "mass work" is the means used to shunt the Trotsky workers from a study of the degeneration of the Comintern and serves as the Marxist cover for what is called "participation in the class struggle." Just as Stalinist mass work is used to divert attention from the criminal policy of Stalinism so does the Trotsky mass work operate to the same end. A new revolutionary party can be built only on the basis of a scientific understanding of the nature of the present-day opportunist forces dominating the proletarian vanguard. Only this can pave the basis for revolutionary mass work. Trotsky stands as the primary stumbling block to any struggle against Stalinism. It captures subjectively anti-Stalinist workers by means of its "anti-Stalinist" front and functions to tie these revolutionary workers back again to the Stalinist hangmen to whom the Trotsky leaders are bound by unbreakable political bonds.

13. Left-Trotskyism is based on political attachment to Trotskyism and through Trotskyism to Stalinism. The left-Trotskyites paint Trotsky as a Marxist but some of them disagree on the date of this Trotskyite Marxism. (The Oehlerites

EVALUATION OF TWO ARTICLES

- 1- Pannekoek: "WHY THE FAILURE OF THE WORKING CLASS" *
- 2- Ciliga: "A TALK WITH LENIN IN STALIN'S PRISON" **

Editorial Note:

The above-mentioned two articles which appeared in the magazine Politics aroused a good deal of interest among advanced workers. The following is a letter to a worker who wrote us and asked for our evaluation.

Dear Com. G.,

Dec. 1, 1946

This is in reply to your letter of 11/10/46 where you ask for our reaction "to the facts presented" in the respective articles of Ciliga and Pannekoek which were published in Politics, the magazine run by Dwight Mc Donald.

The article by Pannekoek "Why The Failure of the Working Class" poses the central problem faced by the revolutionary workers today. Although history has witnessed the international proletariat storming the ramparts of capitalism since 1917 in one country after another, we still see capitalist reaction in power in the imperialist world and the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy firmly entrenched in its sphere of the planet. Since there has been no lack of revolutionary situations, why the failure of the proletarian revolution? According to Pannekoek, the "failure of the working class" is due to a narrow interpretation of scientific socialist aims given by the leaders of the present day organizations within the proletariat:

"Thus what is called the failure of the working class is the failure of its narrow socialist aims." (Politics, Sept. 1946 p. 271)

This is not true to fact. The true reason is the presence and predominance of a consciously crooked opportunist leadership within the working class which prevents any genuine struggle against capitalism. The most dynamic and the most powerful of these forces is Stalinism which comes to the fore in every revolutionary situation and captures the revolutionary masses through its identification with the tradition of the October Revolution.

In the epoch of the First International when the purpose was to set the aims of the proletarian movement, the authorized spokesmen whom the advanced workers recognized in that period were Marx and Engels. In the initial period of the Second International, Engels was the guiding force who the socialist minded workers recognized as the leading authority on the aims and practices of the scientific socialist movement. Today who are the leaders whom the workers look to as the representatives of their struggles? Primarily Stalinism

* Politics- September 1946

** Politics- August 1946

with the voice of Marxism akin to a cry in the wilderness by a few revolutionary workers. The workers throughout the world are under the sway of the opportunist organizations and in times of revolutionary upsurge chiefly flow to the black flag of Stalinism.

Pannekoek does not present the answer at all to his question as far as we can see. Indeed, the very manner in which the problem is posed betrays demoralization at the overwhelming power of reaction. Marxists do not speak of the "failure of the working class." It is the betrayal by the opportunist leadership which prevents the working class from coming to power and organizing society on a new basis. It is not at all a question of the working class "failing" to struggle. The working class will struggle against capitalism as long as imperialism continues to exist; the axis of the problem is the task of casting out the opportunist misleaders of the proletariat who block the path to a successful culmination of proletarian revolution against capitalism.

Pannekoek presents the reactionary position that capitalism still has possibilities of expansion and thus can partly satisfy the needs of the toilers; as long as this condition exists, he argues, the workers will see no need of revolution:

"In Marx's writings we find the sentence: a production system ~~does not~~ perish before all its innate possibilities have developed. In the persistence of capitalism, we now begin to detect some deeper truth in this sentence than was suspected before. As long as the capitalist system can feed and keep alive the masses of the population, they feel no stringent necessity to do away with it. And it is able to do so as long as it can grow and expand its realm over wider parts of the world. Hence, as long as half the population of the earth stands outside capitalism its task is not finished. The many hundreds of millions thronged in the fertile plains of Eastern and Southern Asia are living in pre-capitalist conditions still. As long as they can afford a market to be provided with rails and locomotives, with trucks, machines and factories, capitalist enterprise, especially in America, may prosper and expand." (Ibid. p. 272 My emphasis-A.B.)

