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TWO PENCE

THE RETREAT FROM OCTOBER

Does The Soviet Government
Still Adhere to the Principles
of 20 Years Ago?

by LEON TROTSKY

In order to answer correctly the question posed at the head of this article it is necessary from the very outset to establish the disparity between the basic conquest of the October revolution, the nationalization of property, and the policies of the present government. The revolutionary form of property and the Thermidorian, *i.e.*, reactionary policies, stand in contradiction to each other. But up to now these policies have not yet been able, have not yet ventured, or have not yet succeeded in over-throwing the revolutionary form of property. The line of the present government is diametrically opposed to the programme of Bolshevism. But since the institutions founded by the revolution still exist, the bureaucracy is constrained in outward appearance to adapt its line to the old principles of Bolshevism; it continues to swear by the commandments of October, by the interests of the proletariat, and calls the Soviet regime nothing less than socialist. We can say without risk of mistake that in the history of humanity there has never been a government so

deceitful and hypocritical as the present Soviet bureaucracy.

The safeguarding of the state property in the means of production has enormous progressive importance in itself, since with the aid of planned economy it permits the attainment of a rapid development of the productive forces. True, the economic statistics of the bureaucracy do not merit confidence—they systematically exaggerate the successes and conceal the failures. Nevertheless, it is impossible to deny the fact that even now the forces of production in the Soviet Union are developing at a tempo such as no other country in the world has ever experienced or is experiencing now. Those who refuse to see this side of the question and identify the Soviet regime with fascism, as does Max Eastman, for instance, pour out the baby with the dirty bath water, as the German saying goes. The development of the productive forces is the fundamental factor in human civilisation. Without increasing the

power of man over nature it is impossible even to think of the annihilation of the power of man over man. Socialism cannot be erected on backwardness and destitution. In the last twenty years in the Soviet Union the technical premise for socialism has made an enormous stride forward. However, this is due least of all to the bureaucrat. On the contrary the ruling caste has become the greatest brake upon the development of the productive forces. Socialist economy, in its very essence, must be guided by the interests of the producers and by the needs of the consumers. These interests and needs can find their expression only through the intermediation of expanded democracy for producers and consumers. Democracy is not in this case a mere abstract principle. It is the only conceivable mechanism for the preparation and realisation of a socialist system of economy.

The present ruling clique has replaced democracy in the soviet, party, trade-union, and co-operative by the command of functionaries. But even if the bureaucracy consisted entirely of geniuses, it would not possibly be capable of assuring from its offices the necessary proportion to all branches of economy —*i.e.*, the necessary correlation between production and consumption. What in the language of Stalin's "justice" is termed "sabotage" is, in reality, the unfortunate consequence of the bureaucratic methods of command. The manifestations of disproportion, of waste, of blundering, growing more and more, threaten to sap the very foundations of planned economy. The bureaucracy invariably seeks a "culprit". This, in most cases, is the hidden meaning of the Soviet trials against "saboteurs".

Explaining the present regime by Stalin's personal "lust for power" is too superficial. Stalin is not just an individual but the symbol of a caste. Power is not something insubstantial. Power gives the possibility of disposing of material values and of appropriating them. Naturally complete equality cannot be achieved at one stroke. At the present stage certain differentiations in wages are dictated in the interest of increasing the productivity of labour. However, the question of decisive importance for the evaluation of the nature of society is whether society is developing toward equality or toward privilege. The answer to this question leaves no room whatever for any doubts. The differentiation in society has long since passed the limits of economic necessity. The material privileges of the bureaucracy grow like an avalanche. Frightened by its isolation from the masses, the bureaucracy is trying to create a new worker and collective farm aristocracy under the banner of Stakhanovism.

The distribution of the national income defines,

in its turn, the political regime. The ruling caste cannot permit democracy for producers and consumers for the very simple reason that it robs them both unmercifully. It can be assumed with assurance that the bureaucracy devours no less than half of the sum total of national consumption, counting, naturally, not only lodging, food, clothing, means of transportation and communication, but also the use of institutions of learning, the press, literature, sports, motion pictures, radio, theatres, museums, etc. We can therefore say with full justification that although the bureaucracy is still constrained to adapt itself to the institutions and traditions of the October revolution, its policies, expressing its own interests, are directly opposed to the interests of the people and of socialism. This fundamental contradiction can be verified in all the other realms of social existence, such as the state, the army, the family, the school, culture, science, the arts, etc.

From the point of view of Marxism, *the state* is the apparatus for the domination of one class over another. The dictatorship of the proletariat is only a temporary institution, required by the toilers in order to have done with the resistance of the exploiters and to end exploitation. In a society without classes, the state, as an apparatus of coercion, would gradually wither away and be replaced by the free self-administration of the producers and consumers. But what do we see in reality? Twenty years after the revolution the Soviet state has become the most centralised, the most despotic, and the most bloody apparatus of violence and coercion. The evolution of the Soviet state proceeds, therefore, in complete contradiction to the fundamental principles of the Bolshevik programme. The reason for this lies in the fact that society, as has already been said, is developing not toward socialism but toward the regeneration of social contradictions. If the process goes much further on this road, it will lead inevitably to the regeneration of classes, to the liquidation of planned economy, and to the restoration of capitalist property. In this case the state will inevitably become fascist.

