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The Class, the Party, and the Leadership

Why was the Spanish Proletariat Defeated?

(Questions of Marxist Theory)

by LEON TROTSKY

EDITORIAL NOTE: Among comrade Trotsky's archives were found a rough draft and fragmentary notes which we now publish in the form of an unfinished article.

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The extent to which the working class movement has been thrown backward may be gauged not only by the condition of the mass organisations but by ideological groupings and those theoretical inquiries in which so many groups are engaged. In Paris there is published a periodical "Que Faire" (What To Do) which for some reason considers itself Marxist but in reality remains completely within the framework of the empiricism of the left bourgeois intellectuals and those isolated workers who have assimilated all the vices of the intellectuals.

Like all groups lacking a scientific foundation, without a programme and without any tradition this little periodical tried to hang on to the coat-tails of the POUM—which seemed to open the shortest avenue to the masses and to victory. But the result of these ties with the Spanish revolution seems at first entirely unexpected: The periodical did not advance but on the contrary retrogressed. As a matter of fact, this is wholly in the nature of things. The contradictions between the petty bourgeoisie, conservatism and the needs of the proletarian revolution have developed in the extreme. It is only natural that the defenders and interpreters of the policies of the POUM found themselves thrown far back both in political and theoretical fields.

The periodical "Que Faire" is in and of itself of no importance whatever. But it is of symptomatic interest. That is why we think it profitable to dwell upon this periodical's appraisal of the causes for the collapse of the Spanish revolution, inasmuch as this appraisal discloses very graphically the fundamental features now prevailing in the left flank of pseudo-Marxism.

"QUE FAIRE" EXPLAINS

We begin with a verbatim quotation from a review of the pamphlet "Spain Betrayed" by comrade Casanova: "Why was the revolution crushed? Because, replies the author (Casanova), the Communist Party conducted a false policy which was unfortunately followed by the revolutionary masses. But why, in the devil's name, did the revolutionary masses who left their former leaders rally to the banner of the Communist Party? 'Because there was no genuinely revolutionary party.' We are presented with a pure tautology. A false policy of the masses; an immature party either manifests a certain condition of social forces (immaturity of the working class, lack of independence of the peasantry) which must be explained by proceeding from facts, presented among others by Casanova himself; or it is the product of the actions of certain malicious individuals or groups of individuals, actions which do not correspond to the efforts of 'sincere individuals' alone capable of saving the revolution. After groping for the first and Marxist road, Casanova takes the second. We are ushered into the domain of pure demonology; the criminal responsible for the defeat is the chief Devil, Stalin, abetted by the anarchists and all the other little devils;

the God of revolutionists unfortunately did not send a Lenin or a Trotsky to Spain as He did in Russia in 1917."

The conclusion then follows: "This is what comes of seeking at any cost to force the ossified orthodoxy of a chapel upon facts." This theoretical haughtiness is made all the more magnificent by the fact that it is hard to imagine how so great a number of banalities, vulgarisms and mistakes quite specifically of conservative philistine type could be compressed into so few lines.

The author of the above quotation avoids giving any explanation for the defeat of the Spanish revolution; he only indicates that profound explanations, like the "condition of social forces" are necessary. The evasion of any explanation is not accidental. These critics of Bolshevism are all theoretical cowards, for the simple reason that they have nothing solid under their feet. In order not to reveal their own bankruptcy they juggle facts and prowl around the opinions of others. They confine themselves to hints and half-thoughts as if they just haven't the time to delineate their full wisdom. As a matter of fact they possess no wisdom at all. Their haughtiness is lined with intellectual charlatanism.

Let us analyse step by step the hints and half-thoughts of our author. According to him a false policy of the masses can be explained only as it "manifests a certain condition of social forces," namely, the immaturity of the working class and the lack of independence of the peasantry. Anyone searching for tautologies couldn't find in general a flatter one. A "false policy of the masses" is explained by the "immaturity" of the masses. But what is "immaturity" of the masses? Obviously, their predisposition to false policies. Just what the false policy consisted of, and who were its initiators; the masses or the leaders—that is passed over in silence by our author. By means of a tautology he unloads the responsibility on the masses. This classical trick of all traitors, deserters and their attorneys is especially revolting in connection with the Spanish proletariat.