This is not correct factually and represents a perversion of the Marxian analysis of the class struggle. First, the development toward a revolutionary situation is not mechanically and automatically conditioned to the workings of the capitalist productive mechanism. For example, French capitalism was entering a heyday of expansion when the Paris Commune erupted in 1871 as a result of the effects of the Franco-Prussian war.

Russian capitalism showed many possibilities of expansion and development when the Revolution of 1905 occurred, and if the October Revolution of 1917 had been defeated, the Mensheviks and SR's with the "I told you so" air, would have explained that Russia still had large scale possibilities of capitalist development and thus was not ripe for proletarian revolution.

The bourgeoisie still rules most of the planet today, not because capitalism showed more possibilities of expansion but because of the freedom of opportunism within the ranks of the proletariat. In Germany in 1919, 1923, and again in 1932-33 it was not because of any effect of German economy to revive but the betrayal of Social Democracy and Stalinism that the working class was prevented from coming to power in that country. The same was true in Hungary 1919, China 1925-27, England 1926, France 1934-36, Spain 1936-39, Italy 1943, etc.

Furthermore, capitalism has entered into a period of permanent crisis since the war of 1914-18 and the explosion of the Russian revolution. However, despite the decay of imperialism and its manifest inability to satisfy the

basic physical needs of the masses throughout most of the world, there is no "automatic collapse" of capitalism or an absolutely inextricable blind-alley for it. Capitalism can be smashed only by revolutionary overthrow. However, so long as the opportunists remain in a position to prevent the working class from achieving its historic mission, the capitalist leaders will always find a way to keep their own productive system going and overcome the periodic cyclical economic crisis which infect the body of capitalism and thus survive the effects of the ever continual fall in the rate of profit throughout the imperialist world.

Ciliga's article "A Talk With Lenin In Stalin's Prison" written for the August 1946 issue of the same publication, covers a different point entirely. Ciliga attempts to come to grips with the vital problem of the roots of the Stalinist degeneration and the role which Lenin played in that development.

Ciliga castigates Lenin as the prime organizer of the bureaucratic system in Russia. One of the author's main points is that Lenin was pushed to a proletarian program only because of the pressure of the masses; he reneged on that program, ^{when} the pressure of the masses receded and was replaced by more reactionary social forces:

"Let the facts speak. After the October Revolution, Lenin aimed not at the expropriation of the capitalists, but only at 'workers control'; the control of the capitalists, who were to retain the management of their enterprises, by the organizations of the workers in the factories. The spontaneous class struggle defeated this plan of Lenin for class collaboration under his power: the capitalists responded by sabotage, the workers collectively took over one factory after the other... Only after the expropriation of the capitalists had been practically completed by the workers, did the Soviet government recognize it de jure by issuing a decree on the nationalization of industry..." (p. 238 Omissions in original)

This is not a true characterization of the reciprocal role of Lenin and the Russian masses. To see this correctly one must view the entire context of the development from 1917 onward.

During the February days the overwhelming bulk of the masses were supporting the Mensheviks and SR's and were filled with all sorts of illusions about bourgeois democracy. Lenin was far ahead ^{of the sentiments} of the masses at this period and issued the call for proletarian dictatorship and for a time swam against the current. The atmosphere was hostile and Lenin remained isolated from the bulk of the Russian masses as during the imperialist war. During the July days the inflamed proletariat of Petrograd and Moscow was pressing for an overturn but Lenin resisted the mass pressure on the correct grounds that the uprising would be premature and therefore crushed. There are very many occasions where the pursuance of a revolutionary policy demands resistance to mass pressure when this pressure is exerted in a reactionary direction, as, for example, in the United States today. In October 1917 the situation had matured sufficiently and Lenin's line at that moment coincided with the aspirations of the masses. In April 1917 Lenin expressed the historical interests of the masses ^{but} the masses did not mature politically until they realized the treachery of the Mensheviks and SR's and ^{thereupon} came over to the Bolsheviks. Lenin's April Theses called for the expropriation of the capitalists and landlords; after the October Revolution he simply put at least this aspect of his program into effect when the conditions matured for its application. Why should Lenin have advocated expropriation of the capitalists prior to the October Revolution and then, according to Ciliga's unproved accusations, reneged on this program

