

# ON TROTSKYISM

**British  
& Irish  
Communist  
Organisation**



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## preface

*This pamphlet results from a meeting held by the Limerick Labour Youth Group in January of 1970 at which the Irish Communist Organisation and the trotskyist LEAGUE FOR A WORKERS REPUBLIC were invited to state their respective positions of the general political tasks facing the working class. The I.C.O. attempted to focus discussion on the nature of the Labour Party and the correct strategy with regard to it, since the political experience of the Limerick group was gained in the Labour Party.*

*The L.W.R., whose position with relation to the Labour Party is of course very dodgy, concentrated on the Stalin-Trotsky controversy, of which the Limerick group had little knowledge. To help the Limerick group to get to grips with this matter the I.C.O. proposed that the L.W.R. and itself should both publish a concise statement of their position on a number of questions. The L.W.R. would not agree to this. Eventually, however, they agreed that, if the I.C.O. published a statement of its position, they would publish a criti-*

cism of it within three months. Since 1965 the trotskyists have been acutely aware of the dangers of trying to reply to I.C.O. criticism, knowing that they could only lose influence in the working class by clarifying their position. It is a sign of the influence which the I.C.O. has gained in recent years that the L.W.R. is now compelled to reply to it.

We will deal with the following subjects: the trotskyist concept of "the bureaucracy"; Stalin; the dictatorship of the proletariat; socialism in one country; the political economy of trotskyism and Khrushchevism; and the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union.

BRITISH AND IRISH COMMUNIST ORGANISATION  
(formerly Irish Communist Organisation)

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# 1. The Bureaucracy

The I.C.O. criticism of the trotskyist conception of "the bureaucracy", which Trotsky maintained ruled the Soviet Union from the mid-1920s, is included in the pamphlet IN DEFENCE OF LENINISM, published in 1966. In essence, Trotsky held that political power had been taken away from the Russian working class by the "Stalinist bureaucracy" in the mid-20s; this "bureaucracy" oppressed the working class; yet this "bureaucracy" was not a bourgeois ruling class, or a ruling class of any kind; in fact this bureaucracy, which had "expropriated" the working class politically, and which was an instrument of imperialist counter-revolution, also represented the interests of the working class which it was oppressing. The "Stalinist bureaucracy" constituted a "deformed workers state", but definitely a workers state.

When asked why they had never replied to the ICO exposure of this nonsense, the trotskyists (in the person of their current leader, P. Healy) stated that the reply was included in Trotsky's THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED. In other words, the answer to the criticism of "The Revolution Betrayed" is "The Revolution Betrayed". We will take it that the trotskyists did not reply to the ICO criticism because they could make no reply that would not worsen the situation from their viewpoint.

In what follows we will summarise Trotsky's position from writings other than "The Revolution Betrayed", since that masterpiece was adequately demolished in "In Defence of Leninism". Here is how he described "the bureaucracy" in other writings:

"...the apparatus of the workers state underwent a complete degeneration... It was transformed from a weapon of the working class into a weapon of bureaucratic violence against the

working class and more and more a weapon for the sabotage of the country's economy" ... "The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat. The fascist, counter-revolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with even greater consistency the interests of world imperialism". He refers to "...fascist countries, from which Stalin's political apparatus does not differ save in more unbridled savagery..." (THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME OF THE 4th INTERNATIONAL 1938).

"The Soviet oligarchy possesses all the vices of the old ruling classes but lacks their historical mission" ... "Stalin and the Comintern are now undubitably the most valuable agency of imperialism" (IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM, 1940. p8,13)

Thus, according to Trotsky, the "Stalinist bureaucracy", which controlled the Soviet state, had seized political power from the working class and was using it to oppress the workers even more savagely than they were oppressed in fascist countries. It had become imperialism's most valuable counter-revolutionary instrument, and it even lacked the historical justification of the bourgeoisie. It was not only more vicious than fascism: it was also historically unnecessary.

It is obvious that if the state of affairs was as Trotsky describes it, the Soviet state could in no sense be described as a workers' state. It would be a fascist bourgeois state. Some of his followers, who retained an elementary sense of logic, began in the late thirties to disagree with his characterisation of the Soviet Union as a "deformed workers' state". If his description of it was correct, it was not a workers' state at all. Trotsky denounced them as petty-bourgeoisie, trapped in Aristotelian logic, who were incapable of viewing the matter "dialectically". His "dialectical" view was as follows:

"The role of the Soviet bureaucracy remains a dual one. Its own interests constrain it to safeguard the new economic regime created by the October revolution against the enemies at home and abroad. This work remains historically necessary and progressive. In this work the world proletariat supports the Soviet bureaucracy without closing their eyes to its national conservatism, its appropriate interests and its spirit of caste privilege. But this is precisely the traits which are paralysing its progressive work... Thus the singular position of the bureaucracy...leads to an increasingly more profound and irreconcilable contradiction with the fundamental needs of Soviet economy and culture. Under these conditions, the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, although it remains a distorted expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat, translates itself into a permanent political crisis" ...

"The role of the bureaucracy is a dual one: on the one hand, it protects the workers' state with its own peculiar methods (i.e., by oppressing the workers: ICO); on the other hand, it disorganises and checks the development of economic and cultural life by repressing the creative activity of the masses" (THE KIROV ASSASSINATION p12,18).

"Stalin's function is a double one... Stalin serves the bureaucracy and thereby the world bourgeoisie; but he cannot serve the bureaucracy without maintaining the social foundations that the bureaucracy is exploiting in its own interest". (THE CLASS NATURE OF THE SOVIET UNION).

This is indeed a "singular" phenomenon. Some of Trotsky's followers said that his position led to the absurdity of a "counter-revolutionary workers' state". Trotsky replied:

"Some voices cry out: *'If we continue to recognise the U.S.S.R. as a workers' state, we will have to establish a new category: the counter-revolutionary workers' state'*". This argument attempts to shock our imagination by opposing a good programmatic norm to a miserable, mean, even repugnant reality. But haven't we observed from day to day since 1923 how the Soviet state has played a more and more counter-revolutionary role on the international arena... There are two completely counter-revolutionary workers' internationals... The trade unions of France, Great Britain, the U.S. and other countries support the counter-revolutionary politics of the bourgeoisie. This does not prevent us from labelling them trade-unions, from supporting their progressive steps and from defending them against the bourgeoisie. Why is it impossible to employ the same method with the counter-revolutionary workers' state? In the last analysis a workers' state is a trade union which has conquered power" (IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM p30/1).

Here we see Trotsky's charlatanism in full bloom. A trade union is not a political party. Its essential function is to defend the economic position of its workers. Politics of one sort or another may have more or less influence in a trade union: but its essential function is not political, and does not arise from the political struggle for supremacy between capital and labour. The basis of a trade union is reformist. But the basis of existence of a working class political party, and of working class political power, is the revolutionary struggle of the working class to put an end to the capitalist system and build a socialist system. It is therefore absurd to treat trade unionism and politics as if they had the same function. The one is essentially reformist, the other is essentially revolutionary. A workers' state is not a trade union which has conquered state power but a workers' political party which has conquered state power. A workers' state is revolutionary, else it is not a workers' state. The concept of a counter-revolutionary workers' state (of a "counter-revolutionary revolutionary state") is absurd.

(In 1920/1 Trotsky had a controversy with Lenin on the subject of trade-unionism and politics. Lenin pointed out that "*the trade unions are not state organisations*", and said that Trotsky had "*committed a number of errors that are connected with the very essence of the dictatorship of the proletariat*". (THE TRADE UNIONS - AND THE MISTAKES OF TROTSKY December 1920). But it is clear that Lenin's attempt to teach him elementary politics had no success.)

DUAL NATURE We will now deal with the "dual nature" theory: the  
oooooooooooo "Stalinist bureaucracy" is revolutionary in economics,  
(though it is increasingly disrupting economic develop-  
-ment), but counter-revolutionary in politics. The counter-  
revolutionary bureaucracy is forced in its own interest "to safe-  
guard the new economic regime created by the October revolution".  
But "...the U.S.S.R. minus the social structure founded by the  
October revolution would be a fascist regime" (Defence of Marxism  
p69). Thus the fascist political superstructure is forced to  
serve the working class by the socialist economic base established  
in 1917, and therefore despite its fascist political methods is a  
workers' state.

In fact the "new economic regime" was not created in October.  
Political power was won by the working class in October. The soci-  
alist economy was not built for many years after. Socialist politi-  
cal power inevitably precedes socialist economic construction. In  
view of the exceptionally active role which socialist political  
power plays in socialist economic construction, it would be impos-  
sible for socialist economic construction to be carried out under a  
state which was not a revolutionary working class state. There can  
be no question of socialist economy developing under alien political  
power, as capitalist economy developed under feudal political power.

When the "Stalinist bureaucracy" came to power in 1923 there was a  
flourishing capitalist sector in the economy, a weak socialist sec-  
tor, and an immense section of petty-bourgeois production. The  
"new economic regime" was built in the subsequent decade by this  
"bureaucracy". Thus the "Stalinist bureaucracy" preceded, and  
guided the construction of, the socialist economic basis. How then  
could its behaviour have been determined by this basis?

When his followers deduced from his description of the Soviet state  
that it had ceased to be a workers' state, he denounced them as un-  
dialectical. We will explain exactly what he meant.

"...the nationalised and planned economy of the USSR is the  
greatest school for all humanity aspiring to a better future"  
(CLASS NATURE OF THE SOVIET UNION).

"Socialism, as a system, for the first time demonstrated its  
title to historic victory not on the pages of "Das Kapital"  
but by the praxis of hydroelectric plants and blast furnaces  
..." in the Soviet Union (SOVIET ECONOMY IN DANGER, p7).

The economic developments in the Soviet Union in the 1930s made such an effect that to deny them, or to describe them as capitalist, would have been to invite immediate ridicule. To allow that the economic development was socialist, but maintain that the state was bourgeois, would obviously have been absurd. In order to have any hope of gaining working class support for his counter-revolutionary schemes, Trotsky had to devise a position which would allow that the economy was socialist, and that the state functioned as a workers' state, and yet make it appear to be in the working class interest to overthrow that state. Hence the theory of "the bureaucracy" which functioned as a "degenerated workers' state".

Of course there is a logical chasm running through this position (as we have shown here and in "In Defence of Leninism"). This chasm had to be bridged "dialectically". In trotskyism, "dialectics" means the ability to hold a self-contradictory position. The self-contradiction is shrouded in a "dialectical" haze. (In his dispute with Trotsky in 1921, Lenin had drawn attention, not for the first time, to the fact that Trotsky mistook eclecticism for dialectics. (Dialectics analyses the contradictions of objective reality. Eclecticism is a "theory" made up of bits and pieces.)

The following remarkable passage occurs in Trotsky's dispute with his followers who were unable to keep up this "dialectical" self-deception:

"The Fourth International long ago recognised the necessity for overthrowing the bureaucracy... Nothing else is proposed or can be proposed by those who proclaim the bureaucracy to be an exploiting "class"... Our critics refuse to call the degenerated workers' state - a workers' state. They demand that the totalitarian bureaucracy be called a ruling class. The revolution against this bureaucracy they propose to consider not political but social. Were we to make these terminological concessions, we would place our critics in a very difficult position, inasmuch as they themselves would not <sup>know</sup> what to do with their purely verbal victory. It would therefore be a piece of monstrous nonsense to split with comrades who on the question of the sociological nature of the U.S.S.R. have an opinion different from ours, insofar as they solidarise with us in regard to the political tasks..." (Defence of Marxism p5).

That is to say: The question of whether the working class or the bourgeoisie is the ruling class in the Soviet Union is a secondary, and merely "terminological", question. A difference of opinion on such an unimportant matter doesn't warrant a split. So long as we agree that the Soviet state, whatever its class nature may be, should be overthrown, that is the important thing.

