

THE REVOLT OF THE WORKERS AND THE PLAN OF THE INTELLECTUALS

An Answer to Comrades William F. Ward and John G. Wright

by

F. Forest

Comrades Ward and Wright have entitled their answer to the documents of "Johnson-Forest," "Marxist Method and Ideas - and the Methods and Ideas of 'Johnson-Forest'." Clearly, what is involved is not a minor matter. Comrades Ward and Wright maintain that their approach leads to practical conclusions, while that of "Johnson-Forest" leads to "political inertia." What is at stake here, however, is not activity or inactivity. What is at stake here is a political line. The allegedly "ideal system" of "Johnson-Forest" led it to affirm that the Stalinists would not capitulate to the bourgeoisie in each country. What did the practicalism of Comrades Ward and Wright lead them to say?

Their central thesis is that the monstrous phenomenon of Stalinism has set the thinking of "Johnson-Forest" reeling backward to "a museum of pre-Marxist antiquities." (p.2) They make mince-meat out of Proudhon. Proudhonism, however, is not the problem in 1951. Stalinism is. The nature of Stalinism and how to fight it remain the basic problems for the Marxists of our day.

I. Why the Silence on the Stalinist Revisions?

Comrade Trotsky marked out a clear division between the bureaucracy, which, he said, would not defend state property, on the one hand, and the masses who would defend it, on the other hand. He founded a new, Fourth International as an organ for the destruction of the Stalinist Third International. Since the death of Trotsky, the Stalinist counter-revolution has come to full theoretical bloom in the revision of Marx's greatest work:

(1) The Stalinists have affirmed that the law of value was applicable to all societies. Thus they separated what Marx united: the law of value from the law of surplus value which it entailed.

(2) They ordered that Chapter I of Volume I of CAPITAL be omitted from its "study." While they have thus vitiated its dialectic structure,

(3) they have substituted for the law of the decline in the rate of profit as the law of capitalist collapse, the averaging out of the rate of profit as "the law of capitalism."

There is no secret about this wholesale corruption of Marxian political economy. The Stalinists write full encyclopaedias on the question, and put it in tart slogan form for "the masses to understand." What has the Fourth International had to say about all this? Not a word. Small as "Johnson-Forest" is, and as "politically inert" as its total conceptions allegedly make it, it took the field against the Stalinists and their apologists in this country for

4

their vitiation of Marxism. In State Capitalism and World Revolution, the Stalinist revisions are detailed once again. Special emphasis is placed on the theory of the collapse of capitalism irrespective of the market: "In his strictly logical theory Marx excluded any idea that the system would collapse because goods could not be sold....It is possible to keep silent about this, but to deny it - that is impossible."

I thought the challenge had been made clear enough. But Comrades Warde and Wright remain silent on all this. Why?

Involved here is nothing less than the clothing of the naked exploitation of labor in Marxist garments. Then how can proletarian revolutionists remain silent in the face of it? Could it be because the whole pivot of these revisions is the concept that since there is no private property in Russia, there can be no exploitation of man by man? It is the further contention of the Stalinists that, although the categories of CAPITAL abound in Russia, it is a "fascist-Trotskyist-Bukharinist" slander to assert that the economy thereby is state capitalist.

Is it not clear that Comrades Warde and Wright, imprisoned in their concept of state property equals workers state, cannot fight the Stalinist revisions without first revising their theory of state property? And while they hesitate, Comrade Pablo plunges in, head first. Attention has been called most sharply to the fact that both on the question of the law of value operating "in a transformed fashion," and on the economics and politics of state capitalism, Pablo has sided with the revisionists. What have Comrades Warde and Wright to say on that?

II. The Marxian Economic Categories, and the Class Struggle

Comrades Warde and Wright accuse "Johnson-Forest" of the heinous crime of identifying the capitalist economy with the "Soviet economy." They mean the economy of Stalinist Russia, which since 1943-44, the Stalinist theoreticians themselves have admitted operates according to the law of value. The admission was forced upon them by the Russian reality. Long before the admission was made, "Johnson-Forest" had demonstrated that the existence in Russia of the economic categories analyzed in Marx's CAPITAL was not a matter of coincidence. Rather it was due to a fundamental kinship between the Russian economy and capitalism.* In summarizing the facts and conclusions of the extensive study, "Johnson-Forest" used the concise original formula Marx created for analyzing specifically capitalistic production relations: C/V, that is to say, the domination of constant capital (or dead labor) over variable capital (or living labor.)

