ITALIAN REVOLUTION and the Tasks of the British Workers

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The bourgeoisie, which had been scared out of its wits by the movement of the masses temporarily gave them some concessions. But the economic crisis continued. The Italian bourgeoisie, without reserves and without rich colonies and with a weak economic base, could not hope to compete with the more powerful forces of the Entente on the world market. Consequently, they were compelled to intensify the exploitation of the Italian masses on a scale of collapse and extinction.

The heroic attempts of the proletariat to find a way out on the path of the Socialist Revolution had been blocked by the sabotage of the reformist leadership. The bourgeoisie looked for a solution to the intolerable crisis in which "law and order" could be established. The economic crisis was further intensified in the post-war collapse. The middle class found itself completely ruined and rendered desperate. Large sections had joined the lead of those supporting the Socialist Party in the post-war revolutionary wave. The core of the petty bourgeoisie could have been won with a bold policy on the part of the proletariat. But in sheer despair, the petty bourgeoisie began to look for another solution. It was thus that the fascist movement arose as an expression of the desperation of the middle class. The big industrialists financed Mussolini liberally to organise its bands of thugs and murderers, of crazed petty bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariat for the purpose of physically annihilating the leaders and the organisations of the proletariat. These bands of cut-throats roamed over Italy attacking workers' cooperatives, unions, Socialist municipalities, etc., under the protection of the bourgeois police. In 1922, Mussolini was placed in power by the landowners, industrialists, Church and monarchy, as the sole means of preserving their interests.

The first few years of his rule saw him precariously attempting to establish his domination.

The murder of Matteotti provoked a wave of indignation throughout Italy and the working class only needed a revolutionary lead to overthrow the Fascist regime. Still the Socialists clung to "legal methods." Mussolini sensed the crisis and proceeded systematically to destroy the organisations of the working class. The disillusionment and demoralisation of the working class at the betrayal of their organisations led them to the overthrow of the Fascist Party. Fascist armies entrenched itself in power.

But once in power, Fascism begins to lose its middle class base. The impoverishment and ruin of the petty bourgeoisie is not halted by new impetus by the victory of Fascism. The counter-revolutionary delusions of the petty bourgeoisie are soon dispelled by the cold reality of the totalitarian states and the support for Fascism. The Fascist regime loses its social basis completely and becomes an ordinary military-police bureaucratic dictatorship. That was the position of Mussolini's dictatorship, which has endured for more than two decades.

The secret of the long period of Fascist rule lies not at all in the strength of the regime, but in world events on the one hand, and the apathy and confusion on the other. The Italian people, who had lost all perspectives with the betrayal of their organisations. The victory of Hitler, the defeat of the French and Spanish workers, the further decay and collapse of the working class movement, the strengthening of reaction on a world scale, could not but further demoralise and plunge the Italian working class into gloomy indifference and lack of faith in the future.

But the crisis which overshadowed the regime, forced the Italian bourgeoisie to attempt outward expansion to save themselves from being overwhelmed. The Abyssinian adventure and the war which Mussolini waged against the Spanish workers, were symptoms of the desperation of Italian Fascism. Far from solving anything, they merely increased the misery of the workers and peasants, and increased the prestige of the Socialists in the land of France, the Italian capitalists eagerly seized the opportunity which they imagined had been presented, to secure a rich Empire on the cheap.

But the calculations of the bourgeoisicians were completely falsified by the events. Never in history had an army fought with less morale and less belief in their cause than the army of Fascist Italy! The coarse witticisms of the British ruling class against the cowardly Italian army, completely broke the mark. The Italian army, like that of Czarist Russia, is composed mainly of peasants. Exploited and oppressed by the landlords, beaten and tyrannised by the Fascist thugs, their thoughts of the "enemy" were not against the armies opposing them, but of the landlords in the villages who lived well by fattening on them: while their women and children hungered and even starved. They thought of the tax to be kept at a bloated, ignorant and lazy fascist bureaucracy and fascist militia. They did not have the will to fight. Mussolini could not even defeat the Greeks! In Africa the Fascist Empire disappeared while the Italian Empire disappeared in mud and blood of thousands with only a semblance of resistance. Twenty years of Fascism had rotted the regime from top to bottom. There was not a live element in the whole of its apparatus, not even the mere officials or the men of suppression at home. Moreover, Italy as a backward and only semi-industrialised country did not possess the resources for modern war as her twin Fascist Germany had the fortune of possessing in unrivalled technology and first-rate industrial equipment. All these factors combined, the defeat of Italy became inevitable.

With inattentive foresight and a profound understanding of the masses and of the historical process, in analysing the problem of the revolution in the fascist countries had shown that it would require some sharp shock to the masses' lethargy and stupor, to take to the road of mass opposition and mass struggle against the totalitarian regimes; a shock which could be provided by military defeats or the victory of the revolution in one of the democracies.

The defeats of the regime as a final revelation of its bankruptcy; its corruption and decay provided the means for the re-awakening of the Italian proletariat. The masses of the working class and the peasantry had been proceeding apace behind the outward facade of strength and stability of the regime. The relationship of forces began to change within the country. For the first time mass strikes had broken out, unleashing the unalterable increase in the cost of living, the peasants had begun to move in a series of minor revolts against the landowners and the unalterable tax impositions of the Fascist officials. To the army were an ominous indication of the spirits of the troops. As early as the war against Greece, there were reports of units taken prisoner, singing "Bando alla Rossa" (The Red Flag). The bourgeoisie and the landowners could feel the ground trembling under their feet. As always in modern society, the approach of revolution was heralded by tension within all strata of society, within the ruling class as well as the working class, within the army as well as in the ranks of the fascist bureaucracy and the state apparatus. The pressure from below produces fissures and uncertainty, quarrels and differences within the place and scale of the ruling class. They begin to seek a way out of the impasse, a means of escaping the rising tide of revolt which threatens to engulf them. From regarding the leader as their saviour from the masses, they begin to regard him as the author of their ills whose "mistakes" have landed them in an impossible situation. Abuse of the ruler and his immediate clique of collaborators is replaced by conspiracies and discussions of a coup d'etat, of a palace revolution, which by a timely movement above will prevent and nip in the bud a movement from below. The existing relations between the classes have become unalterable and the situation today's class seeks for some means of saving themselves. They cannot reconcile themselves to the doom which they see is impending and will overtake them un-
less they can forestall it by some means.

Thus it was in Czarist Russia before the February Revolution. Thus it was in Fascist Italy before the fall of Mussolini. Even a better, if less belated, lesson was made by the removal of Primo de Rivera, the military dictator in Spain, by Alfonso in an effort to save the monarchy. Tomorrow we will observe the same process in Hitler Germany. But all these moves in the ruling class that prevent the revolution, dialectically, are the means of precipitating it. The movement from above produces a mighty echo in the movement from below. Thus it was that Mussolini was flung aside by the ruling class in Italy in order to aver their overthrow. Thus as always in history, they have merely opened the first chapter in the Revolution.

