


IN DEFENSE OF BOLSHEVISM

F O R A N E W L E N I N I S T I N T E R N A T I O N A L



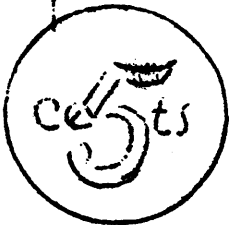
The Question of the WORKERS STATE

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and the bureaucratic distortion MUST BE SMASHED

REPLY TO R. C. V.



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ON THE QUESTION of the WORKERS STATE

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1. THE APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM

THE RISE of the counter-revolutionary Stalinist reaction has succeeded in burying Marxism to such a degree that in the present day it is necessary to revive Marxism as a living force in the proletarian ranks. So many ravages have been wrought on the body of the international working class by the Stalinist bureaucracy that many radical workers are drifting willy-nilly into the confusion that the Soviet Union is no longer a Workers State. This is only natural, for it is indeed difficult to believe, if one does not hold fast to Marxism, that so much damage to the toiling masses could be perpetrated by the rulers of a state which is still proletarian in its property foundation. The idea that the criminal Stalinist clique dominates a workers state is hard to grasp — of this there can be no doubt. The development of such a malignant growth as Stalinism on the body of the workers state is an entirely unforeseen phenomenon. The difficulty involved in grasping the problems created by the Stalinist reaction, however, are by no means insurmountable. Careful reflection is required to see through the black fog spread by Stalinism.

There already exist organizations in the working class which deny that the Soviet Union is a workers state. The Marxist Workers League, the Revolutionary Marxist League, various An-

archist organizations, the Revolutionary Communist Vanguard are some which have expressed this opinion. These ultra-leftist tendencies arrive at their conclusions in various ways. The Marxist Workers League (Mienovites) has a fully worked out position which may be taken as representative of their orientation. The Marxist Workers League arrives at the conclusion that the Soviet Union is no longer a Workers State by means of the following logic: 1) There exists in Russia a bureaucracy which is anti-workingclass in nature; 2) There is no workers democracy in the Soviet Union, i. e., the workers do not control the state and hence the means of production, this control being vested entirely in the hands of the bureaucracy; 3) Therefore, the anti-workingclass bureaucracy has converted itself into a capitalist class and Russia exists under state capitalism. This is summarized in the following statement:

"The Stalinist bureaucracy owns the means of production. But the average bureaucrat, the manager and the director can not lay claim to direct ownership of the machine. In this sense he is propertyless. In the sense that the state functions for him, that his exploiting position is expressed through control of the state, in that sense he is

an owner. Thus we see that the bureaucracy in reaching state capitalism did not have to change the property relations as expressed through the ownership of these by the state, that is, it did not have to change the form, it changed its content. This it accomplished by expropriating the proletariat from political power. In expropriating them politically it also expropriated them economically since the proletarian ownership of the means of production was vested in the state." (The Spark, July 1938, p. 14. Our emphasis.)

In brief, the state owns the means of production, the anti-workingclass bureaucracy unreservedly controls the state, hence the bureaucracy is a capitalist class and Russia is under state capitalism.

In order to make clear the several varieties of confusion that are contained in this position of the ultra-lefts, it is necessary to investigate the history of bureaucratism in the Soviet Republic, Lenin's attitude toward this bureaucratism and Lenin's concept of the nature of the Workers State.

The bourgeois bureaucracy was dispersed by the Bolshevik Revolution. Suffering from a great lack of cultural development, the Russian workers, however, found that they were unable to function themselves in the state apparatus and to restore and manage the industries which had been devastated by the imperialist war. Hence, the ex-tsarist and ex-bourgeois bureaucrats who had the necessary experience and ability had to be called back into the new state and industrial apparatus. Wide-scale bribery in the form of higher wages and better living conditions had to be used by the workers in order to induce these hostile officials to work. The bureaucrats of the former society of the exploiters, while they hated the idea of a proletarian regime, realized that they would have to work in order to eat and finding themselves actually offered favored conditions, agreed to function in the apparatus. Lenin describes the manner in which the tsarist bureaucrats swarmed into the apparatus of the proletarian regime:

"We dispersed these old bureaucratic elements, shook them up and then began to place them in new posts. The tsarist bureaucrats began to enter the Soviet institutions and practice their bureaucratic methods, they began to assume the colouring of Communists and, for greater success in their careers, to procure membership cards of the Russian Communist Party. And so, having been thrown out of the door, they fly in through the window." (V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, English Edition, Vol. III, p. 353.)

These original bureaucrats of the proletarian regime were in fact to a major degree anti-workingclass, opportunistic careerists. Many of them were out-and-out scoundrels who, to escape proletarian justice, posed as Communists and later went over to the Stalinist clique. In November 1922, Lenin gave the following harsh characterization of this bureaucracy:

"We took over the old state apparatus, and this was unfortunate for us. Very often the state apparatus works against us. In 1917, after we captured power, the situation was that the apparatus sabotaged us. This frightened us very much and we pleaded with the state officials: 'Please come back.' They all came back, but this was unfortunate for us. We now have a vast number of state employees, but we lack sufficiently educated forces who could really control them. Actually it often happens that at the top, as it were, where we have state power, the apparatus functions somehow; but down below, where these state officials function, they function in such a way that very often they counteract our measures. At the top, we have, I don't know how many, but at all events, I think, several thousand, at the utmost several tens of thousands, of our own people. Down below, however, there are hundreds of thousands of old officials who came over to us from the tsar and from bourgeois society and who, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, work against us." (V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, Eng. Ed. Vol. X, pg. 330. Our emphasis.)

Thus we see that this initial bureaucracy, vast in proportions, was of such a reactionary nature that very often it acted against the workers by counteracting the measures of the Bolsheviks. The "hundreds of thousands of old officials" were interested primarily in themselves and in injuring and undermining the proletarian regime to the utmost. Lenin's aim was to keep this anti-working class bureaucracy functioning somehow until enough class-conscious workers had been trained to make the hostile bureaucracy unnecessary. The vicious nature of this bureaucracy made Lenin term it in March 1921 an ulcer and a sore:

"The ulcer of bureaucracy undoubtedly exists; it is admitted, and a real struggle must be waged against it.....Bureaucracy in our state system has become such a sore that we speak about it in our Party programme....." (V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, Eng. Ed., Vol. IX, p. 105. Our emphasis.)

The November 1922 statement of Lenin's quoted above shows that at that time the bureaucracy was still a menace to the workers. Because of the anti-workingclass nature of the bureaucracy of his day, Lenin constantly fought it with might and main.

Despite the existence of a huge anti-workingclass bureaucracy, Lenin in January 1921 defined the Soviet Republic as "a workers' state with bureaucratic distortions" (Selected Works, English Ed. Vol. IX, p. 33. Our emphasis.) The ultra-lefts do not consider a bureaucracy as such to be a sign that there is not a workers state:

"The deciding factor would be: In whose interests is the bureaucracy acting? The answer to this determines whether we can label Russia a workers' state." (The Spark, July 1938, p. 25.)

It is clear that this criterion of the ultra-lefts brings them in direct conflict with Leninism. The huge bureaucracy of Lenin's day was anti-workingclass in nature, an ulcer and a sore in the state system, and yet Lenin de-

defined the Soviet Republic as a workers state. The first premise of the ultra-lefts, that the existence of an anti-workingclass bureaucracy is a sign that there is no longer a workers state in the Soviet Union, is anti-Leninist in nature.

Perhaps the ultra-lefts will argue that in Lenin's day this anti-workingclass bureaucracy was held in check by the existence of workers democracy, i.e., by workers control over the state apparatus. The fact is, however, that the real workers democracy never existed in the Soviet Republic. In April 1918, Lenin stated that the idea of workers control was only beginning to enter the consciousness of the proletariat:

"We have passed a workers' control law, but this law is only just beginning to be applied and is only just barely beginning to penetrate the minds of the broad masses of the proletariat." (V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, Eng. Ed. Vol. VII, p. 328.)

In March 1919, Lenin explained that the Soviet apparatus was accessible to the toilers in word but not in fact, i. e., that workers democracy existed mainly on paper:

"The Soviet apparatus is accessible to all the toilers in word, but in fact it is far from accessible to all of them, as we all know." (V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, English Edition, Vol. VIII, p. 349.)

And in the same speech Lenin admitted that the toilers did not participate in the work of government:

"We can fight bureaucracy to the bitter end, to a complete victory, only when the whole population participates in the work of governmentbut so far we have not managed to get the toiling masses to participate in the work of government." (Ibid., p. 353. Our emphasis.)

In the above quotation from Lenin's writings of November 1922 we noted the admission that the workers lacked the

forces really to control the hundreds of thousands of ex-tsarist and ex-bourgeois bureaucrats. Indeed so far was the Soviet Republic from having genuine workers democracy in Lenin's time that as late as 1921 at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party a resolution had to be passed under Lenin's guidance to introduce workers democracy in the Soviet Republic. And as late as March 1923:

"The situation in regard to our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say outrageous, that we must first of all think very carefully how to eliminate its defects..." (V.I. Lenin, Selected Works, English Edition, Vol. IX, p. 387)

Nevertheless, even though workers democracy in the Soviet Republic was a programme and an objective rather than a reality, Lenin defined the Soviet Republic as a workers state. Undaunted by the fact that Lenin defined the Soviet Republic as a workers state even though the proletariat had no actual control over the machinery of the state, the ultra-lefts trumpet boldly:

"The term 'Workers State' which does not take into consideration the actual control by the proletariat, organized as a class over the machinery of the state, is a meaningless phrase, void of discussion, a myth propagated by individuals who have not mastered the elements of Marxism." (The Spark, August 1938, p. 35. Our emphasis.)

There is only one conclusion that can be drawn from this premise of the ultra-lefts: that Lenin was a windbag who uttered meaningless phrases, propagated myths and never mastered the elements of Marxism. The second premise of the ultra-lefts that because there is no workers democracy in the Soviet Republic there is no workers state is anti-Leninist in nature.

The ultra-lefts admit that in Lenin's day there was a workers state in the Soviet Republic. But as soon as they do this they are up against a stone wall of self-contradiction. For even in Lenin's time, the present-day

ultra-lefts criteria of the existence of a workers state were not fulfilled. Even in Lenin's day, there existed a huge anti-workingclass bureaucracy and a lack of workers democracy. To be consistent the ultra-lefts must fly in the face of Leninism and flatly deny that in Lenin's day the Soviet Republic was a workers state.

Whether they like it or not and consciously or unconsciously, the ultra-lefts are forced into making their definition of a workers state dependent upon the degree to which anti-workingclass features of the state obtain. The ultra-lefts' analysis actually boils down to this: today in the Soviet Union the anti-workingclass features of the state have become so great that they no longer believe that a workers state exists. It is obvious, however, that such a theory is wholly idealistic in that it depends entirely on personal opinion, and in fact, one may say, on individual whim. To one person, one degree of anti-workingclass features of the state may constitute the criterion of the non-existence of a workers state; to another person, another degree may serve as the criterion; while to a third still another degree may be the deciding factor, and so on ad infinitum. The ultra-lefts thus become involved in a hopeless mess of individual fancy and prejudice.

A central point of the ultra-lefts' theory is that in order for a state to be a workers state it must act in the interests of the toilers:

"No matter, however, in what form it expresses itself, to be a proletarian state it must function for the interests of the working class, its acts must conform to the class position of the proletariat." (The Spark, July 1938, p. 7.)

They cannot conceive of such a phenomenon as a workers state acting against the interests of the toilers. Lenin, on the other hand, was entirely able to conceive of a workers state which functions against the interests of the workers. If the workers state is bureaucratically distorted, as it always was

Lenin in 1921, it becomes necessary for the workers to have organizations which protect them against their own state:

"Our present state is such that the entirely organized proletariat must protect itself, and we must utilize these workers' organizations for the purpose of protecting the workers from their own state and in order that the workers may protect our state." (V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, English Edition, Volume IX, pg. 9. Our emphasis.)

In fact, due to the bureaucratic distortion of its superstructure, the workers state even in Lenin's day acted in many respects against the interests of the toilers. It is for this reason that Lenin waged such a powerful war against the bureaucratic distortion for he realized that this distortion may become overwhelming. Lenin did not, however, fall into the ultra-left error of concluding that because the anti-workingclass distortion of the state was enormous there was no longer a workers state in Russia. Nor did he put forth any idealistic fantasies that the existence or non-existence of a workers state depended on the degree of magnitude of the bureaucratic distortion.

The difference between Leninism and present-day ultra-leftism stands out sharply. Even though its superstructure was poisoned by a huge anti-workingclass bureaucratic distortion, which was not actually controlled by the workers, Lenin defined the Soviet Republic as a workers state — with bureaucratic distortions. The degree of the bureaucratic distortion, we must remember, increased constantly during Lenin's lifetime. From 1922 on, when Stalin became General Secretary of the Russian Communist Party and organized the bureaucratic distortion to centralize power in his own hands, the bureaucratic distortion rapidly approached frightful proportions. The "Testament" of Lenin written at the end of 1922 with its proposal to remove Stalin from the post of General Secretary was part of Lenin's campaign against

Stalin. Unfortunately, an 1924 death prevented Lenin from guiding the battle against Stalinism. Lenin placed the leadership of the war against Stalinism in the hands of Trotsky, who embarked on the criminal path of compromising with the Stalin clique and of adapting himself to it. "I am against removing Stalin," declared Trotsky (see his autobiography, "My Life," p. 486); thereby sabotaging the proposed Leninist war on the bureaucratic distortion in the Party itself and leaving the road open for the Stalin clique to enlarge it to its present overwhelming degree. The rest of the leadership of the Russian Communist Party directly or indirectly worked with Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev, so that Stalinism triumphed.

