

LEON TROTSKY MEMORIAL ISSUE

The New
INTERNATIONAL

SEPTEMBER • 1946

Notes of the Month

PRICES — POLAND — PEACE CONFERENCE

The Trotsky Heritage

By Ernest Erber

Five Years of the Comintern

By Albert Gates

Reviewing "The New Course"

By Irving Howe

Church Struggles Under Fascism

By Leon Trotsky

A. Rudzienski:

Russian Imperialism in Poland

James T. Farrell:

American Literature Marches On

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTES OF THE MONTH	195
LEON TROTSKY AND THE WORKERS PARTY <i>By Ernest Erber</i>	201
THE HEROIC PERIOD OF THE COMINTERN THE PERIOD OF THE COMINTERN <i>By Albert Gates</i>	205
REVIEWING "THE NEW COURSE" <i>By Irving Howe</i>	210
THE CHURCH STRUGGLE UNDER FASCISM <i>By Leon Trotsky</i>	213
RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM IN POLAND <i>By A. Rudzienski</i>	215
AMERICAN LITERATURE MARCHES ON <i>By James T. Farrell</i>	218

Attention Subscribers:

We want to speak openly and frankly to the readers of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. If ever a Marxist publication worthy of the widest and most effective kind of support has failed to receive this, it is THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. Because of many and varied factors, it has been impossible either to maintain the regularity with which THE NEW INTERNATIONAL should have been published—that is, once each month—or to maintain its circulation.

As a result of this, there has been (a) a decline in interest in the magazine and until recently (b) a decrease in the number of subscribers, readers and bundle orders sent out to our agents.

We believe in THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, because we believe it answers an absolutely essential *political* need of the day, not only in America but throughout the world. It is a magazine to achieve Marxist political clarity and its discussions have accomplished much toward this end. THE NEW INTERNATIONAL is a historic publication, with widespread influence. The time has come to increase this influence, to make up the ground we have lost and to reestablish our pre-war circulation and appeal. We intend to take step in that direction.

First of all, we have every reason to believe that henceforth THE NEW INTERNATIONAL will resume its *monthly* publication. We are publishing only ten issues this year, but from now on it will appear monthly, with twelve regular issues scheduled for 1947. We have solved our printing and press problems to this extent.

Secondly, we shall shortly initiate a subscription campaign, with the idea of expanding our subscription lists to their former size and then overtaking this. Subscriptions are one of our main income sources and must be built up.

Thirdly, our bundle order agents must wake up and begin to take a real interest in their magazine. There are many ways in which bookstore, newsstand and public sales can be expanded. All that is required is an interest and initiative in the matter. We pledge to help our agents in every possible way. The first way, as we know, is to guarantee the regular, month-by-month, on-time appearance of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. We believe we can promise that.

Fourthly, the large and well known pre-war foreign circulation of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL must be revived. This provided us with a substantial portion of our former income, aside from its great political value. We intend to do our best to bring about such a revival. A good start has already been made in the regular bundle order for *150 copies monthly* of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL that has come in to us from the tiny and distant island of Ceylon, south of India. If our friends in Ceylon can sell and circulate 150 copies of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL monthly, surely our agents in the big cities of the United States can do as well!

This Press Column will be published regularly each month. Let's make the future editions of it a report on progress toward rebuilding that leading publication of the Marxist world

PRESS MANAGER,

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

VOLUME XII

SEPTEMBER, 1946

NUMBER 7

NOTES OF THE MONTH

The Struggle on the Price Front

Two major struggles by the American working class were fought since the end of the war in the Pacific. In one, organized labor won a partial victory; in the other, the people as a whole suffered a defeat.

The first struggle was not an unexpected one, for the labor movement, principally the CIO, had given notice even before the war ended that the struggle for wage increases would begin in a series of basic industries. This was a very logical post-war development in a situation where the big bourgeoisie enriched itself not only from the "natural" conditions of a war economy, but with the official acquiescence of a labor officialdom which accepted almost all restrictions of Roosevelt's War Stabilization Act on labor.

The labor officials always sounded a warning: wait until the end of the war! One was led to assume that the coming of peace would result in a new situation, a decline of the power of big business and a rise in the influence of labor and its share in the national economy. But even in its most optimistic moments, the labor officialdom must have known by experience alone, if nothing else, that whatever the working class would gain in the post-war period, it would have to fight for it. And for that reason, large sections of the labor movement prepared for strikes as a means of overcoming the decline in wages by a drive to increase their basic rate.

The Bourgeoisie at Work

The post-war tendencies of the First World War are to be experienced again: the bourgeoisie would seek to guarantee a rate of profit as closely as possible approximating the inflated years of the war. This would be done legally through redress granted the profiteer patriots by Congress; it would be done by sharply cutting into the standard of living of the working class. In the first case, Congress responded nobly by granting industry rebates on taxes paid during the war if industry demonstrated that its profits fell below immediate pre-war averages. It lowered taxes of industry and adopted legislation which would ease the the pains of reconversion for the bourgeoisie. Congress did all in its power to assist the bourgeoisie in shifting the burden of reconversion upon the shoulders of the people, in the first place, the working class. But if it did this for the class whose interests it represents it remained coldly indifferent to the needs of the masses. No adequate housing bill; no minimum wage bill; no FEPC; no anti-lynching bill; no guaranteed job bill!

The reaction of the organized workers to their tremendous loss in wages with the end of wartime production was to present industry with wage demands that revolved around the figure of thirty cents an hour. The first post-war struggle between monopoly capitalism and labor in auto, steel, coal, packing, rubber, etc., had begun.

On the one side, labor showed by cold statistics that the workers had suffered wage-cuts reaching almost forty per cent of their wartime income. Economic reports were presented which not only demonstrated that the official government statistics were falsely constructed, but that if the workers did receive a thirty cent increase their wages would still fall far below their wartime level in a period in which prices had surpassed wartime levels. For their part, the monopoly capitalists carried on an expensive campaign to prove that they could not grant such "astronomical" demands and still operate their industries profitably; that the very system of "free enterprise" was threatened by labor's demands.

Labor's First Struggle

The impasse reached in the period of negotiations was resolved by strike action and the reappearance for the first time since the beginning of the war, of mass picket lines and the complete paralysis of whole industries. As a result, the massed power of labor succeeded in partially breaking the will of industry and winning wage increases which levelled off at about eighteen cents an hour.

But even more significant for the future development of the labor movement than these gains was the role played by the United Automobile Workers in their strike against General Motors. There was revealed in this struggle the first signs of a maturing process taking place among the workers. The General Motors strike, which preceded the other big strikes, saw the union present two demands on the giant GM monopoly which lifted the strike out of the ordinary wage struggles characterizing the main strategy of the pre-war labor movement. These demands were: Open the Books! and Wage Increases Without Price Increases!

The social importance and significance of these demands have already been fully treated in THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. It is only necessary to remind our readers that these demands involved the whole question of workers' control of production and linked wages to prices, which in the epoch of monopoly capitalism are intimately related. No wonder the corporation resisted so strongly; no wonder the major monopolistic combines came to the support of the corporation!

In contrast to the extreme consciousness of the bourgeoisie who saw the whole system of private property threatened, the

majority of the labor officialdom showed little consciousness whatever. John L. Lewis and Philip Murray sought strike settlements in coal and steel without regard to the question of price increases and its consequences upon the standard of living of the working class. Conservative minded, ignorant of economics or else educated in the platitudes of bourgeois economics they declared: industry deserves and should get all the profits it can; the operation of industry is none of our business; all we want is a wage increase for our workers.

Struggle for Price Control

In the earlier days of capitalism, when the system was young and expanding, this reactionary doctrine did not have the end-effect upon the masses as it does today. Today it is a fatal doctrine. That has been the lesson of the period since the strike wave ended. The failure to understand that lesson is in large part responsible for the defeat the people have suffered on the price front. While the "GM Program" would not have guaranteed success, it would have given the labor movement a fighting chance. Without it, all other measures, while individually good, could not succeed in breaking the determination of big business to shift the cost of wage increases upon the shoulders of the masses.

Whatever construction may be put on the actions of Congress and the Administration as revealed in their inner struggle over price control, the fact is that both conspired to defeat strict price control. The former, by its outright abolition; the latter, by a process of successive and gradual lifting of controls. The President vetoes one undisguisedly hypocritical control bill only to sign one equally as bad. No sooner is this bill made law when the administrators of the OPA proceed to lift price controls precisely on those commodities which affect the daily life of the people. This was one of the outstanding swindles in the history of reactionary national legislatures.

But that was to be expected. Any labor leader who feels that he was "betrayed" by Congress should begin to study his lessons to learn the meaning of state power in a class society. The labor leaders had only betrayed themselves in placing one ounce of confidence in the "profiteers' Congress."

The reaction of the labor movement to the crippling of price control was swifter than it was on the question of wages. The sharp rise in prices struck home in a literal sense. It beat its fierce notes on workers and their families, the middle classes, the small and poor farmers, on professional people and every other layer of the population. The UAW adopted a five-point program calling for a buyers' strike, flying squadrons to prevent evictions, rent strikes to halt the gouge of the landlords, a demonstrative strike against the abolition of price control, and for a national conference of labor to meet and deal with this burning question which affected the whole nation.

The responses of consumers' bodies, tenants' leagues, and neighborhood committees, dovetailed with work stoppages, mass meetings, resolutions to Congress, and a host of other actions. These had the effect of forcing the passage of the present OPA bill.

But the fight of the labor movement fell short. Instead of increasing in scope, it ended quickly. The price fight declined with the passage of the aforementioned OPA bill. And the responsibility for this rests upon the shoulders of the labor leaders. Throughout the most stirring days of the struggle, the president of the CIO had not a single word to say on the problem! If William Green muttered anything at all, no one paid any attention to him (now he blames the wage demands of the CIO unions as the cause of the price increases!). The failure

of the tremendous American labor movement to develop an all-sided, continuous struggle on the wage and price fronts has given the initiative momentarily to the capitalists.

New Struggles Ahead

This is only the first stage of the post-war class struggle. Even the boom nature of the present economic situation in the country cannot long down this struggle. The boom itself has a fictitious character and is experienced in part by the reduced economic share of the masses in the national economy.

The lesson for the future, however, is clear: the labor movement must wage a new kind of struggle. Wage fights are not enough. Victories on the wage front can be lost on the price front. The struggle for wages must therefore be linked with a struggle against price increases. It is the sheerest kind of sectarianism and doctrinarism which says that they cannot and should not be linked; that it is a violation of Marxist principle; that control of prices under capitalism is impossible. These are economic questions which are solved in the last analysis by the class struggle.

The development of a new stage of struggle of American labor has come. It is a maturer struggle, a struggle with deeper social implications. The essential content of the GM Program must become part of a national program of labor. This struggle will not develop its full power until it is accompanied by independent political action of labor, by the establishment of an independent labor party, and by the adoption of a program which must lead to a struggle against the bourgeois government and the bourgeois social order. The establishment of such a party would mark the first stage in the socialist political development of the American working class and would give genuine power to its economic struggle.

Poland's Political Pattern

The recent referendum in Poland sheds much light on the political pattern developing in the Russian-occupied countries. It likewise poses in the most concrete terms questions of strategy and tactics for the revolutionary Marxists which in the past have been posed only in theory.

The referendum has revealed that the Stalinist puppet régime is still far from having Stalinized, i.e., totalitarianized in the Russian manner, the political life of Poland. Not only does a widespread opposition to the Warsaw régime exist, but the régime has been forced, due to a number of factors, to grant the opposition a measure of legal existence and expression. The two most important of these factors are:

(1) *The need to acquire some kind of stable mass base for the Stalinist régime. The failure to achieve this will mean that Poland must be ruled by the Russians in an openly colonial manner. In this event Poland would represent less in political and military terms than if it could be controlled entirely through a POLISH Stalinist apparatus.*

(2) *Related to the above is the need of Russia to make some pretense at complying with the terms of its agreement with England and the United States which called for a "strong and independent" Poland with a democratic régime. Russia must maneuver carefully in questions like Poland in order to do least damage to the valuable political asset represented by the still extensive pro-Russian sympathy among sections of American and British public opinion, above all, liberal opinion in the United States and labor opinion in England.*

Then, too, the present situation is rooted in the political shifts affecting Poland arising from the changing international relations between 1939 and 1944. Great Britain went to war over the immediate issue of Danzig and the invasion of Poland. The defeated, exile government of Poland became a British ward. The Stalin-Hitler pact was in effect during this period and the role of the exile régime in London, as opponents of both the German and Russian conquerors of Poland, did not contradict British policy. However, when Hitler invaded Russia and the latter became Britain's ally, a new situation arose. Britain's obligations to the Polish exile régime (not to speak of its interests in the ultimate Polish settlement) did not permit her to place the destinies of Poland entirely in Stalin's hands, but it had to bow to Russian policy on Poland.

The re-conquest of Poland by the Russian armies placed all the strong cards in Stalin's hands. The Warsaw uprising led by Gen. Bor, the last strong bid of the exile régime, was cynically undermined by the Russians. From then on it was a matter of Britain seeking to salvage what it could from the Polish situation. The best that the combined pressure of Churchill and Roosevelt could achieve was the agreement of Stalin to a "merger" of the London exile régime and the Stalinist puppet government on the basis of adding those London ministers to the Stalinist governments whom Moscow passed upon as being "non-objectionable."

Rôle of Peasant Party

The only prominent figure to accept the agreement and to qualify from the Russian point of view was the leader of the powerful Polish Peasants Party, Mickolajczk. He returned to Poland to take a place in the government in the spotlight of a world public interest which afforded him some protection against foul play, such as that encountered by the Polish underground leaders who reported themselves to the Russians and were promptly thrown into jail. Banking upon the vast unpopularity of the puppet régime, Mickolajczk has tried to guard his independence from the Stalinists and, thereby, emerged as the spokesman for the legal opposition.

The fact that the Peasant Party is the sole non-Stalinist force permitted some measure of freedom has made of it the channel for the expression of *all variants* of anti-governmental views. As a result, the opposition that groups itself around Mickolajczyk is most heterogeneous. Its broad mass base is composed of the small land-owning peasant, the stratagem which furnished the base for the Peasant Party before the war. An added strategy of mass support comes from the old labor movement; the underground Socialist Party (PPS) and the illegalized trade unions, which have no other form of legal expressions since the only labor organizations sanctioned are the government unions operated by the Stalinists. However, the opposition is also supported by the remnants of the expropriated bourgeoisie, former land-owners, the church hierarchy, the old officer corps and others who represent the social props of pre-war Poland. These elements see the peasant opposition as the battering ram to weaken the régime in preparation for their own return to power.

The Stalinist régime has, no doubt, the support of a small section of the industrial proletariat. This is the result of a conscious and consistent effort to consolidate a proletarian base. Its policy of nationalization of industry gives it a socialist coloration in the eyes of some workers, who, like so many European workers, tend to identify nationalization with socialism. Added to this is the manipulation of the food supply by the government for purposes of gaining proletarian sup-

port. Exactly to what extent the Stalinist's efforts have succeeded is difficult to say because in the absence of political freedom there are no reliable data. The Stalinists have perhaps secured the support of a strata of the peasants as a result of the "land reforms" they have carried through. The land division has been more limited than Stalinist propaganda would have us believe (see article by Rudzienski in this issue). However, those peasants who did receive land from the new régime have a stake in its preservation.

The only really reliable base of the Stalinist régime is the new bureaucratic class it is seeking to compose from the state apparatus, the new army officer corps trained in Russia, the army of journalists, professionals, etc., on the state payroll and, of great importance, the new technical personnel at the head of the nationalized economy.

The recent referendum resulted from an attempt to prove to the world that it has a decisive majority. The Stalinists sought to capitalize upon the measures they have adopted which are either progressive in appearance or which appeal to the patriotic (really, chauvinist) sentiments of Poles. However, the referendum had to be so phrased as not to permit the masses to express themselves upon the only real political question that matters—government by GPU terror.

The questions which the Stalinist demagogically selected were: (1) an approval of a single chamber legislature; (2) an approval of the nationalization measures, and (3) an approval of the new frontiers.

Mickolajczk chose to make the referendum a test of strength and a challenge of the régime. He asked his followers to vote "yes" on issues of nationalization and the new frontiers but to vote "no" on the issue of the single chamber legislature. In addition to this conditional opposition of Mickolajczk reports from Poland told of a considerable underground literature which called for a "no" vote on all three propositions. The Stalinists, of course, promptly described the underground agitation as "fascist." We need not accept their designation to assume that a considerable reactionary underground exists, in the political tradition of the Legionnaires who came to power under Pilsudski and degenerated into the openly anti-Semitic, fascistic elements who formed the active support for the government of the "colonels" between 1930 and 1939. However, it is just as plausible to assume that a strong underground Leftist opposition exists, composed of those elements who were represented in the anti-Nazi resistance by a widespread revolutionary socialist press which was simultaneously hostile to Stalinism.

The referendum took place in the midst of a campaign of police terror, arrests, assassinations, threats, wholesale raids and secret, nocturnal "disappearances." The objects of most attention on the part of the Stalinist secret police were the local leaders and organizations of the Peasant Party. Mickolajczk's demand for representatives of his party at the polls was refused. His party press was subjected to tightened censorship, including the prohibition to print statements condemning anti-Semitism. Despite this, the government proposition for a single chamber legislature could not rally a vote as large as on the other questions.

The experience of the referendum is one which the Stalinists will seek to avoid in the future, if at all possible. Their main efforts are now concentrated in forcing the Peasant Party into a single-ticket coalition for the elections of a Constituent Assembly promised for the Fall. Thus far Mickolajczk has been able to hold his ground and refuse. The Stalinists have not yet

found a way out of the dilemma. Without the consent of the Peasant Party to a single ticket, a real contest, despite police terror, would reveal the real weakness of the puppet régime. Mickolajczyk has gone so far in taunting the Stalinists as to say that in the interests of creating a sizable opposition he will give them a guaranteed 25 per cent of the seats in the Assembly, being sure that they do not have the votes to win them.