Whatever the fate of the Italian revolution may be, in passing it has dealt the death blow to the cowards and renegades from the Labour movement, such as James Burnham in the United States and C. A. Smith in Britain, and the whole tribe of petit bourgeois intellectuals and sceptics who have regarded the proletariat and the struggle for Socialism with irony and scepticism. This shrewd intellectual rabble regarded the outward varnish of fascism as its inner essence, and even regarded fascism as the development of a new form of society with a ruling class neither bourgeois nor proletarian! To them the inert attitude of the proletariat in Italy and Germany, which bowed its head passively in face of the Fascist tyranny, was proof of the incapacity of the proletariat and as proof of a new society.

Incapable of understanding the dialectics of the development of society, they could not see how, condensation and contumacy, the strivings of the proletariat. As in the case of C. A. Smith this was merely a bridge to justify desertion to the camp of the bourgeoisie. But they were not alone. The traitors of Stalinism and of the Labour bureaucracy, attempted to justify their own treachery by unloading the blame for the passivity of the masses onto the “incapacity” of the proletariat and the lack of ripeness for the Socialist Revolution, which they have put decades hence. How pitifully is Stalinism, which dissolved the Comintern on the eve of the fall of Mussolini, how pitiful the Vatistartistic Labour bureaucracy and Stalinism which unloosed the blunderheaded proletariat of the German proletariat which “tolerates” Hitler. In reality it is the mounting defeat of the past two decades, caused by the silt same “leaders” and their present policies, which has been like a powder which has exploded in the brains of the whole world and produced the mood of frustration and despair of demoralisation and regression, of lack of belief in any and its own future. It is this indeed, which has led to the prolongation of the war and its continuance for four nightmare years before the first catastrophe. All these forces and moods were merely the result of the reaction, which they themselves had called forth.

Alone of all tendencies in the Labour movement, the Trotskyists maintained faith in the working class and themselves. Even at the darkest depth of the reaction they maintained the banner of International Socialism, of the International revolution and retained their faith and confidence in the proletariat. And this was not accidental either. They had analysed and foreseen the reasons for the defeat and understood the basis of the turn towards reaction and naturally understanding the causes which did not lay in the proletariat but in the leadership of the proletariat, they could carry on with the sure confidence of one shedding of Marxism. All other tendencyses were blind. They had caused the defeat and were incapable of understanding the way out of the impasse.

The crisis in Italy came to a head with the invasion of Sicily. The unprecedented lack of support of the regime, the reality of the fact that even on their “own” soil, the Italian soldiers demonstrated no great eagerness to fight. Their resistance was no more energetic and hearty than that of the handful of men and women of Allied propaganda, it seemed clear that the alien invaders were regarded with no more hostility in Palermo and other towns. Surely a rare occurrence in history! Anything, anything could not be worse than Mussolini, was the attitude of the majority of this island. The regime was so rotten and so loathsome to the broad masses that they did not regard it as much better than that of a foreign conqueror. To this catastrophe had Mussolini’s brainchild given its final boost to Fascist Italy! An emptiness and feeling of terror must have gathered round the hearts of the ruling class in Italy.

The denouement was not long in coming. In fear of the movement of the masses and realising that for Italian Imperialism the war was irretrievably lost, the ruling class sought to save something from the wreckage. From Germany, already hard pressed and the virtual certainty of defeat in the future, they could expect no more aid than would reduce Italy to the status of France or the sullen countries even in the event of problematic victory. And with the certainty that the “democratic” allies would extract over greater penalties and tribute in that event. Mussolini was at no use to them. They feared the invasion of the Allies. They feared the invasion of the Allies. They feared their mightier “partner.” In frantic panic, trapped in insuperable contradictions, the ignoble ruling classes of Italy contemptuously cast Mussolini onto the scrapheap of history.

But the bourgeoisie have lost all perspective for the moment. The monarchy and the General Staff imagined that they could club Mussolini and carry on as before, graciously offering the Italian masses as scapegoat for their crimes. Surely Badoglio’s proclamation of martial law will rank in history as the perfect example of the illusions of a regime which has been condemned by history. Mussolini was followed by a declaration of stringent martial law. But the decree merely remained on paper. Badoglio did not have the resources to carry it out despite the illusons of the General Staff.

The fall of Mussolini acted like an electric shock to the Italian workers. When the news came over the wireless, moved by a common impulse, hundreds of thousands rushed into the streets in the belief that terrible retribution had begun. The process that Trotsky had visualised would develop in Italy to mark the fall of fascism, had begun. (As the news trickled through, one could not but allow one’s thoughts to dwell on the Old Man and marvel at his unerring instinct and profound understanding which could develop in advance almost exactly the stages through which the revolution would pass.)

After 20 years of fascism the proletariat was hardened by terror and persecution, has stepped on to the arena reinvigorated and fresh, like a giant awakening from a long sleep. Mass strikes in all the industrial cities, Milan, Turin, Genoa, etc., broke out in 24 hours. The railways in the whole of Italy were paralyzed within a few days. The jails were stormed by the workers and the political prisoners were set free. The fascist headquarters in the large towns have been sacked and the fascist organizations around Italy by the workers in Milan and other areas. Anyone wearing the insignia of fascism in Italy on the day after Mussolini’s disappearance stood in danger of being lynched. Fascism vanished, The belated decree dissolving the fascist party merely took cognisance of a fact that had already been irrevocably established by the workers and soldiers themselves. Symbolically, in Milan, which once again has proved that the lead as “Red Milan’s” short shrift was given by the indignant workers to the murderer of Matteotti. In other areas too, the most hated of the fascist bosses have been despatched by the workers. In Turin “two million fascists” were exterminated by the people. Streets in Milan have been renamed in honour of Matteotti and other working class leaders murdered by the fascists. The attempt to use the soldiers against the demonstrating crowds in Milan, has resulted in the soldiers going over to the side of the workers.
August, 1918.

Overnight the working class has demonstrated its vitality and strength as though fascism had never existed. Workers' Committees have been set up in the factories in the industrial towns. Even the Stalinist 'Daily Worker,' formerly published in the bourgeois press, is compelled to report:

'The radio (Swiss) reported that a Citizens' Committee, consisting of representatives of the industrial workers, soldiers and peasants has been set up in Milan, centre of the industrial north.'

'A majority of the troops of the Milan garrison are reported to have sworn allegiance to the Committee. The banned Communist paper 'La Rossosca' and the Liberal paper 'Il Mondo' were republished on Saturday—produced in former fascist printing offices.

Similar moves were reported by the radio in Turin, Varese, Brescia and Verona.

In Brescia—according to the Swiss broadcast—workers have been armed from the Army arsenal and have established a Workers' Militia, which took over the police authority—with little interference from the police.

What are these "Citizens' Committees' if not Soviets, which the cowardly and treacherous Stalinists are afraid to avow at the present time? These are living proofs that the Italian Revolution has begun.

Whatever the vicissitudes of the Italian revolution in the next period, the lie has been given to all the faint hearts and deserters, to all the cowards and the sceptics. The wonderful resilience and buoyancy, the tremendous powers of recuperation and recovery of the working class, the only through and through progressive class in modern society, has been demonstrated. The victories of reaction are shown to be built on shifting sands. After every defeat, the workers from its wounds and rise again with even greater force to vanquish the enemy.