It is profoundly important to note that though the anti-workingclass bureaucratic distortion of the state constantly increased and by the end of Lenin's life assumed a really prodigious extent, Lenin never changed his definition of the Soviet Republic as "a workers state with bureaucratic distortions." Lenin's definition of the state was always based on the foundations of society, the productive basis, which in the Soviet Republic remained in Lenin's day — and still remains today — socialized. If Lenin had been an ultra-left muddlehead, his definition of the state in the Soviet Republic would have changed from year to year, for the anti-workingclass distortion of the superstructure constantly increased. Lenin would have fallen into the childish position of saying: Today in 1920 we have 9/10 of a workers state — Today in 1921 we have 3/4 of a workers state — Today in 1922 we have 2/3 of a workers state — Today in 1923 we have 1/2 of a workers state — and so forth in ever-diminishing fractions. He would even have set up some mathematical equation expressing an inverse relationship between the degree of superstructural distortion and the quantity of workers state remaining intact. Fortunately, Lenin was a Marxist to the last, and, guided basically by the existence of a socialized economy, defined the Soviet Republic as a workers state — distorted to different de-

grees in its superstructure.

It is interesting to note what the ultra-lefts consider to be the essence of the bureaucratic distortion of the workers state, for in this they reveal their true nature most clearly. To Lenin, the hostile bureaucracy consisting of hundreds of thousands of ex-tsarist and ex-bourgeois bureaucrats functioning in the state apparatus without actual control by the workers comprised the bureaucratic distortion of the superstructure of the workers state. The dictatorship of the proletariat, exercised through its revolutionary Party, was a feature of the superstructure which made it possible for the Soviet Republic, culturally backward, to move historically toward socialism. The ultra-lefts, however, consider the exclusive domination by the revolutionary Party to be the essence of the bureaucratic distortion of the workers state and, moreover, have the effrontery to foist their counter-revolutionary concept on the shoulders of Lenin!

"Whereas on the one hand the concentration of power into the hands of the Party made possible the expression of the working class domination over the peasantry, since by means of democratically elected Soviets, the petty-bourgeois rural elements would have dominated the Soviets, on the other hand this Party control of power termed by Lenin, 'a workers state with bureaucratic distortions' contained within it the germs of the destruction of the proletarian rule." (The Spark, Nov. 1938, p.18. Our emphasis.)

Lenin fought tooth and nail to destroy all bourgeois influences in the Soviet Republic including that portion of bourgeois influence which was exercised through the medium of all the non-Bolshevik political parties existing in the proletarian and peasant ranks. Hence Lenin advocated the illegalization and destruction of the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary parties, which in life had abundantly proved themselves to be counter-revolutionary agents of the bourgeoisie. Lenin insisted that there could be only one

Party of the proletariat capable of leading humanity to socialism, the Party which based itself entirely on the teachings of Marx and Engels. Spurning the philistine liberalist concept of democracy which boils down to permitting the bourgeoisie the "right" of existence, Lenin fought to crush all non-Bolshevik parties. The destruction of all non-Bolshevik political influence was a way of purifying the superstructure of the workers state so that the historical march toward socialism could be maintained despite the other diseases of the superstructure. The opportunist scum which flourished in all the non-Bolshevik parties was held by Lenin to be a menace to the dictatorship of the proletariat that had to be crushed.

"Unless the revolutionary section of the proletariat is thoroughly and seriously trained to object and suppress opportunism, it is absurd even to think of a dictatorship of the proletariat." (V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. VI, p.468. English Edition. Our emphasis.)

What, however, is the ultra-lefts' concept of a healthy workers state?

"The most healthy form of workers' state is one which permits a workers' democracy, the full right of differing workers parties to exist legally with complete freedom to propagate their views." (The Spark, Aug. 1938, p. 36. Our emphasis.)

What "workers" parties which are non-Bolshevik have views that are in the interest of the proletariat, may we ask? The social-democratic party? The Stalinist party? The Trotskyist party? The Pivertist party? The Lovestonite party? The American Labor Party? The Independent Labor Party? And if a party has anti-proletarian views, as all non-Bolshevik parties have, what revolutionary worker can doubt but that these reactionary parties will repeat the treacheries and betrayals of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. To the ultra-lefts, workers democracy means the right of non-Bolshevik parties to exist and

propagate their views in the proletarian regime. To the ultra-lefts, the disease of the superstructure of the first workers state consisted in the fact that non-Bolshovik parties were not permitted to exist. To Marxists, the term, democracy, means control over the state. Bourgeois-democracy signifies the control over the state by the bourgeoisie, while workers-democracy means workers control over the state apparatus. In the lingo of the ultra-lefts, on the other hand, democracy is used in the same way as by the professional liars of the bourgeois press, by the social-democrats, by the liberals and by backward workers, i.e., democracy means free speech for all. Hence, to the ultra-lefts, workers-democracy means free speech for all "workers" parties. Invariably, as we increase our understanding of ultra-leftism, its deep-rooted anti-Marxist nature becomes more clear.

We have seen above in the quotation from The Spark of August 1938, p. 35, that in the opinion of the ultra-lefts, unless the proletariat has actual control over the machinery of the state, the term workers state is meaningless. In order to foist this anti-Leninist thesis on their readers, the ultra-lefts are compelled to commit some rather high-handed juggling of facts. In their "Thesis on The Russian question" (The Spark, July 1938, pp. 1-22), the sixteenth point is an illustration of the kind of fraud perpetrated by the ultra-lefts. This point begins with the following statement:

"The Revolution established this economic structure: it expropriated the bourgeoisie and socialized the industries, abolishing the profit motive in production; it nationalized the land, titles to the land belonging to the state, though the dominant part of the land continued to function under capitalist land relationships; the right of inheritance was abolished; the bourgeois principle of payment for work continued." (The Spark, July 1938, p. 4, point 16. Our emphasis.)

Here we have an admission by the ultra-lefts that the revolution established

a certain specific economic structure differing from that which previously existed. Bourgeois economic structure was destroyed and a socialized economic structure established in its place. The ultra-lefts must admit that the revolution established a socialized economic structure else they would find themselves discounted as plain lunatics. But, in order to draw the mind of the reader away from the socialized economy established by the Bolshevik Revolution, however, the ultra-lefts follow the above admission with this utterly false statement:

"Knowing that during the transition between capitalism and socialism there is no specific distinctive economic structure as distinguished from either capitalism or socialism, the key as to what class holds power, the character of the state, especially in such a backward country as Russia which contained more capitalist than socialist elements, was therefore to be found in the political control of the state, whose interest the state defended, for whom it functioned, and the direction it was moving." (Ibid. Our emphasis.)

Thus, it is only by denying a fundamental Marxist premise, that in the transition period between capitalism and socialism there exists a specific economic structure, the socialized property foundations of the workers state, that the ultra-lefts can delude their readers into taking into account only the superstructure of the workers state, the factor of political control. At all costs, the ultra-lefts must blind the eyes of their readers to the basic structure of the workers state which still exists in Russia. This crude distortion of Marxism is nothing new. In Lenin's day, as now, there existed great confusion on the question of what forms the basis of the rule of a class and of the nature of a state. Some befuddled elements then held a position similar to that of our ultra-lefts of today, i.e., that political control over the state apparatus is the prime foundation of the domination of the proletariat. Lenin gave these mistaken persons an unequivocal answer:

"In what does the domination of

a class consist now? The domination of the proletariat consists in the fact that the ownership of property by landlords and capitalists has been abolished.....THE PRIME THING IS THE QUESTION OF PROPERTYThose who, as we frequently observe, associate the question of what determines the domination of a class with the question of 'democratic centralism' are only causing confusion that makes it impossible to carry on any work successfully." (V.I.Lenin, Selected Works, English Edition, Vol. VIII, pp. 89-90. Our emphasis.)

"The prime thing is the question of property." replies Lenin to those who prattle about political control of the state being the prime consideration. When bourgeois private ownership was destroyed, the Russian proletariat historically became the ruling class even though the state apparatus was to a major degree in the hands of hostile bureaucrats of the former tsarist and bourgeois regimes and even though the Party of the workers did not as yet establish the workers' actual control over this distorted state apparatus. Basing himself on Marxism, Lenin held property relations to be fundamental in historical and political considerations. Historical and political features form a varying superstructure on property relations or form of ownership, the latter being the basic structure. The muddleheadedness of the ultra-lefts consists in mistaking the super-structure of a society for its basic structure. The ultra-lefts agree that in Russia the property relations established by the October Revolution remain intact:

"That the property relations established by October, in the sense of property rights being vested in the state remain intact, is quite true; that is, the form of ownership remains the same." (The Spark, July 1938, p. 18. Our emphasis.)

There is but one Leninist conclusion that can be drawn from this promise: since the property relations established by the October Revolution remain intact, the proletariat in Russia is

still historically the ruling class and Russia still remains a workers state. The fact that there is not one particle of "democratic centralism" in the Soviet Union, i.e., that there is no democratic control over the political apparatus, does not change this fundamentally. If the ultra-leftists do not wish to abide by Lenin's formulation that "The prime thing is the question of property," let them abandon their pretense of being Leninists.

The general relations of superstructure to basic structure during a transitional period may be formulated as follows: the basic structure, the property foundations, determine the class nature of the state, while the political superstructure determines the historical tendency of a society. From the October Revolution to the socialization of property in 1918, the superstructure, under the control of the Bolshevik Party, was demolishing private ownership and transforming private property to socialized property. In this period Russia was moving toward international revolution and socialism. From the time the means of production were predominantly socialized, the basic structure has been proletarian, while the distorted superstructure, during Lenin's leadership of the Party, was proletarian in the sense that the Party of the proletariat which forms part of the superstructure, was revolutionary. In this period Russia was still moving toward socialism. Since the ascendance of Stalinism and the abandonment of Bolshevism by the party, though the basic structure of the state has remained proletarian, the superstructure has been wholly reactionary and hence in the present period Russia is moving back toward capitalism. As long as there remains a proletarian element in the basic structure or the superstructure, there remains something historically progressive in the Soviet Union which must be defended. When both the basic structure and the superstructure have no proletarian elements then and then only, will the whole of the Russian state be entirely reactionary and will have to be smashed by the proletariat.

Another feature of the Soviet

Union which blinds the ultra-lefts is the fact that the living conditions of the workers are so miserable while the bureaucrats live in comparative luxury. Indeed many persons feel that since the workers in the Soviet Union are no better off than those in capitalist countries, and in some respects even worse, how can it be said that the Soviet Union represents a state which is different from that of capitalist society. These factors, it must be held firmly in mind however, are conditioned by the nature of the superstructure and not of the basic structure of society. Even though the basic structure of the Soviet Union, the socialized economy, has remained unaltered, the masses from the very beginning of the Soviet Republic have lived in misery and the bureaucrats have had many advantages, but the degree of mass misery and of bureaucratic advantage have changed from time to time with changes in the superstructure. In the early days of the Soviet Republic, when even the ultra-lefts admit there was a workers state, there was widespread famine amongst the masses while the bureaucrats had many privileges. The reasons for this were that the country had been devastated by the imperialist and civil wars and by the imperialist blockade and that since the masses lacked the cultural requirements necessary to operate the state machinery, the Party was forced to bribe the bureaucrats in order to get them to work. Today, the masses live in misery though not in actual famine and the bureaucrats in even greater luxury, but for different reasons. The bureaucrats, having usurped power in the state, appropriate the lion's share of production. The factor of famine and forced bribery have disappeared. Thus it is clear that the standard of living of the various sections of society is a function of superstructural factors and not of the basic structure of society. The standard of living changed with alterations in the superstructure, though the basic structure, socialized production, remained untransformed. Under capitalism, likewise, the standard of living varies from time to time, but the basis of the bourgeois state, bourgeois private ownership, remains the same.

. To define the nature of the state on the basis of the standard of living of the various sections of society is thoroughly philistine in approach and entirely foreign to Marxism.

The nature of a state is determined by its basic feature, property relationships. In modern times these relationships take two fundamental forms, bourgeois private ownership of the means of production and socialized production. In relation to the basic structure there exists a superstructure in the form of the control of the state and of the means of production. Under both bourgeois private ownership and socialized production, however, the superstructure is by no means necessarily permanent and unchanging. History shows us that with the same basic structure various kinds of superstructure can exist.

Let us consider first the relations of basic structure to superstructure in two capitalist societies. At the end of the 18th Century, the feudal state in France was destroyed by the bourgeois revolution and a capitalist state based on capitalist property relations was created in its place. At the beginning of this revolution, the bourgeoisie established democracy for themselves, i.e., bourgeois-democracy, which gave them control over the state. Very soon, however, threatened on the one hand by the feudal aristocracy and on the other hand by the propertyless masses, the bourgeoisie began to lose their enthusiasm for their own democracy. Bourgeois-democracy was abolished and an iron military dictatorship under Napoleon was clamped down on France, the bourgeoisie losing for the time being their control over the state. To fortify his personal rule, Napoleon created a tremendous centralized bureaucracy. This was a serious change in the superstructure. Nevertheless, the state remained bourgeois, for the basic structure, capitalist productive relations, remained intact. Ultra-left muddleheads of those days imagined that feudalism had been restored by the military dictatorship of Napoleon, but the bourgeoisie knew better, for they saw that the basic structure,

capitalist productive relations, still existed even though the superstructure was in the hands of the Emperor Napoleon. In the subsequent history of France, the superstructure changed several times — bourgeois-democracy to military dictatorship to bourgeois democracy — but the basic structure, bourgeois private ownership of the means of production, continued to exist.

