

**THE
ANATOMY
OF
STALINISM**

by Tom Kerry

(for members only)

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Introductory Note

The following article, "The Anatomy of Stalinism," by Tom Kerry consists of two lectures that were given at the August 1970 Socialist Activists and Educational Conference held at Oberlin, Ohio.

A discussion is taking place within the Fourth International on the questions that are discussed in this Education for Socialists bulletin. For that reason, this Education for Socialists bulletin is for sale only to members of the Young Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party.

The Socialist Workers Party is prevented by reactionary legislation from maintaining organizational ties with the Fourth International. Nevertheless, we retain an active interest in the ideas under discussion in the world Trotskyist movement and express our opinions on important questions.

G.H.

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THE ANATOMY OF STALINISM

by Tom Kerry

The subject of our discussion is the anatomy of Stalinism. This is a big subject, and I fear that in the time at our disposal we will be unable to explore it as exhaustively as it warrants.

The Trotskyist movement has been immersed in the study of Stalinism and in actual combat with it since we began. No movement in the world has said more, contributed more and cast greater illumination on this subject and the problems with which it confronted the working class movement, than the movement founded by Leon Trotsky.

This was one of Trotsky's unique contributions to Marxist theory. Trotsky spoke as a foremost leader of the successful proletarian revolution which established the first workers state; a participant who played a leading role in the consummation of the victory; a witness to the subsequent degeneration of the state, who subjected the historical drama to an incisive analysis while it was happening. Not only did he provide an analysis, but at each stage he offered a counter-program of action.

Trotsky was the first to analyze the character of the Stalinist bureaucracy and designate it as a bureaucratic caste, that is, a parasitic formation that had no essential role to play in the new property relations and forms of production established by the October Revolution.

This caste had a dual function, which gave it its contradictory character. I urge any comrades who are interested in studying the dialectic, especially that aspect of it that deals with contradiction, to study Stalinism from the beginning. It is the most contradictory social phenomenon in all history.

The Stalinist bureaucracy serves a dual function. On the one hand, its function is to defend the nationalized property established by the October Revolution. In that sense it plays a progressive role. On the other hand, as a reactionary political tendency which usurped the power of the workers in Russia, it functions as an agency of world imperialism in the world working class movement, and thereby plays a counter-revolutionary role.

Trotsky analyzed Stalinism in the period of its rise and development. In its early period he designated it as bureaucratic centrism. At that time he was talking about tendencies in the Communist

Party and the policy of the government administered by the bureaucracy.

It is on this question of bureaucratic centrism that I'm going to devote a major part of my first talk, because it is around this concept and this designation that differences have developed in the world Trotskyist movement that persist to this very day. The comrades will recall the International Information Bulletin (No. 4 in 1970, June) which contains the draft resolution on the "Cultural Revolution" adopted by the last World Congress majority, and Joe Hansen's comments. They will have noted that one of the amendments the majority made to the original draft resolution was the addition of the term "bureaucratic centrism."

This may sound like quibbling, or, perhaps like an exercise in semantics. We're not interested in that sort of thing. In my opinion, what is involved is a theoretical error that has led to an incorrect political policy and can lead to very serious differences unless it's corrected. And so I want to deal with the problem in much greater detail than might seem to be warranted otherwise. I will discuss both its historical and theoretical aspects. So that the issue will be better understood I'm isolating this question from the many other facets of Stalinism.

Prior to World War II, Trotsky predicted that the war would result in one of two alternatives: either the extension of the world revolution or the crushing of the Soviet Union. But history proved more contradictory and complicated than even the genius of Trotsky was able to foresee. It ended in neither of these two alternatives.

In the period prior to the war and terminating with the Stalin-Hitler Pact, Stalinism developed and was consolidated on the basis of an unending series of defeats. As Trotsky explained, each of these defeats served to strengthen the bureaucracy and contributed to the defeat of the Left Opposition. Trotsky dubbed Stalin the organizer of defeat. This characterization entered into our concept of Stalinism. And it is repeated in one form or another in the various documents issuing out of the congresses and conventions of the Trotskyist movement ever since.

Instead of either alternative advanced by Trotsky being realized, a new phenomenon made its appearance at the end of the war. The Yugoslav Revolution, led by

a Stalinist party, in defiance of Stalin's treaties with the Allies at Yalta, Teheran, Potsdam, etc., took state power. There was also the establishment by the Stalinists in Eastern Europe first of "coalition" regimes, and then of deformed workers states after the outbreak of the Cold War. With the advent of the Cold War, the "coalition" regimes were brushed aside by the Soviet power which had its troops in most of these countries, and workers states -- deformed workers states -- were established.

I'm not going to be able to go into a lengthy explanation of many of these events. I leave that to the discussion period. If I refer to some event or some problem that arose without sufficient elaboration you can raise the matter in the discussion. I know I shall leave many gaps. But as I said before I'm going to concentrate on trying to clarify at least the one point I mentioned.

We make a distinction between a degenerated workers state and a deformed workers state. Roughly speaking, the difference is that the deformed workers states were never healthy to begin with. We designate the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state because it did begin as a healthy workers state under Lenin and Trotsky. The early Bolshevik regime subsequently degenerated. That is the basic distinction. What they have in common is that both are based upon the socialist forms of property, that is nationalized property, the monopoly of foreign trade, etc.

A third development of the post-war era important to our discussion was the Chinese Revolution led by the Mao wing of the world Stalinist movement.

The problem that arose in the world Trotskyist movement at that time was how to reconcile our view of Stalinism as counterrevolutionary "through and through" with this new phenomenon, the phenomenon of Stalinist parties leading, or ostensibly leading, successful revolutions that established workers states.

It would seem as though we were confronted with two alternatives on the basis of historical experience, primarily the experience in Yugoslavia and China, where the transfer of state power developed on the basis of a surging mass movement as distinct from the Eastern European countries, where deformed workers states were established fundamentally by virtue of the power of the Soviet Red Army. It seemed one would have to conclude on the basis of this historical experience either that our view of Stalinism as counterrevolutionary was incorrect, or that in capturing state power the Yugo-

slav and Chinese Communist parties were not Stalinist, or not strictly Stalinist, or not exactly Stalinist.

There was, of course, another view, one embraced by a wing of the Cochranite faction -- I assume you're all familiar with the Cochranite split of 1953 -- that believed that Stalinism constituted the wave of the future. This was a concept advanced by Michel Pablo in his thesis of "centuries of deformed workers states." (See International Information Bulletins, December 1949 and March 1951.) Pablo advanced the thesis affirming that the whole course of revolutionary development would have to go through Stalinism. Deformed workers states would be established on an international scale as a necessary stage in the unfolding of the world socialist revolution.

