

FIVE CENTS

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# THE BULLETIN

## ON THE CLASS NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN STATE

By  
GEORGE MARLEN

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A STUDY OF THE NEW ANALYSIS PRESENTED BY MAX SHACHTMAN OF THE WORKERS PARTY AND OF THE POSITION HELD BY THE CANNONITE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY IN THE LIGHT OF MARXIAN TEACHINGS ON THE CLASS CHARACTER OF A STATE.

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## THE TROTSKY SCHOOL OF FALSIFICATION

"BREAKING ALL TIES" WITH STALINISM.

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## ON THE CLASS NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN STATE

### "A NEW TYPE OF RULING CLASS"

THE October Revolution and the subsequent extraordinary developments in the former Tzarist Empire gave rise to the much-debated question of the class nature of the State which issued out of that world-shaking upheaval. From the outset among Anarchists and Social-democrats doubts were expressed whether the new state was proletarian in class character. Many people in those political camps voiced emphatic denial of the Bolshevik assertion that Soviet Russia was a Workers State. A certain lack of clarity on this question was evident even in the Bolshevik Party itself. When the concrete manifestations of bureaucratic abuse, corruption, oppression and privileges became sharply pronounced, certain small groups forming in the Bolshevik Party concluded (1923) that the Soviet system represented a new form of capitalism, a distinct kind of capitalist State. However, the overwhelming majority of the revolutionary workers continued to hold to the concept of the Soviet Union as a Workers State.

The years rolled on. The lengthening record of the foul bureaucratic practices and rank opportunism of the Soviet administration stood out more and more boldly and ironically against the original pronouncements and solemn assurances of the Bolshevik leaders that they had founded a proletarian democracy. With the obvious absence of such a democracy, with the gulf between the economic condition of the toiling masses and that of the bureaucracy steadily widening, the problem of determining precisely the class nature of the Soviet State beat with ever greater insistence against the mind of thousands of disappointed revolutionary workers.

The question has become of paramount importance particularly among the anti-Stalin workers grouped in the Trotskyite currents. The unmistakable

tendency, accelerated by the appalling sweep of reaction in the Soviet Union, has been toward denying that the term Workers State applies in any way to the Stalin-dominated Soviet Union. In adopting such a position the honest revolutionary workers are convinced that they are on the firm ground of Marxism.

Recently Max Shachtman, the leader of a Trotsky group which in 1940 split off from Cannon's Socialist Workers Party, published what he claims to be a Marxist elucidation of the character of the Russian State.

Shachtman presents his conclusion as follows:

"The past fifteen years of economic progress and political transformation in Russia are the years of the rise and consolidation of a new type of slave-state, with a new type of ruling class." ("The Struggle for the New Course," p. 219. My emphasis - G. M.)

Shachtman's theory speaks of a special and hitherto unknown type of ruling class and a new kind of slave-state arising in Russia. He does not deny that the October Revolution established a Proletarian State. He applies Lenin's definition - "a 'workers' State with bureaucratic deformations" - only to the early period. According to Shachtman the deformed Proletarian State ruled by a workers' bureaucracy lasted only several years. Subsequently the Proletarian State, allegedly, was displaced by "a new type of slave-state" and the workers' bureaucracy by "a new type of ruling class." Since everything must have a name, Shachtman attaches to the "new type of slave-state" a distinctive title: "a bureaucratic - collectivist class state" (Ibid., p. 241.)

Let us see whether Shachtman's

theory is in keeping with the Marxist teachings on the genesis and development of classes from embryo to maturity. Marx showed that social classes do not arrive into the world on the wings of Mercury but come into existence within the womb of the preceding society and pass through many phases of evolution. Their birth and growth take place on the basis of transformations in the methods of production and exchange. Dealing specifically with the anatomy of capitalism, Marx indicated that the bourgeoisie was born within Feudal society long before that social formation was ripe for destruction. Although capitalism brought into being its particular slave class, the modern proletariat, for a number of centuries the bourgeoisie itself existed as an oppressed class under the tyrannous heel of the Feudal aristocracy. Growing more powerful economically within the shell of the old society, the bourgeoisie engaged in a fierce struggle both against its slave, the proletariat, and against its master, the landowning nobility.

We shall now proceed to examine Shachtman's theory. He says that there has sprung up in Russia a new type of ruling class. Were there any historical seeds and roots of this "new type of ruling class" in the womb of the old bourgeois society? There were none! One can search pre-October Russia, and for that matter the whole world, for a sign or a shred of evidence of any developments of a new exploiting class. There is not even the faintest indication of any sort, not even a barely discernible trace. The class structure of pre-October Russia was the one familiar to Marx and Engels. There were the landlord aristocracy, the peasantry and the city petty-bourgeoisie with its intelligentsia, and there were the two chief classes of the modern historical epoch, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. From 1917 to 1921 a terrific class conflict took place in Russia. The bourgeoisie and the landed gentry were overthrown and defeated by the proletariat leading the peasantry. Suddenly seven years later, according to Shachtman, there began "the rise and consolidation" of a new type of exploiting class which, unlike every

ruling class in history and in total contradiction to everything that Marx taught about classes, did not establish a specific form of property of its own and did not bring into existence a new type of slave class. The form of property in Russia remains as established by the proletarian Revolution—state-ownership of the means of production.

During the revolution the program of expropriating the bourgeoisie by the proletariat ~~was~~ carried out as laid down by Marx and Engels in the Manifesto: "The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible." Such a transformation certainly took place, and Shachtman agrees that out of the titanic struggle of the Russian masses there emerged a Proletarian State. Then, if we should accept Shachtman's "theory," within the womb of the new, not the old, society, that is inside the bounds of the Proletarian State which was not even a dozen years old, on the foundation of proletarian class property, there sprang up a new exploiting class which rode into power over the proletariat and peasantry. While Marx showed that each social class required a whole historical epoch to develop, Shachtman's new class appeared on the scene overnight. Shachtman's "theory" of the "new type of ruling class" in Russia begins to assume the aspect of a new type of "Marxism."

Let us turn to Marx once again and see if we can find more light on the question. In his studies Marx was led to the conviction that capitalist private property is the concluding stage of all the forms of economy which rest on class exploitation. In the Manifesto, the founders of scientific Socialism declared:

"But modern bourgeois private property is the FINAL and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating

products that is based on CLASS antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few." (Capitals mine - G. M.)

In other words, the bourgeoisie is the last exploiting class in the evolution of mankind. This is no minor matter. Will Shachtman deny that this profound conclusion forms an inseparable constituent of the Marxian system of ideas! Eleven years after the Manifesto, Marx in the preface to the Critique of Political Economy distinguished the four vast consecutive epochs in the economic formation of society:

"In broad outlines we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois methods of production as so many epochs in the progress of the economic formation of society."

And immediately following these words comes the statement that the capitalist relations of production represent the last form of antagonism in social production:

"The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production — antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from conditions surrounding the life of individuals in society; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism." (My emphasis - G. M.)

By this Marx meant that the growth of capitalist industry, the concentration and centralization of the means of production and exchange in the hands of a few industrial magnates and the accompanying increase and maturity of the proletariat leads toward the removal of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of a proletarian state, socialization of the accumulated capital, of the forces of production, on the basis of which society marches toward complete elimination of classes and class antagonism.

Marx referred to bourgeois society

which is the last class exploitation form in economic evolution, as follows:

"This Social formation constitutes, therefore, the closing chapter of the prehistoric stage of human society."

When Marx viewed the process of the evolution of society in broad terms and spoke of the solution of "the last antagonistic form of the social process of production," that is, of the elimination of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the proletarian state, he did not enter into a detailed account of the mechanics of the political struggles that would accompany the passage from capitalism to Socialism. That the proletariat might suffer many reverses, that its early attempts to set up a proletarian state might collapse either from external or internal causes was clear to Marx. But that despite the repeated checking of its progress the proletariat would finally reach its goal was also clear in his mind. Unfortunate setbacks such as the crushing of the Paris Commune or the bureaucratic degeneration of the Bolshevik Party simply represent costly lessons in the proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie. The struggle will rise again and again; and despite the temporary victories of the bourgeoisie, this last ruling class will come to its doom. In the words of the Manifesto "Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."

On the fundamental tenet of Marxism that the bourgeoisie is the last exploiting class Shachtman breaks completely since he introduces a new exploiting class arising after the fall of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a Workers State.

Before analyzing the arguments Shachtman advances in support of his "theory," let us point out a very significant fact. The evolution of social classes and slave systems is a world-wide phenomenon, with the leading countries usually taking in tow the backward ones. Chattel slavery, Feudalism, Capitalism did not unfold in one country alone. That Shachtman's story of a new type of slave-state confined within the boundaries of one

country alone, of a new exploiting class without a counterpart in the social structure of the rest of the world, has no more scientific validity than the demagogic hokum of "socialism in one country," will be seen when his "theoretical" foundation is subjected to a patient inquiry. To understand the falsity of that foundation it is necessary to review briefly the bureaucratic development in the Soviet State.

## II.

### THE PRESENT RUSSIAN STATE

**E**VERY class dominating society wields a state. The states of all the exploiting classes which Marx enumerates perform their function primarily through a bureaucracy. A bureaucracy, fundamentally a part of a ruling class, partakes of the fruits of the exploitation of the toiling masses. A state bureaucracy draws its riches from the same source which yields the fortunes of the exploiting class. Essentially a state bureaucracy is corrupt and avaricious, just as is an exploiting class.

Of the classes in bourgeois society the proletariat is the only revolutionary class, the only class whose interests are sharply opposed to corruption. Its historical mission is, therefore, to abolish all corruption, all economic and social injustice, all bureaucracies.

In October 1917 the proletariat became the ruling class of Russia. Immediately upon the victory, the Proletarian State institutions grew infested with bureaucratism. In the very Party which led the proletariat to triumph, there developed bureaucratic corruption, particularly amidst its leadership. There was no taut line dividing the Party and the state bureaucracy; they coalesced into one inseparable whole. The bureaucratic degeneration of the Party did not, however, terminate its leading role. On the strength of the Party's previously established moral and intellectual position of guidance, the degenerated leadership, under the pretense of piloting the proletarian society to Socialism, diverted the working class

from the correct historical path. By means of the continuous application of deception and terror, the renegade leadership, entrenched in power, opportunistically directed the state and the proletarian economy. The interests of the Party bureaucracy sharply diverged from the interests of the class in whose name it operated the state and the economy established by the proletarian overthrow of the bourgeoisie. The historical line of march of the proletariat is toward the eventual abolition not only of the bourgeois state but of its own state as well. On the other hand, the interests of all State bureaucracies, including the Proletarian State bureaucracy, demand the perpetuation of the state as a wellspring of its economic comfort and social and political entrenchment. For the first time in history a toiling class, an inveterate foe of all opportunism, established its own form of state, and for the first time in history the interests of a State bureaucracy clashed with the interests of its own ruling class.

Every form of class economy is identified with a particular ruling class and shares the fate of that class. The revolutionary overthrow of the Feudal aristocracy was bound up with the overthrow of its form of property. The revolutionary elimination of the Russian bourgeoisie carried with it the elimination of capitalist property. But the revolutionary removal of the Russian Soviet bureaucracy would not only not disturb the State form of property upon which this bureaucracy thrives but would actually galvanize that property into turbulent life. This is an essential feature showing that the bureaucracy is not a ruling class. It is a privileged, opportunist segment of the ruling class, the proletariat, in whose name, but against whose revolutionary interests it directs the state and the economy founded by the proletarian revolution.

