

Why workers should reject the *Socialist Worker*, agent of Trotskyism

(Not a successor to the *People's Voice* but a travesty of it)

Workers' Party of New Zealand statement

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By way of introduction

Once there was a Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ). For much of its life it actively fought for the working-class ideology of Marxism-Leninism as part of a powerful World Communist Movement. It published a weekly newspaper, *The People's Voice*, which was widely discussed and its political line followed by many militant, advanced workers.

In 1993 the CPNZ embarked on an anti-working class course. It adopted the anti-Marxist-Leninist views of petty-bourgeois, reactionary Trotskyism. It merged with the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Organisation, abandoned the name of its journal (not long since erroneously changed to *Workers Voice*) and openly espoused the pro-imperialist line and tactics of Trotskyism. It also dropped the title of 'Communist Party' to adapt more readily to the interests of monopoly capital, local and international. It proceeded to publish a Trotskyist journal, *Socialist Worker*. All this was the result of the usurpation of control of the Party by a new, unprincipled gang of opportunists in the leadership.

Line switching

In the course of their multifold switches of line they carried out not only vituperative attacks on Stalin, who they had venerated only a couple of years previously. They also utterly distorted revolutionary history, making snide attacks against the great revolutionary successor to Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, V. I. Lenin, only mentioning him once or twice and then in a derogatory fashion. Their new ideological idol was now Leon Trotsky, an opponent of Marxism-Leninism for most of his life. Not only did they reject the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism defended by Lenin, thereby becoming social-democrats in all but name; they presented Trotsky and not Lenin, as *the* great leader of the 1917 socialist revolution in Russia.

Renegacy and opportunism

The Workers' Party of New Zealand saw all these fundamentally counter-revolutionary tendencies becoming dominant, and accurately predicted their outcome in two pamphlets

exposing the nature of the Communist Party's betrayals carried out by the new Party leadership, namely the *Communist Party Today* and *Apostles of Treachery*.

It might seem to some that the question of basic outlook in regard to *Socialist Worker* and Trotskyism is no longer of interest or importance to workers. To think that would be short-sighted, for the ideological-political line of a party is basic to its value to the working class. That is why in this statement the Workers' Party of New Zealand is reviewing the short, unpleasant history of the *Socialist Worker* and its Trotskyist outlook, in order that workers should learn from their negative example.

Background

What caused the Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ) to abandon formal adherence to Marxism-Leninism and merge with the Socialist Workers Organisation? Two causes – one internal, one external. First, the growth of opportunism and revisionism in its top leadership.

For over 10 years the Communist Party had adopted a line of blind following of the Party of Labour of Albania led by Enver Hoxha. Hoxha had denounced Mao Tse-tung as a lifelong revisionist, a piece of utter nonsense in the light of historical fact. As all in the Marxist-Leninist Movement that grew up in opposition to Soviet revisionism knew, Mao had led the struggle against revisionism.

Before Mao's death in 1976 Hoxha had repeatedly upheld him as a great Marxist-Leninist and anti-revisionist. After his death Hoxha followed an opportunist path. With Mao's death he aimed at seizing leadership of the world Marxist-Leninist movement – then opened up – from Mao's followers. Hoxha was himself a blind follower of Stalin, whom he claimed had made no mistakes. However, in the great polemic of the early 1960s against Soviet revisionism Mao, while restoring Stalin to the stature of a great Marxist-Leninist, nevertheless pointed out certain ideological errors which Stalin had made and which had helped in the restoration of capitalism in the USSR after his death. He estimated Stalin's role as consisting of 70 per cent for achievement, 30 per cent for mistakes. In reply to attacks by revisionist leaders on 'Stalinism' he said that he and the Communist Party of China (CPC) recognised Stalinism as, for them, support for Stalin's positive achievements, and he declared that China would continue to study his works and Marxism-Leninism.

Hoxha set out to establish PLA hegemony in the world Marxist-Leninist movement. Seeing Albania survive the coup d'état in China and the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, various Marxist-Leninist groups and parties shifted to support for blind following of Hoxha and the PLA. The majority, including the CPNZ took this position.

This situation lasted beyond Hoxha's own death until 1992, when Albania followed the same path as other East European countries, restoring capitalism. The CPNZ was completely at sea ideologically. It had gone too far down the anti-Mao road to return to a pro-Mao position. The Party leadership which had followed the Hoxha road in 1980 had only a shallow grasp of Marxist-Leninist theory. Until the Albanian collapse in late 1991 they blindly followed the PLA, and copied the latter's blind following of Stalin, who, according to Hoxha had made no mistakes.