All these events have been crowded into the short space of a single week! The first stage of the revolution has been seen the whole of industrial Italy on the march. For the moment the peasants are quiet. It will take some time for the meaning of the events in the towns to penetrate into the villages. But once it begins to understand, the peasant will turn with implacable hatred against his enemies. The fall of fascism will be interpreted by him, not only as the fall of the fascist official but as the beginning of the end for the landlord whom the officials represent. The revolution can begin in isolated areas, sporadically to the whole country. Against the taxes and the landlord! These will be the rallying cries of the peasants.

All the factors that make for the Socialist and Workers' Militias. The soldiers (mostly peasants in uniform) are moving over to the side of the workers. The peasants will move forward. The middle class in the towns are turning towards the workers. All the objective conditions for a socialist revolution are present. And the taking of power by the Italian workers would instantly provoke the overthrow of Hitler and inaugurate the Socialist Revolution throughout the conditions of the situation. No. The subjective conditions for the revolution are not yet present. Instinctively and almost automatically the Italian working class has taken the correct steps on the road to workers power. But the Stalinists and Stalinists are already preparing to betray the movement by turning it into the channels of bourgeois "democracy".

Meanwhile, the "Allies' regard with not unmixed feelings the developments in Italy. They are already preparing the final blow to the revolutionary workers power. But the Stalinists and Stalinists are already preparing...
The Role of Congress Leaders

By AJIT ROY

After twelve months of anxiety and misgivings, the imperialist bondholders of India once more rest comfortably in their beds. For the revolutionary wave which swept through the country in the months following August last, has begun to decline.

The wave, however, has only been postponed. The general economic position of the masses of the people shows no signs of improvement. Millions continue to suffer from famine and starvation. Neither has the grip of totalitarian repression been relaxed. The number of political prisoners has reached the enormous total of 20,000, and new victims continue daily to be added to the list. But all this notwithstanding, since the beginning of the current year, the number of strikes and demonstrations in the industrial cities and peasant uprisings in the villages, have been steadily falling off.

The period of mass revolutionary activity has for the time being, subsided.

There are those who are wont to explain every popular defeat with the easy formula: "The enemy was too powerful." Against such people, the enemy will always be too powerful. Marxism, on the other hand, demands the most honest and conscientious analysis of every aspect of defeat, as a fundamental prerequisite for final victory.

Least of all does this fatalistic formula suffice as an explanation of the development of Indian events during the last 12 months. If British Imperialism has succeeded in weathering the first waves of the storm, it was not primarily because of the superior forces at its disposal.

Admittedly, one significant feature of the past year was the use by the Viceroy's Government of force to an extent and character not previously known in India. For the first time, air power was systematically and ruthlessly employed against the peasant masses, armed with the most rudimentary weapons and often completely unarmored. But this was because the revolt, especially in the centres of the agrarian movement, had assumed such sweeping proportions that the old technique of suppression had proved to be entirely inadequate. Over large areas of Bihar, Orissa, Central Provinces and Bengal, the task which faced the "guardians of democracy" was no longer the suppression of sporadic and local uprisings, but the subjugation and reconquest of large territories in which British administration had been totally destroyed.

The basic cause of defeat lay in the fact that the Indian masses were faced with two enemies of which they saw only one. They were saddled with a leadership which looked upon their victory as the greatest possible disaster. When in August last year, Mr. Gandhi and his colleagues in the Congress Executive, assented to the inauguration of a new mass movement, the last thing they had in mind was to carry through to a victorious conclusion, the revolutionary uprising which they knew was inevitable. They could not fail to see that a mass movement in India today, would not leave untouched the sacred property rights of the industrial and landed gentry whose interests they so clearly guarded. The peasant masses in the villages hate British imperialism in degree only more than they hate their immediate oppressors -- the landlords and the usurers. A popular revolt against imperialism would mean, from its first beginnings, a class character. Events in India have amply demonstrated this. An India freed from imperialism would mean an India freed from feudalism and capitalism as well. This, the Congress leaders are not prepared to see. They who had consistently championed the rights of the landlords and the Princes, to the extent of throwing into prison hundreds of militant peasants during the period of Congress Ministries, had no heart for a struggle which would go beyond the boundaries of their own narrow bourgeois reformist interests.

Nor did these leaders want to see a breach of industrial peace at a period when the native bourgeoisie, after the long and glorious years of peace, had only begun to garner the golden harvest of war. The following figures of textile profits can throw more light on the policies pursued by the Congress leaders, than all their speeches put together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Kohinoor Mills</th>
<th>Madura Mills</th>
<th>Mull Mills</th>
<th>New Victoria Mills</th>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Rs. 10,171,175</td>
<td>10,836,700</td>
<td>14,988,950</td>
<td>30,090,110</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>2,007,110</td>
<td>14,988,950</td>
<td>30,090,110</td>
<td>35,776,60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>9,689,960</td>
<td>13,937,480</td>
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<td>10,988,750</td>
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Since the beginning of the war, the dominant note in the policy of Congress leadership was to smugly sicken the fear of the masses. This was made obvious in the course of the Individual Civil Disobedience movement which was inaugurated by Mr. Gandhi in the summer of 1941. Not only was Mr. Gandhi to choose each individual non-resister, he was also to choose every word of
his speech! Every loop-hole through which the masses could conceivably enter the political field, was carefully closed up. When the wave of power was on the country, the efforts of the individual crusaders might well be supplemented by mass demonstrations from the factories, they were finely informed that there must be no interference with the normal functioning of the economic life of the country. There must be no interference with profits.

The transformation of the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement into a mass movement of the following year, was a continuation of the old policy. Certainly the Indian bourgeoisie did not think that their trusted lieutenants had suddenly taken the road of Revolution. There was hardly a representative body of native capitalism, which did not plead for the release of Mr. Gandhi at the time of his fast. And they did so from any allegiance to democratic ideals, but because they looked upon his continued leadership of the National movement as the greatest safeguard against the dangers of Revolution in India.

Subsequent events go to show that right up to the moment of his arrest, the Mahatma was looking out for an opportunity which would enable him to stave off the evil day. At the moment when he was supposed to be preparing and perfecting the plan of campaign for the “last decisive struggle”, around the slogan “Do or Die”, the great leader was pacing his cottage in anxious expectation of a message from the Viceroy, which failed to arrive. This at least, is revealed in the Gandhi-Linlithgow correspondence released not so long ago. In his letter of August 12th, Mr. Gandhi writes:

“The Government of India should have waited at least till the time of taking action on the Viceroy’s letter, publicly stated that I fully contemplated sending you a letter before taking concrete action. It was to be an appeal to you for an impartial investigation of the Congress case. As you know, the Congress has readily filled in every omission that has been discovered in the conception of its demand. So I could have dealt with every difficulty if you had given me the opportunity.

Similarly, in his letter of September 23rd:

“I venture to assert that had the Government but awaited my contemplated letter to His Excellency, the Viceroy, and the result thereafter, no calamity would have befallen the country and the reported deplorable destruction would most certainly have been avoided.”

Mr. Rajagopachari, the ex-Congress Premier of Madras, who, in spite of his unpopularity to the imperialists, camp, remains on the best terms with Mr. Gandhi, has revealed that Mr. Gandhi never expected having to put the Congress Resolution into effect.

He hoped by means of the resolution, to persuade the Viceroy to open negotiations. “The Congress leaders were bereft of the initiative they were instructed to the people. This is fully corroborated by Mr. Gandhi’s letter of August 12th to the Viceroy: “The Congress movement was intended to evoke in the people the measures of sacrifice sufficient to compel attention.”

