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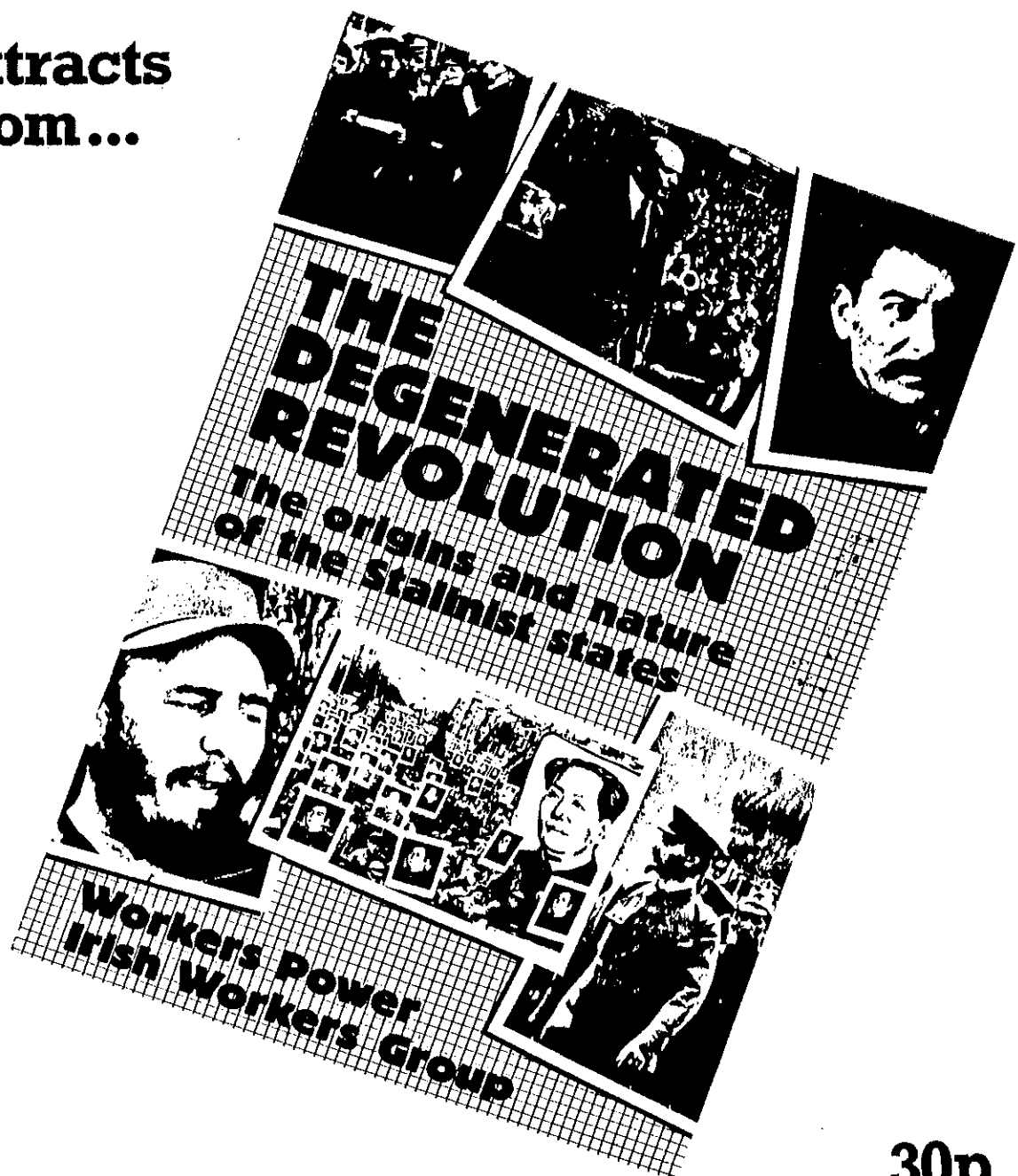
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# The survival and expansion of Stalinism after the Second World War

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# The survival and expansion of Stalinism after the Second World War

The continued existence of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state into the 1980s can only be understood and explained by an analysis of the expansion of Stalinism since the end of the Second World War. The theoretical and political problems posed by this expansion have caused programmatic confusion amongst those claiming to uphold the banner of Trotskyism. In part or in whole this confusion has stemmed from an inability to creatively elaborate Trotsky's own analysis of Stalinism under the changed conditions of the war and its aftermath.

Ever since the early 1920s Trotsky sketched out the general contradictions which were pushing towards a new imperialist world war. He correctly recognised that the USA emerged from the First World War far stronger than both the victorious and the defeated imperialism of Europe. At that time Trotsky believed that a new war would arise out of a failed attempt at post-war USA expansion, a failure caused by an inability to accumulate sufficiently on a ruined European economy, and French and British unwillingness to be reduced to semi-colonies of the USA.<sup>1</sup>

The major impetus which forced Trotsky to concretise his analysis and discuss the tempo of the coming war in the 1930s, was of course, the rise to power of Hitler in 1933 in Germany.<sup>2</sup> Precisely because Stalinism's fate was inextricably tied to the respective fortunes of imperialism and the working class, Trotsky drew a number of conclusions regarding the fate of the Kremlin usurpers should the expected war materialise.

Trotsky argued that the imperialist war and its accompanying revolutionary upsurges would sweep away the Stalinist bureaucracy. Either it would succumb directly to the onslaught of imperialism aided by restorationist forces within the USSR or a series of successful proletarian revolutions in Europe, arising out of the war, would lead to political revolution in the Soviet Union and destroy the Kremlin bureaucracy.<sup>3</sup>

Taken as a strategic prognosis, Trotsky's formulations retain their validity. The reactionary, utopian policy of "detente" practiced by Stalinism in the USSR will lead, inevitably, to the destruction of the collectivised property relations should the working class not first come to the rescue. This *undeniable tendency* towards the destruction of Stalinism was, however, offset during the course of the Second World War, by a set of *conjunctural* factors which Trotsky did not, and, in some cases, could not anticipate.

## STALINISM AND CLASS STRUGGLE IN WORLD WAR 2

The divisions within world imperialism which weakened its offensive capacity against the USSR. The very nature of the imperialist war—bloody conflicts over the division of the world markets—led to the Allied or "democratic" imperialist nations (primarily Great Britain and the USA) eventually enlisting the support of the Stalinist bureaucracy for its war effort against the Axis Powers.

The defeat of the Axis countries and the various compromised national bourgeoisies at the close of the war was accompanied by

large-scale anti-capitalist mobilisations. This confirmed the objective potential for the revolutionary variant of Trotsky's prognosis for the war. In the Axis countries (Bulgaria, Rumania, and Hungary) the upsurges were most pronounced after the German defeat. In Bulgaria, for example, *The Economist* (7th October 1944) noted that throughout Thrace and Macedonia, "Soldiers councils have been set up, officers have been degraded, red flags hoisted and normal saluting has been abolished."<sup>4</sup>

In Eastern Europe the working class was most to the fore in Czechoslovakia, where plant committees, Councils and workers' militias were created. Dual power existed for many months in 1944 and 1945. It was a full year before the government dared to limit workers control in the factories.<sup>5</sup> In Germany there were widespread workers uprisings, particularly in Halle and Magdeburg. It has become commonplace, even amongst bourgeois historians, to recognise that the defeat of Hitler in France during 1944 provoked extremely favourable conditions for the working class to seize state power.<sup>6</sup>

The successful imperialist bloc in the war was itself not able to crush this movement. Imperialism was forced to lean upon the Kremlin and its armed agencies to abort this rising tide of working class struggle. The use of the Red Army to forcibly end workers control in the factories was widespread, particularly in Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria. In defeated Germany and Austria the working class suffered much worse. Many workers' districts were terrorised. Vienna was looted and pillaged for three days.

The continuance of the alliance had the effect of delaying any *immediate* confrontation between Stalinism and world imperialism. This unholy alliance against the working class took on a sickening dimension in Indo-China where the Stalinists, from positions of great prominence in the ranks of the workers and peasants helped butcher the vanguard, and delivered a broken proletariat into the hands of imperialism. In Greece the Stalinists, acting in accord with Stalin's directives, were guilty of a similar betrayal. "Spheres of influence" deals struck between Churchill and Stalin in Moscow and by all the allies at Yalta had given Indo-China and Greece to the imperialists and Stalin was determined to honour this deal.

Trotsky's prognosis had always insisted that the prerequisite for the revolutionary destruction of the Soviet bureaucracy during the war was the ascendancy of the leadership of the Fourth International. However, the war came to a close, and working class struggles erupted, in a situation in which the FI cadre were almost completely marginalised, except for a few notable exceptions, such as Indo-China. (See section on Vietnam). The Stalinists in the USSR and elsewhere were able to survive, therefore, because the revolutionary upsurge lacked a leadership capable of directing it against the bureaucracy, as well as against imperialism. The role of the conscious factor in Trotsky's prognosis should never be overlooked. Failure to recognise its importance led the FI movement, eventually, to believe that Stalinism and imperialism could be overthrown by the "objective process", unfolding independently of human will. (See section on the Fourth International after the War). This method of thinking was alien to that of Trotsky. He believed that prognoses had to be revised and corrected in the light of experience.

The survival of the USSR and Stalinism within it cannot just

be explained by a series of *international* factors. Important *internal* events must also be taken into account. The swift and extensive construction of a war economy displayed the progressive potential of the planned property relations in the USSR. But the survival of the Soviet Union is ultimately accounted for by the heroism of the Soviet masses (20 million dead) in the face of German imperialist aggression. The resistance of the people to fascism, despite the tyranny of Stalinist rule, is explained, on the one hand, by the sobering experience of fascist rule in large Western areas of the USSR, and, by the relative weakening of the Bonapartist State machinery over the masses, enabling them to efficiently organise their own defence against German imperialism relatively free from bureaucratic oppression, as happened in Leningrad.

Although the property relations of the USSR were to prove resilient to the attacks of imperialism the war did wreak havoc on the productive forces of the Soviet Union. This manifested itself most dramatically in a severe contraction in accumulation and an absolute decline in the level of productive forces. In all 31,850 industrial plants were destroyed. 65,000 kms of railway track, 15,800 locomotives and ½ million freight cars were ruined. Coal and steel production fell between 40-50% in 1942-3. It only reached the 1940 level again in 1946. In addition, 4.7 million houses, 1,710 towns and 70,000 villages were destroyed. In agriculture the picture was equally grim. 98,000 collective and 1,876 state farms disappeared. Seven million horses were lost as were 20 out of 23 million pigs. Only 3% of the tractors survived in German-occupied Russia.<sup>7</sup>

Centrifugal tendencies undermining the planned property relations became more and more pronounced between 1941 and 1944. Heavy industry, for example, suffered greatly as budget production costs were done away with in 1941, giving autonomy to the trusts. Light industry was often organised on a local scale and even reduced to handicraft production in some areas. In the countryside the war witnessed an accelerated tempo of capitalist restoration in agriculture, with the extensive development of primitive capitalist accumulation which threatened to undermine the social regime in the USSR. As Germain observed:

"The corollary to greater freedom given to the richer peasants was a massive increase in draconian measures taken against the working class in the cities in order to meet the war's demands."<sup>8</sup>

At the same time the privileges of the bureaucracy and its cohorts were extended. The right of inheritance was increased, the orthodox church re-established, and the army and GPU were given independence from the party. Despite this massive crisis the Kremlin rulers managed to reassert their rule and establish an unexpected level of stability. As the siege of Leningrad was lifted, for example, the GPU converged on the city once again. This was possible because of the exhaustion of the working class. Furthermore the lend-lease aid given to the Kremlin by the Allies at Teheran and Potsdam served to shield the bureaucracy from the worst effects of its economic crisis. As it became clear that Hitler was going to be defeated the Kremlin took fright at the powerful restorationist forces it had unleashed and which threatened the collectivised property; a Five Year Plan (the Fourth) was drawn up for 1945-49 which aimed at a 10% growth rate. At the end of 1944 large show trials of industrial bureaucrats were held for "misappropriations" and at the end of 1945 in official pronouncements, the terminology of "Marxism-Leninism" began to replace that of Great Russian/Imperial chauvinism that had been stoked up in the war.

Gradually the Bonapartist state machine was re-built up all over the country as a guardian of the bureaucracy's interests against restorationist and proletarian threats to its existence. On the one hand this bonapartism struck out against the elements of restoration in the countryside which had been let loose. At the same time, however, the Kremlin lashed out against the working class which had shown a developing independence from the bureaucracy during the process of defending the USSR.

However, the survival of the Stalinist caste was not, in the last analysis, a question to be settled on the national arena. Rather, it was the *international* scene at the close of the war which held the key to the future of the Kremlin bureaucrats.

Formal political and military contact between the USSR and the Allies was established in July 1941, a month after the German

invasion of the USSR put an abrupt end to the Stalin-Hitler pact. The military bloc was always shot through with suspicion and hostility on both sides. Even the first meeting of the heads of the "Grand Alliance" in late 1943 in Teheran was a bitter affair at which the Soviet Union urged the immediate opening of a second front in Europe. The Western Allies, in fact, had left the Soviet Union to take on the might of German imperialism in the East while they concentrated on reconquering lost colonies from Germany and Japan. While the US did give lend-lease aid to the USSR their policy was one of *both* defeating Germany and exhausting their Soviet ally. As token of its sincerity towards its democratic imperialist allies the Kremlin formally dissolved the Communist (Third) International in 1943, thus ending even the pretence of commitment to international revolution.

## DIPLOMATIC MANOEUVRES BETWEEN STALINISM AND IMPERIALISM

In the earlier part of the war the dominant thinking amongst US imperialist leaders was total US control over Europe. George Kennan, chief foreign policy advisor to Roosevelt and head of the Policy Planning Staff in the White House said in 1942:

"We endeavour to take over the whole system of control which the Germans have set up for the administration of the European economy, preserving the apparatus putting people of our own into the key positions to run it, and that we then apply this system to the execution of whatever policies we adopt for continental Europe, in the immediate post-war period."<sup>9</sup>

The decisive shift in the balance of forces between Allied and Axis imperialism took place during the course of 1943, when the victory of the Allies became more and more assured. Soviet victory at Stalingrad and entry into Eastern Europe forced the imperialists to come to terms with the bargaining power of the Soviet bureaucracy within the anti-German alliance. At Teheran little consideration was given to post-war territorial divisions apart from a general agreement to dismember Germany. Stalin said:

"There is no need to speak at the present time about any Soviet desires. But when the time comes, we will speak."<sup>10</sup>

However Roosevelt left the conference convinced that some tactical concessions would have to be made to the USSR after the war. It was only as the defeat of Germany became a certain prospect and the role that the USSR would play in the defeat became clear to the USA that such tactical concessions were even considered.

Roosevelt on his return from the Yalta conference in January 1945 confessed to a group of Senators:

"The occupying forces had the power in the areas where their arms were present and each knew that the others could not force things to an issue. The Russians had the power in Eastern Europe . . . The only practical course was to use what influence we had to ameliorate the situation."<sup>11</sup>

Even in these moments of weakness the imperialists did not give carte blanche to the USSR. They insisted on spheres of "influence", not "control". Faced with this prospect the Kremlin was confronted with several acute problems, all of which necessitated a right turn in international policy. The chief problems was the containment of the rising tide of anti-capitalist upsurge throughout Europe which was largely outside the control of the Soviet bureaucracy or was threatening to get out of control of the indigenous Stalinists. But the Soviet leaders also had to be wary of the *strategic* threat from Anglo/American imperialism. Although the tactical alliance with the latter bloc was necessitated by the threat of German imperialism, as this threat subsided, so the threat of Anglo-American aggression resurfaced. It was essential for Stalin to take steps to prepare for this threat.