SOPHISTRY OF THE BETRAYERS

In July 1936—not to refer to an earlier period—the Spanish workers repelled the assault of the officers who had prepared their conspiracy under the protection of the People's Front. The masses improvised militias and created workers' committees, the strongholds of their future dictatorship. The leading organisations of the proletariat on the other hand helped the bourgeoisie to destroy these committees, to liquidate the assaults of the workers on private property and to subordinate the workers' militias to the command of the bourgeoisie, with the POUM moreover participating in the government and assuming direct responsibility for this work of the counter-revolution. What does "immaturity" of the proletariat signify in this case? Self-evidently only this, that despite the correct political line chosen by the masses, the latter were unable to smash the coalition of socialists, Stalinists, anarchists and the POUM with the bourgeoisie. This piece of sophistry takes as its starting point a concept of some absolute maturity, i.e. a perfect condition of the masses in which they do not require a correct leadership, and, more than that, are capable of conquering against their own leadership. There is not and there cannot be such maturity.

But why should workers who show such correct revolutionary instinct and such superior fighting qualities submit to treacherous leadership? object our sages. Our answer is: There wasn't even a hint of mere subordination. The workers' line of march at all times cut a certain angle to the line of the leadership. And at

the most critical moments this angle became 180 degrees. The leadership then helped directly or indirectly to subdue the workers by armed force.

In May 1937 the workers of Catalonia rose not only without their own leadership but against it. The anarchist leaders—pathetic and contemptible bourgeois masquerading cheaply as revolutionists—have repeated hundreds of times in their press that had the CNT wanted to take power and set-up their dictatorship in May, they could have done so without any difficulty. This time the anarchist leaders speak the unadulterated truth. The POUM leadership actually dragged at the tail of the CNT, only they covered up their policy with a different phraseology. It was thanks to this and this alone, that the bourgeoisie succeeded in crushing the May uprising of the "immature" proletariat. One must understand exactly nothing in the sphere of the inter-relationships between the class and the party, between the masses and the leaders in order to repeat the hollow statement that the Spanish masses merely followed their leaders. The only thing that can be said is that the masses who sought at all times to blast their way to the correct road found a new leadership corresponding to the demands of the revolution. Before us is a profoundly dynamic process, with the various stages of the revolution shifting swiftly, with the leadership or various sections of the leadership quickly deserting to the side of the class enemy, and our sages engage in a purely static discussion: Why did the working class as a whole follow a bad leadership?

THE DIALECTIC APPROACH

There is an ancient, evolutionary-liberal epigram: Every people gets the government it deserves. History, however, shows that one and the same people may in the course of a comparatively brief epoch get very different governments (Russia; Italy, Germany, Spain, etc.) and furthermore that the order of these governments doesn't at all proceed in one and the same direction: from despotism—to freedom as was imagined by the evolutionist liberals. The secret is this, that a people is comprised of hostile classes, and the classes themselves are comprised of different and in part antagonistic layers which fall under different leadership; furthermore every people falls under the influence of other peoples who are likewise comprised of classes. Governments do not express the systematically growing "maturity" of a "people" but are the product of the struggle between different classes and the different layers within one and the same class, and, finally, the action of external forces—alliances, conflicts, wars and so on. To this should be added that a government, once it has established itself, may endure much longer than the relationship of forces which produced it. It is precisely out of this historical contradiction that revolutions, coup d'etats, counter-revolutions, etc. arise.

The very same dialectic approach is necessary in dealing with the question of the leadership of a class. Imitating the liberals our sages tacitly accept the axiom that every class gets the leadership it deserves. In reality leadership is not at all a mere "reflection" of a class or the product of its own free creativeness. A leadership is shaped in the process of clashes between the different classes or the friction between the different layers within a given class. Having once arisen, the leadership invariably arises above its class and thereby becomes predisposed to the pressure and influence of other classes. The proletariat may "tolerate" for a long time a leadership that has already suffered a complete inner degeneration but has not as yet had the opportunity to express this degeneration amid great events. A great historic shock is necessary to reveal

sharply the contradiction between the leadership and the class. The mightiest historical shocks are wars and revolutions. Precisely for this reason the working class is often caught unawares by war and revolution. But even in cases where the old leadership has revealed its internal corruption, the class cannot improvise immediately a new leadership, especially if it has not inherited from the previous period strong revolutionary cadres capable of utilising the collapse of the old leading party. The Marxist, i.e. dialectic and not scholastic interpretation of the inter-relationship between a class and its leadership does not leave a single stone unturned of our author's legalistic sophistry.