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The L.W.R. maintains this position in full. At the meeting in Limerick they referred to "the counter-revolutionary nature of the Stalin

leadership"; declared that "the basis of the bureaucracy rested on the new social relations that had been built in October"; and announced that "*the Russian working class need to regain political power: at the present moment they have economic power.*" Trotskyists never relish stating in all its naked absurdity the line that the working class is a ruling class which rules through a state which oppresses it. P. Healy stated it as follows under pressure in Limerick:

"The working class does not have direct political power... but in the last analysis the dictatorship of the proletariat exists". "Only in the last analysis does it (the counter-revolutionary workers' state: I.C.O.) serve the interests of the ruling class" (i.e. the working class: I.C.O.)

However, the heart of trotskyism is never in these efforts to explain these irrational parts of its programme. Its heart is in its emotional anti-Stalinism, in which it exploits bourgeois anti-Stalin conditioning to disrupt the communist movement.

(*The Irish Communist*. April 1970)

## 2. Socialism In One Country

By 1923 it was clear that the bourgeoisie had staved off the immediate post-war prospect of socialist revolution in Europe, and that for a number of years relative political stability would prevail in Europe. For the Russian working class this meant that the revolution in Russia would have to proceed for a time without the support of socialist revolutions in the industrialised countries, or else it could not proceed at all. To make matters worse Lenin had been incapacitated by a stroke shortly after he had begun to work out a strategy for this situation.

Trotsky, who in the period of upsurge of the revolution had given eloquent rhetorical expression to the prevailing mood of determination and optimism, now began to give expression to the indecisiveness and pessimism of the intelligentsia. He had always been a weathercock revolutionary. In 1922, when Lenin began to work out the strategy for developing the revolution in the circumstances of imperialist encirclement, Trotsky began to resurrect his "permanent revolution" theory, according to which it was impossible for the socialist revolution to proceed in Russia in a situation of imperialist encirclement.

BACKGROUND  
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This was not the first time that the question of "socialism in one country" had arisen. In 1915 Lenin had written, in opposition to Trotsky's UNITED STATES OF

EUROPE slogan, that "the victory over capitalism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country taken separately. The victorious proletariat of that country, having expropriated the capitalists and having organised socialist production, would stand up against the rest of the world, the capitalist world, attracting to its cause the oppressed classes in other countries, raising revolts in these countries..., and in the event of necessity coming out even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their states..."

Trotsky, who was then a "Centrist", trying to blur the contradiction between Communism and opportunism, and to "reconcile" revolutionary Marxism with Menshevism and Kautskyism, wrote in an article opposing Lenin's view, that "it would be hopeless to think...that, for example, revolutionary Russia could hold out in the face of conservative Europe... To accept the perspective of a social revolution within national bounds is to fall prey to that very national narrow-mindedness which constitutes the essence of social-patriotism".

The issue came up again at the Sixth Congress of the Bolshevik Party in August 1917. There was a motion that the Russian workers should "bend every effort to take state power...and, in alliance with the revolutionary proletariat of the advanced countries, direct it towards peace and the socialist reconstruction of society". Preobrazhensky, later to be a member of the trotskyist Opposition, opposed this, and proposed that it be amended as follows: "direct it towards peace and, in the event of a proletarian revolution in the West, towards socialism". Stalin, representing Lenin who had to stay in hiding, said:

"I am against such an amendment. The possibility is not excluded that Russia will be the country that will lay the road to socialism. No country hitherto has enjoyed such freedom in time of war as Russia does, or has attempted to introduce workers' control of production. In our country the workers are supported by the poorer strata of the peasantry. Lastly, in Germany the state apparatus is incomparably more efficient than the imperfect apparatus of our bourgeoisie... We must discard the antiquated idea that only Europe can show us the way".

The amendment was rejected. Therefore in August 1917 the Bolshevik Party committed itself, in the event of its being in state power in Russia and socialist revolution in Europe failing to materialise, to going ahead with the construction of socialism in Russia.

In 1922 Trotsky began to restate his 1905 "permanent revolution" theory which asserted that the Russian working class could overcome neither the internal nor the external obstacles to the building of socialism. The Russian workers could capture state power but could not build a socialist economy. "Without the direct state support of the European proletariat the working class in Russia cannot remain in power and convert its temporary domination into a lasting socialistic dictatorship. Of this there cannot for one moment be any

doubt" (PERMANENT REVOLUTION p237). The attempt to build socialism would bring the workers into hostile collision with the peasant majority.

In a "Postscript" to a 1922 reprint of his 1915 article, "THE PEACE PROGRAMME, Trotsky wrote: *"The assertion reiterated several times in the Peace Programme that a proletarian revolution cannot culminate victoriously within national bounds may perhaps seem...to have been refuted by nearly five years' experience of our Soviet Republic. But such a conclusion would be unwarranted... While we have held our ground as a state politically and militarily, we have not arrived, or even begun to arrive, at the creation of a socialist society. The struggle for survival as a revolutionary state has resulted in this period in an extreme decline of productive forces; yet socialism is conceivable only on the basis of their growth and development. The trade negotiations with bourgeois countries... constitute all too graphic evidence of the impossibility of isolated building of socialism within the framework of national states... Real progress of a socialist economy in Russia will become possible only after the victory of the proletariat in the major European countries"*.

*THE REVOLUTION GONE ASTRAY?* The revolution had been beaten down  
..... in Europe. What were the Russian workers to do? At this point the "left Communist" intellectuals began to quote a famous passage from Engels' PEASANT WAR IN GERMANY. The development of the 16th peasant war developed in one area, under the leadership of Thomas Muenzer and under the ideology of nonconformist Protestantism, to what Engels considered to be a form of socialist politics. But capitalism was only emerging as a world system and there was no possibility of developing a socialist economy. Engels wrote:

"The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class which he represents and for the realisation of the measures which that domination would imply... Thus he necessarily finds himself in a dilemma. What he can do is in contrast to all his actions as hitherto practised, to all his principles, and to the present interests of his party; what he ought to do cannot be achieved. In a word, he is compelled to represent not his party or his class, but the class for whom conditions are ripe for domination. In the interests of the movement itself, he is compelled to defend the interests of an alien class, and feed his own class with phrases and promises, with the assertion that the interests of that alien class are their own interests. Whoever puts himself in this awkward position is irrevocably lost."

This passage was brought to Lenin's attention in 1922 by a young Communist who was influenced by the 'left Communist' intelligentsia. The implication was obvious. Lenin was ending up in Muenzer's position, and was pragmatically stringing the Russian workers along

with illusions. (It has been stated specifically that Lenin was in this position by the trotskyist "International Socialism" group, a British stable-mate of the Peoples Democracy leadership.) Lenin replied: *"It's no use your quoting Engels. Was it not some 'intellectual' who suggested that quotation to you? A futile quotation, if not something worse. It smells of the doctrinaire. It resembles despair. But for us despair is either ridiculous or disgraceful."* (LETTER TO M.F. SOKOLOV, 16.5.1921. CW Vol35, p492)

**L E N I N** Lenin's view was that the working class need not necessarily come into hostile collision with the peasantry. A close alliance could be formed with the mass of the poor peasantry which would suppress the bourgeois strivings of the middle peasantry and isolate the capitalist peasantry. The poor and middle peasants could be guided by the workers in forming co-operative organisations whose development could be determined by the workers' state. In this way it would be possible *"to build socialism in such a way that every small peasant may take part in this building. That is the stage we have reached now"* ... *"the power of the state over all large-scale means of production, political power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured proletarian leadership of the peasantry, etc. Is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society?* (ON COOPERATION 1923)

**K A U T S K Y** The revolution had been isolated. It could not be predicted with any certainty how long the isolation would continue. Trotsky re-asserted that there was no possibility of building socialism in Russia alone. What, then, was his programme, what was his perspective? For all practical purposes he had none.

The German social-democratic leader Kautsky had opposed the October Revolution from the very start on the grounds that socialism could not be built in Russia, where economic conditions required capitalist development, and that the attempt to build socialism in Russian conditions would lead only to the bureaucratic regimentation of the workers. Here is how he stated his criticism of the Bolsheviks in 1918 (in the DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT):

*"The Bolshevik Revolution was based on the supposition that it would be the starting point of a general European Revolution... According to this theory, the European Revolution...which would bring about Socialism in Europe would also be the means of removing the obstacles to the carrying through of Socialism in Russia which were created by the economic backwardness of that country. This was all very logically thought out, and quite well founded, provided that the supposition was granted, that the Russian Revolution must inevitably unchain the European Revolution. But what if this does not happen? ...Our Bolshevik comrades have staked all on the card of general European Revolution. As this card has not turned up they were forced into*

a course which brought them up against insoluble problems".

Kautsky did not think that the European revolution would occur quickly (indeed his opportunist line was an important counter-revolutionary factor in Germany). In his pamphlet on Georgia (1921) he asserted definitely that "a world revolution in the Bolshevik sense is, of course, not to be reckoned with".

In 1921 (TERRORISM & COMMUNISM) Kautsky wrote: "they have anchored all their hopes on one thing. For if Russia ceases to be the chosen people of the revolution then the World Revolution must be the Messiah that shall redeem the Russian people". And he maintained that this Messiah was no more likely to come to the aid of the Russian Revolution in the short-run than the other Messiah. His view was that the Russian socialist revolution had run into a cul-de-sac. The internal situation required a bourgeois democratic revolution, the world socialist revolution was not imminent, and the real requirements of Russian society would assert themselves against all the illusions and all the heroic efforts of the Bolsheviks. The only question was whether the Bolsheviks would come to their senses, restore bourgeois democracy, and allow bourgeois democratic freedom to the Mensheviks and other parties; or whether they would continue the futile attempt to build socialism in impossible conditions, in which case they would only suppress bourgeois democracy, not in favour of socialism but of counter-revolutionary bureaucratic dictatorship. As Trotsky later held that Stalin's government was of a kind with Hitler's, Kautsky in 1921 said that Lenin's (which included Trotsky) was of a kind with Mussolini's. The real choice in Russia, he held, was between bourgeois democracy and bourgeois fascism, and the attempt to build socialism could only lead to the latter,

*S T A L I N* Stalin stated the real alternatives with his customary  
oooooooooooo frankness and absence of evasive rhetoric. In his Report to the Comintern ONCE MORE ON THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC DEVIATION (December 1926):

"one thing or the other: either we can engage in building socialism and, in the final analysis, build it completely, overcoming our 'national' bourgeoisie - in which case it is the duty of the Party to remain in power and direct the building of socialism in our country for the sake of the victory of socialism throughout the world; or we are not in a position to overcome our bourgeoisie by our own efforts - in which case, in view of the absence of immediate support from abroad, from a victorious revolution in the other countries, we must honestly and frankly retire from power and steer a course for organising another revolution in the USSR in the future. Has a party the right to deceive its class, in this case the working class? No, it has not. Such a party would deserve to be hanged, drawn and quartered" (CW Vol9 p22/3)

"...the question of building socialism has become a most urgent

one for our Party and our proletariat, as well as for the Comintern. The opposition considers that the question of building socialism in the USSR is only of theoretical interest... Such an attitude...can only be attributed to the fact that the opposition is completely divorced from our practical Party work, our work on economic construction and our co-operative affairs. Now that we...have entered a period of reconstruction of our entire national economy on a new technical basis, the question of building socialism has assumed immense practical importance. What should we aim at in our work of economic construction, in which direction should be the perspective of our constructive work? ...Are we building in order to manure the soil for bourgeois democracy, or in order to build a socialist society? - this is now the root question of our constructive work" (ibid p39).