Such tactical concessions to the Kremlin were opposed by sections of the US ruling class. Acting Secretary of State throughout most of 1945 was Joseph Grew, a warmonger who argued in December 1944 (the eve of Yalta),

"It will be far better and safer to have the showdown before Russia can reconstruct herself and develop her tremendous potential military, economic and territorial power."<sup>12</sup>

At the Potsdam Conference in June/July 1945, the fine details of the post-war carve up were agreed. During this conference (July 16th) the USA exploded the first atomic bomb in New

Mexico. The existence of the bomb would render redundant the US imperialists request for a Soviet drive against Japan at the end of European hostilities and serve to shift the balance within the alliance against the Soviet Union. Churchill, on behalf of the British, was delighted at the new weapon. Before the news of Churchill's defeat in the July General Election forced him to take his leave of Potsdam, he wrote:

"We now have something in our hands which would redress the balance with the Russians. The secret of this explosive and the power to use it would completely alter the diplomatic equilibrium which was adrift since the defeat of Germany."<sup>13</sup> In addition Churchill was determined to keep the German army intact as a bulwark against the USSR.

Aware of this potential threat Stalin recognised the imperative need to rebuild the ravaged economy as quickly as possible so as to re-establish his security both internally against the working class and externally against the threat from imperialism. In order to put pressure on the Kremlin, lend lease aid to the USSR was stopped in June 1945, immediately prior to Potsdam. The US also took a much tougher line on reparations. Both these measures were designed to punish the USSR for supposedly overstepping the limits of the Yalta agreements. Consequently at Potsdam reparations were the sticking point, as Stalin was determined to make Germany pay for the cost of the war. In the end, the seal of approval was given to any reparations taken from USSR occupied territory and 25% of "unnecessary" capital equipment from the imperialist-controlled zone of Germany.

## THE POLITICS OF STALINIST RECONSTRUCTION AFTER THE WAR

Given the crucial nature of the manifold threats to the existence of a stable, parasitic caste in the USSR, and the international character of the dilemma, the *survival* of Stalinism was inescapably bound up with the political consolidation of its military expansion in Eastern Europe. Stalinism's expansion was marked by a number of specific features. Stalinism fears above all the threat of genuine proletarian revolution. Consequently the expansion of its political influence was achieved in a manner which subordinated the interests of the working class to itself, and through it to imperialism. The reactionary, utopian theory of "socialism

in one country", the credo of the Stalinist bureaucracy, leads programmatically to the illusory strategy of "peaceful co-existence" with world imperialism. The interests of the working class were sacrificed on the altar of this strategy.

However, under exceptional circumstances, the strategy of "detente" with private property on a world scale can lead, by its very logic, to its tactical negation on a local scale. In other words, the overall desire to strike a "modus vivendi" with private property leads to the *abolition of private property* in certain, local circumstances where this proves unavoidable for the Stalinists. This proved to be the end result in most of the areas that the USSR had occupied at the end of the war. But this only occurs when the balance of "detente" has become very unfavourable to the Stalinists. It occurs only in order to re-establish "peaceful co-existence" with the imperialists on a more stable basis on a world scale.<sup>14</sup> It does not indicate that Stalinism has in any way become a revolutionary factor in events.

An extremely important impulse for expansion was the crisis of accumulation within the USSR. For example, the Soviet Union sought to repair its war-torn economy at the close of the war through forced transfers of raw materials and energy (ie: plundering) and through unequal exchange (ie the "mixed company").

The previously Axis countries of Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary were hit first and hardest, immediately they were occupied, about 70% of their industrial machinery was removed. In Hungary some 90% of industrial capacity in the metal and engineering industries was removed in 1945. In Rumania, between 23rd August 1944 and 12th September 1944 equipment to the value of 2 billion dollars was taken, including the entire war fleet, most of the merchant marine fleet, half the available railway stock, and the oil industry equipment. In Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia some 15-25% of the industrial stock was removed. 60 large industrial enterprises alone were dismantled from the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia. In that part of Germany annexed by Poland after the war, it is estimated that up to 30% of industry was uprooted and taken to the USSR. In addition, up to 30% of each occupied country's annual GDP was syphoned off by the Kremlin.

In theory the "mixed company" was supposed to be an equal combination of Russian and national bourgeois capital. In reality very little of the Russian share was forthcoming. Under this guise lots of raw materials and energy supplies went to the USSR for



Stalin (with Molotov behind), Roosevelt and Churchill at the Tehran Conference, 1943.

next to nothing in exchange (eg Rumanian oil, Iranian oil, Yugoslavian bauxite).<sup>15</sup> We must remember Trotsky's own warning that the rapacious insatiable appetite of the bureaucracy, with its desire to enhance its privileges and prestige over other areas, will always be a factor in any expansion. However, this will be very much a subordinate factor since alone it would not be sufficient reason for the Stalinists to risk their "understanding" with imperialism nor provoke the possibility of unleashing unwanted revolutionary action by the oppressed masses.

In Eastern Europe (ie Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia) the political strategies pursued by the Stalinists at the end of the war, and the impetus behind them were essentially the same. In each of these countries the defeat and retreat of German imperialism was accompanied by uneven and potentially revolutionary mobilisations of the urban and rural workers and peasants. Although anti-capitalist in direction, these actions of the masses were without revolutionary Trotskyist leadership. The hold of indigenous Stalinism on the other hand, over the vanguard of the masses was very uneven throughout Eastern Europe. Czechoslovakia was the only Eastern Europe country on the eve of war to have even a semblance of bourgeois democracy. This helped the CP to operate fairly openly. At its lowest pre-war point the KSC (Czechoslovakian CP) had a membership of 24,000. Electorally it always managed to pick up at least ¼ million votes, although it only controlled about 12% of the trade union membership. It survived the occupation emerging with a membership of 27,000 in May 1945 in the Czech areas alone. This grew to 1,159,164 by January 1946. On the other hand the Polish Communist Party suffered from the Stalin purges of 1938. It was virtually liquidated, with 12 of its Central Committee members executed. Reconstituted in late 1941, after the breakdown of the Stalin-Hitler pact (in preparation for which the Polish Stalinists had been killed), it still only had a membership of about 4,000 in 1942/3.

In the last analysis, though, the weakness of certain indigenous Stalinist parties was compensated for by the role and control of the Red Army. Given the sporadic and atomised nature of the resistance movements in Eastern Europe the major force for sweeping German imperialism out was the Red Army, the armed wing of the Kremlin. From 1944 onwards, the defeat of German imperialism by the Red Army was accompanied by the deliberate destruction of the anti-fascist and anti capitalist movements of the Eastern European masses. Everywhere the Stalinists protected, and in some cases reintroduced, the rule of the bourgeoisie in the economy and prevented the seizure of private property by the workers and peasants. Where the workers had already seized factories then the Stalinists used nationalisation as a means of taking direct control away from the workers.

Molotov's strictures to the Bulgarian working class were typical of this period:

**"If certain Communists continue their present conduct we will bring them to reason. Bulgaria will remain with her democratic government and present order."**<sup>16</sup>

Of Bulgaria, the French bourgeois paper, *Le Monde*, was pleased to note in June 1946,

**"Moreover, the Fatherland Front, has been able to maintain a sound economic situation and to safeguard the financial stability of the country."** The equally worthy Swiss publication, the *Geneva Journal* crowed the previous month, with regard to Hungary, **"Wherever they can do so, the Russians block and oppose the taking over of large industrial enterprises under a new statist system."** In Rumania, the fascist collaborator and big oil trust magnate Tatescu was vaunted by the Stalinists as a national hero. Even the discredited Rumanian monarch, King Michael was brought back, decorated by Stalin and put back on the throne.<sup>17</sup>

In the occupied countries of Eastern Europe such as Czechoslovakia the German bourgeoisie owned much of the capital. In 1945 in Czechoslovakia more than 80% of the industry and virtually the whole of the financial system was in German hands. With the retreat of the fascists the workers established workers' control throughout the nation. The workers councils set up national managements, which the Benes government were forced to recognise. A short time after there were some 10,000 national managements embracing some 75% of industrial workers. Nationalisation by the state and the gradual introduction of state function-

aries into the plants as managers was the only way, short of terrible blood letting, of defusing the revolutionary situation.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time there was considerable popular pressure for nationalisations from the working class who believed it would mean an end to capitalist exploitation. As a result, the October 1945 nationalisation decrees brought 61.2% of the working class into nationalised industries (16% of the enterprises). This did not represent the expropriation of the whole capitalist class by the Czech workers. On the contrary, as the KSC put it, **"By nationalisation we understand the transfer of the property of Germans, Hungarians, Traitors and collaborators to the hands of the Czech and Slovak nation."**<sup>19</sup> One nationalisation decree was even more explicit, stating that the enterprises were to be administered in line with the principles of commercial business, independence, profit making and free competition.<sup>20</sup>

The impeccably bourgeois president of the first Czech government, Benes, stated the position clearly in an interview to the 'Manchester Guardian' in December 1945:

**"The German simply took control of all main industries and all the banks. . . In this way they automatically prepared the economic and financial capital of our country for nationalisation. To return this property and the banks into the hands of Czech individuals or to consolidate them without considerable state assistance and without new financial guarantees was simply impossible. The state had to step in."**

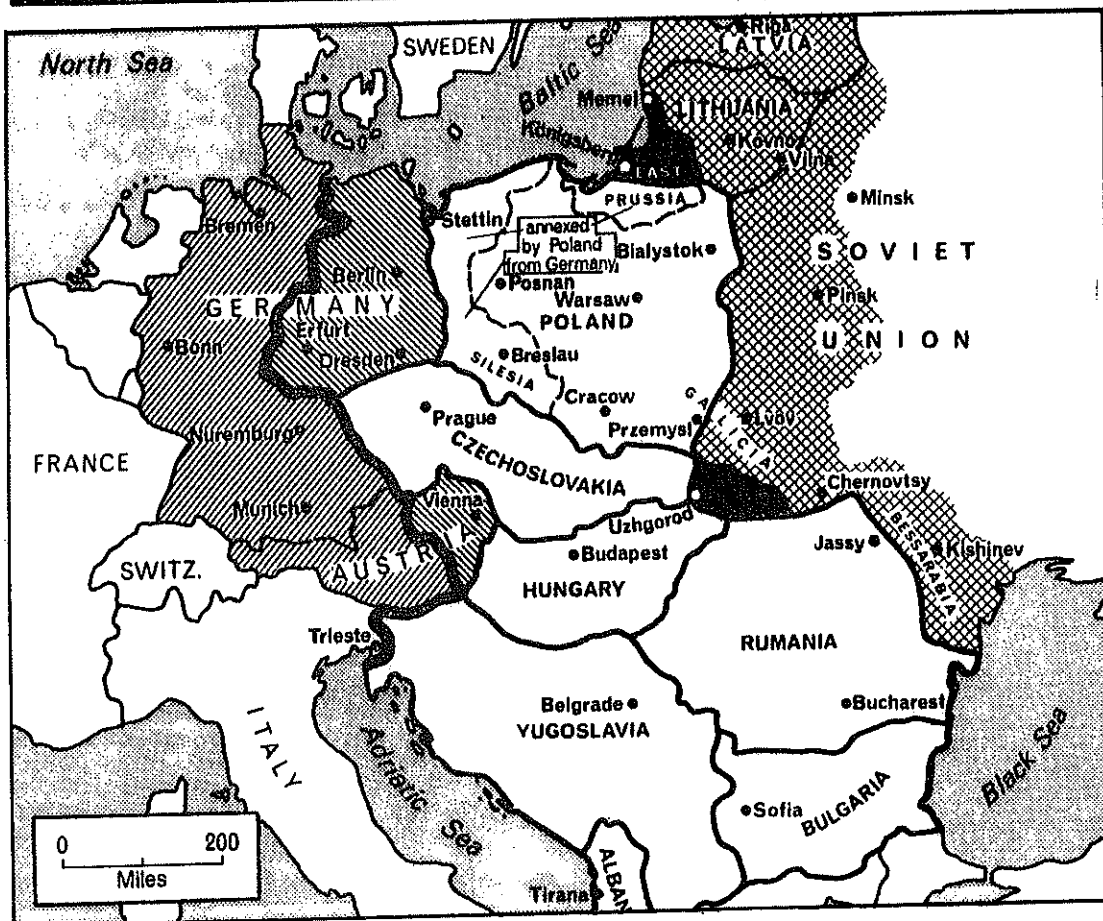
## DUAL POWER IN EASTERN EUROPE 1944 - 1947

At the level of the state, the Red Army served to stabilise and in some cases reconstruct the forms of administrative and repressive state apparatus associated with bourgeois rule; government centralised in the hands of a distant and unaccountable executive; internal and external security centralised in the hands of a standing army above and opposed to the mass of direct producers. Given the highly statised nature of the property relations in these countries and hence the relative weakness of the individual representatives of capital in the economy, it was particularly important for the Stalinists to construct coalition governments with the representatives of the bourgeoisie in high, if not crucial, places.

In Bulgaria, throughout 1945 there was a wave of political executions possibly numbering 20,000. Nevertheless the popular Agrarian Party leader, Nikola Petkov was in the government. In November the elections took place with an overwhelming majority for the Fatherland Front, a Stalinist and bourgeois nationalist coalition headed by the strident anti-communist Prime Minister Georgiev. In Rumania the first government after the German defeat was made up by the National Peasants and National Liberals in September 1944, the only Stalinist representative being the Minister of Justice Patrascanu. The machinations and brutal force of the Red Army over the next months in Rumania were designed to remove the two major bourgeois parties (The National Democratic Bloc) and replace them with a government of the National Democratic Front (NDF), consisting of Stalinists, Social Democrats, Union of Patriots and the Ploughman's Front. Such a government would be an extremely malleable one for the Kremlin. In this period the Kremlin charge, Vyshinsky, dictated the sequence of events to King Michael. Eventually after a period of armed demonstrations an NDF government was installed in March 1945 with 17 Cabinet positions going to the NDF and 3 economic ministries to the oil magnate Tatescu who was installed as foreign minister. These measures were clearly designed to placate the 'democratic' bourgeoisie.

A similar struggle took place in Poland this time between the US/GB backed London based group of Polish nationalists headed by Peasant Party leader Mikolajczyk and the Soviet backed Lublin Committee. In each of these cases the purges, intimidation and liquidation of prominent bourgeois figures must not be interpreted as the complete elimination of bourgeois rule, but as measures designed to crush bourgeois parties with *strong roots in the national population* and replace them with other bourgeois





Stalinist expansion after World War 2

figures who would have little base from which to resist the designs of the Kremlin, but which could, at the same time, administer the economy in a way that would also serve the interests of the national bourgeoisie and even solicit aid from imperialism.

In each of these countries the state apparatus had, to a greater or lesser extent, disintegrated in the last period of the imperialist war. While the Stalinists prevented the workers and peasants from creating their own new state apparatus (based on Soviets and a workers militia) and re-established bourgeois control in the economy, they kept the key levers of the reconstructed state apparatus firmly in the grip of the Red Army and its local allies and agents. The leading Hungarian Stalinist Rakosi spoke for all his ilk in Eastern Europe in this period when he remarked: "There was one position, control of which was claimed by our party from the first minute. One position where the party was not inclined to consider any distribution of the posts according to the strengths of the parties in the coalition. This was the State Security Authority. . . We kept this organisation in our hands from the first day of its establishment."<sup>21</sup> In fact, it was in Hungary where the Stalinists had to make the most concessions on the issue. The coalition which emerged from the October 1945 elections haggled over portfolios. Eventually Imre Nagy secured the Ministry of the Interior but responsibility for the police was delegated to the Smallholders Party. With the exception of Czechoslovakia, the Stalinists also retained the post of Defence, again reflecting the relative strength of the bourgeoisie in this country. Everywhere the levers of armed power were used in this period to intimidate opponents, fix elections and in general guide policy down desired channels.