The October revolution proclaimed as one of its tasks the dissolving of *the army* into the people. It proposed to build the armed forces on the militia principle. Only such an army organisation, making the people the armed master of its own fate, corresponds to the nature of a socialist society. The transition from a standing army of the barracks type to an army of militia was systematically prepared during the first decade. But from the moment that the bureaucracy completely crushed every manifestation of independence on the part of the working class, it has openly transformed the army into an instrument of its own domination. The mil...

system had been completely abolished. The two-million strong army is now, surely, a standing army. The caste of officers with generals and marshals at the top has been re-established. From an instrument of socialist defence the army has become an instrument for the defence of the privileges of the bureaucracy. However, things did not stop here. The struggle between Stalin's narrow clique and the most authoritative and talented military commanders, truly devoted to the interests of defence, has led to the beheading of the Red Army.

Woman's position serves as the clearest and most convincing index for the evaluation of a social regime and of state policy. The October revolution inscribed on its banner the emancipation of woman and created the most progressive legislation on marriage and family that has ever existed in history. Naturally this did not mean that a "happy life" had come all at once for the Soviet woman. The real liberation of woman is inconceivable without a general rise in economy and culture, without the destruction of the petty-bourgeois family economy, without the introduction of socialised kitchens and education. But meanwhile the bureaucracy, guided by its conservative instincts, has taken fright at the "destruction" of the family. It has begun to sing panegyrics to the family dinner and the family wash—that is, to the family enslavement of the woman. To crown everything it has re-established criminal punishment for abortion, thus officially returning woman to the status of a beast of burden. Thus, in complete contradiction to the ABC of communism, the ruling caste has restored the most backward, the most reactionary unit of class society the petty-bourgeois family.

But the situation is no better in the realm of *culture*. The growth of the productive forces was preparing the material prerequisites for a new culture. The development of culture, however, is impossible without criticism, without mistakes and groping, without independent creation; in a word, without the awakening of personality. But the bureaucracy does not tolerate independent thinking in any creative field. And, in its way, it is right; if criticism is aroused in the arts or pedagogy, it will inevitably direct itself against the bureaucracy, against its privileges, its ignorance and its arbitrariness. This explains the fact that the "purge" which began in the party afterwards penetrated into all branches of social life, without exception. The

G.P.U. "purges" poets, astronomers, pedagogues, and musicians under the label of "Trotskyism" and the best heads fall under the Mauser. Is it conceivable under such conditions to talk of "socialist" culture?

In the realm of simple *literacy* the successes are indubitable. Tens of millions have learned how to read and write. But parallel with this, they have been deprived of the right of expressing their opinions and interests in print. The press serves only the bureaucracy. The so-called "socialist" poets have the right of writing only hymns to Stalin. The same privilege is granted to writers of prose. The population is obliged to read these hymns. Exactly the same thing is happening in the motion pictures, radio, the theatre, etc. Recently a new prize history textbook was introduced in the schools. It can be said without exaggeration that this textbook contains nothing but falsifications the purpose of which is to justify the despotism of the bureaucracy and the personal absolutism of Stalin. Even the history textbooks of the Catholic Church, published with the approval of the Vatican, are models of scientific conscientiousness compared with the Stalinised textbooks of the U.S.S.R. Tens of millions of children's heads are contaminated and poisoned by this dishonest literature.

The October revolution proclaimed the right of every *nation* not only to independent cultural development but even to a separate state existence. The bureaucracy has in reality transformed the Soviet Union into a new prison of the peoples. True, the national language and the national school continue to exist; in this field the most powerful despotism can no longer turn back the wheel of development. But the language of the various nationalities is not an organ for their independent development but an organ of bureaucratic domineering over them. The governments of the national republics, are of course, appointed by Moscow, or stated more correctly, by Stalin. But what a striking fact, that thirty of these governments suddenly appear to be "enemies of the people" and agents of foreign powers! Behind this accusation which sounds too gross and preposterous even from the lips of Stalin and Vyshinsky, is really concealed the fact that even though appointees of the Kremlin, once in the national republics, the functionaries fall under the influence of local conditions and moods and generally become infected with the opposition spirit

against the stifling centralism of Moscow. They begin to dream and to talk about the removal of the "beloved leader" and the unloosening of the vice. That is the real reason for the recent decapitation of all the national republics of the U.S.S.R.

It is difficult to find in history an example of reaction which has not been tainted by *anti-Semitism*. This peculiar historic law is now completely confirmed in the Soviet Union as well. In his interesting, though not profound book, "Assignment in Utopia", Eugene Lyons, who spent long years in Moscow, shows how the bureaucracy systematically, though in covert form, exploited anti-Semitic prejudices in order to strengthen its domination. And how could it be otherwise? Bureaucratic centralism is inconceivable without chauvinism, and anti-Semitism always offers the line of least resistance for chauvinism.

In *foreign policy* a turn no less radical than that in internal policy has occurred in these last twenty years. It is only through inertia or for some hidden motive that bourgeois reaction continues to denounce Stalin as the inspirer of world revolution. In reality the Kremlin has become one of the bulwarks of the conservative order. The period when the Moscow government tied the fate of the Soviet republic to the fate of the international proletariat and the oppressed peoples of the East is left far behind. Good or bad, the policy of the "People's Front" is but the traditional policy of Menshevism against which Lenin fought all his life. It signifies the abandoning of proletarian revolution in favour of conservative bourgeois democracy. The ruling Moscow caste has but one wish—to live in peace with all the ruling classes.