Stalin reviewed the internal and external obstacles to the building of socialism. The former were mainly contradictions with the peasantry, the latter contradictions with the surrounding imperialist states. Following Lenin, he showed how the contradiction with the mass of the poor peasantry was not an antagonism and how the working class could guide them into co-operative forms of organisation which would serve as transitional forms for changing the peasants to workers. With regard to external contradictions he showed the strengths and the weaknesses of imperialism. On the one hand there was the undoubted military and economic strength of the imperialist states. On the other there was their dependence on the active support of the working class in the waging of war. Although the working class movements had not been able to capture power, they were developed enough to make it difficult for the imperialists to invade the Soviet Union. It was resistance of the workers in the imperialist countries, active on the part of some, passive on the part of many, that had made it impossible for the imperialist powers to wage effective war against the weak Soviet state in 1918-20. There were, in addition, inter-imperialist contradictions that could be exploited by the Soviet state.

Stalin summed up the position as follows:

"While the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country means the possibility of resolving internal contradictions, which can be completely overcome by one country (meaning by that, of course, our country), the possibility of the final victory of socialism implies the possibility of resolving the external contradictions between the country of socialism and the capitalist countries, contradictions which can be overcome only as a result of a proletarian revolution in several countries. Anyone who confuses these two categories of contradictions is either a hopeless muddle-head or an incorrigible opportunist." (CW Vol8 p278)

The internal contradictions could be overcome by the internal revolutionary forces. Externally the support of the workers in the capitalist countries and the exploitation of inter-imperialist contradic-

tions would make it possible to hold off the imperialists while the Soviet state strengthened itself to deal with them. At the beginning of the industrialisation drive in the late twenties Stalin reckoned that Russia had ten years to build up its industrial strength to meet an imperialist invasion.

(There is an item in the trotskyist litany which says that in the first edition of Foundations of Leninism (1924) Stalin denied the possibility of building socialism in Russia, but that afterwards when he had thought up his socialism in one country theory as part of his counter-revolutionary programme he recalled all the original editions, reissued them with the new line, and pretended that he had held to that line all along. This old chestnut was brought up by Mr. Healy in Limerick. It must be assumed that trotskyist 'theorists' absolutely never read even the basic 'Stalinist' works. The formulation in the first edition confused the internal and external contradictions for building socialism. This was corrected in subsequent editions, and the correction and an explanation of the incident is included in all the editions of Leninism that we have seen.)

Trotsky tried to make capital out of this incident in the Party in 1926, but the attempt did him no good. The good humoured contempt which seems to have been Stalin's personal attitude to Trotsky, is very obvious in his reply: *"Trotsky...said that I had replaced the inexact and incorrect formulation given in 1924...by another, more exact and correct formulation. Trotsky, apparently, is displeased with that - but why...he did not say. What can be wrong with my correcting an inexact formulation...? I by no means regard myself as infallible... What is Trotsky really after in stressing this point? Perhaps he is anxious to follow a good example and to set about, at long last, correcting his own numerous errors? Very well, I am prepared to help him in that... I am prepared to spur him on and assist him"* (Vol8 p365).)

T R O T S K Y In later times, when trying to account to the trotskyist sects for his behaviour in this period, Trotsky maintained that the issue of 'permanent revolution' was raised artificially by the 'Stalinists' in 1924, at a time when it had no practical relevance for the working class. The object was to discredit Trotsky by dragging up his 'old' differences (some of the major ones being as 'old' as 1921) with Lenin, and to lead the revolution astray by whipping up nationalism under the slogan of "socialism in one country". But any worker who reads the Stalin-Trotsky controversy of 1924/8 will be in no doubt that Stalin won the support of the overwhelming majority of the advanced workers because his line dealt clearly and frankly with the practical realities of the situation, and that Trotsky, who at the start had much greater personal popularity than Stalin, lost the support of the overwhelming majority of the working class because it became clear that he wasfunking the main issue, that his 'theoretical' position

consisted in rhetorical evasions, and that his political activity was reduced to the narrowest kind of 'tactical' oppositionist manoeuvring.

The question of "socialism in one country" was not raised by Stalin in 1922. As far as Stalin was concerned the question had been decided by the Party long before, and Lenin had drafted the main outlines of the programme for building socialism in Russia. The matter was raised by Trotsky himself in 1923 when he began to restate his old view that socialism could not be built in Russia. And he never developed his position beyond this negative assertion. We will look at his last statement of position before he was expelled from the Communist movement, his criticisms of the DRAFT PROGRAMME OF THE COMINTERN:

"...nations will enter the revolutionary flood one after another; ...the organic interdependence of the several countries, developing towards an international division of labour, excludes the possibility of building socialism in one country. This means that the Marxian doctrine...posits that the socialist revolution can only begin on a national basis, while the building of socialism in one country is impossible" (p23). "The productive forces are incompatible with national boundaries. The productive forces of capitalist countries have long since broken through the national boundaries. Socialist society...can only be built on the most advanced productive forces... Socialism...must not only take over from capitalism the most highly developed productive forces but immediately carry them onward... The question arises: how then can socialism drive the productive forces back into the boundaries of a national state?" (p44) "Harsh truth ...is needed to fortify the worker, the agricultural labourer, and the poor peasant, who see that in the eleventh year of the revolution, poverty, misery, unemployment, bread lines, illiteracy, homeless children, drunkenness, and prostitution have not abated... We must say to them that our economic level, our social and cultural conditions, approximate today much closer to capitalism, and a backward uncultured capitalism at that, than to socialism. We must tell them that we will enter the path of real socialist construction only when the proletariat of the most advanced countries will have captured power..." (p53)

WORLD ECONOMY Trotsky's conception of "world economy" and "the inter-  
national division of labour" are dealt with in IN  
DEFENCE OF LENINISM. Briefly, his view was that imperialism evened up the economic conditions of various countries (imperialist exploitation evened up the economic conditions of the exploited country with those of the exploiter country. He speaks, in 1928, of "*the diminishing gap between India and Gt. Britain*"!) Imperialism had negated national economy, and was a single integrated world economy. As there can be no question of socialist revolution with a fragment of an integrated national economy, so there could be no question of socialist revolution within a national fragment of Trotsky's world economy. The building of socialism in a single country of the world economy was as impossible and absurd as the building of socialism in a single

county of a national economy.

But, if Trotsky's conception had accorded with reality, the building of socialism in Russia could not have arisen as a practical question any more than the building of socialism in Kerry. The revolution would occur throughout the entire economy or would not occur at all. Nations would enter the revolutionary flood in rapid succession, just as countries would in a national economy. The mere fact that the building of socialism in one country arose in reality as an urgent practical question is sufficient to demonstrate that Trotsky's conception of world economy did not accord with reality.

Lenin's and Stalin's view was that imperialist exploitation widened the economic gulf between imperialist and colonial countries, and that imperialist world economy did not negate national economies. Imperialism remained a system of national economies, increasingly interlinked, some of which exploited others. The world market connected the national economies: it did not abolish them. In Lenin's view, the abolition of national economy within capitalism (a conception which Trotsky shared with Kautsky, who coined the term "ultra-imperialism" for it) was no more than a theoretical possibility of the distant future.

Instead of changing his conception to accord with reality, Trotsky kept on trying to distort reality in order to patch up his conception. (He claimed that "Marxism posits" objective reality). He commented on Lenin's last articles, in which the strategy for building socialism in Russia is outlined: *"one would have to surmise that either Lenin slipped in his dictation or that the stenographer made a mistake in transcribing her notes"* (CRITICISM OF DRAFT PROGRAMME OF COMINTERN p29)

His position never went beyond a repetition of the statement that the starting point of socialism is the most developed productive forces, after they have exhausted all the possibilities of capitalism; in Russia the productive forces are less developed than in the capitalist countries; therefore socialism cannot be built. (He did not, of course, add that in isolating the revolution in Russia for eleven years, history had defied his conception of how it ought to develop.) What was to be done? The workers had to be told to wait in hunger, homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy, drunkenness and prostitution for the world revolution. Though inapplicable to the Bolsheviki, Kautsky's remark was very descriptive of the trotskyists. They had reached a dead-end, and, as impotence always breeds fantasy, an abstract World-Revolution had become their Messiah.

The Bolsheviki, the "Stalinists", saw the Russian working class as an active force in the real progress of the world revolution, which, for the time being, was developing through the building of socialism in Russia. Ten years later the hunger, homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy etc. had been wiped out. Those ten years were

undoubtedly tragic for the trotskyist and other counter-revolutionary cliques who opposed the development of the socialist revolution in Russia. But for the working class and the poor peasants it was very much otherwise.

(Trotsky predicted, with his customary scientific accuracy, that in the event of an attempt being made to develop the Russian economy outside the capitalist world market, *"then in many branches of industry we should stop making progress right now and decline to a level even lower than our present pitiful technical level"* (p44). A decade later, as a result of two Five Year Plans, as a result of ten years of the impossible building of "socialism in one country", Soviet Russia had a technological basis that enabled it to stop and rout the most powerful and industrialised capitalist army ever seen. Without a comprehensive technological development this would have been utterly impossible. In Trotsky's view of the world it ought not have been able to happen.)

Trotsky, then, had no programme except waiting for the world revolution. Even the notion of waiting was absurd. A socialist state that was powerless to develop a socialist economy could not wait very long. A socialist state that could offer the working class the prospect of nothing but hunger, homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy etc. would not be tolerated for very long. And, while it was tolerated, such a state would not be an instrument of international revolution: it would be a mockery of Communism in the international working class movement.

*NON-ECONOMIC "INDUSTRIALISATION"* The nearest approach to a trotsky-  
..... ist programme is a hodge-podge called THE PLATFORM OF THE LEFT OPPOSITION, which includes a very interesting passage on industrialisation: *"A definite renunciation of the theory of an isolated socialist economy will mean, in the course of a few years, an incomparably more rational use of our resources, a swifter industrialisation, a more planful and powerful growth of our machine construction. It will mean a swifter increase in the number of employed workers and a real lowering of prices - in a word, a genuine strengthening of the Soviet Union in the capitalist environment"*. (p41)

The only possible meaning of this is that, while socialism cannot be built, capitalism can. And the "Platform" is in fact nothing but an opportunistically disguised programme for building capitalism.

Trotskyists usually maintain that, while Trotsky was totally opposed to the attempt to build socialism, he had a programme of the industrialisation of the economy which could have been implemented if the "perspective" of socialism in one country was defeated. This industrialisation programme they describe as "transitional". But "transitional" industrialisation is meaningless. "Pure" industrialisation can never occur in reality. It must be done under a definite form

of economic organisation; within definite production relations. In Russia "industrialisation" had to be either capitalist or socialist. If an attempt at industrialisation through building a socialist economy was ruled out, industrialisation could only mean the development of capitalist economy (Trotsky, as we will show, was a pioneer of "market socialist" economic theory).

(A sample of the miserable tactical manoeuvres of the trotskyist clique is found in the "Platform". It states that Trotsky has agreed that his theory of permanent revolution was wrong (p102). This was when Trotsky was still hoping to retain some working class support in the Party. Three years later, when pursuing a new opportunist tactic, he tried to explain this away by saying: "*Not having reread my old works for a long time, I was ready in advance to admit to defects in them more serious and important than really were there*" (PERMANENT REVOLUTION p6). A likely story!)

On the question of building a socialist economy in Russia, when this presented itself as the fundamental practical issue facing the revolution, Trotsky was a conscientious objector to the actual course of history, and he became, through his opposition to the way that the world socialist revolution was actually developing, an agent (ideologically and organisationally) of the imperialist counter-revolution. The tricky, evasive, opportunist phrases and attitudes with which he tried to disrupt the socialist movement from within were the same as those used today in Ireland by the League for a Workers' Republic and the trotskyist faction in the Peoples Democracy leadership. The latter no longer proclaim trotskyism openly as they used to a couple of years ago. Trotskyism cannot maintain itself openly in a situation in which there is a clearly defined Communist movement in the working class movement.

