

**WORKERS’ LIBERTY**

**Reason in Revolt**

**Introduction**

Stalinism dominated and shaped the world for two thirds of the 20th century. Its consequences still warp and shape much of the world’s history. The left has still not properly come to terms with the lessons of Stalinism.

When Draper wrote, Stalinism was still expanding. It would continue to expand for the next 25 or so years, before the sudden collapse of the USSR and its European satellites in 1989-91.

Stalinist “socialism” was the “actually existing” alternative to capitalism for a whole era. It occupied one third of the globe. It seemed as if it might engulf the rest of it. That view of things was mistaken, as we can now see, and so was the view that capitalism was in its death throes, a view which the heterodox shared with the “orthodox” Trotskyists, James P Cannon, Ernest Mandel, Michel Pablo, and so on, who saw the expansion of Stalinism as a deformed working-class world revolution.

Draper’s view was rooted in a picture of Stalinism as a viable historical alternative to capitalism on a world scale — though until the mid 1940s the WP/ISL majority had seen Stalinism as a short-term, freakish socio-economic formation special to the USSR — and in a culpably wrong assessment of the state of capitalism.

Capitalism continued to dominate the economically and socially advanced countries, and by 1953 it was expanding and becoming prosperous.

Notable in Draper’s article is the idea that democracy in the Stalinist states would in fact be the socialist transformation there, and the implicit rejection of the idea that there could ever be a victory for capitalism in those countries. Draper and his comrades shared this idea with the “orthodox” Trotskyists, whose nonsense that the Stalinist formations were “degenerated and deformed workers’ states” the ISL rejected.

That too was, I think, rooted in the idea that the Stalinist system was a viable alternative to a deying capitalism.

The way in which the clearest-minded of the Trotskyist currents after Trotsky, the Shachtman tendency, saw the evolution of the world then is of great interest to socialists today. Draper and his comrades were interested in the world of progress and plenty to birth, the working class to catch up with its tasks: as the working class to catch up with its tasks: as the working class to catch up with its tasks: as the working class to catch up with its tasks: as the working class to catch up with its tasks: as the working class to catch up with its tasks: as the working class to catch up with its tasks:

It was foretold, but the only class which can bring a new system of capitalism in the world today. It is a three-cornered battle for power, in which both basic classes of the capitalist system faces a new contender, the ruling class of the new type of exploiting system which we prefer to call “bureaucratic collectivism” but which is better known as simply Stalinism.

This struggle for the world is not the duel described in the Communist Manifesto a century ago: discipline versus proletariat. It is a three-cornered battle for power, in which both basic classes of the capitalist system faces a new contender, the ruling class of the new type of exploiting system which we prefer to call “bureaucratic collectivism” but which is better known as simply Stalinism.

This triangle of forces is not a mere freak of history. It is the outcome of two factors: the old system of world capitalism is indeed crumbling and disintegrating, as was foretold, but the only class which can bring a new world of progress and plenty to birth, the working class which incubated under capitalism, has not yet reached out for its birthright. But the forces which inexcusably pull the old system apart cannot wait for the working class to catch up with its tasks as the socialist proletariat hangs back, while the old social order dissolves here and there, weakens there and here, to that extent the new social force of Stalinist bureaucratic-statism steps in to take over. Out of the most reactionary elements of the decaying world. An even more hideous ersatz exploiter grows.

Stalinism steps in, not to hold capitalism together, for it groves where that can no longer be done, but to hold society together in the only way it knows how in a world that is falling apart at the seams — by brute force and tyranny.

It seeks power by appealing to the anti-capitalist aspirations and needs of the masses. It gains in power where the people know that they can no longer stand the old system of exploitation which they know on their own backs and in their own bellies, and where they are not presented with a progressive alternative that challenges both the old and the new masters.

What is the importance of understanding that there is a reaction to everything it strives for.

With regard to the fight for democracy, what is the importance of understanding that there is a reac-

tionary alternative to capitalism in the modern world? What is the importance of understanding that anti-capitalism is not enough? If, to previous socialist genera-
tions, the socialism that was to replace capitalism would artificially be democratic, to us the socialism that replaces the old system must be democratic — or it is not socialism, as we shall see in Lesson 2. If to them democracy was the expected and desired com-
promise of socialism, to us it is a condition for socialism.