The much-blurred fact that Russia represents a bureaucratized Proletarian State and not a "new type of slave state" with a "new type of exploiting class" is seen from yet another angle. In every society based upon the exploitation of one class by another,

the interests of the enslaved toiling masses are seen to be always in conflict with the property form under which they are exploited. The interests of the modern proletariat are incompatible with the property forms in every country on the globe—except one. In this one country the revolutionary eradication of the historically last exploiting class and its property relations gave place to the proletarian form of property. Unfortunately this property unfolded not along the wide road of workers democracy but along the narrow, reactionary path of workers bureaucracy headed by "Bolshevik" renegades who arrogated to themselves the controlling powers of the State. The flourishing bureaucratization, now in its most appalling and revolting stage, does not eliminate a certain Marxist principle, however. This state form of property is the very form under which, when democratically administered by the workers, the emancipation of the proletariat and all oppressed will take place. It is toward establishing this form of property that the modern world proletariat has been advancing since its birth and therefore since the commencement of its struggle with the bourgeoisie.

There is only one criterion which guides the Marxists in determining the class nature of a State, and that is the form of property. They are not diverted by the super-structural phenomena that an overwhelming majority of the members of the ruling class might be completely divorced from political power. Incidentally, this latter phenomenon is a common feature in history. For example, during the ruthless reign of Ivan the Terrible only a very small segment of the boyar order possessed political power and exclusive privileges, while the rest of the Russian landlords, comprising virtually the entire ruling class, were oppressed, terrorized, tortured and massacred. Due to its position in production, the landlord class economically was predominant over the peasants and the townspeople. But politically the Feudal ruling class was completely expropriated by a tiny fraction of that class. Any one presenting himself as a scientific inves-

tigator and coming out with the drivel that under the tyrannical rule of Ivan the Terrible the class nature of the Russian State was no longer Feudal but was transformed into some sort of new type of slave state would be considered among Marxists either a swindler or an absurd jester.

Another example is the reign of Louis XI of France. He was virtually a bourgeois king, directing his violent blows against the Feudal aristocracy, crushing the nobles, depriving them even of such elementary Feudal privileges as hunting rights. To the nascent bourgeoisie he extended the hand of friendship, permitting that subject class to clip the power of the Feudal ruling class. Inclined to mingle with the townspeople rather than with the members of his own class, Louis XI hounded the landlord aristocracy to desperation and revolt. Yet France was not a Bourgeois State during his rule but a Feudal State.

History provides innumerable examples of political expropriation of a ruling class by a handful of its members who form a very close ring. The Bourgeois State also exhibits this phenomenon. In the Fascist countries and also in the great capitalist "democracies" only a numerically insignificant but very powerful financial oligarchy is in actual control of political power. Standing on the very pinnacle of the capitalist industrial and political structure, this oligarchy imposes its will upon the lower and broader layers of the bourgeoisie and exercises its sway over all. The form of property upon which the financial oligarchy rests is bourgeois, and therefore Marxists designate the whole bourgeoisie as the ruling class. and even characterise the petty-bourgeoisie as a section of the ruling class. Facts can be twisted, minds can be befogged with phoney notions that in Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy the capitalist class is no longer the ruling class or that in the "democracies" all classes rule. But Marxists do not take any stock in political fictions.

The working class, whose numbers are vaster than those of any ruling

class in history, does not and cannot in its sum total assume administrative political power. Upon the elimination of the bourgeoisie from power, only a section of the proletariat, the most enlightened and politically advanced, organized in the Marxist revolutionary party, takes the control wheel of political power. Having guided the proletariat and the toiling peasantry along the correct path, the Party, if it is to remain on the right path, must immediately, and not on paper alone, begin to introduce workers democracy into the operation of the State machinery. But even in the ideal democratic proletarian state its machinery cannot be run by the whole working class at once. On the basis of genuine workers democracy with true elections of functionaries taking place periodically, with no one allowed to hold a post indefinitely and become a professional office-holder and chair-warmer, there is gradually established a rotation process of office tenure for the whole proletariat. Every worker learns how to perform state functions and therefore takes a turn in exercising political power.

In the Russian Workers State, instead of the Marxist course of greater and greater workers democracy there was a swerve toward greater bureaucratization of the very Party which at the head of the toiling masses had set up the Proletarian State. In March 1919 Lenin was compelled to acknowledge that the Soviet apparatus was accessible to all workers in word, but not in fact. Exactly two years later he made a harsh admission that the bureaucracy in the Soviet State system was an ulcer and a sore. A highly centralized office-holding minority of the working class, selected through a system of appointment by the chief leaders, became the sole manipulator of the state created by the overthrow of the last exploiting class, the bourgeoisie.

Marx and Engels were not unaware of the danger of bureaucratic abuses which might threaten the workers following the establishment of a Proletarian State. In analyzing the lessons of the Paris Commune, Engels in the 1891 introduction to Marx's Civil War

In France spoke of the compelling necessity for the proletariat to "safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials."! The problem of safe-guarding the proletarian ruling class against the officials of its own state may sound strange to ears filled with the sonorous political oratory of Max Shachtman. Nevertheless this problem is real. And if no adequate measures are taken by the revolutionary party then the bureaucratic disease sets in and the proletariat falls victim to the army of high-handed, greedy careerists whose whole interest in life is security against the danger of workers democracy, entrenchment in power and enhancement of its economic well-being built at the expense of the misery of the rest of the class.

### III.

#### SHACHTMAN'S "REACTIONARY BOLSHEVISM"

**R**EVOLUTIONARY workers know that generally a new social class arrives to power through a stubborn civil war. Shachtman could not get around this point. And since no other civil war had occurred in modern Russia except that of the proletariat against the bourgeois power, he was compelled to draw upon the reserves of his imagination. But every work of fiction includes some material substance or other. What was that material substance around which he wove his yarn about a "civil war" between his "new type of ruling class" and the Workers State? He chose the period of the 1936-1938 paroxysm in the Stalinist bureaucracy, declaring that "The 'trials' and 'purges' were the one-sided but bloody civil war by which the new bureaucracy definitely smashed the last remnant of workers' power and established a new class power of its own." (The Struggle for the New Course, p. 226)

In order to show the artificiality of Shachtman's method, it is necessary to review the chain of the Stalinist development.

Stalinism is not static or resting in a equilibrium. Like all living bodies it is in constant motion, exerting pressure and influence internally and externally. Stalinism is



more than merely a bureaucratic force; it is a structure of bureaucratic centralization spiralling upward, like a winding staircase. It went through a number of stages of centralization. The first phase (1921-22) was the formation of the Triumvirate — Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev — with Stalin, as it turned out, receiving the real power. At the close of this phase the Trio entered into a bloc with Trotsky who showed willingness to collaborate with them (Nov.-Dec. 1922 — Twelfth Congress of the R.C.P. April 1923). The next phase (1923-1924) was the Stalinist invention of the bogey of "Trotskyism" to pull down the most powerful political figure in the Workers State. This further consolidated Stalin's power. Then followed the elbowing of Zinoviev and Kamenev out of the Trio, their awakening to the fact that Stalin was the sole authority, their attempt to recoup their lost bureaucratic prosperity by a cringing "opposition" to Stalin in the form of a beggarly but futile entreaty to re-establish "collective leadership" (Dec. 1925-Jan. 1926). The succeeding stage of Stalin's centralization of power was his relentless drive against the Zinoviev-Kamenev-Trotsky self-protective alliance (1926-1927). Next came another crucial period in the centralizing process. Stalin drove the "Opposition" leaders and their misled followers out of the Party, and gradually destroyed these leaders and virtually the whole generation of the rank-and-file proletarian revolutionists of Russia. At the same time Stalin framed up Bukharin and Rykov, big political figures and his chief aides in the drive against the Zinoviev-Kamenev-Trotsky Bloc. Steadily, Stalin climbed the winding staircase of bureaucratic centralism.

In 1934, through Yagoda of the G.P.U., Stalin engineered the Kirov Assassination and opened another bloody phase of centralization, wiped out of the Party and the State many of his boot-licking bureaucrats and in their place boosted a whole stratum of relative newcomers to higher positions in the bureaucratic edifice.

For the "civil war" which brought to power his new exploiting class Shachtman picked one of the phases of

the Stalinist centralization of power. Were Shachtman a stray "ultra-Left" he would probably have singled out the most logical phase, that of the expulsion, imprisonment and murder of tens of thousands of anti-Stalin, anti-bureaucracy Communist workers, a phase lasting approximately from 1927 to 1936. But Shachtman could not make use of that phase. He would have had to unwind almost the entire thread of his whole political career. Conveniently for him the American anti-Stalin revolutionary workers had long since overcome the shock of that momentous phase. At first Shachtman tried to create an illusion that new property relations and a new ruling class developed between 1933 and 1936:

"My view, which was substantially adopted at the following convention of the Workers Party, was, briefly, that which Trotsky called the political rule of the working class was actually its class rule; that this had been brought to an end by the counter-revolution of the Stalinist bureaucracy — roughly in the period between 1933 and 1936!" (The New International, September 1942)

Later, however, Shachtman chose the phase sharp in everybody's memory: Stalin's 1936-1938 purges of the old bureaucratic scum and induction of thousands of new seekers of lucrative jobs. Around this phase Shachtman spun a "civil war" between the "remnant" of the Workers State and "the new type of ruling class."

The manner in which he accomplished this task is a credit to his imaginative qualities and conclusive proof that he is a gifted imitator of Trotsky. When dissenting from Trotsky, Shachtman pointed out the ridiculousness of ascribing revolutionary deeds to the Stalinist counter-revolutionaries. Yet he himself went Trotsky one better and, incredibly enough, divided Bolshevism (Marxism) into revolutionary and reactionary factions! According to Shachtman there is a Bolshevism which is revolutionary, and a Bolshevism which is reactionary but which can assure a proletarian character to the State. The reactionary faction of Bolshevism was replaced in

1936-38 by an exploiting class—in Shachtman's theoretical picture. In mockery of the scientific doctrines of Bolshevism, Shachtman designates the pre-1936 Stalinist bureaucracy, which for over a decade betrayed the proletariat all over the world, as a faction of Bolshevism! And Shachtman pictures that bureaucracy as "more or less assuring the proletarian character of the State," and Stalin's purges of this "reactionary Bolshevism" as the "civil war" which ushered in the "new ruling class." This point, the most important part of Shachtman's fiction, is well worth citing. After mentioning that the Zinovievites, the Trotskyites and the "Right Wingers" were exterminated, Shachtman writes:

"Perhaps of greatest significance is the fact that the same fate was reserved for nine-tenths of the original Stalinist bureaucracy, of the time when it could still be regarded as a conservative or, if you will, a reactionary faction of Bolshevism, that is, of the party whose retention of political power more or less assured the proletarian character of the state. Yenukidze had to go, and Petrovsky, Lominadze, Schatzkin, Syrtzov, even Yagoda. These are names that represent thousands. The new ruling class is a new bureaucracy. The "trials" and "purges" were the one-sided but bloody civil war by which the new bureaucracy definitely smashed the last remnant of workers' power and established a new class power of its own. (Ibid., pp. 225-226. Emphasis in original.)

Thus, Shachtman spins his yarn purporting to depict such a mighty transformation in history as the overthrow of the Workers State and the inauguration of a new slave State in Russia. He draws the workers' attention from the wholesale destruction of the revolutionary workers in the Soviet Union which commenced in 1927. That indeed was a ghastly tragedy for the Proletarian State, because the roaring flames of the Stalinist reaction consumed the honest anti-Stalin Communist workers who comprised the revolutionary vanguard of the Russian proletariat.

