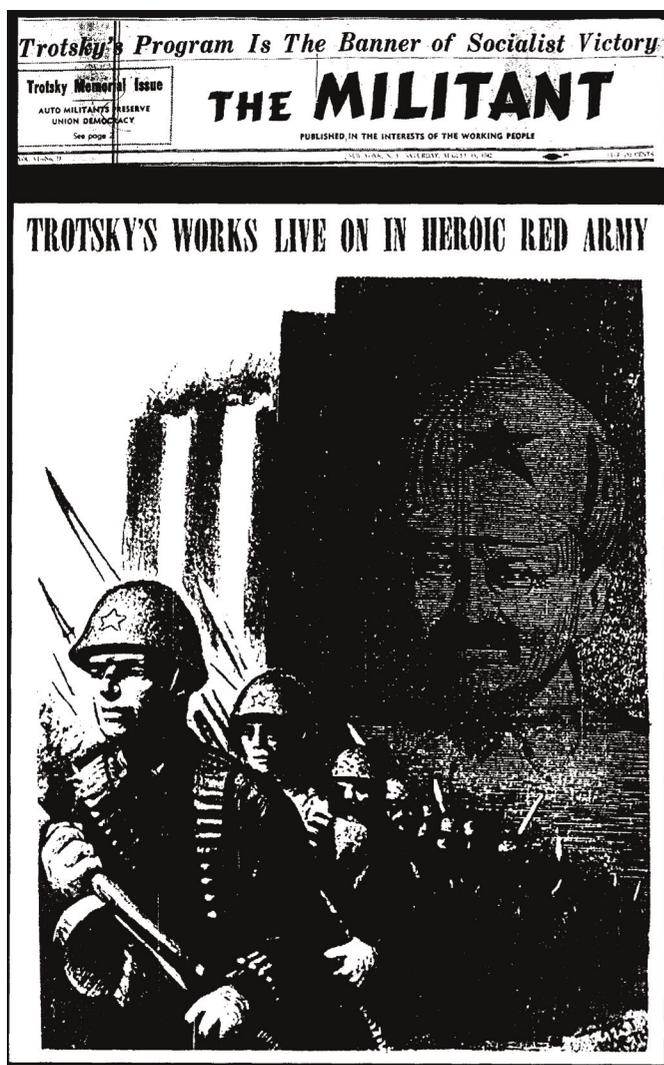
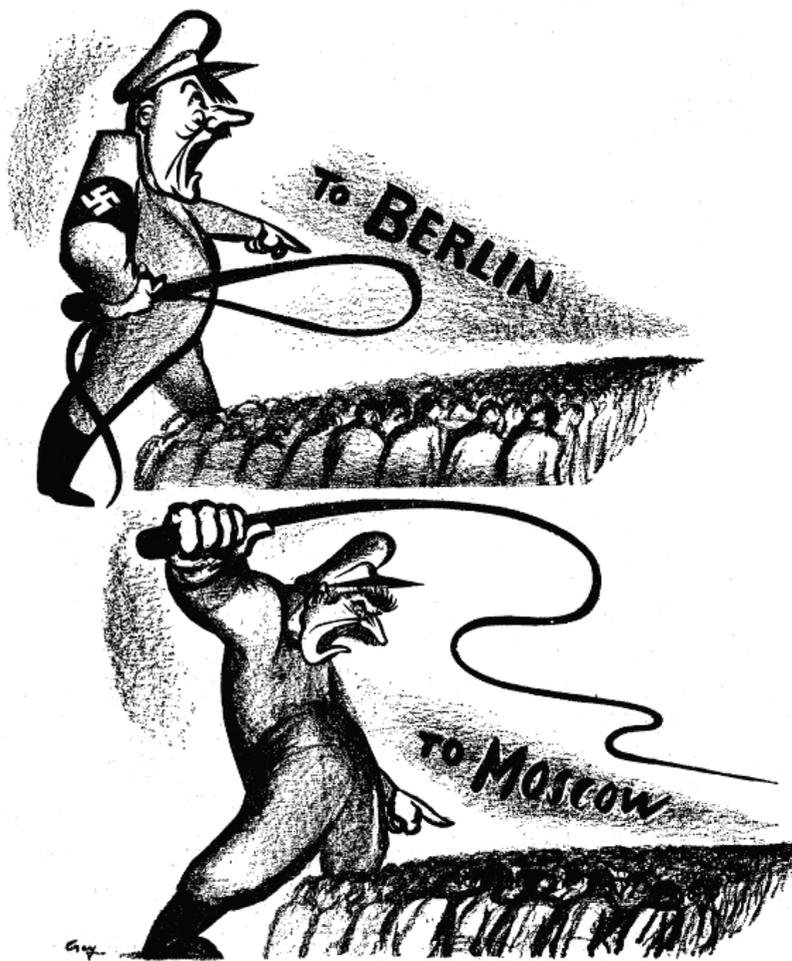




The two Trotskyisms during World War Two



Slave Labor -- Before Yalta and After



Left: the "orthodox Trotskyists" try to annex some of the Russian Army's glory. Right: those same Trotskyists knew who Stalin was.

History of the Trotskyist movement

By Sean Matgamna

By the eve of Leon Trotsky's death in August 1940, the American Trotskyist organisation, which was by far the most important group in the Fourth International, had split. Two currents of Trotskyism had begun the process of complete separation, but only begun.

It would take most of a decade before the evolution of two distinct species was complete.

For brevity they can be named after their chief proponents, James P Cannon and Max Shachtman. Trotsky's political relationship to those two currents is one of the things that will concern us here.

There is no question where he stood in the actual split and the events that led up to it — solidly with Cannon. Indeed, he

was the main writer on that side of the divide. On the underlying political issues, as we shall see, the picture was far less clear-cut.

And why was this the starting point of two distinct Trotskyist tendencies? From the very beginning of his exile from the USSR in 1929, Trotsky and his comrades had had many disputes about the exact nature, the class content, and the historical implications of Stalinism and of the USSR over which it ruled.

Trotsky broke with the biggest group in the Left Opposition outside Russia — the German Leninbund — in 1929 over their conflicting attitudes to Russia's conflict with China over the Chinese Eastern Railroad. Trotsky was vehemently on the Russian government's side.

In October 1933, in a polemical exchange with Leninbund

leader Hugo Urbahns, Trotsky had dealt comprehensively with more or less all the political issues concerning Stalinism and its place in history with which he dealt in 1939-40.

1940 was the definitive branching-off of the two Trotskyist roads for two reasons. It was the end of Trotsky's life, his last word on the subject. And it marked a decisive turn for Stalinism — the beginning of the Russian expansion that would by 1945 see Russia gain control of half of Europe.

Trotsky's views on Stalin's Russia, and the programme he had put forward for the liberation of the Russian working class, had evolved and changed as the Stalinist system had evolved and changed. Until 1933 he had thought that the Stalinist aspects of the Russian state could be "reformed" out of existence.

He had postulated, however, a special type of reform. He

The two Trotskyisms during World War Two

expected the bungling and irrationally-run Stalinist system to encounter disaster. The bureaucracy would begin to break up; then the party which Stalin had strangled would separate out from the bureaucracy; bring back the Left Opposition, which was confined in internal exile; reconstitute Bolshevism; and take power.

In 1933 he had shifted towards the belief that a “political” revolution would be needed to break the Stalinist dictatorship, though at that stage he still wrote of a resurgent Bolshevik party carrying out a “police action” against the bureaucracy. In 1936 he had deepened and sharpened what he meant by “political revolution”, defining it, de facto, as a full-scale working-class revolution against “the sole commanding stratum”.

In 1936, too, he defined the conundrum of the USSR and state ownership thus: “The means of production belong to the state. But the state, so to speak, ‘belongs’ to the bureaucracy”.

In 1937, in disputes with two members of the American Trotskyist organisation, James Burnham and Joseph Carter and with the French Trotskyist Yvan Craipeau, he had uncoupled the politics of “defence of the USSR” (against an expected assault from the West) from the characterisation of the system as a “degenerated workers’ state”. Assume for the sake of argument, Trotsky had written, that the bureaucracy had become a new ruling class: “When we are faced with the struggle between two states which are – let us admit it – both class states, but one of which represents imperialist stagnation and the other tremendous economic progress, do we not have to support the progressive state against the reactionary state?”

The direction of evolution of Trotsky’s politics on the USSR through the 1930s was unmistakable. He moved closer and closer to abandoning the “degenerated workers’ state” categorisation. At the beginning of the 1930s he was in public a critical defender of the Russian state. By the end he was denouncing the Russian bureaucracy as worse than all the historical ruling classes, and publicly calling for a new revolution against it.

MORE UNBRIDLED

Trotsky’s defence of Russia, and his insistence that it was a “degenerated workers’ state”, were not the result of his being “soft on Stalinism”.

In 1938, in the programme he wrote for the founding conference of the Fourth International, Trotsky said of Stalinism that it was worse than (pre-World-War) Nazism: “Stalin’s political apparatus does not differ [from fascist countries] save in more unbridled savagery”.

From the writing of *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) onwards, Trotsky consistently referred to Stalin’s Russia as an oligarchic “totalitarianism”. Indeed, he wrote, “The regime had become ‘totalitarian’ in character several years before this word arrived from Germany”.

At the end of the 1930s Trotsky began to shift from his “fall-back” basis for “defence of the USSR” — that, whatever the Russian system was, it was economically progressive. Towards the end he indicated that it was only potentially or conditionally progressive.

In his *Open Letter to the Workers of the USSR* in April 1940, Trotsky wrote:

“The conquests of the October Revolution will serve the people only if they prove themselves capable of dealing with the Stalinist bureaucracy, as in their day they dealt with the Tsarist bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie...”

“The infamous oppressive regime of Stalin has deprived the USSR of its attractive power. During the war with Finland, not only the majority of the Finnish peasants but also the majority of the Finnish workers proved to be on the side of their bourgeoisie. This is hardly surprising since they know of the unprecedented oppression to which the Stalinist bureaucracy subjects the workers of nearby Leningrad and the whole of the USSR”.

And in *The USSR in War* (September 1939): “In order that nationalized property in the occupied areas, as well as in the USSR, become a basis for genuinely progressive, that is to say socialist development, it is necessary to overthrow the Moscow bureaucracy”.

Even if it was not strictly speaking a ruling class, he wrote (May 1939), the Stalinist oligarchy “contains within itself to a tenfold degree all the vices of a possessing class”.

In the long essay *The USSR in War*, which he finished in mid-September 1939, he broke radically new ground. For the first time he accepted that the USSR, as it was, without any further counter-revolution to overthrow or modify the regime of the Stalinist counter-revolution against the working class, might have to be reconceptualised as a new and hitherto and

unknown type of class-exploitative society.

If the world war produced not the overthrow, one way or another, of Stalinism, but the spread of Stalinist-type regimes across the world, then “it would be necessary in retrospect to establish that in its fundamental traits the present USSR was the precursor of a new exploiting régime on an international scale”.

When some of his American comrades and its factional allies recoiled from such an idea, saying it was “revisionism”, he replied in October 1939 with *Again and Once More on The Question of the USSR*, in which he dismissed such condemnation as nonsensical know-nothing dogmatism.

“Some comrades evidently were surprised that I spoke in my article of the system of ‘bureaucratic collectivism’ as a theoretical possibility. They discovered in this even a complete revision of Marxism. This is an apparent misunderstanding. The Marxist comprehension of historical necessity has nothing in common with fatalism.... [If the working class fails to take power], fascism on one hand, degeneration of the Soviet state on the other outline the social and political forms of a neo-barbarism...”

Stalin simultaneously broke new ground when, on 17 September 1939, with the prior agreement of Hitler, he invaded Poland from the east. His army and Hitler’s met as friends and allies in the middle of Poland, dismembering the country.

“Defence of the USSR” had been seen in terms of a Russia prospectively under attack, on the defensive. Here the USSR was expanding its territory as Hitler’s partner in imperialist rapine and plunder.

Was Russia, then, imperialist? The disputes that erupted around that question were heated, but more about terminology than substance.

At the very start of the Left Opposition against the rising oligarchy, Lenin, from his deathbed, had indicted the Georgian Stalin, whom he urged the party to dismiss as general secretary, for his “Great-Russian chauvinist” treatment of Georgia.

The majority of the peoples of the USSR were not Great Russians, but members of distinct nations. The Bolsheviks, in 1917 and after, had had to tear down the walls of what had been known as the Tsarist “prison-house of nations”.

As Stalinism developed, the rigid bureaucratic centralising power subordinated all segments of the apparatus to Moscow’s control. It thereby made the formal autonomy of the smaller nations in the USSR meaningless. Stalin re-erected, and higher than before, the walls of the old Great Russian prison-house of nations.

All proposals to smash the bureaucracy and revive Bolshevism in the USSR implied freeing the channels of self-determination for the smaller peoples in the USSR.

In 1939 Trotsky called for the independence of a soviet Ukraine. The implications of that call ran right through Stalin’s USSR “empire”.

Trotsky published bitter criticism of Stalin’s invasion of Poland. To those who said Stalin had saved half of Poland from Hitler, he replied that the difference was only between Hitler’s slavery and Stalin’s “semi-slavery”. The invasion was above all an “extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism”.

Trotsky refused to use the term “imperialism”, but in fact the terms of his refusal conceded that Stalinist expansion amounted to imperialism “in the widest sense of the word”.

“History has known the ‘imperialism’ of the Roman state based on slave labour, the imperialism of feudal land-ownership, the imperialism of commercial and industrial capital, the imperialism of the Tsarist monarchy, etc. The driving force behind the Moscow bureaucracy is indubitably the tendency to expand its power, its prestige, its revenues. This is the element of ‘imperialism’ in the widest sense of the word which was a property in the past of all monarchies, oligarchies, ruling castes, medieval estates and classes. However, in contemporary literature, at least Marxist literature, imperialism is understood to mean the expansionist policy of finance capitalism...”

When Stalin invaded Finland in November 1939 (after Stalin’s demand for Russian military bases in Finland was rejected), Trotsky again denounced the invasion; but, considering the conflict inseparable from the world war, he favoured the victory of the USSR in Finland. He feared that the Finnish conflict would lead to British and French intervention.

Over Finland, far more than in relation to Poland, Russian expansion was entwined with the question of “defence of the USSR”. Could people who said “defence of the USSR” second-guess the military actions of the leaders of the USSR? Trotsky was highly critical. Cannon was inclined to accept

that the military defence of the USSR was the business of those who would know best, the Russian government.

Despite Trotsky’s continuing “defence of the USSR” in late 1939 and 1940, he had taken the giant step of accepting that the USSR, as it was, could be reconceptualised as a new form of exploitative class society.

What if capitalism was in terminal decline (Trotsky was sure it was), and the working class should fail to replace capitalism with socialism, and Stalin’s Russia and Hitler’s Germany proved to be the prototypes of a new world society? That, said Trotsky, would be a slave society. Then the socialists would have to elaborate “a new ‘minimum’ program... for the defence of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society”.

