



**THE CLASS
NATURE OF
THE WORKERS
STATES**

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

This pamphlet is the text of a speech given by Pierre Frank in August 1967 at a weekend school organised by the International Marxist Group, the British Section of the Fourth International.

Pierre Frank is a leading member of the Fourth International and of the French Section, the Ligue Communiste. At one time a secretary to Leon Trotsky, he is well qualified to deal with the subject of this pamphlet, a matter which closely concerned Trotsky himself.

The pamphlet mainly takes up the question of the early development of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, and lays a basis for understanding present-day developments. It will be especially valuable as an introduction to the subject and some suggestions for further reading are given below.

December 1969.

Suggested Further Reading;

- * "The Inconsistencies of State Capitalism"
By Ernest Mandel. 4/- plus 6d post.
- * "The Class Nature of the Soviet Union" by Trotsky 4/-plus post
includes an article on Bonapartism and the Workers States
- * "The Revolution Betrayed" 25/ plus post. a Trotsky Classic.

These and a wide range of other marxist literature are available from Pioneer Books 8, Toynbee St, London, E.1. (01-247 9845).

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PIERRE FRANK

This year we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution. It was a gigantic event that has changed the world and which gave great impetus to revolutionary movements all over the world. Today, nobody, neither friend nor foe, denies the importance of the October Revolution. However, if we compare what actually happened in those fifty years to what the Marxists were thinking at that time, to the thinking of the most audacious Marxists of that period, the men who led the revolution, Lenin, Trotsky and the others, we see that the development of the Russian Revolution, of the Soviet Union, during those fifty years has shown itself to be more complex and more perturbing than one could ever imagine, even for those with the strongest capacity for imagination.

The Russian Revolution, for the men who led it to victory, was to be the starting point of the socialist revolution in Europe, the most economically developed continent in the world. The Russian Revolution was not supposed to bring into existence a socialist society - not immediately - but to march towards it and become a more egalitarian and much freer society than capitalism. The Russian revolution was launched during the first World War and at that time it appeared as a beacon of internationalism as opposed to the European nationalisms that were at war, one against the other.

And what do we have fifty years later? There is no socialist revolution for the time being in Western Europe, where capitalism seems to be more stabilized than it has been for many years. The revolution has developed, not towards the West, but towards the East, towards the underdeveloped countries. On the question of internationalism, we have today no real revolutionary international as a mass movement. There is a numerically small organization like our own, a cadre organization, but the mass movement is deprived, as never before for a hundred years, of an International within the mass movement; nationalism is exacerbated everywhere, including those states where capitalism has been overthrown.

The society in the Soviet Union and the other workers' states, instead of being more egalitarian, a much freer society for the masses, is headed by a regime full of contradictions, of big differences between various social layers and where the masses for a long time have been deprived of the most elementary freedoms.

This big contradiction between the revolutionary importance of the October Revolution for mankind, and the various aspects of Soviet life and the internal life of the Communist parties during this period, this contradiction results from the phenomenon called Stalinism which has been the most disturbing element in the development of the workers' movement and also in the understanding of socialism, of communism, by many militants. It has been perturbing as well during the ascent of Stalinism, from the 'twenties to the middle 'forties, and it is perturbing now in this time of decomposition which began towards the end of the 'forties and the beginning of the 'fifties. I will deal with this phenomenon of Stalinism and try to bring about an understanding of what it is.

First we will start with a few words about the theories which have been posed against the Trotskyist theories of the Soviet Union and our theory of Stalinism. You know that we have said that we have been confronted with bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian revolution, with the abnormal growth of bureaucracy - a layer and not a class - in the Soviet Union, a bureaucracy which has taken complete control of Soviet society and the Communist parties. We have stated that this was an exceptional phenomenon, the explanation of which flows from a combination of very definite conditions. We have said that this phenomenon did not change the nature of the Soviet Union as a workers' state. It has only created very difficult and very complicated problems, which we will talk about later on. Against this point of view, there are two essential conceptions: one, that the Soviet Union was not a workers' state, but a state dominated by "state capitalism"; and the other, which holds that in the Soviet Union we have neither a workers' state nor a capitalist state, but a new form, a new exploiting society - a new social regime unforeseen by Marxists up until now.