He rivets the attention of his victims upon the purge of vile Stalinist bureaucrats who carried out every bestial crime ordered by their master. It was they, these repulsive scoundrels, who had conducted the mass murder of the Opposition workers in Siberian exile, in the Lubiankas and Butyrkas. Yet, for his own convenience, Shachtman concedes that up to 1936, though the State apparatus was in the hands of Stalin's henchmen, the Yenukidzes, Yagodas, Kalinins and Molotovs, the State was of a proletarian class nature. And what change occurred after the purges? The Yenukidzes and Yagodas had to go, but the Kalinins, Voroshilovs and some Litvinovs and Kollontays continued in State posts. And who took the place of the Yenukidzes and Yagodas? The Yezhovs and Berias and similar scoundrels. Were they recruited by Stalin from some new social element which, having accumulated its economic strength prior to the purges, waited outside the bureaucracy for a chance to seize the institutions of the Workers State? Where was this "new class," a subject "class" before it acquired power? On this point there is a deep note of mystery in Shachtman's "theoretical" presentation. But the dwelling place of the "new type of ruling class" prior to the purges is no mystery at all. The thousands who took the places of the purged sycophants of Stalin were recruited from within the many-million-headed Stalinist bureaucracy itself, from the very ranks of the "reactionary faction of Bolshevism"! And many members of this "new type of ruling class" who had helped Stalin purge the Yenukidzes and Yagodas have been themselves purged by their terrible Master.

A class striving for power usually forges a political instrument to lead its struggle. Where is the party which supposedly led "the new type of ruling class" to power, and where is the smashed party which had ruled the Workers State? Here too Shachtman must offer a substitute for reality. Since no new political party appeared on the scene he must deal with the only existing party, the Stalin party. And since the basic political essence of this bureaucratized body remained unchanged during, before and after the

purges, Shachtman could not discuss its political program, for in it he could never find even a remote allusion to an attempt to cause such a fundamental social and political transformation as the wiping out of the Proletarian State and the setting up of an entirely new class State of a slave character. Disregarding the vital changes in the Party membership in the early phases of Stalinism—the "Lenin Levy" by means of which Stalin flooded the party with new elements; the "purification" through the expulsion and destruction of revolutionary workers, a process which began in 1923 and lasted over a decade—Shachtman confines his "analysis" to the changes in the length of membership occurring between 1934 (Seventeenth Congress of Stalin's Party) and 1938 (Eighteenth Congress):

"There is a balance-sheet of Stalinism. Twenty years after the Bolshevik Revolution, only ten per cent of those who organized and led it are in the ruling party, and they constitute only 1.3 per cent of its total. It is a new party; it speaks for a new class; it is the political organization of the new bureaucracy that overthrew the workers' state." (*Ibid.*, p.229. Emphasis in original.)

It is a new party, Shachtman says. Shachtman does not even attempt to feign a scientific analysis of the political program of the "new" party. He does not venture to explain the supposed break between the Party's fundamental politics before and after the purges. Despite the amount of ink and paper at his disposal, Shachtman is unable to create a gulf separating the political essence of the Seventeenth Congress from that of the Eighteenth. The alleged "new party" which, Shachtman says, "speaks for a new class," accomplished the purges by means of the long-established political strategy of the Stalinist Party of using Trotsky and his tendency as its central target.

Even the feature of accusing the Trotskyites of consorting and plotting with White Guards and international imperialism was not new, It had been

introduced a whole decade before the purges, as was testified to by Trotsky: "As early as the latter part of 1927, the G.P.U. linked Trotskyists—lesser known ones, to be sure, with White Guards and foreign agents." ("Stalin on His Own Frame-ups," Socialist Appeal, October 30, 1937.)

The purges in actuality represent the continuation of the process of centralization of power in Stalin's hands, a process begun in 1921-1922. Stalin rose a step higher on the winding staircase of his dictatorship, acquiring, at this new stage, a personal power of such an extraordinary degree as Caesar or Napoleon might have envied.

Shachtman analyzes the purges of 1936-1938 as the violent explosion "by which the new bureaucracy definitely smashed the last remnant of workers' power and established a new class power of its own." Was a new form of property established on the "ruins" of the proletarian property? Not in the least. The form of property remained the same as it had been when Yagoda still lived, as it had been when Stalin expelled the Opposition in 1927, as it had been five years earlier when the Stalinist bureaucratism first closed its greedy fingers around the throat of the Workers State. Did Stalin's political form of rule change in any fundamental aspect following the purges? Not at all! If anything, Stalin's personal dictatorship became solidified and more dreaded than ever before. As before, Stalin arbitrarily assigned the management of State departments to a group of servile henchmen appointed by himself to their respective posts. These henchmen, in turn, delegated the routine tasks to the lower ranks.

Thus, except for the strengthening of Stalin's iron rule on the basis of sending to oblivion many of his loyal servitors who were vile bandits and enemies of the proletariat to a man, no break occurred either in the property form of the foundation of the State or in the political form of the Usurper's rule. Moreover, Stalin's bloody shake-up in the personnel of the apparatus eliminated only a

portion of the State's immense officialdom; the greater part of his bureaucracy remained. And even in the high ranks which suffered most, Stalin did not kill off or even remove from high posts many of the eminent figures who had joined the Party in Lenin's time—Kalinin, Voroshilov, Molotov, Andreev, Zhdanov, Litvinov, Kollantay. Except for some shifting, most of them remained in the posts held by them before the purges. So little political distinction was there between those who were wiped out and supposedly represented the remnant of the Workers State and those who remained and presumably were of the new ruling class, that the Trotskyite paper, edited by Shachtman, assured the workers during the purges: "Voroshilov is next!" Ostensibly Voroshilov represented the Workers State, since he was "next;" but obviously he also represents the new slave state, since he remained in power.

Let us suppose that Stalin tomorrow eliminates this Voroshilov and many other of his Voroshilovs and in their place puts a new crowd of flunkys. Following Shachtman's logic such a new purge would represent a fundamental class transformation, perhaps the installation in power of yet another brand of ruling class. Thus, according to Shachtman's "Marxism" societies are brought upon the stage of history and also disposed of by the simple process of bureaucratic removals and appointments. And Stalin is the greatest Houdini of all times, for with his magic wand he can dismiss one ruling class and put into the saddle another, as his fancy chooses.

Shachtman's feat of transforming the Stalinist bureaucracy into a new ruling class got him into another ridiculous contradiction. The purges of 1936-1938 did not affect the Comintern bureaucracy. The Browders and Fosters who had been placed by Stalin to rule over the sections of the Comintern remained in their posts. What is more, they continued the same political line handed down to them by Stalin's flunkey Dimitrov at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935. Proceeding from Shachtman's new evaluation of the Stalinist bureaucracy, one

must regard the organization ruled by Browder as an agency of a new exploiting class. How to explain, then, from this angle, Shachtman's policy of advocating the old Trotsky line of the admissibility of a "united front" with Browder's party? The resolution of Shachtman's party dated almost three years after the purges declared: "the Party reaffirms the admissibility of united fronts under certain conditions, with the Communist Party as a party." (The New International, October 1941, p. 239)

In the same resolution it is stated that the Stalinist bureaucracy is a new ruling class. As every advanced worker knows, Browder's "party" under all conditions fights against the workers. To agitate for a "united front" with the Browder-controlled organization is to impart to that organization a function in the interest of the toilers or at least a possibility of such a function "under certain conditions." A "united front" with a vulture is always in the interest of the vulture.

Compared with the world-shaking bloody storms which swept the French bourgeois State since the days of Robespierre, Stalin's 1936-1938 frame-ups and purges are but a mild disturbance in the bureaucratized Workers State.

#### IV.

#### SCIENCE VS. SOPHISTRY

FORTUNATELY for Shachtman, Marx's teaching that the property foundation determines the class nature of society is not widespread among workers. Very few, indeed know that the anatomy of society is to be sought not in the political regime but in the political economy of a given social order. This want of Marxist knowledge becomes a positive attribute as far as Shachtman is concerned. Without question, Shachtman knows that Marx in his studies observed the most remarkable, most violent changes of political regimes in all periods of history. Shachtman also knows that Marx never took any of these superstructural changes, i.e., changes in the political regimes, as the determining factor

of the class nature of the state but always went to the economic structure, the property foundation by which alone he could form a correct idea respecting the class nature of the State superstructure. Shachtman knows that Lenin, guided by this principle, showed wherein lay the criterion for determining the domination of the proletariat:

"The domination of the proletariat consists in the fact that the ownership of property by landlords and capitalists has been abolished." (Report to the Ninth Party Congress.)

Lenin, as Marx, grasped that it was the question of property, and not that of regime, which solved the problem:

"The prime thing is the question of property. When the question of property was solved practically, the domination of the class was assured." (Ibid.)

Hellbent on putting over his fiction that the Proletarian State had been smashed and a "new type of slave state" established, Shachtman very shrewdly keeps the eyes of his readers glued to the superstructural aspects and completely conceals the fact that it is not the superstructure but the form of property structure which determines the class nature of the State. In his attempts to deflect the mind from the Marxist criterion, Shachtman wrote the following: "-- it was the possession of arms by the people that Lenin qualified as the very essence of the question of the State! The militia system gave way decisively to the army separated from the people." (Max Shachtman, The New International, Dec. 1940, p. 198)

Curiously enough, Shachtman circumvents the fact that the militia system gave way to an army almost immediately after the proletarian revolution. By 1927 the Red Army was a standing institution, an instrument in the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy, well separated from the masses. Yet no one considered the abandonment of the militia system and the creation of the army as a move to abolish the

Workers State.

Shachtman probably felt that it would not do to neglect altogether the question of property. Having "analyzed" the Stalinist bureaucracy as a "new type of ruling class" Shachtman, in a Marx-upside-down gymnastic feat dived down to the property foundation and "evaluated" the state economy in conformity with the "change" he wrought in the superstructure. Since there were no convulsions in the basic form of economy which remained statified during the purges, and since Shachtman felt he had to touch upon the question of property, he wasted no time fabricating evidence to demonstrate with the precision of natural science that the proletarian form of property had been wiped out and an entirely different form, neither proletarian nor bourgeois, had been established. He simply baptized the statified property upon which the Stalinist bureaucracy has rested all along, "the economic foundation of a new ruling class." For the benefit of the reader we shall cite the whole passage containing this mumbo-jumbo:

"The question can be examined in still another way, and the conclusion will still be the same. Where property is privately owned, the problem of the class nature of the existing state can be settled by asking: Who owns property? In the United States as in Germany, in England as in India, the answer is fundamentally the same: the bourgeoisie. The state exists to defend this bourgeois property; regardless of its political form, it is a bourgeois state. But where property is collectively or state-owned, it means nothing to ask merely: Who owns the property, that is, who owns the state-property? The meaningless answer is: The state, of course! Under such circumstances, the only meaningful question is: Who owns the state that owns the property, that is, who has political power? In Lenin's time, the answer was fairly obvious: the proletariat. But under Stalin? When Trotsky wrote that 'the bureaucracy is in direct possession of the state power,' that was tantamount to saying:

the ~~bureaucracy~~ is the ruling class the state is no longer a workers' state; state property has been converted into the economic foundation of a new ruling class; new property relations, therefore, new production relations, therefore new social relations, have been established." (Max Shachtman, The Struggle For the New Course, pp. 234-235)

The central point in Shachtman's picture is the proposition that under Lenin the proletariat had political power and therefore there was a Workers State, whereas under Stalin it is the bureaucracy who has political power and therefore it is not a Workers State and the bureaucracy is a ruling class. The Stalinist bureaucracy, be it remembered, is divided by Shachtman into the old and the new. The old Stalinist bureaucracy "more or less assured the proletarian character of the state." The new Stalinist bureaucracy Shachtman designates as the new ruling class which in 1936-1938 smashed the State which still had a proletarian character. All we have to do now is to determine who was in control of the State prior to the "trials" and purges of 1936-1938, not only under Stalin but also in Lenin's time. In his essay Shachtman himself, quoting the Stalinist historian Popov, calls attention to the fact that by the end of 1920, sixteen years before the 1936 purges, the State bureaucracy was already a large force, already showed signs of complete separation from the masses and of employing constraint against the toilers:

"Popov does anything but exaggerate when he writes that the 'bureaucracy continued to grow and by the end of 1920 it had assumed large dimensions, manifesting a tendency in individual links of the Soviet apparatus to eliminate altogether all contact with the masses and to replace it entirely with measures of external compulsion toward these. This tendency undoubtedly led to degeneration and decay in these links of the Soviet apparatus. These are euphemisms, but they suffice to indicate the real state of things." (Ibid., p. 134)

The Stalinist bureaucrat Popov used guarded words to describe a vicious situation which had developed on the proletarian property foundation. Shachtman says Popov's euphemisms suffice to indicate what was taking place. No, they do not suffice! It is necessary to tell about things in plain words, no matter how harsh, to call a spade a spade. The Proletarian State by 1920 had fallen into the hands of a huge, greedy bureaucracy which excluded almost the entire proletariat — a small bribed section excepted — from exercising political power through the State departments. This bureaucracy — on the railroads, in the factories, mines, shops — subjected the proletarian ruling class, the real owner of the State and the State property, to compulsion.