The contradictions between the October revolution and the Thermidorian bureaucracy found their most tragic expression in the extermination of the *old generation of Bolsheviks*. Vyshinsky, Yezhov, Troyanovsky, Maisky, agents of the Comintern and of the G.P.U., journalists of the type of Duranty and Louis Fischer, lawyers of the type of Pritt, will not deceive world public opinion. Not a single rational human being believes any longer that hundreds of old revolutionists, leaders of the underground Bolshevik party, directors of the Civil War, revolutionary Soviet diplomats, commanders of the Red Army, heads of thirty national Soviet republics, all at one stroke, as if by command, became agents of fascism. The New York or "Dewey" Commis-

ion of Inquiry consisting of irreproachable and impartial people, announced after nine months of work that the Moscow trials were the most gigantic falsification in human history. It is no longer now a question of proving that Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov, Piatakov, Serebriakov, Sokolnikov, Radek, Rakovsky, Krestinsky, Tuchachevsky, Bukharin, Rykov, and hundreds of others fell the victims of a frame-up. This has been proved. The question now consists in explaining how and why the Kremlin clique could venture such a monstrous frame-up. The answer to this flows from all that has been said. In its struggle for power and income the bureaucracy was forced to strike down and to destroy those groups that are bound up with the past, those who know and who remember the programme of the October Revolution, those who are sincerely devoted to the tasks of socialism. The extermination of the old Bolsheviks and of socialist elements of the middle and younger generation is the necessary link in the anti-October reaction. That is why the former white-guard Vyshinsky appears in the trials as prosecutor. That is why the U.S.S.R. is represented at Washington by the former white-guard Troyanovsky and in London by the former minister of Kolchak, Maisky, etc. The right people are found to occupy the right places.

Hardly anyone will let himself be deceived by the comedy of the latest Moscow elections. Hitler and Goebbels have more than once contrived the same thing and by the very same methods. It is sufficient to read what the Soviet press itself wrote on Hitler's plebiscites to understand the secret of Stalin's "successes". Totalitarian parliamentary experiences prove only that if one destroys all parties, including one's own, stifles the trade-unions, subordinates the press, radio, and the motion pictures, either to the Gestapo or the G.P.U., gives work and bread only to the submissive and silent ones, and places a revolver against the head of every voter, it is possible to achieve "unanimous" elections. But this unanimity is neither eternal nor stable. The traditions of the October revolution has disappeared from the official stage but they continue to live in the memory of the masses. Beneath the cover of judicial and electoral frame-ups, the contradictions continue to deepen and cannot but lead to an explosion. The reactionary bureaucracy must and will be overthrown. A political revolution in the U.S.S.R. is inevitable. It will signify the liberation of the elements of the new society from the usurping bureaucracy. Only under this condition can the U.S.S.R. develop toward socialism.

Jingo-Communism

The Popular Front or Peace Alliance received a further douche of cold water when the Co-operative Congress on June 8th decisively voted it down. "Dead, dead, dead is the Popular Front," crowed the *Daily Herald*. Coming on top of the capture of the Liberal vote at the West Derbyshire by-election, the Popular Front passed into eclipse. But the *Daily Herald* buries it too hastily. The experience of France and Spain, to look no further back, shows that Popular Frontism flourishes only in the soil of mass unrest and Britain has not yet reached that phase.

In the face of these discouragements and defeats the Communist Party proceeds to ever more desperate expedients in the attempt to extract Popular Front milk from the British billy-goat. The *Daily Worker* has grown solicitous concerning the honour of the Union Jack. Chamberlain is depicted in a cartoon spreading the well-known "Symbol of Sacrifice" as a carpet for Fascism to trample. Before the horrified gaze of international socialism the *Daily Worker* shows the Union Jack with the Swastika superimposed upon it on Chamberlain's orders. And to crown all, the North London Branches of the Communist Party publish a leaflet declaring: "Mosley, Friend of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco, marches under the Union Jack—while his fascist friends murder our seamen by bombing our ships flying the Union Jack."

In the protection of "our" ships the Communist Party is finding allies in those stalwart defenders of "our" Empire, the Duchess of Atholl, Winston Churchill and Lloyd George.

The Red Duchess of Atholl it will be remembered united with Churchill in the diehard opposition against the Government of India Bill provisions to extend concessions to the Home Rule movement in India. In writing "Searchlight on Spain" she is actuated by the same diehard principles and clamours blood-thirstily for a stern line against Hitler, Mussolini and Franco. And William Gallacher, M.P., in reviewing her book discovers in her "fine courage and deep understanding of the issues involved." For proof, he invites you to read the book. To-day any friend of the Union Jack is a friend of William Gallacher's.

Lloyd George, architect of the Versailles Treaty

which laid the foundations for Hitlerism, organiser of the Black and Tan terror in Ireland, leader of British Imperialism in the great war, initiator of the anti-Bolshevik intervention in Russia—it is to this Lloyd George that the Communist Party extends its hand, to this Lloyd George and to Winston Churchill, champion of Indian repression, strike breaker in chief to the British bourgeoisie. If yesterday Churchill described the struggle between Trotskyism and Stalinism as a quarrel in the reptile house where the snakes and the crocodiles had fallen out, if yesterday Lloyd George hailed Hitler as the bulwark against Bolshevism, the Communist Party is to-day prepared to forgive and forget.