For this, "Johnson-Forest" is taken to task. "In dealing with the C/V relation," write Comrades Warde and Wright, "one remains in the general sphere of PRODUCTIVITY, equally applicable in this abstract form to any and all economic systems." (p.14)

* Fundamental kinship does not mean identical twins. As State Capitalism and World Revolution puts it: "We have never said that the economy of the United States is the same as the economy of Russia. What we say is that, however great the differences, the fundamental laws of capitalism operate."

I beg to differ. Far from being "an abstract form" equally applicable "to any and all economic systems," O/V ARE TWO OF THE ONLY THREE ORIGINAL CATEGORIES MARX CONTRIBUTED TO THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS TO DEFINE THE SPECIFICALLY CAPITALISTIC LAW OF MOVEMENT OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY."

Reflect on this a moment. Marx transformed the entire science of political economy. From a study of things, it became an analysis of production relations. He wrote some 4,000 pages, or 2,000,000 words, in his analysis of the economic system of capitalism. And for all that, except in three instances, he could use the categories of classical political economy. For those three, however, he had to create new categories altogether. Now Comrades Murdo and Wright take two of those three new categories and assert that they are applicable "to any and all societies."

How is it possible for Marxists to go so completely off the class rails theoretically? The error is no accident. It never fails to appear among Marxist theoreticians who have failed to grasp the essence of Marxism for their specific epoch in strict relationship to the revolutionary activity of the masses. Each stage of capitalist production has posed only two alternatives; either the self-activity of the workers or the plan over the workers. A terrible trap awaits those who do not hold tight to this.

(1) Marx's CAPITAL and "the Planners"

The theoretical axis of Marx's CAPITAL is the question of plan - the plan of the capitalist against the plan of free, associated workers. Chapter XIII in particular is unmistakable in its dialectical opposition between the despotic plan inherent in capital and the plan of the proletariat in the cooperative labor process. The cooperative form of the labor process unleashed a new productive power. The attempt to control this power within capitalistic confines is the basis of the despotic plan of capital. Marx affirms that there can no longer be any doubt about this: The workers' resistance has disclosed that what appeared ideally as plan was in practice the undisputed authority of the capitalist.

We say that today only the actual revolution of the proletariat in the process of production itself can save society. We have written and repeat: future generations will stand in amazement at the equivocal but relentless resistance that the Fourth International carries on against this. Yet it is one of the unique contributions to the analysis of human society that this very revolt, this and no other, saved society in the middle of the last century. Capital, in its inherent tendency to appropriate the 24 hours of the laborer's day for itself, had broken all bounds of morals and nature, age and sex, day and night. Marx tells us that society itself was threatened. The revolt of the workers established the shortening of the working day. This revolt and its consequences led to the intensive development of machinery. Bourgeois scientists, as usual, claimed the legally limited working day as a result of their science, their

* Labor power - and with it the split of the category of labor into abstract labor and concrete labor - is the third original Marxian category. (We'll deal with this later.) Commodity, value - and with it surplus value - Marx refined, but the categories themselves he took over from classical political economy. Characteristic of Marx was this insistence of his upon crediting classical political economy with a theory of surplus value it had never elaborated just because it was implicit in their labor theory of value.

intellect, their plan. The bourgeoisie claimed the invention of machinery as their contribution to human welfare and progress. Marx poured scorn on these Pharisees. The determination of what is a working-day "presents itself as the result of a struggle, a struggle between collective capital, i.e., the class of capitalists, and collective labor, i.e., the working class." (CAPITAL, Volume I, p. 259) It was "the product of a protracted civil war, more or less dissembled, between the capitalist class and the working class." (p. 327) The influence of the workers' revolt on the development of machinery should be studied in Volume I, pages 447-457. But even that revolt, because it did not overthrow capitalism, meant increased despotism.

Marx categorically asserts that since all labor under capitalism is forced labor, plan can be nothing but the organization of production under the domination of the machine. To try to bring order, therefore, into the anarchy of the market of a society based on the factory plan, could only mean subjecting society to "one single master."

On the other hand, the cooperative form of the labor process discloses the socialism imbedded in capitalism. The discipline, unity, cooperative action of the proletariat proves once and for all, (1) that its existence as a class presupposed that the fundamental types of all the productive forces of the future have been developed. What is now required is a new method of uniting them. And (2) that the self-development of the proletariat is the new method of uniting them. Without this no higher form of production is possible. Do Comrades Warde and Wright agree with this or not? In THE INVADING SOCIALIST SOCIETY we asked Gorman that question. He did not answer.