This theory was rejected by the SWP and by a majority of the international movement. The Cochranites later split with the SWP, and then with the International, ostensibly over this question. After grappling with the problem of post-World War II Stalinism, the majority of the International adopted the view that the Yugoslav and Chinese CPs were not strictly Stalinist. How then to characterize the new phenomena?

At the Fourth World Congress held in 1954 -- remember, the split in the International took place in 1953 and two factions were established -- the faction that we then referred to as the Pabloites adopted a resolution entitled "The Rise and Decline of Stalinism," which states:

~~There is no contradiction between the fact that, on the one hand, the Yugoslav CP and the Chinese CP have been able to lead a revolution victoriously and independently of the Kremlin and have in these instances ceased to be Stalinist parties in the proper meaning of this term....~~ [available in Education for Socialists bulletin entitled The Development and Disintegration of World Stalinism. See p. 18.]

From this determination, there followed the ineluctable conclusion that "both the Chinese CP and to a certain extent also the Yugoslav CP are in reality bureaucratic centrist parties." (Ibid., p. 20.)

I want you to pay close attention because I think we can trace the beginning of the present difference to this analysis in 1954. You will also recall that we had our own resolution in 1955 entitled "The Soviet Union Today," in which this formulation does not appear. (See SWP Discussion Bulletin A-33, 1955)

I continue to quote from "The Rise and Decline of Stalinism," which asserts that in these "bureaucratic centrist parties," which however "still find themselves under the pressure of the revolution in their countries, we do not call upon the proletariat of these countries to constitute new revolutionary parties or to prepare a political revolution in these countries." (page 20)

If these parties are bureaucratic centrist, in the sense that Trotsky had applied this term to the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia, then it follows, as Trotsky concluded at the time, that the call for a new revolutionary party and a political revolution would be politically unjustified. Trotsky called, instead, for reforming the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist International. His tactic was to try and win over a majority to a revolutionary Marxist position.

Given the context in which the "bureaucratic centrism" designation had been applied in the Trotskyist movement up to this point in 1954, it would follow that opposition to the political revolution in favor of reform of the party in China and in Yugoslavia would apply. And so to continue:

We are working toward the constitution of a left tendency within the JCP and within the Chinese CP, a tendency which will be able, in connection with the development of the world revolutionary rise, to assure and to lead a new stage forward in the revolution in these two countries. (page 20)

From around the period in 1954 to the present, at least to the period of the 1969 World Congress, the third since reunification, the comrades of the present majority of the International obstinately clung to the formula "bureaucratic centrism," although coupling it today with the call for a political revolution. They either fail or refuse to recognize the obvious contradiction involved. Let us pursue the question further.

The world Trotskyist movement reunified in 1963. In 1965, the Second World Congress of the Fourth International after reunification adopted a resolution entitled "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Crisis of the International Communist Movement."

This document was published in the International Socialist Review in the spring of 1966. That resolution states:

The Chinese Communist Party cannot be considered to have been a Stalinist

party in the strict sense of the term; that is, subordinated since the twenties to the bureaucratic leadership of the Kremlin. The Mao leadership had its own personality; and its policies, although often marked in practice by compromises with the Moscow leadership which led to the gravest deviations, had a generally centrist character leaning toward the left. [Now we have bureaucratic centrism leaning toward the left.]

The Mao leadership was also shaped by long years of difficult struggles and it underwent the impact of the great popular revolution that led it to power.

Thus, in the light of the international relationship of forces, the dynamic of the Chinese revolution, and the special features of the Maoist leadership, it can be concluded that the bureaucratism in China, bad as it is in and of itself, is not the same as the bureaucratism that developed in the Soviet Union, into a powerfully consolidated caste. It was Trotsky's view that the Stalinist experience, viewed in all its concreteness, was due to a completely special combination of forces and circumstances. His forecast that it would never be repeated still holds. (page 80, International Socialist Review, Spring 1966)

I am prepared, at the outset, to concede that we can preclude a repetition of the identical historical circumstances under which Stalinism arose in the Soviet Union. I think it is quite safe ruling that out -- but that does not settle the question of the character of the Maoist regime in China. Not at all.

The recurrence of the formula "bureaucratic centrism" came as a surprise to us in the SWP because it had not appeared in the original draft of the 1965 World Congress resolution. It was added at the congress. There was no opportunity to register an objection. We didn't even know the comrades were thinking of adding it to the resolution at the congress.

There was an exchange of correspondence later on the matter. I would like to quote from it to clarify the way the problem developed historically. We wrote:

Since receiving the final draft of the resolution on the Sino-Soviet conflict, on February 21 (the same day, incidentally, on which we received the issue of Quatrième Internationale in which it was published), we have

held a number of discussions on the problem that was created for us, by the considerable modifications that were introduced into the draft submitted to the congress.

The most significant changes involve the characterization of the Mao leadership. In the draft resolution, the Mao leadership was held to come under the general category of Stalinism although with peculiarities of its own due to the influence of the Chinese revolution. [That was a formulation with which we were in accord.] The direction of the changes introduced into the draft resolution was to substitute for this a characterization of the Mao leadership as left centrist.

Then we quote the section of the resolution which I just read to you. And we asked for an explanation. Was it just somebody's afterthought? Or was it inserted because it had been in a previous resolution? Did the amendment imply that the question of the political revolution was again called into question? We didn't know.

We received a reply from one of the leading comrades in the International dealing with the concept of bureaucratic centrism, which is, in my opinion, incorrect. I quote:

On the question of the estimation of the Mao leadership, Art will write you what have been the proposals of the United Secretariat, who took up your letter, on the discussion procedure, and Livio will write you at length on the unfortunate circumstances which led to different formulations. (he was the reporter on this question.) But I should like to insist again upon the question of the very slight difference the two formulas really make. [That is, he considered that the differences were very slight between the two formulas.] For the Old Man [Trotsky] Stalinism is a specific variant of centrism (you know as I do the many quotations from him where he formulates this idea). We completely agree that Mao's party is a centrist party, strongly influenced by the Stalinist origins and grooming of its leadership. If we use the formula "centrist, generally inclined to be left centrist," it is for the very concrete specific reason, to wit, that the main historic characteristic of the CCP is the fact that they took power in 1949 and overthrew capitalism in the biggest country in the world.

Whatever may be our specific criticism of their unnumberable shortcomings --

on which, I believe, we generally agree -- the basic characterization must conform above all to that basic fact. And when you characterize them basically as a Stalinist party (instead of a left centrist party of Stalinist origins and many bureaucratic traits inherited from Stalinism), then you come of course to a somewhat paradoxical conclusion that a basically Stalinist party is capable of overthrowing capitalism, against the furious opposition of Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy! The whole notion of Stalinism is then turned upside down.