Did the situation improve with the introduction of the NEP in 1921? Just the opposite. Shachtman himself made this observation: "If anything the shift aggravated the problem. To put it more accurately, the new problems generated by the NEP could not be dealt with rationally because of the existence of bureaucratism. In revenge, these problems created the conditions for the further expansion of bureaucratism." (Ibid., p. 143)

To put it more accurately, the bureaucracy went all lengths to secure its own interests against the interests of the ruling class. The State apparatus had become packed with careerists, former Tzarist officials, bourgeois exploiters and their ex-politicians. Behind the scenes, Stalin, the General Secretary of the Party, and Zinoviev and Kamenev, the heads of the two most important Soviets, Petrograd and Moscow, entered into a conspiracy to usurp control of the Party and of the State — a monstrous step for revolutionists, but not for renegades! The conspiracy at the top of the Party was a well-guarded secret. The proletarian ruling class, the owner of the State and the State property, was and has remained to this day, completely in the dark. The year 1922 marked the creation of the initial Stalin apparatus out of the degenerated

leaders of the Party. The Party bureaucrats grouping around the self-seeking General Secretary and the vast army of former bourgeois and Tzarist officials united in one aim: to safeguard their special bureaucratic interests against the owner of the State and the State property. That was in Lenin's time. Then came the full flowering of the Stalinist reaction, with political power completely in the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In 1923 there occurred the deliberate Stalinist betrayal of the German revolution. In the same year Lenin's anti-Stalin documents were suppressed by the bureaucrats. The Party was now "Bolshevik" in name only: politically it represented the interests of the bureaucracy. The proletarian class was excluded not only from political power but even from voicing criticism of the usurping renegade leadership. The press was completely in the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

And by 1927 Stalin, already a powerful dictator, with the aid of his Petrovskys and Syrtzovs — the very people who, Shachtman says, "more or less assured the proletarian character of the state" — crushed the anti-Stalin workers and tightened the oppressive bureaucratic yoke upon the neck of the owner of the State and State property. Yagoda's G.P.U. rode roughshod over the prostrate and tyrannized toiling masses and also over the bureaucracy itself.

And who exercised full political sway in 1934, 1935, 1936, at the time when, according to Shachtman, there was in existence "the last remnant of workers' power"? The proletariat? Ridiculous! The political power was completely and exclusively in the clutches of the powerful dictator and his picked crew of anti-workingclass bandits who, beginning with the Kirov assassination in December 1934, murdered each other at the behest of their Master in the course of a spasmodic phase of the centralization of his power. In political terminology Stalin and his army of personal slaves represent only a degenerated section of the Russian proletariat.

We see that even in the days of Lenin the masses of the proletariat were in practice shorn of actual political power while control was in the hands of a reactionary bureaucracy. After Lenin, up to 1936, the Stalinist bureaucracy continued and pursued essentially the same basic politics as the post-1936 bureaucracy. Why then does Shachtman take 1936 as an historical dividing line marking the passing out of existence of the Workers State? Obviously, he is in contradiction with his own criterion of the existence or non-existence of a Workers State. He covers up his contradiction by pretending first that under Lenin the masses of the workers actually controlled the State and secondly that in 1936-1938 some new kind of bureaucracy came into existence. Shachtman's "theory" boils itself down to pretense and sophistry.

## V.

### POLITICAL PLAGIARISM

**S**HACHTMAN ignores the lesson of history that a state retains its class character even though only a fraction of the ruling class gathers the whole political power into its hands and bends almost the entire ruling class in terrible oppression. Shachtman disregards the Marxist criterion that the form of property is the only determining factor in judging the class nature of the State. Instead he presents as the determining factor the superstructural political regimes, and even these he produces in a distorted shape. The basic thought in Shachtman's picture is not at all original. In July 1938, when Shachtman in the face of Stalin's purges insisted that the class nature of the Russian State was proletarian, a small anti-Marxist group, misnaming itself "Marxist Workers League" (Mienovites), broke the ground, as it were, for Shachtman. Not so shrewd or circumspect as their future imitator, they labelled the Russian State as "state capitalism," whereas Shachtman wisely gives it an amorphous title "bureaucratic collectivism." This is but an "improvement" upon the earlier title. In December 1940 Shachtman declared "The Soviet State today we would call —bureaucratic state socialism..." This, of course,

was as bad as the Mienovites' "state capitalism." The Marxist Workers League's approach, however, and their conclusion with respect to the relation between political power and the question of ownership of the State and of economy form the pigments Shachtman used for his picture. Wrote the Marxist Workers League:

"The Stalinist bureaucracy owns the means of production. But the average bureaucrat, the manager and the director cannot lay claim to direct ownership of the machine. In this sense he is propertyless. In the sense that the state functions for him, that his exploiting position is expressed through control of the state, in that sense he is an owner. Thus we see that the bureaucracy in reaching state capitalism did not have to change the property relations as expressed through the ownership of these by the state, that is, it did not have to change the form, it changed its content. This it accomplished by expropriating the proletariat from political power. In expropriating them politically it also expropriated them economically since the proletarian ownership of the means of production was vested in the state." (The Spark, July 1938, p. 14)

In the above Mienovite formulation it is necessary to remove only two words, "state capitalism," and insert "bureaucratic state socialism" or "bureaucratic collectivism" and you have Shachtman's position to the letter. Shachtman laughed at the Mienovites in the past and he may put on an air of holding a position different from theirs in the present. In reality the Mienovite and Shachtmanite methodology are identical, and the difference of their conclusions is only a verbal one, not an essential one. Perhaps it is regrettable that Mienov is not around to have the last laugh on his belated imitator of the so-called Workers Party.

## VI.

### REVOLUTIONARY CLASS AND REACTIONARY POLICIES

THE bureaucratization of the first Workers State has emphasized certain political principles in a new way and when properly understood has enriched the system of Marxian thinking. Ever since the Communist Manifesto it has been known that the proletariat is the only genuinely revolutionary class in history. This, however, is an abstract, scientific principle. Concretely, the proletariat pursues either revolutionary or counter-revolutionary policies. Which path the proletariat marches on depends on its leadership. In the capitalist world today, the proletariat supports capitalism. Such a situation would never be deduced from the abstract Marxist doctrine that the proletariat is the only genuinely revolutionary class in history. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the revolutionary class can act in a reactionary way.

Heretofore, in Marxian discussions the dictatorship of the proletariat, because it arises out of proletarian revolution, was exclusively thought of as acting in a revolutionary way. The rise of Stalinism has provided a new understanding of this matter. It has been made clear that the proletarian dictatorship can also function as a counter-revolutionary force, depending on the leadership which stands at the head. Both when out of power or in power the proletariat follows different political lines, revolutionary or reactionary. The question of whether proletarian rule exists is determined by the form of the economic basis. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat and the establishment of state ownership of the means of production and exchange establishes the proletariat in power. But at that point, the character of the proletarian class rule is still an open question. It remains to be seen whether the new ruling class, the proletariat, will follow a revolutionary or a counter-revolutionary line. In the specific case of the first workers state, the Russian Soviet Republic, the proletarian rule had many reactionary features from the very start, primarily bureaucratism and its various ramifi-



cations. Unfortunately, as time passed, the reactionary features predominated, and the rule of the proletariat became completely and exclusively reactionary.

The toilers must learn these lessons, and must fight not merely for "the dictatorship of the proletariat," but for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat based on genuine workers democracy. A reactionary dictatorship of the proletariat is as destructive as capitalist rule, if not more so.

Shachtman prattles that the concept of a counter-revolutionary workers state is a ridiculous one. But why is this any more ridiculous than the idea of the proletariat, "the only genuinely revolutionary class in history," according to Marx and Engels, supporting capitalism? Marx and Engels were absolutely correct when they stated the proletariat is the only genuinely revolutionary class in history, but it is only fools or charlatans who would deduce from this thesis that everything the proletariat does is necessarily or should be classified as revolutionary. All classes act in different ways at different times. The Workers State is only a form which comes into existence simultaneously with a certain type of economic foundation. This form can have different contents. The latter are determined by the policies pursued by the class. A revolutionary policy, a revolutionary content; a reactionary policy, a reactionary content.

Shachtman makes it appear that Marxism maintains that on the basis of a proletarian economy there must exist a revolutionary political regime, else the economy itself is not proletarian. This is a complete perversion of Marxism. Engels clearly indicated that the proletarian dictatorship can have reactionary features, and Lenin went so far as specifically to warn the workers that they must have means to protect themselves against their own state!

"Our present state is such that the entirely organized proletariat must protect itself, and we must

utilize these workers' organizations for the purpose of protecting the workers from their own state and in order that the workers may protect our state." (V.I. Lenin, Selected Works, English Edition, Volume IX, p. 9. My emphasis - G.M.)

The founders of Scientific Socialism had seen many instances of the proletariat supporting a completely reactionary policy while not in power, but they had never witnessed this phenomenon while the proletariat was in power. It is for the present generation of workers to see and understand the now completed picture.

## VII.

### THE IDEOLOGY OF THE "NEW RULING CLASS"

**K**NOWING that each ruling class develops a specific ideology of its own, Shachtman is constrained to make it appear that this "new type of ruling class" runs true to this historic law. He quotes from an article by a Menshevik "scholar," Schwartz, whose picturization of the ideology of the present bureaucracy Shachtman accepts as accurate. Schwartz says:

"...In their political psychology they represented a new type. Most of them leaned toward authoritarian thinking; the high leadership above (Stalin and those closest to him) has to decide on right and wrong; what that leadership decides is incontrovertible, absolute. Thus the complete devotion to Stalin. It would be an undue simplification to explain this devotion merely by the fact that the system presented by Stalin made possible the rise of these people. The attitude had deeper roots. Stalin was for them the embodiment of the economic rise and the international strengthening of the country. They accepted as natural the fact that this rise was dearly paid for, that the bulk of the toiling masses remained in dire want. They were educated to the idea that the value of a social system depends on the nationalization of the economy and the speed

of its development; a society with a developed industry and without a capitalist class is inso facto a classless society, and the idea of social equality belongs only to 'petty bourgeois equalitarianism. Their interest was not in social problems (read: in the social position of the proletariat—M.S.), but in the strong state that built up the national economy." (Quoted by Shachtman in The Struggle for the New Course, pp. 226-27)

Having cited Schwartz's observations, Shachtman exclaims: "This is a photographically accurate picture of the specific ideology of the new ruling class." (Ibid., p. 227) And further he remarks: "What is important to note is that this ideology does not correspond to that which we have known to be the ideology of the capitalist class, of the working class at any stage of its development, of any section of the petty-bourgeoisie, or any labor aristocracy."

The picture which Schwartz presents is false in its totality. It is an inverted image of the material and ideological elements in the Stalinist order. Not only is it inverted but it is retouched with colors utterly alien to Stalinism.

From the very beginning of the Stalinization of the Workers State the bureaucracy has been steadily diluting proletarian ideology with Russian bourgeois ideology under the pretense of diffusing Leninist education. This process began slowly, gained great momentum, until at present "the specific ideology of the new ruling class" consists of a flood of the old Russian bourgeois ideology which glorifies the Russian national heroes, Alexander Nevsky, Dimitry Donskoy, Peter the Great, Kutuzov, Suvorov and other names dear to the heart of the Russian bourgeoisie. The ideas of the Russian bourgeoisie repositied in the old Russian national literature, in the works of Tolstoy, Pushkin and others, are sweeping through the ranks of the bureaucracy and from it to the toiling masses. One of the most outstanding institutions of Russian imperialism, the Holy Synod, has been reestablished.