If Stalin’s system on a world scale would be an exploitative slave society, what was the Stalinist one-sixth of the world, in the USSR? Logically, there was only one answer to the questions posed by Trotsky’s reasoning: Russia was already that exploitative slave society. Trotsky said explicitly that, looking back, the socialists might have to accept that the USSR was already in 1939 the “precursor of a new exploiting régime on an international scale”.

Was there some additional quality which the Russian Stalinist system would get from participation in a worldwide network of similar states? Yes, there was: stability. But in terms of the social structure, and the roles of social groups in it, especially of the working class, Stalinist Russia would remain itself.

NOT STABLE

Why then did Trotsky reject defining the USSR as already a form of the new order which he saw it as maybe pioneering?

Because it was not stable, not a coherent “order”. “Might we not place ourselves in a ludicrous position if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall? Posing this question clearly should alone in our opinion restrain the comrades from terminological experimentation and overhasty generalisations”.

The USSR would give way either to a workers’ revolution or to capitalist restoration. The great test would be the world war which was already being fought, and which would reach Russia ten months after Trotsky’s death. The war would decide the fate of the USSR.

To understand fully why Trotsky refused to “affix to the Bonapartist oligarchy the nomenclature of a new ruling class”, we need to stand back from the immediate situation of 1940.

In refusing at the start of World War Two to classify the USSR as a class-exploitative society, Trotsky stood on the self-same ground as when he rejected the Stalinist theory of socialism in one country in 1924 and after.

One focus of the disputes around the doctrine of socialism in one country was, properly, its immediate political implications. Socialism in one country? So there would be no other working-class revolution in the whole epoch in which socialism was being constructed in the USSR. The Communist Parties throughout the world would no longer work to make revolutions in their own countries. They would function as frontier guards to “defend” and serve the interests of the state in which socialism was being built.

There was also a more profound theoretical reason for rejecting socialism in one country. The programme of working-class communist revolution is grounded on the level of production attained by capitalism on a world scale. Only that level of production, and what could be developed out of it, would provide a minimum social and economic basis for a socialist society and for abolishing classes.

In a “socialism” in a backward country, confined to its own resources and inevitably severing at least some of its connections with the world market, we would see, as Marx had reasoned: “A development of the productive forces is the absolutely necessary practical premise [of communism], because without it want is generalised, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old crap must revive”.

In the mid 20s Trotsky put forward an ambitious programme of economic development, which the Stalinists and Bukharinites rejected. But the idea that the USSR, in isolation, in parallel to capitalism, could build itself all the way to socialism was a new version, on a gigantic scale, of the projects of 19th century utopian socialists who would set out to create new societies in the wilderness of Texas or some such place.

Marxists argued that socialism would have to develop within capitalism, and be won by one of the classes within capitalism. It could never come from outside advanced capitalism, in parallel to it.

The two Trotskyisms during World War Two

For Trotsky in 1939-40, the idea of the USSR being a new form of class society implied that it was not a freak of history, an “accidental” combination of circumstances, but a relatively stable, “historically established” system.

Trotsky in the late 1930s took it as a fact that capitalism had ceased to develop on a world scale and was in regression — that, short of socialist revolution, a series of world wars and “the eclipse of civilisation”. It was only in such a world of declining capitalism that Stalinism could survive and prosper.

Admitting the theoretical possibility, Trotsky refused to take the step away from his general conceptions of necessary social evolution, which he saw as implied by admitting that the USSR was already solidly established as a new exploitative class society.

That Russia was still a “degenerated workers’ state” was not something Trotsky put forward as a long-term perspective. He did not envisage indefinite Stalinism in one country, or in many backward countries. Anti-capitalist Stalinism could not successfully compete as a development parallel to and on the fringes of advanced capitalism, any more than a working-class “socialism in one country” could.

In *The USSR in War* Trotsky rejected the idea that the USSR could go on as it was for more than “a few years or even a few months”. (At the end of World War Two, the Cannonites would dispose of things like that with a joke about “Shachtman’s promissory note”).

In the American Trotskyist discussion of 1939, James P Cannon was even more clear-cut than Trotsky in his rejection of the very possibility that Russia could survive and expand without that fact compelling reconsideration of what it was.

“Stalin could take the path of Napoleonic conquest not merely against small border states, but against the greatest imperialist powers, only on one condition: that the Soviet bureaucracy in reality represents a new triumphant class which is in harmony with its economic system and secure in its position at home, etc. That if such is really the case, we certainly must revise everything we have said on the subject of the bureaucracy up to now...” (Letter to Trotsky, 8 November 1939).

Trotsky’s time-frame in his argument about the unviability of the USSR developing as an alternative economic model in parallel to capitalism was vastly mistaken — out by half a century. But his fundamental reasoning was not mistaken.

The USSR, after competing with a revived capitalism for decades, and being drawn into arms competition with the USA which it could not sustain, went down to defeat and destruction.

The dispute in the American Trotskyist movement which saw the organisational separation of the two incipient political currents of post-Trotsky Trotskyism was nothing like as clear-cut as it is almost universally summed up as having been. A summing up of 1939-40 that telescopes the details so that later positions are read back onto those of 1939-40 obscures the complexity of the issues, and of Trotsky’s thinking at the end of his life.

The faction fight in the American Trotskyist movement was focused politically on “defence of the USSR” in the Finnish war, and organisationally on the “Cannon regime” in the SWP, which the opposition defined as Zinovievite (akin to the Communist International in its early years of bureaucratisation).

With not many exceptions, the minority, the future “heterodox Trotskyists”, including Max Shachtman, agreed with Trotsky that Russia was a “degenerated workers’ state”. Shachtman had “doubts”, but Trotsky too had doubts, and expressed them.

The minority agreed that against a big imperialist onslaught the Trotskyists should and would “defend the USSR”.

Much was made polemically of divisions on the Shachtman side. There were internal divisions on Cannon’s and Trotsky’s side too. Those on that side agreed with Trotsky on “defence of the USSR” and on the class nature of the USSR, but, some of them, not with Trotsky’s reasoning. As we’ve seen, Trotsky replied in rebuttal when some of them had rushed to call him “revisionist”.

At the start, when Poland was invaded, Cannon expressed the view that such things were technical questions of defending the USSR, and it was no business of the Trotskyists to comment on the military technicalities. Albert Goldman, who would shift radically in the mid 1940s, moved a motion to “approve of Stalin’s invasion of Poland”, which Cannon as well as Shachtman opposed.

At one point, Trotsky gave credence to stories in the pro-Stalinist wing of the emigre Menshevik press of workers and peasants roused to action against the capitalists and landlords by the advance of the “Red” Army, and therefore thought that the Stalinists might be stimulating an anti-capitalist revolu-

tion in the areas they were invading. The minority said that this implied a concept of “bureaucratic revolution”.

Trotsky responded as if someone had thrown acid in his face, with bitter denial and anger. Whatever might be said about what he wrote on Poland and Finland, Trotsky neither meant nor accepted any implication of progressive Stalinist “bureaucratic revolution”. Yet for decades after the belief would dominate the Cannonites that from the mid-1940s the Stalinists had made “bureaucratic revolutions” in many countries.

In defending the idea that Russia remained a species of workers’ state, Trotsky rested his argument on the fact that nationalised property survived in the USSR, and that all the possibilities that gave the bureaucracy for developing the economy had been the work of the Russian workers who crushed the bourgeoisie and the landlords in 1917-18.

The bureaucracy did not do that work of crushing the bourgeoisie, and could not have done it. It had seized the results of the workers’ revolution in a political counter-revolution.

Statified property on the USSR’s scale or anything near it existed nowhere else in the world, and in practice (Trotsky thought) it could not and would not exist anywhere else without a workers’ revolution. A structure like the USSR’s could develop only after a workers’ revolution and then a decline of the revolutionary energies of the working class, leading to political regression.

The events of the 1940s and 50s would cancel out that reasoning about the USSR, and thereby cancel out Trotsky’s theory of the “degenerated workers’ state”.

The USSR expanded enormously, transforming countries in eastern and southern Europe into replicas of itself. Independent Stalinist movements did the same when they took power, at the head of peasant armies, in Yugoslavia, China, and North Vietnam. In the 1960s countries where Stalinists did not rule — Egypt, Syria, Burma — created statified economies.

(The Grant faction of “orthodox Trotskyists”, today’s Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal, decided in the mid-60s that Syria and Burma were “deformed workers’ states”).

Trotsky saw the nationalised economy as the empirical evidence for his “degenerated workers’ state” theory. But it was a matter of the economy not just “in itself”, but as seen in the perspective of the workers’ revolution and its “political” defeat by the bureaucracy. He saw it as necessarily linked to the October Revolution.

And then nationalised economies similar to the USSR were created in the Stalinist transformations of the 1940s and later. The working class played no part in most of those revolutions, and an essential part in none. In China the victorious Maoists and their peasant armies confronted the workers of the cities as a hostile, repressive force.

EITHER-OR

Those developments placed the Trotskyists at another fork in the road. One of two things:

Either the fact that now Stalinists (and, later, non-Stalinist formations) could create as much as “remained of the workers’ state” in the USSR, without any of the framing preconditions which Trotsky thought essential, would be seen as destroying the theory of the “degenerated workers’ state” in Russia.

Or, the new totalitarian states would be seen only in terms of nationalised economy, and Trotsky’s theory of Russia would be “developed” to name them, too, as workers’ states (“deformed workers’ states”).

Eventually, the “empiricists” and the “economic determinists” would come to dominate the Cannonite camp, the Fourth International of the years after 1948.

As late as the Second Congress of the Fourth International in April 1948, the “orthodox Trotskyists” defined the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe as “state capitalist police states”, in effect as fascist states. But then, when Tito’s Yugoslavia and Russia fell out, only weeks later, it took the leaders of the Fourth International just three days from when the break became public to start issuing a series of open letters to the “Yugoslav comrades”.

The Cannon-Pablo-Mandel tendency made a stark revolution within their “orthodox Trotskyism”, shedding much that Trotskyism meant in Trotsky’s time. After a few years of operating with the perspective that the Third World War would come soon as a “War-Revolution”, from the mid 50s they settled in to the idea that Russia was “in transition to socialism”, protected within the great power system by the balance of nuclear terror, and into the belief that the Stalinist bureaucracy was inseparably committed to the nationalised economy.

Thereby they came to accept a version of “socialism in one country” — the possibility of the long-term, albeit “de-

formed”, construction of a social alternative to capitalism by development in parallel.

From the 1940 split and Trotsky’s death, the two currents diverged bit by bit.



James Cannon and Max Shachtman

When Hitler invaded the USSR in June 1941, the Shachtman group did not come out for the “defence of the USSR”. Stalin, they said, had only swapped imperialist partners, from Hitler to Churchill and, soon, Roosevelt. In this imperialist war the workers should not take sides. The Shachtmanites, as “revolutionary defeatists”, loudly opposed the USA in the war.

Before the 1940 split they had identified Russia as imperialism, and the Stalinist expansion of the 1940s, which would throw the Cannonites into political contortions, presented no such problem to the Shachtman group.

The two groups diverged further on some issues where I think Cannon was right: over the place of China in the World War, and over what Cannon and his comrades called the “proletarian military policy”, which called among other things for trade-union training schools for working-class military officers. (The Shachtmanites said that was a capitulation to American defencism).

The Cannonites had a more eventful war. They came out passionately for the defence of the USSR in June 1941. When in August 1941 Britain and Russia invaded Iran, they uninterestingly classified it as legitimate defence of the USSR.

Then, as Hitler seemed to move to inexorable victory, defence of the USSR dropped from their press. Their comments on the USSR were about how the crimes of Stalinism had made defeat inevitable.

“Defence of the USSR” became prominent again after the tide began to turn at Stalingrad late in 1942. By then, Russia was the very prestigious ally of the USA, and “Uncle Joe” Stalin a popular hero in America and Britain.

Ridiculously, trying to annex a bit of the USSR’s wartime glory for themselves, the Cannonites developed the line that Stalin’s Russian army was, somehow, “Trotsky’s Red Army”. Trotsky, by contrast, had seen that the Red Army, with its command structures, was one of the root sources of the bureaucratism that came to engulf the workers’ state.

In mid-December 1942, the SWP brought out a very one-sided selection of Trotsky’s articles on Poland and Finland, under the title *In Defence of Marxism*. In the same month they added “Defence of the USSR” as a ninth point to their paper’s previously eight-point policy platform, and started to print every week, on top of the editorial page in their paper, a quotation on the USSR from Trotsky in 1931.

In 1943 they followed up with a book of Cannon’s writings during the the 1939-40 dispute.

For decades, those two books would be international pillars of their version of Trotskyism, as it took shape in the 1940s. Essentially, they came to run the Fourth International as a one-faction organisation.

In *Defence of Marxism* include Trotsky’s *The USSR in War and Again and Once More*, quoted above; and an introduction by Joseph Hansen and George Novack asserting that the characterisation of the USSR and commitment in all circumstances to its defence was part of the “programme of the Fourth International”.

In July 1944, the Russian army was close to Warsaw, and then stopped advancing and waited six weeks while the Germans slaughtered a large-scale Polish uprising whose decision to rise was based on the knowledge that the Russians were near. Cannon, who at the time was in jail for a year, upbraided the editors of *The Militant* for criticising the Russians for their behaviour. Military tactics were for the Russians to decide! The Trotskyists were defencists!

The main texts in this supplement come from that time. In 1943 Max Shachtman translated a very important 1923 work of Trotsky’s, *The New Course*, and put a long introduction with it, discussing the Stalinists counter-revolution and Trotsky’s final position. The Cannonites gave the job of reviewing it to a comparatively inexperienced comrade, Harry Braverman [Frankel], who would in the 1970s become well-known for his book *Labour and Monopoly Capital*.

Shachtman replied, at length. This debate is an important moment in the crystallising out of the two Trotskyisms.

Defending the Soviet Union

By Harry Braverman [Frankel], from *Fourth International*, May 1944

The collection of articles entitled *The New Course* was Trotsky's opening gun in the struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy.

In 1923, the year of the writing of these articles, the Russian Bolshevik Party was passing through a profound internal crisis. It was not the first struggle inside the Bolshevik Party which had grown and developed through many previous internal disputes over questions of program, strategy, and tactics. The 1923 conflict, however, differed from all the previous ones in culminating in the triumph, not of the proletarian-Leninist tendency, but the Stalinist tendency of capitulation to alien class influences that were pressing heavily upon the party.

After 1923 the European revolutionary wave began to recede, leaving as a deposit moods of pessimism, exhaustion and despair which enveloped the proletarian vanguard and which found their expression through the weakest section of the party. It was in this atmosphere that the Stalinist vice began to close upon the Bolshevik Party, squeezing out its democratic life and transforming it into an instrument of the narrow, opportunist, and eventually counter-revolutionary clique of Stalin.