If it is becoming the trend that dare not speak its name, if it is trying to exercise its influence discreetly and indirectly, that too is trotskyist. Did not Trotsky himself deny trotskyism before the Russian working class in the mid-twenties in the hope of making tactical disruptive gains against the Communist movement which he dared not challenge openly for fear of total exposure?

(The Irish Communist, May 1970)

### 3. Political Economy

The League for a Workers' Republic was asked in Limerick to explain the difference between Stalinist and Trotskyist political economy. The gist of a confused answer by Basil Miller was that there was no difference. We fear that Mr. Miller does Trotsky an injustice by attributing Stalinist political economy to him. In fact Trotsky brilliantly anticipated the major development in modern anti-Stalinist political economy. And we cannot permit Mr. Miller to rob Trotsky of that honour. We refer to the notion contained in Trotsky's *SOVIET ECONOMY IN DANGER*, (1933). This pamphlet deals with the first Five Year Plan which was then transforming the Soviet economy.

In the mid-twenties Trotsky had declared the building of socialism in Russia to be impossible. In 1933 he wrote: "*Socialism, as a system, for the first time demonstrated its title to victory not on the pages of "Das Capital" but by the praxis of hydro-electric plants and blast furnaces*". If socialism is demonstrating its "title to historic victory" in the industrialisation of the Five Year Plan, that industrialisation must be socialist, you might reason. But not at all: "...*light-minded assertions to the effect that the U.S.S.R. has already entered into socialism are criminal*".(p7) So socialism's "title to victory" is demonstrated in industrialisation which it would be criminal to call socialist. Figure that out if you can.

Furthermore: "*The difference between the socialist and capitalist tempos of industrial development...astonishes one by its sweep. But it would be a mistake to consider as final the Soviet tempos of the past few years.*" (p37) So, even though it would be "criminal" to describe Soviet industrialisation as socialist, it has, nevertheless, a socialist "tempo". That's what the man says. God knows what it means.

Here is a further clue: "*The laws that govern the transitional society are quite different from those that govern capitalism. But no less do they differ from the future laws of socialism, that is, of harmonious economy.*" (p37) The Soviet economy, then, was not capitalist and was not socialist, but was transitional. What does "transitional" mean? It is certain that production relations of a definite nature existed in Soviet industry. "Transitional" does not describe class relations in production.

Production relations must be capitalist, socialist feudal, slave or some other kind hitherto unknown. Slave and feudal relations can be ruled out. Even in their wildest rantings about slave labour camps, imperialist propagandists have not attributed the immense achievements

of the Soviet economy to slave labour. Trotsky says it was transitional; which is meaningless. Definite production relations existed.

Trotsky maintained that the non-socialist, non-capitalist Soviet economy, with its transitional economy and socialist tempo, was riddled with major contradictions which were building up to a major crisis.

Basil Miller declared that "*the law of value was not restricted under Stalin*". Naturally, he gave no evidence of this. And in fact the disciple is very much out of key with the master. Trotsky condemned Stalin because he had restricted the law of value. He held the restriction of market relations to be at the basis of the supposed crisis in the Soviet economy:

"By eliminating the market and by installing instead Asiatic bazaars the bureaucracy has created, to consummate all else, the conditions for the most barbaric gyrations of prices, and consequently has placed a mine under commercial calculation. As a result, the economic chaos has been redoubled." (p34)

"The regulation of the market itself must depend upon the tendencies that are brought out through its medium. The blue-prints produced by the offices must demonstrate their economic expediency through commercial calculation. The system of transitional economy is unthinkable without the control of the ruble. This pre-supposes, in its turn, that the ruble is at par. Without a firm monetary unit, commercial accounting can only increase the chaos." (p30/31).

The market must not be eliminated, because outside the market there is chaos. Plans must justify themselves commercially, i.e. in terms of sound market relations. The market must be regulated by means of the market: by financial control. This indicates that Trotsky's "transitional economy" is nothing but a modern capitalist economy, with its plans based on market relations, and its "regulation of the market" by means of "tendencies that are brought out through its medium".

**A G R I C U L T U R E** As well as demanding market relations in  
industry, Trotsky demanded the restoration  
of "Kulak" capitalism in agriculture. (Kulaks are peasant bourgeoisie, equivalent to the big farmers who emerged from the Irish peasantry after the Land Acts.) The greater part of the land had been collectivised and the main power of the kulaks had been smashed by 1933. Trotsky declared: "*100% collectivisation has resulted in 100% overgrowth of weeds on the fields*" (p23). Which is another absurd Trotskyist phrase. If collectivisation had resulted in a decline in agricultural production the immense expansion of industrial production that went on all through the thirties would have been impossible. Without a substantial increase in agricultu-

ral production it would have been impossible. That is an elementary economic fact. An expanding industrial sector cannot be based on a declining or stagnant agricultural sector, (unless it is based on agricultural imports, which was not the case in the U.S.S.R.).

Agricultural production did not grow in the remarkable way that industrial production did. This was due in part to natural causes. Marx explained at length in *Capital* why the organisation of agricultural production is more difficult than the organisation of industrial production. For one thing, nature plays a role in agriculture that it does not play in industry. Secondly, it was due to social causes. The collectives were made up mostly of small and middle peasants, not workers. As Lenin explained, they could contribute to the building of socialism if there was determined working class leadership. In the long run they could be changed from peasants into workers. But for a considerable time they would remain peasants, a vacillating class whose contribution to the building of socialism could proceed only under the pressure of the working class. Leaving aside natural causes, this fact would make the development of socialist agriculture proceed more slowly than the development of socialist industry.

But to develop more slowly is not to decline. If there had been "100% overgrowth of weeds" as a result of collectivisation, the industrialisation that took place could not have taken place.

"The policy of mechanically 'liquidating the kulak' is now factually discarded (?). A cross should be placed over it officially. And simultaneously it is necessary to establish the policy of severely restricting the exploiting tendencies of the kulak." (p47)

The policy of eliminating the class of capitalist farmers was certainly not discarded. The 'New Economic Policy' (1921) had freed market relations and capitalist production. This was made necessary by the total disruption of production during the wars of intervention. During the twenties a powerful class of capitalist farmers developed. It was mainly in capitalist farming, and not in small farming, that the agricultural commodities for the towns were produced. In the late twenties the capitalist farmers began to assert themselves as a class. In a bid to extend their power they began to hold the towns to ransom, and a virtual state of war existed. The choice was to allow the kulaks to extend their power, and give them a stranglehold on socialism, or to wage a class war against them. Millions of small peasants and agricultural labourers took up the struggle against the kulaks under industrial working class leadership, and began the collective organisation of agriculture. 40,000 industrial workers went into the country to direct collectivisation.

Trotsky's notion of "*restricting the exploiting tendencies of the kulak*" is a bureaucratic fantasy. The kulaks were making a bid to free themselves of the restrictions imposed upon them. It was a matter of conceding to them or smashing them as a class. Since kulak production was the main source of agricultural goods for the

towns, and since they were using this position as a lever against the working class, it was a question of allowing them to free themselves from socialist restrictions as a condition for continuing to supply the towns, or of carrying out an extensive social reorganisation of agricultural production from which the kulak class was eliminated. "Restriction" was a thing of the past.

When the struggle against the kulaks was taken up in 1929 it was not let up until they were eliminated as a class. Like any real struggle it had its periods of intensification and relaxation, its adventurist offensives and its tactical retreats. The Trotskyist method of "criticism" was to take one of these incidents of the struggle and represent it as the main thing. Any real struggle has a certain zig-zag character, as Lenin often explained. Trotsky drew attention to zig-zags in the Stalin period and maintained that they were proof of Stalin's "empiricism". But only a bureaucrat (and Lenin frequently drew attention to Trotsky's bureaucratic outlook) could imagine that a real struggle could proceed in accordance with some preconceived blueprint. All that can be established beforehand are the main lines of struggle and the main outlines of strategy.

"...correct, and economically sound, collectivisation, at the given stage, should not <sup>lead</sup> to elimination of the N.E.P. (New Economic Policy), but to the gradual reorganisation of its methods." (p32)

The capitalist farmers declare war on socialism. When the working class resists they engage in sabotage. When collectivisation begins they carry out a massive destruction of crops and slaughter of cattle. A state of actual civil war exists. How do you proceed gradually in that situation? How are the kulaks to be converted to Fabian socialism? How do you go about a gradual reorganisation of the NEP when the NEP has been disrupted by the war of the capitalist farmers against working class control? There is no answer from Trotsky to these little questions.

In 1933, Trotsky demands the restoration of market relations in industry, with "plans" derived from the market, and "control" being exercised through financial manoeuvring. The market must only be "regulated" by market methods. In agriculture he demands the restoration of capitalist kulak production.

MARKET SOCIALISM      On the general question of market relations  
oooooooooooooooooooo      and socialism, Trotsky wrote:

"If there existed the universal mind that projected itself into the scientific fantasy of Laplace..., such a mind could, of course, draw up a priori a faultless and exhaustive economic plan... In truth, the bureaucracy often conceives that just such a mind is at its disposal; that is why it so easily frees itself from the control of the market and of Soviet democracy. But in reality the bureaucracy errs frightfully in

this appraisal of its spiritual resources... The innumerable living participants of economy, State as well as private, collective as well as individual, must give notice of their needs and of their relative strength not only through the statistical determination of plan commissions but by the direct pressure of supply and demand. The plan is checked and to a considerable extent realised through the market."

"Economic accounting is unthinkable without market relations."  
(p33)

When building socialist industry, "Stalinism" did not base it on market relations. Socialist production is non-market production consciously organised by the working class to meet social needs. Trotsky declared it to be impossible at the very time when it was being built in practice.

The economic achievement of the Soviet Union between the 1930's and the 1950's could not possibly have occurred if Trotsky's market socialist notions had been the guiding theory.

To show the impossibility of Marxist socialism (or Stalinism) Trotsky cited examples of disproportions resulting from planning faults which were published in the Soviet press. He saw these as signs of the impending crisis. In fact they were the natural teething troubles of a new system. They were remedied through improvements in planning, not through financial manoeuvres. Planning methods had to be developed through trial and error. But the errors did not lead to commercial crises. There is no evidence of commercial crises during the period of Stalinism. "Socialist" commercial crises only began to appear after Tito and Khrushchev began to put into practice the market socialism recommended by Trotsky (following Proudhon and Duhring).

(In the modern revisionist manner, Trotsky observes: "...the ultimate cost of economically irrational 'successes' surpasses as a rule many times the value of the successes." (p14). If this means anything, it means that there was waste in the Soviet economy many more times the amount of what was actually produced, and that with "rational" economics the growth rate would be multiplied. But it is now a matter of history that no market socialist economy has ever remotely approached the high and sustained rates of development that characterised the Stalin period.)

In conclusion: the difference between Stalinist and Trotskyist political economy, which Mr. Miller was so coy about, is that Stalin was a Marxist political economist and Trotsky was a market socialist. Trotsky did not merely deny the possibility of building a socialist economy in Russia: he denied the possibility of socialist economy in general.