The result was a dual power situation that reflected the balance of forces between the world bourgeoisie and the USSR as it manifested itself in the Eastern European area. Political power was split, or rather shared, between the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie. The Stalinists held a monopoly of repressive power but the bourgeoisie were reintegrated into the political superstructure via their control of the highly stratified economy. Nowhere was this more clearly the case than in Czechoslovakia. The Germans were finally driven from Prague only in May 1945. The first post-

war government set up was a coalition of four bourgeois parties and two bourgeois workers' parties. The KSC emerged from the war the strongest and they were given first choice of ministries, the 22 portfolios being divided up equally among the parties. The KSC chose Interior, Information and Agriculture, leaving the economic ministries in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

By defining this period as one of dual power we can understand its instability and its eventual outcome. In Eastern Europe after 1945 the dual power consisted of a pact between the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie. Such a pact was necessary for the bourgeoisie because they were weak and depended on the Stalinists to maintain private property. It was necessary for the Stalinists because during the period 1945/47 they wanted to maintain private property to fulfil their deal with imperialism and in return secure economic aid. Dual Power was also necessary for the Stalinists because it was a means of *crushing* the independent activity of the working class. Trotsky, drawing on the experience of the English and French revolutions (17th and 18th centuries) anticipated the possibility of such a form of dual power:

"The splitting of sovereignty foretells nothing less than civil war. But before the competing parties will go to that extreme—especially in case they dread the interference of a third force—they may feel compelled for quite a long time to endure, and even to sanction, a two power system."<sup>22</sup> The coalition governments were the sanction given by both parties in Eastern Europe in 1945 to the split sovereignty that existed. These governments had to a greater or lesser extent, bonapartist characteristics. This was less so where the indigenous bourgeoisie and Stalinists represented genuine social forces viz Czechoslovakia, more so where the new governmental form had little indigenous social foundations eg Soviet Occupied Germany.

The ability of the Stalinists to resolve the dual power from 1948 onwards without recourse to civil war can be explained by their dominance within those governments. Dual power does not necessarily mean that both sides are equal and balanced. The Soviet Army and police apparatuses established in Eastern Europe meant that repressive power lay exclusively in the hands of the Stalinists. There were therefore able to use this power to resolve

dual power in a cold manner, when world imperialism moved against them.

## POPULAR FRONT AND BOURGEOIS WORKERS GOVERNMENT

Within the coalition governments in existence throughout Eastern Europe in this period the Stalinist parties were the decisive force because of their relations to the armed forces of the USSR.<sup>23</sup> Committed to the maintenance of private property and the demobilisation and continued exploitation of the masses they acted either in a form of popular front with the bourgeoisie as in Czechoslovakia or as a specific form of a bourgeois workers government. These parties with roots in the national working class, owing their power to the Soviet bureaucracy, shaped the policies of government in the interests of a deal between imperialism, its own national bourgeoisie and the Soviet bureaucracy.

The two forms of government established by the Stalinist Parties were different. A popular front is an open coalition of bourgeois and workers parties, while the bourgeois workers government is a concealed coalition in which a workers party governs on behalf of and in the interests of, the bourgeoisie. However, in content they are both designed to deflect the working class from seizing power and exercising it in its own name. Of the bourgeois workers government the Comintern rightly stated that they "are a means of deceiving the proletariat about the real class character of the State, or to ward off, with the help of corrupt workers leaders, the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat and to gain time."<sup>24</sup> Likewise with the popular front, as Trotsky pointed out, referring to its role in demobilising the French working class in 1936: "The People's Front in France took upon itself the same task as did the so-called 'coalition' of Cadets, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries in Russia in February 1917—checking the revolution at its first stage."<sup>25</sup> He went on to point out that, like a bourgeois workers government, the popular front disguises the real nature of bourgeois power from the workers: "The workers were deprived of these instruments (party and soviets—WP) because the leaders of the workers organisations formed a wall around the bourgeois power in order to disguise it, to render it unrecognisable and invulnerable. Thus the revolution that begun found itself braked, arrested, demoralised."<sup>26</sup>

The bourgeois workers governments and popular fronts played exactly these roles in Eastern Europe. The bourgeoisie was extremely vulnerable. Its armed power was negligible. It lacked, at this time, decisive support from imperialism. The advance of the Red Army had aroused the expectations and activities of the masses. Everywhere the objective possibility of replacing the collapsed power of the bourgeoisie with genuine proletarian power existed. Such an outcome could have delivered a death blow to the Kremlin Stalinists. For that very reason, rather than moving against the bourgeoisie, they either governed on their behalf (eg East Germany) in specific forms of bourgeois workers governments, or drew the bourgeoisie into open coalitions, ie popular fronts (eg Czechoslovakia and Rumania). The dominance of the Stalinists in the bourgeois workers governments and the Popular Fronts did not alter their nature. It did alter the eventual outcome of these necessarily temporary government formations. The bourgeois workers government, as the Comintern predicted, could 'objectively help to accelerate the process of disintegration of bourgeois power.'<sup>27</sup> Thanks to the shift in imperialist policy and the dominance of the Stalinists, this objective possibility was realised. The popular fronts were also superseded by governments in which the Stalinists had absolute control. They were able to dispense with their weaker coalition partners, when the main threat came from imperialism rather than genuine proletarian revolutions which the Popular Fronts had served to check.

The nationalisations of the coalition period were carried through as the result of an agreement between the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie to nationalise that property which was owned by the Axis powers and their collaborators. Land reform affected only the largest estates. Land reform occurred generally within the first months of "liberation", but was uneven between

countries and inadequate in scope. Given the weight of the peasant based parties in the post war coalitions, the large scale evacuations of the land by former landlords in the wake of the German retreat and the immense contribution of the peasantry in the various partisan forces, it was expected that there would be a considerable movement pressing for land redistribution. In addition the immediate need for increased food production required giving peasants the initiative to produce. The most sweeping reforms were in Hungary where all landholdings were reduced to 142 acres. In Rumania all holdings of more than 500 hectares were partitioned. Thousands more peasants 'benefited' from such decrees but the social condition of most remained the same. This was because the Red Army took the best agricultural machinery to the USSR as reparations and left untouched the crippling system of credit, thus condemning the small peasantry to perpetual crisis.

It is clear than between 1944-47 the Kremlin and the local Stalinists were committed to resolving the dual power situation through the creation of capitalist states friendly to the USSR. To this end they sought to maintain or partially reconstruct the old (ie bourgeois) official apparatuses. Only these apparatuses could have permanently guaranteed the protection of bourgeois property. Thus, in the period of dual power the states in Eastern Europe can be described as still, essentially, capitalist. However this general statement is insufficient to explain the dynamics of a dual power situation which by definition is transitional and lends to the state itself a contradictory, transitional character. As Trotsky pointed out with regard to the Russian Revolution after February (ie before the proletarian revolution): "If the state is an organisation of class rule, and a revolution is the overthrow of the ruling class, then the transfer of power from the one class to the other must necessarily create self-contradictory state conditions, and first of all in the form of dual power."<sup>28</sup>

The aim of the Stalinists was to prevent the resolution of dual power in a genuinely revolutionary direction. Two options alone were open to them in carrying this through. Either, they could fully reconstruct a capitalist state and cede power to it—a course that would in fact have resulted in the restored capitalists dumping them from government and attacking them (as happened in Vietnam in 1945). Or they could have carried through a bureaucratic revolution which from the outset, excluded the proletariat from direct political power as they had done in the Baltic states and Eastern Poland at the beginning of the war. The possibility of these two options for the Stalinists invested the state machine in Eastern Europe between 1944-47 precisely with a self-contradictory character. The Stalinists reintegrated sections of the bourgeoisie into the state machine, but their fear of the reintroduction of imperialism into their newly established "buffer zone" led them to exclude the bourgeoisie from any control over the armed power of the state.

This does not mean, however, that these states became degenerate workers states immediately after the entry of the Red Army. We do not, as Marxists, define the form or the content of the state according to the social or political composition of its personnel. That the Stalinist personnel were in the last analysis largely dependent on post-capitalist property relations but found themselves defending capitalist property relations further underlines the contradictory, transitory nature of the period 1944-47. Shortly before his death Trotsky commented that should the Stalinists successfully make their peace with capitalist property relations in those countries it dominated politically for any length of time, then we would be forced to revise our understanding of Stalinism and the social nature of the USSR.<sup>29</sup>

## FROM COMPROMISE TO CONTAINMENT

A closer appreciation of Trotsky's reasoning on this score allow us to affirm the correctness of his analysis. Trotsky's statement was based on the irrefutable fact that with regards to an isolated workers state, imperialism (ie world capitalism) remains stronger than the USSR. If Stalinists were to hold power then their reign must inevitably be short-lived as the national economic power of the bourgeoisie, itself drawing on the power of imperialism



through its thousands of ties, would be marshalled to unseat the "alien body" in the bourgeoisie's state. In this way a bourgeois political counter-revolution would destroy the political rule of Stalinism and the contradiction within the social formation would be "resolved" in favour of imperialism. For this reason the Stalinist project of consolidating capitalist states was necessarily utopian.

It is within this perspective and not by abandoning it that we must understand the situation in Eastern Europe at the end of the war. A situation that allowed this contradiction to exist in reality, but only for a short period. The stagnation of world trade and the protectionism of the decade before the war was at its height during the war itself and spilled over into the post war period. With the partial exception of Czechoslovakia, the Eastern European countries had been bonapartist regimes throughout the 1930s and of semi-colonial status. Their economic and political ties with imperialism were severely dislocated during the war. The contraction of world trade and the fracturing of the world economy continued right through the 1944-7 years. However, relations between Anglo-American imperialism and the national bourgeoisies of Eastern Europe were virtually non-existent after the war. In its turn, this reduced the power of the national bourgeoisies to resist the enforced direction of the Stalinists.

This fracturing of the relations between imperialism and its national agents was a highly unstable, conjunctural factor which temporarily offset the contradiction between Stalinism and the bourgeoisie. But this *strategic* contradiction reasserted itself during 1947/8 when the long expected "united front" of the successful imperialisms was directed at the Kremlin's role in Eastern Europe. The tactical united front between imperialism and the bureaucracy, put together to deny the possibility of a European revolution now subsided along with the threat of a revolution itself. Relations between the USSR and the Western Allies had deteriorated with increased rapidity during the course of 1946, which was a watershed year, a transitional year from compromise to containment on U.S. President Truman's part. He had an ally in Churchill who had become the front runner for a more hawkish attitude ever since he detected a 'betrayal' of the Yalta agreement in 1945. In fact, the first reference to an 'Iron Curtain' across Europe dates from five days after the German surrender in May of that year. The celebrated reference in a major speech in the USA in March 1946 to the Iron Curtain was a pulling together of the threads of what was to later become called the 'Cold War' stance of America and British imperialism against the USSR.



US President Harry Truman.

The reasons which underpin the gradual change in ideological stance in 1946 are not hard to find. The Yalta and Potsdam conferences had come to an agreement over 'spheres of influence' which basically covered Europe and the Balkans. But the Kremlin's refusal to take its troops out of Northern Iran in February 1946, Molotov's claim to the 'trusteeship' of Libya in North Africa, and the USSR's fiery insistence on having the right of access to a warm water port in the Dardanelles in August, convinced the imperialists of the urgent need to contain the USSR. The imperialist offensive was led by the USA; the western nations, such as France and Great Britain, were in the midst of economic crises and were thus unable to relaunch a vigorous round of accumulation on their own.

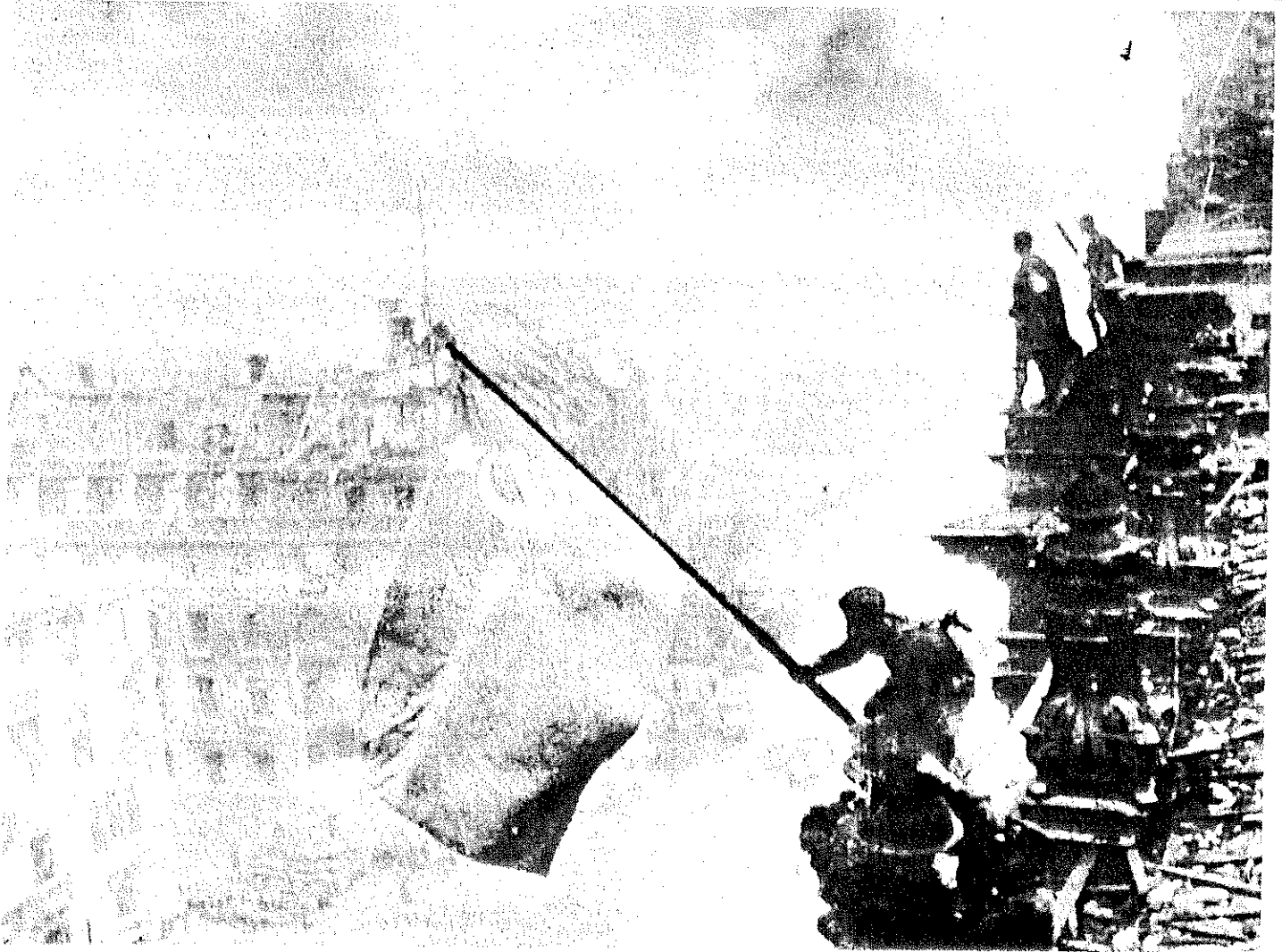
British coal production in 1946 was 20% down on its 1938 level; in Western Germany it was two-fifths of its 1938 level. Precisely because of the dominant position of Germany in the industrial field before the war, its crushing defeat was bound to have an enormous effect throughout Europe. In 1939, Germany had been responsible for one-fifth of all Europe's industrial production. Allied to all this was a severe agricultural and financial crisis in Europe. European wheat production fell in 1947 to less than half its 1938 level. In 1946, some 125 million Europeans were living on 1000-2000 calories a day, and this was to worsen. A measure of the financial instability can be gauged from the fact that wholesale prices in France in 1946 were rising at the rate of 80% per annum.<sup>30</sup> The USA's own productive capital emerged from the war relatively untouched, indeed even strengthened. Relative to its markets the productive forces were burgeoning. In 1945 the USA manufactured half the world's products. In 1946 it accounted for half the world's income. In short, it occupied a position of dominance in the world economy unparalleled since Britain of the 1850s. However the boom in the USA economy was facing the prospect of a major reversal if it allowed the stagnation in the markets of Western and Eastern Europe to continue.

Stalin's hold in Eastern Europe and the spectre of revolution in the west, called forth the 'Truman Doctrine'—the doctrine of containment, not immediate war against the USSR, backed up by massive economic aid for anti-communist governments. Greece proved to be the launching pad for this new policy. Rapidly crumbling as an imperialist power, Britain refused to financially underwrite Greece in February 1947, then in the midst of civil war. Fearing a communist (ELAS) victory, the US made an unconditional commitment to the right-wing government. 300 million dollars was given immediately. On 12th March, Truman elaborated before Congress: "It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure."<sup>31</sup> The economic complement of this doctrine was the Marshall Aid Programme and the plans to introduce a new currency unity in the imperialist-occupied zones of Germany.