May I remind you of the origin of that formula, "centrism generally tending toward the left" in our movement? [Now that's very important, because history and historical development plays a very important role in the shaping of our terminology as well as the ideas behind the terminology. That's what we're concerned about -- not the semantics, not the words, not the expression, not the term -- but the ideas that lurk behind the terminology.] If I'm not mistaken (he goes on) it was used for the first time in a resolution which I wrote myself on the characterization of the Yugoslav workers state, and which was adopted by the SWP sometime in 1950 or 1951.

We were at that time at the beginning of the struggle not only about the class nature of the glacis countries, [that is the Buffer States of Eastern Europe] but also the whole reevaluation of the relations between capitalism, Stalinism and world revolution in the light of the post-war events.

And as the comrades who have read the documents would testify, it was a rather lengthy and a very rich discussion, because these were new problems, problems unanticipated, as I say, not only by us, by Trotsky, but by everyone else. And it occasioned a very long discussion in which we finally arrived at a consensus -- I thought. But it appears, not quite. To continue the quote:

It was especially against Pablo's basic tendency that I insisted strongly upon the need to characterize the Yugoslav CP as a left centrist party and not a Stalinist party, (whatever may have been the Stalinist nature of their habits, traditions and attitudes towards many questions) because I wanted to conserve the notion of the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism. As Stalin had actually opposed the setting up of the

Yugoslav workers state, as he had done in China, the idea of calling the parties who had overthrown capitalism in those countries through a revolution -- be it a very distorted one -- Stalinist seemed to be rather far-fetched, and included the danger of changing our basic characterization of Stalinism, (which is not simply any form of workers bureaucracy, but the specific movement born from the usurpation of power in the Soviet Union by the Soviet bureaucracy).

I think the arguments which held at that time still hold today, and that it is much more embarrassing from the point of view of upholding our traditional programme and identity, to call parties who lead victorious, (be it distorted) revolutions "Stalinist," than to call them left-centrist parties of Stalinist origin and tradition, and with strong bureaucratic inclinations. And if you don't change this characterization in the case of Yugoslavia, it becomes all the more embarrassing to change it in the case of China, for nobody could argue that the Yugoslavs were more to the left than the Chinese centrists (=Stalinists).

That was the text of the letter in its entirety. Let's probe a little further.

Trotsky settled accounts with the concept of "bureaucratic centrism" in an article entitled "The Workers State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism," which was republished in the Summer 1956 ISR. (It has since been published in Writings of Leon Trotsky 1934-35, pp. 166-184.) Now, if you read Joe Hansen's article in the International Information Bulletin # 4, June 1970, on the differences between the two documents on the "Cultural Revolution," you will find that he discusses in some detail the development of Trotsky's views on this question of bureaucratic centrism. I'm not going to repeat everything that he says there; I'll amplify, if that's the correct term, on some of the arguments. (See appendix.)

In his article, Trotsky begins by saying that the question of Thermidor played a very important role in the controversies within the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union in the very early period, 1924-1927. There was a tendency in the Left Opposition which called itself the "democratic centralism" group. It held that Thermidor had already been accomplished in the Soviet Union, interpreting Thermidor as meaning the victory of the counterrevolution. They insisted that the counterrevolution had conquered

in the Soviet Union, and that what was required was a new social revolution in order to reestablish the socialist property forms; a revolution to be led by a new Bolshevnik-Leninist party of the type which led the revolution to victory in 1917.

The Left Opposition split over this question. The democratic centralism group split from the Left Opposition not so much over the controversy involving the analogy with Thermidor, but over the political conclusions that were drawn therefrom. The Left Opposition majority, led by Trotsky, held that the basic economic conquests of the October Revolution still prevailed; that the basic social conquests still remained -- the nationalized property, monopoly of foreign trade, etc.; and that this was the base upon which the bureaucracy rested. Therefore, to call for a social revolution meant to turn your back on the remaining conquests of October, instead of struggling to preserve and to extend them while seeking to restore the Leninist democratic norms characteristic of the early Bolshevnik Party.

The dispute was somewhat analogous, I might say -- with all proportions guarded -- to the dispute we had with the petty-bourgeois opposition in 1939 over the class character of the Soviet Union. The issue was whether the USSR was a degenerated workers state or whether it was a new "bureaucratic collectivist" state. Trotsky, at that time, said it would be foolish for us to engage in a big factional dispute over a terminological difference, if all that was involved was a dispute over what to call this thing, this new thing, this monstrous thing that had emerged from the first proletarian revolution. But it turned out to be more than that, you see. He said so long as we agree on the political conclusions, i.e. the necessity of defending the Soviet Union against imperialist attack, we could continue to differ over what to call it and still remain in the same party. But it was precisely over the political line of defense that we could not reach agreement and so a split occurred.

Let me just "amplify" for those who are not too familiar with French revolutionary history, what Thermidor meant in the revolutionary movement. Thermidor was the name of one of the months in the new calendar set up during the French revolution of the 18th century. On the Ninth of Thermidor, the reaction triumphed and led almost directly to the establishment of a Bonapartist regime. Napoleon Bonaparte became first consul, and then emperor of France. Trotsky points out in his article that the analogy with Thermidor,

like all analogies, must be guarded; that the reaction of Ninth Thermidor in France did not restore feudal property relations.

It was a political reaction, a political reaction which destroyed the plebeian revolutionaries who made the revolution and who were trying to drive it forward. But the reaction took power on the basis of preservation of the property forms established by the French revolution, that is, bourgeois property forms, capitalist property forms. The reaction never restored feudal property forms and feudal relations.

Bonaparte, in his various military enterprises throughout Europe, never found an ally in feudalism. In fact he felt compelled to overthrow feudalism and establish bourgeois property relations in those countries in which he conquered, as the Soviet Union was compelled to "export" its property forms during the course of World War II to Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, those countries which were structurally assimilated to the Soviet Union. But we'll go into that later.

Now when this comrade in his letter refers to Trotsky's use of the term bureaucratic centrism, he must refer expressly to the prior period, because after this article was written, I have been unable to find anywhere in Trotsky any use of the term bureaucratic centrism. In this article Trotsky refers to the Bonapartist regime of Stalin, Stalinist Bonapartism, not bureaucratic centrism. And then he sums up: "The Soviet bureaucracy -- 'Bolshevist' in its traditions, but in reality having long since renounced its traditions, petty-bourgeois in its composition and spirit -- was summoned to regulate the antagonism between the proletariat and the peasantry, between the workers state and world imperialism: such is the social base of bureaucratic Centrism...."