The CPNZ at that point made some criticisms of Hoxha, but still continued a line of blind following of Stalin. However, it was already on the path to wholesale revisionism. Its leadership, particularly the Secretary Grant Morgan, began dropping Stalin as a Marxist-Leninist. Already he had attacked the great slogan of the *Communist Manifesto*, **‘Workers of All Countries, Unite!’** claiming it was erroneous and out of date. Soon he and his fellow renegades began shifting to the Trotskyist standpoint of attacking Stalin as the enemy of the people. They then moved completely to Trotskyism. They abandoned the name of the ‘Communist Party’ and organised within the Party acceptance of a merger with the Trotskyist ‘Socialist Workers Organisation’. The name of the Party’s weekly paper, was changed to *Socialist Worker*.

A quarter of the Party membership rejected the union with Trotskyism, which they regarded – rightly – as counter-revolutionary, and resigned. Morgan and Co. passed over all the former Communist Party assets to the merged organisation which made it able to sustain full-time workers and gave an appearance of being an active revolutionary body, which was a far cry from the truth.

Outdoing Khrushchev

To prepare the ground for abandoning even the badly-flawed standpoint that they took from Enver Hoxha they had earlier produced two thoroughly revisionist documents for Party acceptance. One of these was a Trotskyist denunciation of Stalin as a counter-revolutionary on which they based a so-called ‘programme’.

Briefly, this first document is more an excursion into pro-imperialism than it is a ‘programme’ of working-class revolutionary struggle. It does not attempt to explain the loss of socialism in the Soviet Union. It assumes that what Stalin led was the building of state capitalism, even though this was the road taken by Lenin – for the reason that it was essential to the survival of the revolution. At the end of the civil war and the wars of imperialist intervention the country was in ruins. This was when Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy in order to begin the restoration of the economy. He declared that yes, it was state capitalism, but a system in which all the main means of production were socially-owned and under the control of the dictatorship of the proletariat which could keep it within bounds and bring it to an end when necessary. The revisionist ‘programme’ of the CP leadership declared that Stalin introduced and built state capitalism, with no mention of Lenin’s analysis in such works as *The Tax in Kind*, which was the key in restoring the economy, enabling the building of socialism to proceed.

In fact, as the Workers’ Party of New Zealand pamphlet *Apostles of Treachery* pointed out, Lenin’s remarkable theoretical works were ‘either completely ignored or glossed over’ in the new revisionist ‘programme’. It hardly mentions imperialism, though it makes one brief mention of imperialist war. It certainly does not mention Lenin’s new theory of revolution in which he showed that ‘Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism Hence *the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country*’. This new theory was stated for the first time in an article published in 1915, ‘On the Slogan for a United States of Europe’. The law of uneven development still plays a major role in the world, as any objective observer can verify almost without effort.

A linch-pin of Trotskyism since its beginning has been its denial that socialism can be built in one country. Its proponents denounce Stalin for originating this concept and only building state capitalism, not socialism. *Apostles of Treachery* demonstrates the threadbare character of the revisionist 'programme', which in fact denies uneven development as analysed by Lenin and asserts that: 'in view of the "globalisation" of production and finance, a simultaneous world revolution will take place'. This is not only rejecting Leninism, it is sheer idiocy.

Thus, under the heading Global Revolution we find this gem in their 'programme'. 'If one country is ripe for revolution, this means others must be, since the single world economy reduces the international working class to a common level of exploitation.

'When working class revolution does break out, it will most likely trigger uprisings in other lands, producing a domino effect. The single world economy creates the conditions for global revolution.'

In fact, long before the new-hatched Trotskyist's findings, there was already in Marx's time a 'single world economy' as anyone can verify from Marx's *Capital*. And Lenin firmly repudiated any idea of a common level of exploitation and any idea of a kind of automatic world revolution arising from it.

The facts of history show that Lenin had constantly to wage a struggle against the opportunism and revisionism of Trotsky, and against his 'permanent revolution' theory right up to 1917. While the Bolsheviks under Lenin created an all-Russian disciplined party of the working class, Trotsky was a supporter of treacherous and compromising Menshevism. In his book on the 1905 revolution Trotsky makes only three brief references to the leading role played by Lenin and none to the Bolshevik Party.