The Greek Orthodox religion, the religion of the Russian bourgeoisie, is being constantly strengthened. The "Internationale" has been replaced by a new anthem glorifying "mighty Russia." All these signs indicate not "the specific ideology of a new type of ruling class" but tangible mileposts in the restoration of the old Russian bourgeois ideology. The returning Russian bourgeois ideology has not yet reached the point of open justification of the restoration of bourgeois property relations; in time it will, if the present reactionary process continues.

The foundation of Stalinism is a bureaucratic spoils system. Stalin built his hierarchy by appointment of the most venal people to governmental and industrial posts. Their devotion to him because of some "deeper roots," as Schwartz says, is an illusion. These truckleheads to the powerful dispenser of favors are loyal to him only because they receive payment for that loyalty. Due to him and to the character of his regime, they and their families enjoy privileges. The derogation of the rights of the workers was accepted by them not because of an abstract, idealist program of a "strong state that built up the national economy" but for the sake of fat jobs, superior economic and social positions which carry powers of command over their less "fortunate" subordinates and over the huge mass of toilers. Schwartz envelops the system of bureaucratic usurpation with a halo of idealism. He protests, as does every anti-Marxist ideologist when occupied with explaining social phenomena, that it would be simplification to explain the Byzantine sycophancy of the Stalin bureaucrats by the fact that his political and administrative system lifted them from rags to riches, conferred upon them lucrative posts and a status of "respectability" on the very basis of complete, unconditional servility, abasement and cringing flattery with respect to the person of Stalin.

Not only is Schwartz's photography inverted and retouched, but it is completely devoid of all motion. Moreover, it leaves out the fundamental ideological transformation that has

been in process for over two decades. This distinctive and salient process refutes Shachtman's story that "the new type of ruling class" is crystallizing a specific class ideology.

And just because Schwartz's "photography" presents an inverted, utterly un-Marxist view of the ideology of Stalinism, it ties in well with Shachtman's "analytical" requirements. It is a fitting associate of his own theoretical fiction. Arraigned before the bar of the scientific method of investigation, Shachtman's "new type of ruling class" as well as Schwartz's "photographically accurate picture of the specific ideology of the new ruling class," stand as opportunist distractions. Not concerned with facts of large importance staring him in the face, but rather interested in giving a new cast to the historical character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, Shachtman is piling Ossa upon Felion to support his fabrication. His ammunition, part of which he borrows from Menshevism, is also a fabrication. The momentous and quite spectacular revival of many outstanding features of the former Russian bourgeois ideology demands serious attention to determine why it is taking place and toward what end this development is tending.

The process of the elimination of the signal achievements of the revolution in the realm of ideology, expressed in the backward sweep toward the ideological anchorage of the Russian bourgeoisie, is no dark mystery. If in order to overthrow the bourgeois form of property and break a trail toward Socialism the Russian proletariat had to be armed with the revolutionary viewpoint, then for the purpose of beating down the proletariat and causing it to trudge the opposite road, the working class must be ideologically disarmed. Since there are only two class ideologies extant, bourgeois and proletarian — a fact pointed out by Lenin as early as 1902 (What's To Be Done) — the proletarian viewpoint can be replaced only by the bourgeois one. And since the proletarian revolution occurred in Russia, the reactionary push to the pendulum could be given only in the direction of the former Russian bourgeois ideology. If the

process of reaction is not terminated by a removal of the bureaucratic incubus and provided the Proletarian State is not destroyed by the imperialists, then the unspeakable corruption bred in a whole generation of former revolutionists will bear its ideological fruit. In such eventuality, the individuals forming the upper stratum of the bureaucracy, occupying vantage grounds in the State, will finally accumulate an abundant mass of private wealth. The conversion of this hoard into capital will become the next step. This can be carried out by the upper bureaucratic ring only when the proper ground is prepared in advance. If the ideological path is completely paved with the basic bourgeois idea which depicts the private capitalist form of property as progressive, just, and most advantageous to the Russian national development, and if capitalist exploitation receives a legal and even sacred status and is lauded as "free enterprise," a label already peddled by the Stalin bureaucrats in America, then the death knell of the Proletarian State will toll in the cathedrals of a new "holy Russia."

However, the Stalin bureaucracy may never live to flower into a new Russian bourgeoisie. A transitory, not a fixed, entity, the Stalinist bureaucracy is faced with the imperialist threat of annihilation, paradoxically enough, brought on by its own counter-revolutionary policies. The Stalinist bureaucracy has actively and deliberately betrayed every revolutionary situation to prevent the rise of another proletarian state with its attendant revolutionary upsurge of the toiling masses. This has given international imperialism a free hand with the toiling masses and has hurried the interventionist schemes. International finance capital, on peril of catastrophe to the capitalist system, is compelled to come to military grips with the Stalinist bureaucracy in order to eradicate root and branch the proletarian form of property achieved by the October Revolution and subject the territory and the toilers to the exploitation of the hitherto excluded private capital. The world proletariat, on the other hand, under the pressure of the most critical condition in

its history, on peril of universal Fascist enslavement, is being pushed toward a struggle for the preservation of proletarian property, and establishment of workers democracy. Whether the imperialists or the workers succeed cannot be determined in advance. In any case, the Stalinist bureaucracy is doomed to elimination.

When the future historians assemble the pieces of ideological confusion strewn about by the bureaucratic degeneration of the first Proletarian State, they will discover one of the most curious phantoms of man's fancy. They will read in Shachtman's dusty works that there appeared on the body of the Workers State "a new type of ruling class" which matured with incredible swiftness, won power and then was blasted from the scene — all within the memory of many people of the generation born in pre-revolutionary Russia. This invention was shamelessly lifted by its author onto the plane of "Marxism." A little more research and they will learn the political history of the author and his private reasons for cooking up opportunist fictions.

### VIII.

#### TROTSKY'S DISTORTIONS OF THE NATURE OF THE SOVIET BUREAUCRACY

**T**HE position occupied by the Russian question in the Trotsky movement is a very complex one. Under no circumstances should it be imagined that when it is shown that the Shachtman position is false it follows the Trotsky-Cannon position is correct. For a complete understanding of the role of the Russian question in the Trotsky movement it is absolutely essential to know the opportunist nature of the line held by both groups claiming to represent the Trotsky "International."

In his aggregation of particular notions, theories and ideas Trotsky not only did not question, but persistently stressed the concept of the proletarian nature of the present Russian State. Indeed, any attempt to challenge the accuracy of this concept would evoke from Trotsky a vigorous

defense. However, Trotsky's conformity with the objective fact regarding the proletarian nature of the Russian State was not at all prompted by a policy of rendering comprehensible the rest of the Russian question. The jealously defended position served Trotsky as a vantage ground for throwing up a dense haze around the character of the Stalinist bureaucracy which holds sway over the Workers State.

Hiding the coldly deliberate counter-revolutionary function of the Stalinist bureaucracy, Trotsky impressed upon his followers the illusion that Stalin and his votaries sought to advance the world proletarian revolution but that they were incredibly asinine, had not learned well the principles of Marxism and therefore committed terrible blunders. As the case-hardened criminals of the Comintern continued piling up tragedies for the masses, many revolutionary workers began to suspect that the Stalin bureaucrats were not at all the simple boobs that Trotsky painted but were very sly and skilled disrupters of the proletarian struggle for liberation. Trotsky recast somewhat his terminology in reference to Stalinist policies. His usual evaluation was that "the policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy represent a chain of errors," (What Next?, p. 25) He spoke of the "ruinous mistakes of Stalinist bureaucracy," ("blunders of the Stalinist bureaucracy" Ibid., pp. 51, 81. My emphasis - G.M.) Gradually and with ever greater frequency Trotsky added the terms treachery and betrayal to the words errors and blunders. This addition definitely connotes consciously perfidious acts, intentional delivery into the hands of the enemy, as against the previous characterization which suggests unintentional failure of an honest endeavor. But since Trotsky followed the line of rendering vague and unintelligible the real nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy he would negate the meaning of the words treachery and betrayal by falsifying the inner workings of the bureaucracy. He would have the workers believe that though the bureaucracy was palpably callous to the terrible tragedies it wrought, though it manifested fear and hatred for proletarian revolution, it

nevertheless felt loyal to the great cause of the working class. In a book published and popularized in 1937 at the height of the Stalinist willful betrayal of the Spanish Revolution, Trotsky wrote:

"Having betrayed the world revolution, but still feeling loyal to it, the Thermidorian bureaucracy has directed its chief efforts to 'neutralizing' the bourgeoisie." (Revolution Betrayed, p. 192. My emphasis - G. M.)

A few years earlier Trotsky was cooking up stories about the same bureaucracy adopting "progressive measures" which supposedly stopped the "Thermidor." Trotsky claimed credit for those "progressive measures":

"The progressive measures of the government of the U.S.S.R. which have held back the coming of Thermidor, were only partial and belated borrowings from the Left Opposition. Analogous phenomena, only on a lesser scale, can be observed in the life of all the sections of the C.I." (The Militant, Oct. 14, 1933)

Trotsky's falsifications of the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy covered various fields of its activity. For instance everybody knows that Trotsky scientifically refuted Stalin's fraudulent "theory" of Socialism in one country. The natural impression created by this refutation is that the bureaucratic regime, as the dominant factor in determining the course of the degenerated Proletarian State, inexorably leads Russia not toward but away from Socialism. In the present era no other society is possible except capitalism or Socialism. If the Workers State is guided by a revolutionary regime, humanity moves forward toward Socialism; if by a reactionary regime, backward toward the restoration of capitalism. Since the present Workers State is ruled by a reactionary regime it is plain that its line of march is retrogressive. But Trotsky avoided freeing this fact from obscurity. In most of his writings he left the question unanswered. On page 255 in the book Revolution Betrayed he describes the burocracy

tized Proletarian State as hovering somewhere between Socialism and Capitalism. Which way it is moving under the bureaucracy he does not make definite, "a further development of the accumulating contradictions can as well lead to Socialism as back to capitalism." However, on page 47 he sets the tone, and a reader who is off guard will inevitably fall into a trap. For Trotsky builds a definite impression that the reactionary bureaucratic regime is serving as a bridge toward Socialism!

"If Marx called that society which was to be formed upon the basis of a socialization of the productive forces of the most advanced capitalism of its epoch, the lowest stage of communism, then this designation obviously does not apply to the Soviet Union, which is still today considerably poorer in technique, culture and the good things of life than the capitalist countries. It would be truer, therefore, to name the present Soviet regime in all its contradictoriness, not a socialist regime, but a preparatory regime transitional from capitalism to socialism."

A correct position on the nature of the Russian State must consist not only of the evaluation that it is a Proletarian State but also in showing unequivocally in what direction it is moving. The Russian Workers State is sliding toward capitalism. Yet Trotsky's line upon the issue was on the one hand to refute and condemn the "theory" of Socialism in one country as an impossible Utopia; and on the other hand to spread the Stalinist fraud that the bureaucratized regime of the degenerated Workers State was supervising the building of Socialism. This aid to Stalin's fraud was Trotsky's old-established policy. In 1927, several months before the expulsion of the "Opposition," a Trotsky document was distributed among the Russian masses. In that document, which Trotsky cites in The Revolution Betrayed (p. 297), he lied to the toilers, "It is a fact that we are building Socialism."