(The Irish Communist, June 1970)

## 4. Modern Revisionism

The L.W.R. in some recent publications has been doing what it can to maintain some semblance of a credible position on the revisionist economies. On the political economy of those economies they have published nothing of substance. They have a dogmatic commitment to the notion of "deformed workers' states resting on nationalised property relations". The nonsensical nature of their general theoretical position makes it unsafe for them to engage in any concrete analysis of these economies. All they can do is to try to exploit inadequacies in the published material of the I.C.O.; and they can't even do that with much intelligence. We will give a few samples:

"...the Maoites have discovered that Khrushchev "restored capitalism" in Russia. According to them the working class had direct political power in Russia," *[Mr Paddy Healy maintains that they had 'indirect' political power, which they exercised through their bureaucratic oppressors]*, "which was a full-blown 'socialist' country up to Stalin's death. By a short year or two later capitalism had been 'restored' due to a struggle within the C.P., when Khrushchev came to power and introduced a new economic policy. All this happened, presumably, while the ruling class, the workers, were having their lunch." (Workers Republic -magazine- No.25)

"At least in Eastern Europe the industries are run in the interests of the workers. There is guaranteed employment and education for all. This is possible because industry is nationalised and the economy is planned. Yet these countries are ruled and the workers oppressed by wasteful and inefficient bureaucrats, which itself just goes to show the superiority of a nationalised planned economy." (Workers Republic -bulletin- Jan 10th, 1970)

"Russia was Socialist, these gents claim, until the "20th Congress", shortly after Stalin's death, when a number of economic reforms were made. This, according to our Gaelic 'Communists', changed the whole nature of the Soviet State and reintroduced capitalism. Thus there was a qualitative change in the economic structure of Russian society. But as these people must surely know, such changes take place only through violent revolution accompanied by rapid transformation of the superstructure. When and where did the revolution take place? No answer! Perhaps the "Red Bourgeois" tricked the Russian workers? - how Irish can some of these 'Communists' get!" (Young Socialist, - published by Trotskyists in the Labour Party- No. 12.

What the ICO has established is that Marxist political economy was dominant in Russia in the Stalin period, but that bourgeois political economy became dominant subsequently; that economic policy was socialist in the Stalin period and became bourgeois subsequently; that economic construction was socialist in the Stalin period and was designed to reconstruct the market subsequently. The LWR has nothing to say about these things. On the most elementary level it is blinkered by dogma and incapable of accurate description. Where is there in Eastern Europe now 'guaranteed employment'? In 'Stalinist' Albania. Elsewhere, the new economic policy rules out guaranteed employment. In Yugoslavia, where the new policies have been longest in operation, there is massive unemployment. Guaranteed employment is in conflict with the principles of new economic policy and the system which it is forming. If the LWR is unaware of this awkward little fact it is living in a complete fantasy world.

If the Soviet government implemented a socialist economic policy in the Stalin period, and is now implementing a non-socialist economic policy, there has in fact been a qualitative change in economic policy. An investigation of the new economic policy shows it to be bourgeois. But the LWR finds this approach very 'amusing'. Their approach, you see, it to start by stating that such a qualitative change could only have occurred through a violent counter-revolution. Since they can find no trace of the latter, it follows that the qualitative economic change has not occurred. If, nevertheless, a qualitative economic change has occurred, it has not occurred in the approved manner and must be ruled out of order. It is a piece of reality that does not come within the terms of reference of Trotskyism.

The LWR engages in some weak sarcasm about peaceful counter-revolution. More is known about the counter-revolution in Yugoslavia than elsewhere in Eastern Europe. It did not happen while the workers were having their lunch. It so happens that they were in jail. Many thousands of the most class-conscious workers were imprisoned by the Titoites. A good many of them were murdered. If a Communist government looks crooked at a bourgeois intellectual the whole imperialist and opportunist press sends up a howl. But they never raised a murmur about the mass imprisonment and execution of communists in Yugoslavia. That is perfectly normal. In the class struggle one class doesn't agitate against the oppression of representatives of the enemy class. The trotskyists, as a detachment of bourgeois politics, supported Tito and raised no objection to the execution of Yugoslav 'Stalinists'. Perfectly natural. That doesn't mean that the counter-revolution was peaceful. It only means that, from the bourgeois viewpoint, the right people were killed. Less detail is known about what happened in Russia. It is known that a number of leading members of the Communist Party died shortly after Stalin. Khrushchev boasted of how they shot Beria without even the pretence of a trial. He said that Beria had been an imperialist agent since the 1930s. Strange to say, the imperialists were unanimous in their approval of the murder of this influential agent of theirs. There is strong circumstantial evidencethat Stalin was murdered. An earlier issue

of "Workers Republic" approved of this killing. Trotsky declared in the 30s that Stalin was a servant of world imperialism. And again the whole imperialist world went into rejoicing on the death of a counter-revolutionary imperialist agent.

In addition to propagating the illusion that the revisionist counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and E. Europe was peaceful, the trotskyists also negate entirely the power of opportunism to disrupt and destroy working class politics. They suggest that because the revisionists do not say they are restoring capitalism, because they do not restore the most superficial forms of capitalism, and because they approach the problem of restoring the essentials of capitalism in an intelligent opportunist fashion - then, in fact, they are not restoring capitalism.

In a previous issue we referred the LWR to our pamphlet MARXISM AND MARKET SOCIALISM for an answer to their rhetorical questions about the restoration of capitalism by revisionism. They declare that they can find nothing relevant to the question in that pamphlet. We can well believe that. But the reason is not because the pamphlet does not deal with the question, but because trotskyism has no grasp of Marxist political economy, except on the most superficial level. If they had they would see the absurdity of the notion of a collectively-owned economy based on commodity production. Since trotskyism adopted market socialism forty years ago, it is understandable that it should be incapable of understanding a Marxist refutation of market socialism.

Market socialism is an impossibility. An economy based on market relations cannot be collectively owned and controlled by the working class. Collective ownership cannot give rise to commodity exchange in the means of production, because commodity exchange involves a change of owners. Where commodity production is the general form of production there must be numerous private owners. If there is a single collective owner, i.e. the working class, how can there be a change of ownership? How can there be commodity exchange?

If commodity exchange is general, then, whatever the superficial appearance, there are numerous private owners in reality. Where production is carried on by numerous private owners (whether individuals, companies or co-ops) who buy and sell with one another, collective control of the economy is impossible. Without real collective ownership there can be no collective control by society. And where there is collective ownership, commodity production is impossible.

The economic backwardness of the Soviet Union in the 1920s made it impossible to establish comprehensive collective ownership all at once. But in the 1930s the major means of production were brought into the collective ownership of the working class. They then ceased to be commodities, and their production and distribution was governed by consciously determined social requirements and the

availability of resources. But there were certain areas in which commodity production remained. As a concession to the petty bourgeois character of a large proportion of the peasantry, small private plots were allowed to collective farmers in which they produced commodities for sale on the market. This market could be influenced to a great extent by the state, but it was nevertheless a market.

But the main commodity exchange took place between the collective farms proper and the state. The collective farms owned their own produce and sold it to the state (i.e. to the collective working class). This again was necessary because of the petty bourgeois character of the peasantry. But though the collective farmers owned their own produce co-operatively, they did not own their major means of production. They had the use of the land from the state, and the agricultural machinery was owned by the state. State-owned Machine and Tractor Stations were attached to the collective. These M.T.S.s made it possible for the technology of agriculture to progress more rapidly than would have been the case if the collective farms had to buy their machinery, and were also a means of exercising working class control over the collective farmers.

In 1952 Stalin showed that the main economic measure needed then for the further development of the socialist economy was the elimination of market relations between the state and the collective farms, which could only be done by making the collective farms state property and thus eliminating the two forms of ownership that gave rise to these market relations. (This could only be done when the peasantry, under working class influence, and as a result of the experience of collectivisation, shed their petty bourgeois characteristics and developed into workers.)

No sooner had Stalin outlined the situation, and indicated the general direction of economic change required, than he died (either being killed, or dying naturally at an exceptionally convenient time for the bourgeoisie). His death was followed by the death of other leading communists.

The Soviet revolution was breaking new ground all along the way. There was no historical experience for it to learn from. At every turn an entirely new historical situation had to be analysed and entirely new policies had to be developed for it. It is in a situation like this that opportunism can wreak havoc.

Every revolutionary class develops from out of itself a leadership composed of its most determined, most capable, and most class-conscious members. When it is breaking new ground historically a class is very dependent on its leadership. If we take the British bourgeoisie of today, which has three centuries of experience as a ruling class, and whose business is merely to keep in control of a situation which it knows very well, it is clear that the assassination of individual political leaders would do it very little damage. It has vast reserves of politically capable people. If the entire Cabinet, shadow Cabinet, the heads of the Civil Service, and the Army Chiefs

of Staff were done away with, they could be replaced overnight. But in the time of the bourgeois revolution in the 1640s, when the old society was being overthrown and a bourgeois society was being made for the first time in history, in desperate struggle against the old society, the bourgeoisie were then very dependant for leadership on a particular body of leaders thrown up in the course of the revolutionary struggle. If the Cromwell leadership had been lost it could well have been irreplaceable. Realising this, the revolutionary bourgeoisie gave Cromwell very extensive personal authority and freed him from Parliamentary control.

The historical task of the working class is infinitely more far-reaching than that of the bourgeoisie. Its revolutionary leadership must be developed under very difficult circumstances in bourgeois society. The loss of particular groups of leaders can do severe short-term damage to its political struggle. Opportunist leadership can have very far-reaching effects.

The loss of an experienced revolutionary leadership in a complex situation in which the maintenance and further development of the revolution requires the breaking of entirely new ground, and its replacement with a sophisticated variety of opportunism which, under the pretext of developing Marxism, generated confusion on the very questions which are essential to the further development of the revolution: that is what happened in the Soviet Union in the early fifties.

In trotskyism the 'rule of the working class' becomes a metaphysical abstraction. The working class is said to rule through a bureaucratic caste which is hostile to it, and which oppresses it. What kind of 'rule' is that?

In the reality of the class struggle the working class can only rule when the state is controlled by a leadership which is the active representative of its interests: a leadership composed of the most class conscious, militant and politically developed members of its class. In the early stages of socialism, as Lenin often pointed out, the working class will necessarily include sections which remain in the grip of the bourgeois world outlook. Between this and the state leadership of the class a great variety of stages of political development will be found. In order to be able to rule, the bulk of the class must be developed enough to understand the elements of socialism. There must be an adequate political leadership. And there must be a substantial cadre force.

In Russia in the late thirties working class rule was acquiring a substantial flesh and blood reality. The Nazi invasion had a catastrophic effect on this. The communist cadre force suffered particularly heavily. There was a Nazi regulation to the effect that no communist prisoners were to be taken. All communists and all suspected of sympathy to communism were to be shot on the spot where they were captured. And since the communists were in the forefront of the resistance, the casualties among the politically developed

workers were exceptionally high. That is the reality behind the cheap sneers of the trotskyists about peaceful counter-revolution.

The political flower of the Soviet working class was slaughtered by the Nazis; there was vast destruction of the economy; bourgeois remnants who were prepared to oppose the Nazis had to be conceded a certain degree of freedom. In 1945 the work of restoring industry, of preparing against a nuclear attack by the USA, of curbing the bourgeois nationalists who had used their war-time freedom to extend their tentacles, and of developing all over again a strong communist cadre force, had to be undertaken.

What was done in the economy in the years after 1945 was every bit as remarkable as the economic development of the 1930s. A campaign against the bourgeois nationalists was launched in 1947/8. But at all levels except the very highest there had been a considerable weakening of communist politics which it was not easy to overcome. Provided that revolutionary leadership was maintained there was no reason why there should not be a consistent development of communist politics. But the mass development of communism in the working class was nowhere near high enough to detect, expose and overcome a sophisticated opportunist leadership.

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It was not through any miracle, but as a result of the combination of circumstances favourable to opportunism, which we have outlined above, that the bourgeois counter-revolution gained control in the Soviet Union in the mid-fifties.

(Irish Communist, June/July 1970)

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## 5. Stalin

"The motive of personal revenge has always been a considerable factor in the repressive policies of Stalin... His craving for revenge on me is completely unsatisfied... This is the source of gravest apprehensions for Stalin: that savage fears ideas, since he knows their explosive power and knows his weakness in the face of them." (Trotsky: DIARY IN EXILE)

There is no doubt that what Stalin felt for Trotsky personally was amused contempt: proletarian contempt for an intellectual attitudiniser. The brooding, the craving for personal revenge, was

all done by Trotsky. There is no hint of brooding in Stalin's writings. His last work was a high-level scientific work on political economy. Trotsky's last work was yet another long, brooding tirade against Stalin: yet another attempt to justify himself before history. (His writings on Lenin in the years 1903/17, when he felt continuously hurt by Lenin, have the same subjectivist character.)