The *Daily Worker* of June 10th carries a front page article by Richard Goodman: "Britain is Ready to Abandon Gibraltar." A map shows Gibraltar ringed with "enemy" batteries. "In plain and simple language the British are preparing to abandon Gibraltar to the Nazis." The language is plain enough, in fact positively ugly. It is the language of social patriotism. British Imperialism is far too tame and sheep-like for the British "Communists" who take it upon themselves to present Chamberlain with a white feather. "Once again, therefore, it is being pointed out that the first step to be taken—absolutely necessary before any attempt can be made to 'win back Gib.' is to seize the base of the aerial pirates, Majorca, just as some years ago British and American forces did at Bias Bay."

Another of the boys of the bulldog breed, W. Wainwright, editor of *Challenge* asks in the *Daily Worker* of June 22nd, "What are we to do about the defence of our country?" In the same issue of the *Daily Worker* is printed a verse:

He thought he saw the Union Jack
Flying in the breeze,
He looked again and saw it was
Britannia on her knees.

The perturbation in King Street at the spectacle of Britannia on her knees, the solicitude for the honour of the Union Jack, the new-found Liberal friends, the incitement to seize Majorca, the discovery of "our" country and "our" ships—in what direction is this jingo howling leading the workers who support the Communist Party? In the direction of the Peace Alliance—which is in other words

the war alliance between the Kremlin and British Imperialism. The hirelings of the corrupt Moscow bureaucracy assemble under the betrayed banner of Lenin, on the red flag they daub white and blue, in the name of internationalism they incite the workers of one nation against those of another, in the name of socialism they preach rabid jingoism. The Third International has splintered into national chauvinism.

The attitude of Bolsheviks was and still is the attitude of irreconcilable antagonism to Imperialism, its flag, and its "honour", its wars of plunder and its preparation for future wars. Not by lining up behind the bourgeoisie but by independent class action by the workers can Fascism be defeated at home and abroad. When British Imperialism acts

or refrains from acting it is always in the interests of safeguarding and multiplying its profits at the expense of the working class. This motive and this alone dictates its actions in Spain and in China, in Czechoslovakia and in Austria. The welfare of the working class is diametrically opposed to that of the bourgeoisie. Where they erect national boundaries it is our interest to smash them down, where they prepare wars it is our interest to guarantee peace by the fraternal collaboration of all peoples in a world federation of Socialist Republics. Only world revolution can guarantee peace by obliterating the root-cause of war, capitalism, imperialism.

To save humanity from being plunged into wars of mutual extermination workers must face up to the task of building the new Fourth International.

A Century of Freedom

The wave of revolt among the brutally exploited populations of the West Indies spreads from Jamaica to British Guiana. Defenceless workers striking for the bare minimum wage necessary to maintain their very existence are met with terror and violence at the hands of British Imperialism. Already ten have been killed and hundreds wounded, and the rushing of troops to British Guiana signifies more bloody repressions in store for the victims of imperialist greed.

One hundred years ago, in 1838, the negro slaves were finally emancipated from the last disguise of chattel-slavery, the apprenticed-labourer system. Carried in slave-ships to the West Indies in millions, worked in gangs under the lash, they provided out of their very bones the foundations for the edifice of British Imperialism. The Emancipation Act which fixed the date for the ending of their bondage was received by the slaves as the beginning of a new age. "As the hour of midnight approached they fell on their knees and awaited the solemn moment. When twelve sounded from the chapel bells they sprang upon their feet, and through every island rang the glad sound of thanksgiving to the Father of all, for the chains were broken and the people were free."

In the report made over a hundred years ago to the London Missionary Society by the Rev. John Smith, who was martyred by the slave-owners of Jamaica for "conspiring to bring about a revolt", he describes the conditions under which the slaves lived: "The slaves live in huts that deserve only the name of kennels . . . The only furniture allowed the slave is one iron pot for the family and a blanket

for each individual . . . The slaves have no time to clean their huts, and as they keep their fowls in them, the state of filth is inconceivable."

In the London *Times* of May 25th, 1938, Mr. Harold Stannard describes the conditions of the grandchildren of the slaves of Jamaica: "The first time I saw one of these hovels I could hardly believe that it was intended for human occupation . . . There is no furniture except sacking on the earth and some sort of table to hold the oil stove . . . In a region of Kingston are shacks put together anyhow out of the sides of packing cases and sheets of corrugated iron."

A piece of sacking, sheets of corrugated iron—these are the improvements that a century of emancipation has brought to the slaves. In every other way they are sunk in the same filth and poverty as their grandfathers; the same brutal methods are employed to perpetuate their slavery; they have exchanged the chains of chattel-slavery for the chains of wage-slavery.

The West Indies provide for the world market mainly tropical agricultural products—fruit, sugar, rubber, tropical timbers, as well as minerals like bauxite and asphalt. The coloured populations exist to gather and ship these products and to serve the white administrators and plantation owners. Their share amounts to an average of 1/3d. for a 10-hour working day during the crop season, with no relief whatsoever in the periods between crops when a third, and in some cases a half of the workers fall out of employment.