In surveying Trotsky's role it is necessary to assess it not so much by verbal cries of the need of the overthrow of the bureaucracy (at some future date) but by his immediate political function among the revolutionary workers. That function is to attach the workers to the Stalinist bureaucracy. Some years ago the Trotskyite paper put it in these blunt words: "In defending the Soviet Union we fight jointly with the present government, which is the Stalinist apparatus." (The Militant, September 2, 1933) This political support to the Stalinist bureaucracy Trotsky covered up with phrases which gave to his underlying, basic policy the appearance of uncompromising struggle for the extirpation of the very element to which he lent support.

## IX.

### THE ROOT OF TROTSKY'S DISTORTIONS OF THE CHARACTER OF THE STALINIST BUREAUCRACY

**A**T first view the assertion that Trotsky was from the very early period of Stalinization a close collaborator of the Stalin clique sounds absurd and slanderous. But a deep penetration beneath the external aspect of the Trotsky story amply reveals his precise part in the degeneration of the Workers State. Incontrovertible documentary evidence much of which has already been published by THE BULLETIN, demonstrates that during Lenin's illness, Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev secretly banded together in a Troika to usurp the powers of the State. The decisive moment for the conspirators was the Twelfth Congress of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin, though gravely ill, had prepared a set of documents aimed at Stalin because of the latter's bureaucratic methods and opportunism. For the fight against Stalin and his cohorts Lenin chose the Twelfth Congress which was convoked in the Spring of 1923. Trotsky's testimony reveals that Lenin appealed to him for aid and evidently secured a promise of full support.

Lenin was prevented by a paralytic stroke from appearing at the Congress. But Trotsky was there. In

Trotsky's possession was the dossier of Lenin's documents, the "bomb" as Lenin named it, which Trotsky was entrusted to explode at the Congress. But at that gathering, which had been designated by Lenin to serve as Stalin's political grave, Trotsky combined with the conspiratorial Trio. Together with Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev he concealed Lenin's documents, and this betrayal of Lenin's trust served as cement which politically bound him to Stalin for life. The minutes of the Twelfth Congress plainly show that instead of a sharp fight on Lenin's line which demanded the removal of Stalin, there was greater unanimity among Trotsky, Stalin and other eminent leaders than at any previous Congress of the Party. Moreover, investigation of the whole cancerous development brings to light the unmistakable fact that even prior to the Twelfth Congress Trotsky already played a double game, secretly acting in concert with the Trio (the Seventh All-Ukrainian Party Conference, etc.)

Stalin's entrenchment due to Trotsky's perfidy was far-reaching. Although a lesser figure as compared with such luminaries as Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and others, he had the advantage over all of them because of his key position as General Secretary. This position gave him the power to appoint and remove people and, in consequence, the power of building a personal machine. Soon this advantage told. Stalin broke his peace with Trotsky and with the aid of his partners in the Trio who had not yet grasped that the real power was not in their hands, organized an intrigue against Trotsky. By then Trotsky was completely entangled in all the bureaucratic crimes. The cold-blooded betrayal of the German proletariat in October 1923, Trotsky's silence about Stalin's machinations in Georgia, Trotsky's double-crossing of Lenin, Trotsky's knowledge about the "peculiar" circumstances surrounding Lenin's death at the time the sick man was on the way to recovery — these and many other unsavory deeds stood as an insurmountable barrier between Trotsky and the open, honest road of resisting Stalin. The Trio knew Trotsky's hopeless situation and, accordingly, did

not shrink from sordid and cynical methods of attack. They invented a target "Trotskyism." Trotsky was obliged to resort to impotent gestures of sham resistance, keeping silent all along about the whole gangrenous development for sheer self-protection. Just as the Trio's target was a fraud, so was Trotsky's "opposition." Stalin continued on the road of centralization of bureaucratic power in his own hands. Trotsky, riveted to Stalin with an invisible historical chain, was drawn along politically. One opportunist crime led to another. When in May-June 1924, following Lenin's death — sixteen years later Trotsky strangler, hinted it was assassination! — Stalin diluted the Party with tens of thousands of opportunist supporters ("Leninist Levy"), Trotsky gave full and unstinted backing to this maneuver. When Eastman came out with an exposure of Stalin, Trotsky, far from substantiating the revelations and augmenting them with thousands of appalling facts locked in his own mind and known only to the topmost Russian bureaucrats, agreed to shield Stalin. In the most vicious, the most treacherous manner imaginable Trotsky branded Eastman a liar, an enemy of the Soviet Union.

Trotsky's record in the betrayal of the Chinese Revolution, in the Stalinist machinations with the Anglo-Russian Committee, in the delivery of the German proletariat to Hitler, in the betrayal of the Spanish Revolution, is one of subtle support to Stalin and the bureaucracy. As the bulk of an iceberg drifts treacherously beneath the surface of the ocean, so Trotsky's pro-Stalin policy, hidden beneath a layer of anti-Stalin phrases, moves through the horrible epoch of Stalinism and acts as an effective snare to entrap hundreds of thousands of the most advanced, honest and self-sacrificing proletarians and deliver them up either to the GPU or to the Fascist butchers. An insight into the essential character of Trotsky's role in the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party provides the explanation for his distortions of the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy and his specific reason for constantly repeating the ritual oath of loyalty to the proletarian form of property in the Soviet Union.

## X.

THE ROOT OF SHACHTMAN'S IMITATIONS

SHACHTMAN is a pupil first of Cannon and later of Trotsky. In the old Cannon caucus which was a constituent part of the Foster-Browder "opposition" in the squabble with Lovestone for power, Shachtman played an important part. He achieved his leading position in Cannon's outfit on the grounds of fitness and ability during the life-and-death factional fight in the Stalinist Party. When the fight was lost and the Cannon caucus hitched up with Trotsky, Shachtman rapidly grew in political stature. Almost in a single stroke Shachtman came up to the height of Cannon, the founder of the caucus. Energetic, ambitious, erudite, Shachtman unfolded his literary and oratorical talents to their full capacity and became a foremost provider of the staple Trotskyist fare for the revolutionary workers. Naturally annoyed by Cannon's insistent claims to the title of the leader of the American Trotsky group, Shachtman began to commune with his ambitious soul.

Presently, a bitter factional fight burst upon the Cannon-Shachtman group. As the old factional contests for power in the Stalinist party, the struggle between Shachtman and Cannon in the early Thirties was appropriately cloaked with abstract ideological garments to fool the membership. But the verbal altercations were often profusely salted with mutual charges of dishonesty and corruption. The scrimmage was terminated by Trotsky who sided with Cannon. Unity and domestic tranquility were restored, because Shachtman's knees at that time were as yet too shaky for him to stand up against Trotsky's authority. All that Shachtman had was a few quotations from Engels and some proof of Cannon's bureaucratic fakery — not enough, though, to induce any appreciable number of members disgruntled with Cannon's leadership to take the plunge for independence.

Shachtman bided his time. He learned to retell Trotsky's myths and fables with precision. He became the

most popular lecturer of the Trotsky group electrifying mass meetings with magiloquent utterances directed against the shadow of Stalinism which concealed the Trotsky support to the substance of Stalinism. Among the advanced workers his name was being etched on the political horizon in ever larger letters.

Meanwhile the process of centralization of power in Stalin's hands reached the bloody state marked by the appalling spectacle of the "witchcraft trials" in Moscow and the subsequent murder of many of the cast-off partners and henchmen of Stalin. On the heels of those shocking crimes came the revolting Stalin-Hitler partition of Poland and Stalin's bloody adventure in Finland. Many honest revolutionary workers who had been taught by Trotsky to give "critical" support to Stalin on the plea that the Soviet Union is a Workers State, recoiled in horror. How can it be a Workers State, they reasoned, when that State participates with Nazi cutthroats in an act which can be classified only as imperialist robbery. How can it be a Workers State when that State sets out upon seizing territories outside its borders. No, a host of them concluded, it cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered a Workers State.

Shachtman took cognizance of the changed sentiment within a section of the Trotskyite workers. He fully realized that Trotsky's ideological facade, both in its fraudulent aspects about the Stalinist bureaucracy and in its correct part regarding the class nature of the Soviet Union, was wearing thin. He knew that with every tick of the clock the infamy of the Stalinist bureaucracy would grow, making it more difficult for Trotsky to maintain the old theses. Shachtman keenly sensed that his hour had come.

Cashing in on the reaction of the confused workers, Shachtman warmed over some moldy "ultra-Left" concoctions, added a few new ingredients of his own, and pasted a bright "Marxian" label on the whole thing: "a new type of slave-state, with a new type of ruling class." In the factional fencing with Trotsky, Shachtman pointed

his weapon toward Trotsky's "unconditional defense" policy of support to Stalin and repeatedly lunged at the bureaucratism in Trotsky's organization. Trotsky parried the thrusts by citing the proletarian nature of the property foundation of the Soviet State and by making much fuss about dialectics; the latter though indisputably basic in the Marxian method of thinking was not at all germane to the argument. Seemingly animated by the loftiest of motives, both sides conducted the contest with consummate artistry, soaring eloquence and a show of fierce concern for the proletariat.

Shachtman's well-timed move was a shrewd stroke. In the ensuing split he wrested from Trotsky a substantial portion of his following.

Of course, Trotsky's influence is by no means at the point of disappearing. However, mighty historical events which are soon to crowd the stage will shake that influence and loosen its grip upon the main section of the anti-Stalin revolutionary workers. And the widespread knowledge of Trotsky's true role in the degeneration of the Bolshevik leadership will free the key element in the proletarian vanguard from Trotsky's pro-Stalinist ideological yoke.

Shachtman perseveringly peddles his political inventions among the workers. What does Shachtman's invention of "a new type of slave state" represent? Is it a chance product of momentary political blindness, a pinch of opportunist salt in a vast ocean of Marxian activity? Not at all. It represents the continuation of his life-long work of falsifying the nature of Stalinism. For many years, not only before the Cannon group had been expelled by Lovestone and Foster from the Stalinist Party but even afterward, he advertised that cesspool of reaction as a true revolutionary organization. This provides a clue to the character of Shachtman's politics. He never repudiated the Stalin-Trotsky pernicious fiction that the Stalinist Comintern was a revolutionary body although its hands were blood-stained with the ghastly, deliberate betrayal of the Chinese Revolution, of the



masses everywhere. He never repudiated his own stories that the American Communist Party, that fetid sewer of secret bureaucratic intrigues, which at one time was controlled by the Cannon-Foster unprincipled faction (1924 - 1925) then by the Ruthenberg-Lovestone demagogues (1925-1929), and later by the Browder-Foster crew, was a proletarian revolutionary organization! One might attempt to make apologies for Shachtman on the plea that it would have taxed the acutest intellect to discern the character of the Stalinist Party when it was in its nascent state of degeneration. But how can one treat Shachtman with forbearance when he, following a presumably exhaustive study, still insists that in the earlier stages of the bureaucratic corruption that Party was a true Communist Party. Here is how he pictures the Lovestone-controlled Daily Worker of 1926 and 1927 at the very time that paper covered up Stalin's betrayal of the Chinese Revolution:

"The undersigned was one of the editors of the Daily Worker back in 1926 and 1927 when it was still a working-class, revolutionary paper." (Max Shachtman, Labor Action, Oct. 26, 1942)

With the aid of Shachtman and his ilk the Browders and Thaelmanns confused and paralyzed the workers in all countries and cleared the ground for the flaming Nazi hell in Europe.

Shachtman's journalistic efforts to render Stalinism politically illegible to the workers have taken nearly twenty years of arduous labor and would fill a bulky volume. The shadow of the third decade of his activity will be lengthening. Whether he will be apprehended on the political arena when the impending explosive events startle the proletarian vanguard out of the mesmeric spell cast over it by opportunism, the future will show.