In Germany in recent years the superstructure has also undergone profound changes while the basic structure has remained unaltered. The transformation of bourgeois rule from democratic to fascist in 1933, as the Kaiser's rule to Weimar Republic, in no way negated the fact that the State in Germany is still bourgeois, for capitalist productive relations remain fundamentally unchanged. When the bourgeoisie established their democracy, they controlled the state. But, when they were faced by threats from the proletariat and forced to abandon their democracy for fascism, control of the state passed exclusively into the hands of a tiny clique of finance capitalists with Hitler as its spokesman. Today in Germany nobody, regardless of how extensive his property may be, can oppose or criticize the fascist form of rule. If the state orders the capitalists to give the workers "paid" vacations, they must obey without question regardless of what resentment they may feel at this state of interference. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the bourgeoisie have actually been expropriated politically, the state in Germany is still entirely bourgeois, for the basic structure, bourgeois private ownership of the means of production, predominates. Just as there can be a workers state without workers-democracy, so there can be a bourgeois state without bourgeois-democracy. If the ultra-lefts who base their definition of a state on features of the superstructure were consistent, they would maintain that, because in Germany there is no bourgeois-democracy, the bourgeois state has ceased to exist, the bourgeoisie no longer own the means of production and German capitalism has vanished. Such a "theory", however, can only excite a raucous belly-laugh from

the German bourgeoisie in whose hands, unfortunately, the means of production rest as securely as ever and who enjoy the protection of their bourgeois state. Again it is clear that the ultra-lefts attempt to base the definition of the state on the nature of the superstructure leads to ridiculous fantasy. Thus we see that as far as capitalist economy is concerned, the superstructure can undergo vast alterations while the basic structure continues fixed.

It must be borne in mind, however, that the relations of superstructure to basic structure in a capitalist economy and in a socialized economy are profoundly different in certain fundamental respects. The Bonapartist and fascist dictatorships are superstructural features which strengthen their basic structure, bourgeois private ownership. The Stalinist distortion of the superstructure of the workers state, on the other hand, is a superstructural characteristic which undermines the basis of the workers state and eventually will drag Russia back to capitalism. The bourgeois state is an organism which can be stable for a long period of time on a national basis. The workers state, however, in order to exist for a long enough time to lead humanity to socialism must be organized on an international scale. Within Russia itself and internationally, Stalinism lays the basis for the destruction of the first workers state.

In Russia sometime after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in October 1917, there was established a workers state. For various reasons this workers state from the very beginning possessed a defective superstructure. An anti-workingclass bureaucracy flourished and the workers were unable to establish their own democracy. The workers state from the start was therefore plagued with bureaucratic distortions of the superstructure.

Changes in this defective superstructure were possible in two directions. Either the bureaucratic distortion could be removed entirely or it could grow. If the bureaucracy had been destroyed and workers democracy estab-

lished, the state would have remained proletarian in nature, for the basic structure, the socialized economy, would have remained untouched. Unfortunately, to the incalculable detriment of the world working class, this course was sabotaged. The Stalinist degeneration of the Russian Communist Party organized, intensified and centralized the bureaucratic distortion of the superstructure. The anti-working-class bureaucracy which always existed in the Soviet Union has been magnified from the hundreds of thousands of Lenin's day to several millions today, with Stalin standing at the head of the bureaucratic pyramid. So far the bureaucracy has not abolished the basic structure, the socialized economy. It cannot be denied that the Soviet Union, if it is not first destroyed by world imperialism, or if the bureaucracy is

not overthrown by the workers, will be dragged back to capitalism by the Stalinist reaction. Today, however, not even Stalin, the greatest bureaucrat of them all, dares breathe a whisper in public about giving the now socialized production over to private ownership.

Historically speaking, the Soviet Union, which despite the frightful intensification of the bureaucratic distortion of its superstructure is still a workers state, represents a form of society which is in advance of capitalism. What remains of the October Revolution — socialized production — must be defended to the last against the attacks of both imperialism and Stalinism.

2) THE FATE OF A WORKERS STATE

NOT only are the ultra-lefts in complete confusion on the question of the state in general, but they misunderstand the total nature of the bureaucratic distortion of the workers state in particular. It must be made clear that this bureaucratic distortion has two aspects both of which must be understood if the entire process of the undermining of the workers state is to be grasped correctly.

The original bureaucratic distortion of the workers state was caused primarily by the extreme cultural backwardness of the Russian proletariat. Lacking the cultural requirements to function themselves in the state apparatus and so to have direct control over it, the Russian workers were compelled to permit the predominant portion of the state machinery to fall into the clutches of hundreds of thousands of ex-tsarist and ex-bourgeois bureaucrats. Bourgeois technical experts had to be bribed with exorbitant salaries. Lenin's programme for combatting this original distortion had as its central point widespread education of the workers to raise the cultural level to a degree where dependence on bureaucrats from the former society of the exploiters would be eliminated. In

the same passage of the above-quoted speech of Lenin's of 1922, this programme is described:

"Certainly nothing can be done here in a short period of time. Here we must work many years in order to improve the apparatus, to change it and to enlist new forces. Soviet schools and Workers' Faculties have been formed; several hundreds of thousands of young people are studying, studying too fast perhaps, but at all events, the work has been started, and I think it will bear fruit. If we do not work too hurriedly we shall within a few years have a large number of young people who will be capable of radically changing our apparatus." (V.I. Lenin, Selected Works, English Edition, Vol. X, pp. 330 331. Our emphasis.)

Lenin envisaged the process of raising the cultural level of the workers to a high enough point to enable them to run the state apparatus as involving a period of time. Lenin looked primarily to the Bolsheviki-educated youth for the necessary forces to overcome the initial bureaucratic distortion of the workers state. Meanwhile, whatever

measures were feasible to control the bureaucratic cancer, such as electoral devices, replacement of bureaucrats by class-conscious workers even though the latter were not sufficiently trained, sheer intimidation of the bureaucrats, and so forth, were utilized. This original disease of the superstructure Lenin believed could be vanquished in several years by Bolshevik enlightenment of the masses, an enlightenment which would be facilitated but not made unnecessary, by aid from the victorious proletariat of some of the more advanced countries.

On this original distortion of the workers state, some of the ultra-lefts hold a more or less correct position. It is on the later phase of the distortion, the Stalinist aspect, that all the ultra-lefts fall down completely.

The origin and nature of the Stalinist phase of the bureaucratic poisoning of the workers state lies shrouded in a dense fog spread, directly and indirectly, by all the opportunist tendencies in the proletarian camp. The true story of this criminal page of history may be outlined as follows. Sometime prior to the 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin formed a conspiratorial agreement to endeavor to entrench themselves in power in the Party apparatus and to make their power permanent. Breaking with the Bolshevik organizational principle of democratic centralism, these conspirators embarked on the opportunistic path of bureaucratic centralization of power in their own hands. This break with Bolshevism on the organizational principle of democratic centralism is the origin of the Stalinist degeneration of the Russian Communist Party. It is vitally essential to note that the Stalinist degeneration did not originate along the lines of tampering with the property foundations of the Soviet Republic, which as Lenin insisted, are the prime thing in determining the rule of

the proletariat. The Stalinist clique, followed by the remainder of the Party leaders, abandoned the organizational, superstructural principle of democratic centralism, which must not be confused, Lenin warns, with the prime factor, the socialized property basis. In 1921, Stalin was proposed by Zinoviev for the previously non-existent post of General Secretary of the Party, and at the next Congress was inducted into this office. Utilizing the already-existing bureaucracy, and abusing his power of appointment to remove from the apparatus those who would not be subservient and to replace them with those who would, Stalin within one year managed to centralize much power in his own hands. By January 1923 Lenin in the "Testament" called for Stalin's removal from the post of General Secretary. Severe illness and finally death in January 1924 made it impossible for Lenin to carry out his plan to combat Stalinism. The remainder of the Party leadership, directly or indirectly, worked hand in glove with the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev clique. Trotsky, in whose hands the plans to destroy Stalinism were directly placed by Lenin, bears the major responsibility for the victory of Stalinism, for by his betrayal of Lenin's confidence — set forth in his autobiography and elsewhere* — the triumph of Stalinism was made possible. The Stalin clique proceeded to operate by means of bureaucratic manipulations of the Party machinery and by creating scape-goat after scape-goat — Trotsky, Bukharin, etc., — to camouflage its crimes. Recognizing that victorious proletarian revolution in the rest of the world would not tolerate a bureaucratic distortion of the first workers state, the Stalin clique, through Zinoviev, ~~the~~ then head of the Comintern, bureaucratized the Comintern and converted that organization into an instrument for the prevention of revolution. The various sections of the Comintern were put into the hands of careerists who were willing to carry out the Stalin-

* See IN DEFENSE OF BOLSHEVISM Vol. I, #3, March 1938, for a brief outline of Trotsky's treacherous role. The entire story of Trotskyism as an aid to Stalinism will appear in a forthcoming book, WHITHER TROTSKY, by George Marlen.

ist designs. Avoiding Marxism by giving the workers ultra-rightist and ultra-leftist orientations in the various capitalist countries, the Stalinized Comintern succeeded in crushing revolutionary developments by an ultra-rightist zigzag (in Germany in 1923, in England in 1926 and in China in 1927); followed by an ultra-leftist zigzag in Spain in 1931 and in Germany in 1929-1933; followed by an ultra-rightist zigzag (in France, Spain, Czechoslovakia and China from 1935 to the present).

The present-day ultra-lefts whose confusion we have been considering tend in general to accept the Trotskyist "explanation" of the origin and nature of the Stalinist phase of the degeneration of the Russian Communist Party and of the Comintern. Trotsky in order to cover up his own criminal part in the Stalinist plot, blames the degeneration of the Russian Revolution on the masses and the defeatist spirit, which it is alleged by him, came over them.

"It is for the very reason that a proletariat still backward in many respects achieved in the space of a few months the unprecedented leap from a semifeudal monarchy to a socialist dictatorship, that the reaction in its ranks was inevitable. This reaction has developed in a series of consecutive waves. External conditions and events vied with each other in nourishing it. Intervention followed intervention. The revolution got no direct help from the west. Instead of the expected prosperity of the country an ominous destitution reigned for long. Moreover, the outstanding representatives of the working class either died in the civil war, or rose a few steps higher and broke away from the masses. And thus after an unexampled tension of forces, hopes and illusions, there came a long period of weariness, decline and sheer disappointment in the results of the revolution." (L. Trotsky, "The Revolution Betrayed," 1937, p. 89. Our emphasis.)

spirit of the Russian masses is a monstrous fabrication is clear from the following facts. By 1923, when this alleged defeatism is supposed to have set in, the Russian workers had succeeded in completely crushing the White Guard and imperialist counter-revolution. The proletarian revolution in Russia was firmly in the saddle. This was the greatest triumph ever achieved by the exploited masses in the entire history of humanity. Moreover the world proletariat in general was seething with revolutionary zeal. The March action in Germany in 1921, though abortive and leftist in nature, was a symptom of ferment in the proletariat and a source of terror to the bourgeoisie. By 1923, Germany was once more ripe for proletarian revolution, while in China the bourgeois revolution was proceeding rapidly and the proletarian revolution was on the order of the day. The Russian workers, having achieved an overwhelming victory over their own oppressors, were looking with bright hope to their brothers in the rest of the world. In Russia powerful demonstrations against the bureaucracy took place even as late as October 1927. Trotsky and the ultra-lefts who follow him in this make a great noise about the defeat of the proletarian revolution outside of Russia, giving the impression that this made the degeneration of the Russian Communist Party inevitable. Thus they put the cart before the horse, for the international proletarian revolution from 1923 on was defeated because the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern which it controlled had already undergone a fearful degree of Stalinist degeneration, the latter beginning roughly in 1921. By 1923, when the German revolution was on the order of the day, Lenin, because of illness, was almost completely out of the political picture. The machinery of the Russian Communist Party and of the Comintern was already in the hands of the Zinoviev-Stalin-Kamenev clique, and it was used by them to crush the German revolution by means of the ultra-rightist Comintern zigzag of 1923 (Stalinist-Social Democratic coalition governments in Saxony and Thuringia). The defeats of the other revolutions after 1923 were engineered by the Sta-

That this story about the defeatist

lin gang through alternating ultra-left and ultra-right zigzags. The stories about the degeneration of the Russian Communist Party being due to defeatist tendencies of the masses and the failure of the international revolution are fabrications from beginning to end.

Could the Stalinist degeneration have been overcome by the workers of Russia under the objective conditions that existed? Yes! Beyond the shadow of a doubt this could have been accomplished. Only one "objective condition" was lacking — a genuine Marxist leadership to combat Stalinism. Trotsky, who long since abandoned his adherence to Bolshevism, conceals the fact that not the masses but the entire leadership of the Russian Communist Party, including Trotsky himself, was to blame. Does Trotsky believe that, had a real fight against Stalinism been waged, this opportunist scourge could have been defeated? Let us hear from the "Bolshevik-Leninist" himself:

"And what is more, I have no doubt that if I had come forward on the eve of the twelfth congress in the spirit of a 'bloc of Lenin and Trotsky' against the Stalin bureaucracy, I should have been victorious even if Lenin had taken no direct part in the struggle." (L. Trotsky, "My Life", 1929, p. 481. Our emphasis.)

This reckless admission completely contradicts Trotsky's fables about the inevitability of the Stalinist reaction and of its triumph. This admission shows plainly that deep down Trotsky knows his own guilt, knows that Stalinism conquered because the Leninism of the Bolshevik Party died with Lenin, knows that the stories about the Stalinist reaction being inevitable are fraudulent inventions.

The ultra-lefts, overlooking the role of conscious leadership and mouthing Trotsky's fairy tales about a "great defeatist tide," deny that Lenin could have defeated Stalinism.

"It is an error to think that

the presence of a Lenin would have been sufficient to halt that great defeatist tide which was sweeping everything aside." (The Spark, July 1938, p. 9.)