It was this growing bureaucratisation of the party against which Trotsky took up the cudgels in 1923. With *The New Course*, he began his fight, lasting almost two decades, against the degeneration of the first workers' state.

A new edition of this famous series of articles has been put on sale by Max Shachtman who deserted Trotskyism and broke with the Trotskyist movement in 1940. Attached to Trotsky's 112 page classic, there is a 128 page "explanatory" document by Shachtman. We have here another instance of that common, current black-market device, the tie-in sale, which compels a buyer to purchase inferior, shoddy or worthless goods in order to obtain the articles he really desires. In order to get beef these days a working class housewife is often obliged to buy tripe as well. Trotsky's essays supply Marxist insight and are a matchless example of consistent and principled polemic; Shachtman's essay is the antipode: it is tripe.

One reads occasionally in the Stalinist, or Social Democratic press that there are "two Trotskyist papers" or "two wings" of the Trotskyist movement in this country. This deliberate misrepresentation is akin to references often made in the bourgeois press to "two kinds of communism." In reality, of course, there is only one "kind of communism" just as there is only one party in this country which teaches and applies the program of Trotskyism. Trotsky himself made sure in his lifetime that there would be no confusion on this point.

TROTSKY'S OWN ESTIMATE

On more than one occasion he took the opportunity to explain what he thought of Shachtman's politics and program.

"Our old Mensheviks were real heroes in comparison with them," he wrote of the Shachtmanites. After the split with the petty bourgeois opposition led by Burnham and Shachtman, Trotsky took particular pains to clarify his attitude toward these people. He wrote:

"Only the other day Shachtman referred to himself in the press as a 'Trotskyist!' If this be Trotskyism, then I, at least, am no Trotskyist ... Had conscious agents of the class enemy operated through Shachtman, they could not have advised him to do anything different from what he himself has perpetrated."

No one can deny Shachtman the right to abandon Trotsky's ideas, any more than ex-colleague Burnham could be denied the right to abandon the socialist movement, after he together with Shachtman split with American Trotskyism. The "right" of betrayal and renegacy has always been freely exercised by petty bourgeois intellectuals, particularly in periods of reaction. But then, they should not masquerade, like Shachtman, in the trappings of Trotskyism while propagating the polar opposite of the program of Trotskyism.

Lenin pointed out that the enemies and opponents of the great Marxist teachers have invariably sought after their death to "emasculate and vulgarise the real essence of their

revolutionary theories and to blunt their revolutionary edge." Shachtman is merely another recruit to this legion of emasculators, vulgarisers and falsifiers.

With typical impudence, Shachtman pretends that Trotsky's class analysis of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state "is not even a decisively important part" of Trotskyism. This is like saying that a man could function without a heart.

In addition, Shachtman states:

"Our criticism of Trotsky's later theory of the 'workers' state' introduces into it an indispensable correction. Far from 'demolishing' Trotskyism, it eliminates from it a distorting element of contradiction and restores its essential harmony and continuity." (Op. cit., p.344.)

Every word here is false. The truth is that Trotsky devoted the main energies of the last period of his life to analysing the various stages of the development of the Soviet Union.

His study of the degeneration of the Stalin regime ranks among his greatest theoretical contributions to Marxist thought. Even a conscientious opponent will admit that it is an integral part of Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution and of the Trotskyist program. He affirmed and reaffirmed this literally in scores of articles and books. Thus, in the programmatic document *The Soviet Union and the Fourth International* it is flatly stated:

"The condition for further successes is the correct evaluation of the world situation, including the class character of the Soviet Union. Along this line, the new [Fourth] International will be subjected to tests from the very first days of its existence."

Leon Trotsky properly attached crucial importance to the class nature of the Soviet Union. It is only necessary to recall that the entire struggle against the Burnham-Shachtman faction as well as their break with the Trotskyist movement revolved in the main around the question of the USSR.

Answering at that time the attempts of Burnham (supported by Shachtman) to smuggle into the program of the Fourth International the anti-Marxist motion that the regime of Stalinism represented the rule of a new exploiting class, Trotsky wrote that "the perspective of a non-worker and non-bourgeois society of exploitation, or 'bureaucratic collectivism,' is the perspective of complete defeat and the decline of the international proletariat, the perspective of the most profound historical pessimism." (Leon Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*.)

The revisionist theory that a new social formation can come to replace capitalism concerns not only the USSR. Trotsky made this quite clear. He wrote: "It concerns the whole fate of the world proletariat and mankind." And he asked:

"Have we the slightest right to induce ourselves by purely terminological experiments in a new historic conception which occurs to be in an absolute contradiction with our program, strategy and tactics?" (Loc. cit., pp.1-2.)

Burnham's theory of "bureaucratic collectivism" (borrowed from Bruno) is now coolly offered as an "indispensable correction" to Trotskyism. Shachtman tries to palm off as a restoration of the "essential harmony and continuity (of Trotskyism)" what was flung back in Shachtman's face by Trotsky himself as an absolute contradiction of "our program, strategy and tactics," or, if you prefer, the "whole of Trotskyism."

Small wonder that in 1940 Trotsky characterised Shachtman and his tendency as that of "ideological charlatanism," "petty-bourgeois counterfeits of Marxism," "outright theoretical betrayal."

Let us review briefly the ABC of Marxism. Marxists view classes as the product of historical development, in other words, all classes have a past and a future, as well as the present Shachtman's "new exploitive class" is, in Shachtman's own words, "without a past and without a future." (Max Shachtman, *The Struggle for the New Course*.)

Lenin insisted that the roots of all class rule are to be found in the productive foundations of society. He said: "The rule of the class is determined only by the relationship to property." To explain the rule of his "new class" Shachtman points not to the foundation but to the political superstructure. It thus turns out that Shachtman's "indispensable correction" applies not only to Trotsky but to Lenin and Marx as well. But Shachtman simply forgets to mention such trifles.

"Wherein does the rule of the class (the proletariat) express itself?" asked Lenin. And he answered: "The rule of the proletariat expresses itself in the abolition of landed and capitalist property." Not the introduction of nationalised property and planning but the abolition of the old property forms sufficed for Lenin.

How does Shachtman get around this? Very simply. He denies that his new class needs either to abolish previous property forms or institute new ones of its own.

Shachtman's class that has no past and no future possesses for its "fundament" not property relations but the "ownership" of "political power." Needless to add, this "ownership" in its turn has neither a past nor a future. Such tripe is, according to Shachtman, "the veriest commonplace of Marxism."

According to Marxists the historical justification for every ruling class is the ability under its particular system of exploitation to raise the development of productive forces of society as a whole to a new level. Does Shachtman grant this ability to Stalinism, i.e., his own "new exploitive class"?

What then remains of the Marxist conception of class?

NEW CLASS

The gist of Shachtman's 128-page argument boils down to a representation of the crimes of Stalinism as the birthpangs that marked the rise of a new class to power.

No more, no less. It is an elementary principle of Marxism that ruling classes rise in society through the operation of forces beyond the control of men's consciousness, reason or will. The rise of new ruling classes can be retarded or facilitated but never prevented – until and unless these classes have exhausted their historic mission. In the light of this, what is Shachtman's version of the evolution of the Soviet Union if not an attempt to supply an historical justification not for the ascendancy of a new class but actually for the abominations of the Kremlin?

It is not for nothing that Trotsky told Shachtman in 1940 that an attempt to revise the principled position of the Fourth International on the class nature of the USSR was a mockery of Marxism. In fact, according to Trotsky, to say that the Stalinist bureaucracy was a new exploitive class is to declare that the class struggle for socialism was only a Utopian dream. Here is what Trotsky wrote:

"The historic alternative, carried to the end, is as follows: either the Stalin regime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalin regime is the first stage of a new exploiting society. If the second prognosis proves correct, then, of course, the bureaucracy will become a new exploiting class. However onerous the second perspective may be ... nothing else would remain except only to recognise that the Socialist program, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a utopia." (Loc. cit., p.9.)

Shachtman's choice of the 1923 writings of Trotsky as the springboard for his polemic against Trotsky's position on the USSR is deliberate.

The very date of the writing of these essays and the circumstances surrounding their publication precluded the possibility of their containing a fundamental analysis of the Stalinist degeneration in the Soviet Union. In 1923 Thermidor was still in the year of its birth. Lenin was still alive. The fate of the German revolution still hung in the balance. Moreover, the major political differences between the Stalinists and the Left Opposition had not yet ripened. Stalin had not yet promulgated the theory of socialism in one country, which was to form the crux of the epic struggle. The events of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 and the Anglo-Russian Committee were still in the future.

It is no slur upon the value of Trotsky's 1923 writings to say that they do not contain a finished analysis of events which had not yet occurred at the time. Shachtman, however, finds *The New Course* indispensable for his purposes not for what it does say, but primarily for what it does not and could not of necessity say.

Could Shachtman have published *The Revolution Betrayed* and attempted to refute it? Or perhaps *The Soviet Union and the Fourth International*, and attempted to refute that? He might at least have attempted to review *In Defence of Marxism*

The two Trotskyisms during World War Two

which contains the most finished and the most recent analysis of the Soviet Union made by Trotsky, and is, in addition, addressed in person to Shachtman and Co. Shachtman's perspicacity, lamentably limited though it may be, extends at least far enough for him to foresee the consequences of such foolhardy enterprises. Discretion is indeed the better part of valour, for Shachtman.

The Trotskyist movement holds that the Soviet Union remains a degenerated workers' state, basing that analysis upon the property forms of the Soviet Union: the existence of nationalised property and monopoly of foreign trade. This position is a line of demarcation between Trotskyism and all hostile and alien tendencies in the labour movement.

In order to give a picture of the Soviet Union to advanced workers, Trotskyists have often drawn an analogy between the first workers' state and a trade union. Just as trade unions have become corrupted and degenerated, losing their internal democracy and giving up militant struggle in defence of the interests of the membership, just so, the Soviet Union, subject to far more enormous pressures, has been altered. But the degenerated workers' state, and the degenerated trade union remain class organisations and a struggle must be conducted to reform them and to defend them against the capitalists. Shachtman discusses the trade union analogy only to abandon this time the Marxist position on trade unions. We quote Shachtman verbatim:

"The trade unions remain trade unions, no matter how bureaucratized they become, so long as they fight (ineptly or skillfully, reformistically or militantly) in the defence of the workers' share of the national income, or at least against its diminution. Once they give up that fight, they may call themselves what they will, they may have ever so many workers in their ranks (as many company unions have), but they are no longer class organisations. John L Lewis' organisation is still a trade union; Robert Ley's is not."

This point of view is clear, it is consistent, it is harmonious with the Shachtmanite point of view on the Soviet Union. It likewise happens to be the traditional position of the ultra-leftists. Lenin polemicalised against it in *The Infantile Disease of Left-Wing Communism*. It is precisely on this theory that the Stalinists constructed their thesis of "social fascism," and their designation of the AFL as a "fascist" organisation.

"The trade unions remain trade unions, no matter how bureaucratized they become, so long as they fight (ineptly or skillfully, reformistically or militantly) in the defence of the workers share of the national income or at least against its diminution." But what of those unions that have abandoned the fight? What of those bureaucratized leaderships which have offered their co-operation to the war administration and fight for the diminution of the workers' share of the national income? What of the Stalinist controlled unions? Shachtman's answer is clear: "They are no longer class organisations." By this criterion, the trade union movement of the United States (and not only the United States) has all but disappeared!

Notice the examples given: "John L. Lewis' organisation is still a trade union; Robert Ley's is not." A typical Shachtmanite evasion! In order to find an example of a union that is "still a union" Shachtman cites the one union which has conducted four general coal strikes in the midst of the war! Shachtman is willing to admit it is still a union. This generous fellow would give ice away at the North Pole. Somebody should inform him

that any schoolchild would readily agree that the United Mine Workers is "still" a union, while the Nazi Labour Front is not. But the question remains: what is the Hod Carriers Union, which holds conventions every 99 years? Or the Stalinist-run UE, which fights for incentive pay, not against it? Or anyone of a dozen others.

When a union is involved in a strike against the bosses, all labour must rally to the defence, even though a bureaucracy dominates the particular union. People who advocate defeatism for the striking union are traitors to the labour movement. That is the role of Shachtman, who denies defence to the Soviet Union in its struggle against Nazi imperialism.

Among the primary results of the Nazi-Soviet war has been the elucidation of the attitude of the Soviet masses towards the state which emerged from the October revolution. Of the attitude of the Soviet workers and peasants to the Stalinist bureaucracy there can be no doubt. Stalin has betrayed their democratic hopes by making a prison house of the Soviet Union. He has betrayed their revolutionary aspirations by his continual abasement before world imperialism. The hatred of the masses for the Stalinist caste, so long expressed through the struggle of the advanced workers under the banner of the Trotskyist Left Opposition, will break out into the open at the first decisive turn in the European situation.

DEFENDED

But what of the attitude of the masses towards the Soviet state? The remarkable spirit and fighting energy, not only of the Red Army, but of the whole people, demonstrate their conviction that something important remains in the Soviet Union which must be defended; something which they feel belongs to them.

The morale of the Red Army is the envy of the putrefying bourgeois military staffs everywhere. None of them can duplicate it because its secret lies in that event which they all hate so thoroughly; the October revolution of 1917.

Shachtman attempts to dismiss the morale of the Soviet people as of little significance. In 1940, during the Soviet-Finnish war, he was quite concerned about it. At that time, the Soviet workers, repelled by Stalin's counter-revolutionary policy, by the spectacle of the friendship and collaboration between Stalin and Hitler, and more important, not yet actually feeling the pressure of the bourgeois military intervention against the first workers' state, prosecuted the war with indifference. At that time, Shachtman, like any shyster lawyer, considered testimony relating to the morale of the Red Army to be perfectly admissible evidence as to the "character of the war." He and his followers quoted derisively Trotsky's prediction as to the morale of the Soviet people in the event of war. That forecast is well worth repeating now.

"Within the USSR war against imperialist intervention will undoubtedly provoke a veritable outburst of genuine fighting enthusiasm. All the contradictions and antagonisms will seem overcome, at any rate relegated to the background. The young generations of workers and peasants that emerged from the revolution will reveal on the field of battle a colossal dynamic power. Centralised industry, despite all its lacks and shortcomings, will reveal great superiority in serving war needs. The government of the USSR has undoubtedly created great stores of food supplies sufficient for the first period of

Extend the October Revolution!



war. The general staffs of the imperialist states clearly realise, of course, that in the Red Army they will meet a powerful adversary, the struggle with whom will require long intervals of time and a terrific straining of forces."

These are the words at which Shachtman scoffed during the Finnish events. Where is the "genuine fighting enthusiasm?" he then taunted. Have you seen that spirit yet? The Soviet masses have given their answer.