Before they merged with the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Organisation, the renegade leaders of the then Communist Party asserted in their 'programme' that Stalin was a counter-revolutionary from immediately after the death of Lenin. Evidently they had picked up the technique of the 'big lie' from imperialism.

The imperialists laboured under no such illusions. They were well aware that no counter-revolutionary could conceivably have led the building of socialism, overcome the inherited economic backwardness of old Russia, made the USSR into a powerful modern state and opposed and exposed all the war plans of imperialism from Lenin's death onwards. The idea is not only ludicrous, it is the essence of imperialist reaction, of real, not invented, counter-revolution.

If one wished to get to the nub of the renegacy of the former CP one must ask how it is in fact, that the word 'revisionism' is not mentioned in their programme? How is it that they never once mention Leninism? Simply because they want to bury Lenin's profound analysis of imperialism and replace it with a meaningless hodge-podge of phrases which they substitute for Leninist science. They go so far as to assert that Stalin was as bad as Hitler, a standard imperialist practice in the cold war – and before. This is the most despicable of lies. The Trotskyists have long propagandised this idea. They built upon Trotsky's attacks on the Leninist politics carried on by

Stalin after Lenin's death. A full account would be far too long for this exposé of the *Socialist Worker* of today.

Hard on the heels of their so-called 'programme', the CPNZ published a long and supposedly authoritative analysis of Stalin's life and policies in a document entitled: 'Stalinism: State Capitalism in Russia'. This document is no more than a turgid rehash of all the lies and slanders about Stalin published by the hired servants of imperialism, the professional anti-communists.

Stalin v. Trotsky

Tremendous achievements of the socialist Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership included a) the completion of the immense task of restoring the country's shattered economy begun under Lenin; b) the inauguration of the five-year plans which transformed Russia from a backward, semi-feudal land into a modern state; c) the rapid industrialisation programme carried out with tremendous enthusiasm by the working masses; d) the collectivisation of agriculture as called for by Lenin, in which a rich-peasant (kulak) rebellion had to be overcome, and which has ever since been a source of a vast lie campaign * by world imperialism in which any figure of millions of deaths concocted by the international capitalist media could be, and is used to blacken Soviet socialism and Stalin; e) the development of a massive, modern defence industry which proved its worth in the defeat of the Nazi armed forces in World War II.

The renegades from the CPNZ do not attempt to, and cannot, explain why Trotsky was thoroughly exposed and defeated in the Communist Party and the international movement by 1927, when he was expelled by the CPSU and the Comintern. By the time this happened he had no support whatever in the ranks of the Party, because he was exposed as fundamentally hostile to communism both in theory and in practice. From 1924 on Trotsky had carried on his denunciation of Lenin's theory of the possibility of building socialism in one country. In a series of trenchant, closely-reasoned theoretical articles; such as 'The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists', and 'On the Problems of Leninism', Stalin thoroughly refuted Trotsky's claims and demolished him as a theoretician. This, and Trotsky's own anti-Soviet practice was what defeated him, not coercion by Stalin.

The Trotskyists were Mensheviks right from the 1903 Congress of the old Marxist party in Russia which saw the ideological split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Lenin's 'party of a new type' stood for a disciplined organisation, a vanguard party of the working class, an organised detachment, an organised whole, with strict rules binding on all members. In contrast, the Mensheviks – including Trotsky – stood for a loose, amorphous organisation not having definite conditions for membership, in which any academic or striker could declare himself as a member. This type of organisation could only be, and was, thoroughly opportunist in its programme and tactics.

Between the formation of the Bolsheviks as virtually a separate party from the Mensheviks, and the time of the October Socialist Revolution, Lenin had to wage continuous struggle against Trotsky's opportunist line and policies. In Lenin's Collected Works there is a long list of his polemics against Trotsky which anyone can check. It is far too lengthy to include here, but it required a constant fight by Lenin in defence of basic Marxist principles. In the pre- 1917 period

Trotsky formed his own little group, the 'inter-regional party' (also known as Menshevik Internationalists). These continued in opposition to Leninism until a few months before the socialist revolution of October (modern style, November). Seeing his own influence, small though it was, facing total eclipse as the revolutionary crisis matured, Trotsky and his small band applied for admission to the Bolshevik Party. They were admitted in July 1917, on undertaking to abide by the programme and rules of the Bolsheviks. This took place at the Bolshevik 6th Congress, whose work was led by its Chairman, Stalin, an old Bolshevik in close contact with Lenin.