after the political power was taken away from the exploiters? Ciliga would have one believe that the nationalization of property was only a reflection of the revolutionary pressure of the masses and that this wasn't really the intention of the Bolshevik leadership. In his article, Ciliga presents no facts, simply bald assertions which run contrary to the entire development. As a matter of historical fact there was more socialization of property under Stalin's rule than under Lenin's leadership- this had nothing to do with the pressure of the masses but with the basis of the power of the Stalinist bureaucracy which rests on this bureaucratically controlled nationalized property. Today in the Baltic and the Balkans, Stalin is expropriating many capitalists; his power is strengthened with this extension of the bureaucratic nationalization process. Yet according to the logic of Ciliga's argumentation the socialization of property is only a reflection of the pressure of the masses only in this case he speaks of Lenin and not Stalin.

Ciliga identifies the building of the bureaucratic structure in the Soviet Union with the one-party dictatorship. In fact he claims that Lenin's concept of the relationship of the revolutionary proletarian party to the working class as a whole was only a theoretical veil disguising bureaucratic bonapartism:

"And Lenin knew how to disguise bureaucratic Bonapartism. 'It is impossible to organize the dictatorship of the proletariat by universal organization of the proletariat,' Lenin wrote, 'because the proletariat is still so divided, so humiliated and here and there bribed.' The dictatorship of the proletariat could 'consequently be carried out only by the vanguard which has concentrated the revolutionary energies of the class- the party.' The subsequent experiences of the revolution have unmasked the entirely bureaucratic essence of this conception of the dictatorship of the party over the class, the dictatorship of a chosen minority over the 'backward majority' of the working class." (Ibid. p. 239)

Lenin's observation about the division of the proletariat is absolutely grounded in actual living facts. We may not subjectively approve of the fact but it does happen to be true that only a minority of the proletariat awakens to political class-consciousness and combines to form political parties. Today, even that minority completely supports the policies of the opportunist misleaders.

The very mechanism of capitalist production which creates a contradiction between manual and intellectual labor enforces this condition in capitalist society. We should like to eliminate this but reality is not determined by our wishes. At certain moments in history the workers move forward en masse to revolution but at these moments they follow the lead of the politically advanced workers who are already organized in political parties and organizations.

Socialism is a science and like every other science it must be studied to be understood. It is a historic fact that the viewpoint of scientific socialism was brought to the proletariat from without; from the most educated representatives of the bourgeois intellectuals who rose above their class origins and came over to the proletariat as teachers and guides. (Marx, Engels, the pre-1917 Lenin and Trotsky, the early Kautsky and Flekhanov and others.) Unfortunately only a minority of the workers is able to overcome the intellectual stupor created by the very conditions of capitalist production, surmount the theoretical opium of the spiritual defenders of capitalism in all spheres and come over to the outlook and standpoint of revolutionary Marxism. Lenin simply generalized an existent fact; his theory neither created the fact nor justified it as one would gather from Ciliga's presentation.

Furthermore, the theory of the one-party dictatorship was a product of

historical development and not imposed on the Russian masses a priori from above. From February to July 1917 Lenin called for a coalition of the Bolsheviks with the Mensheviks and SR's on the basis of Soviet Power. He was convinced and so stated that life would prove the Bolshevik program correct as against the program of the parties then dominating the Soviets. However, there was no hint in all this of one-party dictatorship. After the Mensheviks and SR's demonstrated that they would act only on the basis of the bourgeois government and went to the extent of organizing the murder of the revolutionary workers to defend the bourgeois power during the July days, Lenin dropped his slogan of all power to the opportunist led Soviets. The slogan was reissued in late August-September 1917 only after the majority of the workers in the Soviets had come over to the Bolsheviks. Even then Lenin toyed around with the idea of coalition with the Mensheviks and SR's. (See "On Compromises" written Sept. 14, 1917, Collected Works, Vol. XXI, Book I p. 152) While Lenin immediately dropped this idea he still pushed the line for a Constituent Assembly which could not mean a one-party dictatorship. The Constituent Assembly illusion was dropped after it proved itself an organ of bourgeois class interests. Similarly, the line for a coalition with the Mensheviks and SR's was proven a utopia after the activity of these parties in the service of the bourgeoisie. After the capitalists had been overthrown these parties operated for the restoration of capitalism. Still the one-party dictatorship did not wholly make its appearance. The Bolsheviks formed a coalition with the most extreme section of the left petty-bourgeoisie (the Left SR's) and took them into the government. For the first and last time this section actually helped overthrow the regime of the landlords and capitalists. But then the left SR's shot the German ambassador to provoke an invasion, opened the front, and attempted to assassinate Lenin. Thus, all parties and sections but the Bolsheviks (and even within the Bolsheviks there were vacillations to the class enemy- Zinoviev and Kamenev opposition to insurrection- crisis on question of "homogeneous Bolshevik government, etc.) proved themselves in life to be dangerous and uncompromising enemies of the proletarian revolution. The one-party dictatorship and the suppression of the counter-revolutionary agents of the bourgeoisie within the proletariat became imposed by historical development. Any other course would have been a deviation toward the class enemy.