History shows, however, that time and again Lenin was able to overcome the opposition of practically the entire leadership of the Party in even the most chaotic of "objective conditions" on various questions. The polemics on signing peace with Germany in 1918 are only one example of Lenin fighting against enormous odds and, having the masses of the workers behind him, conquering. By 1924, Lenin's prestige was colossal and if he had fought in his characteristically uncompromising Marxist way, the Stalin clique, maneuvering for personal power at the expense of the toilers, would have been scattered to the winds. Zinoviev and Kamenev, plagued with a malodorous past in which opposition to the Bolshevik insurrection and general well-known cowardice played a big part, would have immediately abandoned Stalin like the proverbial rats deserting a sinking ship. The remainder of the Party leadership which was turning opportunist would have done likewise. As for Stalin himself, the "bomb" which Lenin had prepared against him — and which Trotsky conceals to this day — would have exploded in his face and this relatively obscure figure would have been eliminated from the scene. Workers democracy would have been pressed forward in accordance with the Party programme and would have developed to the highest possible degree, the Comintern would have been Bolshevized, and successful proletarian revolution would have swept the world.

Even if Trotsky, without Lenin, had undertaken a Leninist war against Stalinism, instead of sabotaging such a war, the defeat of Stalinism would have been a matter of comparative ease. The above-quoted statement of Trotsky's that without doubt he could have defeated Stalinism is not a mere boast, but is a sober statement of fact. Trotsky, like Lenin, was a man of immense prestige. Moreover, he had the triumphant Red Army in his hands, for his role as the organizer of the Octo-

ber Revolution, of the Red Army and of the victories of the civil war was known to all the toilers. In fact the Stalinist clique in the beginning was on the defensive and feared Trotsky:

"Much later, in 1925, Bukharin said to me, in answer to my criticism of the party oppression: 'We have no democracy because we are afraid of you.'" (L. Trotsky, "My Life," p. 488.)

Upon the death of Lenin, Trotsky was the person to whom the masses looked for leadership on all fronts. History records the path Trotsky, like the rest of the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, chose — an opportunistic attempt to get onto the bandwagon of the Stalinist clique.

It is true that the Russian masses were backward. But Trotsky, Stalin, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek and every one of the scoundrels who abandoned Bolshevik democratic centralism in an effort to become part of a personal ruling clique were not backward. These were among the most advanced men in the world and politically, actually the most advanced. Even granting a certain amount of defeatism and demoralization of the masses the abandonment of Bolshevism by the leaders of the Russian Communist Party certainly cannot be attributed to such weaknesses of the masses. The ultra-lefts in explaining the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party leaders by the different moods of the Russian masses only help Stalin, Trotsky and the rest of the degenerated revolutionists to conceal their crimes. The leaders of the Bolshevik Party consciously reversed Lenin's programme for combatting the bureaucratic distortion of the superstructure of the workers state. In place of this programme they embarked on the path of enlarging the bureaucracy and centralizing it about themselves, thus constituting themselves, rather than the Russian masses, the rulers of the proletarian state. How are the moods of the Russian masses to blame for this crime? The moods of the Russian masses are no more to blame for the villainy of their leaders than are those of the German masses for the

crimes of Kautsky in 1914. The crimes of the leaders of the Russian Communist Party were carried out not because of the Russian masses but against their will. In so far as they were able, the Russian masses, even without a genuine Leninist leadership, resisted the Stalinist degeneration, as the strikes against the bureaucracy even up to 1923 and the gigantic demonstration in Leningrad in 1927 testify. The Stalinist clique can only thank the ultra-lefts for blaming the growth of bureaucracy on the masses.

The Trotskyist assertion that the Stalinist degeneration of the October Revolution was inevitable because of the backwardness of Russia, defeatist spirit, and so forth, bears the implication that in an advanced country such a phenomenon could not occur. Some reflection on this point, however, will show that this implication is false and extremely dangerous. A Stalinist degeneration of a proletarian revolution does not hinge upon the backwardness or advancement of a country. The primary cause of a Stalinist degeneration of a proletarian revolution is the abandonment of the Bolshevik organizational principle of democratic centralism by the leadership of the revolutionary Party and its adoption of an opportunistic attempt to gather personal power by practicing bureaucratic centralism.

The proletarian revolutionary movement is composed of individuals who develop in a vicious society, capitalism. The rottenness manifested by Trotsky, Stalin, Bukharin, Radek, Zinoviev and the others is a product of the rotten exploiting society in which they matured. Like everything under capitalism, the revolutionary movement receives its due quota not only of scoundrels, adventurers, cowards, idiots and weaklings but also of immature Marxists. Is there any reason for believing that in the so-called advanced nations any the less rottenness is bred in human beings than in the backward countries? Not in the least, as can readily be seen from even a cursory glance about us. In the advanced countries, as well as in the backward ones, the revolutionary

movement will be composed of human beings many of them having to one degree or another the seeds of corruption inevitably produced by a corrupt society. Once in a great while, there will appear a Marx, an Engels or a Lenin, who in the process of individual development and in the course of the revolutionary struggle manages to cleanse himself of every particle of capitalist filth. The rest of the revolutionary movement will consist to a considerable extent of individuals who have not completely broken with capitalism psychologically or politically. Nevertheless, it is with such imperfect human beings that the revolution must be made. Are we to wait for perfection before attempting to destroy capitalism? "No, we want the socialist revolution with human nature as it is now..." answers Lenin in his "State and Revolution". And with human nature imperfect as it is now revolutions have been and will be made.

In the advanced countries, as in the backward ones, much of the filth of human nature bred by capitalism will be carried over into the beginnings of the proletarian society. The leadership of the revolutionary Party and the membership of the Party in general will have all the limitations produced in a vicious society. If that leadership succumbs to the corruption engendered by capitalism, if that leadership breaks away from the Bolshevik path and starts to play for personal power, and if no genuinely Bolshevik element remains to combat this degeneration, then the bureaucratic undermining of the proletarian revolution will take place regardless of the degree of advancement of a country. The millions of bureaucrats and officials of the former society of the exploiters, reeking with petty-bourgeois ideology and yearning, consciously or unconsciously, for the "good old times", will give willing support to the Stalin of the advanced countries just as they worked hand in glove with Stalin of backward Russia. A bureaucracy may be created by the new Stalinist degeneration, and perhaps even more readily than was done by the Russian Stalinism. In the advanced countries, the bureaucratic degenerates will have

far more material means with which to bribe the bourgeois-minded bureaucrats than those of Russia had. Let it not be imagined that in the advanced countries the workers will be immediately able to establish a complete workers democracy. Like in the backward nations, time will be required for the workers of the advanced lands to learn how to manage the state machinery. It is true, naturally, that the establishment of a genuine workers democracy will be easier in the advanced countries because of the higher cultural level of the workers to begin with. But it is the merest wishful thinking to imagine that in the advanced nations the establishment of an undistorted workers state will proceed automatically without any internal dangers to struggle against.

The history of the Second International throws a revealing light on this problem of the relation of the degeneration of a revolutionary leadership to the degree of advancement of a country. The frightful degeneration of the Social-democracy since the death of Engels was unrelated to the degree of the advancement of the nation in which it existed. Advanced Germany produced the corrupt Kautsky; backward Russia, the incomparable Lenin. Backward Russia gave forth the decayed Plekhanov; advanced Germany, the heroic Karl Liebknecht. The degeneration of the Social-democracy in general was a world-wide phenomenon, and was related not to the individual regions of capitalism, but to international capitalism as a whole.

The history of the Bolshevik Revolution has brought to light some extremely valuable principles. We learn that a workers state does not necessarily lead to a socialist society. A workers state leads to a socialist society if it remains undistorted by malignant growths that have their origin in capitalism. For a workers state to lead to socialism, regardless of the backwardness or advancement of the country involved, the fundamental requirement is this: the revolutionary Party must remain Marxist-Leninist to the very period of its dissolution together with the withering away of

the state. The revolutionary Party must at all times retain the highest degree of freedom from capitalist ideology. The workers of all lands will have to guard against revivals of capitalist influence in their leaders even when capitalism has been over-

thrown. To tell the workers the fairy story that the bureaucratic degeneration of the revolutionary Party is due to the backwardness of a country is to rob them of their class vigilance and to leave the road clear for "Stalinist" developments in the advanced nations.

RECAPITULATION OF THE ARGUMENT

A) ON THE WORKERS STATE IN RUSSIA:

1. The Bolshevik Revolution socialized the means of production and on the basis of this socialized economy established a workers state.
2. From the very beginning, this workers state possessed a defective superstructure, a bureaucratic distortion.
3. The workers state, therefore, to varying degrees from the very start had anti-workingclass features.
4. Lenin advanced a programme for destroying the bureaucratic distortion of the workers state, the central point of this programme being Bolshevik education of the masses to enable them to establish their own control over the state apparatus, i.e., to establish workers democracy. (Party programme of 1919 and resolution on Workers Democracy passed in 1921.)
5. The leadership of the Party, abandoning the Leninist Party organizational principle of democratic centralism, embarked on an opportunistic path of centralizing power in the hands of a small clique headed by Stalin.
6. This opportunistic leadership, employing bureaucratic centralism as its organizational "principle," sabotaged Lenin's programme to combat bureaucratism and, enlarging the bureaucratic distortion and giving it an organized expression, carried it to its present overwhelming proportions.
7. The anti-workingclass features of the state have therefore come to predominate the entire superstructure including the Party.
8. The socialized means of production which constitute the structure of the state have, however, remained basic-

ly unchanged in form, i.e., have remained socialized.

9. Therefore, the state in Russia today is still a workers state - with a stupendous bureaucratic distortion.

B) ON A WORKERS STATE IN GENERAL:

1. The class nature of the state is determined by the form of ownership, the property foundations, while the historical tendency of the society in general is determined by the political superstructure of the state.
2. The existence of a workers state depends on the existence of a socialized economy.
3. Whether or not a workers state acts in the interests of the toilers bears a direct relation to freedom from distortion of its political superstructure.
4. A politically undistorted workers state can, on an international scale, lead humanity to a socialist society.
5. A workers state, if the distortion of its superstructure increases instead of diminishes, will eventually be destroyed.
6. When the distortion has become strong enough to abolish the socialized economy and restore bourgeois private ownership of the means of production, the workers state will be destroyed and a capitalist state established in its place.
7. A bureaucratic distortion of the superstructure of a workers state can occur regardless of the degree of backwardness or advancement of a country.
8. If the revolutionary Party remains

Marxist-Leninist to the last, the bureaucratic distortion will be overcome regardless of the backwardness or advancement of a country.

9. If the revolutionary Party aban—

dots Marxism-Leninism, the bureaucratic distortion will be intensified and the workers state will eventually be undermined regardless of the backwardness or advancement of a country.

.....
Note: On page 92 of STALIN, TROTSKY or LENIN by George Marlen of the Leninist League, there appeared the following passage:

.....
ful struggle against Workers Democracy." (Emphasis in the original.)

"Stalin knew through personal experience that a bureaucratic pyramid could be erected only after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in a backward country, with the proletarian revolution defeated outside, following a long, strenuous, skill-

.....
This gives the impression that a Stalinist degeneration of a workers state could not take place in an advanced country. After further study and research, we find that this position is not correct. We therefore take this occasion to correct this evaluation. Comrade Marlen no longer holds this position.
.....

3. THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE DISTORTED WORKERS STATE AND IMPERIALISM



SINCE the ultra-lefts do not understand the nature of the distorted workers state, they naturally are in complete confusion as to its relations to world imperialism.

Lenin pointed out that the fundamental cleavage in the present historical epoch is that between the workers state with bureaucratic distortions and world imperialism. Between these two antagonistic social systems a clash is inevitable:

"We are living not merely in a state, but in a system of states, and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with imperialist states for a long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end. And before that end supervenes, a series of frightful collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states will be inevitable." (V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, Eng. Ed. Vol. VIII, p. 33. Emphasis in the original.)

various reasons, this first assault on the Soviet Republic failed. In the years that followed, the imperialists tried again and again to organize a new attack, but, torn by inter-imperialist conflicts, failed each time to do so. At present, however, world imperialism has succeeded in temporarily shelving its internal conflicts and has almost entirely cleared the road for a new attack on the distorted workers state. The Munich agreement recently signed by the British, German, French and Italian imperialists and supported by the Japanese is the clear sign of the formation of a united imperialist front against the bureaucratized Soviet Union. In every way possible, the path of German imperialism, the military spearhead of this anti-Soviet front, is being opened to the East. Every demand of the German imperialists which falls in line with the projected assault on the crippled proletarian state is being fulfilled by the ruling British and French gang, with American imperialism standing by and covering its approval of this murderous plan with the cloak of "pacific" silence. No stone is being left unturned in the forging of

From 1918 to 1921, the international imperialists tried to destroy the workers state by military violence. For

the last links of the imperialist anti-Soviet chain. Precisely when the attack will be launched it is impossible to foretell, but that it will occur in the near future there can be no doubt.*

To Lenin, the inter-imperialist conflicts were a life-saver for the Soviet Republic in that they gave it a breathing spell in which to prepare both itself and the international proletariat for the inevitable conflict. Lenin conceived of only two alternatives in this conflict: either world capitalism would be destroyed by the international proletariat or world capitalism would destroy the only existing workers state. Lenin's line was to work through the Comintern for the spread of international proletarian revolution and, taking advantage of the contradictions within the imperialist camp in every way, to press at all times for the defeat of all the imperialists. The international politics of the Soviet Republic in Lenin's time were unmistakable in their clear posing of the defeat of all the imperialists as the primary prerequisite for world proletarian revolution, the only possible preserver of the first workers state.

If the Stalinist bureaucratic distortion of the workers state had been destroyed in line with Lenin's programme, the international politics of the workers state would be today revolutionary as they were in Lenin's time. The abandonment of Leninism by the leaders of the Russian Communist Party and the consequent overwhelming ascendance of the bureaucratic distortion, however, have distorted also the international politics of the workers state.