Marx's point is that under capitalist production, on the other hand, the only way a rise in productivity can be achieved is the ever greater domination of machines over living labor. "Johnson-Forest" did not discover this. That is what CAPITAL is about.

The consequence of the complete inversion in the relationship of machines to men, with its misery for labor and anarchy of the market, could not help but impress the intellectuals. They were ready with plans for everything except the reorganization of the productive process by labor itself. Consistently Marx posed the cooperative form of the labor process in opposition to these intellectual planners who could not comprehend this new power. Marx warned: not to see the plan inherent in the activity of the revolutionary proletariat must force one to pose an external factor to do the planning. He dismissed with utter contempt Proudhon's plan to do away with exchange. For the practical and violent actions of the proletariat, Marx wrote, Proudhon substitutes the "evacuating motion of his head."

Proudhon was neither the first nor the last of the planners. Planning is not limited to idealists. The abstract materialist who views technological development outside of the class relationship also slips back into considering the capitalistic factors of production as mere factors of any social form of production. That is why Marx created new categories - constant and variable capital - to describe the manner in which machines and labor united under a capitalist economy. In opposition to all the planners - abstract materialist as well as idealist - Marx elaborated his analysis of capitalist production.

In Volume I of CAPITAL, the socialistic nature of the cooperative form of the labor process is held out in sharp contrast to the hierarchic structure of capitalist control. In Volume II Marx isolates the capitalist nation and

analyzes it as a unit:

"...we must not follow the manner copied by Proudhon from bourgeois economics, which looks upon this matter as though a society with a capitalist mode of production would lose its specific historical and economic characteristics by being taken as a unit. Not at all. We have in that case to deal with the aggregate capitalist."

(CAPITAL, Volume II, p. 503)

It is not "Johnson-Forest" who preach that piece of Proudhonism. It is the Fourth International.

The whole of Volume II is built not on individual, private capital, but on aggregate, national capital.*

In Volume III, Marx returns to the creative plan of the workers as the plan most adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it. So that the creative plan of the workers in opposition to the authoritarian plan of the capitalist runs like a red thread through all three volumes of CAPITAL.

Now Lenin in 1915 realized that there were aspects to CAPITAL that no Marxist, including himself, had understood for 50 years. We, in 1951, can see still further, for the problem posed theoretically by Marx in CAPITAL is the very one posed so forcefully in a concrete manner by our epoch. The Marxist theoretician who has failed to grasp this has invariably fallen into the same trap as the abstract materialist, and singled out some basic element of capitalist production as a mere technical problem. The inescapable next step is to spirit away the class content of the economic categories Marx created. This happened to the great revolutionary martyr, Rosa Luxemburg.

Where Proudhon poured forth all his wrath against the machine but had nothing to say about the modern workshop, that is, the factory, Comrade Luxemburg poured forth her wrath against the modern workshop but let the machine stand as if that could be divorced from its factory environment. Having divided what Marx had united, she followed the pattern as if she had been stage directed. She said that there is nothing specifically capitalistic in the categories C/V. These, she contended, were merely expressions of machine production in "any and all" societies. That is how she began. She ended by revising the Marxist theory of accumulation. (See "Luxemburg's Theory of Accumulation," by F. Forest, N.I., April and May 1946.) The same, in different circumstances, was true of Bukharin, and precisely, I might add, on the questions of state capitalism and of the economy of the transition period. Both errors were inevitable. The crisis at each new stage of capitalist production needs some solution. There is always a radical bourgeois solution which, of course, only intensifies the crisis. Let the Marxist theoretician beware. He must find in the specific circumstances the basis for the specific revolutionary action of the masses. If he does not, he is drawn fatally toward the solution posed by the radical bourgeois.

* Anyone aware of the voluminous debates around Volume II will count 1,000 and 1 before he abandons himself to the assertion that the society Marx dealt with was only an "abstraction."

By her theory of accumulation, Rosa Luxemburg anticipated the under-consumptionist theory of Keynes. By his theory of state capitalism and the economics of the transition period, Bukharin anticipated Stalin.