However, we still have to evaluate Ciliga's picture identifying Lenin with the bureaucratic development. Before we attempt to do so we would like to know wherein are the "facts presented" in Ciliga's treatment? On our part we failed to see any; rather we saw a hash of true and false statements, the latter already indicated in the above. But we saw no facts proving these statements. A political worker should not accept any one's charges per se no matter how one may emotionally sympathize with the point of view in question. Accusations must be substantiated by proof; otherwise the assertions will never stand up against the opportunist forces whose interests demand the suppression of the truth and its denial when it is brought to light. Take, for example, our analysis of Trotsky as a collaborator with Stalin. To support our serious charges we present a mountain of evidence, including official documents, citations from party publications, meetings, conventions, plenums, minutes, speeches, etc. To prove Trotsky a liar we base ourselves only on verifiable evidence including the published works of Trotsky. We prove, to take one point, Trotsky's Stalinist role at the 12th Congress by citing first Trotsky's own admissions of the tasks Lenin proposed for that Congress and then Trotsky's actual line as revealed in the recording of votes, speeches and motions by the official minutes and by Trotsky's own statements. When one levels such grave charges of treachery at political leaders who are supported by millions of sincere and honest workers one must be prepared to back up these charges by verifiable evidence or be justifiably branded as unconscionable slanderers.

Ciliga presents the most serious charges against Lenin without an ounce

of evidence to make his charges stick. We are not Lenin fetishists, as you know, and no doubt you will be surprised at some of the statements which will be forthcoming here when we indicate what positions we have come to adopt on the question. However our views were developed on the basis of a thoroughgoing study of Lenin's role after the October Revolution (and we have no pretensions that we have completely exhausted the subject even after this study which is still continuing in some respects.) But we went by unimpeachable facts, documentary evidence and we developed positions only on this solid foundation. We must record the rueful observation that many revolutionary workers for years refused to accept our positions based on documentary evidence and yet are ready to swallow hook line and sinker a host of unproven charges based on a mix mash of ideas when it is put out by people like Ciliga and others who adopt an aura of authority in this particular phase of history.

Various members of our group have been investigating the role of Lenin after the October Revolution in the quest for the origins of the Stalinist degeneration. In this connection, a wealth of material has been unearthed by Comrade Marlen which will be presented in his forthcoming book. This book will contain the complete story of the origin of the bureaucratic development along with the examination of the Stalinist system, its satellites and their role in the working class movement since 1917. The priceless lessons on the subject of the organization of proletarian power will be drawn and made a part of the ideological arsenal of revolutionary Marxism. Unfortunately, we have not been in a position to make this material public as yet. Because of the very nature and importance of the subject we want to avoid presenting an incomplete or one-sided picture which would be inevitable if we came out prematurely without all the evidence to substantiate our views. However, I can briefly summarize some of the points here and indicate some of the conclusions we have come to in our internal discussions of the question.

In 1917, in the period prior to October, Lenin on many occasions referred to the type of state which would be established if the proletariat took power. The points emphasized were: the election of all officials in the administrative apparatus, guarantee of recall of corrupt officials by proletarian electors at any time, elimination of bureaucratism, destruction of police and standing army separate and apart from workers and its replacement by the workers militia, reduction of pay of all functionaries to the level of the wage of a competent worker (the principle drawn from the Paris Commune) and Workers Control of Production.