HOW THE RUSSIAN WORKERS MATURED

He conceives of the proletariat's maturity as something purely static. Yet during a revolution the consciousness of a class is the most dynamic process directly determining the course of the revolution. Was it possible in January 1917 or even in March, after the overthrow of Czarism, to give an answer to the question whether the Russian proletariat had sufficiently "matured" for the conquest of power in eight to nine months? The working class was at that time extremely heterogeneous socially and politically. During the years of the war it had been renewed by 30-40 percent from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, often reactionary, at the expense of backward peasants, at the expense of women and youth. The Bolshevik party in March 1917 was followed by an insignificant minority of the working class and furthermore there was discord within the party itself. The overwhelming majority of the workers supported the Mensheviks and the "Socialists-Revolutionists" i.e. conservative social-patriots. The situation was even less favourable with regard to the army and the peasantry. We must add to this: the general low level of culture in the country, the lack of political experience among the broadest layers of the proletariat, especially in the provinces, let alone the peasants and soldiers.

What was the "active"* of Bolshevism? A clear and thoroughly thought out revolutionary conception at the beginning of the revolution was held only by Lenin. The Russian cadres of the party were scattered and to a considerable degree bewildered. But the party had authority among the advanced workers. Lenin had great authority with the party cadres. Lenin's political conception corresponded to the actual development of the revolution and was reinforced by each new event. These elements of the "active" worked wonders in a revolutionary situation, that is, in conditions of bitter class struggle. The party quickly aligned its policy to correspond with Lenin's conception, to correspond that is with the actual course of the revolution. Thanks to this it met with firm support among tens of thousands of advanced workers. Within a few months, by basing itself upon the development of the revolution the party was able to convince the majority of the workers of the correctness of its slogans. This majority organised into Soviets was able in its turn to attract the soldiers and peasants. How can this dynamic, dialectic process be exhausted by a formula of the maturity or immaturity of the proletariat? A colossal factor in the maturity of the Russian proletariat in February or March 1917 was Lenin. He did not fall from the skies. He personified the revolutionary tradition of the working class. For Lenin's slogans to find their way to the masses there had to exist cadres, even though numerically small at the beginning; there had to exist the confidence of

the cadres in the leadership, a confidence based on the entire experience of the past. To cancel these elements from one's calculations is simply to ignore the living revolution, to substitute for it an abstraction, the "relationship of forces", because the development of the revolution precisely consists of this, that the relationship of forces keeps incessantly and rapidly changing under the impact of the changes in the consciousness of the proletariat, the attraction of backward layers to the advanced, the growing assurance of the class in its own strength. The vital mainspring in this process is the party, just as the vital mainspring in the mechanism of the party is its leadership. The role and the responsibility of the leadership in a revolutionary epoch is colossal.

RELATIVITY OF "MATURITY"

The October victory is a serious testimonial of the "maturity" of the proletariat. But this maturity is relative. A few years later the very same proletariat permitted the revolution to be strangled by a bureaucracy which rose from its ranks. Victory is not at all the ripe fruit of the proletariat's "maturity". Victory is a strategical task. It is necessary to utilise the favourable conditions of a revolutionary crisis in order to mobilise the masses; taking as a starting point the given level of their "maturity" it is necessary to propel them forward, teach them to understand that the enemy is by no means omnipotent, that it is torn asunder with contradictions, that behind the imposing facade panic prevails. Had the Bolshevik party failed to carry out this work, there couldn't even be talk of the victory of the proletarian revolution. The Soviets would have been crushed by the counter-revolution and the little sages of all countries would have written articles and books on the keynote that only uprooted visionaries could dream in Russia of the dictatorship of the proletariat, so small numerically and so immature.

AUXILIARY ROLE OF PEASANTS

Equally abstract, pedantic and false is the reference to the "lack of independence" of the peasantry. When and where did our sage ever observe in capitalist society a peasantry with an independent revolutionary programme or a capacity for independent revolutionary initiative? The peasantry can play a very great role in the revolution, but only an auxiliary role.