But the masses of India had no desire to be made a pawn in the hands of Mr. Gandhi and the Congress leadership. They had interpreted the Congress flag as the symbol of a revolutionary struggle against the imperialist oppressors. The arrest of the Congress leadership became the signal for the independent revolutionary action of the masses. But the bourgeois leaders could never forgive the masses for such abjuration of the eternal principles of non-violence and self-restraint. The disengagement from the Viceroy to disown and disdain all responsibility for the actions of the revolutionary “Canaille”. They regretted and deplored the terror by which the authorities hoped to bring. But they did not even deny to imperialism the right to use violence against the masses.

From behind their comfortable prison chambers, the bourgeois leaders wistfully looked towards the day when strikes and peasant revolt would give way to conferences and negotiations. The whole philosophy of the Gandhi leadership is summed up in the following passage in Mr. Gandhi’s letter of 3rd September:

“The only right course for the Government seems to me to be the release of the Congress leaders, withdraw all repressive measures and palaces and reopen the whole negotiations. Surely, the Government has ample resources to deal with any overt acts of violence.”

There can be no doubt that as the experiences of the last 12 months have made clear, the leadership, the rank and file, and particularly the socialist youth, is awakening to an understanding of the political and class issues underlying the present situation. This is well revealed in the recent document issued under the name of Jai Prakash Narain, the leader of the Congress Socialist Party.

“Our Revolution is at present going through a period of low water, not because the superior forces of the imperialist power intervened but because of two important factors: the largo scale of action and the complete programme of National Revolution. After the first phase of the rising was over there was no further programme placed before the people. Having accomplished over large territories, the negative task of destruction—our revolution called for a positive programme. The Congress leaders, instead, released all the agents, should have put up in their areas, their own units of Revolutionary Government and created their own police and militia, and having seized supreme authority throughout the land.”

It is as an indication of the prevailing trend of thought among the lower ranks of the Congress and Socialist vanguard that the main significance of the document is to be found. While raising the basic issues, it makes no serious attempt to solve them. ‘Had there been a programme things would have been different.’ And again, “people should have their own limits of revolutionary government.” Quite true! But why was not this done? Was it not the duty of those who claimed to be the leaders of the struggle, to formulate a correct programme? If Soviets should have been set up as organs of struggle, why had no mention been made of these by the Congress either in the past or in the course of the struggle itself?

The only attempt which this document makes towards answering these basic questions, shows that the Congress Socialist has not changed its role as the left cover for the bourgeoisie leadership. “The earnestness, the urgency, the determination,” writes Narain: “that is what is needed.” These words, like the others of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Prasad and Sardar Patel, failed to reflect in the minds and hearts of all Congress leaders.”

Such blindness as to the realities of the struggle can only result either in the one of stupidity or deliberate deception of the masses. It represents the complete bankruptcy of petit-bourgeois socialism as an independent force in the Indian struggle. The masses need a programme, but such a programme can only be based on their fundamental economic needs. Only a programme which links the actual struggle in the villages and in the factories with the general struggle against imperialism. Such a programme must include the socialist programme and the most radical measures in the interests of the industrial proletariat.

Had there been a revolutionary party in India which had not under-estimated the problem and was inscrutably opposed not only to the imperialists, but could counterpose a clear class lead to the workers and peasants in opposition to the treacherous bourgeois programme of Congress, the situation in India would have been con-
proletarian party, standing for the setting up of workers’ committees in the towns and peasants’ committees in the countryside, waging a struggle to get rid of the imperialists and the landowners, would have received powerful support. At that time, as Naraïn has indicated, for lack of such a lead the revolt of the peasants in the countryside was isolated and scattered, without aim and perspective, and easily destroyed piece-meal by the centralised force of the imperialist state which moved from one area to the next methodically, without any hindrance being placed in their way. In this helplessness of the peasants, is summed up the necessity for leadership from the cities. As the bourgeoisie is incapable of leading, and is even hostile to the movement of the peasants, the leadership of the democratic movement automatically falls on the shoulders of the proletariat. It is this that the petit bourgeoisie radicals of the Congress Socialist party cannot understand. Instead of boldly proclaiming this, they confuse the issue by raising the responsibility for the failure on the shoulders of some of the leaders of Congress. Instead of a political analysis, the blame is laid on organisational defects. As if the organisational basis of organs of struggle and of Governments, do not flow from the political position of the participants and organisers! And as though it would be possible for the bourgeois leaders of Congress to ‘rectify’ their ‘mistakes’.

After 12 months of struggle, the Indian Revolution has come to a standstill. History, however, provides its own compensation. By its very immobility, the Revolution has set in motion unseen forces which will prepare for it a new period of rising ascendency and under more favourable conditions. It was necessary for the masses to come to a halt before any further progress could be made. The contradiction between their ideological and organisational equipment, and the requirements of the struggle, had to be felt in the bitter experiences of defeat, before the necessary adjustments could be made.

From this point of view, the experiences of the last few months will contribute more towards the political education of the vanguard of the Indian masses, than any other period in recent history. The coming period will witness the revival of Marxism on an unprecedented scale; and its development will take place under conditions much more favourable than those surrounding its birth. The foundation of the Third International by Lenin and Trotsky led to the emergence of Marxism as a distinct current in India’s political life and the formation of the first Communist Groups among the Indian workers. Thousands of workers and students disillusioned and disillusioned by the treacherous role, of the Gandhian leadership, rallied under the banner of revolutionary Marxism with renewed hopes and determination. Their struggles and self-sacrifice will constitute one of the most glorious pages in the history of the Indian working class.

But even before the elementary organisational tasks could be accomplished, the epiphanies of the Soviet bureaucracy had succeeded in establishing their withering hold over the International. Along with the other sections of the Communist International, the Communist Party of India was transformed into a mere border-guard for the Soviet policy, and the interests of the masses were sacrificed to the narrow and nationalistic interests of the Kremlin’s traps. Today, Indian Stalinism has reached its nemesis as the most universally detested political organisation in India. These new byelings of Churchill need not complain when as their paper “World News and Views” admits, their offices are razed to the ground and their persons attacked by bodies of enraged workers. Like the Quislings of Hitler, these traitors subsist entirely on the benevolence and support of the alien conquerors. The coming months will witness the complete disintegration and disappearance of Stalinism as a factor in Indian politics.

With the decline of Stalinism and its fast approaching death, Marxism is once again coming to life in the young and growing cadres of the Fourth International in India. In the months to come, as the vanguard of the anti-imperialist masses of India turns away in disgust from the bankrupt policies of the bourgeois nationalists and their “socialist” allies, they will find in the programme and principles of the Fourth International, the only guarantee for the ultimate freedom of India. The task which faces them is the task which faces the working class throughout the world: to build the mass party of the Indian proletariat, which can transform the halting and scattered character of the movement and the pheasant masses into a concerted national effort against imperialism and for freedom.

Trotsky Assassinated Three Years Ago

Three years ago the greatest brain of our time was shattered at the hands of one of Stalin’s professional assassins. Even today, after this lapse of time, realising what the death of Leon Trotsky meant to Socialism, we cannot think of this tragedy without almost a physical pain clutching at the heart. Trotsky’s brain was in effect, a laboratory for world revolution.