In "State and Revolution" Lenin noted as a principle of proletarian power:

"All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall at any time, their salaries reduced to the level of workmens' wages-- these simple and 'self-evident' democratic measures, while completely uniting the interests of the workers and the majority of the peasants, at the same time serve as the bridge between capitalism and socialism." (Selected Works, Vol. VII. p. 42)

When the Bolsheviki did take power, however, they systematically abandoned all these principles from the very first day of the revolution. Undoubtedly, when the 2nd All-Soviet Congress voted the Bolshevik policy, the Bolshevik leaders took this as a mandate to form and appoint the ruling government apparatus. In any case, on the first day the Bolshevik leaders got together and appointed each other to the various posts of power. By the simple medium of appointment, functionaries were chosen to run the various departments of the administration. Thus, the program of electing "all officials, without exception," was violated from the very inception of the Bolshevik rule. The appointing policy became organized into a system; there was no right of recall established from the workers below and for all the workers knew the various

appointed officials were to stay in their offices permanently since there was no time limit stipulated for holding posts.

Prior to October, the Bolsheviks never indicated that the political leaders would become ipso facto chief administrators and that Soviet Power would take the form of a Council of People's Commissars. The latter creation caused some misgivings among some of the revolutionary workers who had heard nothing of this idea before.

The 2nd Congress of Soviets ratified the Bolshevik State but this was regarded as provisional pending the meeting of the Constituent Assembly. The latter was dissolved but the officials already appointed remained in their posts and built up their departments by appointing functionaries and subordinates.

The Soviet Congress conferred executive power on a purely provisional body called the Sovnarkom and supervision of the Sovnarkom action was assigned to a Central Executive Committee with additional right of recall of any member of the former body. Legislative rights were reserved for the Sovnarkom to be elected by the next Congress of Soviets in January 1918. But when the 2nd Congress of Soviets finished its work the Sovnarkom exceeded its authority by removing and appointing members in its own body and also took over sole legislative power without even submitting laws for approval to the Soviet Central Executive Committee and established this right by a pure decree, known as decree # 12. When this caused objections, the idea contained in Decree # 12 was legalized in a resolution drawn up by Trotsky in the Soviet Executive and its adoption was naturally assured by the Bolshevik majority in that body.

As the appointive system was extended throughout the country, the power of democratically elected local Soviets was curtailed and the local elective system limited in favor of appointments from above by the top leaders. This was legalized in a Sovnarkom Decree on Jan. 7, 1918.

The 3rd Congress of Soviets simply approved the acts of the Sovnarkom and instead of renewing the membership of the latter body, the Sovnarkom to all intents and purposes became the permanent government of the proletarian state with no stipulation of the time of office. This bureaucratic creation had the main threads of power and thereupon became the directing organism.

A subtle change in political ideology necessarily accompanied the objective transformation of the Bolshevik leaders. In March 1918 the Bolshevik leadership moved the state center from Petrograd, the cradle of the Revolution, to the Imperial Palaces of the Kremlin, ^{In Moscow} Seat of the Tsars. The Kremlin was taken over intact; including the retinue of the old Tsarist flunkies and court lackeys who served in the same servile capacity as before, only now catering to the Bolshevik leaders instead of the Tsarist court.

With a decree published in March 26, 1918 appointing an official with dictatorial power over the railroads a new stage was introduced against the principle of Workers Control. Gradually, a whole series of one-man dictators were appointed from above to run the factories. This was followed by another departure from the principles of the Commune-- the bribing of specialists with huge salaries. This new position was defended in Lenin's pamphlet "The Soviets At Work". Lenin later acknowledged that "such exceptionally high- high from the bourgeois point of view-- remuneration to the specialists did not originally enter into the plans of the Soviet government and even ran counter to a number of decrees issued at the end of 1917." (Selected Works, Vol. IX. p. 281.) The bourgeois specialists included people in the military and administrative branches of the former Tsarist Governmental apparatus as well as industrial technicians and managers. Lenin's idea was that this departure from

the Commune was a "temporary" retreat- a necessary "tribute" which the proletariat had to pay. However, it turned out that a system was established and this system became organized into a permanent feature in the Soviet State.

Once the leadership became established by the policy of appointment from above, with no stipulations for the length of time to hold office, with no control from the workers below, the revolutionary consciousness of the leaders became deadened and gradually was supplanted by a bureaucratic consciousness. This was but the ideological reflection of the physical transformation in condition and mode of life. Being precedes consciousness. By the 11th Congress of the R.C.P. in March 1922 Lenin openly observed that the entire Bolshevik leadership had become bureaucratized:

"After all, we have not ceased to be revolutionaries (although many say, not altogether without foundation, that we have become bureaucratized)...". (Ibid. p. 336)

This was an astonishing admission- a reflection of a material fact which had long been established. More, Lenin admitted in 1923 that the entire state machinery was but the old Tsarist apparatus, except the branch of foreign affairs:

"With the exception of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, our state apparatus is very largely a survival of the old one, and has least of all undergone serious change. It has only been slightly repainted on the surface, but in all other things it is a typical relic of our old state apparatus." (Ibid. p. 382)

Thus Lenin himself was constrained to acknowledge that the Bolshevik leaders had become bureaucrats and were operating on largely the same apparatus used by the Tsarist despots.