Shachtman divorced himself from a few theoretical positions of Trotsky, but not from the time-yellowed falsehood that Trotsky fought against the rise of Stalinism, a glittering pretension which veils Trotsky's unbroken political support to Stalin. To this

pretension Shachtman adheres tenaciously because it forms his own political pedestal. He was Trotsky's literary bodyguard. He faithfully discharged his services to Trotsky in the task of misguiding the revolutionary workers into the orbit of Comintern politics. And although after the organizational separation Trotsky denounced Shachtman, publicly branded him a liar, a thief, characterized Shachtman's magazine a petty-bourgeois counterfeit and officially declared that Shachtman's political morality evokes in him nothing but contempt, Shachtman exercised self-restraint. He must falsely portray Trotsky as honest but mistaken, else Shachtman's Red-draped pedestal will be revealed to the workers as a structure of perfidy, imposture and cunning political trickery.

The day is not very distant when the tolling of the bell of history will announce the verdict the revolutionary proletarian vanguard will deliver on the character of Trotsky's politics in the Stalinist epoch. That day will be the blackest not only in Trotsky's but also in Shachtman's calendar. It will then be household knowledge that just as Trotsky's "theory" crediting the Stalinist bureaucracy with certain progressive functions is a deliberate perversion of truth, so is Shachtman's "theory" of the transformation of the bureaucratized Workers State into "bureaucratic-collectivist class state," and of the Stalinist bureaucracy into "a new type of ruling class."

MARKISM VERSUS OPPORTUNISM  
ON THE PROBLEM OF THE DEFENSE OF THE  
REMNANTS OF OCTOBER

**B**EFORE a correct Marxist line can be established toward the war in the Soviet Union, it is necessary to define the class character of the state on either side of the fighting front. With regard to Nazi Germany and her allies, the matter is simple. The German masses and the toilers of Germany's satellites have been forced into a reactionary struggle for the interests of imperialism.

In the case of the Soviet Union, the matter is far more complicated.

The rule of the proletariat has undergone a reactionary transformation with the gravest consequences for the masses of the whole world. These harmful results did not first manifest themselves in June 1941 when the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union. The bureaucratic degeneration of the Workers State showed its poisonous influence more than two decades ago. This corruption actually functioned to bolster world imperialism and free its hand for the renewal of the military attack on the Soviet Union.

Most outstanding in this respect are the effects of Stalinism in Germany. The treachery of the Stalinist leaders put the Nazi regime in power and led to the forging of the very weapon which has wrought such horrible destruction in the Soviet Union.

Within the Soviet Union itself, the reactionary segment of the working-class which usurped power, the bureaucracy, has completely robbed the workers of the benefits of the revolution and has dragged the country a long way back in the direction of the restoration of the former society. The bureaucratic reaction, however, still rests on an economic foundation whose form is essentially that which was brought about by the October Revolution. The political rule of the proletariat in the Soviet Union has become counter-revolutionary.

The workers cannot be for the defeat of the proletarian form of economy even when it is ruled by the most vicious regime in the history of political criminality. In the war of the misled proletariat (Stalinized Soviet Union) with the imperialists, the policy of the revolutionary workers must be directed towards the victory of their class and its form of economy over the imperialists. Defeat of the Soviet Union by the imperialists means the direct introduction of capitalism. This is no hypothesis. Before the very eyes of the toilers, capitalism came to life in every part of the Soviet Union conquered by the bourgeois army.

The chief obstacle which stands

in the way of the victory of the workers of the Soviet Union is the Stalinist regime. That regime and its agents tie the world proletariat, the only force of revolutionary defense, to the imperialists. Taking into account all factors, the Marxist slogan for the workers is: Overthrow the Stalinist regime in order to transform Stalin's bureaucratically hamstrung war into an international revolution against imperialism.

The historical contradiction between the state-owned form of economy in the Soviet Union and the bourgeois-private system of property is the most basic contradiction in the world today. This conflict is one which was brought into existence by a proletarian revolution; only such a revolution can give rise to this kind of historical contradiction. World imperialism will not rest in its endeavors to restore capitalism on a world-wide basis. After the overthrow of the Russian bourgeoisie and the conclusion of the Russian Civil War and the imperialist intervention, the "truce" between the two economic systems lasted for two decades. While a long period in the life of an individual, it was but a fleeting moment in the life of humanity. In these two decades the imperialists were planning and plotting to renew their military effort to destroy the proletarian form of state. In 1941 the plans were put into action and the Nazis came close to succeeding, when they suffered a setback. But the workers must not be deceived by the ebb and flow of the military struggle between the imperialists and the Stalin-strangled Workers State. The imperialists, momentarily repulsed, may reestablish a temporary "truce." They may again throw to Stalin huge and important territories, just as they did in 1939 and 1940 before the military preparations of the imperialists for an attack on the Soviet Union had been concluded. Let no worker be deceived by the jubilant Stalinist out-cries, in the event of such a "truce" and such "successes," that the Soviet Union has actually been saved. Remember Stalin's "pact" with Hitler and the partition of Poland! That also "saved" the Soviet Union — the Stalinists

boasted at that time. Like the "pact," a "peace" between Stalin and Hitler would be merely an interlude to the next attack by the imperialists. It may not be the Nazis who will lead the next attack, but some other section of world imperialism which as a whole works for the introduction of capitalism in the Soviet Union. How long such a "truce" interlude may last, cannot be foretold. Only this can be said with certainty; while capitalism exists and while the basic economic form created by the October Revolution remains, a clash between the imperialists and the Soviet Union is inevitable. With each new attack, the end of the Soviet Union will come closer--if Stalinism continues to rule -- until finis will be written to the last conquests of the October Revolution.

There are two dangers which confront revolutionary workers on this momentous question of determining the correct policy in the war between imperialism and the Stalinized Soviet State. One is the position presented by Shachtman and his ilk. Harping on the vicious nature of the regime which usurped power on the basis of the proletarian form of economy, Shachtman closes the eyes of the workers to the economic foundation of the Soviet Union. He shouts for the defeat of the Soviet Union -- Stalinist bureaucracy, form of property and all. This is a policy which plays directly in to the hands of world imperialism.

Shachtman's false line on the war in Russia flows from his distortion of the class character of the Russian State. In his "analysis" the whole question boils down to the nature of the regime. He obscures the fact that what is fundamentally and causally involved is the contradiction of two forms of property, bourgeois and proletarian. The war is an effort of the bourgeoisie to uproot the proletarian form of property. The object of the bourgeoisie is not the occupation of this or that portion of Russia. The military action is the means the imperialists employ to carry out their basic political task; the uprooting of the proletarian form of economy and the extension of capitalist economy

into the Soviet Union. Only the success of this politico-economic objective can constitute a victory for the imperialists in their attack on the Soviet Union.

The danger of a line which deflects the mind from realizing the tremendous importance of historically progressive forms can be shown. The Soviets in 1917 at their first appearance and for some time thereafter were led by agents of imperialism, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. But the Soviets were considered by the Bolsheviks to be the form of the Workers State. This was the basis of the Bolshevik line of fighting for the victory of the Soviets. A misled worker falling victim to so-called "ultra-Leftism," upon observing that the opportunist leadership of the Soviets was so treacherous as to support the imperialist war, to oppose attacks on the capitalist economy and even to sanction physical assaults on the revolutionary workers, might have cried: Down with the Soviets! But such a slogan was the open aim of the bourgeoisie and the secret aim of the "socialist" opportunists. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, realizing the historical importance of the Soviets as a political form, cried: Out with the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries; transform the Soviets into revolutionary-led organs; spread them over the entire country, over the whole world!

The system of state-ownership of the means of production brought into existence by a proletarian revolution is necessary for the creation of a Socialist society. The usurpation of rule over this economic form by a band of renegades and bureaucrats gives rise to the need to oust the counter-revolutionary rulers in order to save and spread the proletarian form of economy. This is a task that can be accomplished only by the revolutionary proletariat. Any other policy is suicidal for the toilers.

Besides the "ultra-Leftist" danger of defeatism there is the danger of the position advocated by the Trotsky-Cannon branch of the so-called

"Fourth International." These people recognize that the Soviet Union is a Workers State and point to its bureaucratic degeneration. They apparently give a correct evaluation of the role of the Stalinist leadership and its policies. "These policies and this leadership cannot bring anything but disaster." (The Militant, July 11, 1931) Under the heading, "Stalin's policy means disaster," The Militant of August 8, 1942 wrote quite correctly: "Heroism and morale alone will not win the war. Above all a correct policy is necessary." In the Trotsky magazine, Fourth International, for May 1941, it was accurately asserted that: "...the defense of the USSR demands, above all, that the workers overthrow Stalin and his degenerate clique." The Trotskyites have also declared: "...defense of the U.S.S.R., a defense which cannot be entrusted to the Stalinist betrayers." (The Militant, May 25, 1935)

But these correct formulations do not at all represent the actual policy of the Trotskyites. They are used as a disguise of their pro-Stalinist line, the actual policy of the Trotsky leaders, which is embedded in their basic programmatic documents and declarations on the Russian question. Having built up the impression among the workers that the Trotsky line puts the question of politics above the military and all other issues, and recognizes that Stalinism does not defend the Soviet Union, the Trotsky leaders in actuality introduce the opposite line and imbue their followers with the ensnaring illusion that Stalin in his own way really defends the proletarian economy and therefore must be sustained in his efforts. Trotsky put it this way: "We will sustain Stalin and his bureaucracy in every effort it makes to defend the new form of property against imperialist attacks." (The Case of Leon Trotsky, p.282) The heart of the matter is that the Stalinist bureaucracy is a reactionary force and therefore cannot be supported on any pretext. Stalin's "efforts" in the military sphere are a continuation of his political actions which consist of frustrating any tendency to smash imperialism, to avoid actually smashing it even on the military field be-

cause a military collapse of imperialism would release a revolutionary flood that would sweep away not only the bourgeoisie but also, and inevitably, the Stalinist bureaucracy itself. Stalin fights not to crush the invading army but only to hold it at bay in order to strike out for some bargain with the imperialists. Fearing the workers even more than he fears the capitalist armies, Stalin works to perpetuate the bourgeois system, to prop it up. He and his bureaucracy dread a proletarian revolution even in Nazi Germany which has been the spearhead in the attack on the Soviet Union, despite the fact that such a revolution would put an end to the imperialist assault. A military catastrophe for the German ruling class would result in the mightiest proletarian uprising in the history of Europe. For this reason, a military catastrophe for the German capitalist class represents a veritable nightmare for Stalin. Such is the character of this alleged "defender" of the Soviet Union. Stalin's political line and consequently his military line lead unavoidably to greater and greater attempts on the part of the imperialists to destroy the proletarian form of property.

Many years ago when Trotsky was still a revolutionary, he participated in a genuine defense of the workers economy. He saw at first hand what is fundamental in such a defense, namely, the political line of the workers, not their military actions. Trotsky knew well what was basic in the Russian Civil War which was won by the Russian masses despite the fact that the White Guards were receiving political and military support from every imperialist power in the world, while the Red Army was in rags and poorly armed: "During our Civil War, I do not believe that we were victorious principally because of our military science. It is false. We were victorious because of our revolutionary program." (Ibid., p. 295) The Trotsky leaders know well that Stalin's "defense" of the Soviet Union is one of the most disastrous and deadly traps for the masses. Stalin's policy in war is an extension of his policy in peace. The gangrenous bureaucracy which was disin-

tegrating the proletarian economy in peace cannot genuinely defend it in war. The bureaucracy leads the military struggle in a reactionary way for its own interests, just as in peace it misruled the economy for corrupt, bureaucratic purposes. In both situations its policies and actions spell ultimate destruction for the remaining conquests of October, the economic form.

If it is true — and it is true — that Stalin's policies can bring nothing but ultimate disaster, as the Trotsky leaders themselves say, then it is obvious that Trotsky's line of "sustaining Stalin and his bureaucracy" on the specious ground of military action aids Stalin in his counter-revolutionary aims. Many confused workers are misled into supporting Stalinism precisely on the fraudulent ground that he fights the imperialists militarily. Such workers, not realizing that Stalin's military action is imbedded in a counter-revolutionary military and political line, mistake Stalin's bureaucratically conducted war for a real defense of the Soviet Union. Trotsky's exhortation to "sustain Stalin and his bureaucracy" enhances the illusions of the workers who are victims of Stalinism.