It may interest Comrades Warde and Wright to learn that before the theory of bureaucratic collectivism could be fought politically, it had become necessary to destroy the Marxist pretensions of Joe Carter, the theoretician of bureaucratic collectivism in this country, precisely in this field. He, too, had taken exception to the Marxian categories, C/V. (See "Production for Production's Sake," by J.R. Johnson, W.P. BULLETIN, 1943; and "A Restatement of Some Fundamentals of Marxism, Against Carter's Vulgarization," by F. Forest, W. P. BULLETIN, March 1944.)

(2) Once Again, the Marxian Economic Categories

Comrades Warde and Wright quote Marx to the effect that laborers and means of production remain the basic factors of production, whatever be its social form. Without, however, specifying that they are inserting parenthetical expressions of their own, they make the following two additions:

- "(or V)":
1) Next to the word, laborers, Comrades Warde and Wright insert:
2) Next to the words, means of production, they insert: "(or C)".
(p. 14)

Now it is true that "V" and "C" are synonymous with laborers and means of production, but only if one is speaking of capitalist production. Because Marx's subject at that point of the question was not capitalist production, but any form of social production, he specifically excluded them. If, for reasons of their own, Comrades Warde and Wright felt compelled to include them, they should have told the reader why, and, in any case, specified that these were their own, not Marx's parenthetical additions.

Marx follows up the sentence about the union of the two factors of production, with: "The special manner in which this union is accomplished distinguishes the different economic epochs from one another." (CAPITAL, Volume II, p. 44) There, Comrades Warde and Wright stop.

They have thus missed the whole point. It is only after this generalization that Marx specifies in what manner they united under capitalism. Of such great historical importance does Marx consider his analysis of the two factors of production, "as the productive mode of existence" of capital, that he refers the reader to its full analysis in Volume I. There, Marx had put his entire emphasis on the fact that he had to call both labor and means of production capital. In truth, he stresses, it is now the means of production that employ the laborer, not the laborer, the means of production. To describe this special manner in which machines and labor united, Marx created the categories, C/V, constant and variable capital.

Comrades Karda and Wright stand this on its head. Instead of having labor and means of production unite in a special manner, they have C/V do so. They write: "It is the special manner in which C/V relationship is established that marks off capitalism from the transitional Soviet economy." (p.14) So, first they " telescoped" machines and labor with C/V to make them synonymous. Now they have C/V establish itself in various ways and, since under capitalism, it manifests itself as S/V (the relation of surplus value to variable capital), they conclude: "in dealing with the S/V relation, we are dealing with one and only one economic epoch; that of capitalism." (p. 14)

The last sentence is the one that finally stands on its feet. But far from proving that C/V is not such a capitalistic relation, it only leaves unanswered the question: how was S/V, that is, the degree of exploitation, extracted. The answer is C/V. As Engels explained it:

"By ascertaining the distinction between constant and variable capital he was enabled to trace the process of the formation of surplus value in all its details and thus to explain it, a feat which none of his predecessors had accomplished." (Preface, CAPITAL, Volume II, p. 25)

Had Marx not created the categories, C/V, and had worked only with the categories, S/V, the leap from the distributive sphere of utopian socialism into the production sphere of scientific socialism would have been impossible.

The very structure of CAPITAL tells us that S/V are derivatives of C/V, for Marx deals with the "Rate of Surplus Value" (Chapter IX) only after he has dealt with the "Constant Capital and Variable Capital" (Chapter VIII). Because, however, Comrades Karda and Wright had reduced the economic categories dealing with the exploitative extraction of labor under capitalism to mere factors of production of "any" form of production, they were oblivious to this and found instead, that they had to divide what Marx had united: the question of productivity and the question of the class struggle.

Comrades Karda and Wright accuse "Johnson-Forest" of shifting the whole axis from the class struggle to the question of productivity. But what is the class struggle if it is not the never-ending struggle in the factory against what Marx called "the strictly regulating authority of the social mechanism of the labor process graduated into a complete hierarchy." (CAPITAL, Volume III, p. 1027). How far removed is that from the academic play of words, "agents and principals"! The agent Marx has in mind is the agent of capital, that third force that stands in the way of labor united with means of production in a natural way, and not by the intervention of an outside force, the hierarchy capital creates, a relation of class. The hierarchy built up in the factory has little to do with the "ownership" of a "principal." It is something a great deal more basic, with a more solid foundation and deeper roots. The "agent" that Marx is analyzing is that tough bureaucracy which he compares always to a military hierarchy which has a strangle hold on the workers as they work cooperatively. This hierarchy is no simple "agent of a principal." It is the division of labor which makes of the workers mere automatons who must not move from their niche in the assembly line, while everyone from the "principal" to the "agents," that whole gang of foremen, discipline the worker. This discipline forces from him over greater amounts of surplus value through more machines and through the greater intensity with which they are operated. Marx's point was that so long as there is a group of "special agents" in opposition to the direct producer, that is how long that "social mechanism," C/V, will continue to dominate. That is why Marx, from the very first draft of CAPITAL, never tired of reasserting that:

"The mastery of the capitalist over the worker is in reality the mastery of dead over living labor."
(ARCHIVES OF MARX-ENGELS, Vol. II (VII), Russian.)