Let me repeat, "...to regulate the antagonism between the proletariat and the peasantry, between the workers state and world imperialism: such is the social base of bureaucratic Centrism, of its zig-zags, its power, its weakness, and its influence on the world proletarian movement which has been so fatal. As the bureaucracy becomes more independent, as more and more power is concentrated in the hands of a single person, the more does bureaucratic Centrism turn into Bonapartism." (page 40, Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1934-35.)

Trotsky uses "bureaucratic centrism" in The Third International After Lenin, written in 1928. This was in his Criticism of the Draft Program of the Communist

International (Comintern) which had been prepared for the Comintern's Sixth World Congress. In 1927-1928, Trotsky insisted that the Left Opposition continue to function as part of the Communist International and of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, despite the fact that it had been expelled from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and from all the parties of the Comintern.

The program of the Left Opposition was for reform -- reform of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the Communist International. It was only after Hitler took power in 1933 -- following Stalin's Third Period insanity, when the Communist Party of Germany permitted Hitler to march to power without a struggle -- that Trotsky declared the Communist International dead and immediately proclaimed the need to build a new International. He said "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is dead! Therefore we've got to have a political revolution, and a new party, a party of the Fourth International in the Soviet Union."

From that day forward Trotsky did not use the term bureaucratic centrism to characterize the Soviet bureaucracy. Bonapartism, yes. And terms of a much more descriptive, I would say, more apt character, like syphilis of the labor movement, yes! But no more bureaucratic centrism. So when they tell us that it's a departure on our part to abandon the use of the term bureaucratic centrism, which played such a part in the whole history of the development of the ideas of the Left Opposition, I say: "Just a moment, comrades. That's not history. That is not history. Not as we've learned it."

Trotsky fixes the date, the date of the beginning of the Thermidorian reaction as the year 1924. That, he says, was the beginning -- and I quote:

"The year 1924 -- that was the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor." (page 174) And he concludes, "The Thermidor of the great Russian Revolution is not before us but already far behind. The Thermidorians can celebrate, approximately, the tenth anniversary of their victory." (page 182) Now I puzzled over this when I read it, and reread it, and puzzled over it some more. Was Trotsky trying to say here in drawing up the balance sheet of the dispute within the Left Opposition over the question of Bonapartism and Thermidor, that the qualitative change had taken place, not in 1933, but as early as 1924, that it was no longer correct to characterize the Stalinist regime as bureaucratic centrism?

It's not too clear, but there's a certain amount of logic to it. If Thermidor began in 1924, then what happens to bureaucratic centrism? You could say, well, Thermidor was a process -- Trotsky marks 1924 as "the beginning" -- a process of reaction that underwent a qualitative change in 1933; that 1933 was the historical test. But why not 1927? The Chinese revolution, defeated because of the character of intervention of the Kremlin in China? These are some of the problems that you younger comrades will have to grapple with in your study of the development of the ideas of the Left Opposition, of Trotskyism and Stalinism on a world scale.

I just present it to you as a problem. But I know this: while that may pose a problem, there is no problem about what happened after 1933! Trotsky then said: "The Communist International is dead!" And in the same breath: "We must proceed to build the Fourth International."

All right. Now, what are the dangers of clinging to an outworn formula, an incorrect political idea which was correct in one historical context and became outmoded in the course of world historical development? In the resolution, the same resolution of the Second World Congress after reunification, we see examples of what the result can be of clinging to formulas that are no longer applicable. For example, in the resolution on the Sino-Soviet conflict cited above, unwarranted and false conclusions are drawn over the alleged differences between the Peking and Moscow bureaucracies. Let me cite one example. It says:

One of the consequences of this new relationship of forces on a world scale is that the Maoist group itself, however fixed its bureaucratic pattern of thinking and practice may be, is not at all merely repeating the policies and views of Stalin. They display a decisive difference with Stalin, for example, in the key concept of building "socialism in one country," advancing instead the idea of "uninterrupted revolution." Particularly since the disastrous experience of the "great leap forward" when Mao set out to build "communism in one country" -- and at a faster rate than either Stalin or Khrushchev -- the Chinese leaders have been emphasizing the need for socialism to triumph in other countries. (International Socialist Review, Spring 1966, page 80)

If I understand it, the resolution seeks to draw a parallel between the Maoist rhetorical bombast about "uninterrupted" revolution with that of

Trotsky's permanent revolution. If that were true, it would mark a very important change in the political physiognomy of Maoism. If it were true, at least some of Mao's thoughts would be palatable enough for us to swallow. Are the Maoists for "uninterrupted revolution"? If it is true, we would have to revise our position on Maoism. To begin with we would have to abandon the call for political revolution if Maoism has, in addition to displaying "a decisive difference" with Stalin on the question of building socialism in one country, advocated the policy and practice of uninterrupted revolution.

Socialism in one country! That's the "theoretical" cesspool from which the poison of Stalinism welled up over the entire working class movement of the world! The original source! The fountain-head!

If it were true I would say we would have to welcome Mao with open arms, and say: "Brother, if you won't join us, we'll join you!" But let's take a little closer look before we take the great leap. Is the Maoist concept of uninterrupted revolution analogous to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution?

In an article that I wrote for the September-October, 1969 ISR, "A Mao-Stalin Rift: Myth or Fact?" I quoted from a pamphlet by Chen Po-ta, who was a leading theoretician of the Chinese Communist Party. Not only that. He is now probably the foremost exponent of Mao's thought in China. He's one of the leftmost of the "left wing" of the "Cultural Revolution." He's an authority, an unimpeachable authority, I might add -- on Maoism, not on Leninism. In a pamphlet entitled "Mao Tse-tung on the Chinese Revolution" written in 1951, Chen Po-ta observes:

"In the light of the concrete conditions in China, Mao Tse-tung developed the teachings of Lenin and Stalin regarding the continuous development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into the socialist revolution." And then, quoting Mao, he adds: "We advocate the theory of the continuous development of revolution, but not the Trotskyite theory of permanent revolution. We stand for the attainment of socialism through all the necessary stages of the democratic republic. We are opposed to tail-ism, but we are also opposed to adventurism and ultra-revolutionism." (quoted in ISR, September-October 1969, page 7. My emphasis.) Now that was in 1951. Has there been any change since then?