The present Trotsky-Cannon line on "defense" of the Stalin-ruled Workers State is composed of two parts; the pro-Stalinist substance and the Marxist-sounding camouflage. One part clashes with the other. On the one hand the Trotsky leaders, donning their "Marxist" garments, cry: "...only the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy can guarantee the defeat of the imperialist armies." (Socialist Appeal, December 31, 1939) This is a clear and unequivocal statement. It means that the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy is the prerequisite for the guarantee of defeat of the imperialist armies. On the other hand there stands Trotsky's "good soldier" thesis: "In the Soviet Union, I would try to be a good soldier, win the sympathy of the soldiers, and fight well. Then, at a good moment, when victory is assured, I would say: 'Now we must finish with the bureaucracy.'" (The Case of Leon Trotsky, p. 289) This is also a clear and unequivocal statement. It tells

the workers to be good soldiers and fight well and this can assure victory. Then the bureaucracy will be dealt with. In this thesis victory can be assured before the overthrow of the bureaucracy, i.e., the overthrow of the bureaucracy is not a prerequisite for victory over the imperialist armies. This thesis thus stands in direct contradiction to the correct statements made by the Trotskyite leaders as part of their campaign to appear as Marxists. The "good soldier" thesis reinforces the illusions of the workers who imagine that by bravery and skill at the front they can defeat the imperialists even though the counter-revolutionary Stalinist regime stands over their heads and betrays them and their class throughout the world at every turn. The soil of the Soviet Union runs red with rivers of workers' blood because of this fatal illusion. Today Stalin is back in Poland and at the Hungarian frontier. Can one say that victory is assured? What does the "victory" of the Stalinist Army today mean? It means that Stalin is in a better position to dicker for some crooked bargain with German and world imperialism, which in turn will enable the latter to catch its breath and renew the attack on the toiling masses of the Soviet Union. This is the sum total of the Stalinist "victories." Only such "victories" can be assured under Stalinist rule, and not the real victory of the workers, as Trotsky tried to make them believe. The real victory of the Russian toilers can be assured when the army based on proletarian economy is freed of Stalinism and is guided by the political line of overthrowing capitalist economy upon which the imperialist armies are based. Otherwise, not victory, but ultimate defeat is assured for the Stalinized Soviet Union. The very idea of linking Stalinism and defense is criminal deception.

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Faced with the problem presented by the imperialist attack upon the bureaucratized Workers State, many anti-Stalin workers inevitably begin to think in concrete terms of what policy to apply to the military front. The "ultra-Leftist" defeatism gives rise

among some workers to the crude notion of advocating that the Russian workers abandon the front in order to strike a decisive blow at the Stalinist bureaucracy. This notion omits two important features. One, that the Stalinist bureaucracy is both in the rear and at the front. The whole bureaucratic officer caste at the front is a vital part of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Hundreds of thousands of bureaucrats are at the front in numerous capacities. The struggle against the bureaucracy must be conducted at the front as well as in the rear. Second, even in Czarist Russia the Marxist policy was opposed to such an adventurist tactic as desertion from the front. The desertion form of "struggle" against the Stalinist bureaucracy would only help imperialism pour its forces into the country to demolish the proletarian economic forms.

The only correct policy for the Russian workers while the Stalinist regime has a firm stranglehold is to put into practice the formula Lenin employed when the tide was against Bolshevism in the 1917 Soviets and among the Russian masses: "teach and explain." This simple, unpretentious formula may seem too tame for those whose spirits have been overwhelmed by the profound political reaction and the immeasurable bloodshed sweeping over the Soviet Union and who have succumbed to the notorious impatience of disheartened people. The period of "teaching and explaining," however, is still the stage of Marxism as it applies among the workers of Stalin's Russia and among the workers in all other countries. No grandiose adventures can leap over this period, despite anything one may yearn for. To teach and explain to the toilers of the Soviet Union, of Germany, England, the United States, France — everywhere — that Stalinism can assure only defeat and disaster is an herculean task which must be carried out in the face of the whole oppressive force of the bureaucracy and the opportunist pressure of the pseudo-Marxists. If this task is successfully accomplished, then the task of overthrowing the bureaucratic regime and instituting a genuine workers democracy will be relatively simple, as will be the task of crushing and overthrowing the imperialists in the rest of the world.

What does the "ultra-Leftist"

policy of defeatism mean? It signifies that the holders of that policy want the destruction of the target of that policy. The only meaning of Shachtman's position of defeatism toward the Soviet Union is that his aim is the destruction of the economic foundation on which it rests. This is a counter-revolutionary aim which is identical with that of world imperialism and coincides with the only possible outcome of the continuance of Stalinist rule.

The Trotsky-Cannon "defensism" is the other side of the medal. This tendency's "defensism" is a camouflaged policy of support to Stalinism, as has been shown concretely in the foregoing pages.

The genuine line of Marxism on the question of the fate of the Soviet Union is : the Stalinist bureaucracy must be overthrown in order to institute a genuine workers democracy which alone can lead the toilers to liberation from all forms of oppression. The war at the front will become a genuine defense only when it is led by a revolutionary leadership. The workers must hold the front against the imperialist armies on peril of suffering immediate and direct introduction of capitalism which will follow military defeat, but the workers must understand that ultimate military defeat is inevitable unless the Stalinist regime is overthrown by the revolutionary workers. Neither Shachtman's defeatism, nor Trotsky's "good soldier" thesis; the one position works directly for imperialism; the other, indirectly, by blinding the toilers with the illusion that victory is not only possible, but can even be assured, under Stalin's rule.

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Having originated as a loyal "Opposition" in the Soviet Union, the Trotsky movement fulfills its historical role of a political branch of the Stalinist system, operating under a sham anti-Stalinist disguise. In all its ramifications the Trotsky movement is an integral part of the world-wide forces of reaction that are working for the destruction of the remaining conquests of the October Revolution.

George Marlen  
May 1944

"BREAKING ALL TIES" WITH STALINISM

WHEN in 1938 the Trotsky leadership proclaimed the founding of the "Fourth International," the Cannon-Shachtman group devoted a special issue of their paper to that occasion, reviewing the history of the rise of the Trotsky movement and of its American section. About the latter's development it was stated:

"On October 27, 1928 we raised the banner of the Russian Opposition (the Bolshevik-Leninists) in the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Therewith we broke all ties with Stalinism and we never once looked back." (Socialist Appeal, October 22, 1938)

This representation of Trotskyite politics as, presumably, divorced and distinct from the politics of Stalin's Comintern has been accepted by the uninformed workers.

A penetrating study of the whole range of Trotskyite politics throws a piercing light upon the words we have cited, revealing them as a brazen falsification. We can begin our investigation with the very issue of the paper in which the above-cited words are printed. On page 2 something is said of how the Trotsky leaders actually stood in relation to the Stalinist party after they had been expelled by Lovestone:

"But, as evidence, too, of our continuing close ties to the official Communist Party, we began the publication in The Militant of the thesis of the former Minority (Cannon-Foster bloc) in the Communist Party, entitled 'The Crisis in the Communist Party of the United States,' directed against the Lovestone-Wolfe majority."

Indeed, the printing by The Militant of the thesis of the Cannon-Foster bloc is excellent evidence of the

fact that the Cannon-Shachtman group was established from the start as a political branch of the Stalinist system. The Fosterite thesis was a factional bid to the Stalin bureaucrats at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in the Summer of 1928 to oust Lovestone and install the Foster-Cannon bloc in power. The crux of the document was the accusation that Lovestone did not carry out the Stalinist line as laid down by the bureaucrats in Moscow. Aware of the fact that leaderships in the various sections of the Comintern were selected not by the rank-and-file but by the high moguls in the Kremlin to serve the needs of the Soviet bureaucracy, the Foster-Cannon Minority in the American Party submitted a request to Stalin for the "reorganization of the Party leadership." What Foster and Cannon alleged to be Lovestone's deviation from the Stalinist line was termed by them opportunism, and the basis for the organizational change they proposed was to be a strict adherence to the policy handed down by the Comintern:

"The opportunist line must be corrected and the basis laid down for the reorganization of the Party leadership in such a way as to insure the carrying out of the line of the Comintern." (The Militant, January 15, 1929. Our emphasis-  
THE BULLETIN)

When Stalin decided that Lovestone should remain in power for the time being, the Cannon group, seeing no prospect of shaking Lovestone's grip on the helm, hitched its wagon to Trotsky's star and used the above-cited purely pro-Stalinist document to attack their successful rival. Week after week, installments of this inner-Comintern, factional document appeared in the Trotskyite paper, with the declaration that the leaders of the new Trotsky group stood on its basic premise. The mind of the readers was em-

broiled in the "theoretical" controversy between the bureaucratic gangs of the Stalinist Party. The underlying essence of the whole fight was the effort on the part of the Lovestone and Foster-Cannon cliques to prove to the Soviet bureaucracy their particular fitness to carry out the policy of the "Comintern." That was how Cannon-Shachtman "broke all ties with Stalinism" and "never once looked back"!

Systematic examination of Trotskyite policies reveals that beneath the thunderous phrases of "criticism," Cannon and Shachtman were firmly attached to the political essence of the Stalinist Party. This connection with the Stalin party was expressed in various ways. They tenderly called the Stalin Party, ruled by the charlatan Lovestone and his crew of political bandits, "our party." Knowing full well that the Stalinist Party was diseased with bureaucratism and corruption, that it peddled Stalin's demagogic "program" of Socialism in one country, they worked for Stalin and Lovestone by lying to the workers that "our party" would carry out its revolutionary tasks. Thus they concealed the truth that the Lovestone-directed Party was Stalin's tool of selling the workers to the bourgeoisie:

"The fundamental HEALTHINESS of OUR party, its proletarian composition, its BASIC PROGRAM are a GUARANTEE that despite the difficulties, the errors, and the shortcomings it will win the masses and fulfill ITS REVOLUTIONARY MISSION." (The Militant, December 1, 1928. Our capitals - THE BULLETIN)

This powerful Stalinist poison which aided the Comintern to snare the workers, adequately reveals the deceptive nature of the statement "There-with we broke all ties with Stalinism and we never once looked back."

The continuity of political ties with Stalinism was kept up by Cannon and Shachtman in the period of the Comintern sell-out of the German masses to Hitler. The usual cover for that political attachment to the Stalin machine of counter-revolution was a

stream of blatant phrases of "criticism." Political ties with Stalinism were maintained through the "critical" adherence to the Stalinist noose "democracy versus Fascism" with which the Comintern ensured the victory of Franco and the massacre of millions of Spanish workers. Ties with Stalinism were kept up by Cannon and Shachtman when they gave "critical" support to open and concealed Stalinist candidates in various elections. Not so long ago the Cannon leadership supported the Stalinist stooge Connolly and the Browder-controlled section of the A.L.P. That support was approved by Shachtman "in principle." When many honest workers expressed disgust at the Trotskyite aid to Stalinist politics, the Trotsky leadership took note of this healthy reaction:

"Many well-meaning people are horrified at the idea that we are supporting a Stalinist-controlled party." ("Why We Supported the A.L.P.," The Militant, March 15 1941)

Of course, every maneuver of supporting Stalinism is covered up with some excuses. For instance, in the same article the Trotsky leaders argued:

"But we must not forget that this Stalinist-controlled party is backed by Stalinist-controlled unions." (Ibid.)

The Trotsky leadership even took the occasion to set the minds of their misled followers for further support of the counter-revolutionary bandits who operate under the guise of "Communism":

"We can even whisper to our critics that if we deemed it advisable and of benefit to our party and consequently to the working class we would not hesitate to give critical support to Browder running on the Communist party ticket." (Ibid.)

This is how the Trotsky leaders "cut" all ties which connect them to the Stalinist political system of black treachery and bestial betrayal of the toiling masses.