The name of Trotsky will, in future history, always be indissolubly linked with the names of Lenin, Marx and Engels as the greatest figures in working class history. Marx and Engels, as the universal geniuses who created the theoretical basis for the understanding of history; of the laws of the development of society; the laws of motion of capitalism and the historic role of the working class. They placed the theory and practice of Socialism on a firm foundation by developing the science of Marxism.

Lenin’s role was not as an innovator, but as an orthodox pupil of Marx. While deepening and enriching his teaching, he carried Marxism into action by creating and organising the Bolshevik Party. With this indispensable instrument, together with Trotsky, he led the Russian workers to the victorious setting up of the first Workers’ State. The name of Trotsky will always be associated with the successful October insurrection in Petrograd which was carried out under his direct inspiration and leadership.

Trotsky developed in the years before the First World War the theory of the Permanent Revolution which was based on the conception that in the modern epoch, it is impossible for the belated and reactionary bourgeoisie in the backward countries to carry to completion the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Consequently, the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia could only be solved by the coming to power of the proletariat, which would not stop short at the democratic tasks, but would have to pass on to Socialism. On this analysis, he forecast that the proletariat of Russia would be the first to take power, they would arrive at the conquest of power in backward
Russia sooner than the advanced countries of the West. The enunciation of the theory of the Permanent Revolution together with the carrying into action of this theory in October 1917, would be sufficient in themselves to inscribe the name of Trotsky among the leaders and fighters of the proletariat.

But this was not the only service for the October Revolution which Trotsky contributed. Today, when the Red Army is covering itself with glory by the heroism and determination with which it defends the land of the October Revolution, it pays fitting tribute to the granite foundation on which the Red Army was built. And the Red Army was the creation of Comrade Trotsky. As Lenin exultantly exclaimed of him:

"Could anyone point out to me another man who could organise an armed Soviet army in a year and even win the respect of military experts? We have such a man! We have everything, and there will be miracles."

All these achievements: the foundation of the Soviet state, the foundation of the Red Army, the foundation of the Communist International were the joint work of Lenin and Trotsky. Of these not the least stress was laid by them on the foundation of the Communist International. Because, as they taught, durable success for the Soviet Union, durable success for the proletarian revolution, could only be obtained on a world scale and the Communist International was the instrument of the world revolution. In this they remained faithful to the teaching of the founders of scientific socialism.

The years from 1917 to 1923 were glorious ones of revolutionary upheave in Russia and throughout the world. Out of the black years of reaction, in which the official organisations of the proletariat had covered themselves with chauvinism and social patriotism and in which capitalism and reaction seemed all-powerful, these years marked a new stage in the decay of world imperialism. In the dark years of the imperialist war, a mere handful of revolutionary internationalists still kept the ideas of international socialism uncatenated by the mood of the bourgeoisie. Foremost in this vanguard were the Russian revolutionists, Lenin and Trotsky. On the revolutionary upsurge which began with the victorious Russian Revolution, and extended throughout the world, in Europe and Asia, their faith and confidence in the inevitable reaction of the world proletariat in a series of revolts and uprisings against the butchery and those responsible for it, was vindicated.

But the crisis of world capitalism, a crisis reflected in the world war and the heroic attempts of the proletariat to take the fate of society into its own hands, was sabotaged by the leadership of the old organisations, which saved capitalism from destruction.

The years of revolutionary flood-tide were followed by the years of reaction. The Petrograd workers' uprising against the October revolution, under the influence of the defeats of the world proletariat was just beginning to rear its head. Lenin in the last year of his life had made a last attempt to form a workers' government to prepare for a struggle against the tormenting bureaucracy. Stalin then established the Bolshevik Party and of the Soviet State. Recognising that Stalin incinated the petit-bourgeois reaction of the officialdom, Lenin pre pared to strike a blow against Stalin by removing him from his position as general secretary.

Alas! the forces of world history are stronger than the best subjective intentions, even of those who have mastered an understanding of the historical processes. They can take advantage of a favourable historical tide and turn it to their own purposes, but not even a Marx, a Lenin or a Trotsky can stand opposed to an unfavourable relationship of forces. The German revolution of 1923 had been ushered in the beginning of the socialist revolution throughout Europe. Its defeat ushered in the period of reaction in the Soviet Union and throughout the world.

Engels once pointed out that decades of preparation sometimes culminated in a revolutionary situation, which lasts two or three days, and which if the opportunity is missed by the revolutionary party, may not recur again for many years.

As always with the Marxists, Trotsky made a thorough analysis of the reasons for the defeat in his book, "The Lessons of October", the better to prepare for victory on the morrow. The defeat he pointed out was due entirely to the fact that the Comintern was in control at the time, (Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin) and to the leadership of the German Party which temporised, vacillated and missed completely the revolutionary opportunity which had been passed by the situation in Germany.

The publication of the "Lessons of October" precipitated the struggle within the Bolshevik party in Russia. The defeat of the German working class opened the way for the October revolution within the Soviet Union. Revisionist doctrines against the teachings of Marxism-Leninism began to be propagated as a reflection of the petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois petit-bourgeois
domination and reaction by the working class, and their inevitability. The reaction of reaction and reached their culmination in the nationalistic and reactionary utopia now-precipitated by the first time by Stalin of the "theory of "Socialism in One Country". The struggle against reaction, for workers democracy in Russia, for the industrialisation of the Soviet Union, for an international orientation of the Bolshevik party; will be ranked by future historians as a struggle, which while unable to prevent its degeneration nevertheless saved the Soviet State from collapse. It was Lenin who led the Left Opposition within the Bolshevik Party on this programme of internal revival of the Bolshevism Party and of the Soviet State. Today the victories of the Soviet Union (collective ownership) the strengthening of the Soviet population due to the survival of the social basis of the Soviet Union (collective ownership) the strengthening of the Red Army, and the planned industrialisation of Russia's resources. All these achievements were the result of the struggle of the Opposition, under Trotsky's guidance and inspiration, which developed the famous "Platform of the Opposition".

Despite "defeat" the Opposition programme of a thorough going and caricatured form was forced on the short-sighted Stalin and the bureaucracy. They were compelled by the development of events, to adopt it despite their protracted resistance to it in the initial stage. These achievements from the view point of the Red Army and of industry are indelibly linked with the name of the Old Man. Without the struggle of the Left Opposition the Soviet Union could not be in existence today, but would have perished from the earth, and had it succeeded in surviving with the reactionary policies of Stalinism could never have withstood the onslaught of the armoured juggling of the German imperialism with the resources of the whole of Europe at its disposal, without the Five Year plans, first developed and put forward by Trotsky.

But without doubt the greatest contribution of all which Trotsky has made to the enrichment of Marxism, to the theory and development of the struggle for internationalism, has been the long struggle against the terrible Stalinist reaction within the Soviet Union, and the ranks of the international working class. With prophetic insight and a finding he denounces the degeneration and collapse of the Communist International if the revisionist theory of Socialism in One Country were to be adopted.