General Marshall had replaced Byrnes as Secretary of State in January 1947. His Plan was called the 'Truman Doctrine in Action' and was announced in June though it was to take nearly a year for ratification. It was not a programme of relief but of reconstruction, entailing some 17 billion dollars to Europe in return for massive US influence in domestic and foreign policy. Sixteen countries had applied and accepted its terms by September 1947.

With this twin attack the US codified its Cold War stance; to draw the line on USSR influence in Europe, to burden the Kremlin with sole responsibility for reconstruction in its own "spheres" and to eradicate its influence in the imperialist spheres. These events threw the Kremlin and the National Communist parties into a turmoil. In Western Europe the Stalinists were unceremoniously dumped from the bourgeois coalition governments. It was the social instability arising from the economic crisis that forced the French and Italian bourgeoisie to tolerate the Stalinists in Government, since they could control the working class. In May Marshall wrote to DeGasperi, head of the Christian-Democrat Government, urging the expulsion of the CP and promising to underwrite their financial needs.

In Eastern Europe, where the levers of political power were in their hands, the Stalinists were compelled to choose whether to confront the imperialist offensive or retreat and concede to it. Consistent with their attempt to construct a strategic alliance with



Soviet troops atop the Reichstag in Berlin.

capitalism, several of the national communist parties were prepared to accept Marshall Aid. The Marshall Aid Plan was formally open to the USSR, but this was merely a deliberate ploy to put the onus on the Kremlin to make the split. Molotov attended the preliminary discussions briefly before withdrawing. The Czech and Polish Cabinets showed a positive response to the Plan, including the Stalinists. But they were soon forced to decline by USSR pressure. As a counter measure the Kremlin drew up a set of improvised trade agreements (the 'Molotov Plan') for Eastern Europe. If the road of the Marshall Plan had been accepted then sooner or later Stalinism would have lost complete control in Eastern Europe and imperialism would have stood knocking on the door of the USSR itself. The Kremlin and Stalin were not prepared to risk this fate and so risk their own necks. Stalin tightened the reins of power and ordered the elimination, from above, of the economic roots of the bourgeoisie, and their political representatives in the state who could have been a potential point of departure for rebuilding their power in the future.

## COUNTER — REVOLUTIONARY SOCIAL OVERTURNS IN EASTERN EUROPE

A preparatory and necessary step to the *bureaucratic* liquidation of bourgeois power in Eastern Europe was the complete bureaucratic control of the national communist parties over the working class. Primarily this meant the destruction of the influence of the Social-Democratic parties over the working class which rivaled and in most cases outshone that of the Stalinists. This was especially so in Poland, Hungary and in what was to become East Germany. The method was usually the same; intimidations, purges and forced fusions. In September 1944, a new pro-Stalinist leadership was foisted on the Polish socialists (PPS) with a view

to securing unification. The rank and file continuously refused to endorse this so in December 1947, it was done anyway, a further 12 leaders being removed and 82,000 members expelled. The term 'salami tactic' was used by Hungarian Stalinist, Rakosi, to describe what was done. Persistent resistance from the Hungarian socialists (SDP) was finally overcome in February 1948 when the pro-Moscow minority in the SDP convened a Congress without the centre and right under the protection of the secret police, and in June the merger was announced.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the risks this policy held for the future of "detente", the Kremlin reckoned that not to take this road was to risk its own destruction. Not only would the USSR have had to give up the enormous productive potential of Eastern Europe to imperialism, but it would have seriously threatened the continued existence of the bureaucracy itself. Faced with this extremely disadvantageous turn in the relationship of "peaceful co-existence", the Kremlin decided everywhere in these countries to economically and politically destroy the bourgeoisie. Everywhere the pattern was the same. Leading bourgeois figures were arrested or executed and opposition gradually banned. In Poland, the opposition leader, Mikolajczyk fled in 1947 to escape from the tightening hold of the Stalinists. In Rumania King Michael was deposed in December and in early 1948 the now Stalinist dominated United Workers Party took control. The leader of the Agrarian Party in Bulgaria, Petkov, was arrested in June 1947 and executed in September. 20,000 were arrested and opposition papers closed for good. In Hungary, Kovacs, the former Smallholders leader, was arrested in May by the SAF. The Prime Minister fled to the USA in May. New elections in August saw the CP dominant, though they continued the facade of a coalition until the fusion with the socialists in 1948.

After 1947/8 the destruction of capitalism in these countries was undertaken bureaucratically from above and was combined

with repression against the vanguard of the proletariat. One of the ways this repression occurred was through purging of the Communist Parties themselves. This was continuous after 1947 but received new momentum after the Stalin-Tito split in the summer of 1948. In Poland, for example, between September and December 1948 30,000 members were expelled. The General Secretary, Gomulka, was imprisoned. In Bulgaria, the vast majority of the leadership and 92,000 of the rank and file were expelled up to 1950. In Czechoslovakia, where the spirit of independence had long been nurtured via Czech nationalism, 100,000 were expelled between February and August 1948. The Stalinists were already in control of the political/repressive apparatus and could utilise this power against the bourgeoisie and its agents.

Only in Czechoslovakia, during February 1948, did the Stalinists mobilise forces outside their own security apparatus to overthrow the bourgeoisie. The period of dual power, an exact and precarious balance in the Czech Cabinet, came to a decisive end in late February 1948. On 20th February a dispute over Cabinet control of the police resulted in 12 non-CP ministers offering the bourgeois head Benes their resignations. It was understood that they would be refused, and was designed as an offensive against the KSC. But the KSC staged mass demonstrations culminating in marches of armed trade union militia on February 23rd. No independent organisations were thrown up; the demonstration was kept within strict limits designed to put pressure on Benes to accept the resignation which he did. The KSC was asked to form a government which it did comprising only the KSC and its allies. The May elections went ahead under great repression, with one slate of candidates and a decree that a blank ballot paper was 'tantamount to treason', the results gave a juridical seal to the 'coup'.

Elsewhere demonstrations and rallies were used merely to *legitimise* the bureaucratic overturn in the eyes of the Stalinists base. During this period the Stalinists did not constitute a "revolutionary workers government" acting under the pressure of the masses to take decisive measures against the bourgeoisie and its property. The government was not a government of struggle based on independent workers organisations—militias and soviets. Instead the overturn was the work of a Stalinist bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government (see section on the state) which had ensured that the masses were so disorganised, and that the state force at its own disposal was so considerable as to prevent the working class carrying out the expropriation of the bourgeoisie itself and replacing it with the forms of revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat based on workers' councils and a workers' militia. Such a prospect would have *both* challenged the privileges and authority of the bureaucratic caste that had been coalescing in these countries between 1944 and 1947, and stood to challenge the political rule of the Stalinists in the USSR itself.

The *qualitative* transformation of these bureaucratized states into a bureaucratically degenerate form of the dictatorship of the proletariat takes place at that point when the regimes have expropriated the bourgeoisie economically and set out to subordinate and curtail the operation of the essential law of the capitalist economy—the law of value—and organise their nationalised economies on the basis of the planning principle—albeit in a bureaucratically deformed manner.

None of this is possible without the prior existence of nationalisation, the monopoly of foreign trade and the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie. But in themselves the existence of these features do not necessarily constitute a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e. a state based on post-capitalist property forms. Total planification and the *complete* elimination of the bourgeoisie was necessary on top of these features before a post-capitalist economy could be established. This aspect of these degenerate workers states and their method of creation distinguishes them from the period of a healthy workers state in the USSR created by the October revolution.

The characterisation of Russia as a workers state in 1917 flows from the fact that state power was in the hands of the working

class organised as ruling class with its own organs of class rule—the soviets and the workers militia. This preceded nationalisation and planning in the USSR. In Eastern Europe the workers states established as a result of Kremlin policy—*were degenerate from birth*. From their inception a political revolution against the bureaucratic caste was the prerequisite for the working class to take political power into its own hands. With the introduction of the Five Year Plans in the Buffer Zones: Bulgaria 1948, Czechoslovakia 1949, Hungary 1950, Poland 1950, Rumania and GDR 1951 the process of the creation of bureaucratically degenerate workers' states was complete.

We reject the term "deformed workers state" for the states created by the post World War II overturns. Terminologically "deformed" does not adequately suggest the qualitative difference between such states and proletarian dictatorships where the working class holds political power. In the former case there may exist severe bureaucratic deformations—as Lenin admitted existed in Russia in 1921—but the transformation of quantity into quality—the bureaucratic political counter-revolution which faces the proletariat with a new task, a political revolution, still lay in the future. The post-war bureaucratic anti-capitalist revolutions were at the same time counter-revolutionary expropriations of the proletariat's political power. Therefore we designate such states degenerate workers states—degenerate from birth. Thus we identify these states in all fundamentals with the degenerated workers state in the USSR, there being only the latter's origin in a genuine proletarian revolution to distinguish them.

Wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes, Stalinist bureaucratic social revolutions are counter-revolutionary. They are carried through *against* the prevailing level of consciousness of the forces necessary for the proletarian revolution in the country—i.e. the working class. They occur on the basis of a bureaucratic-repressive limitation of independent action of the working class and therefore devalue the very notion of "revolution", "socialism", "workers' state and the planned economy in the eyes of the oppressed masses. They retard the development of a revolutionary consciousness within the world proletariat. They create a congenitally bureaucratized state in which the working class is politically expropriated. The bureaucratic regimes represent an obstacle in the path of the world working class in the struggle for socialism and communism. The measures carried through by the Stalinists in the course of the social overturn (expropriation of the bourgeoisie, statification of the means of production), whilst themselves revolutionary in character, are achieved in a military bureaucratic fashion. This means that during the bureaucratic overturn, revolutionaries organised as an independent force, struggle to transform that overturn into a direct fight for proletarian power.

It was Trotsky himself who witnessed and recorded these things in the first case in which Stalinist expansion was coincidental with a bureaucratic social overturn—Poland and the Baltic states during 1939/40. Under the direct threat of invasion by German imperialism the Kremlin felt compelled to secure the Western flank of the USSR by invading those countries. This adventure was kept within the strict limits of a bureaucratic-military strait-jacket and was followed by generalised repression against the working class and the poor peasantry. This invasion led to the incorporation of these countries into the USSR and the destruction of the private property relations within them. Trotsky summed up his understanding of the nature of these overturns thus: "The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution."<sup>35</sup>

## Footnotes

1. cf. L. Trotsky, *Europe and America*, (New York, 1972).
2. For a selection of his most prescient statements on this theme see "Uneven and combined development and the role of American Imperialism", in *Writings 1933-34*, (New York, 1975), pp.116-120, March 1933; "Hitler and Disarmament", *ibid.*, pp.246-57, June 1933; "Hitler's Victory", *ibid.*, pp.133-7, March 1933; "Hitler the Pacifist", *ibid.*, pp.144-8, November 1933. All these articles are full of a profound grasp of the central strategy of Hitler in Europe in his struggle against the Versailles Treaty and the USSR as well as an excellent insight into the diplomatic and military tactics that Hitler would have to employ to secure his aim. But perhaps the most perceptive estimate of the tempo and line up in the approaching war is to be found in "On the threshold of a new World War", *Writings 1936-7*, (New York, 1978), pp.379-96. Trotsky also predicted the Stalin-Hitler pact after the downfall of Czechoslovakia in 1938, and *because* of that pact, the inevitability of war between the USSR and Germany.
3. "In either case the war will lead to Stalin's downfall." (Trotsky) Depending on which of Trotsky's writings one reads, one can find sharp or guarded statements on the "inevitability" of the destruction of the Soviet bureaucracy in the war. For the former see for example "War and the Fourth International", *Writings 1933-4*, (New York, 1975), Thesis 48, pp.316-7; or for one of the innumerable briefer passages on the theme see "The Kremlin's role in the European Catastrophe", *Writings 1939-40*, (New York, 1973), June 1940, pp.290-1. For a more guarded and considered view see "The USSR in War", in *In Defence of Marxism*, (New York, 1973) eg. "War accelerates the various political processes. It may accelerate the process of the revolutionary regeneration of the USSR. But it may also accelerate the process of its final degeneration." (p.21). It may appear an obvious point, but against those who have taken this prognosis as an example of Trotsky's one-sided 'catastrophism' it needs to be stressed that Trotsky always saw these questions from the point of view of *programme*, that is, the need to outline to his supporters the main conflicting tendencies in order to orientate them for *action* to bring about the desired end.
4. Quoted in Y. Gluckstein, *Stalin's Satellites in Europe*, (London, 1952). Leading member of the Fourth International (FI) E. Germain also noted the widespread demonstrations and strikes throughout Rumania and Bulgaria in the Autumn of 1944. See "The Soviet Union after the War", September 1946 in the *Internal Bulletin of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International*, p.7.
5. cf. J. Bloomfield, *Passive Revolution*, (London, 1979), pp.50-51
6. For one such account, see E. Mortimer's article on France in *Communist Power in Europe 1944-49*, (ed. M. McCauley, London, 1977) pp.161-3. He concludes that 1944 "was the most favourable moment for a revolutionary insurrection...". In Italy the defeat of the German troops occurred in 1945 and they were also accompanied by massive workers' strikes. Allum and Sassoon in *ibid.*, show that in this period there was not a factory in the North and a few in the centre that was not armed. Churchill summed up the problem facing the imperialists in West Europe at this time in a letter to his Foreign Secretary Eden, in November 1944: "...every country that is liberated or converted by our victories is seething with Communism and only our influence with Russia prevents her actively stimulating this movement". Quoted in R. Douglas, *From War to Cold War 1942-48*, (London, 1981), p.61.
7. cf. Germain, *op.cit.*, pp.2-3, and D. Yergin, *Shattered Peace*, (Harmondsworth, 1980), p.64.
8. Germain, *op.cit.*, p.3.
9. Quoted in Yergin, *op.cit.*, p.55.
10. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.473.
11. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.68.
12. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.91.
13. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.120.
14. Trotsky first recognised this in his analysis of the soviet invasion of Poland in 1939: "This overturn was forced upon the Kremlin oligarchy through its struggle for self-preservation under specific conditions. There was not the slightest ground for doubting that *under analogous conditions* it would find itself compelled to repeat the very same operation in Finland." Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*, *op.cit.*, p.175.
15. See Germain, *op.cit.*, p.7; C. Georges, "Russian Economic Policy in Eastern Europe", in *SWP (US) Internal Bulletin* vol 13, no.8, p.10; L. Schwartz, "USSR and Stalinism", in *International Information Bulletin SWP(US)*, vol.1, no.2; C. Harman, *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe*, (London, 1974), pp.49-53.
16. Quoted in Harman, *op.cit.*, p.31.
17. P. Zinner in *Revolution in Hungary*, (New York, 1962), gives details of the factories returned to private owners. See also Schwartz, Germain and Harman. In Rumania, Patrascanu, the Communist Minister of Justice, drew up a law allowing industrialists, businessmen and bankers to escape punishment as war criminals.
18. cf. Bloomfield, *op.cit.*, Chapter 6.
19. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.89
20. cf. Schwartz, *op.cit.*, pp.32-33.
21. Quoted in Harman, *op.cit.*, p.36.
22. L. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, (London, 1977), p.225.
23. The SAF reached its maximum size in May 1945, at the moment of Germany's defeat and the height of the independent actions of the workers and peasants, when it stood at an enormous 11,365,000. Demobilisation began in June and in early 1948 it was estimated at 2,874,000, still twice the size of the imperialist troop presence in Europe. The role of the SAF in Eastern Europe was uneven between nations. In Czechoslovakia in late 1946 British intelligence believed that only 5,000 troops were in the country. Shortly after the 'Prague coup' in 1948 American intelligence thought there were as few as 500 USSR troops left in the country. In other words, the strength of indigenous Stalinism enabled the construction of native security forces that was not possible elsewhere. Poland's security, on the other hand, depended heavily on the SAF and the Soviet Security Corps (NKGB). The latter were particularly notorious, having been granted full control 'over civilian security in the Soviet Army's rear' by the Committee of National Liberation, see McCauley, *op.cit.*, p.270, and Yergin, *op.cit.*, pp.270-348.
24. J. Degras, *The Communist International 1919-1943*, (London, 1971) vol.1, p.427.
25. L. Trotsky, *On France*, (New York, 1979), p.193.
26. *Ibid.*, p.201.
27. Degras, *op.cit.*, p.427.
28. L. Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, *op.cit.*, p.231.
29. L. Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*, *op.cit.*, p.18.
30. Yergin, *op.cit.*, pp.303-310.
31. Quoted in Douglas, *op.cit.*, p.153.
32. cf. Harman, *op.cit.*, p.36, and McCauley, *op.cit.*, p.102
33. cf. Harman, *op.cit.*, p.64.
34. For the relevant passages see Trotsky, *In Defence...op.cit.*, pp.8-20, 26-29, 56-59, 81-90, 130-137, 170-178.
35. *Ibid.*, p.19.