The "state capitalist" conception is not a new one. As a matter of fact, it is the old, post-1917, Menshevik idea. The Mensheviks considered that it was impossible to start building socialism in Russia, that Russia, as a backward state, necessarily had to follow the path followed by the most economically advanced states, i.e., it had first to become a bourgeois state. That is, it had first to develop a bourgeois society. According to them, it was only after the full expansion of bourgeois property relations that socialism could be envisaged in Russia. Though there was the revolution from February to October which overthrew the Czarist regime - in their view, and then the very poor, very weak bourgeois democracy - they said that the Bolsheviks after their October victory were only succeeding in

leading a capitalist society where all the property was nationalised; and then they began to say that the bureaucracy was now the "collective capitalist". That is the theory of the Mensheviks. As the Social Democrats all over the world are not very keen on theory, of course, they do not elaborate that theory very often. But for the few of them who started to do that in 1917 and 1918, Kautsky, Hilferding and some of them from time to time, that was their theory. This theory is also supported by certain sects, old communist sects, like the Bourdigists in Italy who also believe that the Soviet Union is a capitalist state and that the Bolsheviks could do nothing other than create a capitalist society and become the rulers of that society. I do not enter into the details of this theory here; they are not very interesting.

For those who thought that it was not a capitalist society, but a new unknown exploiting society, you will find a large variety of theories, from Rizzi and Burnham, who presented theirs just before or at the beginning of the second world war, to the Yugoslav, Djilas, who some years ago wrote a book on "The New Class". It is not this or that detail in this theory which is important. The theory is based upon the following reasoning: we have a new society which, obviously, is not a capitalist society but yet there is not any socialism in it. It is a society where all property is nationalised. As the workers, as well as the capitalists, have been unable to bring the society out of a major crisis, a new class has arisen to do the job. It has started to exploit this society; this new class is the bureaucracy. The trouble for those people who speak of "state capitalism", is that there is no genuine capitalist in the world who will recognize, in the Soviet Union and other similar states, a capitalist society. The development of society in the Soviet Union and other such states, does not follow the laws of capitalist development. Their economic growth is altogether different from capitalist society with its crises, booms, depressions, etc. The new class theory is complete revisionism. Its supporters do not deny that the relationships of property are collective as they would be in a socialist society. They come then to the conclusion that you may have on the same relationships of property two totally differing societies, one socialist (if the working class rule) and another bureaucratic. It is in contradiction with Marx's views, as expressed in his introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, where he maintained that according to the definite mode of production, there arises a definite kind of society. If you follow such a "new class" reasoning, you will enter into very big contradictions with historical materialism.

In any case, what we have seen since "de-Stalinisation" is not the theoretical refutation, but the practical refutation, because the development of the productive forces in the Soviet Union and outside the Soviet Union did not bring about an expansion, a development of the bureaucracy and of Stalinism, but has brought about the greatest crises of Stalinism. In other words, this so-called "new ruling class" has shown itself as being, not linked with the development, but on the contrary, in contradiction to the almost immediate development of the productive forces in society itself. In the mass of literature on the Soviet Union, Trotsky was the only one to foresee, in The Revolution Betrayed, that the progress of the productive forces would enter into contradiction with bureaucratic rule.

I have mentioned briefly these two groups of ideas in order that we should delineate more clearly and distinctly our own conception of Stalinism. But first of all I want to say a few words, not on Stalinism, but on bureaucracy generally. If Stalinism has been something new, surprising, perturbing, it is not a phenomenon which was altogether novel. Something like it existed already in the workers' movement and it has taken on a huge development and specific features unknown until now.

Bureaucracy in the workers' movement was known almost, I would say, since the workers' movement became a mass movement. The vanguard of the workers' movement was very well aware of the reactionary, and at specific times, counter-revolutionary, role of the bureaucracy in the workers' movement. Especially the Bolsheviks, and the small revolutionary vanguard during the first world war, denounced the role of bureaucracy - which contributed to the collapse - the betrayal of August 2nd, 1917 - in the workers' movement.