During the factional struggle in the SWP in 1939-1940 Shachtman's petty-bourgeois opposition insisted that its sole political point of difference with the majority of the party was over the unconditional defence of the Soviet Union. The class nature of the Soviet Union, they explained, was no concern of theirs "at the moment", and was only dragged into the dispute by Trotsky for "factional, demagogic purposes." "Is it not demagogy for Trotsky to direct polemics against Eastman and Hook, or Bruno instead of against our ideas?" claimed Burnham and Shachtman. Today, Burnham writes from the standpoint of an avowed enemy of Marxism, while Shachtman espouses the former position of Burnham, who in turn borrowed it from Bruno. Today Shachtman even adduces as his main "proof" of the existence of a new class the argument adduced originally by Bruno, namely, Stalin's purges and frame-up trials of 1936-38. A modest disciple never fails gratefully to acknowledge his teacher. Shachtman ungraciously ignores his true preceptors: Burnham and Bruno.

Equipped with the compass of Marxism, Trotsky charted in the struggle of 1939-40 not only our own course, but the future course of the Shachtmanites. That is why he was able to write an annihilating answer to Shachtman's "theoretical" document long before Shachtman set it down on paper! Trotsky's writings *In Defence of Marxism* require no "corrections." Trotsky's characterisations of Shachtman as a "charlatan" and a "betrayal" are as true today as when Trotsky wrote them in 1940.

Why we needed a new theory

By Max Shachtman, *New International*, August 1944

Leon Trotsky's name will be forever linked with the Russian Revolution, not of course as a Russian revolution but as the beginning of the international socialist revolution in Russia.

He fought for this revolution with pen and sword, from his study and from his armoured train in the Red Army. Between the start of his fight, under Tsarism, and its end, under Stalinism, there is a continuous line, the line flowing from Trotsky's great contribution to Marxism, the theory of the permanent revolution.

Except for the first period of the Bolshevik revolution, when the theory was not — and could not be — attacked, it might be said that all of Trotsky's literary-political activity revolved around the elaboration of his theory, and its defence from critics. Which critics? The guide in choosing the objects

of his polemics was not always their prominence or importance, the extent of the front along which they attacked Trotsky's views, the weightiness of their criticism. Wherever Trotsky was given an opportunity to elucidate his views, to expand upon them from a new angle, to fortify them in a new way, he seized upon it. The critic did not need to be Stalin or Radek. Even if he was so obscure, and his criticism so trivial or absurd, that the mere mention of his name by Trotsky sufficed to save him from oblivion, Trotsky did not for that reason disdain to deal with him. Ample evidence of this is to be found throughout Trotsky's writings. The evidence relates not only to polemics about his theory of the permanent revolution but more generally to any of the important views he held.

Similarly with those who were his students and his followers in every country. One example is *The New International*, which, month in and month out, from its first issue onward,

emulated Trotsky by its systematic defence of the principles and program of Marxism against all critics, honest or mendacious, big or small, partial or total. It is, after all, only by this method that the Marxian movement can maintain theoretical alertness, preserve its pre-eminence over all other currents in the working class, and imbue its followers with informed confidence, in contrast to the blind faith, nurtured ignorance or confusion, and slick demagogy that hold together other movements.

What is said above applies not only to debate of Marxists with non- or anti-Marxists, but to discussions within the Marxian movement itself. There we have too often heard that a discussion is a "luxury." It is as much a luxury to the movement as the circulation of the blood is a luxury to the human body.

In the 1939-40 discussion in the Socialist Workers Party, Trotsky repeatedly challenged the then opposition (now the

The two Trotskyisms during World War Two

Workers Party) to debate first and foremost the question of the class character of the Soviet Union, he taking, as is well known, the standpoint that Russia is a degenerated workers' state.

It goes without saying that he did not for a moment consider it a "closed question" precluding all discussion, although it is no less true that on this question his own position was firm and aggressive. For reasons that were then, and often since, advanced, the opposition did not wish to debate on this ground.

If the writer may speak personally for a moment: I not only did not wish to debate the view that Russia was still a workers' state, but I could not if I would. Like so many other members of the opposition (and not a few of the majority), I had developed some doubts (as an otherwise dull commentator correctly observed) on the correctness of our traditional position, without being able to say to myself, and therefore to others, that this position was fundamentally false and that an alternative position had to replace it. Inasmuch as only a dilettante, but not a serious politician, can be "sceptical toward all theories," or engage in a dispute on the basis of "doubts," let alone make them a polemical platform, it was manifestly impossible for me, and not me alone, to take up Trotsky's challenge.

Doubts are a bridge you cannot stand on for long. Either

you go back to the old views or move on to new ones. Along with several other comrades who sought to probe the question seriously, thoroughly and in an unclouded atmosphere, I helped work out, in 1940-41, a critique of Trotsky's theory of Russia as a degenerated workers' state. We arrived at an analysis and conclusions of our own, summed up in the phrase "bureaucratic collectivism," a new class, exploitive state in Russia which is neither bourgeois nor proletarian but is basically different from any other class regime preceding or contemporary with it.

We proceeded to set forth our views in dozens of articles in our press. Stalin's assassin deprived Trotsky of the opportunity, which he would undoubtedly have taken, to subject these views to criticism. But the "official" Trotskyist press, *The Militant* and the *Fourth International*? For three years it maintained complete silence. It did not, you see, deign to reply, unless a reply means repeating that we are "petty bourgeois," "counter-revolutionists," "enemies of the Soviet Union," "renegades from Marxism... common thieves" and the like — "arguments" which had failed to convince us when they originally appeared in the *Daily Worker*.

Yet not only we, but all those interested in Trotsky's views, especially those who supported them, had a right to expect an objective reply to our point of view from the SWP spokesmen. Our theory is the first serious attempt to present a

rounded analysis of the Stalinist state from the Marxian standpoint, which, while basing itself in many respects on the invaluable contributions of Trotsky, is at the same time a criticism of Trotsky's conclusion. Our theory, furthermore, is a unique contribution to the question and not a rehash of old, refuted and discredited doctrines. We do not contend that it cannot be successfully disputed, only that it has not been. The SWP did not even make an attempt to do so.

"THE NEW COURSE" APPEARS

When we finally published the first English edition of Trotsky's classic, written in 1923, *The New Course*, and added to it, as is our custom, an essay by the editor, it explained to the new reader the historical circumstances of the work, its significance in the light of subsequent events, plus a critical re-examination of Trotsky's later theory of the "workers' state."

We felt that the SWP would now have to reply. Some of us thought it would assign a responsible, theoretically and politically equipped spokesman, to review the book as it deserves to be reviewed. Others thought that at most it would assign the job to some unschooled lad equipped with an advanced case of psittacosis and a penchant for abuse. Obviously, some of us were wrong. Under the characteristically

Calling for a new start, 1940

Labor Action, December 16 1940

The utter collapse of the two old Internationals, even before the outbreak of the Second World War, has only been spectacularly emphasized since the war began.

Also emphasised, over again, is the burning need of reconstructing the world vanguard of the working class, of regrouping all the revolutionary Marxists who have remained true to their principles, and of organising them on the basis of the fundamental program of the Fourth International. Now, more than ever before, can it be said that without this program, the downward march of mankind into the abyss of barbarism will remain unhalting, its upward march to the new order of world socialism, of freedom, peace, abundance; security and brotherhood of the peoples will not be crowned with triumph.

Not since the last war has the spirit of nationalism been so prominently engendered in the minds of the people. Nationalism, chauvinism, defense of the fatherland are the indispensable weapons in the bourgeois artillery of the war. As always, the war is accompanied by a strict censorship resulting in severe interference in international contact.

INTERNATIONAL

But the war has also demonstrated the international character of modern economy and has demonstrated that the solution to the problems posed by the war and moribund capitalism is the International, the world revolution. If nationalism is the weapon of reactionary capitalism, internationalism is the weapon of socialism.

Not since the last war has the need for internationalism become so vital an instrument of the struggle against war and capitalism. Ours is the party of world revolution.

It is the task of the Party to demonstrate this, first by an internationalist attitude on the development of events, by active propaganda and agitation for the solidarity of all workers the world over, and by a common effort with Fourth Internationalists throughout the world in struggle against the imperialist war. For this, it is an imperative necessity that our party maintain active contact with Fourth Internationalists in every country and work in a single effort to accomplish our socialist goal.

The events of the past year, filled with many working class defeats, have not been without their injurious effects upon the Fourth International. The war brought with it not only a certain dispersal of our movement, and an enormous accentuation of difficulties for it, but also the destruction of an organised, authoritative central body speaking for the Fourth International as a whole.

The split in the American section of the International has had direct and immediate repercussions in the International as a whole and in its central institutions in particular. The Socialist Workers Party, led by the Cannon group, followed the split with a call for an "Emergency International Conference". This Conference was called in direct and flagrant violation of the Statutes of the Fourth International solemnly adopted at its Founding Congress. The call for the Conference was not supported by any of the important sections of the International outside of the Cannon-group and a dozen comrades in Mexico and Canada. The duly elected Bureau of the International was neither consulted about the Conference, nor informed that it would take place.

The majority of the members of this Bureau were not invited to the conference. They were, indeed, excluded from it by virtue of the monstrous condition placed upon their attendance, as well as upon the attendance of the Workers Party, namely, that they commit themselves in advance to support of the decisions taken by the Cannon group. Members of the International Bureau, who were expelled from, the SWP by the Cannon group, had their expulsion ratified by the same Cannon group sitting as an "international conference". The judges, the prosecutor, and the appellate judges were all the same people!

Throughout the existence of our movement, we have repeatedly condemned the Stalinists for their cynical violation of their own Comintern statutes. We cannot do less when the same, or even worse, violations occur in our own International. For to condone them means to deprive ourselves of the right to indict Stalinism.

In the fight of the Left Opposition in Russia, however, the expelled or suspended oppositionists were at least given the formal right to appear before the International; to state their appeals against the decision of its Russian section. In the case of the "emergency conference" of the Cannon group, the expelled minority was not even given this right.

The Cannon conference could not and did not represent the Fourth International. The Executive Committee elected by it has even less claim to such representation. It is a falsehood to say that a single one of the European sections mandated a representative to this spurious conference. It is false to say that a single one of the South American sections mandated a representative. It was a conference of the Cannon faction, plus a delegate representing two others in Canada, and a delegate representing ten others in Mexico.

Whatever claims to authority this conference, and the committee elected by it, might have made at the time, the last vestige of any authority for it to speak in the name of the Fourth International has disappeared with the tragic death of comrade Leon Trotsky. We cannot tolerate by silence the attempt of the Cannon group, representing at best only one tendency in the Fourth International, to usurp the authority of our world movement or to speak in its name.

The undersigned comrades represent the majority of the International Bureau of the Fourth International, as duly elected by the authorised and representative institutions of the International. These comrades supported, as is known, the viewpoint of the minority of the Socialist Workers Party, now organised as the Workers Party. This viewpoint has also been endorsed by the Brazilian Section of the International, the Uruguayan section, by two important sections in Asia which have recently come over to the program of the Fourth International, and by groups of comrades and individuals in other sections throughout the world.

However, despite our formal authority, the realities of the situation prevent us from arrogating to ourselves, as the Cannon group has done, the right to speak in the name of the Fourth International. We must establish the tragic fact that while the movement for the Fourth International exists and will grow, that while sections exist — the Fourth International as an organised, centralised, authoritative and representative body does not now exist. We see our primary task to be the painstaking work of reconstituting the International as it should be constituted. This involves the work both of restoring relations with other sections and groups throughout the world, and clarifying and elaborating our fundamental international program in light of the developments in the world situation and in the working class movement.

PRINCIPLES

Towards this end, the undersigned comrades have constituted themselves as a Committee for the Fourth International.

It invites all true Fourth Internationalists and revolutionary Marxists throughout the world to follow suit by establishing everywhere similar committees, entering into closest relations with each other, collaborating politically and organisationally to the maximum extent possible, and preparing for the convocation of an authentic and representative world congress of the Fourth International.

Our movement has suffered severe blows. We have felt the first blows of the imperialist war reaction and repression, and been buffeted by the first waves of social-chauvinism. We have had defections — the withdrawal of the Burnhams, the shift to reaction of the Rivcrao, the flight to the democratic imperialists of the Chen Duhsius. But we are more than ever convinced of the power of our principles, of the triumph of our program, of the invincibility and victory of the socialist working class.

Long live the Fourth International, regenerated and more powerful than ever! Long live the struggle against imperialist war and reaction! Long live the struggle for a workers' world and international socialism!

Brown, Anthony, Alberts, Trent
(Members of the Bureau of the Fourth International)

The two Trotskyisms during World War Two

restrained title, “A Defamer of Marxism,” a review of the book appeared at last in the May, 1944, issue of the *Fourth International*, over the signature of Harry Frankel. This is, as we shall see, the literal equivalent of saying: Since the soup is too hot to handle, we might as well spit in it.

Frankel wastes only a few indifferent words on the section of the book written by Trotsky. He concedes, it is true, that *The New Course* is “beef,” whereas “Shachtman’s essay is the antipode: it is tripe.” But he leaves the impression in the few sentences he devotes to *The New Course* that it is merely an initial, immature and dated effort by Trotsky. This is in the order of things.

Trotsky’s *The New Course* is even more timely today than when it was first written. It is one of his most durable works. It is a classic socialist statement on workers’ democracy. It is perhaps the clearest exposition ever written of what democracy means in a centralised, revolutionary proletarian party. It is, of course, a specific analysis of the problem of a specific party, after it has taken power, in a specific country and under specific conditions. This does not detract from its general applicability. What Trotsky says there about party democracy, about a free and vibrant internal life, about the role of tradition and the need of constantly enriching it, about critical and independent party thought, about Leninism, about discussions and how they should be conducted, about loyalty in discussion and in leadership, about the relations between leaders and ranks, between “young” and “old,” about bureaucratism and conservatism, about factions and groupings, and a dozen other vital problems of any revolutionary party amounts to an annihilating criticism of the inner-party regime of the SWP today, of its leaders and their methods. Frankel’s silence on all this, his generally deprecatory remarks, are in the order of things. Had he spoken commendatorily and at length about the ideas Trotsky puts forward in *The New Course*, he could only have brought a wry smile to the lips of every thinking member of the SWP.

Perhaps we do him an injustice. Perhaps he is so eager to work on the tripe that he has no time for the beef. The tripe he divides into five important parts. He deals with the parentage of our theory; the question of its significance in the “whole of Trotskyism”; the question of the roots of class rule; the question of the historical place of the Stalin bureaucracy; the question of the analogy between Russia and a trade union. If we pursue him through his often dreary and never bright abuse, it is because the task, though thankless, is not without profit.

THE QUESTION OF “PARENTAGE”

Frankel writes:

Today, Burnham writes from the standpoint of an avowed enemy of Marxism, while Shachtman espouses the former position of Burnham, who in turn borrowed it from Bruno. Today, Shachtman even adduces as his main “proof” of the existence of a new class the argument adduced originally by Bruno, namely, Stalin’s purges and frame-up trials of 1936-38. A modest disciple never fails gratefully to acknowledge his teacher. Shachtman ungraciously ignores his true preceptors: Burnham and Bruno.