New Political Pattern

The new political pattern of Poland consists, therefore, of a crystallizing bureaucratic class basing itself upon a nationalized economy and ruling the country by police terror, accompanied by demagogic gestures to win some proletarian and peasant support. It is opposed by a broad popular movement of peasants who rally around the banner of democracy and receive support from such divergent elements as the reactionary and fascistic, former rulers, on the one hand, and the best socialist elements of the proletariat on the other.

This political pattern is no phenomenon peculiar to Poland, but extends to all the occupied territories. This poses for the revolutionary Marxists a most critical situation. It gives flesh and blood to the theoretical question which the movement posed when it considered Trotsky's slogan of self-determination for the Ukraine. The question is: what is the revolutionary Marxist attitude toward a broad opposition that rallies under democratic slogans against a totalitarian régime that basis itself upon nationalized economy?

How do the actual forces in conflict pose this theoretical question? In its crudest form it *seems to be* the question of the relative weight of *nationalization of economy* against the relative weight of *political democracy*. This is becoming one of the touchstone questions of our times. Woe to the movement that chooses wrongly or seeks to ignore it.

The revolutionary socialists, of course, want BOTH, nationalization AND democracy. That is the socialist solution everywhere. In Russia the struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of the régime will begin as a struggle for political democracy as the instrument by which the rudder can again be placed in the hands of the masses. In the United States the struggle for nationalization of economy is the struggle for the indispensable framework for a democratic social, economic and political existence for the masses.

But the essence of politics is not merely what we *want*. A political line must proceed from the reality of the existing struggle. The main battle lines are not drawn up between a socialist proletarian movement and the Stalinist régime, nor between a socialist proletarian movement and a Mickolajczyk régime. The main battle lines find the Stalinist dictatorship confronted by a popular opposition movement headed by Mickolajczyk. Our problem is to create a Third Camp which will fight both against Stalinist totalitarianism and the bourgeois reaction inherent in the petty-bourgeois peasant movement. But the question is: where are the elements *today* out of which such a Third Camp can be constructed? Are they in the GPU-staffed, misnamed "Workers Party" and the GPU-staffed government unions? Or are they in the opposition elements grouped around Mickolajczyk? It is precisely in such a posing of the question that the difference between the French situation and the Polish situation comes to the fore. In France the decisive sections of the proletariat are in the Stalinist and social democratic camp. The power, however, remains in the hands of the capitalist class. The class interests of the Stalinist workers require that they engage in a class struggle with the bourgeoisie and aim toward a proletarian solution. The Marx-

ists seek to drive this struggle to its ultimate revolutionary conclusions as a means of breaking the workers from the Stalinist straightjacket, bound in France as elsewhere by the limits imposed by Russian needs. In France, therefore, the elements for a Third Camp are today in the Stalinist and Socialist parties. Without them there will be no socialist revolution in France.

In Poland the case is radically different. The bourgeoisie has, for all practical purposes, been expropriated. The workers do not engage in a class struggle in industry against a capitalist owner. Those workers who support the Stalinist régime do so under the illusion that socialism is being constructed or out of purely opportunist motives, like jobs or food rations. Those workers, on the other hand, who wage a class struggle today, do it precisely *against* the Stalinist overlords of government and industry. In order to wage that struggle effectively they must fight for the democratic rights of existence as a labor movement, the right to free speech, to organization, to a free press, to assembly, etc., all finding their final expression in the slogan, "Out with the Russians!" and "Long live a Free Poland!" These are rights for which the vast majority of the Polish population yearns today and which finds its distorted expression in the Mickolajczyk opposition. It is here that the revolutionary Marxists will find the decisive elements for the Third Camp, i.e., a revolutionary, proletarian, socialist opposition to the Stalinist dictatorship. The political line of the Marxists must, therefore, be one of critical support to the Mickolajczyk camp.

What is meant by "critical support"? It means first of all complete *political independence* from the Mickolajczyk movement. It means political criticism of that movement. It means independent proletarian organizations in the shops and proletarian methods of struggle, all aimed at wresting the leadership from Mickolajczyk and making the proletariat the leader of the broad people's movement against the Stalinist régime. The proletariat cannot remain on the side lines when two sections of the nation stand locked in deadly struggle.

If barricades arise between the two camps, on which side do the Marxists seek to rally the proletariat? In Poland today the civil war smoulders underground and we must take a position. Do Polish Marxists condone the GPU arrests of Peasant Party leaders as being the liquidation of capitalist restorationist elements? Or do they actively fight alongside of the Peasant Party leaders to defend them against GPU persecution? For the Marxists, the revolutionary Socialist struggle is the only decisive one in a historic sense. However, where they cannot determine the nature of the struggle, they must lead the proletariat, as an independent force, into that camp which represents the best possibility of socialist advancement.

Where Do We Stand?

The leadership of the Fourth International has been not so strangely quiet on the Polish events, as has the Socialist Workers Party in this country. Where do they stand on Poland today? Their International Thesis, adopted by the pre-conference of several months ago, took refuge in the disingenuous formula that they would support the "Red" Army "in so far as" it supported the revolutionary struggle and would oppose it "in so far as" it opposed the revolutionary struggle. Poland represents an occasion for the application of this "policy." What questions does this brilliant formula answer in Poland today? Which side are they on? They need not tell us that Mickolajczyk is a faker and a scoundrel, an agent of anglo-American imperialism, etc. We are aware of this. They need

not tell us that the Peasant party is not interested in socialism and that it has restorationist tendencies as far as the nationalized property is concerned. We are aware of this too. Please, tell us the nature of the state that rules in Poland today. Is it a degenerated workers state, already degenerate as it issued forth from the Russian womb? Or is Poland not a workers state despite the nationalized property because the proletariat never made a revolution *before* losing state power to a bureaucracy? Then is Poland ruled by a bourgeois state? Without a bourgeoisie? Or is there a bourgeoisie? Who composes it? The "fascist" guerrilla bands in the forest? But then it could not be their state, for the state shoots them whenever it can. Or does Mickolajczyk represent an expropriated bourgeoisie fighting a war of restoration against the workers' state? Please, Comrades, Experts on the Russian Question and Guardians of the Finished Program, does Poland stump you *that* badly?

Paris Peace Conference

The soft wings of the dove of peace seem to hover everywhere but over the Paris Conference of the twenty-one powers assembled to deal with, in some fashion or other, the problems of Europe. The witty but cynical cartoonists of the big bourgeois newspapers have found even their imagination taxed to describe the dove's embarrassment at its rigid exclusion from the atmosphere and agenda of the Luxembourg Palace gathering.

Describe the Conference as you will, there is universal agreement that it will add nothing to the general hopes for a stable peace and European unification. The Conference can only achieve the *de jure* result of approving the treaties drawn up by the Big Four, and the *de facto* result of reluctantly recognizing that (a) the Big Four dominate Europe and the world and (b) the boundaries they draw and the deals they make are to be, willy-nilly, the boundaries of the post-war world, while their double-dealing acts are to be the practical plane on which whole nations henceforth must exist.

In what terms are matters discussed, resolutions adopted and motions passed at this Conference? We hear mention only of the "Big Four" or the "Big Five"; the "Anglo-American bloc" or the "Soviet bloc"; the "dominions and colonies of the British Empire" or the "satellites of America and Russia"; deals, swapping and trading, wholesale transfers of territory and peoples without their consultation; reparations in the hundreds of millions; pitiful pleadings from the defeated beggar nations; disputes and denials; attack and counter-manuever.

Antagonism of Blocs

Although in session a bare few weeks at this writing, the Paris Conference has underscored two basic points needed for an understanding of current world politics. First, the emergence of Stalinist imperialism as a fearful force that has thrust itself deep into Southern, Northern and East Central Europe. Secondly, the fundamental world division existing today between the Russian bloc of master nation and satellites, and the American bloc of master nation and satellites.

In the orthodox Trotskyist press of the Fourth International (represented in America by the publications of the Socialist Workers Party), the fatal fiction is upheld that Russia is in constant retreat under the combined pressure of "Anglo-

American world imperialism," which is slowly but effectively fastening an encircling noose around Russia's neck. But even the blind can see the actual relation of forces as reflected in the written treaties and the aggressiveness of the Russian bloc at the Conference. In reality, Russia closes its domination over the Balkans, sets its imperialist standards on the north and central Adriatic, stymies any handling of the Austrian and German questions (until it is prepared to deal with them), encircles the shores and countries of the Baltic Sea and, not least of all, receives economic hegemony to impose its social pattern upon the nations it occupies. Stalin, while making full use of the "encirclement propaganda-ideas," assisted by the "orthodox" SWP, must find the sad tale of his retreats vastly amusing to his cynical humor. In truth, it is not the "degenerated workers' state" that is being encircled, but the blank minds of our orthodoxists, encircled by the strangling band of a theory that has become a reactionary fetish.

Despite the wide range of agreement between America and Russia, at the exclusive expense of the conquered nations, it goes without saying; despite the perfect collaboration of these two imperialist monsters when it is a question of blocking democratic procedure at the Conference, or stifling the voice of a small-nation group, it is apparent that the differences between these two countries is unbridgeable and leads inevitably to the Third World War.

The Conference now transpiring will continue and come to a practical conclusion. The treaties, filled with compromises and double-deals, will be concluded and imposed. Not a one of the great powers today is prepared for a sharp break and split with its antagonists. A temporary imperialist truce, with a territorial or bloc stabilization of Europe, will result. It is even conceivable that, with the end of the Conference, there will be a momentary settling down in Europe, with the great imperialist masters in charge of affairs attempting to consolidate, reconstruct, stabilize and organize the spheres allotted to them. The vanquished and small nations can but attempt to live any way they can in the grasp of the giants. An uneasy peace of decay and economic restlessness may settle over Europe.

Preparing a New War

But the Conference can never settle a single basic question. Germany and its future; Austria and the destiny of Central Europe; the problem of atomic warfare; the planned reconstruction of Europe and its ruined cities; even the question of how the work of the UNRRA shall be continued. The agenda of the Paris session of brigands does not include these topics.

How much shallow and lying propaganda passed out to a world at war for six long years has been stripped to skin and bones at Paris! Where are the defending and championing voices of our liberals anxious to tell us of the "brave new democratic world" that was to be born out of the hell of World War II? Where are the voices of official Stalindom, quick to justify Russian "socialist" participation in the war on the grounds that the "socialist fatherland" would lead the way to a people's peace? Where are the voices of our ex-Marxists, the fancy intellectuals of Partisan Review (these gentlemen are already busily laying the political groundwork for their support of approaching World War III), the scientific thinkers of the Social-Democratic New Leader? What do the Hooks, Eastmans, Rahus, etc., have to say about the PRACTICAL outcome of their PRACTICAL war to defeat Hitlerism?

Those of us who opposed the war, on political and ideological grounds, feel more than justified in our unhesitating opposition in watching the revolting spectacle at the gathering of hypocritical "democratic" capitalism, and brutal totalitarian collectivism. This was not, is not, and never will be our world.

Welcome SWP Minority

Since this is the first opportunity to do so, THE NEW INTERNATIONAL bids welcome to that significant number of the former Minority Group of the Socialist Workers Party who joined the Workers Party and participated in its fourth convention. This is an important event for it marks a new turn in the relations between the two organizations and a new stage in the struggle for those ideas held in common by the WP and its new members against the sterile sectarianism and bureaucratic concepts of the Cannon leadership of the SWP.

Readers of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL have more than a passing familiarity with the struggle that developed inside of the SWP between the bureaucratic leadership and the Minority. In the best of revolutionary traditions, the NI published many documents, letters and articles of the Minority, the SWP leadership, and the Workers Party on that struggle. Throughout the fight the warmest fraternal relations existed between the Minority and the WP and that, too, was in the best tradition.

The fight in the SWP, while it did not embrace all political questions in dispute, was a political struggle nevertheless. The fact that the major battle was fought around the so-called "organizational question" does not eliminate the above truth, unless one views a struggle over organizational questions narrowly, i.e., as an administrative conflict. The fight in the SWP was certainly not that kind of fight.

The Minority Group fought for the concept of the revolutionary party as a democratic party whose democracy should not and must not be violated by its centralism. It fought against the Zinoviev-Stalinist concept of a monolithic party. It fought against the corroding and stultifying bureaucratic atmosphere which pervades the whole SWP, a condition created and nurtured by the Cannon leadership of that party. In this respect, the Minority was continuing the struggle which the forces that now make up the Workers Party began in 1939-40.

But that was not all. There were political differences between the two factions (question of the defense of Russia, the national question in Europe, the rôle of democratic demands) though the struggle around them did not fully develop. One of the reasons why this was so is the enormous difficulty there is in trying to engage the Cannon clique in a normal political discussion and debate. One meets with evasion and the inevitable transformation of such political debates in organizational maneuvers.

But on one issue there was no turning. The Minority raised the question of unity with the Workers Party. It proceeded on the theory that the sharp, divergent political differences and groupings were compatible within the framework of a single party, provided there is agreement on a fundamental program (in this case the program of the Founding Conference of the Fourth International).

This view was similar to the views held by the Workers

Party. Thus, when the Minority publicly raised the question of unity the Workers Party did not wait until it was asked where it stood on this question. It immediately adopted a declaration in favor of unity and expressed its readiness to meet with representatives of the SWP for an immediate discussion of the problem.

These discussions were short lived for, together with the kind of struggle Cannon led against the Minority, they revealed that the ruling group of the SWP entered into "negotiations" as a maneuver; that it was against unity and would do everything within its power to prevent it.

We were presented with still another spectacle: before there could be serious, concrete discussion on unity, before there could even be any joint activities, the SWP demanded to know, six years after the formation of the Workers Party, where the WP stood on a whole series of political questions!

The trick was obvious: interminable discussions on that which was known by everyone and forestall endlessly the question of unity! The largest section of the Minority Group concluded correctly that the first stage of the struggle for unity and against the Cannon régime in the SWP, as in the Fourth International, had ended. There was little more to be gained inside the SWP, under the existing conditions, except to wage a continuous and endless brawl with a constantly shifting factional opponent. The first stage of the fight for unity had ended. It therefore determined that the continuation of this fight could best be carried out by uniting within the ranks of the Workers Party.

The Workers Party had demonstrated in practice that it is possible to build a revolutionary party based on the Leninist principle of democratic centralism without bureaucratic rule, without the outlawing of factions and ideas, and with the greatest freedom of thought necessary to the growth of such a party.

The members of the former Minority Group take their place in the ranks of the Workers Party as equals, with a continuity of membership, with the same rights as other members of the party to express and fight for their political views. But they will be working unitedly to build a party which is their own.

ANNOUNCEMENT . . .

The next issue of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL will carry a review of Leon Trotsky's last work, the biography, *Stalin*, by Max Shachtman, national chairman of the Workers Party.

ERRATUM

In *Literature and Morality*, an article by James T. Farrell, which appeared in the May issue of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, a minor error turned up which we desire to correct.

The name of Mark Jennings should have read, Stephen Elwin. The name for the daughter should have been Margaret, not Lucy, and the name of the mother and wife, should have read, Mrs. Lucy Elwin.

Leon Trotsky and the Workers Party

What Is the Great Heritage He Left?

August 21st marks the end of the sixth year that the world revolutionary Marxist movement has carried on without the guiding brain of Leon Trotsky.

His death at the hands of Stalin's axe-man left the world movement without a real titan at its head for the first time in its history.

The infancy and childhood of the movement was fortunate in having the intellectual leadership of one of the greatest minds of all time, Karl Marx. It was doubly fortunate in having in Marx's collaborator, Friedrich Engels, a genius in his own right, whose true stature always remained obscured in the public mind as a result of his modest subordination to the towering height of Marx. The period of the formation of the Second International under the sound, experienced guidance of Engels, his last great service to the working class, coincided with the rise of the Marxist movement in Russia. The latter was soon to replace the intellectually declining movement of Western Europe as the center of uncorrupted Marxist thought and as the source of a revolutionary socialist renaissance on a world scale. Vigorous young Russian Marxism produced two men to fill the international leadership left vacant after the death of Marx and Engels—Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

Though the personalities of Lenin and Trotsky were in considerable contrast and though their unique gifts excelled in different fields, they were both men of genius. It is most unfortunate that, due to their contrasting personalities and the sharp factional lines of the Russian underground movement, Lenin and Trotsky never formed a Marx-Engels relationship. The beginning of such a collaboration after the revolution never found a period of normal political life necessary for it to flower. Since their unique gifts excelled in somewhat different fields of thought and work, such a collaboration would have been especially fruitful.

Outside of Stalinism, which can no longer be considered a proletarian current in the ideological sense, all those who accept Lenin as the heir of Marx likewise accept Trotsky as the heir of Lenin. To rank Trotsky as the last of the four great titans of Marxism has become a commonplace.

In the mind of the public, Trotsky initially earned his place in history due to his role in the Russian Revolution and the Civil War. Though he was a co-thinker with Lenin in pioneering the establishment of the first workers' state, his special talents as the organizer and brains of the military struggle caused him to be regarded primarily as Lenin's brilliant chief of staff. His role as the latter obscured, not only in the eyes of the public but also within the early communist movement, his pre-

eminent place as a Marxist theoretician, already firmly established at that time, even if not widely accepted, by his central contribution to Marxist theory—the concept of the permanent revolution which he began to develop in 1904.