Bureaucracy is, in a given society or movement or organisation, the product of a differentiation, in which some people become so-called "specialists" in the leadership of workers' organisations. The workers' movement at the beginning was a small movement with people who were, of course, unequal in capacity. Nevertheless, those organisations were democratic. There was no other influence of one man upon another, than his capacity to present his views, to develop his positions, and to have a superior point of view to anyone else. But as the workers' movement grew, as the working-class organisations became larger and larger, there developed a tendency for the men who were leading it, who were elected sometimes for a year, or a year more, etc., to become more and more permanently the leaders of these organisations. Then these people became

"specialists" in the leadership of these organisations. The aims of the leaders of the organisations became, thereupon, not only the aims for which the organisations were created - that is, the struggle of the workers to overthrow capitalism or to defend their day-to-day interests - but the organisation tended to become, for these specialists, an aim in itself. And the facts have shown, that at certain times, and especially at decisive moments, the interests of these "specialists", their own aims, could come into opposition to the aims for which these organisations were originally created. We are not anarchists. We believe there is a necessity for organisations in the workers' movement. The working class cannot fight for its liberation by only temporary organisations. It has to be organised in a permanent way and we understand that the functioning of the organisation requires the presence of full-timers (1). We do not reject the necessity to have organisations and full-timers as do some people because of the bureaucratic degeneration of the organisations. We try to understand why bureaucratisation occurs. The main reason for this situation does not rely on some inherent viciousness in men or in some kind of manoeuvre of this one or other. The fact is that there is a time lag between the political development of the working class and its cultural development. The masses are brought by the conditions of capitalist exploitation into conflict with capitalism. They enter into struggles, sometimes very big struggles, often before even their political consciousness is completely developed. They come into struggle against capitalist society and they can even, in certain conditions, overthrow capitalism, seize power, before, long before, they are able to manage the society which they have just taken into their hands. Such a situation occurs not only after the seizure of power, but before the seizure of power. I do not mean by saying that that the masses have no capacity to rule, or cannot understand how to rule their own organisations. I do not mean that the working class, the masses in general, are intellectually low. That is not true. They can stand on their own in comparison to many; I would say almost all the people who are on the boards of capitalist firms. But the fact is that the conditions of the working class in capitalist society are such that workers give the best of their abilities to capitalism and are therefore exhausted by their work for the capitalists and do not have the possibility nor the material means to control even their own organisations. When it comes to the society after capitalism has been overthrown, with the problems of managing the economy, the army, the universities and

(1) There are full-timers and full-timers, professional revolutionists and bureaucrats.

so on and so forth, this lag between the political ability of the masses and their cultural capacity is something which - for a certain period - must unavoidably leave its influence, which will be felt also in the countries where the working classes are more developed culturally. But as the revolution has followed the path through under-developed countries, where illiteracy is overwhelming, we feel all the more this lag between the political consciousness of the masses, who understand the necessity to overthrow capitalism all over the world, and their present capacity to manage the new society.

This question of bureaucracy was not unknown before 1917 by the main Marxist theoreticians. Marx, using the example of the Paris Commune, made some remarks about it, and Lenin, in State and Revolution, takes up the question. Against the danger of bureaucracy is formulated a programme which was taken from the Paris Commune experience. The programme of struggle against bureaucracy is rather a simple programme and it is a very strong one. It raised the first question in this programme, which is that no specialist can have wages or a salary superior to those of a qualified worker. That means there is a ceiling on wages. The second thing is that all specialists have to be elected by universal franchise, and thirdly, that all specialists, all civil servants, all bureaucrats, can be revoked, kicked out, at any time by those who elected them. This programme is a very good one and it is still valid, but life has shown that its application is very difficult, more difficult than Lenin and others thought it to be.

I think that today everyone/^{better} understands the bureaucratic phenomenon than it was understood in the 'twenties. It is now known by many people that the phenomenon of bureaucracy plays a very important role in many of the underdeveloped countries. We have seen that leaderships, like the Cuban or the Chinese, are denouncing bureaucracy and waging a struggle against it. It is another question whether they are waging the struggle correctly and whether they obtain results. But the fact is that today this phenomenon of bureaucracy is well known, is better understood and the dangers are felt more clearly than was the case forty years ago.

In the Soviet Union in the 1920s this phenomenon had taken unexpected forms which have been very perturbing, above all for the leaders of the revolution. Lenin, in the last year of his political life, 1922, expressed in many places, in many documents, his anxiety. He felt that the working class in the Soviet Union during the civil war had suffered more than any working class has ever suffered all over the world. I repeat almost exactly the words he used. He says: What is happening in the Soviet Union? We have, he says, in Moscow,

four thousand communists, the best in the world; the most devoted people, and then what is happening, who rules this country? Who rules whom? He makes the comparison with times in ancient history where often the victors, who had won by sheer force, by arms, were then vanquished by the conquered who possessed a superior cultural level. He also at that period, wrote very strong things against the Russian policemen who wore a Soviet uniform and who imposed the rule of the State against the people who were not Russian.