On a comparatively reasonable level, he writes: *"The Soviet bureaucracy supports Stalin precisely because he is the bureaucrat who defends their interests better than anybody else"*. (DEFENCE OF MARXISM p179) In this view Stalin is merely the leading representative of the 'bureaucracy'. It is no more absurd than the notion of the bureaucracy itself. But it leaves Trotsky's "craving for revenge completely unsatisfied". It is not enough that Stalin should be the leader of the bureaucracy that had strangled working class politics: *"After the bureaucracy had strangled the internal life of the party, the Stalinist tops strangled the internal life of the bureaucracy itself..."* "...The Stalinist faction raises itself above the party and above the bureaucracy itself." (KIROV ASSASSINATION, ps25 & 12.)

The position then is that the 'bureaucracy' has 'expropriated' the working class, and that Stalin has expropriated the bureaucracy. There is a bureaucratic dictatorship over the working class, and Stalinist personal dictatorship over the bureaucracy. And Stalin is even more alien to the working class interest than the bureaucracy is. Stalin reached his position as personal dictator, not through any great strategic ability, but through a narrow and blind craving for personal power. *"Stalin measured every situation...by one criterion - usefulness to himself, to his struggle for domination over others. Everything else was intellectually beyond his depth... Nor did he think through to the social significance of this process in which he was playing the leading role. He acted... like the empiricist he is"* (STALIN p386, old edition).

The vast political and economic developments of the 1930s occurred under this absolute personal dictatorship. Stalin was a narrow-minded and politically mediocre bureaucrat with a strong craving for personal power who somehow or other became dictator of the Soviet Union. How did he achieve this position, and how did he maintain it for so long in a period of such momentous change? On that point, unfortunately, Trotsky can only give rhetorical expression to his own injured emotions.

Leaving Trotsky's gibberish aside, the fact is that Stalin did personally hold an exceptional position in the political leadership. Trotsky could not explain how he came to hold this position. And he considered it sufficient to show that Stalin held this exceptional, and let us say 'dictatorial', position to prove that he was a counter-revolutionary.

But Stalin was not the first man to hold such a 'dictatorial'

position; though nobody else held it for such a long period. In 'In Defence of Leninism' we quoted Lenin to the effect that the mere fact of personal 'dictatorship' indicated nothing about its class nature. In THE IMMEDIATE TASKS OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT (1918) Lenin dealt with the assertion that "*personal dictatorship is absolutely incompatible with Bolshevik (i.e. not bourgeois, but socialist Soviet) democracy*". He wrote:

"The question is becoming one of really enormous significance: first, the question of principle, viz., is the appointment of individual persons, dictators with unlimited powers, in general compatible with the fundamental principles of Soviet government? ... The irrefutable experience of history has shown that in the history of revolutionary movements the dictatorship of individual persons was very often the vehicle, the channel of the dictatorship of revolutionary classes. Undoubtedly, the dictatorship in individual persons was compatible with bourgeois democracy."

But is it compatible with socialist democracy?

"If we are not anarchists, we must admit that the state, i.e. coercion, is necessary for the transition from capitalism to socialism. The form of coercion is determined by the degree of development of the given revolutionary class, and also by special circumstances... Hence there is absolutely no contradiction in principle between Soviet (i.e. Socialist) democracy and the exercise of dictatorial powers by individual persons."

There was also a time when Trotsky understood that elementary truth. The following is a quote from his pamphlet, WHERE IS BRITAIN GOING?, written in 1925:

"Following at the tails of those living non-lions who write leading articles in the Manchester Guardian and other Liberal organs, (*we should mention here that the present-day leader-writers of the Guardian include one of the most eminent Irish trotskysts, Mr. John Palmer. And the presence of trotskysts on the editorial staffs of newspapers is now becoming a commonplace even in Ireland*), the leaders of the Labour Party customarily contrast democracy with any kind of despotic government, in the form of the 'dictatorship of Lenin', or the 'dictatorship of Mussolini'... The Liberal vulgarians customarily say that they are against a dictatorship from the left just as much as from the right, although in practice they do not let slip any opportunity of supporting a dictatorship of the right. For us, however, the question is decided by the fact that one dictatorship urges society forward, and the other drags it backward. The dictatorship of Mussolini is a dictatorship of a prematurely rotten, impotent, thoroughly corrupted Italian bourgeoisie. It is a dictatorship with a broken nose. The 'dictatorship of Lenin' expresses the mighty pressure of a new historic class and its superhuman struggle with all the forces of the old society. If Lenin is to be compared to anyone, it is not with Buonaparte, and still less with Mussolini, but with Cromwell and Robespierre. One can say with a certain amount of truth that Lenin is the proletarian Cromwell of the 20th

"A fool, an ignoramus, or a Fabian may see in Cromwell only a personal dictator. But in actuality, here in the conditions of a profound social rupture, the personal dictatorship was the form adopted by a class dictatorship, and that class which alone was capable of freeing the kernel of the nation from the old shells and husks." (p97)

The only explanation of the 'Stalin dictatorship' that makes sense is the same as the explanation of the 'Lenin dictatorship' given above. The view that Stalin manipulated the bureaucracy, which manipulated the Party, which manipulated the working class, and that in this hierarchy Stalin was farther removed from the working class than any of the intermediaries, does not allow of any natural, social explanation for Stalin's authority.

Trotsky describes Stalin as a savage. The savage imagines that he can control natural forces through a kind of mimicry: that he can cause rain by imitating a cloud-burst. But the power exercised by Stalin was real. It was not the fantasy power of a savage, and we must assume, despite Trotsky, that it was not exercised by the ineffective methods of a savage.

The source of Stalin's power was the working class. His personal power, in fact, was nothing more than his effective leadership of the working class in the building of socialism.

Stalin led the Russian working class for thirty years. These were years of continuous, rapid and fundamental social change in the Soviet Union. In a stagnant society a personal dictatorship based on military power may continue for a relatively long period by force of inertia. But the force of inertia can explain nothing about Stalin's position. At no time would the force of inertia have maintained him in his position for a year.

In a period of revolutionary change the continuance in power of an individual political leader can only be explained by his effective leadership of the class whose interest is the motive power for this change. There was only one class in the Soviet Union whose interest required the abolition of capitalism and the commodity system, and that was the working class. If Stalin's power was not an expression of his effective leadership of the working class, then it was entirely miraculous in character.

(The Irish Communist. July 1970)

*NOTE TO SECOND EDITION* It is interesting to note the similarity  
 between the view which the wing of the  
 Royalist party which came nearest to democracy had of Cromwell and\*  
 the wing of bourgeois democracy which came nearest to Communism had  
 of Stalin.

(\* the view which)

Edward Hyde, later Lord Clarendon, was actively involved on the Parliamentary side during the initial phase of the struggle between Parliament and Charles I, and his objective was the establishment of constitutional monarchy. But constitutional monarchy was not possible at that point due to the fact that the King was an incorrigible absolute monarchist. Since Parliament was determined not to tolerate any longer any traces of absolute monarchy the refusal of the King to compromise his authority led the Parliament to an ever greater assertion of its independence. This brought the more democratic and revolutionary elements to the fore in the Parliament, culminating in the supremacy of the Independents led by Cromwell. When Clarendon had to choose between a virtually independent Parliament and an uncompromising Monarchy he chose the latter, and became personal adviser to King. As a former Parliamentary leader he was a valuable political acquisition to the Monarchists. And though he joined the Monarchists he remained in partial sympathy with the Parliament.

Revolutionary times cause rapid developments. Clarendon's position, from being a liberal tendency in the Monarchist position, eventually became the main Monarchist position. Politics to the right of his became useless and died away. After the death of Cromwell, Clarendon negotiated on behalf of the King (Charles II, Charles the first having demonstrated the bankruptcy of absolute monarchy in England by losing his head) the compromise which led to the Restoration. On the Restoration he became the chief minister of Charles II. He later wrote "The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England": a Monarchist history which shows great understanding of the Parliamentary party. Here is how he describes Cromwell, the chief enemy of the Monarchists:

"...he could never have done half that mischief without great parts of courage and industry and judgement. And he must have had a wonderful understanding in the natures and humours of men, and as great a dexterity in applying them, who from a private and obscure birth, (though of a good family,) without interests of estate, alliance or friendships, could raise himself to such a height, and compound and knead such opposite and contradictory tempers, humours, and interests, into a consistence that contributed to his designs and to their own destruction; whilst he himself grew insensibly powerful enough to cut off those by whom he had climbed, in the instant that they projected to demolish their own building... Without doubt, no man with more wickedness ever attempted anything or brought to pass what he desired more wickedly, more in the face and contempt of religion and moral honesty; yet wickedness as great as his could never have accomplished those trophies without the assistance of a great spirit, an admirable circumspection and sagacity, and a most magnanimous resolution.

"When he appeared first in the Parliament, he seemed to be a person in no degree gracious, no ornament of discourse, none of those talents which use to reconcile the affections of standers by: yet he grew into place and authority, his parts seemed to be

renewed, as if he had concealed faculties till he had occasion to use them; and when he was to act the part of a great man, he did it without any indecency through the want of custom..."

"To reduce three nations, which perfectly hated him, to an entire obedience to all his dictates; to awe and govern those nations by an army that was indevoted to him and wished his ruin; was an instance of a very prodigious address. But his greatness at home was but a shadow of the glory he had abroad. It was hard to discover who feared him most, France, Spain, or the Low Countries, where his friendship was current at the value he put upon it." And he "even terrified the Pope himself, without so much as doing any grace to the English Catholics..."

"In a word, as he had all the wickednesses against which damnation is denounced and for which hell-fire is prepared, so he had some virtues which have caused the memory of some men in all ages to be celebrated, and he will be looked upon by posterity as a brave bad man" (Book XV, Paragraphs 147/156).

Compare this with, for example, Isaac Deutscher on Stalin. Clarendon was impressed by the great political capability of the vulgar commoner, Cromwell, and with the rise of England to a major European power during his government. Deutscher was impressed by the great political capability of the worker, Stalin, and by the immense industrial and cultural transformation of backward, illiterate, peasant Russia during the Stalin period. But both Clarendon and Deutscher, while being in sympathy with aspects of the new world that was emerging, remained rooted in the old. They could only judge the new world in the light of the old. Hence the paradoxical character of Clarendon's Cromwell and Deutscher's Stalin. But such paradoxes are not real historical facts. They arise out of an inadequate understanding of historical fact, or out of an attempt to understand a particular society in terms of a qualitatively different society.

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## 6. The Imperialist Press

It is now a year since the League for a Workers Republic undertook to publish a detailed statement of the trotskyist position on a number of fundamental questions, in reply to a statement of the 'Stalinist' position by the I.C.O. (which has been done in the earlier articles in this series). As was anticipated, the L.W.R. reply has not materialised. Already the LWR has split. The few concessions which its leadership made to reality brought into being a 'pure' trotskyist faction in opposition to it. This faction broke from the LWR and attached itself to the Socialist Labour

League (the main trotskyist organisation in Britain). It denounced the LWR (quite correctly) for liquidationism and nationalism, and after a flurry of activity hurried towards oblivion, after the manner of numerous predecessors. The effect of losing its pure trotskyist 'left' was to drive the LWR ever deeper into opportunism. It is now thoroughly submerged in the Irish Labour Party, and any appearance of building an independent political movement has vanished.