When bureaucratic consciousness replaced revolutionary consciousness, it was inevitable that the leadership would become accustomed to their unlimited power and privileges, accept their soft positions as natural and finally seek to retain power permanently. Under the veil of the call for Workers Democracy the Bolshevik leadership steadily consolidated the bureaucratic stranglehold on the neck of the Workers State. The cry for Workers Democracy had a widespread appeal precisely because it was the system of bureaucratic centralism which was the concrete actuality in the day to day life of the Soviet state. The reaffirmation of the program of Workers Democracy was confined to holiday speeches and paper resolutions to placate the revolutionary rank and file. The bureaucratic usurpation of the proletarian state was the feeding ground for the Stalinist conspiracy which first came into view in 1921 and ^{had} obviously hatched some time before. Note that Lenin in his "Testament" (the very idea of a Testament of a leader to a party to follow indicates the ideology of leader deification) had become so accustomed to the bureaucratic methodology that he proposed to REMOVE Stalin (from the top) and ...APPOINT someone else. The idea of democratic workers election and recall was already out of sight entirely. From all indications Lenin's differences with the other top bureaucrats at the time were not based on the idea of Workers' Democracy against bureaucratism as we had erroneously thought up to now. Lenin was for bureaucratism... but without excesses. On the basic policy there was fundamental agreement although clique fights between the bureaucrats gave the impression of basic divergences in policies.

The foreign policy of the Soviet State was but an expression of the domestic policy. When the Bolshevik led forces advanced into Poland a Sovnarkom direct from the Kremlin was ready to take over and act in the name of the Polish masses. Similar bureaucratic conceptions dominated the policy in other

countries. Just as the aim domestically was the preservation of the bureaucratic system so was it in foreign policy. At Brest Litovsk the Bolshevik leadership traded over the revolutionary principle of fraternization as part of a bargain with the imperialist butchers and thus helped them choke off a revolutionary development in the German army. Later the revolutionary workers of Finland and Latvia were sacrificed to the imperialist brigands to complete another "bargain" with the class enemy. Similarly the foreign policy pursued in Persia, Turkey, and in the Far East was already motivated by opportunist conceptions. As the idea became one of entrenchment of the bureaucratic power in Russia the Bolshevik leadership began to throw their weight behind those forces in the labor movement whose policy coincided with the momentary interests of Soviet diplomacy. Thus the German revolutionary workers were ordered to bloc up with the rotten "independent" Socialists who were talking against the intervention of the Soviet territory due to the hot situation within Germany itself. Likewise, the Bolsheviks feted the British Laborites who verbally opposed the unpopular British intervention. It was not long before Lenin was urging the "tactic" of supporting a British Labor Government. From every angle, the break with the Marxian principles on the organization of proletarian power necessarily expressed itself in an opportunist foreign policy. The historic needs of the masses was replaced with the interests of preserving the bureaucratic usurpation of power in Russia.

I hope this sketchy summary will help acquaint you with the lines along which our comrades are thinking. The facts as a whole will be presented in the not too distant future when we hope to publish Comrade Marlen's book.

...

A.B.

REPLY ON: (1) THE GREAT MAN THEORY OF HISTORY
(2) THE CLASS NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN STATE

Editorial Note:

We are publishing the following political extracts from one of our letters because it deals with a trend of criticism symptomatic of some advanced workers who criticize our material. These workers feel that our publications approach history from a Great Man viewpoint. Another typical point called into question is the basis for our analysis of the class character of the Russian state.

...