Eventually, in his last document, which is known as the Testament of Lenin, he sees the possibility of a split in the party and he comes to proposals which are only, I would say, of a political nature. He tries to have a greater control by the rank and file of the leading bodies of the party. Trotsky also at that time saw the danger of the growing bureaucracy. In his last talk with Lenin he insisted upon the fact, and Lenin agreed, that bureaucracy had not only affected the state, but also the party, even the leadership.

When, in October 1923, Trotsky initiated the open struggle against bureaucracy in a small pamphlet entitled The New Course his proposals were wider than those presented by Lenin in his Testament. He proposed, of course, also the introduction of greater democracy, the elections at various party levels of the secretaries, of those who had the leading functions. But he also introduces some proposals of an economic nature, because he understood that the struggle against bureaucracy needed a society on a higher economic and cultural level, and he brought up for the first time the proposals of planification and of industrialisation.

In the Soviet Union in the 'twenties the objective conditions (i.e. the backwardness of the state, the low cultural level) had favoured the growth of bureaucracy, just as we see it now in many under-developed countries, either in Asia, Africa or Latin America. But at that time other factors played a more important role, and I want to stress them because this combination of factors has given Stalinism its specific features and made of it a unique phenomenon.

First of all, though I said that Lenin and Trotsky were aware of this danger of bureaucracy, we cannot say the same of the other men in the leadership. It became all the more clear after the absence and death of Lenin. The people who held the leadership of the party after the death of Lenin (Trotsky was actually already in a minority on the Political Bureau) did not understand what this phenomenon was. The clearest examples are given in the struggles that occurred between 1923 and 1929. I suppose that the comrades have read the second

volume of Trotsky's biography by Deutscher, where these developments are fully described. One of the most pathetic things which comes out of it is that the two most prominent men who, one after the other, were at the top, or who formally thought they were the real leaders, Zinoviev first, with his ultra-left course, and Bukharin with his rightist course, thought not only that they were leading, but that they were using the man, Stalin, who was actually becoming the real leader. Zinoviev, as well as Bukharin, thought that they had in Stalin a tool who could be useful to fight for their positions, but out of whom they could make what they wanted. As a matter of fact, it has been shown in this period that the real emerging leader was almost unknown. It was Stalin, not because he had special political capacities - he had capacities of course - but because he had no perspective, because he was the most empirical of the people inside the Political Bureau, and as such became the true representative of the party apparatus, and not only of this apparatus. During this period there took place the fusing of the party with the state. The party had conquered the state in 1917, and then in this period the state as a matter of fact conquered the party. The bureaucracy of the state and the party bureaucracy became one unit. In this bureaucracy there was at the same time the remnants of the old Czarist bureaucracy and also many individuals who came out of the revolutionary struggle but functioned at a very primitive political level. They were not the men who had carried on the struggle against Czarism, against capitalism for years and years: they were men who had come to political life and been very devoted in the civil war, cadres of the Red Army and so on, and who had transferred, after the civil war, the same rough ways and means that they had used in the army to win the war into industry and the administration.

So it happened in the Soviet Union that the state and party became one. The bureaucracy became at the same time the bureaucracy of the state and of the party. During this period had entered into the party not only people who went there to fight for communism, but also many people who went there because it happened to be ruling in the Soviet Union.

Then another factor played perhaps the most important role in the development of Stalinism's success in the Soviet Union, giving it its special features. As I have already said, Lenin noticed that there was a great weakening of the working class of the Soviet Union. The working class of the Soviet Union at that period, in the 'twenties, after the end of the civil war, went through a period of a big reduction in its political activity. People were looking for food, for lodgings, for the elementary necessities of life, and had lost political interest. This became accentuated because of a big disappointment over the prospect for the world revolution; this is probably, if not certainly, the factor which played the biggest role in the