Trotsky's Fight to Preserve Marxism

Great as were his achievements before and during the revolutionary period, his true stature was revealed during the seventeen-year long fight he began in 1923 for the preservation of the Marxist program and the revolutionary cadres. To stand upright, the Marxist banner firmly held aloft, throughout the continuous decline, degeneration and defeats that became the hallmark of an epoch and to found a movement to carry on the revolutionary tradition was a role which only a man cast in the mould of a Marx, Engels or Lenin could fulfill. No one can understand the Trotsky heritage unless he understands the true nature of this epoch

and the place which Trotsky occupied in it. The survival of the Marxist program and those revolutionary cadres that exist today is so uniquely the result of his work that one shudders to speculate upon how much of the Marxist tradition would have survived had his life terminated with Lenin's. Trotsky's heritage can only be appreciated fully when one understands the period of 1923 to 1940.

The defeat of the working class in the post-war revolutionary wave ending in 1923 permitted capitalism to settle down to its own "stabilization." But the pre-war world of capitalism was gone for good. The 1870-1914 era of continued economic expansion, growth of political democracy, liberalism and pacifist internationalism, gave way to the bitter post-war disillusionment. The industrial graph of capitalism became a



fever chart. The ruddy glow of bourgeois democracy in the Weimar Republic and the re-created small national states proved to be, not a sign of health, but the last flush before death. Bourgeois democracy proved impossible amidst the economic decay of an out-lived social order. It gave way to the most vicious and unbridled reaction.

It could not be otherwise. Mankind lived in a social order that had really died in 1914. The stench of the corpse left nothing unaffected—but nothing. From economy to politics to culture to morals—everything suffered a breakdown. Society sank ever deeper into the filth which engulfed the lowlands and splashed up to the summits.

Political and Moral Decline of Workers' Movement

The great split of the organized working class into a reformist and revolutionary wing during the years of "sturm und drang" became ideologically meaningless as both wings kneeled in the mire. From pre-war critics of capitalism, the reformists now became its indispensable saviours. They struck down the revolution and grubbed along in the twilight of capitalism as its ministers, taking responsibility, governmental responsibility, until relieved of this task by fascism. No maneuver was too shoddy and no prostration before the capitalists too debasing. Where Luxemburg once wrote reams of indignant denunciation of South German provincial Social Democrats for making unprincipled blocs with liberals, "Socialist" police chiefs now forebade May Day marches and gave orders to fire upon demonstrators.

But the stolid stupidity of the reformist bureaucrats doing the dirty work of capitalism was soon "caught up with and outstripped" by the studied duplicity of the new Russian rulers. They made a science of seducing the finest motives, the holiest purposes, and the most consecrated watchwords of the Socialist tradition. In place of revolutionary idealism, the new masters enthroned the dictum that ultimate success was all that mattered. The Marxist explanation of the class basis of morals became for them the barbarous concept that nothing that "serves the Soviet fatherland" can be immoral. Murder, character assassination, torture, blackmail, informing and debasing "public confessions" became virtues in the service of the fatherland.*

Thrown off balance by the halt in the forward march of Socialism and depressed by the atmosphere of defeat, the politically conscious workers felt themselves on the defensive and sought to cling to that which was at hand. For the reformist workers this meant the struggle to defend bourgeois democracy as the repository of their post-war gains. Socialism became ever more a chimera and the defense of some "Weimar" or other ever more an urgent reality—particularly as each passing year saw additional hundreds of thousands of the embittered victims of capitalism pass over into the camp of fascism.

The goal of Socialism was everywhere replaced by the fatal trap of "anti-fascism." Its results were nowhere better illustrated than in Austria, where the hounded and retreating working class produced from its ranks that incomparable band of rank and file *Schutzbund* men. Poorly armed and poorly organized, they mounted the barricades with the deliberation of an army of the doomed. They offered themselves as a desperate, sacrificial rear-guard, not even to save an army in retreat, but to save the honor of their class.

*Just measure the depths to which Socialist morality sank when Lovestone's paper (*Workers Age*, organ of the Communist Party Right Opposition in the U. S.) found it possible to say that the Moscow trials were concocted of fantastic lies but objectively served progress and were, therefore, to be endorsed and defended. This was swallowed by hundreds of Lovestone's followers who saw in it no contradiction of their efforts on behalf of Socialism.

In the ranks of Communist workers, the place of "defense of democracy" was taken by "defense of the Soviet Union," until with the 1935 change in Russian foreign policy the two concepts became identical in Stalinist politics. As the prospects of revolution in their own country seemed to diminish, the existence of that "sixth of the earth" loomed as an ever more imposing reality. Soon they lived for nothing else. As the rise of Hitler made the threat to the "fatherland" all the more real, the old Communist cadres were more and more taken into the confidence of the party chieftains and taught, with a knowing wink, the grand strategy of "defending the land of Socialism" at the expense of their own native working class interests. The Communist ranks became ever less dupes and ever more "insiders" who were playing their little, but necessary, role in saving Russia.

"Socialism," "Class Struggle," "Class Solidarity," all the brave words with capital letters that once aroused and inspired the awakening pre-war generations, were now only pronounced for holiday effect on May Day. Workers considered it "old stuff" that gave forth a stale odor. Nor could it have other than a false ring when mouthed by "Socialist" ministers busy ministering to a sick capitalism. These concepts were replaced in the worker's thought with a growing skepticism, given vent by a shrug of the shoulders and a defeatist, "What else can one do?"

This decay of class feeling and militancy was an inevitable result of the decay that penetrated the entire social organism. No class, above all not one so basically rooted in the productive process as is the proletariat, can base its politics upon the status quo of a rotting society without beginning to rot politically itself. The proletariat could only save itself in a revolutionary struggle against the status quo.

Trotsky's Preservation of Marxism

But only a tiny segment of the working class understood this and was willing to wage such a fight. More accurately, it was not even a segment of the class but only an ideological grouping that consciously expressed the historic aims of the working class and identified itself with the most advanced program and revolutionary traditions of that class. This core of irreconcilables was all that was salvaged from the revolutionary years. They remained all but immune to the all-permeating decay of the times. *Their existence was the fruit of Trotsky's labors.*

Beginning his struggle in one of the chief centers of the gangrenous growth, in Moscow itself, Trotsky gathered about him men of integrity who turned flint-like faces against the stream. In the midst of the growing popularity of "being practical," Trotsky took his stand upon theory. As the mass of the party functionaries reconciled themselves after 1923 to a long period of Russian isolation in a capitalist world and embraced the new nationalist concept of "Socialism in One Country," Trotsky became the incarnation of uncompromising principles and preached permanent revolution and proletarian internationalism.

Though many, if not most, of his Russian collaborators were to break under the combined strain of physical suffering and the depressing effect of unchecked defeats, their example inspired similar handfuls in other countries to take their stand upon principle. Their struggle kept alive an indispensable tradition and trained an invaluable cadre. The Russians who grouped themselves under the banner of the Opposition hoped to strike off the spark for a new revolutionary flame in the Communist International. But it was in keeping with the char-

acter of the epoch that they succeeded only in striking off additional sparklets that glowed feebly in an engulfing darkness.

But these "sparklets" stood upon a firm ideological rock. Neither the pressure of popular opinion nor the violence of persecution could overwhelm them. History has few examples to compare with the twenty-year-long struggles of the Trotskyist movement to survive against the combined pressure of its enemies. Barely tolerated in the bourgeois democracies, persecuted in the fascist dictatorships and colonial empires and ruthlessly exterminated in Russia and wherever else Stalinism came to power, the movement survived solely by a deep conviction in its program. Executions in Russia, assassinations in France, Spain, Switzerland and Mexico, murder camps in Germany and imprisonment in practically every nation of the world could not kill the ideas the movement lived by. Less dramatic but just as present in the lives of members of the movement in those countries where it had legal status was the persecution of Trotskyists as uncompromising revolutionists by governmental agencies, employers and trade union officials. "Trotskyism" was a reason for not being given a WPA job in New York and "Trotskyism" was a reason for sharecroppers being evicted from government settlements in Missouri. In recompense there was neither a "one-sixth of the world" to look to nor a hold on a union apparatus nor even a "Socialist Milwaukee." The movement lived and survived on its program.

The Trotskyist movement has come through the epoch of the great defeats with least loss of principle, of honor and of integrity. But the movement withstood the siege at a terrible cost. For two decades it struggled in enforced isolation from the main stream of the working class. Trotsky's rôle, however, was not the cloistered refuge of intellectual detachment. Those who favored a cloistered existence were lost. Trotsky built a movement and saved Marxism as a banner in relentless struggle against the tide on every battlefield of the epoch: the struggle over the "New Course," the Anglo-Russian bloc, the Chinese Revolution, the Third Period insanity, the German events of 1930-33, the Spanish Revolution of 1930-31, the French events of 1936-38, the Spanish Civil War, the Moscow Trials, the defense of Bolshevik morality against Stalinist perversion and reformist detraction and the defense of international solidarity against the defeatist acceptance of imperialist war as the last barrier to world fascism.

Trotsky as Link Between Generations

It is still too soon to judge adequately how much we owe our intransigence and clarity to the titan who captained the fight. Without Trotsky it would have been all but impossible. He personified the link between the two epochs of Marxism. He lived the latter half of his political life so that the best of the old epoch might be preserved and transplanted to new cadres. The physical destruction of Trotsky was more than an insane emotion with Stalin. It served a cold-blooded, practical purpose. But it came too late to achieve its aim completely. Trotsky had not fought in vain. He left behind more than illuminating ideas set on paper. He left a living movement schooled in the "old" Marxism* and his examples in applying it to two decades of political life.

The movement which Trotsky founded maintained itself

*The Socialist editor who, in defending the victims of the Minneapolis frame-up, referred to Trotskyists indulgently as somewhat naive people who still believe in the *Communist Manifesto* as originally written hardly realized the historical significance of his statement. Yes, Trotskyists are the only people to whom the great document of Marx and Engels remained a living program.

intact as the revolutionary Marxist current. It would, however, be expecting the impossible of a movement to so insulate itself for nearly two decades as to remain *wholly* unaffected by the ideological disorientation and disintegration unloosed upon the workers' movement by the simultaneous decay of capitalism and of the first workers' state. Nor *did* the Trotskyist movement remain entirely immune. The virus of bureaucratic degeneration, to which the workers' movements fell victim since the end of the First World War, also found its way into the veins of the Trotskyist movement.

The movement could only survive the great defeats and retreats by a most vigilant struggle against every kind of adaptation to the drift of events, i.e., centrism. In doing this the movement drew heavily upon the theory and practice of Bolshevism in its most hard pressed days, the rigid underground life under Czarism and the military life of the party during the Civil War days of 1918-21. Much of what the Bolsheviks were forced to do out of the stern need to survive was idealized and presented as a model. Any practice or theory that found precedent before the Fifth Congress of the Comintern was considered firmly established by that fact alone. Political concepts and organizational practices were passed off in the ranks of the movement, not always without opposition, however, as being "genuine Bolshevism," which, when submitted to critical examination, were revealed to be semi-Stalinist or, more accurately, Zinovievist survivals.

The American Trotskyist movement was particularly beset by such survivals. The "leader cult," cliqueism, concepts of monolithism, a party political life zealously shielded from the eyes of "outsiders," a concept that theory would be supplied by Trotsky or that it was all solved by the "finished program," an American boorishness toward the sections abroad, a disregard for the lack of education of the membership in theory, an impatience with all innovators and critics, especially the youth, and, in general, that which can be best described as *bureaucratic conservatism*. Anyone familiar with the American Trotskyist movement recognizes these immediately as the features of the Cannon clique which dominated the movement until 1940 and today operates the Socialist Workers Party as its own private experiment in monolithism and bureaucratism.

Trotsky and the 1940 Split

The struggle against this virus in the Trotskyist movement came to a head in 1940 with the crystallization of an opposition, numbering some forty per cent of the SWP, that split to form the Workers Party. The issue which occasioned the struggle, and which, from the outset, was inter-related with the "organizational question," was the attitude of the party toward the slogan of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union." This opened to question the theory which history has proved to be Trotsky's greatest theoretical error—the theory that Russia is a degenerated workers' state because its economy is nationalized. We have submitted that theory to innumerable criticisms in these pages and cannot expand upon our views at this point. Trotsky's adherence to "unconditional defense" had the unfortunate effect of blinding him to what was really involved in the "organizational" dispute in the SWP. He took his stand with the majority out of political solidarity and relegated to secondary importance the minority's telling indictment of the majority's management of the party. Trotsky's rôle in the ensuing struggle stands in sorry contrast to any other chapter in his life. Worst of all was the fate that never permitted him to re-evaluate his rôle and undo,

his errors as it was possible in his earlier life, above all in undoing the false organizational policy he pursued before 1917. Still a prisoner of the closed circle logic of his position on the "Russian question" (Russia is a workers' state because the property is nationalized and the property remains nationalized because Russia is a workers' state), at the time the furious faction struggle broke out in 1939, he was not able to pursue the promising questions he raised in his article on *The USSR and the War*, written on the very eve of that struggle. Feeling it necessary for the movement to enter the trials of wartime existence with a firm program, he plumped hard for the existing position on the Russian question. Unfortunately, Stalin's assassin got in his deadly blow before Trotsky could live to see the outcome of his policy, both on the historic scale in terms of Russia's rôle in Europe and on the organizational scale in the speedy degeneration of the party leadership he had supported.

The Fourth International After Trotsky

In the period since Trotsky's death, parties of the Fourth International, above all the Socialist Workers Party, which poses as its theoretical guide, have presented a sorry spectacle as defenders of Trotsky's ideas. Utterly incapable of any independent thought, either in theory or politics, they have compounded a record of sectarian sterility relieved only by admixtures of opportunism—mostly sectarianism in Europe and opportunism in the United States. The judgment that the present leadership of the Fourth International is composed of political bankrupts is a harsh one, but the record does not permit a milder verdict.

Above all do they reveal their bankruptcy in dealing with the Russian question. Here Trotsky's theory of the degenerated workers' state has proved to be a veritable straightjacket. The blame can no longer rest on Trotsky, not even a share of it. The six years since his death have been so filled with evidence as to the untenability of the theory that its defenders can no longer adhere to it out of the stupidity of inertia but require an active, agile participation in mental gymnastics to bridge the daily widening chasm between fact and theory.

The inability of the present "official" Trotskyist leadership to break from the strangling embrace of "workers' statism" is partly explained by their lack of self-confidence in matters of theory, an understandable attitude in view of their record. They prefer to "cling," as they always put it, to the position of Trotsky. The result is that it is precisely on the question where Trotsky committed his greatest error that they follow him with the faithful zeal of idolators and epigones. They hash and rehash his writings, squeeze dry his unfinished manuscripts and submit his notes to chemical analysis in a vain attempt to shed new light upon this most perplexing question. However, they flee in terror from the thought that they may be required to undertake a revision of Trotsky's views.

However, the lack of theoretical competence of these people is only a partial explanation. The rest of the explanation is found in the fact that it was no mere coincidence that the same people who rigidly adhere to "unconditional defensism" are also the defenders of monolithism, bureaucratic practices and other Zinovievist concepts of the rôle of the party. How could people have any other view of party who can write the following about Russia:

Factories, mills, mines, railroads, workshops belong to those who work them. The soil belongs to those who till it. A man who will not defend such treasures is either a coward or a traitor; a

man who fights to the death for them is more than a hero—he is a socialist worker. (George Clarke, *The Militant*, Sept. 12, 1942.)

To continue to see any kind of a workers' state in Russia today is to make a breach with the very concept of socialism as described in the *Communist Manifesto* and Lenin's *State and Revolution*. It means to give up proletarian socialism for a form of *bureaucratic* socialism. The ultimate logic of this position is revealed by those French theoreticians who see in Stalin's conquest and nationalization of Eastern Europe the bureaucratic *socialist* revolution. They express regret that socialism must come in this manner, but that it is socialism they do not doubt. They bolster their views by a historical analogy to Napoleon's armies spreading the bourgeois revolution over Europe. At this point the break with revolutionary Marxism increases. Can people whose views of socialism tend in this direction be expected to remain unaffected in their views of the nature of the revolutionary party?

We do not for a moment seek to minimize the importance of Trotsky's views on the Russian question in his system of ideas as a whole. But we most decisively reject the notion of the epigones that "workers' statism" is the essence of Trotskyism. The essence of Trotskyism is represented by his theory of the permanent revolution and his seventeen-year-long fight on its behalf against all forms of reformism, centrism, anarchism and Stalinism. The essence of Trotskyism is Trotsky's *method* of political thought as demonstrated in his writings on China, on England, on Germany (1923 and 1930-33), on France (1934-36), on Spain (1930-31 and 1936-38), on imperialist war, on fascism, on the American scene, on the transitional program, on the colonial question, etc. These sum up the application of the theory of the permanent revolution in the form of *Marxist politics*. In this sense the only efforts to use Trotsky's *methods* (not merely his quotations) in dealing with new political situations today are those of the Workers Party. Its six-year-long record of dealing with the political questions arising from World War II represent the continuation of the heritage of Trotsky in the field of Marxist politics. We lay no claim to Trotsky's mantle. That already firmly rests on the shoulders of such theoretical giants of the "official" leadership as E. R. Frank, Joseph Hansen and Pierre Frank. The essence of Trotskyism, its real heritage, is to be found only in our party.

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The Heroic Period of the Comintern

Trotsky and Revolutionary Strategy

The rich and noble history of the Communist International, formed in a period of tremendous class struggles, has yet to be written. Trotsky has contributed a considerable amount of material toward that history and a portion of it is now available in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*.^{*} Since the formation of the Comintern in 1919, a new generation of revolutionaries has grown up. It knows little about the travail which attended its birth, the heroic period of its early growth, the tremendous figures,—martyrs all—of the world revolutionary movement who directed its destinies, the body of Marxian theory which it developed, and the enormous contribution to strategy and tactics of revolutionary struggle which it gave as a legacy to the movement of today.

The Stalinist era is better known, being still with us. The crippling blows of its revisionism and then outright counter-revolutionary practices are felt with particular severity today in a period of the deepest depression the world revolutionary movement has ever known.