In no other era than this does the fight for democracy rise to such a pinnacle of importance for the forces of progress. No other movement in the history of the world is so driven to place the democratic goal so close to everything it strives for.
domination, capitalist and Stalinist. Today, in the capitalist-Stalinist struggle, not only the latter has also been increased towards bureaucratic centralisation and militarisation to save them- selves against the threatening rival. There is no other fight for socialism, no struggle for social democracy, which unifies the struggle against both systems, which sums up the tasks of progress.

STAFFICATION AND SOCIALISM

(2) Nationalisation of industry is not equivalent to socialism. Socialism presents us with a society in which all the means of production and distribution are "nationalised", or better, "staffified", and which is yet the antithesis of socialism. The staffification of industry is not the source of the economic, but of the political power of the new ruling class: the new ruling bureaucracy, which becomes the new ruling class.

The victorious working class also will fuse the econom- ical and political power by centralising its control in its own hands. This can be done only in one way — through its democratic institutions.

Nationalisation of the economy under a state which is the "property" of a new minority class of overlords is Stalinism. Socialistisation of the economy under a state which is the democratic expression of the majority of the people is socialism.

The socialist revolution in Russia was made by over- throwing the bourgeoisie. The Stalinist counter-revolution had to be made by destroying the workers' democrac- y.

Stalinism itself cannot he understood without under- standing the new lessons of the relation between social- ism and democracy.

ECONOMICS OF DEMOCRACY

(3) Democracy is an economic essential for socialism, not merely a desirable "moral value".

Let us make plain immediately that we agree entirely with those who say that democracy is what one wants be- cause it is a vital moral value for humanity. But if that were the case for it would go hard. People who are hungry, people who are ill-housed and ill-clothed, are difficult to interest in moral values. It is if one looks at the source of crisis and the capitalist type of crisis, as the Stalinists boast. But like every exploiting society it does so only in order to destroy its own specific forms of crisis. The crisis of the Stalinist economy is chronic. In elimi- nation of capital, the term "capital" has been eliminated that which regu- lates and orders the capitalist system: the market and its laws. In the unplanned and economically anarchic system of capitalism, the producer and the consumer are both the scenes regula- tor of the economy which keeps it working, which acts as its impersonal "planner". There is only one thing which can be done in order to destroy its specific forms of crisis. The truth of the Stalinist economy is chronic. In elimi- nation of profit, profit which can keep specific forms of crisis.

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crimes committed against the socialist revolution by Stalin in the course of the year since the end of the European war (as was a "defensive" one, and in the US SR zone, and the (b) The Militant on each of these crimes.

1. The USSR and the dismantling of factories
A large part of the industries in countries occupied by the US SR have been stripped, dismantled and shipped to Russia. In Czechoslovakia, the official figure is over 20% of all industry; in Poland, over 30%. These are "allied" countries. The US SR and its partners. This unqualified statement leads the reader to domination prevents the stabilisation of capitalist relations in the following areas have been occupied: Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland and half of Korea. of self-determination of the countries involved.

3. USSR and the seizure of territory
There is no condemnation whatsover of Stalin's seizure of territory! there is no condemnation whatsoever of Stalin's seizure of this Stalinist crime must be opposed by socialists as the most cruel and brutalised form of human slavery yet perpetrated in this case in military logistics!

5. USSR and forced labour
Millions of physically fit men and women, war prisoners and nationals of "defeated enemy nations" have been deported to the USSR and put to forced labour in concentration camps among them are tens of thousands of political opponents of the Stalinist regime. Inside the USSR, whole peoples have been declared "collaborators" and shipped to Siberia (Tartars, Volga Germans, etc.) Torture and malnutrition has resulted in the deaths of literally hundreds of thousands of these modern slaves.

In addition to the impeding revolutionary upsurge by removing demoralising and killing off millions of workers and peasants, and alienating the rest of the working class, this Stalinist crime must be opposed by socialists as the most cruel and brutalised form of human slavery which has been perpetrated. The enslavement of man, and socialism, the freeing of man from capitalist slavery, is laid down as one of the most important tasks of the working class.