Dec. 29, 1946

1. We do not hold to any "great man" theory or any other essentially idealist notions of historical development. Individuals in the positions of leadership are reflections of various social forces and in turn react on the forces which produced them. The relationship is interactive; dynamic and always in a process of change and transformation. In the proletarian movement for liberation we see as "great men" simply those who understand the social processes better and more clearly see through the fog of deception to the road ahead. Ideological development unfortunately is not uniform and in this respect the proletariat is not homogeneous. Thus certain individuals inevitably make more contributions to proletarian science than others; such individuals were revolutionists like Marx and Engels who were truly intellectual titans. The ideas of Marx and Engels were organically related to the development of the class struggle in bourgeois society; on the other hand the works of Marx and Engels can not be separated from the movement for proletarian liberation. For example, when you wanted to reexamine your conceptions in the light of

a new point of view on the Russian question you noted that "we are reading again the 'classics' of Marxism to see where we all got off the track." In this respect a critic adopting the same angle as those attacking us for adhering to a "great man" theory could apply the same characterization to you comrades, for why harp on two individuals, Marx and Engels? We do not raise such a line of argumentation because we see no "great man" theory involved here. While ideas develop from objective facts, they are the products of the human brain and thus the examination of social movements must concern itself with the theories and practices of those voicing the aspirations of the contending classes in society. Behind these voices there are class forces, of course, and it is this fact which is hidden by the bourgeoisie. But in our case, since we are in agreement on the role and movement of the basic class forces in society (this is accepted by the advanced workers) we have to go a step further and concern ourselves with the policies pursued in the proletarian camp. Since it is the leadership which formulates the policies, we have to concern ourselves with the leaders. Because we are addressing ourselves to advanced workers we presuppose that the ABC's are understood and thus, in most cases feel free to concentrate on the line and policy of the leadership.

For instance, in an analysis of the Russian Revolution it would not be sufficient to point out the contending class forces, the previous development of the mode of production, the crisis engendered by the war, and the generation of the revolutionary activity of the masses. (Incidentally, those who reject the vanguard concept keep harping on this revolutionary activity of the masses as if this is the alpha and omega of Marxian science.) A correct analysis must point out the subjective factor- the leadership- which happens to become the crucial and chief factor in determining whether we have a successful proletarian overthrow or a defeat of the proletariat. The factor of revolutionary activity of the masses has today been converted into a lifeless abstraction in pseudo-Marxist "science" and is used to conceal the actual truth. Insofar as the activity of the masses is concerned as the key to the October overturn, the fact is that such revolutionary activity was duplicated in even more intense forms in other countries and in other situations (China 1925-27) and yet the proletariat went down to defeat. The revolutionary activity of the masses is produced by objective facts- the decay and crisis of imperialism. But the direction of this proletarian movement is determined by the political tendencies operating within the proletariat- specifically by its leadership. A history of the Bolshevik party can not be divorced from the history of the October Revolution and similarly the history of the Bolshevik Party can not be separated from the political biography of Lenin and other leaders. Therefore, in discussing the pre-October and post-October Russian development one has to study the political development of the key figures in the leadership, and the relationship of the theories and practices developed by these leaders to the needs of the objective situation.

While the conditions of capitalism force ideological division of the proletariat and invariably push to the fore the factor of leadership, we try to combat the development of specific "great man" theories and the deification of leaders which flows from that reactionary conception. It is a tragic fact that it is precisely the pseudo-Marxist betrayers who in practise spread the great man theory and instill the hero-worship ideology accuse us of such rotten perversions of Marxism and get this slander accepted among sincere workers. In our political productions and in our day to day political work we fight tooth and nail against the introduction of any such "great man" theory as a deviation toward the Stalin ideology. While there is, naturally, comradesly respect among workers in our group. we do not have any mutual admiration society and go at each other hammer and tongs without regard to personalities when there are sharp differences of political opinion. On the other hand, it is true that some comrades have contributed more to our ideological work than others and that these contributions are recognized and accepted.

This differentiation is only a reflection of the differing levels of ideological development which exist within the proletariat as a whole and can only be levelled to some rough degree of equality through continual education conducted through the group as a whole and self-clarification through persistent individual study by the worker who thereby expresses his class consciousness in this particular form.

You are of course, quite familiar with the ideology of the Stalin, Trotsky, and even Oehler tendencies which piously mumble acceptance of historical materialism but in practice pump into the uninformed membership a hero worship idea. But argue with a Trotsky or an Oehler worker and he will tell you in all seriousness that it is we and not they who believe in the "great man" theory.

The test of who actually practices the "great man" theory is in life itself; that is, in the very building of a group. We rejected this from the beginning and never deviated to hero worship of any sort:

"The great danger in this period is for an isolated revolutionary worker to cling to the paralyzing illusion of the need to wait for a great man, a Marxist 'Messiah', who can lead the toiling masses out of the present straits. The 'great' men have gone bankrupt! The workers must rely upon themselves to forge a new leadership." (Stalin, Trotsky, or Lenin, P. 489 Original Emp.)