# Bureaucratic social revolutions and the Marxist theory of the State

The precondition for the establishment of proletarian property forms is the destruction of the machine used by the capitalists to defend their property forms—the state. The Marxist programme is clear that the task of smashing the capitalist state belongs to the proletariat. It calls for the fulfilment of this task through the use of armed, directly democratic, workplace organisations—workers' councils or soviets. These councils in turn are the antithesis of the capitalist state. They are the organs (legislative, executive and coercive) of the workers' state.

The bureaucratic anti-capitalist revolutions that have occurred in Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba did not witness the destruction of the state by the proletariat organised in armed workers councils. Yet when the actual stages of these revolutions are examined it becomes clear that the abolition of capitalism by Stalinist parties did not contradict the Marxist theory of the state. The capitalist state was smashed in each bureaucratic revolution, but in a manner not envisaged by Marx, Engels or Lenin, nor in a manner that is at all desirable from the standpoint of revolutionary communism.

## THE BOURGEOIS STATE AND THE MARXIST PROGRAMME

The state, fundamentally, is the *oppressive* apparatus used by the ruling class to defend its economic dominance in society. Thus, we define the class nature of a state, not by its form (which for all states can vary tremendously), nor even by the specific features of its apparatus, but by the economic regime, the mode of production, that it defends. We recognise that the *common* feature of all states that have ever existed, is the presence of a *public force*, bodies of armed men whose job it is to defend the given mode of production. As Engels noted: "We saw that an essential characteristic of the state is the existence of a public force differentiated from the mass of the people."<sup>1</sup>

Or as Trotsky expressed it: "Friedrich Engels once wrote that the state, including the democratic republic, consists of detachments of armed men in defence of property; everything else serves only to embellish or camouflage this fact."<sup>2</sup>

From this it follows that all social revolutions necessarily involve the passing of state power from one class to another. However for the bourgeoisie, during its revolutionary struggle against feudalism, it was not necessary for it to smash the feudal state or its public force. By virtue of its economic dominance prior to its achievement of political power it was possible for the bourgeoisie to merely capture the allegiance of the public force, of the whole state machine (through its influence and wealth). In other words the bourgeoisie captured and perfected the old state machine. It did not smash it: "All revolutionaries perfected this machine instead of breaking it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor."<sup>3</sup>

But the nature of the proletariat as a class and the tasks of its revolution—the conscious construction of a communist society—require that the proletariat organise itself as a ruling class with unique and particular state forms. Unlike all hitherto existing revolutionary classes the proletariat cannot achieve its historical

objective by laying hold of the existing machinery and form of state—its army, bureaucracy and officialdom—and use it to implement its programme. This was the principal lesson that Marx and Engels drew from the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871: "But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made machinery and wield it for their own purpose. The political instrument of their enslavement cannot serve as the political instrument of their emancipation."<sup>4</sup>

The goal of Marxists is the abolition of classes and therefore also of all states. This is to be achieved in the first phase by the dictatorship of the proletariat; a state to be sure, but one that is, properly speaking only a semi-state:

"As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection, as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon the present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from this struggle, are removed, nothing more remains to be held in subjection—nothing necessitates a special coercive force, a state. . . The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state (ie the workers state -Eds) is not 'abolished'. It withers away."<sup>5</sup>

Because the proletariat's seizure of power inaugurates the transition to socialism, because the dictatorship of the proletariat is the first act in the very withering away of the state itself (ie of any form of coercive apparatus), the proletariat must smash the state of the bourgeoisie and replace it with a state of a new sort. Lenin, against the opportunists, made the necessity of this action clear: "The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletariat is impossible without a violent revolution. The abolition of the proletarian state i.e. of the state in general, is impossible except through a process of 'withering away'."<sup>6</sup>

If the essential characteristic of the state is the existence of bodies of armed men in defence of property, then the essential element in the smashing of the state is the destruction of the armed power of the bourgeoisie. This is a fundamental law of proletarian revolution. By smashing the state we mean first and foremost smashing its armed apparatus. Marx left no room for doubt on this question: "Paris could resist only because in consequence of the siege, it had got rid of the army and replaced it by a National Guard, the bulk of which consisted of working men. This fact was now to be transformed into an institution. The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people."<sup>7</sup>

The Bolsheviks later codified this lesson into their programme: "When the proletariat is fighting for the power, against whom and what is it fighting? In the first place against this bourgeois organisation (the state-Eds). Now when it is fighting this organisation its task is to deliver blows that will destroy the organisation. But since the main strength of the government resides in the army, if we wish to gain victory over the bourgeoisie the first essential is to disorganise and destroy the bourgeois army."<sup>8</sup>

The armed bodies of the bourgeoisie—its police and standing army—must be abolished and replaced by a militia of the armed proletariat. This repressive element of the state must be smashed prior to, or in the process of, the proletariat achieving state power. The degree of violence involved in that seizure of power will be



determined by the degree to which the bourgeoisie have lost control over, and allegiance of, the coercive apparatus of the state. As long as the bourgeoisie's armed power remains at all intact then the proletariat still faces the task of destroying it. Otherwise it will be used to crush the proletariat itself.

But, in addition to its armed forces the capitalist state maintains itself by alienating the mass of producers from the administration of society by means of a huge and powerful bureaucratic apparatus (civil service, judges etc.) This is directly and indirectly linked to the army and police etc. Thus the smashing of the state must also involve the destruction of this bureaucracy. The highest ranks of the executive bureaucracy—the top civil servants, the judges etc.—must be immediately abolished by the proletarian revolution and replaced by responsible, recallable representatives of the proletariat. In this way the bourgeois executive is smashed. This is vital because as Marx and Engels made clear in *"The Communist Manifesto"*: "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for the managing of the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."<sup>9</sup>

The bureaucracy of the modern state however, also consists of large numbers of lower ranking officials who possess administrative skills that would be vital to the functioning of a young workers' state. Therefore, the bureaucracy in its entirety would not be smashed. Rather the ranks of the lower officialdom would be heavily purged and placed under the control of the workers themselves. Lenin, for example, distinguished between the smashing of the key elements of the oppressive apparatus and the need for the workers' state to maintain certain elements of the administrative apparatus bequeathed it by the bourgeois state. He made this clear in advance of the seizure of state in *"Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?"*: "In addition to the chiefly 'oppressive' apparatus—the standing army, the police, the bureaucracy—the modern state possesses an apparatus which has extremely close connections with the banks and the syndicates. . . This apparatus must not, and should not, be smashed."<sup>10</sup>

The tasks of book-keeping, accounting and so forth would be fulfilled by those sections of the bureaucracy thus retained by the workers' state. The marxist tradition maintained that such initial acts as limiting the pay of all officials to that of a skilled worker, subjecting the apparatus to workers control, were in themselves, preparatory to the gradual disappearance of administration as a distinct element in the social division of labour separate from and set against the producers themselves. The task facing a proletarian state was to progressively eliminate the separate caste of full time administrators on the road to building a communist society. This task was always seen, however, as distinct from the immediate act of smashing the bourgeoisie's oppressive machine.

Prior to the October revolution Lenin outlined the tasks of the Bolsheviks in this sphere of the state apparatus thus: "Power to the Soviets means radically reshaping the entire old state apparatus, that bureaucratic apparatus which hampers everything democratic. It means removing this apparatus and substituting for it a new, popular one, ie a truly democratic apparatus of soviets, ie the organised and armed majority of the people—the workers, soldiers and peasants. It means allowing the majority of the people initiative and independence not only in the election of deputies, but also in state administration in effecting reforms and various other changes."<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the destruction of the bourgeois state machine marxists also insist that the proletarian revolution involves a positive action—the consolidation of a state of a completely new sort which is in the process of withering away from its very inception. In other words the organs of destruction (of the bourgeois state) are, in turn, the organs of reconstruction, of a workers' state. The workers' state itself will disappear with the advent of communism—that is with the disappearance of classes. Marx and Lenin were clear the building up of the workers' state was a process that took place *after* as well as during the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the seizure of state power by the proletariat. This process constitutes the final element of the smashing of the state. It constitutes the continuation of class struggle even after the conquest of power by the proletariat: "After the overthrow of the exploiting classes—he (Lenin-Eds) repeats and explains in every chapter

of State and Revolution the proletariat will shatter the old bureaucratic machine and create its own apparatus out of employees and workers."<sup>12</sup>

## THE VICTORY AND DEFEAT OF SOVIET POWER

The October revolution marked the passing of state power to the proletariat organised to wield that power with new distinctively proletarian state forms—the workers' militia, the factory committees and the soviets of workers, soldiers and peasants' deputies. The police and army of the Russian bourgeoisie had been smashed as instruments upon which the bourgeoisie could rely in order to defend its class rule. The last significant attempt of the Russian bourgeoisie to deploy the army in defence of its interests crumbled with the defeat of the Kornilov coup in August 1917. After that—in the struggle against the Moscow uprising and in the form of the White Guards of the civil war, the bourgeoisie could only deploy armed force as an instrument of counter revolution against a victorious proletariat. In all of the major industrial centres the standing army and police force was replaced by the armed power of the workers' militia. The first and most essential aspect of the smashing of the capitalist state was completed—ie the bourgeoisie was deprived of its powers of coercion.

The executive power of the bureaucracy—its civil service chiefs and judges—was smashed by the soviet power. But the young proletarian state faced the task of building new forms of administration and regulation on the basis of the armed power of the proletariat expressed in the soviets. It faced that task in conditions of extreme material backwardness and, increasingly, of international isolation. In order to ensure the very survival of proletarian power the young proletarian state was forced to maintain, and even reintroduce, capitalist state forms in a workers' state. A standing army was created, material privileges were granted to officials with particular invaluable skills and experience and a standing bureaucracy had to be maintained in order to preside over the unequal distribution of goods in a situation of extreme shortages and disruption of production. Lenin and Trotsky both noted and explained this inevitable development: "Bourgeois law in relation to the distribution of the objects of consumption assumes, of course, inevitably a bourgeois state, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of compelling observance of its norms. It follows that under Communism not only will bourgeois law survive for a certain time, but also even a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie."<sup>13</sup>—Lenin. And: "For the defence of 'bourgeois law' the workers' state was compelled to create a 'bourgeois' type of instrument—that is the same old gendarmes although in a new uniform."<sup>14</sup>—Trotsky.

By the death of Lenin the old administrative apparatus overwhelmingly determined the functioning and administration of the new soviet state. Lenin talked of Soviet Russia as a workers' state with profound bureaucratic deformations. The administrative apparatus in Russia was not replaced by a state of a new sort in any permanent or lasting form. But, in our view, the forms of the state were not decisive. Despite its reversion to old forms of administration, the state was based on the defence, and that time particularly, the extension of new forms of property.

The possibility of different forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat has always been anticipated by marxists, whose method is based on a dialectical analysis of concrete reality and not on the rigid application of schematic norms to reality. Thus Bukharin perceptively commented, against Kautsky: "In his (Marx-Eds) analysis of capitalist production he took capitalist economy in its 'pure' form ie. in a form uncomplicated by any vestiges of the old (feudal) relations of production, or any national peculiarities and so on, and he treats the question of the dictatorship of the working class in the same way, as a question of the workers' dictatorship in general, that is to say a dictatorship which destroys capitalism in its pure form. And there was no other way to consider the question if he was to do it in abstract theoretical terms ie if he was to give the broadest algebraic formula for the dictatorship.

Experience of the social struggle now permits concrete definition of the question along the most diverse lines."<sup>15</sup>



Likewise Lenin had not expected the dictatorship to have a universal form: "Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same; all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same; the dictatorship of the proletariat."<sup>16</sup>

The degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Bolsheviks increased the diversity of these potential forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat with tragic consequences for the Soviet and international working class, leading Trotsky to comment: "In the interim between the conquest of power and the dissolution of the workers' state within socialist society the forms and methods of proletarian rule may change sharply depending on the course of the class struggle internally and externally."<sup>17</sup>

What for Lenin and Trotsky had been a temporary retreat/truce in the direction of strengthening bourgeois state forms in order to consolidate the workers' state was embraced as a permanent and conscious goal by the Stalinists. They strove to consolidate and extend elements of the capitalist state form in the USSR as a base for their own material privileges and as an obstacle to the proletariat's realisation of socialism. In that the Soviet state defends bourgeois norms of distribution, in that it maintains a massive standing bureaucracy, army and police force against the masses, it retains key features of the state of the old, bourgeois type. In that it defends, albeit in the manner of the privileged bureaucracy, the property relations of October it retains a proletarian character. Within the Degenerated Workers' State bourgeois state forms continue to present themselves to the proletariat as an obstacle to the transition to socialism. The political revolution will destroy the power of the bureaucracy and, in so doing, either destroy completely bourgeois state forms or, where necessary, place them under the strict controls of the organs of the healthy workers state.

However, from this we do not conclude that there are two types of state co-existent in the USSR. We describe the degenerate workers' state as one that has a dual, contradictory nature. It defends proletarian property forms but it does so with coercive instruments normally associated with capitalist states. It does this because the working class have been politically expropriated by the bureaucracy. Trotsky described the dual nature of the USSR thus: "The state assumes directly and from the very beginning

(ie even in its healthy period—Eds) a dual character; socialistic, in so far as it defends social property in the means of production bourgeois, in so far as the distribution of life's goods is carried out with a capitalistic measure of value and all the consequences ensuing therefrom."

This dual character remains right up to today but we should add that the bureaucracy have a monopoly of political control over the bourgeois aspect of the state and it serves first and foremost their interests. The Stalinist programme is historically committed to the maintenance of bourgeois state forms and the suppression of proletarian state forms even should bourgeois property relations be overthrown.

## THE BUREAUCRATIC WORKERS' GOVERNMENT

When we look at each of the postwar overturns we can see that in no case did the Stalinists permit the old bourgeois state to be replaced by a state of a new sort based on workers' councils and a workers' militia. Throughout the process they tried as best they could to strengthen and maintain bourgeois state forms—a standing army and police force, a bureaucracy separate from, and in opposition to, the mass of toilers. The realisation of this element of their programme placed the Stalinists alongside the bourgeoisie in the struggle to break up the embryonic organs of a healthy workers' state that emerged, in some form, prior to the creation of degenerate workers' states in each case, ie in the period 1944/47.

While this was the case—and the new workers' states were therefore created in a form bureaucratically degenerate from birth—in each case the armed bodies of men of the old ruling class were smashed/broken up either by the entry of the Red Army into Eastern Europe, by Stalinist led partisans as in Yugoslavia, Albania and later China or, in the 1959/60 by the politically petty bourgeois July 26th Movement in Cuba. These coercive bodies were smashed to the extent that the bourgeoisie were no longer able to deploy armed force in defence of their remaining property rights, just as the coercive machinery of the Russian bourgeoisie—its army and police—disintegrated prior to the direct seizure of power by the proletariat and, to that extent, was smashed before the October revolution. Thus it is indisputable that *the armed*



Russian workers' militia on guard in 1917.

power of the bourgeoisie was physically smashed prior to each of the bureaucratic revolutions that marked the expansion of Stalinism in the post war period. This is decisive in understanding why apparently peaceful bureaucratic revolutions were able to take place. The essential element of the smashing of the bourgeois state had, in fact, already been completed.

In each case the outcome of this initial act of smashing was—as had been the case in Russia during the process of the disintegration of the Russian bourgeoisie's enormous standing army—a highly unstable period of Dual Power. In each case there coexisted: a) the forms of a reassembled/reasserted bourgeois state kept in viable existence by the continuing direct links between the particular native bourgeoisies and the armed power of world imperialism, but in each case in need of decisive external aid in order to reconstruct and deploy armed power in defence of its property of its own accord; b) the embryo of degenerate workers' states—in the form of the Red Army itself or of Stalinist-led armed bodies, not inevitably forced to, but in exceptional circumstances capable of, resolving the contradictory Dual Power period through the medium of a *Bureaucratic Workers' Government* should either the interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy or the interests and privileges of a nascent Stalinist bureaucratic caste based on national proletarian forces come under threat in circumstances where the balance of forces between the Stalinists and the Imperialists is unfavourable to the latter.