In 56 issues of The Militant, except for two of the above mentioned articles by Goldman and Morse, there is not a single reference to forced labour, or a word on Stalin's policy which includes looting of factories. Reference is thus nothing more than incidental to the main argument of the article on anti-Stalinism.

There is not a single reference to any looting of factories in the 1946 Militant, no reference in either 1945 or 1946 to the looting of factories in Manchuria, Hungary, Romania, Korea, etc.

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3. USSR and the seizure of territory
The following countries were occupied and were incorporated into the USSR: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Eastern Poland, Bessarabia, Bukovina, Moldavia, Carpatho-Ukraine, Eastern Prussia, Karlovia-Finland, Posen, Tarao, Tuva, Southern Sakhalin, Khabars.

In addition, through occupation troops and police rule, the following areas have been occupied: Romania, Hungary, parts of Austria and Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bukovina, parts of Finland.

As Marxists, we must oppose this violation of the right of self-determination of the countries involved.

In The Stalins, the following references appeared:

July 14, 1945: Relations between US and USSR (Li Fu-jen): very brief, factually a rewrite job from bourgeois newspapers, no interpretation.

Aug. 25, 1945: NC Statement on "USSR in China" has not a single reference to the US/SR looting of China and Manchuria!


Dec. 8, 1945: Austrian Election (unsigned) correctly re-wrote job on Wh eeler's speech, written to defend the US SR. — No single reference or mention of any of Stalin's crimes.

March 9, 1946: Hansen explain that (a) Workers must oppose US imperialism. (b) Workers must oppose the US SR “as the labour movement.” (c) The workers must oppose US in case of war. A big sub-head reads: “Defend the USSR.” Not a word of condemnation! March 16, 1946: US prepares war (Hansen). Correctly opposes US: Them: "In the face of this unbridled assault on the SU, the Kremlin is at an extreme disadvantage.” Why? — because it always denied the danger of a third war, thereby disorienting the workers. Presumably Stalin's alarms have corrected this previous omission.

March 23, 1946: “Wall St. Hurks Reactionary Barrage at USSR (Carsten). In a long and detailed article, there is a single paragraph on Stalin, buried in the text.

March 29, 1946: Preparations for anti-Soviet war (Carsten); 25 paragraphs directed against the US, one paragraph 10 the US SR. — No attempt made to show Kremlin masterminded anything. Carsten's history of this period was not a single detailed charge or condemnation is made.

April 4, 1946: US prepared to go further on USSR (Wright), first page, lead article. Exposes US not Stalin, mentioned, except for his "crime” of gaining control of the United Nations as peace instrument.” Nothing further. April 13, 1946: Long article on War danger (unsigned); no mention of Stalin or US policy.

April 20, 1946: US prepares war (Carsten), not a single word on Stalin.

May 4, 1946: Carsten refers to US's building of a ring of steel around the USSR. Exposes US. Not a single word against Stalin.

May 11, 1946: Paris Foreign Minister Conference (Carsten). Sub-head: "Imperialists Blame USSR." "Imperialists are attempting to lay the entire blame for deadlock on the USSR.” No attempt made to show Kremlin share the blame.

May 18, 1946: Carsten finds US "blaming" USSR for breakdown of peace negotiations. Except for one abstract statement — Stalin enemies of the "power politics” — there is nothing else on Stalin policy.

So in all the articles mentioned there is so much as a hint that Stalin may be responsible for the peace which is being fought on the next war. On the contrary, the entire enus for World War III is placed on the imperialists. To clinch this charge, one need only mention Gray's cartoon (March 16, 1946) on "Preparing for World War III" showing Churchill and American soldier, the caption: "American soldier, Bomb. Stalin is absent. Apparently he is the innocent vict— victim of that bomb.