Since the failure of the German revolution of 1923, the proletariat has experienced little else but uninterrupted defeats, the rise of fascism and, finally, the chaos, destruction and mass misery of the Second World War. Some have learned to associate crafty politics, opportunism, bureaucracy, ruthlessness, deception, assassination and counter-revolution with the whole history of the Communist International, unaware that the pre-Stalinist era of the Comintern contains within it the lessons for the future emancipation of the proletariat.

The material in Trotsky's book has an extraordinary value for us in the present historical period. We have just lived through a second imperialist war and are in the midst of a post-war period of capitalist decay on a world scale. The re-emergence of imperialist rivalries occur even before the dead of this war have all been buried. Disequilibrium remains the basic characteristic of present-day economic, social and political life. Thus, all the objective conditions for the revolutionary overthrow of world capitalism are overripe.

Two Post-War Periods

The war, as could have been foreseen, was unable to solve any of the problems of imperialism. In this respect, then, the post-war conditions of 1945-46 are approximately identical to the post-war conditions of 1918-19. This similarity in the objective condition of world capitalism between the two post-war periods is, however, of no fundamental importance. *It is the dissimilarity in the subjective conditions, between the two periods, namely, the state of the world revolutionary movement, which is of quintessential importance.* And on these grounds it is necessary to say the proletariat of the present period, in contrast to 1918-19, finds itself in an unfavorable position. In 1918-19 there was a revolutionary movement on the Continent. The Russian proletariat had taken power. Shortlived Soviet republics existed in Bavaria and Hungary. The first German revolution had begun and the Italian workers were preparing to seize the factories. In all other countries the revolutionary movement was growing swiftly.

^{*}The First Five Years of the Communist International, by Leon Trotsky. Pioneer Publishers. 320 pp.

The formation of the Communist International, as the guide and spirit of the world-wide upsurge of the revolutionary movement was itself a factor of inestimable value for giving the elemental movement organization and direction. But even then, as we shall see, the weaknesses of the revolutionary party, i. e., of revolutionary leadership, or the absence of such leadership, resulted in the defeat of the proletariat of Europe and the isolation of the Russian Revolution!

To begin with the subjective factor first because in "the epoch of wars and revolutions" it is the *decisive* factor, one must acknowledge that it does not exist today in any formidable shape or form. Certainly it does not exist in any comparable degree to the movement of 25 years ago. Except for the tiny organizations of the Fourth Internationalist movement, there is nothing on the Continent which resembles the mass revolutionary parties of the first post-war period. Moreover, there is no continuity of leadership or organization. Add to this, the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the reactionary influence of Stalinism and you have the explanation for the absence of great class battles in Europe, where the decay of capitalism is far deeper than it has ever been before. We shall seek the explanation for this a little further on. But first, to return to the formation of the Communist International.

War and the International

The Communist International was not an insidious product of the Russian Bolsheviks, as the bourgeois and social democratic critics of the International maintained. The victory of the Russian Revolution coming on the heels of the collapse of the Second International in the war, made it inevitable that the re-emergence of a new world organization of the proletariat would take place in revolutionary Moscow. How else could it have happened? The Second International was rent by social chauvinism. The leading parties which dominated the International and controlled its policies were at war with each other, having joined their respective ruling classes in the imperialist conflict. The official organizations of the working class, parties, trade unions, fraternal societies and cooperatives, under the leadership of traitors, merged with the state apparatus of the warring powers and were drenched in the flood-waters of imperialist nationalism. What an inglorious chapter in the history of proletarian struggle! *The "socialists" at war with each other! Over what? The imperialist interests of their respective ruling classes! No wonder the bourgeoisie snickered and marveled at its own imagined power.*

The collapse of the International made inevitable the formation of a new world body. After the fateful day of August 4, 1914, new organizations, groups, and factions of revolutionary internationalists made themselves heard all over Europe. Under the leadership of the Russian Bolsheviks and the brave revolutionists of the other Continental countries, a new voice was heard in the din of the war: the voice of revolutionary socialist internationalism. Zimmerwald and Kienthal were the first organized expression of the revival of internationalism in the workers movement in the midst of the war. The Russian Revolution then occurred as the

mightiest force for the reconstitution of the new, Third International. The victory of the Russian working class was like a fresh breeze on a Europe befouled by imperialism and the treacherous social democratic leadership.

Given these conditions it was logical that the International be reconstituted on the soil of revolutionary Russia which heralded the new society, the new fraternity of the exploited. With the convening of the founding congress in Moscow on March 2, 1919, the continuity and integrity of the revolutionary socialist thought and practice was saved. Its formation marked a new stage and task for the modern proletariat.

Role of the Internationals

The First International "laid the foundation of the international struggle of the proletariat for Socialism." It disseminated the scientific principles of socialism developed by Marx and Engels and destroyed for all time the power and influence of utopianism, "true" socialism and anarcho-communism, and gave the coming movement of the proletariat its scientific basis. The First International of Marx and Engels disappeared with the defeat of the Paris Commune and the beginning of a new epoch in the expansion of world capitalism. But it had sown the seed of the future.

In assessing the role of the Second International, one must not lose sight of the fact that it too had a grand history. There was the International of Engels, the elder Liebknecht and of Bebel, just as there was the International of MacDonald, Bernstein, Scheidemann, and Hillquit. Before its collapse in the Great War, the Second International had been a preparatory school of working class organization. And Lenin, in an historical appraisal of this body, once wrote:

When it is stated that the Second International is dead and has suffered shameful bankruptcy, it needs to be properly understood. It signifies death and bankruptcy of opportunism, reformism, petty bourgeois socialism. For the Second International has to its credit a service ELS A'EI (for all time) which no intelligent working man will ever repudiate, and that is—the building up of mass labor organizations, co-operative, trade union and political; the utilization of bourgeois parliamentarism, and generally all bourgeois democratic institutions, etc."

The Communist International took over all that was good in the previous history of the Second International, but it gave the new movement a rekindled spirit of internationalism, the lack of which caused the old organization to founder. The historic place of the Communist International is thus secured by the fact that it became the International of proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, the "International of the deed."

Trotsky's book is a summation of this heroic period of the Communist International. It presents one of the most stirring stories of an era of intense class struggle and presents a panorama of revolutionary strategy, purposeful in design, by the most complete revolutionary internationalists the world has ever known. Trotsky contributed an enormous amount of this history himself. The vibrant call of the manifesto of the first congress was his. He wrote the manifesto of the second congress. The main report at the third congress and the theses of that gathering, perhaps the most important in the history of the Comintern, were also his. Between these great documents, there are speeches and articles outlining the strategy of the Comintern which remain living documents to this very day and are invaluable source material to revolutionary Marxist thought.

II.

This volume of Trotsky's book can be readily divided into two distinct periods: the First and Second Congresses, and the Third Congress. The first two gatherings occur in the post-war revolutionary period; the third in the period following the defeat of the European proletariat in its initial struggles for power. Unavoidably, then, the material which composed the deliberation of these congresses dealt with the problems which arose in the transition from the stage of proletarian offensive to defensive; from the stage of capitalist decomposition to one of relative stabilization.

The First Congress of the Communist International was held in Moscow on March 2, 1919. It was attended by 51 delegates from 17 countries. The Allied blockade of Russia prevented wider representation. Delegates sent by their respective organizations never arrived in Moscow, but representatives of the most important areas of Europe were present.

As the organizing congress of the Communist International, the first meeting had a provisional character. Yet it was to clear away the ideological debris of social democracy and its traditions and set the theoretical sights of the new world party. Convening in the midst of the social decay of capitalism and proletarian struggle for state power, the congress naturally reflected the intense revolutionary situation in Europe. If one bears in mind the confusion created by the betrayals of the Second International, it will be easier to understand why the Congress dealt with the following subjects: Bourgeois Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship; the Berne Conference and our Attitude Toward Socialist Tendencies; the World Situation and the Policy of the Entente, and the Manifesto.

Manifesto of the First Congress

The manifesto which Trotsky wrote and presented to the congress clearly delineates the purposes of the new international and the period in which it emerged: Capitalist chaos and disintegration! Mass unrest and a will to struggle on the part of the working masses. Toward the revolutionary seizure of Power! No wonder the manifesto is a stirring call to action:

"Our task is to generalize the revolutionary experience of the working class, to purge the movement of the corroding admixture of opportunism and social patriotism, to unify the efforts of all genuinely revolutionary parties of the world proletariat and thereby facilitate and hasten the victory of the Communist revolution throughout the world."

And it concludes with this ringing challenge:

"Bourgeois world order has been sufficiently lashed by Socialist criticism. The task of the International Communist Party consists in overthrowing this order and erecting in its place the edifice of the socialist order. We summon the working men and women of all countries to unite under the Communist banner which is already the banner of the first great victories.

"WORKERS OF THE WORLD—in the struggle against imperialist barbarism, against monarchy, against the privileged estates, against the bourgeois state and bourgeois property, against all kinds and forms of class or national oppression—UNITE!

"Under the banner of Workers' Soviets, under the banner of revolutionary struggle for power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, under the banner of the Third International—WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!"

The manifesto of 1919 became a rallying force for the new world organization of the revolutionary proletariat. Eighteen

months later the Second Congress convened. This intervening period was the most revolutionary in the history of Europe. Throughout the continent the Communist International established new sections. Its growth was phenomenal and reflected the turbulent character of the class war that girdled the globe. Thus, the Second Congress concerned itself chiefly with the struggle for power as an immediate prospect.

Theoretical Clarity and Political Struggle

Clarification of principle became indispensable for the future development of the new movement; a world party engaged in the struggle for power in the name of the only progressive class in society.

As in all periods of revolutionary upswing, the movement attracted dubious elements of every description, organized in their own parties, factions or groups, or unattached. These hybrid elements brought with them an assortment of theoretical and political ideas which ran the gamut from sectarianism to opportunism. The excursion train was a long one and tended to slow the progress of the revolutionary engine at its head. The congress therefore had to return to basic principles: the role of a revolutionary party, shall revolutionaries participate in parliamentary activity?; shall Communists work in reactionary trade unions? On all these questions, the congress rejected the sterile doctrines of sectarianism which could only lead to isolation from the masses. It then adopted conditions for admission into the Communist International, the basic premise of which was the acceptance of the revolutionary doctrines of Marxism.

The continuation of the intensive revolutionary offensive was also reflected in the manifesto of the Second Congress which Trotsky wrote, too. So sure of the future were the leaders of the International, that the manifesto, issued again as a call to action, proclaimed:

"Civil war is on the order of the day throughout the world. Its banner is the Soviet Power. . . . In different countries the struggle is passing through different stages. But it is the final struggle."

How nearly true these stirring words were, we can only appreciate in retrospect. The failure of the victory, however, was revealed as a failure of leadership! Only a few years afterward, Trotsky was able to write:

"War did not lead directly to the victory of the proletariat in Western Europe. It is all too obvious today just what was lacking for victory in 1919 and 1920: a revolutionary party was lacking."

This statement by Trotsky is in apparent contradiction to the reality, the existence of the Communist International. Yet, actually, its formation was belated. Had the Communist International been formed *during* the war, it is likely that the parties which adhered to it would have passed through their formative, preparatory stages in time. Instead, the First and Second Congresses met in the course of the revolutionary wave and had to carry through the task of clarification and education during the battles itself. Thus, the struggle for power was pursued in the midst of a process of clarification and education in which the advance guard of the proletariat had to discard the ideological trash of social democracy and to learn, for the first time, the theory and practice of revolutionary Marxism, of revolutionary strategy and tactics. Before this process of rearming was nearly completed, the revolutionary wave had passed.

In his *Third International After Lenin*, Trotsky wrote of this period between the second and third congresses, relating

specifically to the lack of maturity of the communist parties:

"When we looked forward at that time to an immediate seizure of power by the proletariat, we reckoned that a revolutionary party would mature rapidly in the fire of the civil war. But the two terms did not coincide. The revolutionary wave of the post-war period ebbed before the communist parties grew up and reached maturity in the struggle with the social democracy so as to assume the leadership of the insurrection."

(Henceforth, in at least four other significantly revolutionary situations, especially in Germany in 1923, the defeats of the proletariat were attributable to a new failure in leadership resulting this time from the degeneration of the Communist International under the aegis of Stalinist revisionism.)

Foundation of Internationalism

But before the Third Congress had convened, the leaders of the Comintern had sufficiently clarified theoretical questions and, above all, established the *international* character of the movement as its primary manifestation. Reflecting the international character of capitalism (the interdependence of nations, the primacy of the world market, the world division of labor and exchange of goods), the Comintern was not a "sum" of national parties each devoted to their national tasks. "It is," as Trotsky wrote, "*the Communist Party of the international proletariat.*" As such it "*represents a unified, independent, international organization, pursuing definite and precisely formulated aims through definitive revolutionary means.*"

Corresponding to the imperialist epoch, the proletarian struggle was essentially "international in substance but national in form." No party can estimate the objective situation in its country, or develop strategy and tactics for its working class, without giving first consideration to the international situation and the condition of the world movement of the proletariat. For a party to do otherwise would result in its degeneration after the manner of the Second International.

These ideas hammered home, the CI arrived at its very important Third Congress. The revolutionary wave, as we have already indicated, had subsided. The proletariat, worn out from years of war and revolutionary struggle, exhibited marked tendencies of fatigue and disillusionment at the failure of their revolutionary parties. The failure of the revolution gave capitalism a new breathing spell and the opportunity to reestablish a measure of economic equilibrium.

A Turn in Strategy

The Third Congress which met mid-year of 1921, was attended by more than 500 delegates from 48 countries. The most important subject before the congress was the report made by Trotsky (in complete agreement with Lenin) on the World Economic Crisis and the New Tasks of the Communist International. The main content of this report and the resolution which formed its basis is already indicated. In summary, Trotsky's report showed the delegates the dialectical relationship between an objectively revolutionary situation and the problem of leadership, the subjective element. He illustrated, by example, how the failure of the revolution gave world capitalism the opportunity for reorganizing the chaotic economy and reestablishing a measure of stabilization. Given the failure of the revolutionary parties, the exhaustion of the proletariat, Trotsky was able to pose for the first time since the end of the war this type of question:

"Does development actually proceed even now in the direc-

tion of revolution? Or is it necessary to recognize that capitalism has succeeded in coping with the difficulties arising from the war? And if it has not already restored, is it either restoring or close to restoring capitalist equilibrium upon new post-war foundations?"

The report already indicated the answer in its opening remarks in which Trotsky said:

"Capitalist equilibrium is an extremely complex phenomenon. Capitalism produces this equilibrium, disrupts it, restores it anew in order to disrupt it anew, concurrently extending the limits of its domination. . . . Capitalism thus possesses a dynamic equilibrium, one which is always in the process of either disruption or restoration. But at the same time this equilibrium has a great power of resistance, the best proof of which is the fact that the capitalist world has not toppled to this day."

There follows a mass of evidence indicating how capitalism was gaining strength and confidence, repairing its tottering economy, plugging gaps here and there and reaching the road toward a stabilization of the system. *"The bourgeoisie gains appeasement"* said Trotsky. But with this difference: whereas in the period of capitalist growth and expansion, crises were of brief duration and "prosperity" longer lasting, in this period of capitalist decay and decline, the *"crises are of a prolonged character while the booms are fleeting, superficial and speculative."* Thus the prospects of economic crises and sharp dislocations are ever present. Then Trotsky made clear that even boom and stabilization did not automatically preclude the prospects of great class struggle. On the contrary, a favorable economic conjuncture can *"reassemble the demoralized and devitalized workers who had lost their courage."* And then he added, *"Such a change (stabilization) could prove harmful only in the event of a long epoch of prosperity."* Denying this prospect, Trotsky contends that the future will offer favorable opportunities for victory. And it did.

The "Uninterrupted Revolution"

The emphasis given to this problem by Trotsky was made necessary by the presence at the congress of an ultra-leftist faction led by Bucharin whose major premise was his own version of the "permanent revolution": "Since capitalism had exhausted itself, therefore the victory must be gained through an uninterrupted revolutionary offensive."

It was against this pernicious theory of the "uninterrupted revolutionary offensive" that the big guns of the conference were turned. The report declared that the great task, in view of the changing world situation, was to win the support of the majority of the working class everywhere. "To the Masses," became the slogan of the Congress. But not simply that. "To power through a previous conquest of the masses!" The emphasis laid on this point was to defeat all ultra-leftist and sectarian ideas which arose in the congress. The ultra-leftists proceeded on a single note: *this is the period of the decay of capitalism. All the objective conditions for the overthrow of capitalism are ripe. Therefore we must adopt the policy of "continuous revolution."* And in this way they overlooked the dynamics of the revolutionary struggle and the fact that "the revolution has its own fluctuations, its own crises and its own favorable conjunctures."

The Third Congress, however, met at the end of one wave of revolution. It was necessary to reorient the International to a new stage of the struggle. This stage Trotsky summarized in the *Third International After Lenin* as follows:

"The Third Congress of the Comintern was a milestone

demarcating the first and second periods. It set down the fact that the resources of the communist parties, politically as well as organizationally, were not sufficient for the conquest of power. It advanced the slogan: 'To the Masses,' that is, to the conquest of power through a *previous conquest of the masses*, achieved on the basis of the daily life and struggles. For the mass also continues to live its daily life in a revolutionary epoch, even if in a somewhat different manner."

And out of this congress came the tactic of the united front to serve as a means of developing the class struggle and achieving leadership of the masses. How? Through the united front tactic, to fuse the masses "on the basis of transitional demands!"

"It is economics that decides," wrote Trotsky, *"but only in the last analysis."* In other words, it is not merely the decay of capitalism, the "objectively revolutionary situation" which is decisive, but the state of the revolutionary movement, the maturity of the parties, their leadership over the masses, the will to struggle on the part of the proletariat and their confidence in the revolutionary party. And the absence of these conditions, given the defeat of the post-war revolutionary movements, brought about a new political stage in Europe and the decisions of the Third Congress.