And elsewhere:

Burnham’s theory of “bureaucratic collectivism” (borrowed from Bruno) is now coolly offered as an “indispensable correction” to Trotskyism.

About Burnham, our readers know something, and so, presumably, does Frankel. But who is this sinister Bruno? All we know of him is that just before the war he wrote a big book in France on the “bureaucratisation of the world.” This book we never read. Neither did Frankel. The only thing he knows about Bruno, about whose views he speaks with such impressive familiarity, is the reference to it made by Trotsky in 1939 in a few sentences. It takes a high grade of impertinence or transoceanic vision, one of which Frankel certainly possesses, to speak with such assuredness about views elaborated in a book you have neither seen nor read, and about which all you know is a dozen paraphrasing sentences written by a critic.

But can’t it be assumed that the sentences in which Trotsky sums up the views of one of the “parents” of our theory are adequate? We are ready to do so. According to Trotsky’s summary, Bruno seems to hold the theory that “bureaucratic collectivism” or the bureaucratic state is a new, unprecedented exploitive social order, with a new ruling class, which exists not only in Russia but also in Germany and in a less developed form in “New Deal” America, and is, in a word, sweeping the world. According to this theory, there is no class difference between the German-US type of state and the Russian type. As is known, Burnham’s latest theory is similar, apparently, to Bruno’s.

What, however, has such a theory to do with ours? In every article we have written on the subject, in the official resolution of our party, we have repeatedly emphasised the unique class character of the Russian state, its fundamental difference not only from a workers’ state, but from all the bourgeois states, be they fascist or democratic. Time and again we have polemised against the theory that Russia and Germany, for example, have the same class state or social system or ruling class — against those who, like Burnham and Macdonald, held that both countries were “bureaucratic-collectivist,” as well as against those who held that both were capitalist. Our party has formally rejected both these standpoints. If our cavalier is aware of these facts, he is practising a fraud on his readers by concealing them. If he is unaware of them, he is practising a fraud on his readers by dealing with matters he is ignorant of. Take your choice.

In *The New Course*, Trotsky lays the greatest stress on loyalty in discussion, on the importance of an honest presentation of your opponent’s views, on the reprehensibility of amalgamating one view with views that are essentially alien to it. No wonder Frankel thinks so little of the book.

Where does our theory have its roots? Primarily in the writings of Trotsky! More accurately, in the resolving of the two basic, irreconcilable theories about Russia as a “degenerated workers’ state” which are to be found in Trotsky’s writings. For a long time Trotsky rightly based his theory that Russia is a degenerated workers’ state on the view that, to one degree or another, in one form or another, the Soviet proletariat still retained political power, that it could yet submit its bureaucracy to its control, that it could regenerate the state by means of a profound reform. Indeed, Trotsky repeated that the proof of the working class character of the Soviet states lies in the fact that the regime could still be changed by reform. This theory he later abandoned, substituting the point of view that, although the proletariat had lost all semblance of political power and control, and an uncontrolled, counter-revolutionary bureaucracy had complete possession of the state power, and that it could not be removed save by means of a violent revolution, the state was nevertheless proletarian by virtue of the existence of state property. Only Trotsky’s immense authority in the movement made possible the acceptance by it of a theory which, up to that time, had never been held by any Marxist.

In numerous articles we have pointed out the contradiction between the two theories. We have pointed out how Trotsky abandoned the one for the other without so much as a link between them. We have showed how Trotsky was compelled to abandon his original theory because events refuted the essential predictions about Russia’s evolution which he based on it. The voluminous quotations we have adduced from Trotsky’s writings are simply irrefutable. Enough of them are again cited in our essay on *The New Course*. Frankel does not even hint at their existence (we are making the audacious assumption that he actually read the book). With consummate native skill, he plays dumb on this point. And not on this point alone.

This is not all. Frankel knows — and if he does not know, why does he venture to blacken so much innocent white paper? — that our press, the present writer in particular, has called attention to the fact that the first man (so far as we know) in the Trotskyist movement who put forward the theory that the Stalinist bureaucracy is a new ruling class, based on a new “property form,” was neither Shachtman, Burnham, nor, God help us, the mysterious Bruno, but Christian Rakovsky. More than a decade ago, Rakovsky, next to Trotsky the outstanding leader of the Opposition, presented this view in a theoretical document of his own, which was circulated throughout the Russian Opposition. Trotsky, although he obviously did not share this view, printed it in the organ of the Russian Opposition without comment and certainly without denunciation — he was not made of the same stern and intransigent stuff as his eminent theoretical successor, Frankel. There is enough evidence, moreover, in letters of Oppositionist exiles and in the testimony of A. Ciliga, that Rakovsky’s theory was shared by a considerable number of Russian Trotskyists. Poor devils! They had no Frankel to explain to them that they were “defamers of Marxism,” purveyors of tripe, and belonged, as he so delicately puts it, to the “legion of emasculators, vulgarisers and falsifiers” of Trotskyism.

We do not hesitate for a moment to say that this or that element of our theory as a whole is taken from numerous other sources, including, if you please, Burnham (the Burnham of 1937-38, of course, and not the Burnham of 1940 or today). If our critics derive satisfaction from this readily-made acknowledgement, it is either because they do not know any-

thing about the “alien” origins and components of the entire theoretical system of Marxism, or because they do not care. For the construction of our theory, for its synthesis, for the ideas of others and of our own incorporated into it, for the manner in which they are incorporated and interlinked, we and we alone are responsible.

“With typical impudence,” says Frankel, to whom impudence of any kind is as foreign as a bad odour to a sty, “Shachtman pretends that Trotsky’s class analysis of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers’ state ‘is not even a decisively important part’ of Trotskyism. This is like saying that a man could function without a heart.”

We thus learn for the first time, but from an authority, that the “heart” of Trotskyism is the theory of the “degenerated workers’ state.” Which of the two theories Trotsky held on this subject is the “heart” of Trotskyism, the authority does not say. After all, what does it matter?

In our own confused way, we have always thought that the “heart” of Trotskyism is the theory of the permanent revolution and the struggle for it. Frankel, we regretfully record, has not changed our opinion. For if the theory that Stalinist Russia is still a degenerated workers’ state is the “heart” of Trotskyism, then obviously Trotskyism was without a heart, and consequently non-existent, before the Russian Revolution and during the early years of the revolution. It seems equally obvious that if Russia should tomorrow cease to be a “degenerated workers’ state,” either by virtue of its regeneration or its transformation into a capitalist state, the “heart” of Trotskyism would thereby be removed, leaving only a lifeless carcass which Frankel would not consider worthy of decent burial. To put it differently, the restoration of the Russian revolution to full life would produce the instantaneous death of Trotskyism. Or, to strain fairness toward our inimitable dialectician to the groaning point, if the “degenerated workers’ state” were replaced by a revolutionary workers’ state, Trotskyism would have a new “heart” grated into it, its old one being removed to a bottle of formaldehyde labelled: “This was the heart of Trotskyism when Russia was a degenerated workers’ state. Remove only in case of similar contingency — Dr. Frankel, M.D.”

TRADE UNIONS

Only one other thing need be said about this nightmarish idiom.

We consider ourselves Trotskyists because we are partisans of the theory of the permanent revolution, because Trotskyism incarnated the tradition and principles of revolutionary Marxism, of socialist internationalism, above all in a period when these principles were being trampled under every foot. We are not idolators, precisely because we are Trotskyists. We know how easy it is, as Lenin used to say, sardonically, to “swear by God,” and we have only pitying contempt for those who substitute the quotation for the living idea, worshipful parrotry for critical thought. We are Trotskyists, but we do not “swear by God.” But if it can truly be demonstrated that the very “heart” of Trotskyism is the belief that Russia today is a “degenerated workers’ state” and that all the other organs and limbs of Trotskyism live from the bloom pumped to them by this heart, then the present writer, at least, would promptly cease calling himself a Trotskyist. At the same time, however, he would have to conclude that Trotskyism and Marxism are not reconcilable. Fortunately, no such conclusion is indicated, or necessary, or possible.

We come now to the third of Frankel’s five points. Here we must admonish the reader. He must resolve in advance not to laugh himself sick. On this he must be firm, for Frankel offers more temptations than the unforewarned reader can possibly resist.

The reader is surely acquainted with the point: An analogy is made between the bureaucratized trade unions, with their bourgeois-minded leaders, and bureaucratized Russia. “Just as trade unions have become corrupted and degenerated, losing their internal democracy and giving up militant struggle in defence of the interests of the membership, just so, the Soviet Union, subject to far more enormous pressures, has been altered,” writes Frankel. But the degenerated workers’ state and the degenerated trade union remain class organisations and a struggle must be conducted to reform (!) them and to defend them against the capitalists.”

(According to Trotsky, the “degenerated workers’ state” cannot be reformed; according to the heart specialist, it can and must be reformed. Frankel does not know the difference between revolution and reform, but in every other respect he is an authority on Trotskyism and above all on what lies at its heart.)

From Shamefacedness to Solid Brass

By Paul Temple [Hal Draper], *Labor Action*, 14 July 1941

Those very principled people, the Socialist Workers Party (Cannonites), have re-discovered the “defense of the Soviet Union.”

This event occurs under very happy auspices for them. While Russia was busy grabbing Poland and Finland, they were also for its defense — but not so happily. The masses of people (not to speak of Churchill, Sumner Welles and Alexander Kerensky) were quite annoyed with Stalin in those days, so the principled Cannonites kept their slogan under their hats. In their public press they merely called the invasions a “crime” and “de-emphasised” the defense angle — to the extent of mentioning it practically only in internal argumentations and theses. As recently as their May Day manifesto, there was hardly a peep (in public, where somebody might hear them) from the SWP on this paramount task of “defending the Soviet Union.” After all, it was so unpopular!

THE POLITICS OF THIS WAR

Now the “shamefaced defensists” of yesterday splash the headline “Defend the Soviet Union!” across the first page of *The Militant* and boldly write:

“German imperialism seeks to overthrow the October Revolution and to restore the capitalist system in its degenerate fascist form. This is the essential meaning of Hitler’s attack on the Soviet Union ... Defend the Soviet Union at all costs and under all circumstances against imperialist attack!”

As if “the politics of which this war is the continuation” is Hitler’s desire to abolish nationalised property in Russia, rather than his very real desire to gain Russian resources to prosecute his war against Britain. The manifesto throughout is blind enough to speak as if Hitler’s invasion is itself his goal, instead of a means to an end.

The Militant, in addition, prints a ten-year-old quotation from Trotsky calling for the defense of the Soviet Union as “the main fortress of the world proletariat”. James P. Cannon himself sends a telegram to Mr. Stalin, via Ambassador Oumansky, calling for the release of Trotskyists from GPU jails so that they might “take their proper place in the front ranks of the defenders of the Soviet Union.” (Naturally, he brings this up merely as a helpful suggestion, not as a condition for support, since the Cannonites are UNCONDITIONAL defenders of the Soviet Union.) In another column Russia is “this one bastion of socialism.”

GOLDMAN’S NEW INTERPRETATION

Shamefacedness being definitely thrown aside, Albert Goldman substitutes solid brass in the next issue of *The Militant* (July 5).

Believe it or not, he blandly denies that there ever was an alliance between Hitler and Stalin; denies that the Cannonites ever said there was such an alliance; and was used only by middle-class democrats and the Workers Party.

For outright forgery, this is equalled only by the Stalinists. We have room for only two examples:

One of Cannon’s rare literary works, an article in the *Socialist Appeal* of September 29, 1939, denouncing “the joint policy of Stalin and his Axis partner, Hitler,” and stating that “the pact of Stalin and Hitler is in fact a military alliance.”

The article by Trotsky in *Liberty* of January 27, 1940, if anything, goes further, saying that Russia attacked Poland and Finland at Germany’s behest.

Goldman explains the Stalin-Hitler pact (today) solely on the basis of Stalin’s desire to avoid war and to strengthen his military position against Germany by taking over adjacent lands. This is a belated plagiarism from the *Daily*

Worker: No alliance with Hitler, only a policy of peace and the defense of the Soviet Union! Like Churchill, Goldman, too, prettifies the Kremlin while calling for its defense.



James P. Cannon

Goldman attacks our own stand by asking, apparently seriously: If it is true, as the Workers Party claimed, that Hitler and Stalin were partners, how come one partner attacked the other?

“For, if one claims that such a close partnership existed between Stalin and Hitler, then the fact that Hitler found himself in trouble need not and would not lead to his attacking the Soviet Union.”

And he positively belligerently asks us to explain how “such an unusual change in imperialist partnerships” is possible! Of course, France changed partners, he admits, but that was because it was defeated, adopting its conqueror as partner. His memory being what it is, he forgets that Finland has changed partners too — this time not with its conqueror! In fact, there is hardly a country in the war that has not changed partners at least once. If Japan decides to pull out of the Axis in the event of successes by London-Washington-Moscow, Goldman will no doubt again be astonished at imperialist trickery, provided he doesn’t deny that there was ever a Berlin-Tokyo Axis.

CARRY OUT THE “FIRST TASK”?

Two more notes on the SWP position: We have said that the Cannonites are now very brash about proclaiming the “defense of the Soviet Union.”

But so far they have presented this slogan in a manner completely empty of all concrete meaning. Are they in favor of rendering “material and moral support to the Soviet Union” by the American workers? So far, they have indicated only that that’s all right for the Russian Trotskyists — not a word to American workers on the subject. Their manifesto has only one sentence on the question of what to do: “The method to defend the Soviet Union is to continue the class struggle against the imperialists.” If this is all the “defense of the Soviet Union” means in practice, in THIS war, it should be made unmistakably clear. But it is not all, as the CP can point out to them.

The *Militant* appeals to the members of the Communist Party as follows: “You set the defense of the Soviet Union as your first task. We do likewise. On that basis we appeal to you to give sober consideration to the grave problems of this defense ...” Follows an injunction to continue the struggle against capitalism and the war, and then: “This is the only real defense of the Soviet Union and in this defense we stand ready to join you in any action that will advance our common cause.”

Since the defense of the Soviet Union is “the first task” of the SWP (here, in the United States, as Roosevelt drives into the war!) and since this is a “common cause” with the Stalinists, we presume that the SWP will immediately start a campaign for a united front with the Communist Party to render material and moral aid to the Soviet Union ... Or will Cannon wait till the CP becomes more popular?

If defense of Russia is the “first task,” naturally everything else must be subordinated to it. In this connection, we note that *The Militant* has so far kept mum about the question of aid to Russia by the Roosevelt government. This may be an oversight (a pretty big one), but in any case it behooves the SWP to make clear its own attitude as well as specify what the defense of Russia means to it outside of literary exercises.