development of Stalinism. The Soviet working class and the Soviet communists had made tremendous efforts and sacrifices for years and years with the idea that they were fighting at the vanguard of the world revolution. They were expecting, if not from day to day, then at least from month to month, the launching of the revolution somewhere in Europe. There had already been the revolution in Germany in 1918, in 1919 in Bavaria and Hungary. There were big struggles all over Europe. In 1921 - again in Germany - and then in the second half of 1923 there was a period of great hope. Then the revolution failed and with that there began a loss of confidence in the revolutionary perspective. Scepticism, demoralisation, entered into the consciousness of the masses in general in the Soviet Union, and also amongst communists, not only in the rank and file, but in the cadres, the very important cadres, even top leaders, of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. I have often given an example because it impressed me very much at the time, and I think it is not only impressive but it explains better than many theories and lectures a lot of things. In 1926-27 in France there was no organised left opposition, but there were many opponents inside the Communist Party who were trying to understand and to follow what happened in the Soviet Union. Some were in direct contact with Piatakov, who was at that time the director of the Soviet trade mission in France. We were informed of his personal views. Who was Piatakov? In his Testament, Lenin mentions on the one hand Trotsky and Stalin as the two most able men of the central committee, and then he mentions amongst the two most able men of the younger generation, Bukharin and Piatakov. Piatakov was at that time one of the leaders of the left opposition, but in fact he was completely demoralised and carried the struggle for the Left Opposition up to the fifteenth congress more by a kind of inertia than from conviction. He said openly to French C.P. members, "We were learning at that time that it is useless to think of a revolution in Europe for twenty or thirty years, and the only thing to do is to build the economy of the Soviet Union". Of course when he capitulated and went back to Moscow, he became the builder of the heavy industry in the Soviet Union. I give this example because it shows that what played the biggest role in the Soviet Union is the fact that after years of sacrifices, many communists lost their perspective of world revolution for a whole generation or more. It led to such demoralisation, such scepticism in the Soviet Union, that the bureaucracy which had grown in this society, which had taken on more and more scope because it is a huge country and where everything was nationalised there were jobs for all kinds of bureaucrats. This layer in society took the upper hand, where the working class was completely lost and demoralised by its sacrifices and also by the fact that the vanguard in its overwhelming majority had lost faith in the future and had then accepted and capitulated before bureaucracy. I think that this is the most

important factor which explains the development and features of Stalinism.

One word more; we should not forget this explanation of Stalinism. Bureaucracy is a social layer. We should not consider it, as many do, as a method of rule only. A long time ago - I do not know if it has been published again recently in English - a document was written by Rakovsky. It is certainly the most brilliant thing written on bureaucracy. Trotsky mentions it in the Revolution Betrayed as the best thing written on the question. It is a document of about twenty pages, in which Rakovsky starts with a comparison to the French Revolution. Leaving aside this part, which may mean a lot to those who know the French Revolution fairly well, he shows that by seizing power, the militants of the working class movement were transferred from the functions of journalists working clandestinely, professional revolutionists who were acting clandestinely, leaders of trade unions in difficult conditions, people who went to jail and so on and so forth - all those people, whatever their origins and tasks, workers, journalists, intellectuals, were transferred to a different function. They became leaders of armies, leaders of regiments, leaders of universities, leaders of big plants. These functional differences resulting from these shifts brought with time social differentiation in their development. If this document is not known it should be printed again.

After the twenties bureaucracy in the Soviet Union acquired monstrous proportions and from the bureaucratic deformations which existed already at the time of Lenin and Trotsky, it came to bureaucratic degeneration under the leadership of Stalin. The party ceased to be the party of the Russian working class and became the political tool of the Soviet bureaucracy. The inequalities became extraordinary. I mentioned that in the programme of Marx and Lenin against bureaucracy there was a limitation on the wages of civil servants. During the period of Lenin and Trotsky there was a limit on the wages of communists: a communist could not earn above a certain amount. The Soviet Union was compelled to pay more to engineers and technicians and so on, because they were scarce; but if these highly qualified persons were members of the C.P. in the Soviet Union they could not earn as much as those who were not members of the C.P. But at the end of the 'twenties or at the beginning of the 'thirties, this rule was annulled, and since then we have seen the development of gross inequalities in Soviet society. There were Soviet millionaires whilst the conditions of the masses in the towns and the country became worse and worse. There was concurrently a repression. Everybody knows the purges of the Moscow trials. The fact is that Stalin killed more communists in the Soviet Union than all the capitalists in the whole world, including

Hitler, killed during the same period. There has been a suppression of all the elements of workers' democracy. At the same time another phenomenon appeared outside the Soviet Union: the Russian Revolution had brought forward politically a part of the international working class movement, which meant that a part of that movement separated itself from the traditional reformist movement and took communist positions. The Communist International was created, and communist parties were created. Stalinism not only took the upper hand in Soviet society but also in the communist movement created on the appeal of the October Revolution.