The World Congress resolution was adopted after the Indonesian catastrophe

of 1965. And the resolution deals in some detail with that event. Let me quote from the resolution:

...even after the anti-Communist offensive of the generals was unleashed [in Indonesia], the leadership of the Indonesian Communist Party refrained from calling upon the masses for an all-out reply and continued to bank on Sukarno although he was becoming an outright captive of the army. Overwhelmed by the repression, confronted with the choice between political suicide and a turn toward guerrilla warfare, the leading faction of the Indonesian Communist Party, at least those who survived the October 1965 disaster, seem to have chosen the latter alternative.

This choice was facilitated by the fact that parallel to its line of class collaboration, an opposite tendency existed in the ideology of the Indonesian CP. Some of its concepts are rather close to the Chinese concept of the uninterrupted revolution; the Indonesian CP constantly explained that the peasants are the fundamental revolutionary force, that even in the democratic revolution the leading role belongs to the workers and peasants, and that the formation of the government of the people's democracy type constituted its immediate aim.

But these contradictions were confined within a strategic line of "revolution by stages," within a policy of coalition with the national bourgeoisie headed by Sukarno. This led the Aidit leadership to put brakes on the mass movement, to hold the masses prisoner to "Nasakom" -- the "national front" of the three main political groupings (the Sukarno nationalists, the Moslem Religious Teachers and the Communist Party). This paved the way to the bitter defeat suffered by the biggest Communist Party in the capitalist world. (International Socialist Review, Spring 1966, page 81.)

In other words, application of the Maoist concept of the "uninterrupted revolution" in Indonesia led to the slaughter of the Indonesian Communist Party. It led to the greatest defeat on an international scale since the defeat of the working class of Germany in 1933. That's no exaggeration! Three hundred thousand, some three hundred thousand members of the Communist Party slaughtered! That's a high price to pay for the "uninterrupted revolution," à la Mao as applied by Aidit of the Indonesian Communist Party!

In the light of this experience, how is it possible to speak, or even intimate that the Maoist rhetoric.... Words fail me. But even more recently, last year, the Communist Party of Peru published a savage diatribe against Trotskyism, centering on what? An all-out attack on our concept of permanent revolution, as advocated and applied by the Fourth International group in that country. They counterpose to it the Maoist formula of uninterrupted revolution, which is spelled out in precise detail and adds up to the old Stalinist formula of revolution in stages.

In other words, they say that in Peru the democratic revolution is on the order of the day. That's the first stage: the democratic revolution in which the national patriotic bourgeoisie is fated to lead the struggle for national liberation against American imperialism. They say that the revolution in Peru would have to first go through the stage of the establishment of a bourgeois democratic republic with the labor movement and Communist Party playing the role of loyal opposition. Then, at a much later stage, the "opposition" will begin the struggle for the proletarian revolution. This is the Stalinist theory of revolution in stages. Hsinhua, which is the daily news service of the Maoists, published the complete text of this document, without comment. And Hsinhua, let me inform you, doesn't publish anything that Mao doesn't approve of, nothing! If my memory serves me, this document was considered important enough to be republished in Peking Review.

But an even more important question than permanent revolution vs. uninterrupted revolution of the Maoist variety is the question which we have always considered of decisive significance, the theory of socialism in one country. If it is true, as the 1965 World Congress resolution affirms, that the Maoist group displays "a decisive difference with Stalin, for example, in the key concept of building 'socialism in one country,'" it would, in my opinion, require a fundamental and basic revision of our view not only of Maoism, but of Stalinism on a world scale.

The theory of socialism in one country marked a basic revision of Marxism. It provided the ideological framework for the transition from revolutionary socialism to national (reform) socialism. That has always been our position, that is the position of Trotskyism. The theory of socialism in one country is not Marxist, it's anti-Marxist. It's not proletarian, it's petty-bourgeois. It's not revolutionary, it's reformist. And any tendency in

in the world today that subscribes to this theory is, in my opinion, Stalinist!

That doesn't mean that all Stalinist parties and regimes are the same. Oh, no! There are some, like the Chinese and Russian, who are at this moment on the verge of military warfare! But that doesn't make Mao any less a Stalinist than Brezhnev in the ideological sphere, or in practice. Those tendencies who subscribe to the theory of socialism in one country, whether they function as heads of states or exist as opposition parties in capitalist or semi-colonial countries, today occupy the place that Social Democracy did in Lenin's day. They are social reformists, who preach and practice the line of national reform.

The one thing that identifies Stalinism as a world tendency in the working class movement is support and advocacy of the theory of building socialism in a single country. Let me read an interchange on this point which appeared in The Case of Leon Trotsky; it is an interchange between John Dewey, who was the head of the commission investigating the Moscow trials, and Leon Trotsky.

Dewey [to Trotsky] : Now I wish to ask you a question more on the line of your theoretical position, about a question involved in the struggle of the Left Opposition. Why did the question of socialism in one country and the world revolution become such a fundamental point of division?

Trotsky: Because the theory of socialism in one country signifies in our eyes the repudiation of internationalism. We consider internationalism not as an abstract idea, but as the first interest of the workers' movement of the world; not for the purpose of building an independent, isolated socialist state. Then the Russian worker would not have a vital interest in connection with the workers of other countries.

Dewey: Was that a theoretical objection, based upon a general theory?

Trotsky: Yes, theoretical, and at the same time practical, because the international policies of the Stalin government are directed against the interests of the international proletariat. And, more than that, as I tried to explain, I believe yesterday, Stalin himself changed his position during one year." (page 407.)

Let me say, in explanation, that in a compilation of articles written by Stalin under the title: Problems of Leninism, published in the spring of 1924, Stalin

specifically rejected the concept of building socialism in one country. In the fall, another issue of the book was published with just the opposite position. Of course, the first edition was suppressed. To continue the Dewey-Trotsky exchange:

Dewey: That is in the record.

Trotsky: Why? Because they substituted for Socialism -- for the idea of socialism, the regime of the solidarity of all the population -- substituted for that idea the idea of a satisfied bureaucracy. They named that "Socialism in one country." What we named deformation of the workers' state, they named "Socialism in one country." It was the question of the essence of Socialism itself. (page 407.)

"The essence of socialism itself" is involved in this basic revision of the international character of the workers movement, of the impossibility of carving out of the world area one section, and saying: "We're going to build a socialist utopia here while reaction, capitalism, military dictatorship, exploitation and oppression, reign throughout the rest of the world."

Under the banner of socialism in one country, the Stalinist bureaucracy grew to monstrous proportions, destroying the Soviets and the party; transforming the Comintern into a frontier guard of the Soviet state; subordinating the Communist parties and revolution abroad to the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy; first emasculating and then dissolving the Communist International.