Virtually all of our comrades have gone through the opportunist organizations; some have journeyed through the complete cycle from Social Democracy to Stalinism to Trotsky and then to the Left Trotskyites. It has been the experience of every comrade, without exception, that the renunciation of hero worship (the great man poison) was developed concretely with activity in our group.

...

2. On the Workers' State: This term has been much abused and thus the subject of more confusion than most other problems. In most cases the confusion here reduces itself to a question of terminology and therefore it is necessary to begin by defining terms.

We accept the Marxist criterion which defines the class character of a state from the form of property prevailing in that state. If the proletariat does rise to overthrow the bourgeoisie what form of property will it establish? This can be no other than socialized property; it is this specific form which gives the state a proletarian form of economy and thereby determines the class nature of the state structure. The confusion arises because most workers take the term Workers' State to mean that the workers really run the state. This is the ideal form and determines what attitude you have to the leadership of that state but it does not determine the nature of the state per se. It is impossible for many revolutionary workers to conceive of a state dominated by the counter-revolutionary Stalin bureaucracy as a workers state in any form. All that we mean in this instance by the term Workers' State (which we rigidly qualify) is that the basic property formation is proletarian in character in contrast to the bourgeois private property structure. And even here we must qualify the term "proletarian form" of property as it exists in the Soviet Union as a bureaucratized form of that type of property. In this case again, the ideal form would be workers control from below but this again does not determine whether the form of property is proletarian or bourgeois. The criterion is not exploitation or misery of the workers but the form of ownership and the production relations which ensue as a result of that form of ownership. If the workers were to overthrow the Stalin bureaucracy they would not alter the basic property formation but simply oust the bureaucrats and institute actual workers control. On the other hand, in a bourgeois country, in overthrowing the class enemy the proletariat would not only have to introduce control from

below

by the workers but would have to transform the very form of property into socialized property. That is the difference in the class nature of the state in Russia and that existing in the imperialist world.

How is it possible that a workers state can be counter-revolutionary as the state is in Russia? This is a question of the subjective factor. Historically the working class as a whole is the grave digger of capitalism and bears within itself the basis for building a new society and eliminating class divisions. But concretely today this historical revolutionary working class pursues counter-revolutionary politics and follows a reactionary path of supporting capitalism. This does not alter the basic historic mission of the proletariat or our conception of the proletariat as the historically revolutionary force in capitalist society. The present policy of the proletariat is a product of the subjective factor, the leadership and does not alter the basic character of this class. Similarly, the counter-revolutionary leadership astride the Workers' State does not and can not determine what form of property exists in the Soviet Union.

We agree that right from the beginning of the October Revolution the Bolshevik leadership introduced a bureaucratic distortion in building the state apparatus and thus the development did not go forward in a revolutionary direction. ...

3. We do not classify the Stalin bureaucracy as imperialist since imperialism is an outgrowth of private property relations. The Stalin bureaucracy pursues a policy of bureaucratic aggrandisement and in the present instance of history the door was opened to this expansion from 1943 to 1945 by a machination of the leading imperialist powers. The purpose was to build up a substantial basis to whip up a war spirit against the Soviet Union so as to organize a new war against it and reintroduce capitalist relations in that sphere of the world. In the division of territory between Stalin and Hitler in 1939-1940 it appeared that the German bankers and industrialists were acquiescing in the expansion of socialized property. Later in the intervention, the Nazi leaders showed that this was but a temporary maneuver and in all the territory taken from Stalin's forces, socialized property was broken up and bourgeois private ownership introduced. This is also the intention behind the present-day maneuvers of the Anglo-American imperialist rulers who by the way never allowed themselves to lose sight of the significance of the form of property in the Soviet Union.

A.B.

...

(Continued from page 18)

hold that Trotsky was a Marxist until 1934, the now defunct Stamm group held that he was a Marxist until 1927, etc.) All such tendencies unite in characterizing present-day Trotskyism as "centrism" and Stalinism as some form of "reformism."

The Marxist evaluation is that Stalinism is the bureaucratic usurpation of power in the Workers State and operates as a consciously counter-revolutionary force within the working class. Trotskyism is simply a political branch in the Stalinist counter-revolutionary political system.

Arthur Burke
For the W.L.R.P.
Dec. 6, 1946