The “trade union analogy” has long been a favoured argument of the defenders of the theory that Russia is a degenerated workers’ state. Following Trotsky, the present writer used the “analogy” more than once. Along with others, he accepted it uncritically from Trotsky. This acceptance was eased, so to speak, by the fact that the analogy has a long and worthy standing dating back to the earliest days of the Russian Revolution. But if it is traced back clearly to those days, it will be seen that the analogy was entirely legitimate in its time. It was not employed to prove that Russia was a workers’ state, however. It was employed to show why the workers’ state did not always operate as the ideal program indicated. Between the two uses of the analogy, there is a world of difference.

Whatever may have been our errors on this point in the past, they look like downright virtues in comparison with what Frankel does with it. We beg the reader to follow very closely. It would be a pity to miss any part of it.

“Shachtman discusses the trade union analogy only to abandon this time the Marxist position on trade unions,” says our relentless Spartan. Shachtman, it is clear, has left very little of Marxism, and Frankel has left very little of Shachtman. But even if there were less, it would still suffice for what follows.

Wherein lies this new “abandonment”? Read carefully the quotation from Shachtman which Frankel cites:

The trade unions remain trade unions, no matter how bureaucratized they become, as long as they fight (ineptly or skilfully, reformistically or militantly) in the defence of the workers’ share of the national income, or at least against its diminution. Once they give up that fight, they may call themselves what they will, they may have ever so many workers in their ranks (as many company unions have), but they are no longer class organisations. John L. Lewis’ organisation is still a trade union; Robert Ley’s is not.

Now read just as carefully Frankel’s comment on this definition, part of which we ourselves emphasise:

This point of view is clear. It is consistent, it is harmonious with the Shachtmanite point of view on the Soviet Union. It likewise happens to be the traditional position of the ultra-leftists. Lenin polemicised against it in *The Infantile Disease of Left-Wing Communism*. It is precisely on this theory that the Stalinists constructed their thesis of “social fascism,” and their designation of the AFL as a “fascist” organisation.

What’s right is right; our view on the trade unions is clear, consistent and harmonious with our views on Russia. Every thing else in this quotation, except for the spelling and punctuation, is — if we may be forgiven the abusiveness provoked by snarling, stubborn ignorance — wrong and stupid.

Frankel thinks I cited the Lewis union because it is “the one union which has conducted four general coal strikes in the midst of the war ... This generous fellow would give ice away at the North Pole.” A heart specialist, a trade union expert, and a wit to boot. The fact is the United Mine Workers was cited by me not because it “conducted four general coal strikes in the midst of the war,” but because it is one of the most bureaucratically constructed, managed and controlled unions in the country, and yet is a proletarian organisation. Our wit is persistent: “But the question remains: what is the Hod Carriers Union, which holds conventions every ninety-nine years? Or the Stalinist-run UE, which fights for incentive pay, not against it? Or anyone of a dozen others.”

The answer to these questions must be given, we fear. Frankel is old enough to be told the truth, at least in a whisper. The members of the Hod Carriers Union are among the highest-paid workers in the United States. The union leaders are despots, some are even said to be gangsters, grafters and corruptionists, some have made a mighty good thing for themselves out of unionism. But, by terroristic methods, if you will, by bureaucratic and reactionary methods, and with the aim of feathering their own nests, they work and must work “in the defence of the workers’ share of the national income, or at least against its diminution.” If they did not, the union would disappear and so would the very basis on which their autocratic power and privileges are built up. The Stalinist-led unions are, of course, somewhat different, but fundamentally the same. Take even incentive pay. The Stalinists put it forward, and are compelled to put it forward, as a means of increasing the workers’ income. We say that the incentive-pay system, while it would increase the income of some workers, or of all of them temporarily, would do so at the expense of the muscles and nerves of the workers, at the expense of their long-range interests, at the expense of the solidarity and fighting power of the union, etc., etc. How mortifying the thought that the ABC’s have to be explained to a Marxian theoretician of such height, breadth and weight.

The two Trotskyisms during World War Two

Four times we read Frankel's comment on our definition. But nowhere did we find a word to indicate how he defines a trade union, how he would distinguish even the most reactionary trade union from a company union or from Ley's "Labour Front." What standard would he employ? That it was originally formed by workers? That it is composed of workers? That it claims to speak for workers? What? What?

If instead of comparing Russia with a union, we would compare a union with Russia, then by Frankel's standards, a union would still deserve the name: if the "union" bureaucracy had all the power, if it had an army and police at its disposal to oppress the members, if it could be removed from office only by violent insurrection, if it ran prisons for recalcitrant members, if it made an alliance with U. S. Steel for joint picket lines against Republic Steel, if we opposed the organisation of the unorganised ("against the seizures of new territories by the Kremlin" — Trotsky), if we favoured the withdrawal, say, of its Negro members to form a separate union ("independence of the Ukraine" — Trotsky), and so forth. Ley's "union" could easily fit into such a definition

UNIONS

Disappointed by Frankel's failure to define a union, we seek elsewhere. Perhaps the following definition will prove acceptable:

The character of such a workers' organisation as that of a trade union is determined by its relation to the distribution of the national income. The fact that Green & Co. defend private property in the means of production characterises them as bourgeois. Should these gentlemen in addition defend the income of the bourgeoisie from the attacks on the part of the workers, should they conduct a struggle against strikes, against the raising of wages, against help to the unemployed, then we would have an organisation of scabs and not a trade union. However, Green & Co., in order not to lose their base, must lead within certain limits the struggle of the workers for an increase — or at least against diminution — of their share in the national income. This objective symptom is sufficient in all important cases to permit us to draw a line of demarcation between the most reactionary trade union and an organisation of scabs. Thus we are duty-bound not only to carry on work in the AFL, but to defend it from scabs, the Ku Klux Klan, and the like.

Is this the "traditional position of the ultra-leftists"? Is this what Lenin polemicised against? Is this "precisely" the theory on which "the Stalinists constructed their thesis on "social fascism"? Is this clear? Is it consistent? Is it, too, "harmonious with Shachtman's point of view on the Soviet Union"?

Doesn't every one of Frankel's strictures against Shachtman's definition apply equally to this definition? Absolutely! No more, no less! Who is the author of this second definition? Shachtman? No! Shachtman is guilty only of having copied it, in some places word for word, in all places meaning for meaning. It is Trotsky who is guilty of writing it! Our "authority" will find it in the December, 1937, Internal Bulletin of the Socialist Workers Party, No. 3, page 4.

Trotsky says you recognise the difference between a scab outfit and a union by the fact that the latter, even under Green and Co., "must lead within certain limits the struggle of the workers for an increase — or at least against diminution — of their share in the national income."

Shachtman, frankly "plagiarising" from Trotsky, says you recognise the difference between a fascist "front" and a union by the fact that the latter, even under Lewis and Co., "fight (ineptly or skilfully, reformistically or militantly) in the defence of the workers' share of the national income, or at least against its diminution."

The thought and even the language are identical, and not by accident, for both are dealing, Mr. Authority, with the ABC's of Marxism; both are dealing, Mr. Trade Union Expert, with the ABC's of trade unionism. And what does the Expert-Authority say about these definitions — not the stupid things about Lenin and social-fascism, but the unwittingly intelligent things? He says, let us remember, that "this point of view... is harmonious with the Shachtmanite point of view on the Soviet Union." Agreed! No complaint!

We could complain, however, if we were given to indignation over such things. If we were, then we might say: Have we really committed such unforgivable crimes that in a discussion of this importance you send against us a zero who does not know what the "heart" of Trotskyism is, where the roots of our theory lie, what the difference is between revolution and reform in Russia, or even what a common, ordinary trade union is — not even what Trotsky said it is — and who argues that Trotsky's definition of a union is harmonious with Shachtman's definition of Russia?

Inasmuch as indignation is really not called for here — pity is the more appropriate emotion — we do not make this complaint. It seems to us, however, that the membership of the SWP does have grounds for energetic complaint — Does our party have to discredit itself so ridiculously? Is this the only way we have of replying to the views of the Workers Party?

These questions will gain greater poignancy when we examine next month the last two points dealt with by the Authority. We fear he will not fare too well under the examination. We invited honest, sober and informed criticism of our position. Instead, we got Frankel. The fault is clearly not ours.

We have already seen that our critic does not know what the "heart of Trotskyism" is, what are the sources of our criticism of Trotsky's theory of the "degenerated workers' state," and that he does not even know what a trade union is. We have also established that by Frankel's involuntary admission, Trotsky's conception of a trade union (which Frankel attributes to Shachtman alone) "is clear, it is consistent, it is harmonious with the Shachtmanite point of view on the Soviet Union." There remain two of the original five points to deal with: the question of the roots of class rule and the question of the historical place of the Stalin bureaucracy.

Marxists view classes as the product of historical development, in other words, all classes have a past and a future, as well as the present. Shachtman's "new exploitive class" is, in Shachtman's own words, "without a past and without a future." (Max Shachtman, *The Struggle for the New Course*.)

Lenin insisted that the roots of all class rule are to be found in the productive foundations of society. He said: "The rule of the class is determined only by the relationship to property." To explain the rule of his "new class," Shachtman points not to the foundation but to the political superstructure. It thus turns out that Shachtman's "indispensable correction" applies not only to Trotsky but to Lenin and Marx as well. But Shachtman simply forgets to mention such trifles.

"Wherein does the rule of the class [the proletariat] express itself?" asked Lenin. And he answered: "The rule of the proletariat expresses itself in the abolition of landed and capitalist property." Not the introduction of nationalised property and planning but the abolition of the old property forms sufficed for Lenin.

How does Shachtman get around this? Very simply. He denies that his new class needs either to abolish previous property forms or institute new ones of its own.

Shachtman's class that has no past and no future possesses for its "fundament" not property relations but the "ownership" of "political power." Needless to add, this "ownership" in its turn has neither a past nor a future. Such tripe is, according to Shachtman, "the veriest commonplace of Marxism." (*Fourth International*, May, 1944, page 150.)

This is typical Frankel: x parts ignorance (principal ingredient), x parts falsification (never omitted), x parts insolence (the style is the man), and x parts plain, ordinary, anhydrous muddleheadedness; the solvent is not even tap-water. This chemical analysis requires demonstration. Here it is.

1. For Lenin, the roots of class rule are to be found in the productive foundations of society; Shachtman, however, who simply forgets to mention (note: "forgets to mention") such trifles, points not to the foundation but to the political superstructure.

That Shachtman, who is in his way as human as Frankel, may forget to mention one trifle or another, is more than possible. But the trifle of which Frankel speaks with that mastery of sarcasm which marks him out from a world of dullards, was not forgotten by Shachtman. Not only was it not forgotten, but it is to this very trifle that the origin of the new ruling class in Russia was traced. In *The Struggle for the New Course* it says:

At bottom, classes have risen and come to power throughout history in response to the developing needs of production which preceding classes were unable to satisfy. This is the case, also, with the new ruling class in Russia. The Russian bourgeoisie had ample opportunity to prove that it could not, or could no longer, develop the productive forces of the country. It came upon the scene too late to play the historically progressive role it played in the Western countries....

But if the bourgeoisie came too late, the proletariat of Russia came to power, so to speak, "too early." It is of course more proper to say that the rest of the European proletariat did not come to power early enough. The results of this retardation of the world revolution are known. The isolated Russian proletariat, in a backward country, could not satisfy the needs of production, either. It could not satisfy them on a socialist basis. That was the quintessential point made by Trotsky in his theory of the permanent revolution. It was with

this conviction in mind that he combatted the bureaucracy's theory of "socialism in a single country." The bureaucracy won, the revolution degenerated. But not in accordance with the predictions of Lenin or Trotsky. The revolution did not turn to capitalism. (Pages 241f.)

The reader, we think, is getting some idea of who it is that simply "forgets to mention" the "trifles." Let us continue.

"All modern nations," we noted on page 219, "experience the need of an economic organisation and strength that will enable them to survive." The Russian bourgeoisie, however, was unable to develop the productive forces, an inability which conditioned its social impotence and the triumph of the Russian revolution under the hegemony of the proletariat. (A contrary view is a capitulation to Menshevism.) The proletariat, in turn, was able to develop the productive forces — in Trotsky's words, make possible an "authentic rise of a socialist economy" — only with the state aid of the victorious Western proletariat. (A contrary view is a capitulation to Stalinism.) The old prediction said: Without the world revolution, Russia will inevitably stagnate and then succumb to capitalism in the form of foreign imperialist exploitation; also, Stalinism is turning the country in that direction. The prediction, however understandable, was erroneous. A tremendous economic advance was made under Stalin's "Planning." It was not a socialist advance — this prediction of Trotsky was absolutely borne out. But neither was it capitalist! It was not accomplished by restoring private ownership in the means of production and exchange or by abolishing the monopoly of foreign trade.

The productive forces were not developed by way of socialisation (which implies a trend toward socialism) but by way of bureaucratic collectivism. The new bureaucracy was born, grew, and took power in response, not to the needs of society as a whole — the world proletariat is sufficiently capable of satisfying those — but to the organic needs of a backward, isolated country, existing in unique and unprecedented world conditions. (Page 242.)

Let us temper the verdict with charity, and say: Frankel "simply forgets to mention" that he wrote his review before reading the book. Impossible! the reader may protest. Impossible or not, the statement has the virtue of mercifully avoiding the right name for Frankel.

POLITICAL POWER AND PROPERTY

2. For Lenin, the rule of the class is determined only by the relationship to property; Shachtman, however, tries to get around this by arguing that "his new class" establishes no new property forms of its own, and does not have property relations but the ownership of political power as its fundament.

That looks bad — but only if there lingers in you a faith that Frankel understands what he reads, or even reads what he reviews and condemns. It does not look so bad when you understand that the rule of the class is determined in the same way in Lenin's conception and in Shachtman's. The latter wrote in *The Struggle for the New Course*: "It is of the ABC of Marxism that the fundament of all social relations (that is, relations of production) are property relations. That holds for the old slaveholding societies, for feudal society, for capitalist society and for the proletarian state." (Page 233.) "How," asked Frankel, "does Shachtman get around" Lenin's conception? Very simply: by sharing it.

But it is necessary to know what conception it is we share. Lenin speaks of property relations, of the relationship of a class to property, that is, to the means of production and exchange. Let us present a little more of the speech by Lenin at the 9th Congress of the Russian party in 1920, from which Frankel takes his quotations.

When the question of property was decided in practice, the rule of the class was thereby assured: thereupon the constitution wrote down on paper what life has decided: "There is no capitalist and landed property," and it added: "The working class has more rights than the peasantry, but the exploiters have no rights at all." Therewith was written down the manner in which we realised the rule of our class, in which we bound together the toilers of all strata, of all the little groups....

The rule of the class is determined only by the relationship to property. That is precisely what determines the constitution. And our constitution correctly sets down our attitude to property and our attitude to the question of what class must stand at the head. (My emphasis — M. S.)