On the international arena, the Stalin clique finds itself faced by two threats, proletarian revolution and imperialism. Since 1923, it has been preventing proletarian revolution by means of the Comintern ultra-right and ultra-left zigzags. With imperi-

alism it compromises as long as it is able, avoiding in every way any action which might cause the defeat of imperialism for such a defeat would in turn result in proletarian revolution. Stalin, knowing full well the Leninist prediction that an attack on the workers state by imperialism is inevitable, tries to prolong the inter-imperialist conflicts by attaching himself to one or another camp of imperialism. First German, then French imperialism served him for this purpose. The "pacts" signed by Stalin with the various capitalist powers are nothing but an expression of his compromising policy to ward off the inevitable attack on the workers state as long as possible. The imperialists, torn by fierce conflicts amongst themselves, used these "pacts" in the past as diplomatic clubs, so to speak, against one another. That fundamentally these "pacts" were never worth the paper they were written on and were never taken seriously either by the imperialists themselves or by Stalin now becomes clear. All the imperialist "pacts" with the workers state are going up in smoke, for the imperialists, who never for a moment lost sight of the fundamental cleavage in the international scene, that between imperialism and the workers state, have finally launched unequivocally on their project to renew the assault on the Soviet Republic.

Nowhere does the political infantilism of the ultra-lefts stand out more tragically than in their evaluation of the Stalinist maneuvers with imperialism. Incredible as it may seem, the ultra-lefts take the "pacts" at their face value! Swallowing hook, line and sinker the "comedy" being played by Stalin and the imperialists, the ultra-lefts cry out indignantly:

"In connection with these moves aligning Russia in the League of capitalist robbers, we have witnessed the signing of mutual pledges

* In this connection, see IN DEFENSE OF BOLSHEVISM Vol. I, #8, Sept-Oct. 1938. The article entitled "The Character of the Coming War and the Tasks of the Proletariat" gives a more extended treatment of this impending war against the Soviet Union.

of military assistance to the imperialist nations. Imagine! — A workers state' pledging herself to send the 'workers' army to aid in the plunders of the imperialists. This is the straw that breaks the camel's back." (The Spark, October, 1938, p. 28.)

The ultra-lefts may save themselves the trouble of getting so indignant, for the "pacts" between Stalin and the imperialists are a thing of the past, in light of the Munich accord, which will never arise to shock the ultra-lefts' sensibilities. Harsh reality in the form of a ferocious attack by imperialism on the workers state will soon take the place of Stalin's paper promises of military aid to imperialism and the imperialists' sham acceptance of such offers of assistance. The "logic" of the ultra-lefts is a rather interesting spectacle. In defining the state in Russia, they look only at the distorted superstructure and decide that a workers state has ceased to exist. But in analyzing Russian foreign policy, they no longer concentrate on the distorted superstructure and hence do not see that it is the malignant Stalinist cancer, and not the socialized economy, which signs "pacts" promising military aid to imperialism. And so the ultra-lefts cry out: Imagine! Russia signs pacts with imperialism. Could a real workers state do such a thing? Of course not. Therefore there is no longer a workers

state in Russia. With such a "logic", the ultra-lefts might also have cried — as in fact the ultra-lefts in Russia did cry — in Lenin's day: Imagine! A workers state wanting to give oil concessions to foreign capitalists! Could a real workers state do such a thing? Of course not. In 1921, the Soviet Republic signed a trade agreement with the British imperialists who only a few months before were giving Poland support in her war against the workers state. Could a real workers state do such a thing, our ultra-lefts would have cried. Of course not, etc. etc. The complexity of political relations is the factor which forever baffles many opportunists, in this instance the ultra-lefts. To them life is an all-or-none proposition. Either the workers state is absolutely perfect or it is not a workers state, is the reasoning of the ultra-lefts. In Lenin's day, because of economic weaknesses, the Soviet Republic for revolutionary purposes was forced to pursue in its foreign relations certain policies which in some respects temporarily profited the imperialists. Today, because of the complete ascendance of the Stalinist distortion of its superstructure, the Soviet Republic for reactionary reasons aids international imperialism. This in no way negates the fact that the socialized economy, which existed in Lenin's time, still exists and forms the basis of a workers state, distorted to one degree or another, in both Lenin's and Stalin's day.

4. THE REMNANTS OF OCTOBER MUST BE DEFENDED; THE BUROCRATIC DISTORTION MUST BE SMASHED



WHEN Lenin was confronted by the rising Stalinist monster, he drew the sword of Marxism and proceeded to the attack without hesitation. Our ultra-lefts, however, stand before the huge Stalinist dragon with their mouth agape and are only able to gurgle a few childish sounds: The Stalinist bureaucracy is a class but not a class — Russia has a socialized economy but not a workers state — Stalinism was inevitable — Imagine! Pacts with imperialism! — and so forth. And what is worse, being unable to understand and hence to

combat Stalinism, they objectively only aid it — and imperialism.

Basing his policy on what is fundamental in society, the productive relationships, Lenin, observing socialized production in Russia, considered Russian society, although impoverished by the social cataclysm, a higher form than that in the capitalist world. Regardless of how distorted the superstructure of the workers state might be, Lenin's aim was to defend the foundations of this distorted workers

state, the socialized economy, against all enemies. Three foes threatened the socialized economy of the Soviet Republic in Lenin's day. First, Russian and world imperialism through Menshevism and direct military assault, secondly, the initial bureaucratic distortion of the workers state caused by the Russian proletariat's cultural backwardness, and thirdly, the Stalinist distortion of the workers state caused by the opportunistic degeneration of the leaders of the Russian Communist Party. In the present day, two enemies still threaten the Soviet Republic, world imperialism and the Stalinist distortion. The Leninist policy for the proletariat within and outside of the Soviet Union fundamentally holds as true today as when Lenin first formulated it for the defense of the workers state. Imperialism must be defeated on a world scale and the bureaucratic distortion of the first workers state, today Stalinist in nature, must be destroyed.

The ultra-lefts, since they paradoxically conclude that the socialized economy of Russia is the basis of a capitalist state, naturally, as far as war is concerned, lump Russia with the capitalist countries:

"Thus when we consider the basic capitalist nature of Russia, no matter what heights its productive forces will attain, any war that this state capitalist regime conducts is a reactionary war for markets and more profits for the Russian rulers " (The Spark, October, 1938, p. 27.)

Consequently, the ultra-lefts call for the military defeat of the distorted workers state:

"Our program as regards a Russian war is clear. We must condemn the war and apply the line that Lenin fearlessly carried out in all wars of a predatory character — revolutionary defeatism, to call for the military defeat of all the armies as a means of overthrowing the Russian, French, etc., governments." (Ibid., p. 32.)

A greater service to imperialism cannot be conceived.

Let us examine again the situation in the imperialist and Stalinist camps, for the more detailed the understanding of reality becomes, the more grotesque is the position of the ultra-lefts seen to be.

In the first place, the ultra-lefts as well as the Trotskyites and Lovestonites, despite all their "Leninist" howling, have gulped down Stalin's "collective security" fakery without even blinking an eye. The ultra-lefts actually believe it is possible that Russia will fight in a war allied to some imperialist power. The Stalinists, using an ultra-right, (Popular Front), zigzag in order to prevent proletarian revolution, hogtie the workers to the bourgeoisie by telling them to "defend democracy against fascism". In accordance with this treacherous line, the Stalinists also bamboozle the workers with the fantasy that the "democracies" will fight on the side of the Soviet Union. And the ultra-lefts repeat this Stalinist fakery word for word! Reality, however, explodes this Stalinist fiction. The "democracies" are lining up with Hitler and in every way possible prepare for the inevitable assault on the Soviet Union. Once Hitler starts the attack on the workers state, world imperialism as a whole will continue to assist him up to the hilt. The ultra-lefts naively believe it is possible that some of the imperialists will help the Soviet Union to defeat other imperialists. Facts show, however, that in the present historical epoch world imperialism cannot and will not permit the defeat of any of its national sections. The fierce antagonism between German imperialism and the Anglo-French bloc is well known. Yet we see that even at the expense of really enormous self-sacrifice, French and British imperialism exert every effort to bolster German capitalism and prepare it for their war against the Soviet Union. For this purpose the hegemony of the European continent has actually been surrendered to German imperialism

by the Anglo-French bloc. Only in the benighted imagination of our ultra-lefts will some of the imperialists help the Soviet Union defeat some of the other imperialists. At all costs the imperialist cutthroats unite for the inevitable clash with the Soviet Union. For the imperialists are not ultra-left boneheads. They realize that however great the inter-imperialist conflicts may be, the historical conflict between capitalist and socialized economy is far greater. This cleavage between bourgeois private ownership and socialized production is fundamental, the imperialists realize. These two forms of production cannot exist side by side indefinitely. This basic contradiction of the present historical period must be liquidated before any inter-imperialist redivision of the globe can be undertaken. The imperialists know that if capitalism is to survive every remnant of the first victorious proletarian revolution must be annihilated. Not only will they seek to wipe out socialization as such, but they will endeavor to destroy as much of the actual material products created by the socialized economy as they can. The imperialists will try to leave no stick standing which might possibly remind the workers of the socialized economy which existed before the Soviet Union was destroyed. In addition to perpetrating incalculable physical destruction in the Soviet Union, the imperialists will bend every effort to wipe Marxism out of the human mind so that for at least the next hundred years the vanguard of the proletariat will consider the overthrow of capitalism a childish dream. Capitalist economy will be restored in Russia and the country divided up amongst the imperialists. Let the ultra-lefts who call for the defeat of Stalin's army ponder on this prospect.

The existence of the Stalinist distorted superstructure of the workers state does not for a moment fool the imperialists as it does our ultra-lefts. Stalin may make friendly gestures to the imperialists until his hand falls off, but to no avail, for beneath the smiling face of this renegade from Communism they see the so-

cialized economy on which his blood-spattered feet still stand. Hence the imperialists reject Stalin's friendship and prepare to destroy the Soviet Union.

The ultra-lefts are afraid to call for the victory of Stalin's army because they imagine that this would strengthen Stalinism:

"Let us consider for a moment the possibility of a Russian victory in a war. A victory can only mean the strengthening of the ruling regime...." (The Spark, October 1938, p. 32.)

Here again we see the political idiocy of ultra-leftism which imagines that Stalin will try actually to defeat imperialism. While Stalinism rules the Soviet Union and holds its present dominant position in the international proletarian vanguard, the victory of Stalin's army and the defeat of imperialism are an absolute impossibility. In times of peace, Stalinism in order to preserve itself in power has the political aim of preventing proletarian revolution and of compromising with imperialism lest the latter's weakening or defeat result in proletarian revolution. In times of war, Stalinism will follow precisely the same line. The ultra-lefts fancy that, if they called for the defeat of imperialism and the victory of Stalin's army, they would be playing into Stalin's hands. Let these muddleheads set their fears at ease, for Stalin is the last one in the world to desire the victory of his army and the defeat of imperialism. To save himself from immediate destruction and to have a bargaining card with the imperialists, Stalin will hurl his army into the battle with just enough force to stave off a too easy victory for imperialism. Stalin's army will be made to exert only enough pressure to force the imperialists to desire a compromise with Stalin. The latter, harping on the danger to the imperialists of proletarian revolution if the war is prolonged, will offer the imperialists various concessions. He will promise to open Russia to foreign investors and to bring Russia back to capitalism.

The imperialists, however, if they are not meanwhile wiped out by international proletarian revolution, or if they are not threatened by a sullen, rebellious working class, will brush Stalin's offers aside, as they now throw his "pacts" into the garbage can, and will proceed to the complete destruction of the Soviet Union, for which task they have more than enough material strength:

"...for you know perfectly well that as long as Russia remains the only workers' republic and the old bourgeois system continues in the rest of the world, we shall be weaker than they, we shall be under the constant menace of attack." (V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, Eng. Ed. Vol. IX, p.479. Our emphasis.)

The ultra-lefts who imagine Stalin wants to defeat imperialism give the workers only two alternatives: either support Stalinism or call for the defeat of the Soviet Union. Both these alternatives are false. The task of the proletariat is to wipe out Stalinism and every form of opportunism else the victory of the workers of the Soviet Union and of the international proletarian revolution is impossible and universal fascism a certainty.

The poisoning of the proletarian vanguard by opportunism, and primarily by its Stalinist brand, is preventing the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. A Leninist exposure of Stalinism and its opportunist and ultra-left co-workers must tear the vanguard of the proletariat away from the scoundrels who now, each in his own way, bind it to the bourgeoisie. The real nature of Stalinism which, basing itself on a socialized economy, prevents proletarian revolution through the Comintern ultra-right and ultra-left zigzags in order to preserve itself from overthrow and which compromises with imperialism as

long as it can, must be made clear to the workers. The danger of an imminent ultra-left Comintern zigzag, the present ultra-right Stalinist line becoming of no more use to mislead the workers because its disastrous nature is growing too obvious, must be impressed on the mind of the proletarian vanguard. Trotskyism and Lovestonism as part and parcel of the Stalinist degeneration of the Comintern and as objective aides to Stalinism must be annihilated lest the workers be led into these counter-revolutionary traps. Social-democracy, consistently since 1914 the agent of imperialism and during the ultra-right Comintern zigzag the open partner of Stalinism, is still a potent opportunist force whose destruction is essential. The various groups such as the Fieldites, Oehlerites, Mienovites, Stamaites, etc. who to avoid a battle with Stalinism distort the facts about the true nature of Stalinism and embark on an opportunistic "mass line" even though the masses, because Stalinism, social-democracy, Trotskyism and Lovestonism control the proletarian vanguard, are in the clutches of these criminal gangs, must be understood as a hindrance in the struggle for a new revolutionary party. And finally, the ultra-lefts who, perhaps chiefly out of confusion, deny that the Soviet Union is still a workers state and call for its defeat, must be exposed as objective servants of imperialism, regardless of what their intentions may be.

Casting aside every form of anti-Marxist quackery, class-conscious elements of the proletarian vanguard will recognize the formation of a new revolutionary party and International as the prime requirement today. Only a Marxist-Leninist leadership, which before and after the revolution will be faithful to the proletariat, can lead the toilers to socialism.

A LETTER TO THE
REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST VANGUARD

* * *

S P A I N

Dear Comrades:

We shall begin with examining your remarks on Spain. You see in Spain not a civil but "an imperialist war" -- a position held by the Stalinists, by Mienov and some others.