The Comintern recognised two types of 'workers' governments': ostensible workers' governments, Liberal and Social Democratic, that were in reality bourgeois governments, and workers' governments that could act as a bridge to the dictatorship of the proletariat. To the three types of the latter category: workers' and peasants' government, workers' government in which communists participate and governments in which communists predominate, the experience after 1945 obliges us to add a fourth type—the bureaucratic workers' government. In this new type Stalinists are politically dominant. The government has the programme of anti-capitalist measures constituting the expropriation of the bourgeoisie whilst simultaneously depriving the working class of political power. Thus it prevents the formation or development of organs of proletarian struggle, self-organisations and democracy (soviets) with methods which range from political misleadership to outright military repression. Where the working class has a history of conscious revolutionary struggle, has an alternative revolutionary leadership, the element of repression, of breaking the proletariat's advance, of smashing and bureaucratising its parties, soviets and trade unions, will generally precede the formation of a bureaucratic workers' government. Where the proletariat is weak in numbers or where its class consciousness is obscured by petty bourgeois illusions, the process may take place while the masses are mobilised for non-socialist tasks but before clear class goals and the political forms are created to achieve and defend them, exist. In the latter case the element of repression, of Stalinist dictatorship may be attenuated for a whole period. However, what defines a bureaucratic workers' government is that it is not under the control or conscious pressure of the organs that can form the basis of a full political dictatorship of the proletariat. It is thus anti-capitalist but a bridge to a degenerate not a healthy workers' state.

Thus in Eastern Europe and in degenerate workers' states created since the late 1940s the bourgeoisie is overthrown by an anti-capitalist bureaucratic workers' government. Such an overthrow of

the bourgeoisie could only take place, in each case, after the potential organs of a healthy workers' state had been either physically destroyed or rendered mere appendages to the Stalinists. In Eastern Europe what remained of the bourgeoisie's administrative apparatus, in each case was either deliberately maintained or re-instituted. The administrative apparatus—composed largely of the personnel of the old regime—was purged and key positions within it occupied by the Stalinists and their allies.

This utilisation of the capitalist state's administrative apparatus (suitably purged) for the purposes of social revolution would have been impossible had the capitalist class not been deprived of their control of armed force. The armed power of a degenerate workers' state (as in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and later Cuba, Stalinist-led peasants armies) can be said to have completed the first and essential stage in the smashing of the capitalist state. This alone facilitated the later complete political and economic expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

The resolution of Dual Power in each case did not occur on the basis of the programme of revolutionary marxism. The Stalinists moved against the bourgeoisie, having already destroyed their armed power, with the full intention of maintaining a state profoundly similar to that of the old bourgeois type, not of replacing it with a state of a new soviet type. The creation of new workers' states was the work not of the working class acting in its own name and through its own democratic organisations but of a counter revolutionary caste based on the working class. This process was complete only after the liquidation of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of proletarian property forms. At every stage in the process the programme of the working class would have remained the seizure of power by the working class itself and the establishment of a state of a new type based on soviets and the armed workers.

This process does not contradict the marxist theory of the state. It demonstrates that the capitalist state can be destroyed by counter revolutionary workers' parties only to the extent that these new states no longer defend capitalist property relations while retaining most of the features of bourgeois type states. They are therefore an obstacle to the socialist transformation of society. The creation of a healthy proletarian state, a genuine semi-state, remains a task of the working class political revolution against the bureaucratic caste.

This does not mean that workers' states can be created without the smashing of the capitalist state. The bureaucratic revolutions were only possible because in each case the coercive apparatus of the bourgeoisie had been smashed. The Eastern European overthrows were to prove that the historical and material preconditions for the creation of workers' states had been revised and extended as a direct result of the creation of the first workers' state in October 1917 and its consequent degeneration. The Russian revolution mapped out the only conscious and revolutionary road for the overthrow of capitalism and the building of communism. The healthy workers' state will be the revolutionary product of the independent actions and organs of the mass of the working class, headed by a revolutionary Trotskyist party, which seeks to preserve the revolution by its extension internationally.

However, the degeneration of the Russian Revolution has meant that in certain exceptional historical circumstances, the preservation of the remaining gains of the October Revolution, together with concern for its own privileges, has driven the Stalinist bureaucracy or Stalinist parties to overthrow capitalism in a counter-revolutionary manner which retards the working class struggle for socialism and communism.

#### Footnotes

1. F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, (London, 1972), p.180.
2. L. Trotsky, *Whither France*, (London, 1974), p.108.
3. K. Marx, *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, (London, 1979) vol.11, p.186.
4. K. Marx, *Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune*, (Moscow, 1976) p.202.
5. F. Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, (Peking, 1976), p.363.
6. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, (Moscow, 1964), vol.25, p.400.
7. K. Marx, *The Civil War in France*, (Moscow, 1972), p.53.
8. N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*, (Harmondsworth, 1970), p.128.

9. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, (London, 1976), vol.6, p.486.
10. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, (Moscow, 1964), vol.26, pp.105-6.
11. *Ibid.*, vol.25, p.368.
12. L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, (New York, 1972), p.50 (our emphasis).
13. V.I. Lenin, *op.cit.*, vol.25, p.471.
14. L. Trotsky, *op.cit.*, p.53.
15. N. Bukharin, *The Politics and Economics of the Transition Period*, (London, 1979), p.37.
16. V.I. Lenin, *op.cit.*, vol. 25, p.413.
17. L. Trotsky, *Writings 1934-35*, (New York, 1974), p.172.
18. L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, p.54.

# Castro's 'Cuban road' from Populism to Stalinism

The "unique" features of the Cuban revolution have produced endless confusion in the "Trotskyist" movement, rivalling the programmatic chaos and ensuing revisionism engendered by the Tito-Stalin split in 1948. The fundamental problem the Cuban revolution poses is how can a petit-bourgeois nationalist movement not only overthrow a pro-imperialist military dictatorship (a political revolution) but pass on under the same leadership to overthrow capitalism and establish a self-proclaimed "socialist state" indistinguishable in type from China, Vietnam etc?

From this problem flow questions relating to the fundamentals of revolutionary Marxist theory. Does the experience of the Cuban revolution contradict the Marxist notion of the historical limits of the petit-bourgeoisie as a class and of petit-bourgeois nationalism as a programme for social revolution? Does the experience of the Cuban revolution contradict the Marxist theory of the state?

The "adaptations" made to the fundamentals of revolutionary Marxism, by all sections of the movement which claimed to be Trotskyist, to "account for" the Cuban events were all, in fact, revisions of the first magnitude. Permanent Revolution is reduced to an objective force, a historical process that works its will independent of the consciousness of human beings even with regard to the socialist revolution. Its petit-bourgeois agents can be "unconscious marxists" or unconscious Trotskyists". Therefore a revolutionary party is a desirable, but not essential, instrument of this process. Revolutionary Workers' Governments can exist without the "norms of proletarian democracy" i.e. without soviet-type bodies to express and exert the revolutionary pressure of the working class. Lastly the proletarian dictatorship can exist "without the norms of proletarian democracy" yet be qualitatively a healthy workers' state - not in need of a political revolution.

These positions, developed by Joseph Hansen and the SWP (US), and providing the basis for the re-unified United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), repeated in a starker manner the theoretical and the programmatic collapse that occurred after 1948. The importance of the Cuban revolution was raised in the context of the Nicaraguan revolution and the consequent split in the USFI (1979/80). The issues it raises, therefore, are not matters of idle historical curiosity, but have a burning relevance for the struggle for revolution today.

Cuba's whole history prior to 1959 was dominated by its colonial and then semi-colonial status. From being a Spanish colony it passed into the hands of US imperialism. Formal independence was an empty shell under both parliamentary bourgeois nationalist regimes and under repressive military dictatorships. Attempted constitutional "revolutions" like that of 1933/4 were rudely aborted by US backed military coups. The underlying cause of this was Cuba's integration with, and subordination to, the US economy. As with all semi-colonies in the imperialist epoch, this integration had not transformed Cuba into a balanced and developed capitalist economy. Cuba was dominated by sugar production for the North American market. At the beginning of the 1950s sugar production accounted for 36% of Cuba's GNP, for 80% of its exports revenue; and 83% of all cultivated land was under sugar cane. With 41% of labour tied to agricultural production and 20% to tourism, Cuba's economy was tied to the sweet tooth of the North American populace and the pleasures and vices of its

bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie directly owned a large part of the economy, 35% of capital invested in sugar was US-based. In the late 1950s over one billion dollars of US capital were invested in Cuba.

A small class of latifundists (less than 3,000 of them owned 70% of the land) and a comprador and rentier bourgeoisie acted as the agents of US imperialism. Only a tiny fraction of the Cuban possessing classes were capable of any sustained opposition to US imperialism and even these turned sharply against the Castroite revolution as soon as it began to take limited measures of agrarian reform. The Cuban revolution confirmed to the hilt the Trotskyist assertion that in the epoch of imperialism the colonial and semi-colonial bourgeoisie are completely incapable of leading the struggle for national independence and independent (capitalist) economic development.

On the other hand the popular classes were not dominated by a peasantry chronically deprived of land. Cuban society was more urban than rural (57% urban to 43% rural in 1959).

Moreover, the countryside itself was dominated not by land-hungry, small peasants but by rural proletarians suffering from chronic and massive unemployment, job insecurity, low wages and appalling social conditions. The sugar refineries were well organised in trade unions, as were the urban workers generally. The CTC (Cuban Trade Union Federation) unionised half the total workforce.

Cuba was possessed of a revolutionary nationalist tradition, that of Jose Marti and Antonio Maceo and the insurrectionary war against Spain and then US colonialism (1895-8); a tradition with parallels in the early years of the imperialist epoch (in China, Mexico, Turkey, Iran etc.) The island also had seen a reformist, constitutional attempt to break with US dominance.

In 1933/4 the democrat Dr. Grau San Martin was brought to power and driven from it 100 days later, by a military coup d'etat engineered by Fulgencio Batista. Castro's July 26th Movement was politically, programmaticaly a continuation of these movements. There were no differences with Grau's Autenticos of the 30s or Chibas' Ortodoxos of the late 40s. Fidel Castro was a member of the latter party. The programme Castro was thus committed to was of political and economic independence and democracy.

"History Will Absolve Me", Castro's heavily doctored (and re-written) speech from the dock after his trial after the 1953 attack on Moncada Barracks was pure "Chibasism" in its political programme. It promised restoration of the 1940 constitution, a "Government of popular election", a land reform to *restrict* large land holdings and nationalisation of US-owned electric and telephone companies. By December 1956, Castro had even renounced the nationalisation of the utilities and declared "Foreign investment will always be welcome and secure here." <sup>1</sup> His differences with the Chibas and the Ortodoxo party, which carried on the tradition after Chibas' death, was that whereas they (and Grau and the Autenticos before them) were bourgeois nationalist *reformists*, he was (like Maceo and Marti) a bourgeois nationalist *revolutionary* i.e. he employed revolutionary methods of struggle not constitutional ones.

The July 26th Movement (J26M) however, never formulated a precise programme. It never held a conference or elected a leadership. It was in essence a military apparatus for overthrowing Batista. It was itself a miniature popular front. On its left wing stood figures like Raul Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara

who were strongly influenced by Stalinism and secretly had no objections to an overthrow of capitalism, and on its right wing stood the anti-communist figures like Hubert Matos and Faustino Perez.

## THE JULY 26th MOVEMENT — A COALITION ACROSS CLASSES

In the cities the J26M leaders, known as "the Plain" ('Llano') were anti-communist bourgeois nationalists to the core. Nor were they an insignificant force. Frank Pais in Santiago and Faustino Perez in Havana controlled large movements of resistance and sabotage and supplied the rural guerrillas with arms and money. The Plain leaders were fiercely anti-communist and open defenders of private property. Faustino Perez reflected the views of this group in his attitude to the "extremist" Castro when he stressed in Spring 1958 "Castro will not be part of the Provisional Government...We shall create a climate of confidence and security for the investment of national and foreign capital".<sup>2</sup>

On the left there were figures like Raul Castro, an ex-member of the CP youth and resolutely pro-communist (Stalinist). Guevara probably considered himself a Marxist from 1954 onwards. His experience of the American backed coup against Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954 and a reading of Lenin's "State and Revolution" led him to reject the "peaceful road" to revolution.

All wings of the J26M were highly suspicious of, if not hostile to the PSP, the Cuban Stalinists. The PSP had a history of collaboration with Batista and openly condemned the Castroites before 1958 as "adventurous". But by the Spring of 1958, Blas Roca, the veteran Stalinist leader threw his weight behind Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, leader of the pro-Castro wing of the PSP and against Anibal Escalante. A number of PSP cadres including Rodriguez were sent to the Sierra Maestra, base of Castro's guerrillas, where a secret pact was made between the PSP and the Castroites in March 1958. Thus it is clear that the J26M was not simply a petit-bourgeois movement but rather a coalition of bourgeois and proletarian (albeit politically petit-bourgeois ie Stalinist or proto-Stalinist) forces.

In January 1959, the two year long civil war between the J26M, its "rebel" army and the Batista regime culminated in the overthrow of Batista. Batista had led a corrupt military dictatorship that had acted as an agent for US imperialism in its Cuban semi-colony since 1953. The 1959 revolution was not however a mere putsch or coup d'etat. In the countryside it assumed, during 1958, the character of a serious movement of the rural proletarians and poor peasants. In the cities it had the support of important sections of the nationalist bourgeois and petit-bourgeois strata grouped in the Directorio and the Civic Resistance.

Under attack from such a wide spectrum of Cuban society and deserted by its US backers, Batista's regime collapsed after the failure of its summer offensive of 1958. A general strike in Havana assured the complete disintegration of the old regime. The high command and much of the officer caste of the army, the judiciary and high state bureaucracy fled en masse. Castro subjected the remaining forces to a far reaching purge with hundreds shot and thousands imprisoned. The units of the old army were integrated with the Rebel Army and placed under J26M officers and commanders.

From January 1959 there was as a result of this disintegration, a specific form of dual power, a fragmentation of the state power. The bourgeoisie's hold on the army was very weak because of the loss of most of the officer corps and the whole of the high command, but substantial sections of the airforce and the old regiments existed and would have formed a basis for a reassertion of the bourgeoisie's control over the army. On the other hand was the 3,000 strong Rebel Army which by January 1959 was made up of "three fourths to four fifths" of rural proletarians and small scale peasant proprietors under the leadership of pro-PSP or populist and centrist tendencies.<sup>3</sup> The effect of this where the left-wing of the J26M was in command (Raul Castro in Oriente for example) was an immediate push to

grant peasant-worker demands. In February, 22,500 families were awarded 67 acre plots. In Camaguey on the other hand, rightists under Hubert Matos and backed by figures like Diaz Lanz (head of the old airforce) held up reform. Thus the duality of power ran through the army and the J26M itself. Fidel Castro played the role of a bonaparte - the "lider maximo" balancing between, and obscuring, this division.

However the actual balance of forces was heavily unfavourable to the bourgeoisie. Its real strength lay in the pro-bourgeois, class collaborationist politics of the J26M, in Castro's unwillingness to break from the utopian project of national independent capitalist development for Cuba. It also lay in the Raul Castro/Guevara wing's inability to break with the "lider maximo" and put themselves at the head of (and therefore potentially under the control of) the workers and poor peasants. They refused to openly express class demands against the bourgeoisie. They would not give voice to the proletariat's historic goal. Lastly it lay in the PSP's popular front/stagist programme which gave the weakened bourgeoisie pride of place in the popular front. These forces, not the Cuban bourgeoisie's intrinsic strength, accounted for the nine-month period of dual power.

The Castroite project throughout this period was to maintain the popular front whilst striking at the working class/poor peasant or bourgeois elements should either of these classes attempt to decisively tip the balance in their own favour. Thus a wave of strikes and land occupations in January and February caused a serious breach between the "lider maximo" and the PSP (a military bloc had existed from March; a trade union pact from November 1958).