9. USSR and Iran
The US/SR zone has been fortified on a team in Iran in 1942 permitting their troops to be stationed there until six months after the end of the war. After this date, Russian troops remained giving a vague pretext ("education of the situation").
LESIONS OF STALINISM

They also charged that Iran was threatening war on the USSR. Stalin manufactured a carefully planned "revolt" against the Tehran government, put pressure on it with the help of its Arab satellites and compelled it to grant important economic concessions, spheres of influence, monopoly of its northern oil resources. In 56 issues of The Militant, there appeared the following: May 23, 1946: Wall St. Hurtles Reactionary Barrage at SU (Carsten). The entire article is devoted to Iran: headline suggests that what may be said against Stalin is reaction- ary ideology. The impression is heightened by the absence of any reference to Stalin's crimes in Iran except for a side remark, buried in the text.
March 30, 1946: Iran (Carsten) 25 paragraphs against US, one against Stalin.
April 15, 1946 (unsigned) one line: "Iranian export crisis on pressure on Iranian government" in a long article. No condemnation. Nothing further. May 4, 1946 (Carsten) once again refers to "Poor little Iran" (quotation marks here) Not a single word against Stalin.

The above is the complete record The Militant on the Iranian issue.

10. The USSR's rule in Germany

The USSR, as much as its imperialist accomplices, has breathed its complete life into the zone in Germany. It has looted machiney, dismantled entire factories. It dragged off millions to slave labour. It kept the country at starvation levels and by brute dictatorial force. Those undeniable crimes of the Kremlin must be exposed in our press.

In 56 issues of The Militant there appeared the following: May 30, 1946: Stalinist Imperialism. Barbarous Rule on Germany" contains 1) one passing reference to Allies' "Kremlin accomplishments", 2) all of long article devoted to denunciation of US and England. Not a single word more on Stalin!
July 7, 1945: CP opposes Soviets in Germany (Abbott), but the single sentence to Stalin's policies in Germany. Oct. 6, 1945: "Allied Rule in Germany" — generalities only
Nov. 10, 1945: "Allied Rule in Germany" (Varlin) explicit about US and England, completely silent about USSR.
April 27, 1946: an especially odious example of an almost explicit capitulation to Stalinism: Two articles on the same page:
1) "Kremlin Policy in Germany" — under this comprehensive title, the "Kremlin's policy" is outlined as: a) bringing the workers into an accidentally contradicting Abbott's July 7th article: "CP opposes Soviets in Germany") b) creating fact- democracy c) workers' seizure of factories. Nothing further.
2) "US Imperialism Brings Stavrovia to Germany" (Varlin) is the odious article. Imperialism is tendentious in the extreme. Apparently one of the occu- pying powers brings factory democracy, while the other power is the nemesis of mankind.

This is the complete record of The Militant on this topic.

11. USSR and the merger of the German CP and SDP

As in Eastern Europe and Korea, so, too, its zone in Germany. The merger in Germany was attended by an overwhelmingly vote of the SDP members against the merger (7:1) and by the last-minute prevention of the ballot in the Soviet sector of Berlin, in which half the SDP membership reside. It was further attended by the reactivi- sation of the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, etc. and the political opposition were imprisoned, as well as by the terror of the NKVD and policy.

Impoverished by brute force, the merger strengthens the hands of the Stalinist, puts a party based on party based on totalitarian principles at the head of the masses, and thereby adds to the difficulties of the German workers in creating the preconditions for a struggle. With no opposition.

In 56 issues of The Militant, there appeared nothing on this.

12. USSR and political asylum

The Soviet government has dared against the granting of political asylum in the post-war period. In the UNO, the SU demanded that persons not wanting to return to their countries be granted full international assistance not only with that country's consent; that no "propaganda" be allowed against the idea of return home (a limitation of the right to self-determination). But the Kremlin has failed in its revolutionary task to tell the truth.

The attacks on the Kremlin in whatever few manifests or resolutions appear on the subject are purely funtory and hence, meaningless, since the line was not carried out in the party's propaganda or press.

The objective resultant of the party press's failure to in any way adequately deal with the Kremlin's crimes thus becomes, at least implicitly, or by omission, a capitulation to Stalinism on the part of the Trotskyist movement.

The same sorry record of the party press. There is probably no comrade in the party, be they major or party, or minority, who is not aware of the fact that there is a complete change of line — the majority leadership in its dealings with the Kremlin in any way adequately deal with the Kremlin's crimes thus becomes, at least implicitly, or by omission, a capitulation to Stalinism on the part of the Trotskyist movement.

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