"And it added" — what Frankel failed to add: The working class has more rights than the peasantry, but the exploiters have no rights at all. "Therewith was written down the manner in which we realised the rule of our class." Class

The two Trotskyisms during World War Two

rule is determined only by the relationship to property. "Our constitution correctly sets down our attitude to property and our attitude to the question of what class must stand at the head." Today, the working class does not have "more rights than the peasantry." The capitalist exploiters have no rights at all in the Stalinist state, but neither have the workers or the peasants. The working class does not "stand at the head." It is in the prison house that — so Frankel says — Stalin has made out of Russia.

In Russia in 1917, the proletariat first took political power. Then, the proletariat — in — power "did abolish property and abolished it completely." The "rule of the class was thereby assured." The constitution then gave the proletariat ruling rights; it provided that the proletariat "must stand at the head." The means of production and exchange became the property of the workers' state. The setting up of a new class state by the Stalinist counterrevolution was accomplished by wiping all this out, by establishing fundamentally different property relations.

All wiped out? This is where Frankel is baffled. Isn't it a fact that property is still nationalised, still state property? Do not the property forms set up by the Bolshevik revolution still remain? Isn't it a fact that "the abolition of the old [capitalist] property forms sufficed for Lenin"? and that these old forms have not yet been restored by the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy?

Here we approach the nub of the problem.

THE NUB OF THE PROBLEM

The "abolition of the old property forms" would not have "sufficed for Lenin" if these forms (capitalist private property) had been burned out in a fire, inundated in a storm, or bombed into rubble by Flying Fortresses.

The abolition sufficed because it was accomplished by the proletariat-in-power which converted capitalist property into the property of a proletarian state. By this action, the proletarian state completed (the first stage of) the transformation not only of the old property relations. What is the meaning of this distinction between "forms" and "relations"? Does it exist in reality or is it purely verbal?

Under capitalism, property exists in the form of capitalist private property. This simple sentence already shows what are the property relations under capitalism. Regardless of the political regime (be it monarchical, democratic, militarist, Fascist or even semi-feudal), the capitalist class owns the property (means of production, etc.) and the proletariat works, as Marx would say, "with conditions of labour belonging to another." That is how we find the relationships of the classes to property. The state exists to maintain these relationships. The minute, therefore, you say "capitalist property forms" you have already said "capitalist property relations." Similarly, under slavery and feudalism, and in general wherever property is privately owned. The class that owns the property is the ruling class.

But what about the society in which property is not privately but state-owned? Trotsky wrote about the Stalinist bureaucracy that "the very fact of its appropriation of political power in a country where the principal means of production are in the hands of the state, creates a new and hitherto unknown relation between the bureaucracy and the riches of the nation" (*Revolution Betrayed*, page 249). Let us re-emphasise: a new and hitherto unknown relation. This thought, however, needs supplementation: the seizure of political power by the proletariat in a country where it turns over the principal means of production to the hands of the state also creates a new and hitherto unknown relation between the rulers and the property. For the third time we emphasise: a new and hitherto unknown relation.

Why new? Why hitherto unknown? Because the proletariat, its revolution, and the social order whose establishment is its historic mission, differ fundamentally from all preceding classes, their revolutions and their social orders. The proletariat is not a property-owning class under capitalism; and it does not become a property-owning class when it takes power. When it takes state power, it turns the property over to its state. Its relations to property are then expressed only through its state. It "owns" the property only inasmuch as it rules the property-owning state. That is the only way the proletariat ever did own property, ever will own it and ever can own it. It owns it through its state, the workers' state, through its political power!

That is why there is such lamentable ignorance in the sarcastic question: "Since when did a ruling class have for its fundament not property relations but the ownership of political power? Are the Fascists a new ruling class? Is an absolute

monarch a new ruling class?"

No, the monarch was not a ruling class; the feudal lords were, because they owned the landed property. The fascists are not a ruling class; the bourgeoisie is, because it owns the means of production and exchange. The proletariat, however, is not merely "another" class, but a fundamentally different one: It does not and cannot own property. It can only "own" the state when it takes power. By that "ownership" it establishes state property which it organises and operates so that it ceases to be state property and becomes social property. The state itself ceases to be.

The complete expropriation of the political power of the working class by the Stalinist bureaucracy only makes this point clearer. The property forms seem to be the same as they were before: property exists in the form of state property. Therefore, cries Frankel triumphantly, it is still a workers' state, even if politically degenerated.

But hold on a moment: What are now the property relations in Russia? That is, what are the relations of the various classes (or, let us say, the various social groups) to the state property? We have been told by Lenin, through Frankel, that the rule of the class is determined only by the relationship to property. Granted. But just how shall we now determine what the relationship is?

In a society where property is privately owned, the question answers itself: this class (or social group) owns the property, this class does not. Such an answer is obviously impossible in a society where property is not privately owned but state owned. To determine then the relations to property of the various social groups, is it not clear that we must first find out what are their respective relations to the state-which-owns-the-property?

"From the point of view of property in [ownership of] the means of production," wrote Trotsky, "the differences between a marshal and a servant girl, the head of a trust and a day labourer, the son of a people's commissar and a homeless child, seem not to exist at all." (*Revolution Betrayed*.)

That's just the point, although Trotsky did not draw the right conclusion. If you look at Russia from the standpoint of ownership of the means of production in the same way you look at a society in which these are privately owned — the trust head and the labourer have exactly the same property relations. Yet, in reality, their respective relations to property are as fundamentally different as the respective relations to property of the bourgeois and the proletarian under capitalism (except that in Russia the gap between the classes is so much greater). The bureaucracy is the ruling class. It has all the political power, the proletariat has none.

That is why Frankel's "irony" about Shachtman because the latter "points not to the foundation but to the political superstructure" is so utterly out of place. He does not understand the historically unprecedented nature of the proletarian state power, the peculiarity of the proletariat as a ruling class. He does not understand what is unprecedented about the class rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy. He derides its "ownership" of "political power" as something quite secondary, because he cannot grasp the simple idea that where property belongs to the state, the "ownership" of the state power means the monopolisation of all economic and social power. The bureaucracy is the ruling class because its "mere" political power makes it the owner of the conditions of production. It is always the relation of the owners of the conditions of production to the actual producers that shows us the real basis of a class society and establishes the true class character of the state. The Stalinist state is no exception to this rule.

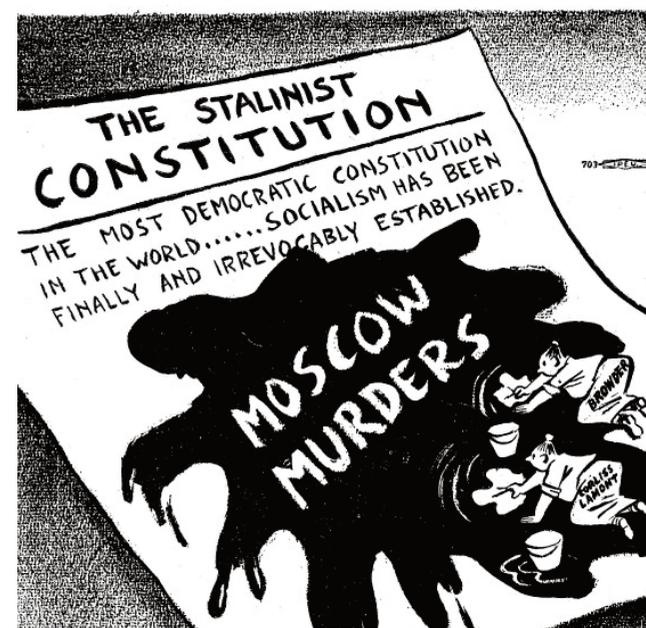
This is the nub of the problem, we said. Without understanding this essentially simple idea, the Stalinist counter-revolution will remain an enigma and a source of confusion.

We wrote that our criticism of Trotsky's theory "introduces into it an indispensable correction." The key to this correction is given by Trotsky. If we quote Trotsky himself, this may be of help to Frankel, whose Marxism consists, in Lenin's excellent phrase, of "swearing by God."

In the *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky shows how bourgeois society has maintained itself and developed in spite of different political regimes and bureaucratic castes. "In contrast to this, the property relations which issued from the socialist revolution are indivisibly bound up with the new state as their repository. The predominance of socialist over petty bourgeois tendencies is guaranteed, not by the automatism of the economy — we are still far from that — but by political measures taken by the dictatorship. The character of the economy as a whole thus depends upon the character of the state power." (Page 250. My emphasis — M.S.)

Our whole difference with this basically unassailable statement of the problem lies in the fact that we draw the consis-

Stains That Won't Come Off



tent conclusion. The new state is the repository of the property relations and is indivisibly bound up with them! The character of the economy depends upon the character of the state power! And that in contrast to bourgeois society! Once this is understood, the rest follows.

It is this conception that lay at the heart of Trotsky's first theory of Russia as a degenerated workers' state: the state is the repository of the property relations; the character of the economy depends upon the character of the state power. In this first theory, Trotsky, as Frankel would put it, "pointed not to the foundations but to the political superstructure." That is why Trotsky used to repeat and repeat that Russia is still a workers' state because the political power can be reformed, "that the proletariat of the USSR has not forfeited the possibility of submitting the bureaucracy to it, of reviving the party and of mending the regime of the dictatorship — without a new revolution, with the methods and on the road of reform." (*Problems of the Development of the USSR*, page 36.)

With the abandonment of the program of reform and the adoption of the view that the Stalinist bureaucracy can be overthrown only by a revolution, Trotsky was compelled also to abandon his first theory and to develop an altogether different one, namely, Russia is still a workers' state because property is still nationalised. This complete change has been demonstrated by us in detail and in several places, including *The Struggle for the New Course*. Frankel just acts as if he never heard of the point. His silence encourages the belief that our demonstration is irrefutable.

The second theory of Trotsky is radically different from the first. Originally, the state was the repository of the property relations; now the "property relations" (nationalised property) are the "repository" of the state. Originally, the character of the economy was determined by the character of the state power (Frankel's "political superstructure"); now the character of the state power is determined by the character of the economy.

If you understand and hold to the first, and only correct, conception of Trotsky, you understand why the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy, in conquering state power and establishing itself as the new ruling class, did not need "to abolish previous property forms or institute new ones of its own," at least not in appearance. By completing its conquest of state power, the bureaucracy established new property relations. Thereby (will Frankel ever understand this?) it established property forms of its own, if by that is meant social property forms. When the proletariat was in power, property existed and was exploited in Russia in the form of property-of-the-workers'-state. With Stalinism in complete power, property exists and is exploited in the form of property-of-the-bureaucratic-collectivist state. Stalinism has wiped out all the conquests of the proletarian revolution.

The trouble with Frankel, at bottom, is that he accepts and his party repeatedly disseminates the fundamental sophism of the Stalinist doctrine, which, in the new Russian constitution, legalises the lie that state property equals "the possessions of the whole people."

3. A ruling class without a past and without a future? In a terse, but all the more devastating reply, Frankel says: "Such tripe is, according to Shachtman, 'the veriest commonplace of Marxism.'"

The two Trotskyisms during World War Two

Neither the commonplaces nor the complexities of Marxism are made up of tripe. This we will grant. But only if we are allowed to add that discussions of Marxism should not be made up of forgeries.

In the chapter on the bureaucracy as a new ruling class, Shachtman analyses the hopeless contradiction into which Trotsky's theory drove him in 1939 when he presented us with a proletarian revolution carried out in Russian-occupied Poland by the "counterrevolutionary workers' state." (Brave Frankel, like his friends, has not one word to say in defence of Trotsky on this point.) At the end of his analysis, Shachtman writes that "In comparison with this, our theory of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a new and reactionary exploitive class, and of Russia as a bureaucratic-collectivist class state, neither proletarian nor bourgeois, is the veriest commonplace of Marxism" (page 241). Several pages later, at the end of the volume, Shachtman writes, in an entirely different connection, about "the new bureaucracy, without a past and without a future" (page 247).

Frankel, who belongs to the "only moral people," simply cuts away the couple of thousand words that separate the two quotations, pastes together the two unrelated clauses with a little trip, and passes it off on the public as a genuine check written "according to Shachtman." Following right after this clumsy little forgery appears a sub-heading over another one of Frankel's stern indictments of us. It reads (O Coincidence!): "A Petty Bourgeois Counterfeit." The only comment this requires is two punctuation marks: !!

However, we did speak of the Stalinist bureaucracy as being without a past and without a future. It is a question that is best dealt with — in so far as it can be adequately treated in an article — in connection with the final point raised (i.e., muddled up) by Frankel:

According to Marxists, the historical justification for every ruling class is the ability under its particular system of exploitation to raise the development of productive forces of society as a whole to a new level. Does Shachtman grant this ability to Stalinism, i.e., his own "new exploitive class"? ...

The gist of Shachtman's 128-page argument boils down to a representation of the crimes of Stalinism as the birthpangs that marked the rise of a new class to power. No more, no less. It is an elementary principle of Marxism that ruling classes rise in society through the operation of forces beyond the control of men's consciousness, reason or will. The rise of new ruling classes can be retarded or facilitated but never prevented — until and unless these classes have exhausted their historic mission. In the light of this, what is Shachtman's version of the evolution of the Soviet Union if not an attempt to supply an historical justification not for the ascendancy of a new class but actually for the abominations of the Kremlin?

Ex ungue leonem — you know the lion by his claws. Another species of animal, however, you know by its bray. From the braying, we gather that Shachtman is not only trying to provide an historical justification for Stalinism, "but actually for the abominations of the Kremlin." Obviously a detestable creature this Shachtman. Much deeper he cannot sink.

However, if we fumigate the air a little and reflect a little, things look more cheerful.

In the first place, the two accusations are in conflict: Shachtman says the bureaucracy has no past and no future, and he gives the bureaucracy an historical justification. If it is historically justified, it has both an historical past and an historical future.

In the second place, Shachtman nowhere speaks of an historical justification of Stalinism, nor does he suggest that it has one. Here we have not a forgery, but an invention.

And in the third place, the only one in our movement who ever spoke of an historical justification of the Stalinist bureau-

cracy was — Leon Trotsky. As in the case of the definition of a trade union, Frankel does not know where Trotsky ends and where Shachtman begins (this is his only qualification for writing on either one of them).

On December 28, 1934, Trotsky wrote: "Indeed, the historical justification for the very existence of the bureaucracy is lodged in the fact that we are still very far removed from socialist society." (*The Kirov Assassination*, page 10.) Further, he notes that the Stalinist dictatorship is both a heritage of past class struggles and an instrument for preventing a new class struggle. "In this and in this alone rests the historical justification for the existence of the present Soviet dictatorship." (Ibid., page 11.) Again, in the same work: "It would be criminal to deny the progressive work accomplished by the Soviet bureaucracy." (Ibid., page 25.)

(This Trotsky pamphlet was translated by J. G. Wright. Wright is editor of the *Fourth International*. Without a murmur, he prints Frankel's ignorant and venomous observations on "historical justification." What does it matter? Who will read the answer to it? Is it against the "petty bourgeois opposition"? Is it true and harsh and tough and vicious? Well, so much the better! That's how we rough-and-tumble proletarians (i.e., J G Wright! i.e., H Frankel! i.e., J. Hansen!) write, and if you don't like it you can lump it. Let's print it, damn it all.)