III.

Capitalism saved itself, but it was a wounded giant. The healing process left it alive but it was not the youthful, strong, expanding capitalism. The fact was, as Trotsky reported at the Third Congress, that *"Europe has been hurled back. . . . The Balkan countries are completely ruined and have been thrown back into the economic and cultural conditions of barbarism."* He speaks of a *"regression in economic life."* However, all is not lost for the bourgeoisie so long as the proletariat does not take power.

In 1921, still living under the influence of the post-war revolutionary situation, Trotsky did not believe that capitalism could survive another decade or two. But he did postulate the future, saying:

"If we grant—and let us grant it for the moment—that the working class fails to rise in revolutionary struggle, but allows the bourgeoisie the opportunity to rule the world's destiny for a long number of years, say, two or three decades, then assuredly some sort of new equilibrium will be reestablished. Europe will be thrown violently into reverse gear. Millions of European workers will die from unemployment and malnutrition. The United States will be compelled to reorient itself on the world market, reconvert its industry, and suffer curtailment for a considerable period. Afterwards, after a new world division of labor is thus established in agony for 15 or 20 or 25 years, a new epoch of capitalist upswing might perhaps ensue." (Emphasis in original—AG.)

How prophetic Trotsky was! A new upswing has not occurred and will likely never occur. But a new period of stabilization did arrive. The United States did orient itself on the world market and did "suffer curtailment for a considerable period." This whole course of development continued approximately until the outbreak of the Second World War. For a second time within living memory the imperialist powers went to war to seek a new redivision of the earth.

But whereas in 1914 it was possible to depict the great revolutionary upheavals during and after the war, one could not justifiably make such predictions for the recent war and post-war period. And this was due, not to the absence of favorable objective conditions. This period of capitalism remains

a period of "wars and revolutions," of capitalist decline and disintegration. This past war was far more destructive than the first, far more dislocating in its effects. If Trotsky declared that Europe was "hurled back" after the First World War, what would he have said today! If the Balkan countries lived under "economic and cultural conditions of barbarism" in the '20's, what can one say of Europe today, Europe of the concentration camps, labor camps, forced migrations of peoples; Europe, the economic wasteland. These, then, are the fruits of modern capitalism.

The Meaning of the Struggle for Power

Why did not the proletariat revolt and take power after World War II? Why no class battles, no revolutionary offensive comparable to 1919 and 1920? The answer is simple: no revolutionary organization of the working class; no revolutionary parties.

Revolutionary Marxists cannot approach this question sentimentally or emotionally. One must apply the power of Marxist analysis to the world situation in order to understand precisely the conditions under which we live, what the prospects of the class struggle are, and how the revolutionary socialists must orient themselves.

Delusion is the greatest danger to the movement today! The delusion lies in the failure to recognize that all talk of an immediate successful overthrow of capitalism in this period is criminally disorienting given the absence of the revolutionary organization of the proletariat, the absence of mass revolutionary parties, the absence of experienced cadres, i.e., leadership, and the absence of a revolutionary international with authority and the following of the majority of the working class of Europe.

Yet it is upon such leadership and proletarian organization that the whole future depends. If one does not recognize this task, then the reconstruction of the movement is an impossibility!

Can a small party (not of hundreds, but of thousands) achieve the strategic goal? Perhaps. Says Trotsky: "And therefore if it is true—and it is true—that *under certain conditions* even a small party can become the leading organization not only of the labor movement but also of the workers' revolution, this can happen only with the proviso that this small party discerns in its smallness not an *advantage* but the greatest *misfortune* of which it must be rid as speedily as possible." (Emphasis mine—AG.)

This was said against those who developed putschist concepts and the idea that the revolution is the task of a small minority party whose *will* is decisive, no matter what the objective conditions and the state of proletarian organization.

"A purely mechanical conception, of the proletarian revolution," said Trotsky, "which proceeds solely from the fact that capitalist economy continues to decay—has led certain groups of comrades to construe theories which are false to the core: the false theory of an initiating minority which by its heroism shatters 'the wall of universal passivity' among the proletariat. The false theory of uninterrupted offensives conducted by the proletarian vanguard, as a 'new method' of struggle; the false theory of partial battles which are waged by applying the methods of armed insurrection. . . . It is absolutely self-evident that tactical theories of this sort have nothing in common with Marxism. . . . The economic preconditions for the victory of the working class are at hand. Failing this victory, and moreover unless this victory comes in the more or less near future, all civilization is menaced with decline and

degeneration. But this victory can be gained only by the skilled conduct of battles and, above all, by first conquering the majority of the working class. This is the main lesson of the Third Congress."

The Effect of Prolonged Defeats

We continue to live in the epoch of "wars and revolutions." But that does not wholly describe our epoch. It is also the epoch of Stalinist counter-revolution which has burst forth from the failure of the European revolution and the persistent decay of imperialist capitalism. The past twenty years have been years in which the proletariat of Europe and the colonial peoples of Asia have suffered uninterrupted defeats. These defeats have taken a heavy toll, but heaviest has been the destruction of the revolutionary world organization of the proletariat. Nor is there an end of "favorable prospects," of "revolutionary objective situations." There is much evidence of the deep dissatisfaction of the masses throughout Europe and the colonial world. There have been many struggles already in Italy, France, Belgium, etc., many more will follow. These struggles have the potentiality of great class battles for power. But all of them pass by so long as the instrument to take advantage of these "favorable objective conditions," i.e., the revolutionary party, synthesized in the revolutionary international, does not exist. It is true, *compared to the great movement of the Second International*, the revolutionaries during the last war were small in number. But the recuperative powers of the then undefeated working class were yet great. There was in existence a Bolshevik Party. The Russian proletariat had taken power and the working class thereby had a fortress embracing "one-sixth of the earth." Parties were formed in the heat of the battle. The hope of the Russian Revolution was an international unifying force.

How does the present post-war situation, from this point of view, compare to that period? Unfavorably. The only revolutionary socialist force in the world is represented by the Fourth Internationalist movement, small in number and isolated from the masses. It is necessary to recognize this fact, for it is impossible to change this situation, to grow, to become a mass movement by self-deception. If you already believe that you are a mass movement, that you are a force to contend with, and that power is . . . well, almost yours, then it is impossible for you to do what is indispensably necessary to insure the future: rebuild the world revolutionary socialist movement, rebuild the revolutionary parties in all countries. Without this, the immediate future lies in the hands of capitalist reaction and Stalinism.

The world revolutionary socialist movement suffers from a crisis in leadership and organization. That is the outstanding feature of this post-war period. It is necessary to repeat this over and over again since the special and fundamental reason for the primacy of this factor lies precisely in the character of our epoch. Again, in the *Third International After Lenin*, Trotsky summarized the problem from the following viewpoint:

"The role of the subjective factor in a period of slow, organic development (of capitalism) can remain quite a subordinate one. Then diverse proverbs of gradualism arise as: 'slow but sure,' and 'one must not kick against the bricks,' and so forth, which epitomize all the tactical wisdom of an organic epoch that abhorred 'leaping over stages.' But as soon as the objective prerequisites have matured, the key to the whole historical process passes into the hands of the subjective factor, that is the party. Opportunism which consciously or uncon-

sciously thrives upon the inspiration of the past epoch, always tends to underestimate the role of the subjective factor, that is, the importance of the party and of revolutionary leadership."

However, can the present situation be changed? Can it change quickly? Yes. This social order has known many swift transformations. But that depends on how the Fourth Internationalists recognize the problem and judge the tasks ahead. Trotsky's book is a guide to this epoch, a textbook in strategy and tactics. To absorb its teachings is the first guarantee of success. Unfortunately, the official Fourth Internationalist movement has not yet understood the monumental ideas which Trotsky, in common with the other deceased giants of the Comintern, had developed. It talks of power without a party, of the revolutionary offensive without a movement. It pretends to be what it is not: the leader of the European and American proletariat. It takes for granted what is yet to be accomplished. And all of this is done in the name of Trotsky!

It is impossible to close this review of one of the greatest books in Marxian literature without a comment on its editors. That the publication of the book is an invaluable contribution to the movement, goes without saying. The explanatory notes, however, are sloppily done and unscholarly. They give all the evidence of slipshod work and petty factional bias, lacking in objectivity.

But even worse than this is the introduction to the book. Nature and God were unkind to Joseph Hansen. They enabled

him to write and what flows from his pen is indeed a commentary on the intellectual sterility of the theoreticians of the SWP. The introduction has no relation to the ideas in the book. Banalities and assertions replace reality. Sectarian bragadocco substitute for the living movement. Thus, the introduction reaches its high point (or low, depending on your point of view) when Hansen asserts:

"... the organizations of the Fourth International... find the world working class far more receptive to the program of Bolshevism than was the case in 1917-19."

Were this only true! But one blinks his eyes upon reading such undiluted bureaucratic smugness which proclaims achieved that which is yet to be achieved, which counts as completed that which has to be done. Is it any wonder that the forces of the Fourth International make such slow progress? That despite the heroic activities of the European sections, they have failed to grow more rapidly. One of the reasons for this failure is that the concepts and practices of the SWP have exercised too great an influence upon these European sections. These sections have not absorbed the great teachings of Trotsky, the theoretician of revolutionary strategy and tactics of our era. They too are saturated with a sectarianism which casts a shadow over what is the main strategic task of our period: the building of the revolutionary socialist party.

ALBERT GATES.

Reviewing "The New Course"

A Critical Re-Evaluation

A political book is an act. If, like Trotsky's *The New Course*,* it appears at a critical juncture of an historical struggle, it must primarily be understood by an attempted placement of oneself in the context in which it was written. In this sense, understanding is a process that moves backwards in time. But it is not the only possible sense in which such a book can be approached. Understanding can also be a projection out of the specific historical context; it can be a movement forwards in time, away from the context of the book's creation and towards whatever relevance it has for new situations different from the original context.

I begin in this way because I wish in this article to use both methods and because the two methods will yield slightly variant results. What follows may subject me to the charges of "looking at the situation out of context" and "second guessing," both of which charges I partially acknowledge in advance and the legitimacy of which will be discussed towards the end of this article.

* * *

The New Course is one of Trotsky's most remarkable works. Unlike many of his other books, it is not immersed in history; it does not concern itself with the alternation of epochs, their opposition and synthesis. Nor is it primarily a polemic on Marxist strategy though it does contain some of the first formulations—how brilliant they seem in retrospect! how remarkable is Trotsky's gift to sum up in a phrase an

entire political conception!—of the strategical conceptions on the Russian economy which he was later fully to develop in his "Draft Program" (*Third International After Lenin*.)

The New Course is unique among Trotsky's works in that it represents a kind of pause in his thinking, when he stops at a moment of crisis to take stock. It is, and appropriately so, more static than dynamic in its approach. It is as if he were saying: Let us desist from the specific events of the incipient struggle and see what generalizations we can draw. Which is why Trotsky does something in *The New Course* that is quite rare in his writings: he offers, with the appropriate reservations and the relativistic emphases, certain general observations on the conduct of a revolutionary party and revolutionists in the post-revolutionary behavior.

A Polemic Against Bureaucratism

Trotsky therefore discusses in *The New Course* such problems as the internal functioning of a revolutionary party, the relationship between the older leaders and the often rebellious youth, the moot role of tradition in a revolutionary movement and the role of the functionary in the party. Now these problems are discussed in their specific context first of all: Trotsky is most concerned with demonstrating the growth of bureaucratism in the apparatus, its contempt for criticism, its snide attitude towards the youth, its demagogic deification of tradition into a gag on fresh and creative thought. Trotsky is writing a polemic—an opening, veiled, mild but still powerful blow against the bureaucracy. But he is doing something else as well. First out of motives of caution (the fight is in its open-

*The New Course by Leon Trotsky. With The Struggle for the New Course by Max Shachtman, The New International Publishing Company. 265 pp. Cloth \$2.00. Paper \$1.50.

ing stages) and second because the problems he discusses cannot be restricted to a specific context, Trotsky necessarily indulges in certain generalizations on problems of democracy and organization.

Trotsky has some profoundly important things to say. He tells us that a healthy revolutionary leadership is constantly being renewed; its personnel, far from being static or "hereditary," is constantly refurbished by additions from the most critical and serious of the youth. Tradition, he tells us, is a controlling guide and not a stifling inhibition; no argument is settled by appeals to tradition, for though we may learn from the experiences of our revolutionary predecessors we must recognize the existence in each situation of unique elements to which fresh answers must always be furnished. Bureaucratism is an ever-present danger in a party, especially when it is forced to function in such a difficult historical milieu as was the Bolshevik Party in the post-war years. Bureaucratism inheres in all organizations (as we today understand organization) for organization is concomitant with struggle, status, hierarchy and social differentiation and with these present bureaucratism cannot be absent. We do not draw the self-defeating conclusion of abandoning organization, but rather of constantly being on guard against bureaucratism. Trotsky indicates a high degree of sensitivity to the cross-currents of social pressures which wrack every party, to the realistic pressures which give it its ever-present dual character of liberator and confiner. I shall not here continue to list these admirable aspects of Trotsky's work; everyone should read them for himself.

I want now to proceed to a consideration of what seem to me some of the weaknesses in Trotsky's book.

* * *

Trotsky's polemic proceeds too much within the framework of discussion—and thereby, action—laid down by the bureaucracy itself. His book is full of assurances and reassurances that the struggle which he is about to begin, or rather which has already been provoked by unavoidable historical circumstances, will not assume the character of a party "crumbling into factions"; Trotsky speaks of the possibility of "the leadership... finding this line corresponding to the real situation..." What then was Trotsky's fundamental understanding of the nature of the differences in 1923?

The Question of Factions

Though the dispute over the theory of "socialism in one country" does not yet appear in this book—because it has not yet been developed as a political rationalization by the bureaucracy—all of the deep social conflicts which were later to prod the bureaucracy into developing the theory of "socialism in one country," are implied and described. The rise of bureaucratism in a backward country whose revolution has not received succor from the west, the economic problems of the relation between industry and agriculture summed up in the graphic figure of the "Smytchka" (scissors)—these are the fundamental social problems of which the dispute over "socialism in one country" was a mere ideological reflection. But if Trotsky understood the depth of the crisis, as the book suggests, then he was wrong in fearing a party which would "crumble" into factions (*why does the existence of factions necessarily imply crumbling?*); in fact, objectively he was playing into the hands of the bureaucracy by moderating the struggle: calm was to its advantage.

It may of course be objected—and with considerable rele-

vance—that Trotsky began his struggle in conditions of great difficulty, when the population was wearied from years of hunger and struggle, when all of the objective factors were highly unfavorable. That is true, and cannot be ignored.

(In that case, however, how explain the apparent optimism which fills Trotsky's book, his assurance that "the present critical period... will teach a good deal to the majority of the apparatus workers and will get them to abandon most of their errors." Can that be considered merely as exhortation?)

But it would seem, in retrospect, that precisely these objectively unfavorable factors would have dictated a more vigorous, a more open struggle rather than one which for many months before and several years after 1923 was largely confined to the top strata of the apparatus. By open struggle I mean exactly the opposite of what certain people have meant when they asked why Trotsky didn't utilize his popularity in the Red Army to initiate a coup d'état; for an open struggle would have involved at least the attempt to bring the issues to the masses *before* the degenerative process had gone further, rather than the effects of a coup d'état which would have been self-defeating whether victorious or not. These considerations, which are of course not novel, are given added weight by the internal evidence from *The New Course*.

A specific instance of how Trotsky kept his polemic more or less within the framework convenient to the bureaucracy is seen in his discussion on the role of democracy in the young soviet state. By 1923 there was only one legal party in Russia. For this regrettable state of affairs, the Bolsheviks were least of all responsible. The Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks had openly gone over to the camp of reaction and counter-revolution. In the famine year of 1919, when Petrograd was threatened on two sides by White armies, the Left SRs and the Mensheviks had called a general strike in the factories which the revolutionists had left in order to fight in the Red Army. Such parties had no moral right to legality in the soviet state.

But to accept the necessity of the Bolsheviks' suppression of these parties is not to deny that the very act of suppression was dangerous, that it created a vacuum which should have been full, that it *tended* to establish certain attitudes and incipient conceptions which smoothed the way, though they did not cause, the bureaucratic degeneration.

The 1920 Opposition Groups

Thus in the early twenties there was only the Martov group in vocal opposition; exactly how it ended up is not quite clear, though it seems indisputable that the Bolshevik government took at least mild police measures against it. More important, there arose opposition groups within the Bolshevik Party itself, the two main ones being the Workers Opposition Group led by Kollontai and Shlyapnikov and the Workers Group led by Myasnikov. The former group was outlawed within the Bolshevik Party at its 10th Congress and the latter at the 11th Congress; subsequently many of its members joined the Left Opposition of Trotsky. Little is known of these groups—their history has been lost in the maze of subsequent struggles—but it appears that their democratic opposition to the growing bureaucratism led them to advocate anarcho-syndicalist economic measures.

Trotsky has not satisfactorily explained his negative attitude towards these groups: their invalid economic conceptions were entirely secondary to their healthy and correct attitude towards the problem of democracy, which was the *main* problem. Nor has he explained, in *The New Course* or

elsewhere, why he acquiesced in the suppression of these groups within the Bolshevik Party, which merely strengthened the bureaucratic regime and made more difficult his own subsequent opposition. On the contrary, *The New Course* contains a number of references to the groups which seem without justification. Thus Trotsky writes that the Workers Opposition Group was "the most dangerous" opposition, and that the 10th Party Congress took action "satisfying what was just and healthy in the criticisms of the Workers Opposition." How valid these statements of Trotsky were can be judged by his own subsequent experiences.