During the Great War when the imperialists were

busy organising the slaughter of one another's populations, the West Indies received the opportunity to expand agriculture and industry. But after the war, the disturbed markets were reorganised, the production of beet sugar in Europe was resumed, and the West Indian production was faced with new competition. The British sugar monopolies maintained their huge profits only by preferential tariffs and by forcing down the standards of the West Indies workers to the barest minimum necessary to sustain life. Half starved in crop periods and altogether starved between crops, the intolerable conditions under which they live has called forth a strike movement among the workers of Jamaica which finds its echo amongst the peasant populations and the workers throughout the West Indies.

The best land is in the possession of the planters and the sugar and banana monopolies. The majority of the peasants of Jamaica own or hire plots of 5 acres or less in territory so malarial and fever-stricken that the post-offices have to be utilised to provide quinine and anti-fever drugs to the population in penny packages. In British Guiana, the East Indians who were brought to the colony in the first place as indentured coolies, now cultivate the malarial swamps for rice-growing. These small peasants cling to the patches of ground they hire or own, and the planters resort to the whip of taxation to drive them into the plantations and ports to serve as cheap labourers. In Jamaica the franchise is held by barely 5 per cent. of the population; the remaining 95 per cent. do not even possess the meagre qualifications that would entitle them to vote—an income of £50 a year or the possession of property rated at 10/- per year. In British Guiana the position is even worse: only 2 per cent. of the population possess the vote. The privileged minority is thus in a position to enforce the most reactionary and repressive measures against the voiceless masses to extract cheap labour from them. The legislature is backed up by a militarised police force and by a militia drawn from the upper layers, and confronts the exasperated workers and peasants with a display of armed force.

When the strikers on the Frome Estate in Westmoreland, Jamaica, demonstrated on May 2nd in an orderly fashion with their demand for a living wage, they were met with a volley from the police: six killed, 50 wounded, 93 arrested. Another volley met a workers' demonstration on Empire Day, May 24th, in Kingston, Jamaica: 3 killed, 200 wounded, 80 arrested, including Alexander Bustamante and other labour leaders.

The general strike which began in Kingston and spread to the countryside included dock and transport workers, municipal employees, food and tobacco workers. The entire working population rallied

behind the strikers not only in Jamaica but in the neighbouring colonies, particularly in British Guiana, where the labour conference which met on June 8th sent a cablegram expressing solidarity with the demonstrators in Jamaica in the struggle against inhuman conditions. The stirring of the colonial peoples is met with movements of troops and battle-ships, the organisation of special police, the wounding and arrests of strikers and demonstrators.

The British Government announces commissions of inquiry and plans for reforms, the Acting Governor of Jamaica proposes a £500,000 scheme of land settlement and the population is urged to return to work and wait for the carrying out of these promises. But British Imperialism cannot, dare not carry out any extensive resettlement of the dispossessed peasants without depriving itself of the cheap West Indian labour upon which it depends in a declining world market. Lord Oliver, himself a former governor of Jamaica has expressed this in *Time and Tide*, June 18th: "White imperialism cannot survive in these colonies on a basis of adequately paid and fed coloured workers. If those workers, as they are now attempting, should refuse to work on any other conditions, and are able to maintain themselves independently, such colonies will cease to be assets of the British Empire." No more explicit confession of the bankruptcy of British Imperialism can be hoped for.

There is in the Museum of the Institute of Jamaica a relic preserved from the barbarous days of slavery: an iron cage or gibbet, in which a slave condemned to death was hung up till he died. It is shaped to fit round the body, with spiked stirrups for the feet which inflicted excruciating pain on the victim. The cage is designed to be hung in an elevated position so as to be exhibited.

In just such a cage is the colonial victim of Imperialism hung up to-day, imprisoned within the framework of a social system that dare not feed him lest he cease to be "an asset of the British Empire". The West Indian worker is now on exhibition, like his grandfather was before him, as a warning to mutinous slaves.

The heroic struggles of the West Indian colonial workers must have the firm and loudly voiced support of the British workers. The exploited masses, whether they live at the centre or on the edge of the Empire, have one enemy in common, British Imperialism, an enemy that can only be fought by the international solidarity of the toilers. Down with British Imperialism! Away with the cage that starves and tortures the workers. We can and must fling it into the museum of history. By the united action of British and colonial workers, we can and we must smash out of our path this decrepit monstrosity that constricts and strangles humanity.

The Manifesto in Afrikaans

The Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels has just been published in an Afrikaans translation with a Preface, in Afrikaans, by Leon Trotsky. In publishing this most famous of the Marxist classics in the language of the greater part of the white workers in South Africa, the Workers' Party of South Africa has performed a service to internationalism.

Almost within the memory of the older generation of Afrikaans speaking workers British Imperialism has smashed its way into their world of "rural idiocy", has transformed a backward semi-feudal land of ranches into an industrialised country criss-crossed with railways and motor roads, dotted with mines and factories, strung with telegraph wires. But the progressive mission of capitalism imperialism is obscured for them by the brutality with which finance capital established its dominion over the country, culminating in the Boer War with its farm burnings and concentration camps.