What are the distinct characteristics by which an imperialist war is recognized? National States controlled by giant corporations are engaged in a direct military struggle for the seizure of one another's lands, colonial possessions, sources of raw materials, markets for exporting commodities, places of investment of capital, for the purpose of financial exploitation and plunder of conquered countries. The robbery is achieved through direct invasion of the enemy's territory, annexation of provinces and entire countries, national oppression of the vanquished peoples, and is cloaked with the slogan "Defense of the Fatherland" -- a progressive slogan in the epoch of the rise of the revolutionary bourgeoisie but totally reactionary and fraudulent during the decline of capitalism.

And what is civil war? Civil war is a conflict among classes or groups of the population comprising a nation, carried on within the boundary of the State, usually by armies speaking the same language, either for the control of the State or more often, for its overthrow. The chief aims pursued by the antagonists are not outward-bound but are confined to the question of power within the territory of the nation. The military entry of any oth-

er State into the conflict is termed intervention. Even before the conflict is decided, one side is sometimes recognized by other nations as the legitimate power within the country.

Let us now proceed with the analysis of the war in Spain. When Franco opened his attack the Stalinists told the workers that the war was one between "democracy" and Fascism. As the conflict unfolded, thousands of sincere idealists, many workers, believing that bourgeois democracy is freedom, fought on the Loyalist side "to preserve democracy." Did that really make the war in Spain a war between Fascism and "democracy"?

The fallacy of terming the Spanish conflict imperialist or one of "Fascism vs. Democracy" can be appreciated and a correct view of the war in Spain shaped only if the whole problem is studied in the light of the present period of world history.

One must form in mind a precise picture of the contemporary mechanics of class struggle in Spain and within world capitalism as a whole. A very important section of the picture, occupied by the reactionary development in the first proletarian State and the colossal, anti-Marxist influence this development exerts upon the class struggle throughout the world must not be lost sight of for a single instant.

Bourgeois revolution in Spain was due long before world capitalism ent-

ered the imperialist state. Early in the twentieth century the country experienced a notable industrial growth. This development was accelerated by the World War. There grew up a considerable proletariat. If Marx and Engels in 1847 could speak of Germany as pregnant with bourgeois revolution which would immediately be followed by proletarian revolution, how much more applicable is this formulation to Spain of the Twentieth Century. The epoch is far more advanced. Since the Manifesto the world went through tremendous revolutionary developments of which the most outstanding is the October victory of the Russian workers and peasants. Capitalism is in the declining stage, convulsed by a continuous, ever-deepening crisis.

Historically, therefore, the bourgeois republic in Spain was but a passing phenomenon, a transition stage towards immediate proletarian revolution. But the establishment of the proletarian State was frustrated by the opportunists within the working-class. For five years the proletarian revolution was brewing, preparing to burst the fetters of the capitalist system. Since bourgeois democracy, despite the assistance it received from the Stalinists and the opportunists within the workingclass, could no longer restrain the masses, the Spanish imperialists launched a Fascist drive aiming to eliminate the threat to capitalism and create "order."

Marxists recognize that history is the greatest political consultant and instructor. Viewed from the angle of the historical conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the situation in Spain was very much similar to the one in Russia at the moment of the Kornilov uprising. The fundamental difference was that in Russia the workers fortunately had a Marxist party to lead them which the Spanish workers lacked.

Lenin grasped the essence of the Fascist rebellion of General Kornilov against the bourgeois-democratic provisional government. And it was Lenin's brilliant appraisal and tactic that finally led the Russian prolet-

ariat to victory.

At that moment there were two wars: one between the Kerensky government and the Kaiser government of Germany; the other between the Kerensky government and Kornilov.

With respect to the imperialist war between the Kerensky government and Germany Lenin plainly stated "We are not defencists....Neither the fall of Riga, nor the fall of Petrograd will make us defencists."

But with regard to the commencing civil war of Kornilov against the Kerensky government, in reality a war of both Kornilov and Kerensky against the workers and peasants, Lenin initiated a "unique" policy. He insisted that it was necessary to defend Petrograd, to fight Kornilov. At the same time Lenin warned not to support Kerensky's government, but to change the tactic and for the moment refrain from pointing the spearhead of the proletarian attack directly against Kerensky. "Wherein, then, consists the change of our tactics after Kornilov's revolt?" wrote Lenin to the Bolshevik Central Committee. "In that we are changing the form of our struggle against Kerensky....We must take into account the present moment; we shall not overthrow Kerensky right now; we shall approach the task of struggling against him in a different way....It would be erroneous to think that we have moved away from the task of the proletariat conquering power. No. We have come tremendously nearer to it, though not directly, but from one side. This very minute we must conduct the propaganda not so much directly against Kerensky, as indirectly against the same man, that is, by demanding an active and most energetic, really revolutionary war against Kornilov. The development of this war alone can lead us to power" (Collective Works, Vol. XXI, p. 137. Emphasis in the original.)

Guided by this policy, the workers of Petrograd forced upon Kerensky's government the "victory" over Kornilov. But Kerensky's "victory" opened the way for the overthrow of Kerensky himself and the establishment of Bolshevik power.

During the Kornilov uprising some of the Bolsheviks loaned to the Right; to the support of Kerensky. A few moved to the Left of Lenin and spoke of the need of "immediate arrest of Kerensky's government." Lenin piloted the Bolsheviks past the Rightist and the Leftist pitfalls; which, by the way, appear regularly on the road of the proletariat's struggle for liberation.

The Russian proletariat politically was a million miles closer to the seizure of power than the Spanish ever was. Kerensky's government possessed only a shadow of power. Kornilov was extremely weak. The entire soldier mass was dead against him. Not even the entire body of the officers was supporting Kornilov. Some regiments supported the Bolsheviks. The Baltic fleet was decidedly Bolshevik. The influence of the S.R.'s and Mensheviks was on the eve of collapse. Their followers were rapidly turning to Bolshevism. Yet Lenin with iron realism waited for the Maximum of certainty that power could be seized and held, and in the new situation caused by the Kornilov revolt the overthrow of the bourgeoisie could be accomplished only by way of the defeat of the Russian Franco, General Kornilov. Kornilov directly "fought" Kerensky, but indirectly fought against the proletarian revolution; Lenin by urging the direct fight against Kornilov, indirectly fought Kerensky and the entire bourgeoisie.

But supposing the Kornilov rebellion had been more thoroughly organized, the civil war prolonged, and Kerensky repressions against the proletariat intensified. Would Lenin abandon his tactic and declare for immediate overthrow of Kerensky, for "revolutionary" defeatism, for desertions from the front in order to facilitate the overthrow of Kerensky? Not unless he suddenly went ultra-Leftist. The adoption of such a seemingly revolutionary line would mean the abandonment of the only path that could lead the proletariat to power. No, Lenin with all the vigor at his command would have continued rousing the workers against Kornilov, simultaneously exposing Kerensky's treachery and sabotage.

It is obvious that in the form of

a Kornilov uprising against bourgeois democracy the proletariat has not with a new experience in the class struggle. "The contest of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie, assuming various forms grow continually richer in content" (Lenin). As a measure to stifle the working class and thus prevent proletarian revolution, the bourgeoisie resorts to a civil war, in appearance directed against the existing bourgeois-democratic government, in reality against the proletariat. This is the lesson of the Kornilov uprising against Kerensky, or Mussolini's march on Rome and of Franco's rebellion against the People's Front government. This is the essence of the war in Spain. It is a civil war of the bourgeoisie led by Franco and aided by Azana, who proved too weak to cope with the "disorders" that were sweeping the country, against the proletariat blinded and misled by Stalinism, Social Democracy, Anarchism and other betrayers within the working class. The difference between such indirect civil war of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat and a direct one as in Russia beginning with the October Revolution in 1917 and closing with Kronstadt in 1921, is that in the direct civil war virtually all the opportunists side openly with the Kolchaks and Denikins, Lenin soberly recognized that to the new method of struggle on the part of the bourgeoisie it was necessary to oppose a new revolutionary tactic.

Anyone who has failed to observe how Franco and the Loyalist Government have been cooperating in wiping out in blood the flower of the Spanish working class is only a superficial observer. Anyone who does not see the fake Loyalist offensives into which the foreign volunteers and the best proletarians were rushed into destruction — "offensives" which, "strangely" have always been accompanied with frightful massacres of the toilers and retreats of the Loyalist army — while the more politically advanced workers have been thrown into Loyalist prisons, is blind indeed.

Your position that in Spain there is an imperialist war, that "if either side is victorious world labor will

suffer a frightful defeat," the policy of "revolutionary" defeatism which you advocate plays directly into the hands of Franco and Spanish and world capitalism. Moreover, your position aids the Stalinists, the chief betrayers, who in the beginning were concealing the nature of the war in Spain by portraying it as "a war between democracy and Fascism" and of late have introduced the fraud that it is a war against imperialist invasion. During the "trials" of the P.O.U.M. leaders the Stalinists wrote;

"Gorkin's central line of defense was the fascist argument that the struggle in Spain was a civil war not a German-Italian invasion." (Poumists on Trial in Spain for Treason," Daily Worker, Oct. 13, 1938.)

What difficulty does a bourgeois government encounter in conducting an imperialist war? Obviously the difficulty of prosecuting the war with maximum mobilization of all resources of the country in order to secure victory. But what is the difficulty of a Kerensky or Azana in a war against Kornilov or Franco who is attempting through a military dictatorship to save the domination of the exploiting classes? Obviously the difficulty of concealing from the workers that Kerensky or Azana is not pushing the war towards victory, that Kerensky and especially Azana, who knows what happened to Kerensky after the defeat of Kornilov, and therefore fears victory, is confronted with the difficulty of preventing the defeat of Franco.

It is noteworthy that in your labors of propping up your Leftist position on Spain you resort to the most amazing twisting of history and facts. In your magazine Creative Communism you are portraying Lenin as a Leftist during the Kornilov days: "In hiding Lenin RAGED against the Bolshevik officials who were reluctant to wrest the helm of state from the impotent Kerensky, against the editors of Pravda, Zinoviev, Stalin, Kamenev." (Our emphasis.)

Reading the words quoted above, we rubbed our eyes in amazement. The

monstrous distortion of facts stared at us in all its hideousness. To show that this is definitely a crude invention we quote Lenin once again:

"Without renouncing the task of overthrowing Kerensky, we say: we must take into account the present moment, we shall NOT overthrow Kerensky right now." (Our capitals.)

That is how "Lenin raged against the Bolshevik officials who were reluctant to wrest the helm of state from the impotent Kerensky" (Creative Communism, Nov. 1938, page 5).

Since you are supporting your "position" with a reference to Lenin's letter in which the very opposite is said, it is obvious that either you do not understand what you are reading or you are consciously and deliberately perverting the truth to make the distortion fit your Leftist position. We are justified in arriving at this conclusion for immediately following your statement about Lenin's "rage" you actually cite a few sentences from his very letter from which we quote his words "we shall not overthrow Kerensky right now."

There is also a distortion of Marxism in your phrase "~~to~~ wrest the helm of the State." Marx, Engels and Lenin taught that the workers must smash the capitalist state, not wrest the helm of it from the bourgeois leaders.

And speaking of perversions of facts and falsifications of history we might as well point out another "little" distortion in the very paragraph where the first two occur. You write of Lenin "On 10 September he flayed the Bolshevik central committee-men who flirted with the slogan of 'revolutionary defense' of Russia against Germany." And to prove the "flaying" you quote Lenin "Neither the fall of Riga, nor the fall of Petrograd will make us defensists." But in this same letter of Lenin's from which you quote, Lenin says to the Bolshevik Central Committee: "Having read six copies of the Rabochy after this was written, I must say that there is

perfect harmony in our views." (Our emphasis - L.L.) By omitting this highly important statement of Lenin you leave the impression that in 1917 members of the Bolshevik Central Committee rolled down to the reactionary position of Menshevik defencism. Combining all these distortions you are hammering out a so-called Leninist line, which is in reality a deadly Leftist trap. Plainly, you have entered upon a dangerous path. You must realize that you are basing your political position on distortion of facts. If you don't reject and repudiate your distortions you will find, as you go along, that you will have to cover them up with new distortions. Eventually this path leads to conscious, systematic fakery.

There is a certain sentence in the midst of your twists and jugglery: "Lenin's line of 1917 is the line of revolutionary Communists today and forever." That Lenin's line of 1917 as it actually was, and not as you distorted it, should be the line for revolutionists today in Spain, we agree. Not the criminal Right opportunism of supporting the reactionary Loyalist government in any way; not the criminal Leftist adventurism of desertions from the Loyalist front, etc., but indirect demand to Azana-Negrin government to pursue an active and most energetic war against Franco. Merciless unmasking of this bloody capitalist government, exposure of its skillful sabotage of the war, its fake offensives, its fear of victory over Franco. Exposure of reactionary Social Democracy, Anarchism, Trotskyism, the crazy ultra-Leftism, and above all exposure of Stalinism. It is primarily this mighty opportunist force within the world workingclass, which, earlier through its ultra-Left adventurist putschism, and since 1935 through its Rightist line of People's Frontism, has prevented the rise of the Spanish workers State. The idea of revolutionary defeatism, of active sabotage of the war machinery, energetic struggle to disrupt the front, agitation for the seizure of land and factories, must be propagated among the forcibly recruited toilers who for the most part make up the armies of

France. The central agitational point must be the overthrow of Franco's Fascist government in order to open the possibility for the overthrow of the rotten capitalist Republic which has been deceiving and crushing the toilers in the seven years of its existence. The Stalinist-Socialist-Anarchist Liberal fake "First win the war then the revolution" would act as a boomerang against its "victorious" authors. The masses would test it in life and, with a Leninist leadership, would sweep away the Azana-Stalinist-Socialist government as the Russian workers swept away Kerensky after his "victory" over Kornilov. Only along this road, the road Lenin followed during the Kornilov insurrection, lies the possibility of proletarian victory in Spain.