On the contrary, there are formulations in *The New Course* which indicate that Trotsky's thinking—vigorous and valid though it was in opposition to bureaucratism—had itself also been infected by the milieu in which he functioned. Thus the remarkable but indefensible sentence: "*We are the only party in the country and, in the period of the dictatorship, it could not be otherwise.*" Thus, also his left-handed endorsement in *The New Course* of the 10th Party Congress decision outlawing factions. In fairness, it should be remarked that Trotsky writes that this decision outlawing factions within the Bolshevik Party was supplementary and that it was not intended as a police decree; that, in fact, a certain amount of both free discussion and factional activity did continue after the decision was made. But the point which is involved and is central here is this:

In launching a struggle in behalf of a democratization of the degenerating soviet regime, Trotsky confined himself to the boundaries laid out by the bureaucracy. *His struggle would have been more effective and meaningful had he launched an open demand for the unconditional right of all loyal factions to exist openly and without intimidation within the Bolshevik Party, as well as for the right of legal existence of any party which remained loyal to the soviet regime regardless of its differences of policy with the Bolshevik Party.* But Trotsky—so *The New Course* indicates—was himself subject to the narrow conception that in the concrete situation only one party was possible (a conception Bukharin was soon to render profound by stating that only one party was possible in *any* workers state) and that a split* in the Bolshevik Party would have been a major tragedy. Quite possibly, had the leading militants been acclimated to the idea that there could exist more than one loyal soviet party at one time—in fact, more than one loyal Bolshevik Party at one time—an early split might have been no tragedy at all. But by so thoroughly accepting the idea which the bureaucracy craftily spread—that a split in the party would be a tragedy leaving the door open for capitalist restoration and that therefore opposition groups should "restrain" themselves (or be restrained . . .)—Trotsky made much more difficult his own struggle. The conception of the proletarian dictatorship as a kind of *erziehungsdiktatur* with the Bolshevik Party as the stern schoolmaster had begun to be common in the ranks of the communists; and only a radical, total break with that conception could have rallied a more effective opposition.

Economic Planning and Democracy

Instead Trotsky made the error of seeing the economic issues as predominant. It goes without saying that they were integrally and inseparably linked with the problem of democracy, that ultimately they were two sides of the same problem. But as *issues for struggle* they were entirely secondary to

*Lenin was ready to face splits on much less basic issues. Do we not all feel Lenin would have behaved differently from Trotsky?

the one burning problem of democracy; proper economic planning may have been impossible without workers democracy, but a successful struggle for workers democracy was the best way to make possible proper economic planning. Had Trotsky been able to see this he would have: (a) been less ambiguous about his attitude towards the general problem of democracy in a workers state, as I have indicated above, and would have not been intimidated by the demagogic cries of "split" which came from the bureaucracy; and (b) he would not have made the false analysis that he did make of a number of other opposition groups that arose in Russia. For instance the fact that Bukharin's Right Opposition had an economic program which was incorrect and even dangerous was as nothing to the fact that it found itself in opposition to Stalin. Much the same was true, I think, for the pre-1923 opposition groups. What strikes one in examining the 1920-1932 period of Russian history is the existence of successive oppositions, all of them, whatever their other differences, dedicated to a restoration of at least some soviet democracy. Even if their total strength had been put together at any given time, they still could probably not have triumphed. But a much stronger struggle could have been conducted and Trotsky was the one man who might have welded them all into one bloc.

Trotsky's difficulty on this matter flowed—it is now clear—from his acceptance of the idea that the main danger in Russia was capitalist restoration. Now it is true, that unlike today when there is very slight possibility of it, capitalist restoration was a real danger in the early twenties. But Trotsky failed to see—and this failure was to mar all of his subsequent analyses of Stalinism, brilliant as they were—the possibility of the development of an *indigenous bureaucracy based on nationalized economy* which would strike as powerful blows against any restorationist tendency as against revolutionary groups. Trotsky was in the grip of a more or less mechanical conception of progress as measured primarily by economic productivity, a conception which served well enough during the historical past when world economic productivity was still insufficient to satisfy man's basic needs, but which was by now irrelevant in an historical epoch when productivity had reached a new peak and the social problem became no longer one of how to develop the productive forces but rather within which social relationships to utilize them. It was this conception of the theory of progress, adequate enough for the past but requiring supplementation for the present, which led Trotsky to view Stalinism as merely a bureaucracy within a degenerated workers state. In 1923 Stalinism *was* just that: a bureaucracy of a degenerated workers state; but Trotsky's conception of progress and his unwillingness to accept the possibility of a new kind of society arising in Russia, what we have called bureaucratic collectivism, were at the root of his subsequent difficulties on the Russian question. And in *The New Course* we can see the incipient manifestations of those shortcomings which were to develop into a false political line on Russia's role in the second world war.

Early Speculation on Degeneration

There is one fascinating sentence in *The New Course* in which Trotsky answers the question of what are the political paths by which counter-revolution might triumph. He answers: "either the direct overthrow of the workers' party, or its progressive degeneration, or finally, the conjunction of a partial degeneration, splits, and counter-revolutionary upheavals." But he does not, alas, explain what he meant by "progressive degeneration." Later he was to deny that this degeneration

could be called anything but a workers state so long as nationalized property was maintained, but there is at least the possibility in this pregnant sentence of another interpretation—of the kind which the Workers Party has made. So long, then, as Trotsky saw capitalist restoration as the main danger or danger equal to that of degenerative bureaucratism, he was necessarily restrained in the struggle which he conducted and his analysis was necessarily disoriented at times.

* * *

Nonetheless, whatever weight the reader may give to the above remarks, I wish to emphasize that they are made within the framework of the general Bolshevik conception; that I accept the essentials of the Trotskyist explanation of the degeneration of the Russian revolution and also the essentials of Trotsky's explanation for the constriction of democracy in the early twenties. It is hoped that these remarks will not be viewed as an attempt to gain the cover of piety. We must by now understand that the acceptance of Bolshevism and Trotsky's politics does not mean an acceptance of each of their acts or statements; that, on the contrary, *loyal criticism is the most useful and fructifying kind of agreement.*

* * *

The Question of "Second Guessing"

One matter remains to complete this discussion: what about "second guessing" and "taking events out of their context?" I have said at the beginning that it is necessary to understand both in and "out of" context. We can now see the relevance of that remark.

In a certain sense, all historical criticism is second guessing. We examine Trotsky's behavior in 1923 or what he wrote in 1923. We conclude that some of his behavior and some of his writings were incorrect. What does that mean? It can mean several things. It can mean that insofar as we can project ourselves into the situation of 1923 we believe that our opinions would have led to a more correct course of action. In that sense, we try—never successfully, for the effort is self-contradictory—to move backwards in time and imagine ourselves in a situation of the past.

Even in that limited sense, I believe what I have written is valid for the following reasons: 1) There *were* Bolsheviks* even then who had this—what I consider—superior political conception; in that sense, the previous criticisms are not *merely* second guessing. 2) We are writing here about one of the titans of modern history, Leon Trotsky, a man of consummate and universal genius from whom we expect and have a right to expect insight superior to that of most people. It does not seem absurd to ask why Trotsky didn't see what took ordinary mortals twenty additional years to see. The canons of criticism can be infinitely more severe in relation to a man of Trotsky's stature than towards some one else.

But let us grant that we are largely second guessing, let us grant that our opinions are retrospective judgment. The question is: what is wrong with second guessing, what is wrong with retrospective judgment? To some extent all historical criticism is second guessing and retrospective judgment. Certain kinds of second guessing are useless and absurd, for they pertain exclusively to the past; they are as dead as the events they describe. But historical criticism—which we have crudely equated here to second guessing and retrospective judgment—may have more relevance to the future than to the past. Thus if we criticize *The New Course* in order to learn certain lessons for the future, in order to once more reassert the forever necessary statement of the indissolubility of socialism and democracy, then we are engaging in a useful activity. The criticism is then in a sense more important for today and tomorrow.

If retrospective judgment is used for this purpose, it is a very important form of *self-criticism*. It does not in any way detract from the brilliance of our teachers of the past, it does not detract from the luster of their achievements or their writings. For we build not merely on that which we accept from the past but also on that which we reject. And that too is a tribute.

IRVING HOWE.

*See the discussions of the internal differences in the Left opposition contained in Cilliga's "The Russian Enigma."

The Church Struggle Under Fascism

An Important Letter by Trotsky

In 1935, the conflict between the Nazi régime and the Catholic and Protestant churches in Germany came sharply into the foreground. The position of the German section of the Fourth International (IKD) was to support the church movement as a fight for democratic rights and freedom of religion. And to make it very clear for all people concerned, the IKD demanded *unconditional* support and declared the defense of the democratic rights and freedom of religion as an integral part of the communist program.

As could be expected, the Committee Abroad of the IKD encountered strong opposition to its points of view, especially from other sections. The usual ultra-leftists were quick of hand to inform Leon Trotsky about the "false" and "disastrous" policy of the IKD. In short, this unfortunate Com-

mittee Abroad of the IKD had, in their opinion, "given up" the *proletarian class standpoint* and the whole of *Marxism*.

Leon Trotsky proposed to form an international commission in order to investigate the German situation and the policy of the IKD. The Committee Abroad accepted the proposal and the International Commission started its work with a "heavy" attack upon the attitude of the IKD toward the church struggle. The discussion itself was pitiful and ended after weeks in a complete deadlock. Leon Sedov (who was a member of the Commission) was practically the sole supporter of the IKD position. His only objection referred to the fact that the German members insisted "stubbornly" on *unconditional* support and would not compromise even on that word.

Finally the fight was decided by a letter

from Leon Trotsky (who studied the discussion from the minutes), dated August 19, 1935. Trotsky wrote this letter as a "conciliator" between the two tendencies, but with all his politeness in refuting the "arguments" against the IKD position (they were in reality distortions with which the IKD had nothing to do), he disappointed the ultra-leftists to such a degree that the discussion ended abruptly and the Commission was dissolved. It is Point 3 of Trotsky's letter that deal with the church struggle in Germany. The extract follows below and appears for the first time in English. It is of rare instructive value as an example on how to approach a political question in the Marxian sense and needs no further comment.

A. ARLINS.

The Church Question.—I believe I come closest to the essence of the matter if I begin with the following quotation from the statements of Comrade D. in the Commission meeting of July 15:

"D. does not understand how in Nicole's* head the terribly radical slogan 'Down with the Radical ex-Ministers' and the 'Support of the Church in Germany' can go together." (Trotsky quotes this from the minutes.—A. A.)

Naturally, there can be no question of supporting the church. For us it can be only the question: do we or do we not support the *political struggle* of the Catholics and Protestants for their right to remain Catholics and Protestants and to act as such? This question is to be answered in the affirmative. That we thereby certainly do not commit ourselves for religion and church, but stress our opposition to religion and church as far as possible, is self-evident.

But it is not clear to me what that has to do with the slogan "Down with the Radical Scoundrels (not only with the ex-Ministers)." This slogan is nothing else than the demand to break the *class collaboration*. Because the Reformists and Stalinists refuse this break they will compromise themselves in the eyes of the workers. "Out with the radical bourgeois from the People's Front" is therefore a perfectly right Marxian slogan in the given moment. But let us imagine, and it is not difficult, that the fascists tomorrow begin to storm Free Masons' lodges or to destroy anti-clerical newspapers (episodically, they have already). It goes without saying that the workers will go into the street to help in the defense of the Free Mason lodges. But what is the Free Masonry? Also a kind of church, designed to make the liberal petty bourgeoisie docile to the interests of the *haute finance*. Can we support the Free Masonry? Never! But we can and must defend its right to exist against the fascists, if necessary with rifle in hand. To be able to do this the working class must be revolutionary and remain effective in struggle. The People's Front makes this impossible. Therefore, to be able to defend eventually also the Free Masonry, the radical bourgeoisie must be driven out from the People's Front. Herein exists not the slightest contradiction. If we clear up this misunderstanding for good we can also, I believe, come closer to the German church question.

In modern society the church goes along with the interests of finance capital, i.e., with the ruling power. But its sphere of influence remains predominantly the petty bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie-influenced worker, his wife and so on. As for the proletariat, the Social-Democracy has long ago overtaken the function of the conciliatory and consoling church—it has replaced the church to a considerable degree. The ever more weighted down petty bourgeoisie cannot, insofar as it remains petty bourgeois, do without the church, and the essence of the present conflict in Germany consists precisely in this. By the tremendous inner antagonisms (which are immeasurably sharper than in Italy and grow steadily) the state power is driven to ever higher concentration. The fascist state-idol will not and cannot tolerate any competition. National-socialism intends to absorb the religion and to deify its state. But because the frantically rearming fascist state oppresses the petty bourgeoisie more and more, the latter cannot give up the mystic compensations of the church for the sufferings by the state. Socially speaking, it is only a division of labor between

church and state. But every devout philistine is now inwardly torn by this division of labor, which has developed into a political conflict. Two souls, alas, dwell in his bosom. It is necessary to stoke up this conflict and to direct it in the first place against the state.

It goes without saying that the leading sections of the bourgeoisie do not stand aside during this. They had to let the Hitler gang take the power, but the adventurist politics of the latter keeps them constantly worried. The vacillating conduct of Hindenburg at Hitler's nomination always remains as a symbol of the attitude of these sections. They regard the church as an *external* institution—according to Lloyd George's maxim, as a power station serving all (ruling) political parties—while the Nazis are regarded *only* as an *expedient make-shift*. It is for this reason that the Nazis, on their part, add fuel to the church struggle. At the same time they seek, together with the princes of the church, not to exceed its "reasonable" limits. When we speak of "support" of the struggle, we mean in the first instance supporting the struggle against the Nazi state. In the second instance, we support the struggle against those sections of the ruling classes, who at one and the same moment both encourage and retard this struggle, in order to preserve Hitler's respect for them through these means.

Solutions, such as separation of church and state, school and church, are, of course, correct in themselves, and must be advocated whenever the opportunity presents itself. But these solutions don't quite hit the nail on the head in actuality. For it is a question of the right of Catholics and Protestants—without consideration of the fact whether the church as such as separated from the state or not—to consume their religious opium as Catholics and Protestants without thereby endangering or impairing their existence. It is a question in the first place of freedom of conscience, then of equal rights regardless of creed (pagan, Catholic, Protestant, etc.), then the right of forming organizations (the Catholic Youth organizations, etc.).

The argument over the word *unconditional* support seems to be more of a terminological dispute. Nobody will propose, of course, that we give unconditional support to every demand made by the church opposition, as, for example, increasing religious instruction in the schools, increasing state subsidies to the church, etc. I have understood the word *unconditionally* in such a manner, that we must fulfill our duty toward the opposition movement, without imposing any kind of conditions on the participating organizations. That must be considered self-evident. What conditions could we demand in the present situation and which opposition party would accept them? It is only necessary to find real and effective methods to intervene in the struggle, to stir up the religious-democratic opposition, to broaden it and to assist the young Catholics, especially the workers, in their struggle (and not, of course, the Nazi police, which wants to "destroy" these religious organizations). Thus, in Russia we always defended the struggle of the Armenian church for its autonomy. We did the same in the struggle of the different peasant and petty bourgeoisie sects against the governmental Orthodox church. And at times we did it with great success.

It is highly probable that the slumbering powers of the proletariat may receive a saving impetus from this opposition movement against the fascist state, which, according to its social basis, is petty bourgeois. It is, of course, not certain. It

*Nicole: Erwin Wolff, later murdered by the Stalinists in Spain. (A.A.)

would become certain with the existence of a strong and wise revolutionary party. But, one does not exist. We are only beginning. But we must do everything that is in our power. The question is, in the first place, of great educational significance for our cadres, which have maintained for, perhaps, too long

a purely propagandistic orientation. It seems to me that a turn is absolutely necessary. The church struggle can provide them not only with a starting out point, but also with more favorable conditions.

Leon Trotsky

Russian Imperialism in Poland

Part II of a Marxist Study

The Poland existing prior to the first partitioning of 1772, whose restoration Marx and Engels desired, was a federated state of Poles, Lithuanians, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, and White Russians. In the year 1387, the Duchy of Lithuania was united with Poland proper, forming, until the partitionings of Poland, an integral part of the Polish Republic (Engels—*The Doctrine of Nationality*). The different nationalities originated in the Duchy of Lithuania. The voluntary union of both states under the Lithuanian dynasty of Jagellones transformed itself into an organic union with a dual constitution, that is, within the framework of one republic there existed two different states and governments, the Polish and Lithuanian. For this reason, Engels wrote that “the restoration of Poland means the re-establishment of a state composed of at least four nationalities” (Ibid.). Condemning the expansion of Russian imperialism, Engels says in the same article, “the history of Poland between 1700-1772 constitutes a record of Russian usurpation of dominion, made possible by the corruption of the Polish nobility.” Before the partitionings, Poland extended to the eastern shore of the Dnieper (400,000 sq. miles). In 1772, its area was already less than 301,080 square miles. In the first partitioning, Poland lost 77,200 sq. miles, in the second, 115,800, and in the third, the remainder, 98,044 sq. miles.