Marx says the same thing in a thousand different ways throughout the three volumes of CAPITAL and THE THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE, because it is this which sums up the whole essence of capitalism. It is for this reason that Marx had not divided, as Comrades Warde and Wright had divided, the class struggle from the question of productivity. Far from being anything abstract, productivity is the most concrete, the most oppressive way of making workers sweat the more. That is precisely what Marx was saying with his formula C/V. Comrades Warde and Wright, however, who theoretically had stripped these categories of their class content, and practically spoke of some abstract "Soviet economy" instead of the specific class relations in the factory, saw, and can see, "nothing in common" between the Russian economy and capitalism.

(3) Fetishisms and Freely Associated Men

Comrades Warde and Wright stand everything on its head. Where Marx says the property relationship is nothing but a legal expression for the production relationship, they make the productive relationship nothing but an expression of the property form or relationship. Where Marx says that outside the production relationship, property is nothing but a juristic illusion, Comrades Warde and Wright say: "Productive relations of the economy transitional to socialism is contained in collectivized property." Where Marx says that if you understand bourgeois private property to be but a legal expression for class antagonisms, then "in this sense" (my emphasis, F.F.) "the theory of Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property," these Comrades Warde and Wright leave out the phrase, "in this sense," altogether, and, with a century of capitalist development behind them, equate the abolition of class antagonisms with the abolition of private property.

Marx, on the other hand, found, with less than two decades of development separating the writing of THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO from the writing of the RULES of the First International, that he had more reason to emphasize the word, "monopolizer" than the word, "private." Thus the RULES proclaimed "the economical subjection of the man of labour to the monopolizer of the means of labour, that is, the source of life, lies at the bottom of sorvitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence." And when a few years later the Paris Commune came out of the revolutionary activity of the proletariat, Marx, far from shouting, private property, private property, private property, warned against even "cooperative production" becoming a mere "sham and snare." The only way to prevent that, wrote Marx, in THE CIVIL WAR IN FRANCE, is to see that all control remains in the hands of "free and associated labor." All the emphasis now shifts to "free and associated labor" for the state is being smashed up and in its stead is to be a Commune. And, on the eve of October, Lenin puts his stress on the fact that the Commune was "not a state at all." Is Stalinist Russia with its ubiquitous army, with its over-expanding prisons, forced labor camps "not a state at all"? Or in transition to that? Does its property form really contain "the productive relations of the economy transitional to socialism"? (p. 6)

Even where Comrades Warde and Wright state a simple Marxist truth, it somehow gets transformed into its opposite. They state, for instance, that the real contradiction is between productive forces and production relations. Absolutely true. But where Marx includes the revolutionary proletariat as the greatest

productive force, the productive forces with them are only the simple material means of production. No wonder that the "quest for universality" is to them "an ideological, not a material force." No wonder that, though they quote from Marx's POVERTY OF PHILOSOPHY so often, they failed to grasp its essence: "But from the moment that all special development ceases, the need for universality, the tendency towards an integral development of the individual begins to make itself felt." (p. 157)

This was not "just" the young Marx of the early PHILOSOPHIC ESSAYS, nor "only" the Marx of POVERTY OF PHILOSOPHY. Nor is it absent from the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO which Comrades Werde and Wright see as a manifesto for the abolition of private property in order to institute state property. The aim is better stated by Marx who writes that the abolition of class antagonisms means to have "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." I put it bluntly. "Johnson-Forest" say that this free association is the new material force, the greatest of all productive forces. "Johnson-Forest" have asked the question often enough and I ask it again: Do Comrades Werde and Wright accept this or is it for them idealism?

It is the mature Marx of CAPITAL who says that even for the simple task of getting rid of the fetishism of commodities, it is not enough to see labor as the source of value and "know" that class relations are involved. Thus we see that Marx from the first chapter of CAPITAL poses the question of plan of the freely associated laborers. This time it is posed in opposition to the fetishism of the commodity-form.