C H I N A

While on Spain your position is consistently ultra-Leftist, on China your line is a mixed one containing Leftist and Rightist features.

China is not an imperialist but a semi-colonial country. The ruling classes and their government are thoroughly reactionary and are allied with British, French and American imperialism. The policy pursued by Chiang Kai-shek or rather by his imperialist allies upon whom he is dependent, is not to defeat Japan now but wait until the imperialists destroy, as they hope, the sick workers State and push the entire world proletariat into the abyss of Fascism. The collapse of the Japanese Empire at present would set afire entire Asia, perhaps the world. (See our Bulletin #8 on nature of the coming war.) The British and other imperialists intend to settle with Japan later. Hence the sham resistance, which is in reality the treacherous surrender on the part of Chiang Kai-shek of important centers of China. In the light of such a situation, for the workers to adopt the line you advocate, of "revolutionary defeatism" — as if China were an imperialist country pursuing a war of conquest — is definitely Leftist, only helping Chiang Kai-shek to continue his surrender of

territory to the Japanese army.

It is highly amusing that you yourself recognize that Chiang Kai-shek really does not fight Japan when you write of "the sensational surrender of Canton to the Mikado by Chiang Kai-shek,"

The Rightist feature in your line is your advocacy of a "people's government, a proletarian-peasant regime." This is but a variation of the Stalinist "workers and peasants government" of the Right line of 1923; and is akin to the present Trotskyist position. There can be today either dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry, even in such backward countries as China and India.

Among the Chinese masses the chief obstacle along the road to proletarian revolution is Stalinism. This glaringly outstanding fact in the history of China since the Stalinization of the Comintern in 1923 is completely omitted in the section on China in your letter.

The Marxist line in China must stem from the complexity of the historical and political situation of that country. The outstanding factors are: 1) the part-capitalist, part-feudal, semi-colonial nature of China; 2) the alliance of its ruling classes with the greatest imperialist powers; 3) the policy of retreat to prevent the "premature" collapse of the Japanese Empire; 4) the domination of Stalinism within the proletariat. The line of the revolutionary proletariat in China can be no other than Lenin's September 1917 line. Exposure of Chiang Kai-shek's treacherous game. Exposure of Stalinism and its dark manipulations by means of which it subdues the masses and prevents their independent, revolutionary action. The breaking up of "national unity" through indirect demands for an energetic war against Japanese and all imperialism. A struggle against that opportunism which, in one way or another supports Chiang Kai-shek from the Right and against that opportunism which does the same thing from the Left. Only

by means of such a policy can the toiling Chinese giant be awakened to shake off Stalinism, imperialism and Chiang Kai-shek and march toward power, to carry out the bourgeois and immediately afterward the proletarian revolution.

O N

S T A L I N I S M

In your letter to us you assert that the Stalinist regime "lives off the dominant economy of the Russian empire, state capitalism, and is petty capitalist in its politics..." (page 2). What is a modern empire, concretely? We will not be wrong in describing an empire as a group of nations tied together under the domination of an oppressor nation which establishes itself as a sovereign power through conquest, the State being either ancient, feudal or bourgeois. The fundamental policies of the modern bourgeois empire are: struggle on the part of the upper crust of the capitalist class of groups of multi-millionaires at the head of trusts and monopolies for sources of raw materials, for markets and places of investment of capital, for extension of the power of the financial magnates over the globe. We search in vain for these features in what you term the "Russian empire." What is still more fantastic is your assertion that this "empire" which is a State developing heavy industry on a huge scale is "petty capitalist in its politics."

Petty capitalist politics are traditionally bourgeois-democratic politics. In the era of decline of capitalism large sections of the petty capitalists are going over to Fascism. But in practice both the bourgeois democratic and the Fascist regimes are big capitalist politics, the politics of finance capital. Is the "Russian empire" ruled by bourgeois democracy? Obviously not. Since no other rule is possible for a modern empire than either bourgeois democratic or some sort of military, Bonapartist, Fascist dictatorship, the ultimate inference, to follow your way of thinking, to the logical end, can be no other than that

Russia is governed by Fascism. Along your line of deduction one is led to conclude that Fascism is not only a method of capitalist rule to preserve private property, but can also develop in a workers State on the basis of socialized property - which assumption is sheer absurdity.

Your statement about "Russian empire" is contradicted by you when you say that the Stalinist regime "exists within a proletarian state, under conditions that frustrate free trade and individual monopolies of the means of production and exchange."

You further write:

"The major instrument in the struggle against Stalinism is propaganda enlightening the proletariat on the nature of the 'Soviet' state, the contradiction between its substance and its form (the bourgeois government)." (Page 3.)

But the substance of the Soviet Union as you have it, is the strangest combination of the most contradictory, mutually exclusive descriptions that are likely to occur only in an extremely bewildered head. The Soviet Union is an empire, it is state capitalism (page 2), it is a proletarian state and is in form a bourgeois government which is "petty capitalist in its politics"! Such is your "position." And with such "enlightenment" you propose to down Stalinism! We declare that it is necessary to enlighten the workers as to what Stalinism is, how it arose, how it operates to prevent proletarian revolution (the two-fold method, ultra-Right and ultra-Left zigzags of the Comintern). Instead of shedding light, you juggle with phrases and intensify the fog of confusion.

We explain that Stalin's Comintern is a machine to prevent the world revolution. The duty of each Stalinist Party in the capitalist world is to prevent the rise of a Marxist party, to divert the workers from the path leading to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. But you obscure the essence of the function of Stalin's Comintern,

when you say: "Under Stressemann and Bruening, the admirers of the Soviet-German treaty of Genoa and Rapallo, Thaelman and Co. flourished. Once finance capital held the reins of the German state firmly in its clutch, freed of tedious and timid parliamentary democracy (as if finance capital under bourgeois democracy does not hold the reins of the state firmly in its clutch! - L.L.)...and started its drive to the East with greater vigor than the Kaiser and his crew ever mustered -- the German Stalinists were thru."

It was not a question of the orientation of German finance capital but the problem of disrupting the genuine revolution which threatened the well-being and power of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact German finance capital did not start its drive to the East immediately after Hitler took power. It continued its old orientation of amity with Stalin and granted fifty million dollars credit to the Stalinist bureaucracy (The N.Y. Times, March 2, 1933). These friendly material relations between Nazi Germany and Stalin continued for some time. Stalin helped Hitler to rearm Germany by shipping into that country enormous quantities of manganese needed in the manufacture of hard steel. The heavy shipments continued throughout 1934 and even a considerable portion of 1935, and were greater than to any other country in the world! (See Soviet Union Customs Report, 1935). You refuse to look facts in the face, and divert the workers' mind from learning the true lesson of the Stalinist betrayal of the German masses. (See the chapter "The Betrayal of the German Proletariat," in STALIN, TROTSKY or LENIN by George Marlen.)

Your singular lack of understanding of the nature of Stalinism is manifested on every hand. You state, for instance, that Stalinism and Trotskyism "Both tendencies regard Democracy and Fascism as irreconcilable orders; Trotskyism has taught this lie longer than Stalinism." This is absolutely false. It is only in an ultra-Right zigzag, particularly in the present

one, that Stalinism tells the workers that democracy and Fascism are irreconcilable. It is a fact that during the ultra-Left zigzag, however, Stalinism taught the workers that "the Fascist dictatorship offers no basic distinction from bourgeois democracy." (Resolution of C.C. of C.P.G. on decision of Eleventh Plenum, May 1931.) Furthermore, when Stalinism again puts forth an ultra-Leftist zigzag it will drop its Right fakery of irreconcilability of bourgeois democracy with Fascism. It is obvious you do not grasp the zigzag method of Stalinism. We find in the October issue of your magazine Creative Communism the following incorrect and extremely harmful thesis: "Stalinism also teaches the theory of the irrepressible conflict between Fascism and Social Democracy, ALWAYS TAUGHT IT." It must be recalled that it was during the brief ultra-Leftist swing in 1924 that Stalin presented his theory of social-fascism, the thesis reading: "Social democracy is objectively the moderate wing of Fascism.....they are not antipodes, but twins."

Your false statement that Stalinism always taught that Social Democracy and Fascism ~~are~~ irreconcilable is far from being accidental. It is your line. This outright distortion objectively is a criminal hiding of the Stalinist method of the two zigzags and aids Stalinism.

O N

T R O T S K Y I S M

In examining present-day Trotskyism you simply ignore the fundamental feature of this tendency which developed since the rise of Stalinism. You do not explain why Trotsky avoids a real fight against Stalinism. There is not a word, either in your letter or in your magazine, to show the genesis of contemporary Trotskyism.

On Page 1 of your letter you admit that of various opportunist tendencies "chief among these is the Third International." Leaving aside your

wrong definitions, this formulation is correct. Stalinism is the main traitorous force within the working class, and Stalin, the man who controls the distorted proletarian State, is the chief of falsifiers and swindlers operating within the oppressed masses inside and outside the Soviet Union. But you divert the attention of the workers from this cardinal fact by calling Trotsky "The chief of charlatans" (p.34).

You sneer at the Trotskyist movement. "He and his ilk play as serious a part in class struggle as the unemployed intelligentsia, the theoreticians of streamlined social-patriotism."

This is a terrible falsification. Trotskyism is an extremely serious enemy, international in scope, playing a very important role due to Trotsky's part in the October revolution, and next to Stalinism the most pernicious of all the pseudo-Bolshevik forces. Your low estimation of Trotsky's role is also in conflict with your descriptive appellation "The chief of charlatans." We define Trotskyism as a hybrid of Centrism, Bolshevism and Stalinism with an anti-Stalinist coloration. Trotsky is attached to Stalinism because he time and again voted against accepting Stalin's resignation. Because he deceived the proletariat from 1922 and throughout the years of the rise of Stalinism. Because he, objectively, assisted Stalin to deliver the German proletariat to Hitler. Because he is among those who are chiefly responsible for the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union and the Comintern. Because he perpetuates the fraud that this degeneration came as a result of the adoption by the Stalinists in 1924 of the "theory" of Socialism in one country, hiding the truth that the degeneration came as a result of the intrigues and plots among the leaders conspiring for personal power. Trotskyism covers up and objectively serves Stalinism. It fights against the dictatorship of one party; it supports reformism, bourgeois democracy in Spain and Mexico. If the origin of today's Trotskyism is not correctly explained to the workers, it is not only possible but absolutely inevitable that many workers disillusioned

with Stalinism will fall into the trap of Trotskyism.

F I E L D, S T A M M
and
O E H L E R

So far as Fieldism is concerned you assure us that "a precise and scientific term for this tendency is Trotskyism that out-Trotsky's Trotskys." We cannot help remarking that such term is neither precise nor scientific; it is meaningless. In what particular way does Fieldism show itself to be Trotskyist you do not show. We evaluate the Fieldites as Left-Trotskyists, above all because their view is that up to the "French Turn" Trotsky was a Marxist. They cover up Trotsky's treacherous part in the creation of the Stalinist monster. They have already stepped into the Leftist morass by declaring that the Soviet Union is no longer a Workers State.

Your estimation of Stamm and Oehler is utterly unpolitical. You write: "These two scoundrels represent a single trend which might be described as ultra-left Trotskys. They too desire nothing more than the united front against fascism, the defense of the "Soviet Union," and the Fourth International as the only instrument for proletarian salvation. The panacea of the revolutionary workers party is their most disgusting present to labor." There is not a single word to give the workers an idea as to what sort of a tendency "these two scoundrels" represent. What is their political line and what is wrong with it? We show that they are left Trotskyists, as Field is, because they are covering up Trotsky's true role since Lenin's illness and death. Even after the "French Turn" they declared that Trotsky's line, though opportunist, is not anti-workingclass. They are deceiving the workers as to the genesis and development of Stalinism and of other pseudo-Bolshevik movements within the proletariat. They refuse to declare openly that Stalinism is the chief enemy within the workingclass.

They lump Stalinism together with reformism. They conceal the truth about the Stalinist zigzags. Both Oehler and Stamm, by declaring the main danger to be Caballero and the Anarchists rather than Stalinism, have assisted Stalin in betraying the Spanish workers. Like Field, Lovestone, Trotsky, Mienov and others they pursue a fake mass line assuring the vanguard workers who are influenced by them that the masses can be reached without a head-on collision with Stalinism.

It is for the reasons given above that Oehler and Stamm cannot be regarded as Marxists, and not because they advocate the necessity of building a revolutionary party, which is a correct thing to do.

T H E Q U E S T I O N O F
S T A L I N ' S W A R

Now on the attitude the workers should take in the event of war between the Soviet Union and the imperialists. We read in your letter: "Any war that Russia might undertake, under its present government would be an imperialist war.....We are against the defense of the Soviet Union because we are opposed to the shedding of proletarian blood for what does not exist. There is no Soviet Union, there is only the Russian empire, the aggregate of nations and governments under the iron heel of Stalinism which daily destroys the proletarian dictatorship created by October 1917" (Page 5).

We'll have to dissect this, separating fact from illusion. That Stalinism can conduct only a counter-revolutionary war, goes without saying. But in so far as the question of the workers defending the "Russian empire," you have done phenomenally well in tangling yourself inextricably in a glaring contradiction. Observe that you yourself admit that the Stalinist regime exists "within a proletarian state, under conditions that frustrate free trade and individual monopolies of the means of production and exchange "(Page 2). But the use of

the present tense in your statement that Stalinism "daily destroys the proletarian dictatorship" amounts to an admission that in Russia not all the conquests of October have been eaten away by the Stalinist cancer. Without eluding truth and logic, it is clear that Russia in its material foundation is still a proletarian State, though horribly distorted by the usurping bureaucratic centralism. It is also obvious that the duty of true Marxists is to defend the remnants of October against the enemy within — Stalinism; and the enemy without — international imperialism. In the problem of defending the distorted proletarian State the Marxists must demarcate themselves sharply from the opportunists who in one way or another assist Stalinism and the bourgeoisie. The Stalinist rank-and-file workers see only the economic structure and close their eyes to the political and administrative superstructure. Trotsky and Lovestone see both the structure and the superstructure but make peace with the reactionary superstructure. The ultra-Leftists' attention is drawn mainly to the superstructure. They distort the true character of the economic structure and urge the workers to practice "revolutionary" defeatism when the armies of world imperialism enter the Soviet Union to smash not only Stalinism but also its material base, to reintroduce private property relations in the means of production and exchange.