Trotskyism v. Leninism

In the years prior to 1917 Trotsky's main thesis which he advanced against Leninism was that it was impossible to build socialism in one country. However, the immense sweep of the movement of the revolutionary workers and masses pushed Trotsky into participation in the Socialist Revolution, in an active role. True, he did some good work at this time, but his anti-Leninism again came to the fore over the necessity early in 1918 of accepting the onerous terms of the demands of imperialist Germany - which faced a ruined and prostrate Russia with its powerful army, and demanded territorial and other concessions. Lenin called for acceptance of these terms in order to obtain a breathing space so as to continue the revolution. He was opposed by Trotsky and Bukharin and some so-called 'Left' Communists at a decisive Central Committee meeting in February, 1918. Trotsky opted for no surrender because of the imminent German revolution. Lenin called such opposition 'revolutionary phrasemongering' which took no account of the concrete situation. He declared: 'If we do not sign the German peace terms, we will sign the death warrant of the Revolution in three weeks'. By a threat of resignation from the Central Committee and intention to appeal to the Party masses, Lenin finally won a majority, and as Minister of Foreign Affairs Trotsky was instructed to negotiate acceptance of the German demands. Even then he sought to delay the signing by pursuing his own line instead of the Central Committee's instructions, actually worsening the terms of the peace.

When Poland, backed by the Entente, invaded Russia to restore Tsarism the attack was beaten off by the Red Army, but under Trotsky's orders it attempted to drive the Poles back beyond their own borders with an amateurish offensive which failed, resulting in a collapse of Russia's Eastern Front.

Straight after the civil war Trotsky forced a Party-wide discussion in which he advocated 'shaking up' the trade unions to the point of making them into organs of the state. This was completely contradictory to Lenin's firm adherence to voluntary unionism. Lenin made a blistering criticism of Trotsky's views. In his speech to a Joint Meeting of top leaders of the Party and the Trade Unions, Lenin said apropos of Trotsky's pamphlet 'The Role and Tasks of the Trade Unions': 'In reading it very carefully, I am astonished at the number of theoretical errors and crying inexactitudes that are concentrated in it. How was it possible for anyone, in entering into a big Party discussion on this question to write such a poor thing instead of something most carefully thought out'? 1 And further: 'In taking such a wide subject as "The Role and Tasks of the Trade Unions", Comrade Trotsky, I am convinced, committed a number of errors that are connected with *the very essence of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.*'

What is this latter? It is the unrestricted state power of the working class, the fundamental question of socialism. Additionally, Lenin points out that Trotsky's theses 'were found to support not the best but the worst in military experience'.²

Although Trotsky's line of 'shaking up' the trade unions was decisively rejected by the Joint Meeting, the last word had not been said. Lenin showed in a further article 'Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Present Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin', that both were indulging in factionalism. He writes: 'The whole of Comrade Trotsky's pamphlet-platform is thoroughly permeated precisely with the spirit of 'shaking up from above'.³

Trotsky's pamphlet was published in Volume VII of the *Lenin Miscellany* **, together 'with marginal notes by Lenin to almost every paragraph. Lenin accompanies the arguments given by Trotsky with words like: "Not true", "syndicalist trash, blunder, nonsense etc." '

These notes are obviously fully in line with Lenin's devastating criticism of Trotsky in his (Lenin's) two articles on the trade unions referred to above. By themselves these articles damn Trotsky as a theoretical ass and a factionalist with only minuscule support among the Party membership. No wonder they chose long-time Bolshevik J. Stalin and not Trotsky as Lenin's successor.

Some may say, why go into all this; it's so long ago. Indeed, we would not bother except that Trotsky claimed to be Lenin's heir, and that Trotskyism still tries to present Trotsky as Lenin's equal, pretending that his line, his strategy and tactics – in fact his whole theoretical position – was almost indistinguishable from Lenin's. Just how distinguishable it actually was exposes the essentially counter-revolutionary nature of Trotskyism both then and now. It also shows how bankrupt the ex-Communist-Party leadership were in uniting with the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Organisation.