What is needed is clear: it is to see labor not as substance, that is to say, thing, but as subject, that is to say, an active, developing human being. Hence, where the political economists began their analysis of capitalism with labor as the source of value, Marx began CAPITAL with the concept of labor-power, the worker as creative subject. With this new concept of the worker as a human being, he could see what the political economists could not see - that under capitalism human relations assumed the form of material relations, social relations assumed the form of relations between things. Marx says that such relations between men must assume "the fantastic form of a relation between things" because that is, in truth, what they are. Under the perverse relationship of dead to living labor characteristic of capitalism, social relations, writes Marx, "really are material relations between persons and social relations between things" (CAPITAL, Volume I, pp. 83-84. Indeed, the product of labor under capitalism can have no other form but that of the commodity. Tens of millions of workers in Russia, in their own way, know this. That is why the Stalinists are so anxious to have Chapter I of Volume I omitted from the study of CAPITAL.

The fetishism of commodities expresses on the market level what the C/V relationship expresses at the level of production - that the human being does not control the thing, but the thing controls the human being. It was only by beginning with this new universal concept of the worker as creative subject that Marx could pose the fundamental negations inherent in capitalist production: (a) the negation of the fetishism of commodities, and (b) the negation of the workers as part of the mechanism of capital. That is why, as has been shown above, Marx called the worker variable capital. For Marx the negation of both of these could take place only by the workers becoming freely associated. To substitute for this, nationalized property and "planned economy," is to turn Marx into nothing more than the vulgar materialist the bourgeoisie say he is.

It was because Marx had this general concept of the worker that he could have the more concrete concept of the socialized workers - freely associated men.

- 10 -

Marx's whole point is that the commodity-form only became general when it extended to the particular commodity, labor itself or rather the capacity to labor. To this end Marx created his third original economic category: labor power. In Volume II he reiterates once again:

"The peculiar characteristic is not that the commodity, labor power, is saleable, but that labor power appears in the shape of a commodity." (CAPITAL, Volume II, p. 37)

Now read this:

"An economic system is first of all determined by its class structure.... And capitalist society - by the sale of labor power to the capitalist class which owns the means of production."

It is by Comrade Weiss in his report to the National Convention. (DISCUSSION BULLETIN, No. 6, January 1951, p. 13.)

Where Marx made the commodity-form appearance of living labor the quintessence of capitalism, Comrade Weiss made the saleability that quintessence. Marx's point is that the form of appearance of living labor as mere labor power reveals the class structure of society and thus belies the equality of exchange. Comrade Weiss's point seems to be that the ownership determines the class structure. Comrade Weiss thus leaves the fetishism inherent in commodities where classical political economy had left it. Marx was most categorical on the matter. The only way that the fetishism can be stripped off is through the workers' revolt against the conditions which have produced it and thenceforward as freely-associated men planning their own lives. Should an intellectual ever lose sight of this type of plan in strict relationship to this revolt and this self-activity of the workers, Marx concluded, it would be impossible to advance from the position of the classical economists who, despite their discovery of labor as the source of value, "remained more or less prisoners of the world of illusion which they had dissolved critically...." (CAPITAL, Volume III, p. 967)

Theoretically there is no other road. That is why Comrade Weiss could not help but fall into the trap that always lies waiting for the Marxist theoretician who leaves out this central point of CAPITAL.

III. What About Lenin's Method?

Comrades Wardo and Wright attempt to attribute to "Johnson-Forest" an assertion that we are "self-avowed revisionists." We deny that absolutely. The essence of revisionism is blunting the class distinction between the revolutionary vanguard and the labor traitors of all types. Let us see what Comrades Wardo and Wright make of Lenin's IMPERIALISM and what "Johnson-Forest", the alleged revisionists, make of it.

Lenin lists five essential features of imperialism. Comrades Wardo and Wright re-list these as if that were the whole significance of the book. Were that the issue, Lenin's book would have to take second place to Hobson's IMPERIALISM, and Hilferding's FINANCE CAPITAL, on which works Lenin based his book.*

* Indeed, bourgeois theoreticians dismiss Lenin's IMPERIALISM precisely because the "primary sources" had already been covered in those other books.

As five "essential features" of imperialism, the five phenomena listed were, more or less, contained in both those books. What was theoretically and politically new was Lenin's singling out the quintessence of those five features to be the transformation of competition into its opposite, monopoly.