Yours is an ultra-Leftist position, bent upon turning your back on the sick proletarian State. You are compelled to recognize that the Soviet Union is different from the bourgeois States.

You do not realize that by saying "World capital regards the Russian state as a bug in its soup," you unwittingly indicate the salient fact that the chief contradiction in the world today is between socialized property of the bureaucratically distorted proletarian State and private property of world capitalism. Seizing upon the invention of yours you cry out "there is only the Russian empire." Your policy is "We will call on Russian

toilers to practice revolutionary defeatism...even if Fascism is flooding over the empire's borders." A more effective way of assisting capitalism to finish the remnants of October is difficult to imagine.

Your unscientific position helps Stalinism to continue its deadly hold upon the Russian and world working-class. Everybody knows that in an imperialist war none of the imperialist powers threatens to alter the economic foundations of society in the countries of the defeated antagonists. But the defeat of Stalin's "Red" forces, which are based upon bureaucratically controlled socialized economy, by the armies of "democratic" England, Fascist Germany or semi-feudal Japan, which are based upon private ownership of industry — a distinctly lower economic order — can result only in the restoration of private property in Russia, very possible under the bloody rule of the Romanovs. Internationally, the defeat of the "Red" armies by the world bourgeoisie would only intensify the demoralization and ideological chaos within the proletariat. The Russian workers in the face of restoration of private property rights in the provinces occupied by imperialist forces, would naturally see in Stalin the defender of socialized property. The slogan "revolutionary defeatism," because it is incorrect for the Soviet Union would serve Stalinism and would help the Browders and Dimitroffs make the workers cling the more to the "greatest disciple of Lenin." Not for one instant must revolutionists lose sight of the fact that Stalinism is not a social class but an opportunist force, an aristocracy of labor, in control of the workers state and operating within the camp of the international proletariat to prevent a new revolution. The overthrow of this privileged, reactionary bureaucratic crust by the revolutionary proletariat will not alter the fundamental property order within the State. Proceeding from this basic understanding the revolutionists are duty-bound to set the Russian workers in motion of militant struggle against Stalinism, international imperialism and spread among the workers inside and outside, the

slogan: No confidence in Stalin! By removing the Stalinist bureaucracy and instituting direct workers control the proletariat must transform Stalin's war for the privileges of the bureaucrats into a revolutionary war against world imperialism! Such slogans will be along Leninist lines because it will fit into the realistic interests of the international proletariat. The Russian workers, even the less advanced among them, will grasp that this policy not only does not threaten the form of property in the Soviet Union but in actuality is the only safeguard of socialized property in that it prepares to remove the Stalinist incubus and prevent Fascism from "flooding over the empire's borders." They will come to the understanding that it is the old Leninist line of workers democracy within the Soviet Union and of extending the October revolution throughout the entire world.

T H E

L E N I N I S T L E A G U E

O N S T A L I N I S M

To conclude this lengthy letter, Concerning our magazine IN DEFENSE OF BOLSHEVISM you say: "We like the magazine's work of exposure of Trotsky's and Lovestone's bloody past, and esteem highly its services in clearing up many heads concerning the functions of Stalinism and its satellites. However, we do not believe that it will ever achieve its purpose, the explosion of Stalinism so long as it persists in idealizing, fetishizing it..."

Where is your logic? It does not occur to you that our exposure against Stalin, Trotsky, Lovestone and other betrayers of the proletariat flows directly from our political position. Next, how can you charge that we are "idealizing" Stalinism? Lenin during and following the imperialist war devoted a considerable amount of his energies to writing about Social Democracy, particularly Kautsky. According to your way of thinking Lenin "idealized" social democracy. We state

certain facts, among them that Stalinism is the chief enemy within the proletarian camp. We explain the zigzag method Stalinism employs to disrupt revolution and do our utmost to waken the workers so that Stalinism and with it all other opportunist tendencies are shattered and the path cleared towards proletarian revolution. And you say that such work means "idealizing," "fetishizing" Stalin.

It is obvious that such a dangerous attitude as yours must lead sooner or later in the direction of branding Stalinism as "Russian Fascism," a position already arrived at by some ultra-Lefts, and of openly advising the workers to turn their back upon the Soviet Union. In your attitude we see only another method of objectively working for Stalinism and, therefore, for international reaction.

To sum up. Your confusion with respect to the Soviet Union, Stalinism, Trotskyism, Oehlerism and other opportunist currents that sprang up in the post-Leninist era; your failure to grasp the meaning of the conflict in Spain, the imperialist tactics in China, the present world situation as a whole; the unscientific manner in which you throw conflicting political tendencies into one pot labelled "social-imperialism"; and last but not least the Rightist features which supplement your ultra-Leftism make it plain to us that yours is an eclectic anti-Bolshevik tendency.

Deny if you will that your position, just as the position of Trotsky, of Lovestone, and of other pseudo-Bolsheviks, and also of true Leninists, is closely tied with the Russian question — the central question of the present era. In the entire Leftist craziness experienced by the proletariat, the present-day Leftism passes all in its harmful consequences. Instead of a policy of curing the diseased Workers State by means of a surgical operation, the Leftists propose to destroy the patient together with the disease. So socialized means of production and exchange means nothing to them. It was won through the most excruciating struggle and bitter sacrifice of hundreds of

thousands of the best lives of the Russian toiling masses. Established on the graves of private property of the Russian capitalists and landlords, socialized economy — one of the greatest and most precious revolutionary achievements in all history -- the ultra-Leftists, after recklessly pasting on some justificatory labels, "Russian empire," "State capitalism," and the like, are preparing to help reaction to tear it down through their counter-revolutionary defeatism. A more dangerous blindness leading to so monstrous a crime can hardly be imagined. And if the Russian masses were to carry out the program of the Leftists so that "Fascism is flooding over the empire's borders" smashing to atoms the socialized foundation and in the midst of an unsurpassed orgy of sadism and savagery reestablishes the Russian capitalist state, what will the honest ultra-Left workers' reaction be? With the world bourgeoisie sating its lowest class feelings of cruelty and furious revenge, with wide swaths of terror cut through the oppressed of the entire world, the honest but unwise ultra-Left workers will be sickened and horrified at their own incredibly vicious anti-workingclass policy which will have helped world imperialism to destroy the only remaining precious achievement of the October revolution -- socialized property. And the profound tragedy of their ~~will be~~ the keener because, victims of Leftist myopia, they will have acted in the name of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Recognizing the revolutionary origin and the transitional nature of the present Russian State, we establish in our analysis a distinction between the State's basic economic structure and the political superstructural disease. We combat Trotsky who pursues his old, treacherous circuitously capitulatory policy of expressing readiness to collaborate with the Stalinist cancer (The Case of Leon Trotsky, p. 171), and who in the event of an imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union, promises to tell the workers to remove Stalin "When victory is assured" (Ibid., p.299). We fight always under all circumstances for the complete destruction of Stalinism. Against

Stalinism we advance the policy of revolutionary surgery be there "peace" or war. The revolutionary workers must do their utmost to save the half-strangled workers state from the Stalinist bureaucratic vampire and create a healthy superstructure in the shape of a new Bolshevik Party and democratic workers' control of the entire socialized economy and of the administration of the apparatus. In the event of war usurper Stalin will skillfully avoid inflicting a crushing defeat upon imperialism for the fear of unleashing the forces of revolution. We advocate the September 1917 tactic (Kornilov situation) to expose and overthrow renegade Stalin and transform Stalin's reactionary and treacherous war into a revolutionary war against the world bourgeoisie. It must be borne in mind that when Lenin employed the September tactic the Russian State was capitalist both in its structure and superstructure. Kornilov's attempt contained imperialist features in that he was secretly backed by the British Ambassador Buchanan and the French military attache, while Kerensky enjoyed the official recognition of the imperialist allies, England, France, Italy and the United States. In the forthcoming imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union, alongside the foreign Fascist legions will march the revitalized Russian White Guards led by the Kornilovs and Miliukovs gathered from all the four corners of the world. International imperialism in all probability will assign them the role of puppets to rule over the Russian masses. In essence the forthcoming onslaught will be a repetition of the intervention when the Soviet Republic had just been formed, with the following important differences: A) It will be carried out on a titanic scale; B) Instead of the Kolchak and Donikin armies being the backbone it will be Hitler's Fascist hordes; C) The Workers State is in the grip of a clique of degenerated usurping gang of former Bolsheviks whose sole concern is to maintain itself in power by means of internal terror and a consistent, systematic prevention of collapse of international capitalism; D) The aim of the world bourgeoisie is not so much to restore the former Russian ~~ruling~~

classes to power as to abolish socialized economy and to carve up the vast territories among the imperialist states.

And in that situation you will tell the Russian workers to disregard the armies led by Hitler and his allies and aids sweeping into Russia! You will urge the workers to disrupt the front. How utterly devoid of a grain of Leninist sense, how monstrously reactionary and literally suicidal your policy of "revolutionary" defeatism for the Russian masses is can be seen in the glaring light of your own admission that the Stalinist regime "exists within a proletarian state."

Marxism is flanked by Right and Left opportunism. During the World War Left opportunism was dormant. Marxism (Lenin) was the extreme Left of all tendencies within the proletariat. Leftism made its reappearance in the May 1917 crisis in Russia, expressed in the adventurist slogan "Down with the Provisional Government." There was recrudescence of Leftism in September 1917 when some sailors, supporters of the Bolsheviks, inclined against Lenin's line and spoke of the immediate overthrow of the Kerensky government. Leftism broke out during the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations, endangering the life of the Soviet Republic. It appeared in Germany in 1920, necessitating a pamphlet on Left sickness by Lenin. Leftism was represented in the Comintern by Bordiga, who at the Fourth Congress of the C.I. regarded Lenin as being a Rightist deviator. This was but natural: Leftists view Marxism as Right opportunism, while Right opportunists brand Marxism as sectarianism.

It is in place here to mention a certain queerness of Leftism, namely, that it often swings to ultra-Rightism. Bukharin who in Lenin's day was a habitual Leftist, under Stalin readily supported not only the ultra-Leftist but also the ultra-Rightist zigzags. Cannon who was a Leftist in the underground days of the American Communist movement is today distinctly a Rightist. And coming to the present-day ultra-Leftists, the Mienovites reject the basic Bolshevik principle of dic-

tatorship of one party, the party of Communist revolution, and advance the old Menshevist line of freedom "for other workingclass" parties, now also supported by renegade Trotsky; and your own leader, Fairfax, holds that it is perfectly permissible for a "Communist" to enter a bourgeois cabinet. His exact written statement is as follows: "Communists may take part in capitalist governments, in any department of the bourgeois state." This opportunist position called "Millerandism" was condemned yet by the Second International in 1904. Certainly history has proved conclusively, especially since 1914, that "Communists" and "Socialists" who enter a bourgeois cabinet are among the basest traitors to the cause of the working class.

With the steady Stalinist degeneration of the first Workers State, especially after the Moscow "Trials," Leftism again became rampant among the workers. From a longer point of view, as the degeneration uninterruptedly continues, the danger from Left opportunism is acquiring a serious aspect. Many a radical worker, failing to arrive at the correct analysis of the counter-revolutionary transformation of the Comintern, takes to Leftism as a duck to water. In essence a position like yours is but the expression of the inability and unwillingness to struggle against Stalinism, the most potent opportunist malady ravaging the only Workers State and the international proletariat.

We can only sincerely trust that the comrades in your group make a serious and patient survey of the entire field of problems confronting the international workingclass and re-evaluate their present political position.

The watchword is: Beware of the tempting, revolutionary-sounding opportunist programs which spell disaster for the world proletariat!

THE LENINIST LEAGUE U. S. A.

November 28, 1938.

T O
T H E R E A D E R S O F
I N D E F E N S E O F B O L S H E V I S M

Dear Friends and Comrades:

You have been receiving our bulletin IN DEFENSE OF BOLSHEVISM for some time. No doubt you are now acquainted with the ideas expressed there and sympathize with the main aim of the magazine, i.e., to defend the ideas of Bolshevism against all its enemies and its pseudo-Marxist "friends" - especially against the Stalinist scourge which is burying the traditions and teachings of Leninism.

The comrades around the periodical IN DEFENSE OF BOLSHEVISM have undertaken the task of unearthing the whole truth about the degeneration of the Comintern and the Soviet Union, clarifying the class-conscious, revolutionary, vanguard workers; to rally them in an offensive against the persistent and deep-going trend of pessimism, demoralization, confusion and defeats

that have beset the international working class since Stalin usurped power in the Soviet Union.

In the very short time allowed us by history for this task, we must reach an ever-widening circle of politically clear and determined sympathizers and supporters. The imperative need of the hour is the need of a genuine revolutionary party. The work of carrying on and spreading IN DEFENSE OF BOLSHEVISM has already reached the limits of the financial capacity of our small group.

We ask you to share in the work of attempting to extricate the entire working-class from the reactionary wave engulfing it. We ask you to share in the struggle for the establishment of Socialism.

THE LENINIST LEAGUE U.S.A.

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The Leninist League, U.S.A.,
P. O. Box 67, Station D,
New York City

Dear Comrades:

Enclosed please find \$ _____ as a contribution toward the publication of IN DEFENSE OF BOLSHEVISM.

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P. O. Box 67, Station D
New York City

Dear Comrades:

Enclosed please find \$ _____ for which send me IN DEFENSE OF BOLSHEVISM for _____ year.