South Africa has become a link in the imperialist chain that girds the world around. The proud Boer

has been humbled, the warlike Zulu has been conquered, the wily Basuto has been outwitted and today they labour submissively side by side in the gold mines to enrich conquering imperialism. They have become proletarianised. The Communist Manifesto is for them pregnant with meaning.

That is why the publication of the Manifesto is a significant step in the development of the Afrikaans speaking workers. That is why the organs of the "Liberal" imperialists in South Africa have raised an angry howl over its publication. The leading article of the *Cape Times* objects to it not so much because of the text which it describes as "vindictive dreariness" as on account of the preface by Trotsky, which is referred to the Department of Justice as subversive literature. On the other hand *Die Burger*, Nationalist mouthpiece hints darkly at foreign subsidies.

In contrast to the comments made by the capitalist papers the South African Stalinists maintain silence, totally at a loss to explain why the "agent of Hitler" writes the preface to a work which Hitler is casting into the bonfire of books in Germany and Austria.

Noah London

A report has reached the United States that Noah London has been executed in Moscow, and there is good reason to believe that the report is true.

Who was Noah London?

He was a founder of the Communist Party of the United States and a leader of its Jewish Federation for years. A true proletarian, raised in the misery and poverty of New York's East Side, he devoted his whole life to the revolutionary movement. Speaker, organizer and writer, he was known to thousands of Jewish workers in New York and elsewhere.

Among the leading spirits in the foundation of the first Jewish communist daily newspaper—the *Freiheit*—he was a member of its editorial staff all during the early years of its existence. In addition he was a member of the Educational Committee of the party and one of the directors of the C.P. Workers School since its foundation.

Several years ago, he voluntarily gave up a well-paying position as engineer with one of New York's big corporations and went to the Soviet Union with his wife, to place his technical talent at the disposal of Soviet economy. He left for Russia with a recommendation from the American Communist party to the Soviet authorities.

Why was this old communist militant executed? To those who knew him and worked with him in the past—even to those who could not agree with his political acceptance of Stalinism—it is inconceivable that he should have committed any crime against the revolution or the Soviet Union to merit capital punishment.

And the fact that the official communist press has been absolutely silent about his case only strengthens the suspicion that Noah London was murdered by the Stalinist assassins.

We know that hundreds of foreign-born communists—leaders and rank and filers—well known in the German, Hungarian, Polish, Greek and other movements have been murdered on Soviet soil by the G.P.U. But this is the first case we know of which involves an American communist.

What has Moissaye Olgin, London's old friend, political colleague and collaborator on the *Freiheit*, to say about the case? What have his other old associates to say about it? Why is there no statement at all from the party of which he was a member?

The labour public is entitled to a plain-spoken explanation!

After Blum

Since the fall of Blum's government in April and the institution of Daladier's regime of government by decree, there has been a lull in French political life, a lull illuminated by lightning flashes that reveal the growing tensions within France that must shortly burst forth in stormy struggles.

The economic crisis in France drags on. Industry is stagnant at a low level in spite of the unparalleled armaments activity, and even shows a tendency to deteriorate still further, while the figures for unemployment show no decrease. The cost of living has risen steadily, while the so-called "sliding scale of wages", which only comes into operation after a 5 per cent. increase in the cost of living has been attained, gives little relief to the workers, who are forced to resort to strike after strike to lift their wages to the subsistence level. The arbitration decision which followed the April strikes of the Paris metal workers turned down their demand for a wage increase to meet the higher cost of living on the grounds that there had been a rise of only 3.67 per cent. in the official index in place of the 5 per cent. needed to bring the sliding scale into operation. While the Popular Front government has steadily nibbled at the gains wrested by the workers from the employers in the sit-down strikes, it has on the other hand by means of currency devaluation and financial manoeuvres transformed their gains into losses.

It was only after Blum failed in his attempt to create a "French Front" government of all parties that he fell back upon the Popular Front for the second time, but he retained the central idea of the "French Front", the determination to speed up the war preparations of French Imperialism to the limit, and to raise the funds necessary to finance those preparations. His proposals to substitute a 45-hour week for the 40-hour week in the war industries met with the approval of the big capitalists, but his financial plan did not, because it made inroads on their privilege of being the sole controllers of credit and exchange and because it proposed to exact a larger proportion of direct taxes from them. When the "stony-hearted old men" of the Senate, the stronghold of finance-capital, rejected Blum's programme, just as he expected, he accepted the posi-

tion and cheerfully surrendered the task of advancing the war preparations of French Imperialism to his successor Daladier. He admitted in his speeches that the French masses were ready to support his programme, but he refused to appeal to the country in a general election on account of "the grave international situation".

The international crisis over Czechoslovakia stirred the "patriotism" not only of Blum but of all the Popular Front parties. French Imperialism was threatened, and they hastened to its support. In contrast with the vacillation and dilly-dallying of the French Popular Front towards the urgent question of sending arms to the Spanish anti-fascists, the action taken towards keeping Hitler out of Czechoslovakia was decisive and swift. The Sudeten crisis served as Blum's excuse for abandoning even the mild programme of reforms he had put forward to regain the lost confidence of the workers and the lower middle classes.

The left elements in the Socialist party, however, took Blum's programme seriously, and demonstrated against the Senate's decision, much to the embarrassment of Blum himself, who called in the police to disperse thousands demonstrating in favour of his own programme. Against the left wing Socialists led by Marceau Pivert who had placed themselves at the head of the demonstration, drastic action was taken.