Lenin's central thesis was that the transformation of one thing into its opposite was a dialectical mode which explained the actual, the concrete problems that faced him, both economically and politically. In the economic development it meant the transformation of competition into monopoly. In the political sphere it meant the development within the labor movement of a stratum of labor into its opposite, an aristocracy of labor. Thereupon Lenin changed his entire method of approach to the Second International. He wrote his IMPERIALISM: A POPULAR OUTLINE to show the economic roots of the betrayal. Although his book was a profound description of the economics of his epoch, that was not the point of the book. The point, as he had phrased it in the Preface, was to disclose that "the split in the labor movement is bound up with the objective conditions of imperialism." Lenin's method of analysis had helped him to find out the objective reasons for the collapse of the Second International and to chart its future course. He drew a sharp class distinction between the Second and the Third International.

What exactly is it that Comrades Wardo and Wright are trying to prove by clinging to the mere listing of the "five essential features?" How does the mere re-listing of those features of the 1914 economy help Comrades Wardo and Wright to understand the economy of 1951 to the end that they find the economic basis, the class nature of Stalinism? They, we are to presume, are not revisionists because in 1951 they list the features of 1914 and add the claim that those are not only correct now, but more so. The political result however, is that until 1950 they predicted that Stalinism would follow the road of the Social Democracy. Now they continue to list these features and change their position on Stalinism for reasons which have nothing whatever to do with those features. For Lenin, however, there was no division between the essential features and his politics.

Comrades Wardo and Wright again think they are following Lenin in stressing the need to export surplus capital as "the fundamental characteristic of capitalism." This is totally wrong. Even the American bourgeoisie is concerned with something more vital than the export of capital. The American bourgeoisie knows that there is no possibility whatever of its finding any basis for surplus profits from the export of capital in the way the British Empire did. No one in the whole wide world believes that there is, except Comrades Wardo and Wright and those in the Fourth International who think like them.

As is characteristic of capitalism of our day, a far more fundamental movement than the export of capital is involved. Where five imperialisms in 1914 sought to export surplus capital for surplus profit, we now have two large masses of capital each seeking to incorporate smaller national capitals into their larger one. This is a far more serious question than the mere export of capital. It is this which is at the basis of political understanding today. Whoever thinks in terms of export of capital simply does not understand, not only the economics of today, but what is far more important, its politics. In this necessity to incorporate national capitals there is no difference between the United States and Russia. There is not and there cannot be. Here I can best express it by quoting from our Resolution on the International Situation which is published in the present bulletin:

"The bankruptcy of capitalist production compels not the export of capital for surplus profits; it compels the dominant capitals to seek to incorporate and submit to their domination the total national capital of other nations. The smaller national capitals, such as Britain and France, continue to resist, but they are steadily being forced into a situation where their capital, manpower, scientific knowledge, etc. are being incorporated into the services of the United States. The same process is being followed by Russia. This is the process of statification of production and centralization of capital on a gigantic national and international scale. This is the economic movement that has destroyed five competing imperialisms for the redivision of the world and has substituted two gigantic masses of capital competing for total centralization.

"In this change is to be found the basic economic reason for the difference between the reformist parties of World War I and the Stalinist parties of World War II. Whereas the Social Democracies each remained attached to its own national capital, in World War II and since, the Stalinist parties attached themselves to one of the competing powers, and the Social Democrats to the other. It is the development of world economics and world politics which have caused the change in the character and politics of the labor bureaucracies."

Lenin insisted that unless you understood the specific nature of imperialism in 1914 you could not take a single step. To assert today that every single mistake of the Fourth International stems from its refusal to understand the specific stage of imperialism today.

IV. "Idealism" and Concrete Questions

Comrades Ward and Wright accuse "Johnson-Forest" of having slipped into Hegelianism in its "pure idealist form." Their point seems to be that our ideas on Christianity prove their accusation of idealism. The charge is grotesque. I am sorry to have to weary the comrades once more with a paragraph from WORLD REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES which we had already quoted in STATE CAPITALISM AND WORLD REVOLUTION:

"Hegel saw objective history as the successive manifestations of a world spirit. Marx placed the objective movement in the process of production. Hegel had been driven to see the perpetual quest for universality as necessarily confined to the process of knowledge. Marx reversed this and rooted the quest for universality in the need for the free and full development of all the inherent and acquired characteristics in productive and intellectual labor. Hegel made the motive force of history the work of a few gifted individuals in whom was concentrated the social movement. Marx propounded the view that it was only when ideas seized hold of the masses that the process of history moved. Hegel dreaded the revolt of the modern mass. Marx made the modern proletarian revolution the motive force of modern history. Hegel placed the guardianship of society in the hands of the bureaucracy. Marx saw future society as headed for ruin except under the rulership of the proletariat and the vanishing distinction between intellectual and manual labor." (p. 70)

A minority finds it difficult enough to keep up with all the things that have to be discussed to add to its burdens by a discussion on Christianity. I see no reason why I should assist Comrades Ward and Wright in having such a discussion.