The Poland which arose once more in 1918 contained less than half of the old territory, 150,000 sq. miles. In 1939, while the Polish people struggled against Hitler, Stalin proceeded to a new partitioning of Poland, occupying 77,596 square miles, or 51 per cent of the national territory, with 13,200,000 of its 33,000,000 inhabitants. The zone annexed by Russia represented: 40 per cent of the arable surface of Poland, 63 per cent of the pastures, 57 per cent of the forests and wooded territory, 50 per cent of the sources of potash, 84 per cent of the oil, and 42 per cent of the water-power. About a million and a half Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, White Russians, and Jews were deported to Russia in 1939 in order “to prepare” the famous “plebiscite.” Of these, almost a million disappeared in Russia. In these deportations, Stalin “preferred,” above all, Socialist intellectuals and workers, Communists and peasants. The plebiscite carried out in the annexed territories revealed, in spite of the deportations and the terrorism, an important opposition, officially admitted, which in the region of Vilna reached 10 to 15 per cent. According to the official British news agency, abstention from the plebiscite embraced 50 per cent of the people in the city, and reached 75 per cent in the villages. The official Polish figures give the number of Poles in the annexed territories as follows: Ukrainians, 5,274,000, or 40 per cent; White Russians, 4,529,000, or 34.4 per cent; Jews, 1,125,000 or 8.5 per cent (the majority of whom speak Polish); Lithuanians, 84,000; Germans, 89,000; Czechoslovakians, 35,000; remainder

population, 134,000, or one per cent. And those inhabitants of Eastern Poland without definite nationality, 822,000, or six per cent, who should be classified with the Ukrainians and White Russians. In the industrial regions and the two capitals of Vilna and Lwow, the Poles were in the absolute majority. Not only the landlords and the bureaucracy, but the intellectuals and proletariat as well, spoke Polish and possessed a Polish culture. The metal workers, the railroad workers, as well as the textile and oil workers were all Polish. The peasants, and the workers in the sawmills and lumber-camps were Ukrainians and White Russians.

The Polish and Russian Oppression Compared

Stalin's annexation, motivated by “blood-ties” embraced almost six and one-half million Polish speaking inhabitants (Poles and Jews). It is necessary to point out that the White Russians, and the majority of the Ukrainians as well, are Catholic, linked for over 500 years to Polish culture, and as close through “blood-ties” to the Poles as to the Russians. The figures showing the number of Ukrainians and White Russians deported demonstrates that they did not greet Russian domination with pleasure, far removed as it is from self-determination for White Russia and the Ukraine. Aside from the figure of six and one-half million, we must add one and a half million Poles remaining on the Eastern side of the Polish-Soviet frontier: in other words the Curzon line annexed “only” 8,000,000 Poles and Polish-Jews, that is, a larger number than the total number of Czechs, Serbs, Slovaks, Croatians, and Slovenes. For the Ukrainians and White Russians, Russian domination signified a worse oppression than that of the Polish bourgeoisie. In the first place, Stalinist imperialism is much more powerful than the Polish bourgeoisie, and in the second place, it is a perfected totalitarian system, in which the oppressors have at their disposal an enormous machine. In Poland before the war there were 200,000 soldiers; in the occupied territories alone, Russia has 800,000 soldiers.

The Ribbentrop-Molotov line was transformed into the Curzon line with some minor corrections and embraced some 8,000,000 Poles. In order to “correct” the “injustice” to Poland, in reality, in order to assure a frontier shaped to the needs of Russian strategy, Stalin annexed 40,000 miles of Germany's eastern territory, regions of Germany which no Polish party—not even the most nationalistic—had ever asked for Poland, thus preparing the ground for future conflicts. The Polish population is being moved to Silesia, Pomerania and Prussia, while the German population is expelled and driven into the interior of Germany, all in the name of the self-determination of peoples. The cynicism of the Thermidorean reaction knows no bounds.

In the economic sphere, the Stalinist bureaucracy has con-

verted Poland into a colony of Russian Imperialism. Industries have been dismantled and shipped to Russia. Unfortunately, we do not possess the necessary statistics, because the Russian bureaucracy conceals its thefts. Something, however, is known of the dealings in coal. According to the contract between the Warsaw government and Moscow, Poland must deliver from 12-18 million tons of coal to the Russians at cost price. A ton of coal is worth 3,000 to 5,000 Zlotys on the market. If we take the minimum figure only, 3,000 Zlotys (or \$10 in American money on the basis of 300 Zlotys to the dollar) we have \$10 per ton, or if we take the amount for 18 million tons, \$180,000,000 that Poland must yield annually to Russia as a tribute of her colonial dependency. To produce the required amount of coal, 50,000 to 80,000 Poles and Germans must engage in slave-like labor. According to Minister of Industry Minc, the annual production of coal is between 30 to 35 million tons, that is, Poland must hand over nearly two-thirds of the coal produced every year to Russia, at the expense of her own industries which used more than 20 million tons of coal a year before the war. Because of this colonial policy Polish children must die of cold.

According to the facts given in the bourgeois press, Russia is carrying out in practice the de-industrialization of Poland, and turning it back into an agrarian economy. The dealings in coal merely highlight this colonial and reactionary policy.

Apart from the individual robberies perpetrated on the Polish population by the Russian soldiers, the plundering of the national wealth reaches unheard of proportions: out of ten million head of cattle, there remain in Poland only three million; out of eight million pigs, there remain only a million and a quarter; out of seven and a half million sheep there remain hardly 772,000. The confiscations of cereals as the contributions to maintain an enormous army of occupation, which, with those demobilized, reaches the figure of two million, weigh heavily on the country-side, and above all on the exhausted and impoverished population. Nine Russian armies, seven concentrated on the Oder Line, "lease" almost 1,200,000 hectares of land, that is, about half of the land the Polish peasants received in the agrarian reform. These statistics are enough to demonstrate the reactionary, parasitic, and colonial character of Stalinist imperialism, which despoils the Polish people in a manner unknown in history and reduces them to a state of extreme poverty and permanent hunger. Hunger is an instrument of domination, of subduing those who resist.

The Democratic Revolution or the Stalinist Counter-revolution?

Having dissolved the Communist party, Stalin handed the direction of Polish affairs over to the police apparatus of the GPU. From this apparatus came the most "prominent" figures of the Warsaw government, like Bierut, "the president" and the Minister of Police, Radkiewicz, chief of the GPU in Poland, who hardly knows the Polish language. Fearing the Communist workers, Stalin organized the ZPP (Polish Patriotic Association) in Moscow, from among the petty-bourgeois elements sympathetic to Stalinism, led by Wasilewska. These elements, controlled by the agents of the GPU, formed the Lublin Committee, the organization of the Stalinist quislings, by means of which Stalin ruled over Poland. Not one old, well-known Polish Communist was on this committee; not one prominent Socialist, or known leader of the peasantry. Obscure figures, unknown in the Communist party, the PPS and the Populist movement, "figures" inflated by Stalinist propa-

ganda, were brought into Poland behind Russian bayonets. The real workers' movement was independent, being organized in an "underground movement of the laboring masses" whose documents demonstrate that within this movement there was a left-wing with marked revolutionary and Marxist tendencies. This movement, which played an important part in the Warsaw insurrection, was persecuted and suppressed because its policies were far to the left of Stalinism.

The need for a Stalinist party in Poland being urgent in view of the advance of the Russian army, the Kremlin bureaucrats created the PPR (Polish Workers Party) imitating the name of the PPS, popular among the workers. The cadres of the new party had nothing in common with the old Communist party. Since the old leaders had been assassinated, the new leading cadres were made up of agents of the GPU. As the Stalinist party did not have a great ideological influence, the Stalinists were compelled to create a false PPS (Socialist Party) which served as a mouthpiece for the Stalinist party, and had as little in common with the real and illegal PPS, as the PPR had in common with the old Communist party. Besides these, the Stalinists created an imitation of the Populist party for the small peasantry and a Democratic party for the petty-bourgeois collaborators. These police shadows of the real parties imitated the illegal national council and created the Lublin Committee. Under the imperialist pressure of the "Big Three" Mikolajczyk, the peasant leader, agreed to join the Warsaw government of "national unity." But in reality, the key positions were in the hands of the Stalinists, or openly in the hands of the Russian police.

The program of this Stalinist imitation of democracy, whose real content is totalitarianism, is a democratic-agrarian revolution, the construction of a capitalist Poland, "truly democratic." This "fundamental" thesis was proclaimed at the congress of the PPR. As the first step in this "democratic revolution," the Stalinists proclaimed the "historic agrarian revolution," as the second step the nationalization of factories employing more than 50 workers, including those worked by shifts. This "democratic" program is typical Stalinist deception and theoretical fraud to win the support of the bourgeoisie and the popular masses, especially the peasants.

In reality, as we have already pointed out (*NEW INTERNATIONAL, August*) the stage in the bourgeois democratic revolution was carried out in 1918-20. From this point Polish bourgeois democracy degenerated into the Bonapartist-totalitarian dictatorship of Pilsudski in 1926. But in spite of its deformation, the democratic revolution achieved its principal aims: the creation of a national state, democratic in its beginnings, and a "moderate" agrarian reform, which had as a consequence the capitalist development of Poland. The agrarian reform divided more than three million hectares (a hectare equals 2.47 acres) while the Stalinist "historic agrarian revolution" divided up only 1,300,000 hectares of land. Of the remainder, the Russian army holds 1,200,000, the rest is in the hands of the state and the church. The wealth of the latter (the wealth of the dead hand) has not been touched. The plundering of the agricultural stocks and the products of the field deprives the peasant of any benefit whatsoever from this reform, which is smaller in scope and economic consequence than was the bourgeois agrarian reform. Scarcely 380,000 families out of between 3-4 million families received land.

The small "dwarfish" peasant farm, from one to ten acres in size, "the farm of hunger," remains dominant in the agricultural economy. This is surely the source of silent peasant opposition to the Stalinists, in spite of all the "courting"

the hands of the Polish proletariat, but is possessed by the bureaucracy. This power is an instrument of foreign imperialism for the purpose of economic and social despoliation and the national oppression of Poland.

In and around the Warsaw government there is a clique of old Pilsudskists, fascists, sworn enemies of the proletariat, who are linked with the party of the Colonels, as well as with the reactionary and anti-semitic national-democracy (Grabiski, Trampczynski, Rzymowski, Kirtiklis, Zeligowski, Strasburger, Kwiatkowski); ministers and generals of Pilsudski and of Chienopiast (the concentration of the right-wing of 1923). But there are no old Communists nor independent Socialists moving towards Stalinism. The repressions are above all directed against the workers movement. The trade-unions are under constant attack. Not only is there no Trotskyist party in existence, but legality is denied to the independent socialists, the true PPS, while it is granted to the bourgeois parties which collaborate (the Christian-Democrats). The figure given for those held in the concentration camps inherited from Hitler, is from one and a half to two million. The figure for those deported to Russia since 1939 is calculated to be about two million. In the most recent police round-up alone 100,000 politicals were taken. More than ten thousand political agents have been assassinated. Radkiewicz, the chief of Police, admitted

that more than three thousand police agents have been assassinated. These figures demonstrate that in Poland a terrible and bloody civil war to the finish is being carried on by the Stalinists against all those elements which refuse to submit and above all against the workers and peasants movement. Hundreds of political agents of Mikolajczyk's collaborating party have disappeared. For more than a year and a half, the Stalinist dictatorship has governed without elections, fearing the results of voting. It has put all its pressure on Mikolajczyk and his strong peasant party to force him to enter the elections in a "bloc of national unity" so that one blow, the existing opposition may be dubbed "fascist" and the totalitarian dictatorship installed officially.

Before the proletariat and the people of Poland is a socialist, not an agrarian or democratic revolution. Only this revolution can save Poland from the hateful foreign yoke, from colonial exploitation and economic and national annihilation. This revolution can conquer only in the common struggle together with the German and European proletariat, in the struggle for the Socialist United States of Europe, basing itself on the defeat of capitalist imperialism and the reactionary Stalinist counter-revolution.

February 15, 1946.

A. RUDZIENSKI.

American Literature Marches On

An Essay by James T. Farrell

I think that we can gain some insight into the conditions of contemporary culture in America if we can see it in the light of some contrasts and comparisons with Russian literature in the nineteenth century. Marxists have framed what is called the historical law of uneven and combined development. They analyze, evaluate and picture society on the basis of hypotheses which are describable as norms, norms of development and of historical evolution and change. This aspect of their methodology is to be found in the basic work of all Marxian thought, Karl Marx's *Capital*.

His analysis of capitalist society as a form of society (evolving under definite historical conditions, revealing its own inner and developing dynamics, and working according to its own laws of development, of growth, change and decay) is all laid out in the account which Marx gives of what is called "pure capitalism." In his introduction to the first volume of *Capital* Marx remarked that the instrument for the great development of physical sciences was that of experimentation, but that in the realm of political economy, the scientific weapon was abstraction. By abstraction, Marx did not mean pure theory, irrelevant to and irrespon-

sible of fact. Abstraction meant (to him) what it means on its face—to take aspects out of life, and by a process of synthesis and analysis to look at them closely, see what they show in themselves, and then, to link them together with other abstractions in a chain of categories which provide us with a system of hypotheses that permits us to re-enter the realm of crude, direct primitive fact in life, and to see in this welter, the tendencies that are in motion, that are evolving in a manner which permits generalization because of the uniformities which these tendencies express. To continue, Marx did not regard capitalist society as one lump, a lump to be seen, described and analyzed. To the contrary, he looked at the phenomenon from different standpoints, he cast on it an eye which could see from a number of perspectives, a number of intellectual posts of observation. In this way, he analyzed "pure capitalism." Pure capitalism is a synthetic account of capitalism, which reveals it as evolving in terms of its own dynamics without being impeded, without counter tendencies, obstructions, confusion, or new emergences to interfere with that pure development.

One of the correctives to a literal application of this analysis of pure capital-

ism is the Marxian law of uneven and combined development. This law seeks to frame the terms in which capitalistic society evolves and changes, not in the terms of analysis, but on the stage of history. It tells us that in history, societies change not according to an absolute of evolution, but in patterns of different deviations from that norm. The norm is, thereby, a criterion, a hypothesis, a means of measuring change. The phenomenon of uneven and combined development is seen in the many glaring contrasts in the world between progress and backwardness, in the contrasts between the employment of the most advanced technology side by side with the use of the most primitive tools. The backward, the semi-colonial countries, the late comers onto the arena of world power, such as Imperial Japan, illustrate this phenomenon clearly. In the social structures of such societies, the contradictions are glaring: capitalist relationships have been imposed on the relationships of past societies, and there is a tension of opposites in the very structure of such societies. The logical tension which Hegel wrote of years ago, and which he saw in a world of spirit, i.e., of concepts, becomes, as it were, an actual and an acute social

tension based on this unevenness of development.

Goethe wrote in *Faust* to the effect that gray is theory, but green, forever green, is the tree of life. This greenness, in history, is often a poisonous color, a terrible form of poison ivy, to continue the metaphor. And one task we must try to meet here concerns this grayness of theory and greenness of the tree of life. We need to find avenues whereby gray theory and green life are not separated, but rather, where the one leads us into knowing what the greenness of the other is. The greenness of life in history is a wild color, uneven, full of shades and reflections, an impressionistic landscape. Looked at, in itself, it is senseless. But to accept the premise that life is senseless is to negate, in advance, the very role of intelligence, and with that to deny the possibility of human control. Societies have evolved and changed without human control and direction. Direction and control have been fragmentary, episodic. In consequence, this unevenness of development has been most pronounced. Uneven development means that there is not an all-sided and consistent regularity in the advances made in civilization, so that the implications of new technological instruments are not implemented in all relevant fields; the changes in society effected or brought into reality by these new instrumentalities are not evaluated, coordinated, and put into marching step with other changes. Combined development means that the old and the new are pressed together and exist side by side. And we see the most advanced machinery and the most backward tools used in the economy of the same country—as was notably the case in Imperial Japan, and in nineteenth century Russia.

19th Century Russian Literature

The significance of this law in culture is that it provides us with the hypothesis for the analysis of what sociologists, philosophers and many others in our own age call "cultural lag." Inasmuch as men are not merely what they think they are, but, more importantly, are what they do, we can observe a whole series of ambiguities, confusions, false problems, contrasts of old and new ideas, clashes of philosophies and philosophical systems in the culture of any period. To relate the culture of a period, a society with its social structure, its level of production is now a commonplace. Marxists have always tried to do this. Anti-Marxists, and non-Marxists are always doing this, too, although they frequently try to issue formal de-

nials that this is the case. Looked at broadly then, nineteenth century Russian literature can illuminate some problems of contemporary culture. In the nineteenth century, Russia had an almost a-historic past. It had been a feudal land without a thirteenth century, without the tremendous development of feudal civilization in the West. It had entered modern history, modern civilization. Its social structure was contradictory. On the one hand, it was feudal; on the other hand, it was capitalistic. In the course of the nineteenth century, there was a relatively tremendous development of capitalism in backward Czarist Russia. This did not only precondition a tension in the interests of classes and groups: it was, also, reflected in ideological and cultural tensions. More than mere machinery, and economic relationships on the pattern of the West, were introduced into Russia. There were also—ideas. These were the ideas of the Great Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, of the rights of man, of western individualism. Herein was laid the social or material basis for a period of the most intense ferment. Intellectual ferment is possible only if there is an awareness of problems, and if this awareness of problems is sensed to a degree sufficiently widespread so that it is clear that a social and historic condition exists which involves and even threatens the entire sense of the self. In other words, an awareness of problems must not be purely concepts, and be stated in the language and concepts of political economy, philosophy, sociology, etc.: it must also be psychologically felt in personal problems, tensions, inner hopes and doubts, in problems concerning what man is, what is his place in the universe, what is the relationship of social classes, what is the relationship of men to men, of men to women, what is the role of women and so on. All sides of the nature of the life of man must be involved in this awareness: in consequence, there must be an awareness that the entire self is involved. Such was the case in Czarist Russia. The most sensitive spirits of the time felt just this.

Part of World Literature

We see in nineteenth century Russia, then, a contradictory social structure, and a period of intense ferment. In Russia, the Russian problem was not the sole one posed. The problem of Europe, and with this, that of the past and the future was posed, posed in an all-sided way so that it involved not only social relationships and political forms, but also moral

ideas, concepts of the universe, of purpose in the world in general, and of the purpose of man in particular. Uneven and combined development was to be seen in culture as well as in economic structures. All of the fears, the anxieties, the hopes, the confusions, the moods which agitated advanced cultural nations in the West, notably France, these were also registered in Russia. Ideas were imported as well as machinery. Napoleon did not conquer Mother Russia. But the Napoleonic Invasion made irreversible the fact that forever after, Russia had to be a western nation, rather than an eastern one, lost in Oriental fatalism and going on endlessly from generation to generation *sans* change, *sans* technological inventions.