The thirty-fifth annual conference of the French Socialist Party which met last month at Royau expelled the Revolutionary Left as a preliminary to the review of the internal and foreign policy of working class betrayal carried out by the "Socialist" leadership during the past year. Blum defended the treachery of "non-intervention" in Spain carried out by the Popular Front, he spoke in approval of Daladier's foreign policy and he summed up the treacherous role of his party in these words: "If our country is dragged into a war we shall not refuse to re-enter a government of "National Union".

The Stalinists within the French Socialist Party, headed by Zyromski, supported the right wing in the expulsion of the Pivertists. In this action they still further weakened their own position. During the past months the Stalinists inside and outside the Socialist Party have been finding themselves in-

creasingly isolated, in spite of their enthusiastic support of the "French Front", the "Union Sacree" and the other devices designed to hoodwink the workers into supporting "their" capitalists in the coming world slaughter. Zyromski pleaded for the strengthening of the Franco-Soviet Pact; when he declared that the Moscow Trials were proof of the strength of the Soviet Union, he was hissed. This was a straw which showed the way the wind was blowing. To the extent that Chamberlain is drawing the French bourgeoisie away from the pact with the Soviet Union, to the extent that the diplomatic isolation of the Soviet Union grows, to the same extent is the Communist Party being isolated in France.

The correspondence between Stalin and Ivanov published a few weeks ago gave the first intimation of Stalinist apprehension over its growing isolation. The tentative turning towards left phraseology, the revival of half-forgotten revolutionary slogans was a cautious threat to the French bourgeoisie, reminding it that the Stalinists were still in a position to use their considerable influence among the French masses to embarrass capitalism. In the exchange of letters between Honel, Communist Deputy and Thorez, C.P. secretary, published in May, the question is raised, again for the benefit of the bourgeoisie, of the Stalinists turning away from the Popular Front towards a Workers' Revolutionary Front. Thorez answers reassuringly, but behind it all is to be sensed the growing discontent and disillusionment of the workers with the Popular Front, while the Stalinist leaders get ready to utilise the dissatisfaction for their own ends to conclude a bargain with the bourgeoisie.

The Revolutionary Lefts, upon being expelled from the Socialist Party, have put into operation the plans they formed to meet this eventuality. They have formed a new organisation, the Socialist Workers' and Peasants' Party. The French Trotskyite Party, the P.O.I., has proposed to this organisation fraternal collaboration in the working out of a programme for a revolutionary workers' party in France and for the new, Fourth International. Towards the questions raised by the P.O.I., Pivert adopts an evasive attitude, if not a downright attitude of opportunism. In place of the revolutionary condemnation of the policy of collaborating in a capitalist government, he has adopted the line which proved so disastrous to P.O.U.M. in Spain. On the question of war he clings to social pacificism in place of the realistic Bolshevik-Leninist policy of

revolutionary defeatism. And above all, he leans towards the bankrupt London Bureau and places the task of building the new revolutionary international as a programme for the future, after a mass following has been acquired.

On these burning questions, the new party has manifested an attitude similar to that of the British I.L.P., wavering between revolution and reformist betrayal, seeking to split the difference between two irreconcilable trends, mixing revolutionary phrases with opportunist deeds. The Pivertist programme will be discussed at the first conference of the new party this month, but it is possible to forecast its centrist nature from the reception which greeted Fenner Brockway's speech at the first meeting of the Pivertists after their expulsion: "That is our programme, comrade!" cried a delegate.

The P.O.I. persists in its efforts to secure unity of action with the militants of the new party on the basis of a realistic revolutionary programme. Now as never before is workers unity needed against the reactionary regime of Daladier.

On June 17th, after a session of less than three weeks, in the teeth of loud protests and to the accompaniment of fist-fighting in the corridors, the French Chamber of Deputies was adjourned by Daladier for five months. As a result of the confusion sown by the Popular Front and the frustration of workers' struggles carried out during its rule, there obtains in France to-day a deadlock. Daladier, shaking himself free from the restraints of the parliamentary parties, is now able to rely entirely on the military-administrative machine and rule by decree. The deadlock will be resolved in the coming months, one way or the other. The supreme need of the French working class is for a revolutionary party to lead its struggles in the critical months ahead.

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German Bolsheviks in Hitler's Jails

The slight recession in the wave of G.P.U. terror against Trotskyites and alleged Trotskyites in the Soviet Union has been made up for by a renewal of Gestapo terror against the German section of the Fourth International.

Reports from Germany inform us of the arrest and conviction of the leading comrades of the Magdeburg group of the Fourth Internationalists. Two trials were held of the arrested comrades in the Fascist courts at Berlin and Magdeburg.

In the Berlin trial, Comrades Joachim Wittschiebe and Gerwin Hinze were given 6 and 3 years imprisonment respectively. In the Magdeburg trial, Kurt Sliewsky received four years, Oskar Kramer and Walter Ruhle, three years each, Walter Soder,

two and a half years, and Ullrich Wittschiebe, one year and nine months.