An item appeared in "The Workers' Republic" of September 19, 1970, which marks the final abandoning by the LWR of the attempt to account for itself in real historical terms. This is a list of quotes which has done service in many trotskyist papers as a substitute for political thought. It consists of a couple of the more extravagant items from what is called the "Stalin cult". Also the following quote from a poem in an emigré Russian Monarchist paper, commenting on

(1936) Moscow trial:

"We thank thee Stalin. Sixteen scoundrels, Sixteen butchers of the fatherland, Have been gathered to their forefathers. Today the sky looks blue. Thou has repaid us for the sorrows of so many years."

This Monarchist statement is supposed to indicate that Stalin acted in the interest of the counter-revolution, and had the support of the bourgeoisie and the landlords, while the Opposition represented the working class interest... In fact all it demonstrates is that this particular clique of Monarchist emigrés retained all their political backwardness in exile. It may have seemed to them for a brief moment in 1936 that Stalin was becoming a Russian nationalist, and was moving in their direction. It would be interesting to see how long they held that illusion (if in fact they held it at all: it is more likely that the quote expresses glee at the illusion that two sets of revolutionaries were at loggerheads). In any case the Russian emigré Monarchists were by 1936 nothing more than quaint fossils of a world that had vanished.

The flower of the Russian bourgeoisie in exile was the Mensheviks, and the Menshevik bourgeois intelligentsia never wavered in the assessment that the Opposition was the thing to support and that "Stalinism" had to be overthrown at all costs. Recent imperialist publications express great admiration for the Opposition, and show a clear awareness that it was the spearhead of bourgeois politics in the Soviet Union. And, needless to say, it was not fossilised Monarchist politics, but a development of the Opposition (Trotskyist/Bukharinist) politics (aided by the intelligent application of imperialist pressures and inducements) that brought revisionism to dominance in the Soviet Union.

Since the LWR has raised the matter of the relation of trotskyism and Stalinism with the bourgeois press in the 1930s, let us see how the matter stands with Trotsky. (Unlike the LWR, we will take account only of the main bourgeois press, and ignore the idiosyncracies of obsolete or eccentric cliques).

Lord Beaverbrook's DAILY EXPRESS was in 1929, as it is today, a right-wing Tory imperialist newspaper. It is one of imperialism's most effective mass circulation newspapers on the Tory side. It has over the decades exercised a very extensive direct imperialist influence on the politics of a substantial section of the working class. When the thousands of workers who were influenced by its vigorous Toryism looked at their Daily Express on February 27, 1929, they say the following headlines splashed across the front page:

"TROTSKY'S OWN STORY OF HIS EXILE FROM RUSSIA: DRAMATIC REVELATIONS BY BANISHED REVOLUTIONARY: HOW HE WAS RUSHED TO TURKEY: BITTER ATTACKS ON STALIN, HIS CHIEF ENEMY: THE USE OF FORCE OVER A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE: AN HISTORIC DOCUMENT: PHOTOGRAPHS OF M. AND MADAME TROTSKY: TROTSKY'S OWN EXCLUSIVE STORY, BY LEON TROTSKY."

*"The Daily Express publishes today the first instalment of Leon Trotsky's own story of his banishment from the Bolshevik Russia which he did so much to create. It is a historic document. Trotsky, ill and exiled in Constantinople, where he is protected by Russian officials against the danger of assassination, has dramatically broken his long silence. He bitterly blames his arch-enemy, Stalin, Dictator of Russia, for the fate that has overtaken him, predicts Stalin's downfall, criticises the Soviets' present regime, and reveals the secret history of the developments which have led to his being a penniless political outcast."*

The Daily Express commented on Trotsky's articles: *"Their political and historical importance is remarkable, and at the same time they are full of vivid human interest that carries the reader from stage to stage of an astonishing narrative."*

The next day Trotsky again had the front page of the Daily Express. The headlines were: *"TROTSKY'S VIOLENT DENUNCIATION OF STALIN: 'GRAVEDIGGER OF THE PARTY': AMAZING OUTBURST BY EXILE: 'I WILL HAMPER HIM': DEFIANT CHALLENGES BY SOVIET OUTCAST: WHAT IT THINK OF STALIN BY LEON TROTSKY"*. And yet again on March 1st Trotsky occupied the front page of the Daily Express.

On February 27, beneath a welter of sensationalist headlines and blurbs, Trotsky began his articles as follows:

"Any policy with high ideas should avoid sensation, and my object in writing these despatches is not further to sensationalise my case, but on the contrary to stifle sensation by giving the public objective information as far as objectivity is possible in political matters.

"It is true that I am now adopting a different means of approaching public opinion than heretofore; but that is because I am in a different position from any I have ever before occupied..."

"My object is not propaganda, but simply veracity. Before I undertook to write these articles I demanded entire freedom of expression. I will say what I think - or say nothing."

In the articles which follow Trotsky - who had been expelled from the Comintern and from the Soviet Union the previous year - publicly launched his new political career, and laid down the new trotskyist positions. (And it was not only the Daily Express that became the vehicle for his politics - and paid him handsomely for the privilege. In the same period many right-wing imperialist papers in Europe and America put themselves at his disposal, and allowed him to "say what I think" in their columns.)

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The Comintern journal, Imprecorr (International Press Correspondence), commented on this new development in trotskyism in the issue of March 22, 1929:

"Since the end of 1928, the reactionary bourgeois press has been enriched by a new collaborator in the person of L.D. Trotsky. In the Daily Express, the organ of Chamberlain and of the Conservative Party in Great Britain, in the New York Herald and Tribune, the organs of the American capitalists, in the ultra-Conservative Dutch papers Algemeen Handelsblaad and Nieuve Rotterdamsche Courant, as also in other reactionary bourgeois papers, served by the American Consolidated Press agency, a series of articles by Trotsky has recently appeared, which were acquired by the agency for a substantial sum of American money. This has naturally aroused triumph in the bourgeois press, which could never have expected that in 1929 they would have no less a collaborator than 'Mr. Trotsky', as he is described below his portrait in the Daily Express.

"Yes, the bourgeoisie has reason to be glad. For a time the name of 'Mr. Trotsky' will serve as a bait for the love of sensation on the part of the public which the bourgeois press manages to keep in a state of benighted stupidity. And it is well worth paying Trotsky a few thousand or even tens of thousands of dollars for the articles in which he libels the Communist Party, the Soviet authorities and the Communist International.

"Of late years our class enemies have evinced great interest in the fate of Trotsky. Both the Social Democratic and the bourgeois press have promptly seized upon every invention, every libellous declaration of Trotsky, on all his attacks on the Party, on the Soviet authority and on the Comintern. His books and articles are prized by bourgeois publishers and bourgeois editors, who are glad to advertise them, seeing that the outward Left veneer of his writings is of no significance compared with their counter-revolutionary contents and in comparison with the objective counter-revolutionary role which these writings have played and still play in the hands of our class enemies."

The article quotes the following comment of Theodore Dan, leader of the emigré Mensheviks: *"The Social Democratic labour movement need have no fear in regard to the political activity of Trotsky. On the contrary, he is more likely to give the death blow to the Communist movement outside Russia and to induce the Communist workers to return to Social Democracy than to strengthen any Communist Party or to weaken the Social Democrats in any way"*.

Another emigré Menshevik writing in a German Social Democratic paper, according to the Inprecorr article, *"assumes that Trotsky still has remnants of his Communist illusions, symptoms of War Communism, and the like, but points out that it is not these differences that must be remembered but rather the various points which bring Trotsky nearer to the Social Democrats. This approach, she says, is based mainly on the fact that: 'Trotsky now derives his "vital" slogans from the programme of the Russian Social Democrats. The Trotskyists are gradually finding the right path'."*

The confidence of the Menshevik reactionaries that trotskyism would function to the disadvantage of Communism and to the advantage of Social Democracy has been fully justified by the history of the subsequent forty years. Trotskyism everywhere functions as the militant, anti-Communist, 'left' spearhead of Social Democracy. (The Irish trotskyists who undertook a year ago to publish a detailed statement on the matters dealt with in these articles have already virtually disappeared into the Irish Labour Party.)

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Inprecorr continues:

*"The reactionaries know what they are doing. They know why they publish the article of Trotsky. For the sake of the credulous he is at liberty to make the reservation: *"Before I started writing this article, I demanded the right of full freedom for my utterance. I will either say what I think or I will say nothing."* Everyone has the right to ask since when and why the bourgeois imperialist press has become a free tribune for such as profess themselves to be good Leninists. And if this 'truth' which appears today in the columns of the Daily Express...has been paid for with the gold of the bourgeoisie, every worker will understand that this 'truth' is advantageous to the bourgeoisie, otherwise it would hardly be paid for. Let Trotsky declare that he does not aim at propaganda but solely at the truth. Any any one who knows that Trotsky was subjected to the condition of avoiding all revolutionary propaganda will know how to estimate the meaning of his declaration that propaganda was not his aim.*

*"And is it not curious that the British bourgeoisie is willing to pay tens of thousands of dollars for 'propaganda' to Trotsky whereas it organised its breach with the Soviet Union for no other reason than just on account of 'propaganda'? Is*

it not obvious that Mr. Trotsky's sort of propaganda is absolutely different from the sort of propaganda for which Communists have been arrested and shot in all the capitalist countries of Europe and America?...

"The Daily Express prefaces the article by a short remark...: *"He reveals the secret history of the developments which led to his being a penniless political outcast."* Poor Mr. Trotsky. How is it possible not to pity this man who is now penniless and obliged to make money out of his political conscience? There is nothing to be done. He who has engaged to serve new masters must also suffer such reservations, such as Trotsky would not so long ago have attacked in the strongest terms."

On April 5th, Inprecorr reported that Trotsky's writings were being published *"even in Fascist organs like the 'Corriera della Sera' and in 'boulevard papers' like the Paris 'Journal'.* In America the articles of Trotsky are distributed by the Current News and Features, an auxiliary organisation of the Consolidated Press... This agency controls a big newspaper in practically every city, and thus Trotsky has from the very beginning had the 'big' press on his side."

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In an attempt to justify Trotsky, P. Healy - leader of the LWR - compared his Daily Express articles to Marx's articles for the New York Tribune in the 1850s. Let us list some points of comparison.

The Daily Express in 1929 was the organ of right wing Tory imperialism. It was, without qualification, the organ of imperialist reaction.

The New York Tribune in the 1850s was not an imperialist paper. It was an organ of the most advanced bourgeois democracy in the pre-imperialist era of American capitalism, in a situation where bourgeois democracy had still substantial progressive tasks to accomplish. It was founded by a group of Fourierist Utopian socialists. It campaigned for the abolition of slavery and supported the general democratic movement in Europe. (Its editor, Charles Dana, contacted Marx during the 1848 revolution in Germany. Beaverbrook did not, however, contact Lenin in 1917 to report the Russian revolution for the Daily Express.)

Mehring, in his biography of Marx, comments that the Tribune *"by its agitation for an American brand of Fourierism raised itself above the exclusively money-grubbing activities of a capitalist undertaking"* (p277). Lord Beaverbrook, of course, regarded money-grubbing as the noblest human activity.

Marx got paid a few dollars for high quality articles on developments in the international democratic movement. Trotsky got paid tens of thousands of dollars for a guttersnipe attack on the first socialist country, by the imperialists who were encircling it and trying to

destroy it.

At one point, when Marx saw signs that the Tribune was back-tracking from the democratic position on a particular issue, and was flirting with Tsarism and pan-Slavism, he immediately sent in articles exposing and denouncing pan-Slavism. The Tribune returned to the democratic position but cut down its contract for articles from Marx. Since Trotsky assures us that he insisted on being given "entire freedom of expression" by Lord Beaverbrook, and since he chose to publish an attack on the Soviet Union instead of an exposure of British imperialism, are we to take it that he was in general agreement with the politics of the Daily Express?