Trotsky's mastery of the dialectical method, his underlining of the theory of Marxism-Leninism enabled him to separate himself from the bureaucratic reaction in the Soviet Union and provided him with the indispensable means of analysing and explaining all the problems and the events of the modern epoch. As an orthodox pupil he carried on the work of the great architects of the future, Marx and Lenin. The last seventeen years of his life were spent as the leader of the small, hunted and persecuted minority of the international labour movement. This did not affect him in the least. To be the head of the Red Army and in power, to be in exile as the leader of a small sect, it was all one to the Old Man; it was
not the possession of power as such he sought but as he once explained the
role of the party, "to fight for the full
social independence of the proletariat; that
part of mankind." Those words exactly fit
and describe the life and activities of
Leon Trotsky. They describe perfectly
the whole attitude towards men and
women, towards events, and all this aim derived
from a perfect understanding of history
and of society. That is from whence
his voice and his power.

Trotsky had nothing but contempt
and revulsion for the petit-bourgeois
and bourgeois philistines who judge
everything in the "Marx and Lenin
principle of success". Success of the
movement meant nothing to Trotsky.
The careers of Stalin and of Trotsky
provide the exact antithesis of the
difference between bureaucratization
and a healthy respect for the
interests of the toilers, between blind
empiricism and Marxist theory.
The present reverent kow-towing of
the Centrist jackasses towards the
Premier is a pitiable effort to
indulge only laughter and
decision from Trotsky. How his pen
would have scorched them at the
present time with his acid wit.

It was an understanding of the epoch
and its tasks which constituted the
true greatness of Trotsky. His life and
work are inseparably intertwined
with the history of the world labour
movement over a period of more than
four decades. Characteristically his stature
was increased by the struggle against
the world-wide reaction which followed
the rise of Stalinism. His works on
the revolution and counter-revolution
in Germany, on France, Spain, Britain,
China, on the rise and nature of
faschism, the meaning and social
nature of the Stalinists, the Social
Union and militarism, tactics and
strategy of the revolutionary party,
constitute an imperishable addition to the
theory and practice of Marxism. In
the light of these works, the writings
and teachings of Marx and Lenin
acquire a new significance, the
understanding of Marxism and of social
problems becomes deepened and
received a new content. Without them
the history of the past two decades
became a meaningless and bloody blur
of defeat after defeat for the world
proletariat, culminating in the present
criminal and insane slaughter of the
peoples.

When we turn to any other tendency
within the world Labour movement or
to the bourgeois theorists the stench of
decay, of utter bewilderment in
the face of events, arises from the pages
of their writings. Who has explained the
history of the past decades? The
historians of the Second International
who led the proletariat to defeat time after
time till they could find no other way
except to support the world slaughter
on the side of the "democratic"
imperialists; the degenerate and putre-

ing "school" of Stalinism which has
long since thrown all pretence of Marx-
ian theory on the dustcart? Or perhaps
the "Leninist" trojan horses of Trotsky
steal bits and pieces from the pro-
gramme of Marxism while capitalizing
on opportunism at every great test?
To speak of the utopian programmes
of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois
toilers, who in the words of Trotsky
or the democrats would be superfluous.

Alone of all currents in the Labour
movement the "Trotskyists" have an
understanding of the epoch, and a pro-
gramme with which to tackle it. That
is Trotsky's greatest achievement
which will rank with the achievements
of the men of genius for all time. It
is this immortal achievement which
will place him on the same pedestal as
Lenin, perhaps with an even greater
warmth and affection in the hearts
and memory of mankind in the future
than that reserved for Lenin, a
reverence and self-sacrifice to create.

Without the work of the Old Man in
the last seventeen years of his life the
vanguard of the proletariat would be
blind and incapable of understanding
the events of the epoch. They would
have floundered helplessly on the tide
of events, whether it was the modern
twentieth-century world war or the
clockwork-keen drive to create
Bolshevism. Many years of horrible
suffering and needless reaction for
the realisation by the vanguard of
the tasks of the proletariat. Stalinism
and revisionism would have succeeded
for a long period in completely wiping
out the programme of Socialism by
bringing on a bloody chaos and bloody
barbarism, before society could have
found a new road.

But Trotsky handed on the search-
light which lights up the darkness
of the complicated twentieth-century
epoch of wars and revolution, of
Stalinism and Fascism. He explained
the dialectic of social
development, of the waves of reaction
and of revolution. Trotsky explained
the basic contradiction of the epoch in
the development of the productive
forces beyond the framework of the
national state and of private ownership
of the means of production. It was
this which was and is causing the
crises of our epoch. Surely the
most disturbed epoch in the history
of mankind!

Trotsky showed the crisis of human
culture and of civilisation as a crisis
of the leadership of the working class.
That was the key to the situation! He
educated the cadres of the Fourth In-
ternational so that they would be able
in the building of a leadership which
would lead the toilers on a world
scale out of the horrors which
socialist imperialism perpetuates in its
death agony.

Comparing Marx and Lenin, Trots-

sky wrote: "When we want to give
a concise answer to the question: Who
is Marx? we say 'Marx ... is the
author of Capital.' And when we ask
ourselves—who is Lenin?—or Lenin is the
author of the October Revolu-
tion!"

And we can add Trotsky's name to
the greatest teachers of the working
class. He is the creator of the Fourth
International. That was his greatest
work.

Trotsky not only analysed and
explained the terrible defeats of the
working class as a product of
reaction which would culminate and has
culminated in the second world war. He
also showed that the reaction which
doomed the revolutionary
internationalists to a position of being a
marginal group of advanced workers and
torpedoed isolated from the masses,
would have been arrested by a new
revolutionary wave on a world scale
which would dwarf into insignifi-
cance the revolutionary wave of
1917-1921. He conceived the years of
reconstruction as years of preparation and
education of the cadres.

Lesser thinkers and sceptics regarded
this prognosis with scepticism. But
the events of the war have already
come to confirm this. The fall of fascism
in Italy is a confirmation of his analysis
and of his prediction. It is but the
beginning of the terrific shocks and
collapses of the coming period.

Trotsky, like all the great Marxists,
was imbued with the optimism of
progress. His understanding gave him
the faith and confidence in the future
of the working class. He foresaw their
victory in the next decades, if not the
next period ahead. He lived by pre-
paring for the future. All his thoughts,
his every activity, his every act,
were dominated by the conscious desire
to assist in the liberation of mankind
from the shackles of capitalist slavery.
Stalinism and Fascism he merely re-
garded as the foul and decaying rem-
nants of the old society. Personal
ambition and selfish considerations
were completely alien to him. He lived
only for the revolution.

His death at the hands of one of
Stalin's tools was a terrible blow to
the world working class. How in-
viable would have been his analysis
of the Italian situation, of the situa-
tion in the Soviet Union, of the com-
ing revolutions and the task of the
vanguard. But Stalin made sure that
Trotsky was not here. But while killing
Trotsky he could not destroy his pro-
gramme. When Stalin's and the
bourgeoisie the old mole of the revolu-
tion burrows well. And the mole is
given sight by the programme develop-
ed by Trotsky. With this it will be
invincible!