In a sense, we are able to accept Trotsky's characterisation of the bureaucracy. That is why we are able to speak of the new class without a past and without a future — that is, without an historical past or future. If Frankel had resisted his penchant for tearing phrases out of their context, the meaning would have been clearer.

CLASS WITHOUT A PAST

We say the Stalinist bureaucracy is a new ruling class because it is the "owner of the conditions of production." Despite similarities in certain aspects with other class societies (the capitalist, for example), it differs basically from all of them in its own unique mode of production, in the "specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers," in the distribution of the means of production and of the products of economy.

As a result of unforeseen historical circumstances, it arose out of "the needs of production"; it did develop the productive forces in a way that no other class could under the given conditions.

We say this class is without a past. We seek thereby to distinguish it from the great and durable classes of history which, for various objective reasons (economic, geographical, etc.), went through a long evolution and decisively directed the course of social development. What Frankel says about "every ruling class" is true only in a manner of speaking, that is, with the necessary historical limitations. In other words, it is not true as an absolutely valid dogma. History is studded with the record of classes under whose rule society stagnated and which could not be fitted into Frankel's rigid formula. Whoever does not know this had better rush to a serious history before he even pretends to speak about Marxism.

Marxism does not say that the world, and everything in it, marches straight from primitive communism to slavery, then to feudalism, then to capitalism, then to the proletarian dictatorship and communism, with no reversions, sideleaps, combinations or "oddities" whatsoever. This is an utterly primitive conception of Marxism.

"My critic," wrote Marx to the Russian Populist, Danielson, "must needs metamorphose my outline of the genesis of capitalism in western Europe into a historic-philosophical theory of the general course, fatally imposed upon all peoples, regardless of the historical circumstances in which they

find themselves placed, in order to arrive finally at that economic formation which insures with the greatest amount of productive power of social labour the most complete development of man. But I beg his pardon. He does me too much honour and too much shame at the same time....

"... Strikingly analogical events, occurring, however, in different historical environments [lead] to entirely dissimilar results. By studying each of these evolutions separately and then comparing them, one will easily find the key to these phenomena, but one will never succeed with the master-key of a historico-philosophical theory whose supreme virtue consists in being supra-historical." (My emphasis — M. S.)

Marx often repeated the same thought. All classes and all ruling classes are not the same and do not always have the same characteristics. They cannot always be measured by the same criteria. The same obviously holds true of all societies, for in each of them, as Marx points out, the "prevailing element" is a different one. To apply the same criteria to the present ruling class and the present social order in Russia as is applied, for example, to feudalism, simply makes no sense from the Marxian or any other standpoint. "By studying each of these evolutions separately, and then comparing them, one will easily find the key to these phenomena." This is what we have sought to do in our analysis of Stalinist Russia. A suprahistorical master-key does not exist. Not even a thinker of Frankel's stature can, if we may say so, forge one.

We say, further, that this new class has no future. Why?

Because it arose at the stage of the final decay and crisis of class society. It has given no sign of an ability to resolve the crisis which the combined forces of world capitalism have failed to resolve. It is historically conditioned by the concrete circumstances of its origin. One of these circumstances is the existence of its origin. One of these circumstances is the existence of a modern proletariat which, on a world scale (but not on a national scale), is capable of breaking the fetters on the productive forces, on social development, on freedom, and thus resolving the last social crisis of humanity.

That is how it stands historically. Theoretically, it is conceivable that this new class may have "a future" and that on a world scale. Such a perspective might open up for it if, for example, it was conclusively demonstrated that the proletariat is organically incapable of resolving the crisis, of taking and holding power and employing it to inaugurate a classless society. Nothing of the sort has yet been demonstrated, much less demonstrated conclusively. There are some dilettantes and ex-radicals who confine themselves to just such speculations, and even make them their program of "action." We for our part find little interest in them, and less need for them. Our task is the mobilisation of the working class for the revolutionary assault against decaying capitalism. Our task is not ponderation over the growth and "future" of Stalinism, but the struggle against it for the future of the proletariat.

Successful struggle against a foe requires an understanding of his nature. That Frankel and his like do not understand, is already bad. That they refuse to understand — and a precondition of understanding is intelligent and loyal discussion, be it ever so vigorous — is worse. Frankel is only a minor epigone of Trotsky. Trotsky's whole *New Course* is an instructive protest against the type of methods, outlook, procedure that Frankel and his friends represent. That is why Frankel speaks so cavalierly of Trotsky's work. That is why he does not give the reader as much as an inkling of its contents. We have already suggested that he does not know much. But he knows enough to see that what Trotsky wrote in 1923-24 is a timely and thorough indictment of what he stands for.

In this sense, a reading of *The New Course* may be recommended all over again as an excellent preparation for a fruitful discussion of "the Russian question."

What is Trotskyism?

By Max Shachtman *The Struggle for the New Course*, preface to an edition of Trotsky's *The New Course*, 1943

Our criticism of Trotsky's later theory of the "workers' state" introduces into it an indispensable correction. Far from "demolishing" Trotskyism, it eliminates from it a distorting element of contradiction and restores its essential inner harmony and continuity. The writer considers himself a follower of Trot-

sky, as of Lenin before him, and of Marx and Engels in the earlier generation.

Such has been the intellectual havoc wrought in the revolutionary movement by the manners and standards of Stalinism, that "follower" has come to mean serf, worshipper, or parrot. We have no desire to be this kind of "follower." Trotsky was not, and we learned much of what we know from him. In *The New Course* he wrote these jewelled words, which are worth repeating a hundred times:

"If there is one thing likely to strike a mortal blow to the

spiritual life of the party and to the doctrinal training of the youth, it is certainly the transformation of Leninism from a method demanding for its application initiative, critical thinking and ideological courage into a canon which demands nothing more than interpreters appointed for good and aye.

"Leninism cannot be conceived of without theoretical breadth, without a critical analysis of the material bases of the political process. The weapon of Marxian investigation must be constantly sharpened and applied. It is precisely in this that tradition consists, and not in the substitution of a formal ref-

The two Trotskyisms during World War Two

erence or of an accidental quotation. Least of all can Leninism be reconciled with ideological superficiality and theoretical slovenliness.

“Lenin cannot be chopped up into quotations suited for every possible case, because for Lenin the formula never stands higher than the reality; it is always the tool that makes it possible to grasp the reality and to dominate it. It would not be hard to find in Lenin dozens and hundreds of passages which, formally speaking, seem to be contradictory. But what must be seen is not the formal relationship of one passage to another, but the real relationship of each of them to the concrete reality in which the formula was introduced as a lever. The Leninist truth is always concrete! ...

“Leninism is orthodox, obdurate, irreducible, but it does not contain so much as a hint of formalism, canon, nor bureaucratism. In the struggle it takes the bull by the horns. To make out of the traditions of Leninism a supra-theoretical guarantee of the infallibility of all the words and thoughts of the interpreters of these traditions, is to scoff at genuine revolutionary tradition and transform it into official bureaucratism. It is ridiculous and pathetic to try to hypnotise a great revolutionary party by the repetition of the same formula, according to which the right line should be sought not in the essence of each question, not in the methods of posing, and solving this question, but in information ... of a biographical character.”

There are “followers” who seem to think that the whole of Trotskyism (that is, the revolutionary Marxism of our time) is contained in the theory that Russia is still a workers’ state and in the slogan of “unconditional defence of the Soviet Union.” They merely prove that they have retired from a life of active and critical thought, and from the realities of life in general, and confine themselves to memorising by heart two pages of an otherwise uncut and unread book. They would be the first to deny, by the way, that the whole of Leninism is contained in Lenin’s theory of the “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” or in his strictures against Trotsky and the theory of the permanent revolution.

The whole of Trotsky, for the new generation of Marxists that must be trained up and organised, does not lie in his contradictory theory of the class character of Russia; it is not even a decisively important part of the whole. Trotskyism is all of

Marx, Engels and Lenin that has withstood the test of time and struggle — and that is a good deal! Trotskyism is its leader’s magnificent development and amplification of the theory of the permanent revolution. Trotskyism is the defence of the great and fundamental principles of the Russian Bolshevik revolution and the Communist International, which it brought into existence. Trotskyism is the principle of workers’ democracy, of the struggle for democracy and socialism.

In this sense — and it is the only one worth talking about — *The New Course* is a Trotskyist classic. It was not only a weapon hitting at the very heart of decaying bureaucratism in revolutionary Russia. It was and is a guide for the struggle against the vices of bureaucratism throughout the labour and revolutionary movements.

Bureaucratism is not simply a direct product of certain economic privileges acquired by the officialdom of the labour movement. It is also an ideology, a concept of leadership and of its relationship to the masses, which is absorbed even by labour and revolutionary officialdoms who enjoy no economic privileges at all. It is an ideology that reeks of its bourgeois origin. Boiled down to its most vicious essence, it is the kind of thinking and living and leading which says to the rank and file, in the words Trotsky once used to describe the language of Stalinism: “No thinking! Those at the top have more brains than you.”

We see this ideology reflected in the every-day conduct of our own American trade union bureaucracy: “We will handle everything. Leave things to us. You stay where you are, and keep still.” We see it reflected throughout the big social-democratic (to say nothing of the Stalinist) parties: “We will negotiate things. We will arrange everything. We will manoeuvre cleverly with the enemy, and get what you want without struggle. You sit still until further orders. That is all you are fit for.” We even see it in those smaller revolutionary groups which are outside the reformist and Stalinist movements and which consider that this fact alone immunises them from bureaucratism. We repeat, it is a bourgeois ideology through and through. It is part of the ideas that the bourgeoisie, through all its agencies for moulding the mind of the masses, seeks to have prevail: “Whatever criticism you may have to make of us, remember this: The masses are stupid. It is no accident that they are at the bottom of the social ladder. They are incapable

of rising to the top. They need a ruler over them; they cannot rule themselves. For their own good, they must be kept where they are.”

The New Course does more than dismiss this odious ideology that fertilises the mind of the labour bureaucracy. It analyses its source and its nature. It diagnoses the evil to perfection. It indicates the operation needed to remove it, and the tools with which to perform the operation. It is the same tool needed by the proletariat for its emancipation everywhere. Its name is the democratically organised and controlled, self-acting, dynamic, critical, revolutionary political party of the working class.

The counter-revolution in Russia was made possible only because Stalinism blunted, then wore down, then smashed to bits this indispensable tool of the proletariat. The bureaucracy won. “If Trotsky had been right,” says the official iconographer of Stalin, Henri Barbusse, “he would have won.” How simple! What a flattering compliment to ... Hitler. The bureaucracy not only won, but consolidated its power on a scale unknown in any country of the world throughout all history. Stalin himself is now the Pope-Czar of the Russian Empire.

But that is only how it seems on the surface; that is how it is only for a very short while, as history counts. “Any imbecile can rule with a state of siege,” said Rochefort. Only the really powerful and confident can rule by establishing peaceful relations in the country. That, the new bureaucracy, without a past and without a future, cannot do. The combined efforts of world capitalism cannot do that nowadays, still less the efforts of the Stalinist nobility. The latter has succeeded in establishing “socialism,” for itself and “in a single country.” It will not live long to enjoy it. Together with all modern rulers, it is doomed to perish in the unrelenting world crisis that it cannot solve, or to perish at the hands of an avenging socialist proletariat.

Cromwell’s Roundheads marched with Bibles in their hands. The militant proletariat needs no divine revelations or scriptural injunctions, no Bibles or saviours. But it will march to victory only if its conscious vanguard has assimilated the rich and now-more-timely-than-ever lessons to be learned from the classic work of the organiser of the first great proletarian revolution.

What is Leninism?

By Leon Trotsky, *The New Course*, 1923

Leninism cannot be conceived of without theoretical breadth, without a critical analysis of the material bases of the political process. The weapon of Marxian investigation must be constantly sharpened and applied. It is precisely in this that tradition consists, and not in the substitution of a formal reference or of an accidental quotation.

Least of all can Leninism be reconciled with ideological superficiality and theoretical slovenliness.

Lenin cannot be chopped up into quotations suited for every possible case, because for Lenin the formula never stands higher than the reality; it is always the tool that makes it possible to grasp the reality and to dominate it. It would not be hard to find in Lenin dozens and hundreds of passages which, formally speaking, seem to be contradictory. But what must be seen is not the formal relationship of one passage to another, but the real relationship of each of them to the concrete reality in which the formula was introduced as a lever. The Leninist truth is always concrete!

As a system of revolutionary action, Leninism presupposes a revolutionary sense sharpened by reflection and experience which, in the social realm, is equivalent to the muscular sensation in physical labor. But revolutionary sense cannot be confused with demagogical flair. The latter may yield ephemeral successes, sometimes even sensational ones. But it is a political instinct of an inferior type.

It always leans toward the line of least resistance. Leninism, on the other hand, seeks to pose and resolve the fundamental revolutionary problems.

Leninism is, first of all, realism, the highest qualitative and quantitative appreciation of reality, from the standpoint of revolutionary action. Precisely because of this it is irreconcilable with the flight from reality behind the screen of hollow agitationism, with the passive loss of time, with the haughty justification of yesterday’s mistakes on the pretext of saving

the tradition of the party.

Leninism is genuine freedom from formalistic prejudices, from moralising doctrinalism, from all forms of intellectual conservatism attempting to bind the will to revolutionary action. But to believe that Leninism signifies that “anything goes” would be an irremediable mistake. Leninism includes the morality, not formal but genuinely revolutionary, of mass action and the mass party. Nothing is so alien to it as functional-arrogance and bureaucratic cynicism.

A mass party has its own morality, which is the bond of fighters in and for action. Demagoguery is irreconcilable with the spirit of a revolutionary party because it is deceitful: by presenting one or another simplified solution of the difficulties of the hour it inevitably undermines the next future, weakens the party’s self-confidence.

Swept by the wind and gripped by a serious danger, demagoguery easily dissolves into panic. It is hard to juxtapose, even on paper, panic and Leninism.

Leninism is warlike from head to foot. War is impossible without cunning, without subterfuge, without deception of the enemy. Victorious war cunning is a constituent element of Leninist politics.

But, at the same time, Leninism is supreme revolutionary honesty toward the party and the working class. It admits of no fiction, no bubble-blowing, no pseudo-grandeur.

Leninism is orthodox, obdurate, irreducible, but it does not contain so much as a hint of formalism, canon, nor bureaucratism. In the struggle, it takes the bull by the horns. To make out of the traditions of Leninism a supra-theoretical guarantee of infallibility of all the words and thoughts of the interpreters of these traditions is to scoff at genuine revolutionary tradition and transform it into social bureaucratism. It is ridiculous and pathetic to try to hypnotise a great revolutionary party by the repetition of the same formulae, according to which the right line should be sought not in the essence of each question, not in the methods of posing and solving this question, but in information of a biographical character.