The Stalinist bureaucracy led a whole series of defeats which laid the basis for the outbreak of World War II; then fought the war as a great patriotic war around the central slogan of "kill Germans." The theory and practice of national socialism led ineluctably to the jettisoning of revolutionary internationalism in favor of peaceful "competitive" coexistence, defense of the status quo, the parliamentary road to socialism, the whole bag and baggage of reformism, which stinks to high heaven. I was going to say to Bernsteinism, but Bernstein would be a rabid left winger in the Communist Party today.

Does this mean that Stalinism has not changed, does not change, will not change? Not at all! There have been significant changes. I might say that the theory of socialism in a single country has spawned changes never dreamed of by the bureaucracy. It is giving them nightmares that keep them awake nights. For, you see, if you can build socialism in the Soviet

Union, why not in Albania? Why not in Rumania? Why not in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary? Yes, why not? And certainly in China, with its 700 million people and its vast resources, why not in China? They all ask themselves "Why not?" and they answer in chorus, "Of course we can!" Of course they can, but only at the expense of the world revolution, and paradoxically, of their own national development.

These changes have spawned various theories. There is the theory that Stalinism died with Stalin; the theory that Stalinism equals the Moscow trials -- there haven't been any Moscow trials anywhere else, with the exception of some miniature Moscow trials in Eastern Europe in the early 1950s, therefore, no Stalinism; the theory that there cannot be a repetition of the historical circumstances that gave rise to Stalin, therefore -- no Stalinism; the theory that the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the aborted de-stalinization campaign ended Stalinism; and so forth and so on.

No. There have been changes, but not any essential change in the nature and ideology of Stalinism.

It is true that great changes will occur in the Stalinist world in the transition from monolithism to polycentrism. Monolithism applied to that period in the development of Stalinism when the Soviet Union was the only existing workers state. The Soviet bureaucracy, capitalizing on the prestige of the October Revolution, wielding its authority and its power, converted the entire world Stalinist movement into pawns subordinated to the interests of the Moscow bureaucracy.

The first break in the Stalinist monolith occurred with the Yugoslav revolution. I'll go into a little detail here because it's important; it is one of those instances cited yesterday, which raise the question of how we reconcile the Trotskyist position that Stalinism is counterrevolutionary with the fact that a Stalinist party led a successful revolution and captured state power.

To begin with, such an event was foreseen and provided for in the Transitional Program. When Trotsky wrote the Transitional Program he included a section which stated that under unique and extraordinary circumstances a Stalinist party could lead a successful revolution, and I submit that the conditions in Yugoslavia were both unique and extraordinary. For one, there was a world war in progress and Yugoslavia was occupied by the Nazis, by German troops.

The resistance movement in Yugoslavia was divided. One wing, headed by Mihailovich, led a group called the Chetniks, who had the support of the Allies, including Stalin. Another wing, led by Tito, was called the Partisans. There was a civil war in Yugoslavia that raged between these two groups conducting armed resistance to the German occupation. In the course of this civil war, as a matter of elementary survival, the Partisans were compelled to undertake a fight on two fronts: to destroy the Chetniks in order to conduct an effective struggle against the German occupation. The Chetniks, representing the national bourgeoisie of Yugoslavia, stood in greater fear of their own armed revolutionary working class than of the Nazis. Tito and the Partisans emerged victorious.

The same held true in China. The struggle was a national struggle for independence from the occupation of foreign troops combined with class war against the native bourgeoisie represented by Chiang Kai-shek. It involved whole sections of the population outside of the working class, primarily the peasantry. They did take power and they did establish a deformed workers state.

Yugoslavia represented the first break in the Stalinist monolith because it was here that the first Stalinist party captured state power. Yugoslav Stalinism's base was no longer in the Soviet Union, it was the national state upon which they rested.

The end of World War II in Europe was followed by the establishment in Eastern Europe of a number of coalition regimes, artificially imposed upon the various Eastern European countries, as part of the series of pacts in Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam, etc. between Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt -- the "Big Three" -- carving out various spheres of influence. Part of the deal was a commitment by Stalin that there would be no socialist overturns in Europe, and so Stalin artificially established these coalition governments. I say artificially, because the real power in Eastern Europe was the Soviet Red Army.

Whatever native working class revolutionary upsurges occurred as the Red Army advanced into these countries were suppressed by the Red Army. Stalin wanted no "independent revolutionary" states established in Eastern Europe. He wanted "coalition" regimes established under the immediate aegis and control of the Red Army.

The existence of these coalition regimes precipitated a debate in the

Fourth International. There was a big discussion over the class character of the states in Eastern Europe. (See Education for Socialists, bulletin entitled Class, Party and State and the Eastern European Revolution.)

Just prior to 1948-49 -- when these phony coalition regimes were unceremoniously booted out, and deformed workers states established -- the comrades arrived at a formula to characterize these states. The question was posed: What were they? Capitalist states? But capitalist states occupied by the Red Army?

Trotsky had insisted that if, in the event the Soviet Union occupied countries contiguous to the borders of the Soviet Union and maintained capitalist property relations in those countries, we would have to reconsider our whole position on the class character of the degenerated workers state. You recall the analogy of Thermidor and Bonapartism in the French revolution, where under Bonaparte, the counterrevolution did not restore feudal property relations. Bonapartism was based upon the new property forms established by the French revolution. The analogy would apply, in some form, to the territory annexed to or occupied by the Soviet Union.

The comrades arrived at what was a sort of compromise formula. They said these were capitalist states on the road to structural assimilation with the Soviet Union. Let me repeat: capitalist states on the road to structural assimilation with the Soviet Union. A contradiction in terms, I think.

When the cold war broke out, Stalin decided -- in the necessity of defending the Soviet Union against a threat by American imperialism which had launched the Marshall Plan in Europe -- to boot the bourgeoisie out of the coalition governments. With the establishment of workers' states in Eastern Europe the formula was altered. The comrades said, then, these are states in which structural assimilation has been completed. The position had a certain logic to it. These new state formations had adopted as their model the Soviet forms of production, that is, socialist forms of production, and bureaucratized state formations.

The comrades identified structural assimilation with the adoption of the pattern of economic and political organization that existed in the Soviet Union. In the original program of the Bolshevik Party, the October victory was looked upon as the beginning of the world revolution. Nobody at that time ever dreamed of implying or suggesting the possibility of building socialism in a single country.

Lenin, along with all the Bolsheviks, reiterated that the Soviet Union could not exist indefinitely, side by side with world capitalism, that one or the other would have to prevail. Either the revolution would be extended, first to Europe and then to the rest of the world, or the Soviet Union would be crushed.