The last hour of the Old Man was
typical of the sweep of his personality
which looked beyond petty things to
to those which were great and significant
in the human horizon. He thought
while on his death-bed of the necessity
to a message for the world movement
which embraced the future of man:

"Go forward. I am sure of the
victory of the Fourth International".
Trotzky by his life and work has
made a certainty of his last message.
As we salute his memory, and while
feeling the first breeze of the coming
revolutionary storm, we remember with
gratitude that he gave the theoretical
understanding, on the basis of which
the Fourth International was able to
throw capitalism in the coming epoch.

Trade Unions in the Epoch of
Imperialist Decay

By Leon Trotsky

(The manuscript of the following article was found in
Trotzky's desk. Obviously, it was by no means a complete
article, but rather the rough notes for an article on the
subject indicated by his title. He had been writing them
shortly before his death.—The Editors.)

There is one common feature in the development, or
more correctly the degeneration, of modern trade union
organisations in the entire world: it is their drawing
closely to and growing together with the state power.
This process is equally characteristic of the neutral, the
Social-Democratic, the Communist and "anarchist" trade
unions. This fact alone shows that the tendency towards
"growing together" is intrinsic not in this or that doctrine
as such but derives from social conditions common for all
unions.

Monopoly capitalism does not rest on competition and
free private initiative but on centralised command. The
capitalist cliques at the head of mighty trusts, syndicates,
banking consortiums, etc., view economic life from the
very same heights as does state power; and they require
at every step the collaboration of the latter. In their turn
the trade unions in the most important branches of industry
find themselves deprived of the possibility of profiting by
the competition between the different enterprises. They
have to confront a centralised capitalist adversary, intim-
ately bound up with state power. Hence flows the need
of the trade unions—insar as they remain on reformist
positions, i.e., on positions of adapting themselves to pri-
ivate property—to adapt themselves to the capitalist state
and to contend for its co-operation. In the eyes of the
bureaucratic of the trade union movement the chief task
lies in "freeing" the state from the embrace of capitalism,
in weakening its dependence on trusts, in pulling it over
to their side. This position is in complete harmony with
the social position of the labour aristocracy and the labour
bureaucracy, who fight for a crumb in the share of super-
profits of imperialist capitalism. The labour bureaucrats
do their level best in words and deeds to demonstrate to
the democratic state how reliable and indispensable
they are in peace-time and especially in time of war. By
transforming the trade unions into pawns of the state
bureaucracy, they frighten the新生 of something new; it merely draws to their
ultimate conclusion the tendencies inherent in imperialism.

Colonial and semi-colonial countries are under the sway
not of native capitalism but of foreign imperialism. How-
ever, this does not weaken but on the contrary, strengthens
the need of direct, daily, practical ties between the magnates
of capitalism and the governments which are in essence
subject to them. The governments of colonial or semi-
colonial countries. Inasmuch as imperialist capitalism
creates both in colonies and semi-colonies a stratum of
labour aristocracy and bureaucracy, the latter requires the
support of colonial and semi-colonial governments, as pro-
tectors, patrons and, sometimes, as arbiters. This con-
stitutes the most important social basis for the Bonapartist
and semi-Bonapartist character of governments in the
colonies and in backward countries generally. This like-
wise constitutes the basis for the dependence of reformist
unions upon the state. Moreover, the trade unions have been transformed by
law into semi-state institutions and have, in the nature
of things, assumed a semi-totalitarian character. The
bureaucratisation of the trade unions was, according to the con-
ception of the legislators, introduced in the interests of
the workers in order to assure the latter economic and
personal security. But insofar as foreign
imperialist capitalism dominates the national state and
insofar as it is able, with the assistance of internal re-
duction forces, to overthrow the unstable democracy and
replace it with outright fascist dictatorship, to that extent
the legislation relating to the trade unions can easily
become a weapon in the hands of imperialist dictatorship.

Slogans for Freeing the Unions

From the foregoing it seems, at first sight, easy to draw
the conclusion that the trade unions cease to be trade
unions in the imperialist epoch. They leave almost no
room at all for workers' democracy which, in the good old
days, when free trade ruled on the economic arena, consis-
tuted the content of the inner life of labour organisations.
In the absence of workers' democracy there cannot be any
free struggle for the influence over the trade union mem-
bership. And because of this, the chief arena of work
for revolutionists within the trade unions disappears.
Such a position, however, would be false to the core. We cannot
select the arena and the principle to struggle for. We
have to fight in a totalitarian or a semi-totalitarian state for
influence over the working masses than in democracy.
The very same thing likewise applies to trade unions whose
fate reflects the change in the destiny of capitalist states.
We cannot renounce the struggle for influence over workers
in Germany merely because the totalitarian regime makes
such work extremely difficult there. We cannot, in precisely
the same way, renounce the struggle within the compul-
sory labour organisations created by Fascism. All the less
we can renounce internal systematic work in trade unions
of totalitarian and semi-totalitarian type because
they depend directly or indirectly on the workers' state
or because the bureaucracy deprives the revolutionists of
the possibility of working freely within these trade unions.
It is necessary to conduct a struggle under all these con-
crete conditions which have been created by the preceding
developments, including there in the mistakes of the work-
ing class and the crimes of its leaders. In the fascist and
semi-fascist countries it is impossible to carry on revolu-
tionary work that is not underground, illegal, conspirator-
ial. Within the totalitarian and semi-totalitarian unions
it is impossible to well-nigh impossible to carry on any
except conspiratorial work. It is necessary to adapt our-
selves to the concrete conditions existing in the trade
unions of every given country in order to mobilise the
masses not only against the bourgeoisie but also against
the totalitarian regime within the trade unions themselves.
and against the leaders enforcing this regime. The primary slogan for this struggle is: complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labour aristocracy.

The second slogan: trade union democracy. This slogan flows directly from the first and presupposes for its realisation the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state.

In other words, the trade unions in the present epoch cannot simply be the organs of democracy as they were in the epoch of free capitalism and they cannot any longer remain ‘politically neutral’ (that is to say) themselves in serving the daily needs of the working class. They cannot any longer be reformist, because the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms. The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of the workers and for obstructing the revolution; or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.

The neutrality of trade unions is completely and irretrievably a thing of the past, gone together with the free bourgeois democracy.

From what has been said it follows quite clearly that, in spite of the progressive degeneration of trade unions and their growing together with the imperialist state, the work within the trade unions not only does not lose any of its importance but remains as before and becomes in a certain sense even more important and work than ever before revolutionary party. The matter at issue is essentially the struggle for influence over the working class. Every organisation, every party, every faction which permits itself an ultranationalist position, in relation to the trade union, i.e., in essence turns its back upon the working class, merely because of disapproval with its organisation, every such organisation is destined to perish. And it must be said it deserves to perish.

Inasmuch as the chief role in backward countries is not played by national but by foreign capital, the national bureaucratic oligarchy in the name of its social position, a much more minor position than corresponds with the development of industry. Inasmuch as foreign capital does not import workers but proletarianises the native population, the national proletariat soon begins playing the most important role in the life of the country. In these conditions the national government, to the extent that it tries to show resistance to foreign capital, is compelled to a greater or lesser degree to lean on the proletariat. On the other hand, the governments of those backward countries which consider incapable or more profitable for themselves to make their shoulder to shoulder with foreign capital, destroy the labour organisations and set up or less totalitarian regime. Thus, the falsehood of the national bourgeoisie, the absence of traditions of municipal self-government, the pressure of foreign capital and the relatively rapid growth of the proletariat, cut the ground from under any kind of stable democratic regime. The governments of backward, i.e., colonial and semi-colonial countries, by and large assume a Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist character; and differ from one another in this, that some try to orient in a democratic direction, seeking support among workers and peasants, while others install a form close to military police dictatorship. This likewise determines the fate of the trade unions. They either stand under the special patronage of the state or they are subjected to cruel persecution. Patronage on the part of the state is dictated by two tasks which confront it: first, to draw the working class closer thus gaining a support for resistance against excessive pretensions on the part of imperialism; and, at the same time, to discipline the workers themselves by placing them under the control of a bureaucracy.