So the phenomenon, which is certainly one of the most totalitarian we have seen, took on very monstrous proportions. For years and years the workers' movement retreated whilst reaction rose, and in this retreat the bureaucracy became more and more powerful, not only in Soviet society, but in the communist movement all over the world.

Now we will deal with some of the features of the bureaucracy. One of the main features of the bureaucracy is that it is a conservative layer within Soviet society, inside the Soviet Union. This ruling layer had a dual role. On the one hand, as a ruling layer, they were forced to defend the conquests of Soviet society, that is, the collective property and planning. In this sense, they were forced to defend something, which by its nature, was a very important revolutionary factor to the capitalist world. For years and years anyone in the world, any movement in the world which was coming up against capitalism necessarily looked to the Soviet Union as the only place where they had an example, some model, some hope. On the other hand this conservative layer was afraid of revolution. It had no confidence in the world's working class movement. Therefore it began to defend the concept of building their "socialism" in one country, in the Soviet Union, and from this moment onwards they tried to come to an agreement with capitalism on a world scale, to find some status quo. You remain capitalist or what you like outside the Soviet Union, they said, but inside, let us live our own socialism. This is the basic concept which is the essence of the peaceful co-existence policy. The latter was not invented by Khrushchev or by Malenkov. It had been first expressed by Stalin. Of course he did it in the 'twenties, the 'thirties and the 'forties, under objective conditions other than those that prevailed after the second world war. But it was the same conception of the bureaucracy trying to establish the status quo with the capitalists, in a world where, of course, status quo is more than ever an impossible thing. This conception explains why this bureaucracy, which is very empirical and without long term political perspective, has been compelled from time to time to make sharp turns; because it was faced with conditions which it did not expect and which it did not understand.

Another feature of this bureaucracy was that in as much as it destroyed all the democratic elements in Soviet society, it was necessarily compelled to find a solution for the very big contradictions within the society - the contradictions between the various layers, between town and country, between the people who were ruling politically and the rulers of the economy, between the rulers of the economy and the workers, etc. The Soviet Union was a state and a society full of contradictions. As there were no elements of democracy left, and as the bureaucracy arose more and more above society as a whole, it felt the need to produce from within itself an arbiter who could settle all the contradictions in this society. Of course to be the arbiter in such difficult conditions, in such a difficult situation, this man had to have all the qualities and properties of a God. That explains why this society was compelled to create the "cult" of Stalin, just as in the past, in ancient history, people became gods like Caesar, Alexander, and so on.

The bureaucracy, as I have said, came from a necessity in a society where there were big shortages, where the society was still stratified, and especially where the working class, even after having overthrown capitalism, had not the ability to manage the society. The bureaucracy became a kind of necessity in this society, but it should be well understood that the necessity to have a bureaucracy is not a justification for the privileges it took, nor for the fact that it eliminated all the elements of democracy in that society. Some people think Stalinism was unavoidable. We do not think so. Bureaucratic deformations were unavoidable. The victory of Stalinism was not. An explanation is not a justification, and even less the justification for one's capitulation to Stalinism. The bureaucracy, a parasitic layer in this society, played a certain role, but because of certain conditions it became more and more monstrous. The fact that the bureaucracy is a parasitic element in society and not a new class, as the contenders of "bureaucratic collectivism" claim, and that we don't have to deal with a new kind of exploiting society, is revealed in many areas, including the realm of ideology. The bureaucracy takes upon itself the credit for being at the origin of all progress made by Soviet society. This is not true. On the contrary, The bureaucracy, of course, participated in the economic development, but the role of the bureaucracy was rather more negative than positive in this matter, and many things could have been more developed, or acquired at a cheaper price, were it not for the big blunders and crimes of the bureaucracies, especially the forced collectivisation of the countryside. If we pass from the realm of material production to the realm of production in ideas, then it is very clear that bureaucracy has not created a single original concept. The bourgeoisie in the past had its own ideology, the working class has its Marxist theory.

If we look at all the ideas which have been developed by the Communist parties and the Soviet leadership during those forty years, we will find that there is not a single idea of their own. They have only made an amalgam of Marxism transformed into an ideology with bourgeois or petit-bourgeois ideology. In the theoretical production of the Communist parties there is not a single distinct original idea.