More serious is their contention that the "idealism" of "Johnson-Forest" must lead it to deny national struggles. This simply is not true. The truth is that "Johnson-Forest" supported the national resistance movements during the war. It urged the Movement to enter them and there raise the banner of the Socialist United States of Europe. The Movement on the other hand, remained on the sidelines throughout the period of this tremendous mass upsurge.

Comrades Warde and Wright, in contrast to our attitude to "abolish all distinctions," go with great precision into the analysis of Stalinist Russia. They cite this time nine essential features. The point at issue, however, is not the "nine essential features," but the one political conclusion. Trotsky, like Lenin, based his political conclusions on the essential features of the economy. He said that the Stalinist bureaucracy and the Stalinist parties were headed back toward private property. That was the distinction he drew between the Third and Fourth International. But every tendency or sub-tendency in orthodox Trotskyism will subscribe to the nine "essential features" and then draw what will soon be nine different political conclusions. Exactly what is the position of Comrades Warde and Wright on this question of Stalinism and private property?

The same dilemma faces Comrades Warde and Wright when they attack us on the theory of the party. I haven't the slightest doubt that all tendencies in the Fourth International will agree on the list of "essential features" of the Leninist conception of the party. But here again, as they constantly do, and as they must, Comrades Warde and Wright are applying one set of ideas to a set of circumstances qualitatively different. It was not that the Social Democratic parties in Lenin's days were mass parties. It was that they were mass parties which would not seize the power. Lenin was striving for a party which would seize the power, against parties which, from his economic and social analysis, he was convinced would not seize it. Are the Stalinist parties of today a repetition on a higher scale of the Social Democratic parties? Trotsky believed they were. We say they are not. Exactly what do Comrades Warde and Wright believe?

The vanguard today faces a very concrete enemy in the counter-revolutionary theory of the party put forward by the Stalinists all over the world. The Stalinists are not bad leaders while we offer ourselves as good ones. For what they intend to do - suppress the self-mobilization of the proletariat - the Stalinists are as good leaders as could be imagined. We say that the Fourth International is and must be an organization that aims to do exactly what the Stalinists try with all their might to prevent. What the proletariat is concerned with today is not whether or not the mass parties will seize power. The problem is: when they do, must it inevitably end in the one-party totalitarian dictatorship? We posed the answer to this problem, not to the problem that Lenin faced. Perhaps we did not make ourselves as clear as we could have on that point in our document, STATE CAPITALISM AND WORLD REVOLUTION. But at this stage of the discussion there is no reason for confusion. The principles by which a revolutionary party must be built still remain Lenin's in essence. We do not question that at all. What we do is pose the answer to the problem of the party today.

Leninism is not a matter of "essential features." Leninism is the struggle for annihilation of whatever stands in the way of proletarian power. Comrades Warde and Wright must first decide what kind of party it is they are fighting against before they can decide what is the correct Leninist theory of the party for 1951. What kind of party are we trying to build? We are trying to build a party which will destroy, not Menshevism in 1903, nor the Social Democracy in 1919, but Stalinism in 1951.

Comrades Warde and Wright end by characterizing "Johnson-Forest":
"Nothing less than the traditions, methods and ideas of scientific socialism here
confront an attempt to revise Marxism which would drag the theory of our move-
ment back more than a century and derail it politically." (p. 25) That we
accuse Comrades Warde and Wright is not 100 year old, or even 11. We are strictly
contemporary. Every point that is raised comes back to the question: What is the
nature of Stalinism? Trotsky had an answer. "Johnson-Forest" have an answer.
Comrade Marcy has an answer. But, the plain truth of the matter is that Comrades
Warde and Wright have none. Sooner or later they will have to choose. To make
the correct choice our Party has only to look at its historical origin and the
struggles by which it has arrived at maturity.

June 5, 1961

1437