MONOPOLY CAPITALISM AND THE UNIONS

Monopoly capitalism is less and less willing to reconcile itself to the independence of trade unions. It demands of the trade unions, which are only the extensions of the state, to rid the working class who pick the crumbs from its banquet table, that they become transformed into its political police before the eyes of the working class. If that is not achieved, the labour bureaucracy is driven away and replaced by the fascists. Incidentally, all the efforts of the labour aristocracy in the downfall of capitalism cannot in the long run save them from destruction.

The intensification of class contradictions within each country, the intensification of antagonisms between one country and another, produce a situation in which imperialist capitalism can tolerate (i.e., up to a certain time) a reformist bureaucracy only if the latter serves directly as a petty but active stockholder of its imperialist enterprises, of its plans and programmes within the country as well as on the world arena. Social-reformism must become transformed into social-imperialism in order to prolong its existence. It cannot last on its own accord. Because along this road there is no way out in general.

Does this mean that in the epoch of imperialism independent trade unions are generally impossible? It would be fundamentally incorrect to pose the question this way. Impossible are the independent or semi-independent reformist trade unions. Wholely possible are revolutionary trade unions which not only are not stockholders of imperialist policy but which set as their task the direct overthrow of the rule of capitalism. In the epoch of imperialist decay the trade unions can be really independent only to the extent that they are conscious of being, in action, the organs of proletarian revolution. In this sense, the programme of transitional demands adopted by the last congress of the Fourth International is not only the programme for the activity of the party but in its fundamental features it is the programme for the activity of the trade unions.

(Translator’s note: At this point Trotsky left room on the page to expand further the connection between trade union activity and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. It is obvious that implied here is a very powerful argument in favour of military training under trade union control. The following idea is implied: Either the trade unions must assume the political role, for the imperialist army and imperialist war they train workers for self-defence and revolution.)

The development of backward countries is characterised by its combined character. In other words, the last word of imperialist technology, economy, and politics is combined in these countries with traditional backwardness and primitiveness. This law can be observed in the most diverse spheres of the development of colonial and semi-colonial countries, including the sphere of the trade union movement. Imperialist capitalism operates here in its most original and natural form. It transports to virgin soil the most perfected methods of its tyrannical rule.

In the trade union movement throughout the world there is to be observed in the last period a swing to the right and the suppression of internal democracy. In England, the Minority Movement in the trade unions has been formed within the assistance of Moscow; the leaders of the trade union movement have come essentially in the field of foreign policy, the obedient agents of the Conservative party. In France there was no room for an independent existence for Stalinist trade unions; they united with the so-called anarchosyndicalist trade unions under the leadership of the Communist party, and as a result of this unification there was a general shift of the trade unions not to the left but to the right. The leadership of the C.G.T.,
is the most direct and open agency of French imperialist capitalism.

In the United States the trade union movement has passed through the most stormy history in recent years. The rise of the C.I.O. is incontrovertible evidence of the revolutionary tendencies within the working masses. Indicative and noteworthy in the highest degree, however, is the fact that the new “leftist” trade union organisation was no sooner founded than it fell into the steel embrace of the imperialist state. The struggle among the togs between the old federation and the new is reducible in large measure to the struggle for the sympathy and support of Roosevelt and his cabinet.

No less graphic, although in a different sense, is the picture of the development or the degeneration of the trade union movement in Spain. In the socialist trade unions all those leading elements which to any degree represented the independence of the trade union movement were pushed out. As regards the anarcho-syndicalist unions, they were transformed into the instrument of the bourgeois republicans; the anarcho-syndicalist leaders became conservative bourgeois ministers. The fact that this metamorphosis took place in conditions of civil war does not weaken its significance. War is the continuation of the same policies. It speeds up processes, exposes their basic features, destroys all that is rotten, false, equivocal and bare all that is essential. The shift of the trade unions to the right was due to the sharpening of class and international contradictions. The leaders of the trade union movement sensed or understood, or were given to understand, that now was the time to play the game of opposition. Every oppositional movement within the trade union movement, especially among the tops, threatens to provoke a stormy movement of the masses and to create difficulties for national imperialism. Hence now the swing of the trade unions to the right, and the suppression of workers' democracy within the union.

We should also recall Holland, where the reformists and the trade union movement was not only a reliable prop of imperialist capitalism, but where the so-called anarcho-syndicalist organisation also was actually under the control of the imperialist government. The secretary of this organisation, Sneeveld, in spite of his anti-fascist sympathies for the Fourth International was as deputy in the Dutch Parliament most concerned lest the government descend upon his trade union organisation.

In the United States the Department of Labour with its leftist bureaucracy has as its task the subordination of the trade union movement to the democratic state and it must be said that this task has up to now been solved with some success.

The nationalisation of railways and oil fields in Mexico has of course nothing in common with socialism. It is a measure of state capitalism in a backward country which in this way seeks to defend itself on the one hand against foreign imperialism and on the other against its own bureaucratic state. This is the management is effected through the labour bureaucracy which is independent of the workers, but in return, completely dependent on the bourgeoisie state. This in effect is the whole task of the bourgeoisie consists in liquidating the trade unions as organs of the class struggle and substituting in their place, the trade union bureaucracy as the organ of the leadership over the workers by the bourgeoisie state. In these conditions, the task of the revolutionary vanguard is to conduct a struggle for the complete independence of the trade unions and for the introduction of actual workers' control over the present union bureaucracy, which has been turned into the administration of railways, oil enterprises and so on.

Events of the last period (before the war) have revealed with especial clarity the anarchy, which in point of theory is always only liberalism drawn to its extremes, was, in practice, peaceful propaganda within the democratic republic, the protection of which it required. If we leave aside individual terrorist acts etc., anarchy, as a system of mass movement and politics, presented only propaganda material under the peaceful protection of the laws. In conditions of crisis the anarchists always did the opposite of what they taught in peace times. This was pointed out by Marx himself in connection with the Paris Commune. And it was repeated on a far more colossal scale in the experience of the Spanish revolution.

Democratic union in the old sense of the term, bodies where in the framework of one and the same mass organisation different tendencies struggled more or less freely can no longer exist. Just as it is impossible to bring back the bourgeois-democratic state, so it is impossible to bring back the old workers' democracy. The fate of the one reflects the fate of the other. As a matter of fact, the independence of trade unions in the class sense, in their relations to the bourgeois state can, in the present conditions, be assured only by a completely revolutionary leadership, that is, the leadership of the Fourth International. This leadership, naturally, must and can be rational and assure the unions the maximum of democracy conceivable under the present concrete conditions. But without the political leadership of the Fourth International the independence of the trade unions is impossible.

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