Fragmentary reports regarding the cases of the Solingen and Cologne comrades, who were tried some time ago, have also been received. The Solingen comrades were tried in the mass trial of the Gelsenkirchen group. Of the 26 comrades involved, information is only available on Comrade Walsken, who received four years imprisonment, Paul de Grote, who received three and a half years, and Comrade X who received two and a half years.

The fate of the Cologne group is unknown beyond the information that sentences were passed and that Comrade Metz was one of those involved.

American Pacific Pre-Conference

An important beginning in organizing and centralizing the work of the Fourth International on the two American continents and on both sides of the Pacific, was made by the delegates assembled two weeks ago in New York for the sessions of the All-America-Pacific pre-conference of the Fourth International.

The Second International never had much strength in the colonial and semi-colonial lands of Asia and Latin America and displayed very little interest in their struggles for liberation. In a deep sense, it was and is a "white man's" International, for in practice the parties that dominate it have followed a policy of supporting their respective imperialist overlords and their empires.

COMINTERN AN OBSTACLE

The Third International, which made a brave and successful start in mobilizing against world imperialism the millions of black, yellow and brown slaves of finance capital, has degenerated into an obstacle to the struggle for colonial emancipation. This is

especially plain in Latin America because of the ardent support which Stalinism is now giving to United States imperialism, by means of which it hopes to cement an alliance between Washington and the Kremlin bureaucracy at the expense of the former's slaves in Latin America.

A growing realization of the significance of this reactionary course has permeated the consciousness of the vanguard elements among the revolutionists in Latin America. This fact accounts to a large extent for the gathering strength of the Fourth International on the two American continents.

MOVEMENT'S GROWTH

In the last few years, sections of our movement have been established—or the basis for them laid—in a whole series of countries. In Cuba and Puerto Rico, in the Argentine Republic, Chile and Bolivia, in Uruguay, Colombia, and Panama, in Mexico and Brazil, the banner of the 4th International has been raised and the best militants have rallied to it. In

some of these countries, the high political level of our press and the revolutionary Marxist activity pursued, are gratifying promise of victorious struggles to come.

For the purpose of co-ordinating the work of these sections, of setting forth collectively-elaborated policies for them, and linking their work with that of the comrades in the land of the most powerful imperialist masters—the United States—as well as with the comrades in China, whose work has so much in common with theirs, the second All-America-Pacific conference was called together. The first conference had taken place some time before, when a number of basic political documents were drafted for discussion.

MANDATED DELEGATES

Difficulties, in the form of lack of finance and the vast distances separating the countries (the Fourth Internationalists are subsidized neither by the corrupt Kremlin gang, the French bourgeoisie nor by Hitler!), cut down the size of the conference. But delegates were nevertheless able to attend with mandates from several Latin-American countries, as well as from Canada, China, Australia and the United States.

Documents already drafted were taken up by the delegates and it was decided to submit them with various recommendations for the discussion of the various sections concerned and eventual adoption, in finished form, at a large conference to be called in the future. In addition, the conference adopted political resolutions on the perspectives of the Sino-Japanese war and the tasks of the Bolshevik-Leninists in China, and on the situation and tasks of the Canadian section. A thesis on the world role of North American imperialism, with special reference to its position in the Latin American countries was also adopted.

OUR OBLIGATIONS

The last-named resolution is of particular importance for the revolutionary movement in the United States. Its tasks and obligations are enormous, for upon it devolves the main burden of the struggle against Yankee imperialism and for the defence of the independence and freedom of Wall Street's colonies. Indifference to the struggle against U.S. capitalism, which is being waged by the millions of Latin Americans, is a most corrupting force in the American labour movement, and contributes directly to the chavinistic poisoning of the workers in this

country.

With this resolution, the Socialist Workers Party of the United States assumes the responsibility of devoting itself intensively to the problems of the workers and peasants of Latin America and the Pacific, who are its indispensable and invaluable allies in the struggle for freedom of the workers in this country.

The conference discussed, among other things, the situation in Mexico. Due to the disastrous and irresponsible leadership of the former Mexican section of the Fourth International (the Internationalist Communist League under the leadership of G.....), the conference was obliged to adopt a decision declaring that the Fourth International no longer recognizes the G. group (the so-called I.C.L.) as its section in Mexico. A statement on this matter is being drawn up, to be presented for confirmation to the international conference now being organized. However, plans were laid for the reorganization of a Mexican section, for which excellent prospects exist; the Fourth International enjoys a considerable sympathy among the advanced revolutionary elements in Mexico, who were repelled from it in the past because of the discreditable course pursued by G., who is now, moreover, engaged in repeating all the time-worn slanders of the professional enemies of our movement.

ORGANIZATIONAL STEPS

Subject to confirmation by the international conference, the delegates elected an All-America-Pacific Bureau and a Latin-American administrative secretariat of the Fourth International—a clearing-house for the sections involved, in which representatives of all the important sections will be seated. In addition, official bulletins of the Bureau will be issued regularly, at first in the Spanish language, for circulation among all the sections. The first one will contain the resolutions adopted and the reports made. Future issues will publish discussion and informational material.

The conference, modest in its composition and objectives, was nevertheless an important beginning. It will help to consolidate, build and unify the movement of revolutionary Marxism—the Fourth International—in the New World and the Pacific. Its work, continued in the future, will speed the day when the victory of the proletariat will inaugurate the united socialist republics of the Americas.

M. S.