When they organized the Soviet Union, they established it as a federation, a federation of Soviet Socialist Republics. And they looked to Europe, especially to Germany and to the German revolution, to come to the assistance of the backward Russian state. They held open the possibility for inclusion within the various federated Soviet Socialist Republics of a German federated soviet socialist republic, that is, assimilating into the structure of the Soviet state those areas or those revolutions, especially those contiguous to the Soviet Union, as an integral unit of the united federation of Soviet Socialist Republics. That was the perspective! That was why the federated form was adopted in the very beginning.

A different form of assimilation took place in the case of countries like Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. Those Baltic countries were conquered militarily and then assimilated into the structure of the Soviet Union. They are now a part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This is different than the relationship that exists between the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states.

Stalin never had any intention of proceeding to carry through the structural assimilation of the Eastern European countries, not at all. Not from the very beginning. In the beginning he resorted to a policy of pillage and plunder of these countries. He even sliced off a section of Rumania and assimilated that to the Soviet Union. He set up joint stock companies, exploiting these countries for the purpose of "building socialism" in the Soviet Union. He could get away with that, as I say, up to a certain point.

By the way, I may add that the break with Yugoslavia in 1948 occurred over Tito's attempt to promote the idea of a Danubian federation. I recall that in the dispute over the East European question one of the objections Ernest Mandel raised to designating these states as deformed workers states was the impossibility of developing a planned economy on the basis of the Balkanized states in Eastern Europe. He contended it was too narrow a base for a planned economy and without a planned economy there can be no genuine nationalization of the basic means of production.

Mandel later changed his position, but he had a certain point. Tito saw this problem too and tried to resolve it by promoting a Balkan federation, that is a federation of Balkan states which would begin to plan on a Balkan-wide basis, to begin building a planned economy on a Balkan-wide scale which would be a more adequate basis for building a "socialist" society. But Stalin viewed this move as a direct threat to the domination of the Soviet bureaucracy and so he launched a big offensive against the Yugoslavs. Whereas previously Tito had been considered a staunch ally, he was now metamorphosed into Tito the traitor, Tito the scoundrel, Tito the fiend. Stalin tried to destroy Tito, but did not succeed.

At the root of this schism in the Soviet Bloc was this concept of building socialism in a single country.

After the 23rd Congress of the Russian Communist Party the Stalinists announced that "socialism had already been completely established and the Soviet Union was now in the transition period from socialism to communism." And, if you please, "in a single country."

Economic planning such as is done in the Soviet Bloc is done primarily on the basis of favoring the Soviet Union against the other workers states. Division of labor, a problem that arises when socialized production is conducted on an extended scale, is mutilated by the Soviet bureaucracy to its own advantage. That was what the Rumanians revolted against. In the division of labor in this system of so-called "socialist states," Rumania

was assigned to developing agricultural products, primarily minerals and oil, and they revolted. They, too, consider Rumania is rotten ripe for "socialism in a single country."

So polycentrism, as it has developed in those areas in which Stalinist parties have taken state power, can be traced directly back to Stalin's theory of building socialism in a single country. Instead of structurally assimilating the states of Eastern Europe within the system of Soviet Socialist Republics, they were kept on the outside, thereby planting the seeds of division which are bound to grow more acute as time goes on.

With China, in my opinion, it entered as one of the important aspects of the Sino-Soviet dispute. Think of the very idea of announcing the building of "communism" in the Soviet Union, while China was faced with a very acute economic problem, an enormous and growing population and inability to adequately feed its own people. To the demand for material aid from the Soviet Union came the reply: "No, we can't do that. We can't give you too much now, because we're in the process of building communism, you see. Wait! Wait and when we achieve communism we'll take good care of you."

That didn't satisfy Mao & Co. And so relations between the two went from bad to worse, until at this moment it's on the point of erupting into actual warfare. That's what the "theory" of building socialism in a single country has led to.

APPENDIX: excerpt from "The Differences Between
the Two Documents on the "Cultural Revolution"

by Joseph Hansen

(reprinted from International Information Bulletin #4, June 1970)

Let's turn to the second change in this sentence on page 15, the change from "opportunism" to "bureaucratic centrism." That seems like a very small change, a tiny unobjectionable change, but it turned out to be one of the points that stood out in the discussion on the "Cultural Revolution" at the world congress.

In his contribution, Comrade Pierre Frank explained that while he was not the one responsible for suggesting the change, he voted for it. In defense of his vote he said that "bureaucratic centrism" was the correct label to put on the policy of zigzagging between opportunism and ultraleftism which the comrades of the minority themselves included in the original draft.

(We would have been willing to settle for the original sentence about Mao zigzagging between opportunism and ultraleftism in his foreign policy. Unfortunately the comrades of the majority de-

leted it.)

In any case, Comrade Pierre said, in defense of his vote, that the formula "bureaucratic centrism" was used by Trotsky in 1928 in his introduction to The Third International after Lenin.

It should be mentioned that a new edition of The Third International after Lenin was published this spring in France under the editorship of Comrade Pierre, who also supplied a preface. This edition has been checked against the original Russian manuscript in the Trotsky archives at Harvard. It is an improvement over the old English edition and includes a foreword by Trotsky, written in 1929 after he was exiled from the Soviet Union, which does not appear in the English edition.

In the foreword Trotsky mentions "Stalinist centrism," and he also refers to its zigzag course in foreign policy. He calls Stalin's policies "a variety of

the same centrism" as that represented by "Friedrich Adler & Co." but "based on the ideological and material resources of a state that emerged from the October Revolution."

What Comrade Pierre had in mind, I suppose, was not this foreword, in which the term "Stalinist centrism" is used, but the subsequent item in the French edition, a letter written by Trotsky from Alma Ata in 1928, which actually constitutes an introduction to the main document in the book, the famous criticism of the Draft Program of the Communist International. In the English edition, this letter, entitled "What Now?" follows the main document. It is here that Trotsky uses the term "bureaucratic centrism."

What did Trotsky mean by this term? To begin with, I don't think he identified it with zigzagging, although zigzagging is one of its characteristics. For example, Trotsky speaks elsewhere in The Third International after Lenin of the "inevitable Leftward zigzags of the Chinese bourgeoisie." Evidently "bureaucratic centrism" -- which certainly does not refer to any bourgeoisie -- has a deeper content than mere oscillations in policy.

Comrade Peng made what I thought was an effective rebuttal on this point. As he put it, we no longer stand in the period of 1927-28. The situation has changed. As a matter of fact, Trotsky, and the whole Left Opposition internationally, dropped the use of the term "bureaucratic centrism" in reference to the ruling group in the Soviet Union when the orientation of calling for a political revolution was adopted in 1933. Trotsky in 1927 and 1928 had not yet reached the position that a hardened bureaucratic caste had crystallized out in the Soviet Union which could be removed from power only through a political revolution. "Comrade Pierre Frank, of course, understands this very well," Comrade Peng said, "but then he did not explain it."