Today, whatever they say in denial, Trotskyism is fundamentally a pro-imperialist, petty-bourgeois tendency with a single prop: the imperialist hatred for, and denigration of Stalin. They borrow wholesale from the professional anti-communists both outside and inside Russia to blacken Stalin and hence communism with which Stalin's name is inextricably linked.

In his 'secret speech' to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, Khrushchev began a frontal attack on Stalin which brought joy to the hearts of imperialists worldwide. He made no attempt whatever to give a balanced assessment of Stalin's life but gave him no credit for any positive achievement whatever and tried to write him out of history. With this Congress he began the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and also a complete rejection of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism. It was Mao Tse-tung who restored Stalin to the stature of a great Marxist-Leninist in two pamphlets, *On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, and *More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (1959), which declared that Stalin's positive achievements in building Soviet socialism and in the main, correctly leading the world communist movement up to the time of his death in 1953, substantially outweighed his mistakes.

Mao's defence of Marxism-Leninism against Soviet revisionism began only a couple of months after the 20th Congress, where, in a speech to the Communist Party of China's Central Committee he exposed Khrushchev's revisionism. As Khrushchev proceeded to try to demolish socialism and basic communist principles he began attacking Mao and China, trying to enforce the hegemony of Soviet revisionism throughout the world communist movement, leading to the great ideological dispute of the early 1960s between revisionism, represented by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union leadership and their satellite parties, and Marxism-Leninism, represented by Maoist China supported by Albania.

Then, the CPNZ was the only Western Communist Party to stand alongside the Communist Party of China and the Party of Labour of Albania in defence of Marxism-Leninism.

The Trotskyists internationally sought to make capital out of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and crawled around the Communist Party of China trying to get unity with it for their petty-bourgeois anti-Marxist-Leninist views. To use an old saying, they were given 'the bums rush' by China. They also tried the same tactics in regard to the CPNZ and received the same treatment.

This is not to say that all who were involved with Trotskyist organisations were open, conscious counter-revolutionaries. However, the leadership were. The attack on Stalin, however popular it was with imperialism, was at the same time an attack on revolutionary Marxist-Leninist ideology and fell far short of being the basis for any genuine revolutionary movement. As a result Trotskyism has a mostly petty-bourgeois following; it has no basic working-class support.

It is, of course, not possible to analyse and document all the anti-communist features of Trotskyism in a few pages. We will, however, point to an irrefutable instance of its pro-imperialist position.

At the height of the Vietnam war, when the US fascist-type McCarran Act, barred communists from entering the USA, the Trotskyists were able to hold a world Trotskyist conference in, of all places, Washington DC, with no let or hindrance on the part of the reactionary US state machine. If this is not evidence of a concealed alliance with US imperialism, what is?

Much more could be said on the subject of reactionary Trotskyism, but it would probably take several volumes. In this short statement we have said enough to convince radical workers and democrats that a) Trotskyism is a pro-imperialist, right-wing outlook with a deceptive veneer of radicalism, and b) that most of the former leadership of the old CPNZ have utterly disgraced themselves by abandoning their name and any pretensions to Marxism-Leninism in order to unite completely with Trotskyism in the form of the Socialist Workers Organisation. This merged body now publishes a fortnightly paper, *Socialist Worker*, with a thoroughly Trotskyist outlook. One-time CPNZ cadres such as Grant Morgan who used to write for the then Party paper, the *People's Voice*, now feature prominently in the columns of *Socialist Worker*.

The two pamphlets by Ray Nunes, referred to earlier published in 1993 and 1994, expose the whole sorry tale of betrayal and chicanery by the ex-CPNZ leadership which transferred to Trotskyism. These are *The Communist Party Today*, and *Apostles of Treachery*.

A final note: not all the members of the old CPNZ went with the Trotskyist leaders. At least 25, including the former editor of the People's Voice, resigned in protest. That group today issues a substitute paper also entitled the *People's Voice*, obtainable on application. □

NOTES

* An exposure of the imperialist fabrications and of the wild guesswork of the number of millions killed (murdered is nowadays the preferred description) is contained in the massive study *Soviet Communism* (1938) by the Fabian observers Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

1 coll. wks. vol. 32, p.19

2 *ibid.*, p.22

3 Lenin, V I, coll. wks., vol. 32

** Not translated into English. Quoted from *Marx and the Trade Unions*, by A. Lozovsky (1935), Martin Lawrence, p.178.