In April 1959, Castro classified communism, Peronism and fascism as merely different kinds of "totalitarianism". Castro declared that the Cuban revolution was "humanist" - capitalism bred hunger whilst communism "took away liberty". The Cuban revolution was not red but "Olive Green".<sup>4</sup>

Early in 1959, the J26M officered police stood by as members of the Havana Civic Resistance ransacked the offices of "Hoy", the PSP's newspaper, an action which led its editor, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez to declare the PSP had gone underground before and could do it again.<sup>5</sup> By May 1959, a vitriolic campaign was being conducted in the pages of "Revolution", the J26M's paper, against the PSP. The Stalinists were denounced as "anti-revolutionary", similar to the counter-revolutionaries. Particularly singled out for attack was their encouragement of strikes for wage increases, and their involvement in peasant land seizures in San Luis.<sup>6</sup>

## CASTRO IS FORCED TO BREAK WITH HIS BOURGEOIS ALLIES

However, Castro's anti-communist campaign inevitably encouraged the Cuban landowner bourgeoisie's resistance to his own land reform. Though a moderate capitalist reform, its operation and implementation lay with INRA (ie effectively with the armed guerrillas of the Rebel Army), in a situation where the peasants' and rural proletarian masses' expectations had been aroused by the revolution. The first attempt at nationalisation and the methods used to enforce them touched the US and Cuban companies and land owners to the quick. Confirming the thesis of Permanent Revolution that none of the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois revolution can be carried out in colonial or semi-colonial countries under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, or any alleged "national" or "revolutionary" fraction of it, the Cuban landowning and capitalist class passed in its totality into the camp of counter-revolution. Castro was forced to move against the most vociferous opponents of agrarian reform in his government. A group of bourgeois ministers were sacked in June. In July he mobilised the workers and peasants in a general strike and mass demonstration, to remove the bourgeois president Urrutia, and to purge the airforce.

Castro's reluctance to break his ties to the bourgeoisie can be seen in his hesitancy to purge all the bourgeois ministers. However, the activities of US imperialism and their agents in Cuba was to leave him no choice. On June 11th, the US issued a





Castro's guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra: (from left to right) Raul Castro, Juan Almeida, Fidel Castro, Ramiro Valdes, Ciro Redoulo.

strong protest on the Agrarian Reform measures, demanding "prompt, adequate and effective compensation". Castro was faced with a choice: either concede on the agrarian reform and strengthen the bourgeoisie and its alliance with US capital, thus alienating his peasant base, or push ahead with the reform and strike out against the right wing.

He chose the latter. The day after the US note, Castro demanded the resignation of various bourgeois ministers - Sori Marin, Minister of Agriculture; Elena Mederos, Minister of Health; Luis Orlando Rodriguez, Minister of the Interior; Angel Fernandez, Minister of Justice and Agramonte, the Foreign Minister.

All these ministers were replaced by trusted members of the J26M, often close intimates of Castro. While the "political representatives" of the bourgeoisie were purged, the "economic representatives" were left untouched - bourgeois figures like Fresquet (Finance) and Bunilla (Commerce) remained in their posts, while Pazos remained in charge of the Bank of Cuba.

These actions forced Castro into close reliance on his own left wing and consequently back into a bloc with the PSP. In October/November, counter-revolutionary activity and economic crisis caused by US and native Cuban capitalist sabotage forced Castro to strike decisively at the bourgeoisie outside and inside the J26M effectively ending the latter as a popular front, or indeed as a "movement" at all. Hubert Matos was arrested and tried and the J26M purged of "anti-communists". The army was reduced by 50%, and renamed the "Revolutionary Armed Forces". The Defence Ministry was completely purged and put under Raul Castro's command. The organisation of a mass armed militia of workers and peasants was launched and the standing army was integrated with the militia. Castro, forced to act with the left wing of the J26M, his brother, Guevara and Rodriguez, against the political and military agents of the Cuban capitalists, drove all the bourgeois ministers from the government. Fresquet at the Finance Ministry was the sole exception, but Guevara took over the National Bank, and effectively economic power and policy emanated from there. Thus by November 1959, the popular front had been ended, along with the duality of power.

These actions all necessitated a rapprochement with the principal political force within the Cuban working class, the 18,000 - strong PSP. Having ousted them from the CTC leadership completely in February / March, and formed a bloc with the pro-bourgeois labour bureaucrats in the Frente Obrero Humanista, in November / January 1959/60, Castro was now forced to strike a new alliance with them, and purge his former supporters. The left wing of the J26M were now in the ascendant, and the process of founding a unified party apparatus to replace the movement began in December 1959. Whatever Castro's differences with sections of the PSP leadership, he had now irrevocably cast in his lot with the PSP. This process of fusion with a politically petit-bourgeois Stalinist workers' party did not however immediately mean a break with US imperialism or a conscious and determined march towards socialism. If the Castro fusion with the PSP gave the government the appearance of a workers' and peasants' government, it was *not* a revolutionary workers and peasants' government.

It was not anti-capitalist in its action or programme, and it was not under the control of democratic armed organs of workers' and peasants' power ie soviets and a democratic workers' peoples' militia. It commenced its life as a *bourgeois* workers' and peasants' government, but one born under special circumstances. Firstly, the bourgeoisie had lost all vestiges of control of its armed apparatus (the fundamental bastion of the bourgeois state had been smashed). Henceforward the bourgeoisie could only recover its rule by armed counter-revolution, ie by armed revolt from outside the state machine. Secondly the bourgeoisie, aided and abetted by the right wing of the American bourgeoisie (Nixon and the CIA) were in fact renewing counter-revolutionary civil war. Thirdly, the workers and peasants were being armed, and whilst they had no effective alternative leadership to the left J26M/PSP leaders, they formed an armed bulwark against capitulation, and a pressure for decisive measures against the counter-revolution.

This government was in effect a "government of the parties of petit-bourgeois democracy". Its programme and the intentions of its leaders did not go beyond bourgeois limits, its social

roots were the urban and rural workers and poor peasants. It was in this sense a bourgeois "workers' and peasants' government", ie one which is described in the Comintern's 1922 theses as being "tolerated by the enfeebled bourgeoisie in critical times as a means of deceiving the proletariat about the real class character of the state, or to ward off, with the help of corrupt workers' leaders the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat and gain time",

However the growing class conflict in Cuba, the increasingly organised expression of the expectations of the armed workers and peasants, the response via sabotage, guerrilla activity etc, of the Cuban bourgeoisie and its agents in the state bureaucracy, and the hostile blows of US imperialism forced this government "to go further than they themselves wished along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie".<sup>7</sup>

Attempts by this government to ease the stranglehold of US imperialism over its economy by entering into a trade agreement with the USSR led to a dramatic worsening of relations with America. In June 1960, US oil companies (and the European controlled firm Shell) refused to refine Soviet oil. The Castro government replied by nationalising them. In July, the US responded by cancelling the agreement to buy the sugar crop - only an agreement with the USSR and China to buy sugar saved the economy from disaster.

Between August and October 1960, the government nationalised all the US-owned sugar mills, electricity facilities and telecommunications industry, all the banks and all American and Cuban-owned large and medium industrial concerns. By the end of 1960, 80% of Cuba's industrial capacity was nationalised and the agrarian reform had been dramatically speeded up. Under the pressure of imperialism, the Castro government had been faced with a choice: either to submit to imperialism, or take the measures necessary to break the power of imperialism and its agents in Cuba by expropriating it.

While the Castroite government was forced to break with the bourgeoisie and take anti-capitalist measures, the form that this took was different to that envisaged by Trotsky. From the summer of 1960, the Castro government had become a *bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government* - a government forced to attack and break the economic power of the bourgeoisie, but through carefully controlled bureaucratic measures and mobilisations. The Castro government was able to carry out this expropriation relatively "peacefully" because it had already broken the political and military power of the bourgeoisie within the state, and was able to use the Revolutionary Armed Forces/Militia against internal resistance. The major threat to the government came from intervention by US imperialism either directly with US troops, or indirectly through armed Cuban counter-revolutionaries.

## CASTRO FUSES WITH THE STALINISTS

It was this threat that necessitated the controlled mass mobilisations under the control of the Castroites (loyally supported by the PSP). Thus the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) were set up in September 1960 while the militia, integrated with the RAFs, reached 150,000 by the summer of 1960. The militia, which was made up of workers who did eight hours military training after work, had at its centre the purged rebel army, its officers trusted Fidelistas. The heads of the militia in the provinces were often heads of G2, the military/political intelligence organisation. The CDRs were headed by Jose Matar, a leading PSP member.

The militia was down-graded as the threat from US imperialist intervention receded. After the defeat of the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, divisional command structure was reintroduced into the RAF, and by 1964, the militia was disarmed, leaving the RAF as the sole armed force of the state.

By November 1960, a US trade embargo was in effect which completely cut off Cuba from its traditional markets of North and South America (80% of Cuban imports came from the USA and from US oil companies in Venezuela). Only the support and

aid from the Stalinist bloc (primarily the USSR) allowed the Cuban government to develop a workable economic strategy. At the end of 1960, Guevara led a trade delegation to the USSR and the Eastern bloc, which resulted in the entire 1961 sugar crop being taken up. At the same time (end of 1960), a team of Czech technical advisors arrived to help set up a planning agency. In February 1961, the government departments and agencies were completely reorganised to fit in with the tasks of the new planned economy. JUCEPLAN was transformed into the central planning agency, which evolved the first plan which was in operation from the start of 1962.

The massive nationalisations of 1960, the expropriations of the US imperialists and Cuban bourgeoisie and the establishment of the monopoly of foreign trade laid the pre-conditions and established the necessity for state planning. From the implementation of the first Five Year Plan in 1962, we can speak of the creation of a degenerate workers' state in Cuba.

The PSP cadres were central in the staffing of the administrative apparatus of this plan and this increased importance, plus their vital role in maintaining discipline within the trade unions was recognised in the fusion between the J26M and the PSP in the Integrated Revolutionary Organisation (ORI) in July 1961. This organisation was later to become the Cuban Communist Party in 1965.

The "fusion" in fact took the form of a takeover of the Stalinist party apparatus by the Castroites, a project which caused considerable conflict with "old guard" Stalinists. When the National Directorate of the ORI was announced, it consisted of 25 members: 14 from J26M, 10 from the PSP, one from the Revolutionary Directorate<sup>8</sup>. By October 1961, offices of ORI had been set up in almost every town (100 out of 126 townships). Anibal Escalante, the veteran Stalinist who had been given responsibility for organising the ORI, ensured that trusted Stalinists staffed the leading positions in the towns and provinces. Recognising this threat, Castro denounced Escalante for "sectarianism" and for creating a "counter-revolutionary monstrosity", in March 1962. Escalante was expelled from the Directorate, having left hastily for Prague. A Secretariat of the ORI was set up with Fidelistas having five of the six places - Blas Roca being the only PSP member. PSP strength was further reduced in 1964 when the trial of Marcos Rodriguez, who had spied for Batista in the mid-1950s, but also worked for the PSP, was used to expose PSP complicity with Batista, and led to further expulsions of PSP members.

When the Cuban Communist Party was set up in October 1965, the strength of the Fidelistas could be seen in the fact that of the 100 Central Committee members, 72 had military titles, ie were trusted Castroites from the Rebel Army. The entire eight-man Politbureau were Fidelistas. From 1961, the Castroites had consciously set out to construct a Stalinist party in their own image - taking over the PSP apparatus and purging it of its old guard leadership. The struggle within the ORI explains the length of time it took to found the Cuban Communist Party.

By the summer of 1960, Castro had broken decisively with the remaining Cuban and US bourgeoisie. However, the absence of workers' councils (soviets) and a revolutionary communist party comprising the vanguard of the proletariat, ensured that the outcome of these events was not a revolutionary workers' government, ie a bridge to the full and direct political power of the proletariat, but a bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government. This government under the Castro faction and the PSP, with the material aid of the Kremlin bureaucracy, became a bridge to a qualitatively bureaucratized workers' state, one in which the working class and its vanguard were from the outset deprived of political power.

In a speech in February 1961, Guevara referred vaguely to "workers' councils", which could "approve plans and directives". These became technical councils which were to be transmission belts for government targets. In August 1961, the trade unions were reorganised to expedite work co-operation in fulfilling government production goals. By April 1962, Guevara was blaming the lack of labour discipline for the poor sugar harvest. In November 1962, the CTC congress and union congresses were held to "endorse" the government programmes. Guevara stated that



the reluctance of some trade union leaders to endorse the new contracts "would not be tolerated"<sup>9</sup>. In 1962, identity cards were introduced for workers and stringent laws on labour discipline were instituted. A law of 1964/1965 enforced sanctions for breaches of labour discipline. The Grievance Commissions established in 1961 were abolished as being "too lenient". In the words of Martinez Sanchez, Minister of Labour, the law would "strengthen labour discipline and increase production and productivity. It will be applied to the kind of worker who is a residue of exploiting society...We still find workers who have not taken the revolutionary step and tend to discuss and protest any measure coming from the administration"<sup>10</sup>.

Whilst gains were made for and by the working class (the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, statified and planned economy, a state monopoly of foreign trade), the Castroite bonapartist clique and a privileged bureaucracy usurped power from the working class. Thus the Cuban overturn had a predominantly counter-revolutionary character. It was not qualitatively different to the overturns that created the other degenerate workers' states. In carrying through this programme, Castro proved himself a Stalinist. This regime from its foundation could only be removed by political revolution.

Many of the features of the petit-bourgeois populist origins of the Fidelista movement remained hybridised with the essential features of a Stalinist dictatorship. The "Peoples' Power" committees and so forth were never organs of working class power or proletarian democracy. Whilst the origin of the regime in an anti-imperialist revolution gave Castro's power an overwhelming popularity, not seen in the USSR or Eastern Europe, the avenues for a peaceful transition to the political power of the working class do not exist in Cuba.

In this same period the Cuban supporters of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International (IS) were at first hounded out, then imprisoned by the Castroites and PSP. At the 1960 Youth Congress in Havana, the delegates identifying with "Voz Proletaria", the paper of the Cuban section of the IS, were denounced publicly in the PSP's press as CIA agents. In 1961, the paper's press and the plates of Trotsky's "Permanent Revolution", which was being published, were smashed and the paper was suppressed. Later the supporters of "Voz Proletaria" were either imprisoned or deported as "counter revolutionaries".

## IS THE PETIT-BOURGEOISIE A REVOLUTIONARY CLASS ?

The contradiction which might appear to exist between the positions of Lenin, Trotsky and the great revolutionary Marxists with regard to the role of petit-bourgeois political formations dissolves if the full dynamic of the Cuban events is understood. The petit-bourgeoisie indeed cannot be a ruling class - ie it cannot establish a state power defending its own class rule - just as petty commodity production cannot be a dominant mode of production, but is always dominated by a large scale property belonging to another mode of production - slave, feudal or capitalist. The Cuban revolution in no way contradicts this fundamental Marxist assessment of the intermediate class.

Petit-bourgeois parties and their personnel can however be the instrument of the rule of other classes. By a process of internal differentiation, the grouping around Castro evolved from petit-bourgeois nationalism to petit-bourgeois Stalinism. The Fidelista clique assimilated themselves to the Stalinist party and programme whilst ousting most of the latter's former leadership and hybridising its programme with elements of petit-bourgeois nationalism (central role of the peasantry, rural guerrilla warfare, etc), as Mao had done before. Thus Castro, who in 1959 was a bonaparte for the enfeebled Cuban bourgeoisie was, by 1962, a bonaparte "for" the politically expropriated Cuban working class. Trotsky considered in 1938 that "experience" (ie of Russia, Spain and France) confirmed the inability of the parties of petit-bourgeois democracy to create a "government independent of the bourgeoisie". He thought that exceptional circumstances might force them to go further than they wished, that the establishment of such a government was "highly improbable" and that even if it occurred, it would be "merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat"<sup>11</sup>.

The realisation of this "highly improbable" alternative in Trotsky's prediction and then in a manner and with a result not foreseen by him, does not undermine either the Marxist method or the fundamentals of Trotskyism. It demands the application of that method to understand these events, developing the programme as a guide to action for the proletariat in situations unavoidably only dimly foreseen by Trotsky himself.