Comrade Peng maintained that if one believes there is an analogy between the situation in China today and the situation in the Soviet Union in 1927-28, then it is inconsistent to call for a political revolution in China.

On the other hand, if you call for a political revolution in China, then to be consistent in drawing an analogy with the Soviet Union, you must say that the situation in China today is comparable to the situation in the Soviet Union after 1933, or after it became clearly established that a hardened bureaucratic caste had seized a monopoly of power and consolidated its position so firmly that it could be removed only by a political revolution.

For myself, I would like to add a few observations on Trotsky's use of the term "bureaucratic centrism." In 1927-28 he distinguished between the Right, which was intertwined with the growing bourgeois tendency observable in the Soviet Union at the time, the Left, represented by the Left Opposition, which was carrying on the tradition and program of Leninism, and the Center, the key figure of which was Stalin. Trotsky's terminology, as well as his platform at the time, was shaped by the view that the Communist party in the Soviet Union and the Comintern on a world scale could still be reformed. Thus in the letter "What Now?" -- which I assume Comrade Pierre was referring to -- Trotsky states the position of the Left Opposition as follows:

"In any case, the Opposition, by virtue of its views and tendencies, must do all in its power to see that the present zigzag is extended into a serious turn onto the Leninist road. Such an outcome would be the healthiest one, that is to say, involving the least convulsions for the party and the dictatorship. Trotsky means the dictatorship of the proletariat. This would be the road of a profound party reform, the indispensable promise/premise? of the reform of the Soviet state." Emphasis in the English original.

We can see in this the consistency in Trotsky's use of the term "bureaucratic centrism" and his program of reform rather than political revolution.

This is not the end of the matter, however. In 1935 Trotsky returned to this question and brought things up to date both as to terminology and the great historic analogy he saw between the degeneration of the French and Russian revolutions. He did this in an article entitled "The Soviet Union Today." This was published in English in the July 1935 issue of The New International and republished in the summer 1956 issue of the International Socialist Review.

Trotsky explains in this article that "bureaucratic centrism" has given way to "bureaucratic absolutism"; or, in relation to the historic analogy he was discussing, "bureaucratic Bonapartism."

In the period 1926-27, Trotsky recalls, the question of the "Thermidorean" reaction was intensively discussed among the opposition circles. A split even occurred over the question. At the time, Trotsky projected the possibility of a Thermidorean triumph only in the future, and even then, of course, only if the growing rightist tendencies in the Soviet Union were not halted. Looking back, he continued, it can be seen that the analogy was used in a faulty way. Actually the Soviet Thermidor began in 1924. And

the "Thermidoreans can celebrate, approximately, the tenth birthday of their victory." The present political regime in the USSR, he said, is "the regime of 'Soviet' (or anti-Soviet) Bonapartism, closer in type to the Empire than the Consulate."

Trotsky did not say in his article whether he considered it to have been an error to use the term "bureaucratic centrism" in the earlier period. He was concerned only about correcting the broad analogy with the French revolution; and he said that whatever adjustments this correction might call for, it did not alter the correctness of the program and policies which the Left Opposition had fought for. These had been vindicated completely by events.

We note that by 1929, in his foreword to The Third International after Lenin, he used the term "Stalinist centrism" instead of "bureaucratic centrism," and distinguished "Stalinist centrism" as a specific variety of centrism, observing that in distinction from centrism in general, as hitherto seen in the workers movement, it had at its disposal the ideological and material resources of the state that had emerged from the October Revolution. By 1935 he had adopted the term "Soviet Bonapartism."

Whatever we may say today about the use of the term "bureaucratic centrism" in the late twenties, it is clear that the shift to the term "Stalinist centrism" and then "bureaucratic absolutism" or "Soviet Bonapartism" did not signify that the Trotskyist movement had taken the view that the Kremlin could no longer follow a zigzag course. During his pact with Hitler, Stalin ordered a sharp left turn for the Communist parties in the Allied countries. Again in the period following World War II, Stalin finally shifted far enough to the left in Eastern Europe to topple a number of capitalist states.

All of this has an important bearing on our appreciation of the course of the Chinese revolution, but I will leave that for another time.

In relation to the question of using the label "bureaucratic centrism" to designate the bureaucracy in China, Comrade Livio Maitan made the point, if I understood the translator correctly and the translator was translating and not betraying Livio, that the phrase "hardened, crystallized caste" is not a scientific designation. The term "bureaucracy" is meaningful but the term "hardened, crystallized caste" does not signify anything in a scientific sense. I think this relates to Comrade Livio's view that the term "Stalinism" should be reserved for the specific period of the worst excesses under Stalin in the middle thirties, a view I do not at all agree with.

Aside from that, we have used the term "hardened caste" and similar terms to designate the development of the bureaucracy to such a point in a workers state that it completely displaces proletarian democracy and establishes its own rule. In the political arena, we have recognized this qualitative difference from "bureaucratism" in general by calling for a political revolution.

The attitude of the bureaucracy toward political power — towards proletarian democracy — is a certain indicator of the degree to which a caste has been formed. If it succeeds in eliminating proletarian democracy, refusing the masses any possibility to express themselves; if it prevents the formation of independent proletarian tendencies and political parties, you can be certain that it has special reasons for this and that it understands these reasons quite well. The point of qualitative change in the crystallization of this peculiar formation is registered by its success in monopolizing state power, which it then uses to consolidate and defend its special privileges at the expense of the interests of the masses and the revolution.

In comparing the bureaucracies in China and the Soviet Union from this standpoint, I would say that differences between the two can be recognized. The Soviet bureaucracy is older, more hardened, more entrenched, with the greater wealth and resources of an advanced industrial power at its command, able to afford a more crass display of opportunism. In other words, a number of differences in quantity or degree can be found — and these are important — but qualitatively, the two formations are pretty much the same. In both instances, we are compelled to call for a political revolution and by that fact we recognize that a certain identity or equivalence does exist despite the differences.

It may seem that I am belaboring the point. But it also seems to be of considerable importance to the comrades of the majority. Even after the discussion at the congress they insisted on their formulation with but a small modification. Here is how it reads in the final draft which is to be published as the majority document:

"While not forgetting that the Chinese leadership is led by the defense of its own interests to inspire among its partisans in the world a more militant line than Moscow's, the Fourth International criticizes the bureaucratic centrist nature of the policy."

We would very much like to know why the comrades of the majority are so insistent on the forty-year-old label "bureaucratic centrist" which Trotsky dropped so long ago.