Marx's articles in Tribune were exclusively about international-democratic affairs. He did not use it for polemics against socialist tendencies that he disagreed with. At a time when he was on the starvation line, (the romanticised "penniless political outcast", Trotsky, never even remotely approached the poverty that Marx lived in for decades), Marx was able to get a small regular income, and at the same time contribute to democratic politics (in the sense of anti-colonial and anti-feudal politics, not anti-socialist politics) by his articles in the Tribune. He never compromised his Communist politics in these articles. Trotsky's articles, on the other hand, were exclusively attacks on the Soviet leadership and the international Communist movement. He did not make any attempt to **expose** British imperialism to the working class readers of the Daily Express. For all his eyewash about Beaverbrook giving him freedom of expression, he knew perfectly well what he could, and what he could not, get published in the Daily Express. Beaverbrook was not paying him to expose British imperialism. He was paying him to attack the Soviet Union and the international Communist leadership. That is all he was 'free' to do in the Daily Express, and other imperialist papers. And that is exactly what he did, in the appropriate sensationalist journalistic style.

There is no comparison between Marx's Tribune articles and Trotsky's Daily Express articles, however much the trotskyist may try to degrade Marx by comparing the two. If Marx had prostituted himself, for a high price, to Bismarck during the period of the anti-Socialist legislation in Germany, and had supplied the reactionary German press with guttersnipe rantings against the German socialist leaders, then we might begin to compare Marx and Trotsky.

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These 1929 articles were no isolated incident in Trotsky's career after his expulsion from the Communist International. He continued as he began. Throughout the 1930s he was imperialism's foremost anti-Communist guttersnipe. His major books, from "MY LIFE" (1929) to the hysterical diatribe against Stalin which he was working on when he died, were all written as propaganda for the imperialist press. Consider the following account of his literary activities

ten years later, given by his trotskyist biographer Isaac Deutscher:

"Financial difficulties", [i.e. not difficulty in feeding himself, as in the case of Marx, but difficulty in financing an international counter-revolutionary movement. B & ICO], "led him to a strange quarrel with Life magazine. At the end of September 1939...one of 'Life's' editors came to Coyoacan", [where Trotsky's Mexican fortress was. B & ICO], "and commissioned him to write an article on Lenin's death (Trotsky had just concluded the chapter in "Stalin" in which he suggested that Stalin had poisoned Lenin, and he was to present this version in "Life".) His first article appeared in the magazine on 2nd October. Although it contained relatively inoffensive reminiscences, the article raised the ire of pro-Stalinist 'liberals', who flooded "Life" with vituperative protests. "Life" printed some of these to the annoyance of Trotsky, who maintained that the protests had come from 'a G.P.U. factory' in New York, and were defamatory of him. He nevertheless sent in his second article, the one on Lenin's death; but "Life" refused to publish it. Ironically, the objections of the editors were reasonable enough: they found Trotsky's surmise that Stalin had poisoned Lenin unconvincing; and they demanded from him "less conjecture and more unquestionable facts". He threatened to sue "Life" for breach of contract, and in a huff submitted the article to 'Saturday Evening Post' and 'Colliers', where he again met with refusals, until 'Liberty' finally published it. It is sad to see how much time in his last year the irate and futile correspondence about this matter took. In the end "Life" paid him the fee for the rejected article." (THE PROPHET OUTCAST p446)

The 'biography' of Stalin is a long brooding compilation of gossip. It culminates in the suggestion that Stalin poisoned Lenin - or that he acceded to Lenin's request for poison in order to commit suicide. All that needs to be said is that in order to keep on top of the market for sensationalised anti-Communist journalism you have to get ever more sensationalist. By 1939 the guttersnipe was scraping the barrel. His scurrility had become so obviously baseless and hysterical that it fell below even the abysmal standards of objectivity which the 'quality' imperialist press requires of anti-Communist journalism. Even Deutscher thinks it wiser to concede that

"...in composing the portrait (of Stalin), he uses abundantly and far too often the material of inference, guess, and hearsay. He picks up any piece of gossip or rumour if only it shows a trait of cruelty or suggests treachery in the young Djughashvili. He gives credence to Stalin's schoolmates and later enemies who, in reminiscences about their childhood, written in exile thirty or more years after the events, say that the boy Soso 'had only a sarcastic sneer for the joys and sorrows of his fellows': ... or that from 'his youth the carrying out of vengeful plots became for him a goal that dominated all his efforts'. He cites Stalin's adversaries who depict the youngster and the mature man

as almost an agent provocateur.

"There is no need to go into many examples of this approach. The most striking is, of course, Trotsky's suggestion that Stalin had poisoned Lenin". (p453)

Deutscher finds Trotsky's caricature of Stalin 'implausible' because

"The monster does not form, grow and emerge. He is almost fully-fledged from the outset. Any better qualities and emotions, ... without which no young man would ever join a persecuted revolutionary party, are almost totally absent. Stalin's rise within the party is not due to merit or achievement; and so his career becomes very nearly inexplicable. His election to Lenin's Politburo, his presence in the Bolshevik inner cabinet, and his appointment to the post of General Secretary appear quite fortuitous." (p455)

The 'brilliant' Trotsky had degenerated so much even on the literary level, by 1939 that he embarrassed his idolators.

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From 1929 to 1940 Trotsky worked for the imperialist propaganda machine. And appropriately enough his literary remains and archives were entrusted to the bourgeoisie. Marx left everything with Engels. Engels left everything with the German Socialist Party. Lenin and Stalin left everything with the Bolshevik Party. Trotsky left everything to the American bourgeoisie (not even to his 'Fourth International'). He sold his archives to Harvard University for \$115,000. They found their proper resting place.

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Like many opportunists, Trotsky was riddled with affectations. He was above all a poseur, an attitudiniser. At the end of MY LIFE he strives for a new pose. To find it he casts back to the petty bourgeois market socialist, Proudhon. In the final paragraph (which might be the conclusion of a bourgeois romantic novel) we read:

"...Proudhon had the nature of a fighter, a spiritual disinterestedness, a capacity for despising official public opinion, and finally, a many-sided curiosity never extinguished. This enabled him to rise above his own life...as he did above all contemporaneous reality. On April 26, 1852 Proudhon wrote to a friend from prison: *'The movement is no doubt irregular and crooked, but the tendency is constant. What every government does in turn in favour of revolution becomes inviolable... I enjoy watching this spectacle, in which I understand every single picture; I observe these changes in the life of the world as if I had received their explanation from above;*

*What depresses others elevates me more and more, inspires and fortifies me; how can you want me then to accuse destiny, to complain about people and curse them? Destiny - I laugh at it; and as for men, they are too ignorant, too enslaved for me to feel annoyed at them."*

"Despite their slight savour of ecclesiastical eloquence, those are fine words. I subscribe to them."

When he rose "above all contemporaneous reality", and struck a metaphysical attitude, Proudhon at least did so in a private letter from prison. When Trotsky mimicked this attitude it was with the greatest public display. When he laughed at destiny and despised men as ignorant and enslaved it was when he was earning thousands of pounds writing propaganda for Lord Beaverbrook's paper, an instrument for perpetuating ignorance and slavery.

As Marx put it:

"...all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice...: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce." (THE EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE OF LOUIS BONAPARTE.)

(The Irish Communist. March 1971)

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## Trotsky: A Character Reference By Lenin

"Trotsky distorts Bolshevism, because he has never been able to form any definite views on the role of the proletariat in the Russian bourgeois revolution" (The Historical Meaning Of The Inner-Party Struggle In Russia. 1910. Collected Works. Volume 16)

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"It is impossible to argue with Trotsky on the merits of the issue, because Trotsky holds no views whatever. We can and should argue with the confirmed liquidators and otzovists; but it is no use

arguing with a man whose game is to hide the errors of both these trends; in his case the thing to do is to expose him as a diplomat of the smallest calibre" (Trotsky's Diplomacy And A Certain Party Platform. 1911. C.W. VOL 17)

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"...this Judas who beats his breast and loudly professes his loyalty to the Party" (Judas Trotsky's Blush of Shame. 1911 CW Vol 17)

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"Trotsky's 'workers journal' is Trotsky's journal for the workers, as there is not a trace in it of either workers' initiative, or any connection with working-class organisations"...

"Trotsky possesses no ideological and political definiteness, for his patent for 'non-factionalism' ...is merely a patent to flit freely to and fro, from one group to another... Trotsky does not explain, nor does he understand, the historical significance of the ideological disagreements among the various Marxist trends and groups, although these disagreements run through twenty years' history of Social Democracy and concern the fundamental questions of the present day"

"All that glitters is not gold. There is much glitter and sound in Trotsky's phrases, but they are meaningless" ... "But joking apart (although joking is the only way of retorting mildly to Trotsky's insufferable phrase-mongering)..."

"Trotsky is very fond of using, with the learned air of an expert, pompous and high-sounding phrases to explain historical phenomena in a way that is flattering to Trotsky. Reading things like these, one cannot help asking oneself: is it from a lunatic asylum that such voices came..."

"The reason why Trotsky avoids facts and concrete references is because they relentlessly refute all his angry outcries and pompous phrases. It is very easy, of course, to strike an attitude... Or to add a still more stinging and pompous catch-phrase... But is not this very cheap, Is it not this weapon borrowed from the arsenal of the period when Trotsky posed in all his splendour before audiences of high-school boys "

"The old participants in the Marxist movement in Russia know Trotsky very well, and there is no need to discuss him for their benefit. But the younger generation of workers do not know him, and it is therefore necessary to discuss him... Trotsky was an ardent Iskra-ist [i.e. a member of the Iskra group, of which Lenin was a leader] in 1901-03, and Ryzonov described his role at the Congress of 1903 as 'Lenin's cudgel'. At the end of 1903, Trotsky was an ardent Menshevik, i.e. he deserted from the Iskristis to the Economists

... In 1904-5, he deserted the Mensheviks and occupied a vacillating position, now co-operating with Martynov (the Economist), now proclaiming his absurdly Left 'permanent revolution' theory. In 1906-07 he approached the Bolsheviks and in the spring of 1907 he declared that he was in agreement with Rosa Luxemburg.

"In the period of disintegration, after his long 'non-factional' vacillation, he went again to the right, and in August 1912, he entered into a bloc with the liquidators. He has now deserted them again, although in substance he reiterates their shoddy ideas.

"Such types are characteristic of the flotsam of past historical formations, of the time when the mass working class movement in Russia was still dormant, and when every group had 'ample room' in which to pose as a trend, group or faction... The younger generation of workers should know exactly whom they are dealing with, when individuals come before them with incredibly pretentious claims..." (Disruption of Unity Under Cover of Outcries For Unity. 1914. CW Vol 20)

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"Trotsky has never yet held a firm opinion on any important question of Marxism. He always contrives to worm his way into the cracks of any given difference of opinion, and desert one side for the other" (The Rt of Nations To Self-Determination. 1914. CW Vol 20)

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"My principal material is Cde. Trotsky's pamphlet, 'The Role & Tasks of the Trade Unions'...I am amazed at the number of theoretical mistakes and glaring blunders it contains. How could anyone starting a big Party discussion on this question produce such a sorry excuse for a carefully thought out statement?" ... "Cde Trotsky has...made a number of mistakes bearing on the very essence of the dictatorship of the proletariat" ... "Cde Trotsky's 'Theses' are politically harmful. The sum and substance of his policy is bureaucratic harassment of the trade unions" (The Trade Unions, the Present Situation And Trotsky's Mistakes. 1920 CW Vol 32.)

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"Less than a month has passed since Trotsky started his 'broad discussion'...and you will be hard put to find one responsible Party worker in a hundred who is not fed up with the discussion and has not realised its futility (to say no worse)". ... "...what Trotsky wrote...was an exercise in bureaucratic projecteering". ... "It is Trotsky and Bukharin who indulge most in intellectual verbosity devoid of all facts" ... "Trotsky's mistake is one-sidedness, infatuation, exaggeration and obstinacy" (Once Again On The Trade Unions...And The Mistakes Of Trotsky & Bukharin. 1921. C.W. Vol 32.)

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