There is a marvelous all-sidedness in Russian literature of the nineteenth century. Its development was, unquestionably, as high as has been that of literature in any period of human history. The great Russian writers—and most notably Tolstoy and Dostoevsky—became world writers. Russian literature, saturated with pictures of life in Russia, rich in its presentation of Russian types, describing the Russian land, Russian characters, moods and customs, became overnight part of the body of what we call world literature. We cannot account for this in the sense that we can really account for what we call genius. But we can account for it in the sense that we can state what material prerequisites existed in Russian society, and in the relationship of Russia to the West—prerequisites without which Russian literature could not have taken the character it did take, with its serious, penetrating and all-sided probing into those problems which agitated, not only the most sensitive and conscious spirits of Russia, but also, the most sensitive, alert, aware spirits of the entire western world.

Theme: Integrate Ideals and Actions

At one place in *Anna Karenina*, the character, Levin, is described as seeing his times as topsy-turvy. In general, nineteenth century Russia was topsy-turvy. The character of its topsy-turviness was that the struggles, the tensions, the problems agitating this land were a forecast of the twentieth century. Technologically backward, if compared with the West, Russia became, in the summits of its culture, the most advanced of nations. One way of interpreting literature is by describing it as an imaginative trial of the consciousness of man. In imaginative representation and re-creation, man goes

through the trial of his times, the trial of his past and his present, and in doing this, he anticipates his future as best he can. One feature, then, of the uneven character of nineteenth century Russia is revealed in its tremendous cultural development. This development is evinced not only in literature, but also in politics, in political thought. In general, the ideas of the West were grasped immediately, intensely, and they were pondered over and discussed. Practically every major writer and thinker of Western Europe, during this century, had a profound influence on some person, some group or groups in Russia. Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, Stendhal, Balzac, these and many others were read and studied with a care rarely matched in any other country. Often, the intensity with which western culture was felt and worked over is evinced by the fact that it was acted on. We see suggestions of this in Russian literature, in the succession of characters who are described in such convincing human terms, and who modelled or tried to model their lives, for good or for ill, on a philosophy, a set of ideas. The major theme of Russian literature of the nineteenth century is a moral one—that of revealing in various ways the effort of men to find consistency between their ideals and their actions. As nowhere else in this century, the meaning of literature was lived, lived in life. The effort was made to put ideas, to put values into practice. In passing, this is one of the important facts to be observed in the life of Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian literary genius.

America—Capitalist Paradise

Whereas Russia was a backward country, America was an advanced country. Whereas the introduction of capitalism into Russia was marked by the most disrupting of social contradictions, capitalism in America developed in a more "normal" fashion, in a fashion which is, I think, the closest approximation to the "pure capitalism" which Marx described that we can find in any country. Marx's analysis, it is true, was based mainly on England: but American capitalism is more "pure" in this sense than even English capitalism. The American continent offered a new world to man. This new world was exploited, under the aegis of capitalism, without the impediments of the feudal past which stood in the way of capitalistic development in Europe. Often, various historians and others have commented on how many of the early settlers were nothing but the rag-tag of

Europe, the prisoners, the ignorant, the dangerous, the dissidents and so on. Snobs who make this comment do not understand the significance of such a fact. In a new world, with free conditions of development, even the rag-tag, the human refuse of an old continent could develop, could show ingenuity, courage, daring, inventiveness, and could contribute to the making of a new world. Even the despised of humanity could, and usually always can, make a mighty contribution to creating a new world if they are given conditions of free development. America developed historically into the closest approximation to a capitalist paradise that mankind will ever know. And if we see this first, we can see precisely what it will mean when we say that American capitalism has been a success. The vision of the founding fathers of the American republic, the profound historic vision of Alexander Hamilton—a man so misunderstood by contemporary liberals—has been realized, more than realized. But it is a commonplace to say that man wills, and that what he gets is not an exact realization of what he willed. Again, we can say, gray is theory, but green is the tree of life, and that in history, there is often a noxious poison in some of the rich greenness.

Alexander Hamilton—lest some of our contemporary business men, newspaper owners, practical men and others forget—was a highly developed theoretical man. No man who is devoid of theoretical grasp can have a profound political vision of the future. The vision of Alexander Hamilton was that of the free—i.e., capitalist—development of an entire continent. No man of his time had a more profound vision of the American future. We say this now, however, with the future he visioned really behind us. The understandable gloom, despair, confusion, anxiety which we felt in immediate reaction to the perfection of the atomic bomb now incontrovertibly attests to this simple fact: the future of American capitalism, the realization of a great statesman—Hamilton—is behind us. This is the kernel of meaning in the commonly and currently discussed statement, "Modern man is obsolete."

American capitalism has been a success, and the development of American capitalism has been one of the most important historical developments in the entire history of mankind. With the exception of events such as the Great French Revolution, and the Russian Revolutions of the century, no historical

subject as much demands the most intense, the most serious, the most honest and through study as does that of the history of American capitalism. The rise of America, the development of American capitalism has permitted mankind to solve—for all times—some of the most important of all problems confronting man. The organization of production on a scale that can satisfy all of the major needs of mankind has been perfected in the United States. In passing, we might add in irony and bitterness, that in America, under capitalistic aegis, mankind has also solved the problem as to how he might destroy himself and the planet known as the earth when and if he wishes, and perhaps, even without wishing. The success of American capitalism, in the historic sense, shows us, in another focus, the same phenomenon of uneven and combined development. In passing, it might be here suggested that it can't really be described as a fortuitous fact that so many social scientists, philosophers, cultural critics and others in America wrote continuous analyses and polemics based on the phenomenon called "cultural lag." This cultural lag reveals the character of unevenness of development in America. The heights of cultural development in America are to be seen in technological improvement, in inventiveness, in the organization of means, methods and techniques of production, in scientific development—especially the practical application of scientific development.

At the same time, the development of what we call humane culture has lagged. This is evinced in literature, the most profound of the modern forms of humane culture. Alongside of French and Russian literature of the nineteenth century—in particular—the greater body of our own writing is relatively more shallow. At the same time, we see this same phenomenon evinced in the way that European—especially English—culture was for so long imitated, in the hostility that has been successively manifested for many generations against writers from the mid-west and the west who—regardless of all else—had what might loosely be called a native American flavor. In line with this fact, we can note the recurrent irony to be found in the fact that in the major political democracy in the world, there is such cultural and literary snobbery. Successively, writers from the plebeian heart of these United States have, generation after generation, run afoul of this snobbery. They have been treated with condescension, described as

crude, as barbarians, as bad writers, as uneducated, as raw fellows; they have not been able to measure up to the pseudo culture of a sterile genteel tradition. Again and again, without one evidence of concern about the problems the American writer faces, about the relationship between his real environment and his style, about the obstacles he has faced and still faces, he has been arbitrarily measured against the background of European writers who grew out of a much deeper, much more sophisticated, much more profound culture. Critics—sometimes critics whose major trait is merely that of a holy cultural petulance—have thrown the great cultural traditions of Western Europe into the face of the struggling American writer. This can be both snobbish and meaningless.

American Aesthetics Utilitarian

By and large, the culture of a society cannot really rise above its origin. By and large, there is, and there must always be, a most intimate relationship between culture and the society out of which it grows. By and large, negatively or positively, the culture, the literature of a society will be an imaginative trial of consciousness of man in that society. And American literature has been precisely this. Speaking most broadly, the theme of American literature has been the so-called American Way of Life. If we would express what is the real philosophy of the American Way of Life, our procedure should not be that of analyzing the statements—especially eulogistic, patriotic and ceremonial statements—which praise and contain laudatory descriptions of the American Way of Life. Rather, we should look at the quality of life, the aims, the wants, the actions, the things men do, and the values they want to realize among the different social classes that go to compose the population of these United States. If this is done—and in passing works such as *Middletown* by the Lynds will give the verification of social science to my statement—it can be said that the philosophy of life in America to be deduced from the plane of action, of living, of struggle can be described as Benthamistic. It is often a rather primitive Benthamism. If one but cursorily looks at the phenomenon of commercial advertising, the character of advertising appeal, one can see that this is the fact. By and large, Americans live on the pleasure-pain principle that Bentham formulated, and they abide by a morality and an aesthetics of utilitarianism. This fact again introduces us into

the subject of cultural lag. The criticism of American civilization, based on what we now call cultural lag, has been the most common one made by a variety of American critics, critics of different points of view. The way that this criticism has usually been phrased is that there is a contradiction between ideals and actions. Jane Addams said this; so did the late Herbert Croly. This is the burden of the writings of the younger Van Wyck Brooks. It is at the heart of the comments on America by John Dewey, and the writings on America of his distinguished colleague, the late George Herbert Mead. From a different standpoint, Waldo Frank and Lewis Mumford have said this also. The basis of Sinclair Lewis' criticism of America in *Babbitt*—a criticism weakened by that undisciplined inclination of Mr. Lewis to confuse his own personal irritations with ideas—is, again, just this.

Commodity a Work of Art

Especially since the end of the First World War, one of the dominant motifs of American writing—both serious and "popular" or commercial—has been that of leisure. There are many more accounts in American fiction of the way Americans spend their leisure than there are of the way that Americans work. If we go back to the fiction of Henry James, we can note this. The Jamesian world is mainly one of people on vacations. One of the aspects of James, in fact, is that he introduced into world literature, the vacation attitude and the vacation consciousness, and related this to American attitudes. The sharpest, perhaps the bitterest, of modern American satirists is Ring Lardner. An analysis of his stories will patently reveal the same phenomenon. On the one hand, he writes stories of people trying to have a good time when they are not working; on the other hand, it is usually the case that when he describes a character at his or her occupation, that occupation is of the kind that relates to leisure, to the pleasure and the entertainment of others. Thus, he shows us a caddy at work; or he describes ball players, prize fighters, song writers and theatrical producers at their work. The major motif of the late F. Scott Fitzgerald was social disillusionment, that is, the disillusionments of people who enjoy much leisure, and who finally became bored with it. The characters of Hemingway are seen, mainly, in a tourist world. The occupations of his characters are of secondary importance: when he shows characters at work, we see prize fighters,

newspaper men in foreign countries, waiters, bull fighters and so on.

Directly, or by implication, the motifs, and the actions of characters in a great preponderance of American fiction deal with aspects of the enjoyment of life, with what people do and what happens to them when they are on vacations and can spend money, or develop their awareness, with how they play cards, make love, go to parties, talk in social gatherings and so on. This can be generalized in the statement that a dominant theme or motif, then, of American fiction is that of leisure, and with this, that of how to use or how commodities of this kind or another are used. Some of this fiction is couched in the tones of glorification of the American Way of Life: other works of this kind are critical. The Hollywood hero, the hero of the plot short story, is almost always happy at the end, and involved in his happiness, in most instances, is the fact that he has gained access to the commodities he will need to enjoy the fruits of a Benthamistic paradise: often, the hero of serious and "realistic" fiction is unhappy, and he finds that commodities are not enough. Sinclair Lewis has criticized the low cultivation of *Babbitt* and *Main Streets*: he then later wrote a novel with the theme that a hotel was a work of art. Leaving aside literary criticism of this novel, it is suggestive of my point here: a commodity is a work of art.

Culture Superfluous

A common reaction to these aspects of the so-called American Way of Life has been that of using culture as a form of snobbery. We have already noted this in passing in our reference to how eastern critics have treated writers from other areas with such recurrent and usually predictable condescension. In fact, most American literary criticism reeks with snobbery, although it is often concealed behind democratic phrases. In the last analysis, this snobbery is based on a class idea of culture: culture as something which is the special prerequisite of people with (a) peculiarly sensitive capabilities of appreciation, or (b) the income to possess objects and the time to read books that others cannot possess or appreciate, or (c) a combination of these. A reason for this snobbery is that culture has never had the same meaning in America as it has in Europe. Building, exploiting a new continent, most Americans had little need of the culture that concerned Europeans.

If we go back to Mark Twain, we can

note—for instance in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*—how he criticizes what went for culture in the immediate background of the frontier—romanticism revealed in the adventures of kings and dukes. Tom Sawyer concerns himself with this, and builds a fantasy life out of it. Or we can see a related indication of this in Booth Tarkington's *Penrod*. The minister who is cultivated is also effeminate, and the ladies dote over tea and poets. The sissies among the boys like to read. *Penrod*, however, is the real boy, and his father is a man in a man's world who (unlike the minister) smokes a cigar and has little use for poets and books. In Frank Norris' *The Pit*, the artist, Corthell, is removed from the business of making money, and concerns himself with his impressions and art objects from Europe. When the Great Bull of the Pit, Mr. Jadwin, is too busy to pay attention to his wife, the artist reads her Browning and other poets. Snobbish conceptions of culture are related to the fact that those who were doing the work of exploiting the resources of the American continent, who were making money, who were gaining power, had, with rare exceptions, little need of culture. Often, they let their wives attend to this realm, and they sent their sons to eastern colleges where some of it could be imbibed. And the sons and daughter and wives could make the Grand Tour of Europe, look at Rome, at castles, at pictures and at medieval armor, and thereby, they could get culture, and the business man could buy a lot of this culture, and put it in his house. Men, with little more cultivation than that contained in the three R's, could become millionaires, powers in the nation. Since there was little need for culture, it did not become important.

Realistic School

At the same time, optimism is an attitude related to the role of culture in capitalistic America. For decades, there was tremendous hope and optimism in America. Marching capitalism, after all, had an entire continent to develop and exploit. With this, there was opportunity. There was, in American class relationships, an extraordinary fluidity. New generations produced new financial kings and speculative barons. The sons of successive waves of immigrant rose on the social ladder. New lands, new jobs, new opportunities were open on all sides. The Success legend was no myth. After all, the statement that a child born in a log cabin of a working man could be Presi-

dent of the United States was not a mere fiction: Abraham Lincoln was so born. Briefly, opportunity was open on the planes of business, and in the field of politics. The country once thronged with the so-called self-made man. Socially, life offered a more open universe in America than anywhere else in the world. When, under such circumstances, you could get a bird in your hand, what need was there to concern yourself with two of them in the bush?

The growth of the so-called realistic school of writers in America has charted the course of the change in the American dream, of the decline in the basis for this optimism and hope of success. As such, realism has been a means of counting the cost of American civilization. In Dreiser, the successful man is insatiable: he can win neither a sufficiency of power nor of love. In Sinclair Lewis, the Babbitt has no inner life. His life, and hence his character, is formed in terms of commodities that he owns, gadgets that he can put into his house, and in a religion of service. In Ring Lardner, the glamor of the sporting hero is shown to be inglorious when the man is looked at. The sons of the rich in F. Scott Fitzgerald became sad young men, and they don't know what to do. Sad horns do not play forever. Concomitant with this, we note that other emphases tend to drop out of American writing. A major theme of writers like Henry James, of Stephen Crane in *The Red Badge of Courage*, of Harold Frederic in *The Damnation of Theron Ware* can be described as that of awareness. Rather than awareness, development, the realistic novels of the twentieth century usually deal with movement, geographical movement and social movement from class, and with this, the consequences of what happens either to those who have moved, geographically or socially or both, or with what happens to their children. Another emphasis that we find rather rarely in American fiction is that of friendship. It is striking to observe how little there is friendship (friendship such as that portrayed between Pierre and Andrey of *War and Peace*) in American fiction. One of the reasons why Clyde Griffiths, of *An American Tragedy*, ends as he does is because he has no friends. He has no one to talk to, no one whom he can really trust. The characters of American fiction are unduly competitive, or else, they possess the color of their *milieu*. In one way or another, many of them are strikingly aggressive. They are American individualists.

Describes Man in Commodity Culture

In this context, how strikingly can we see the difference between individualism in American literature, practically since the post-Civil War period, and individualism in Walt Whitman. Whitman, one of America's first figures of world literary importance, was the poet *par excellence* of individualism. And yet in Whitman, individualism is social, friendly, comradely, inclusive, non-aggressive. Walt, alone with a blade grass, alone on the shores of the bay, wherever he goes, is surrounded with friends, with a feeling of friendship. No matter where he goes, he is not alone. The entire universe is an arena of love and friendship, love and friendship which are not tainted with the slightest sentimentality. Contrast this with the attitude of Mark Twain, another great American writer. In his last years, he looked at the "damned human race," and he saw man, alone in a dreary waste of space. In this same contrast, let us consider the boasting of Walt Whitman, and the boasting of many characters in twentieth century American fiction. When old Walt boasted, he did so because he felt that he was like all other men. He boasted because he belonged to the great human family, a brotherhood of men who lived on the earth bravely and who joyously opened their senses to all of the possibilities of life: To him, living, life and death were adventurous. How different this is from the boasting of, say, Babbitt. Babbitt has a vanity of things, a vanity because he belongs, not

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to the human family, but to an organization of business men who are the best of good fellows, the like of which is practically non-existent anywhere else. They call each other by their first names as if it were a ritual they must perform because a resolution was passed requiring such a ritual. Many parallel illustrations also could be cited here, and these would only give added confirmation to my analysis.

Let me then repeat—American literature—regardless of precise literary evalu-

ations of specific writers—has been a treatment of the American Way of Life. It has been an effort to explore, to reveal, to criticize, to eulogize, or to state the tragedies and disappointments of men and women living in the closest approach to paradise that capitalistic civilization can or will ever produce on this earth. As such, it is an account, however incomplete, of the story of how man tries to live in a commodity civilization. The notes of dissatisfaction, the notes of personal irritation, the tragedies so often

told, all of these are related to this one central fact. For America has gradually been producing a culture of commodities. In this culture, the commodity itself tends to become a value superior to all other values. Serious American realism is, really, an account of what happens to men when the commodity is the real *summum bonum*.

JAMES T. FARRELL.

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