We now come to the decomposition of Stalinism. At the end of the second world war, in spite of the first intentions of Stalin, which were to leave unchanged the social nature of Eastern Europe, the mode of production which existed in the Soviet Union expanded to Eastern Europe, in reaction to imperialist policies. Later on, in 1949, despite Stalin's policies, there was the victory of the Chinese revolution. This led to an expansion of the mode of production in the Soviet Union to the east. In these years following the second world war all those people who were precisely opposed to our conceptions of the degenerated workers' state, to our idea of the bureaucracy being a social layer and not a new class in the Soviet society; all these people, the supporters of the theory of state capitalism, of bureaucratic collectivism and so on, were speaking about the "expansion of Stalinism". At that time, in 1945-46, we had big arguments with them. We said that there was no "expansion" of Stalinism, but there was an expansion of the Soviet Union's mode of production. Because this mode of production was the mode of production of workers' states, and because Stalinism was a phenomenon linked to the retreat of the revolution, this expansion of the mode of production would be the starting point for a big crisis in Stalinism. We said that there cannot be an expansion of Stalinism, that Stalinism was a phenomenon linked to the retreat of the revolution; even if it took very peculiar forms, as was the case in most countries of Eastern Europe, the development of the revolution was incompatible with Stalinism and that we would see the beginning of the crisis of Stalinism. There was a big discussion in our movement, because we had, up to the Second World Congress in 1948, tendencies who defended the "state capitalist" and the "bureaucratic collectivist" point of view. Schachtman and others were present at the Second World Congress, and we had a long argument with them.

The matter has been settled since then. We have seen the tremendous crisis of Stalinism, a decomposition of Stalinism, although it has taken many features which are also not very simple. It started in 1948 when there was the break between Yugoslavia and Moscow. Then we had in 1953 the uprising in East Berlin, the uprisings in the concentration camps in the Soviet Union, the beginning of "de-Stalinisation". There was, in 1956, the Twentieth Congress and the big events in Poland and Hungary, and then in 1959 the beginning of the Sino-Soviet

conflict. And now we see, and see almost every day, manifestations of the decomposition of Stalinism.

The Soviet bureaucracy certainly has not disappeared. Neither has its power, nor its regime. They are still there. What we now see is a new relationship of forces between the bureaucracy and the masses in the Soviet Union and the bureaucracies of the other workers' states; and between the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and the leaderships of the world's Communist parties. Compared to that which existed before the second world war, the Soviet bureaucracy has been compelled to try to adjust itself to this new situation, to these new conditions, in order not to put in jeopardy the regime itself. They had to do that and they did it in an especially intense way between 1953 and 1957. It appeared to them at that time as though conditions in the Soviet Union were very near to breaking point - to an explosion - so they rapidly made big changes.

We now see that though in some countries big bureaucratic deformations exist, the role of bureaucracy in society is still very important, we see also some important developments like the "cultural revolution" in China. It is certainly not the political revolution against the bureaucracy, as some sectarians a la Healy pretend, but in it we find expression within Chinese society to rid itself of its bureaucratic features. Neither do we have the repetition of what we saw during the 'twenties and 'thirties. China is a big country, a world power as great as the Soviet Union was then. But nevertheless it is impossible for the Chinese to repeat what the Soviet Union has done. For example, it is impossible for the Chinese bureaucracy to create a monolithic system among world communist parties as the Soviet Union did during the 'twenties all over the communist world in the Comintern. The pro-Chinese groups are small, very divided. And, of course, for small countries like Yugoslavia to the right and Cuba to the left, such a question does not arise. Today, one of the main features of the decomposition of Stalinism, is that the international monolithism has completely broken down. It does not exist at all. But monolithism in a practical way still exists very much on a national scale. I do not mean that the parties nationally are as they were in the past. On an international level, with some exceptions here and there, inside the communist parties there are no differences and tensions which appear to be strong. One exception would be the Italian party. But in most of the parties, even the Italian party, the tendency to maintain the national monolithism remains strong.

We have seen in the Soviet Union in this period a decomposition of Stalinism. It's a certain kind of liberalisation. What do we mean by that? The political power during Stalin's time was not even in the hands of representatives of the bureaucracy in general, but only in very few hands, and Stalin ruled without any control over him. Today, not in a regular way, but from time to time, it seems that the people who are at the top of the Soviet