Cuban territorial troop militia in Havana 1981 - a far cry from the Sierra Maestra days.

The condition which opened the "Cuban road" to the establishing of a degenerate workers' state was the continued existence of the USSR and indeed, the proliferation of degenerate workers' states. Without the political, economic and military aid from the USSR, the Castro government would eventually have gone down to defeat - either at the hands of Cuban/US counter-revolution, or at the hands of the Cuban proletariat led by a Trotskyist vanguard party. The willingness of the Soviet bureaucracy to assist Castro in avoiding such alternatives was due to the Kremlin's tactical disagreements with imperialism and its strategic counter-revolutionary hostility to the seizure of power by the working class.

The desirability of Cuba as a missile base was prompted by the severe disparity in military capability between the USSR and the USA at the end of the 1950s. The refusal of the US bourgeoisie to discuss arms limitation talks, despite Soviet concessions on the siting of offensive missiles in NATO countries in 1958, led to the USSR seeking a counter-weight. Actions such as the walk-out of the 1960 summit by Khrushchev signalled not an abandonment of "peaceful coexistence", but a search for a greater bargaining power. The Cuban revolution was just such a political counter-weight. The arms programme of Kennedy on assuming office in 1960 made this even more imperative. Hence, whilst the Kremlin oligarchy did not plan, or incite Castro to, the creation of a degenerate workers' state in Cuba (any more than they did in Yugoslavia, China or Vietnam), they economically and militarily acquiesced, for their own state interests.

In many instances it can be seen that it was the Castroites themselves who pushed ahead faster than either the USSR or their agents in Cuba liked. The nationalisations of August 1960 were coolly received by the PSP. Escalante declared at the 8th Congress of the PSP that the revolution should try to keep the national bourgeoisie "within the revolutionary camp". Blas

Roca goes on record as saying "some nationalisations could possibly have been avoided", and that "private enterprise which is not imperialistic...is still necessary"<sup>12</sup>. While the PSP was trying to maintain its alliance with "peace-loving" sections of capital, Guevara was declaring at the first Congress of Latin American Youth: "If I were asked whether our revolution is communist, I would define it as Marxist. Our revolution has discovered by its own methods the paths that Marx pointed out"<sup>13</sup>.

The considerable mass base of the Castro regime, the treachery of the Kremlin leaders over the Cuban missiles crisis in October 1962 (the decision to remove the missiles and the offer of United Nations observers in Cuba - both made without the consultation or participation of the Cubans), together with the limited economic aid, predisposed Castro, Guevara and co to a relatively independent foreign policy, especially in the years 1966 - 1968. In this period Castro advocated and Guevara practised a guerrilla strategy aimed at producing regimes similar to Castro's. The policy led to sharp clashes with the Latin American Stalinists, and ended in complete fiasco.

By 1971/1972, this policy was completely abandoned in favour of support for an orthodox popular front in Chile, and a statement of the unique "national roads" to be followed in Latin America. From 1972, with Cuba's entry into Comecon, Cuba came to provide in return for USSR economic aid, an interventionist strike force in Africa. In Angola 1975/76, the Cubans aided the MPLA against South Africa, but also stiffened the MPLA leaders' crack-down on the left nationalists and on working class action. In Ethiopia, in 1978, Cuban troops assisted the nationally oppressive Dergue to impose its domination over Eritrea.

In short, the Stalinism that Castro tried to disguise with populism became more and more overt. His recent support for the crackdown on Solidarnosc is entirely consistent with his political trajectory since the early 1960s.

#### Footnotes

1. Quoted in A.M.Ritter, *Economic Development of Revolutionary Cuba*, (New York 1974) p.66
2. Quoted in H.Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, (New York 1971) p.981
3. L.Huberman and P.M.Sweezy, *Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution*, (New York 1960) p.78
4. T.Draper, *Castroism: Theory and Practice*, (New York 1966) p.37 and H.Thomas, *op. cit.* p.1219
5. H.Thomas, *op. cit.* p.1199
6. *op. cit.* p.1220

7. L.Trotsky, *Transitional Programme for Socialist Revolution*, (New York 1973) p.136
8. E.Gonzalez, *Cuba Under Castro*, (Boston 1974) p.102
9. *Hispanic American Reports*, (June 1962) Vol. XV, No.9
10. Quoted in P.Binns and M.Gonzalez, "Cuba, Castro and Socialism" in, *International Socialism* (London Spring 1980) No. 8, p.18
11. Trotsky, *op. cit.* p.136
12. Thomas, *op. cit.* p.1212
13. *ibid.* p.1212

# The Permanent Revolution aborted

Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Cuba have all been cited by the USFI as living examples of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution. Here we have a series of revolutions in backward, overwhelmingly rural countries, all resulting in the establishment of workers' states. For the USFI, at various times, Tito, Mao, Ho and Castro all became (Castro still is) agents of the Permanent Revolution. To be sure they were *all* to a greater or lesser extent unconscious of this noble role, but the strength of the objective process, of the unfolding world revolution, compensated for this subjective deficiency. Hansen gives one of the clearest expositions of this version of Permanent Revolution: "The question of the absence of direct proletarian leadership in the 1958-9 Cuba Revolution offers a complication, it is true, but on the main question - the tendency of a bourgeois democratic revolution in a backward country to go beyond its bourgeois-democratic limits - Cuba offers once again the most striking confirmation of Trotsky's famous theory. That the Cuban revolutionaries were unaware they were confirming something seemingly so abstract and remote makes it all the more impressive."

This interpretation is one-sided and therefore false. It is true that the objective factors of underdeveloped countries in the imperialist epoch create the essential objective conditions for the permanence of a revolution. It is not true that these objective factors, propelled in a revolutionary direction by their intrinsic features, can achieve a revolutionary communist outcome. Indeed one is forced to ask why the majority of anti-imperialist revolutions have *not* led to the establishment of workers' states if the objective process is so all-powerful. The truth is that in all imperialised countries that have become workers' states, the subjective factor, i.e. the working class's political leadership, has been decisive. In Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Kampuchea *Stalinism* both in terms of the leadership of these struggles and the intervention of the pre-existing degenerate workers' states, has played a decisive role in establishing the new workers' states. Without Stalinism at the helm of government in such countries, the creation of a degenerate workers' state would be impossible. In Cuba the non-Stalinist origin of the Castroites was overcome in the course of 1961 by the rallying to Stalinism of Castro and the assimilation and transformation of his own petit-bourgeois nationalist movement into a Stalinist party. In all of those countries where the Stalinists did not control the government - Algeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Iran etc., - far from growing over into socialism, objective factors have pushed the rulers of such countries back into the arms of imperialism to one degree or another. Without the conjuncture of world and local Stalinism the option of the *conscious* creation of a degenerate workers' state does not exist. This was the stubborn fact that pushed Castro in a Stalinist direction.

However, while the creation of degenerate workers' states in imperialised countries *confirms* the tenets of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution, it simultaneously aborts the programmatic fulfilment of this theory. The goal of Permanent Revolution is *not* the creation of degenerate workers' states that *block* the road to socialism, but the creation of healthy workers' states as links in the chain of world revolution paving the way to international socialism. Thus Castro and Co. are *not* unconscious agents of Permanent Revolution - they are its *conscious* enemies. The strength of the objective process can do little to alter this because the fulfilment of Permanent Revolution

rests in the final analysis on the subjective factor, on consciousness, on the revolutionary party and a self-organised, self-conscious working class. This much is clear from all of Trotsky's key writings on the Permanent Revolution.

## TROTSKY'S THEORY

Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution is not an abstract historical schema, not an objective process of "History". It is a coherent strategy for the seizure of power by the proletariat based on a scientific appraisal of the laws of motion and contradictions of capitalism. It is rooted in the theory of uneven and combined development. Out of the *unevenness* of the growth of capitalism in the world and the consequent existence of advanced and backward countries arises the phenomenon of *combined* development. The backward country does not simply follow the stages of development pioneered by the advanced, but is compelled to "leap over" stages of gradual evolutionary change. It does not thereby abolish its backwardness but combines it in a new formation. Thus Tsarist Russia combined bureaucratic absolutism and semi-feudal agrarian relations with a small but concentrated modern proletariat. Concentrated in huge modern factories in certain strictly delineated areas, the Russian workers pioneered at the level of organization and tactics all the key aspects of the modern class struggle. They created the soviet; they developed the political mass strike. They gave their support to the most advanced Marxist party of the Second International, the Bolsheviks. Bolshevism learned all the lessons of the "advanced" West, of German Marxism and applied it critically and creatively to Russia and hence developed Marxism on the question of the relationship between the bourgeois revolution and democratic tasks and the proletarian revolution and socialist measures.

Lenin disagreed with Trotsky's theory before 1917, holding that the proletariat would have to *share* its dictatorship with the peasantry and consequently limit its programme initially to the most far reaching revolutionary democratic but not socialist measures. However life settled the dispute in Trotsky's favour. Lenin's "April Theses" and indeed all his major programmatic and tactical writings, ("The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It", "Can the Bolsheviks retain State Power" etc) express the clear recognition that the task facing the proletariat and its party was to seize state power. Whilst it had to limit itself in its *agrarian* programme to the "capitalist" programme of division of the large estates to the peasants, it was equally necessary to use the proletarian dictatorship to take measures transitional to socialism. Trotsky had warned in 1907 that "while the anti-revolutionary aspects of Menshevism have already become fully apparent, those of Bolshevism are likely to become a serious threat only in the event of victory."

Trotsky's words proved prophetic - not with regard to Lenin but certainly with regard to his "Old Bolshevik" disciples Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, at various points in 1917 and after 1923. Since Lenin fully accepted tactically the seizure of full power by the proletariat, an alliance with the peasantry socialist measures and reliance on and support for the international spread of the revolution no further disputes existed between him and Trotsky on this question. Indeed it seemed entirely a question of party history until the troika -

Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev - started a campaign against "Trotskyism" based on unearthing all the disagreements between Lenin and Trotsky between 1903 and 1917. This unprincipled factional onslaught, whose real social and political content was the defence of bureaucracy, of necessity fixed on the theory which most clearly expressed the socialist and international goals of the Russian Revolution. The most consistent expression of this attack was Stalin and Bukharin's theory of "socialism in one country". No resurrection of Lenin's "democratic dictatorship" slogan was possible - though Zinoviev tried to do so first against Trotsky's theory then against Stalin's. In fact, these two completely counterposed theories had developed and transcended Lenin's theory. Trotsky's "permanent revolution" expressed everything positive and revolutionary in Lenin's theory, Stalin's everything potentially retrograde. Indeed it so developed the retrograde elements that it represented a complete Menshevik negation of Lenin's theory.

The conflict within the International, the social dynamics and goals of the Chinese Revolution, obliged Trotsky to re-assess the importance of his own theory. Prior to this he had regarded it as a historical question specific to Russia. His bloc with Zinoviev in 1926-7 both obliged and persuaded Trotsky to keep open or algebraic the question of proletarian supremacy or of the duality of power between workers and peasants in a revolutionary government in China. The Chinese Revolution and Counter-Revolution convinced Trotsky of the general validity of the theory of Permanent Revolution in the Imperialist epoch. Stalin and Bukharin's stages theory led to murderous defeat for the Chinese proletariat at the hands of Chiang Kai Shek. In his work "Permanent Revolution" (1928) he summed up his theory thus; "It is a question of the character, the inner connections and methods of the international revolution in general."<sup>3</sup> With regard to colonial and semi-colonial countries, backward in terms of capitalist development, it meant that "the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses."<sup>4</sup> The vital importance of the peasantry arises not only from the agrarian but also from the national questions and necessitates an "irreconcilable struggle against the influence of the national-liberal bourgeoisie."<sup>5</sup> The peasant-worker alliance can only be led by the proletariat organised in the communist party and only the dictatorship of the proletariat can solve all the tasks of the democratic revolution. The peasantry has a great revolutionary role to play but not an independent one - "the peasant follows either the worker or the bourgeois."<sup>6</sup>

There is no intermediate stage between bourgeois regimes like those of Kerensky or the Kuomintang and the proletarian dictatorship. The former are counter-revolutionary bourgeois regimes disguised in "democratic" or anti-imperialist colours.

In a backward country the proletarian revolution will triumph because of the need to resolve the national-revolutionary and democratic tasks but their fulfilment will be accompanied by an assault on private property: "The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent revolution*."<sup>7</sup>

Conquest of power does not complete the revolution but opens it - heralding a series of civil wars and revolutionary wars.

The socialist revolution cannot be completed within national limits. It "begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena and is completed on the world arena."<sup>8</sup>

This is what Trotsky calls the "newer and broader" meaning of permanent revolution - ie its character as a world revolution. Whilst backward countries may arrive at the dictatorship of the proletariat sooner than advanced ones, "they will come later than the latter to socialism."<sup>9</sup>

To say that this whole process is grounded in the law of uneven and combined development is *not* to say that this law operates and wins through independently of the actions of the leaderships of the various classes. A *conscious* revolutionary programme is needed to utilise the consequences and potential of the objective laws. Against those, such as the USFI, who would disagree with this and claim that the "laws of history" can successfully overcome subjective difficulties, we would repeat Trotsky's criticism of the Chinese CP in 1928 who under the leadership of the Stalinist agent Lominadze, endeavoured to offload the responsibility of leadership onto "History":

"Now, Lominadze has made of the possibility of a permanent revolution (on the condition that the communist policy be correct) a scholastic formula guaranteeing at one blow and for all time a revolutionary situation "for many years". The permanent character of the revolution thus becomes a law placing itself above history, independent of the policy of the leadership and of the material development of revolutionary events."<sup>10</sup>

Hansen and the USFI seek to get round this problem by suggesting that the most conscious act in history - the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a bridge to the construction of communism - can be carried out by unconscious revolutionary communists. In saying this they in fact grant to Stalinism - the force that these unconscious agents invariably belong to or end up with - the capacity to carry out the programme of Permanent Revolution. This is a betrayal of revolutionary communism of the first magnitude.

As a political tendency Stalinism is absolutely opposed to the programme of Permanent Revolution. Instead, it deliberately subordinates the working class as a political force to the parties of the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie, and in so doing espouses the petit-bourgeois utopia of a national-democratic stage in the anti-imperialist struggle. Stalinism thus seeks to divert the proletariat's objective propulsion towards the leadership of the revolution and does so either through enforcing political alliances with reactionary classes, or physical liquidation of revolutionary leadership within the working class, or a combination of both.

This programme for the anti-imperialist struggle is bloodily self-defeating. The bitter fruit of the subordination of the interests of the workers and peasants to "progressive" bourgeois politicians, petty bourgeois nationalist demagogues or military bonapartes has been seen in China (1925 - 7), Spain (1936), in Egypt and Iraq (1950s and 60s), in Indonesia (1966), in Chile (1973) and in Iran in the 1980s.

But even should the Stalinists, exceptionally, outdistance their bourgeois "allies" and seize political power, as they did in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Cuba, then their political expropriation of the working class creates a counter-revolutionary obstacle blocking the road of permanent revolution.

Both of these courses of action form part of the ever pragmatic and eclectic programme of Stalinism, and both of them are diametrically opposed to the programme of Permanent Revolution. They utilise and abuse the objective basis of permanent revolution to abort its fulfilment and defend their own bureaucratic interests.

The revolutionary variant of the opportunities presented by the law of uneven and combined development within imperialism retains all its validity and urgency. The experience of the the creation and history of the degenerate workers' states have proven that the cost of aborted permanent revolution is not only a blocked path to socialism, but a savage defeat for the democratic tasks of the revolution. The vandalism inherent in the forced collectivisation of the peasantry, the abolition of all freedom for progressive movements, the cultivation of national and ethnic oppression and the strengthening of the reactionary elements in the old bourgeois culture (eg. family life and religion) testify to this fact.

## Footnotes

1. J. Hansen, *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*, (New York 1978) p.291
2. L.Trotsky, 1905, (Harmondsworth 1973) p.332
3. L.Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, (New York 1966) p.152
4. *ibid.*, p.152
5. *ibid.*, p.153

6. *ibid.*, p.153
7. *ibid.*, p.154
8. *ibid.*, p.156
9. *ibid.*, p.155
10. L.Trotsky, *On China*, (New York 1976) p.349