In many instances the Spanish peasants acted boldly and fought courageously. But to rouse the entire mass of the peasantry, the proletariat had to set an example of a decisive uprising against the bourgeoisie and inspire the peasants with faith in the possibility of victory. In the meantime the revolutionary initiative of the proletariat itself was paralysed at every step by its own organisations.

The "immaturity" of the proletariat, the "lack of independence" of the peasantry are neither final nor basic factors in historical events. Underlying the consciousness of the classes are the classes themselves, their numerical strength, their role in economic life. Underlying the classes is a specific system of production which is determined in its turn by the level of the development of productive forces. Why not then say that the defeat of the Spanish proletariat was determined by the low level of technology?

THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY

Our author substitutes mechanistic determinism for the dialectic conditioning of the historical process. Hence the cheap jibes about the role of individuals, good and bad. History is a process of the class struggle. But classes do not bring their full weight to bear auto-

* Untranslatable term, which means in part "liquid assets."—Trans.

matically and simultaneously. In the process of struggle the classes create various organs which play an important and independent role and are subjects to deformations. This also provides the basis for the role of personalities in history. There are naturally great objective causes which created the autocratic rule of Hitler but only dull-witted pedants of "determinism" could deny today the enormous historic role of Hitler. The arrival of Lenin in Petrograd on April 3, 1917 turned the Bolshevik party in time and enabled the party to lead the revolution to victory. Our sages might say that had Lenin died abroad at the beginning of 1917, the October revolution would have taken place "just the same." But that is not so. Lenin represented one of the living elements of the historical process. He personified the experience and the perspicacity of the most active section of the proletariat. His timely appearance on the arena of the revolution was necessary in order to mobilise the vanguard and provide it with an opportunity to rally the working class and the peasant masses. Political leadership in the crucial moments of historical turns can become just as decisive a factor as is the role of the chief command during the critical moments of war. History is not an automatic process. Otherwise, why leaders? why parties? why programmes? why theoretical struggles?

STALINISM IN SPAIN

"But why, in the devil's name," asks the author as we have already heard, "did the revolutionary masses who left their former leaders, rally to the banner of the Communist Party?" The question is falsely posed. It is not true that the revolutionary masses left all of their former leaders. The workers who were previously connected with specific organisations continued to cling to them, while they observed and checked. Workers in general do not easily break with the party that awakens them to conscious life. Moreover the existence of mutual protection within the People's Front lulled them: Since everybody agreed, everything must be all right. The new and fresh masses naturally turned to the Comintern as the party which had accomplished the only victorious proletarian revolution and which, it was hoped, was capable of assuring arms to Spain. Furthermore the Comintern was the most zealous champion of the idea of the People's Front; this inspired confidence among the inexperienced layers of workers. Within the People's Front the Comintern was the most zealous champion of the bourgeois character of the revolution; this inspired the confidence of the petty and in part the middle bourgeoisie. That is why the masses "rallied to the banner of the Communist Party."

Our author depicts the matter as if the proletariat were in a well-stocked shoe store, selecting a new pair of boots. Even this simple operation, as is well known, does not always prove successful. As regards new leadership, the choice is very limited. Only gradually, only on the basis of their own experience through several stages can the broad layers of the masses become convinced that a new leadership is firmer, more reliable, more loyal than the old. To be sure, during a revolution, i.e., when events move swiftly, a weak party can quickly grow into a mighty one provided it lucidly understands the course of the revolution and possesses staunch cadres that do not become intoxicated with phrases and are not terrorised by persecution. But such a party must be available prior to the revolution inasmuch as the process of educating the cadres requires a considerable period of time and the revolution does not afford this time.

TREACHERY OF THE POUM

To the left of all the other parties in Spain stood the POUM, which undoubtedly embraced revolutionary proletarian elements not previously firmly tied to anarchism. But it was precisely this party that played a fatal role in the development of the Spanish revolution. It could not become a mass party because in order to do so it was first necessary to overthrow the old parties and it was possible to overthrow them only by an irreconcilable struggle, by a merciless exposure of their bourgeois character. Yet the POUM while criticising the old parties subordinated itself to them on all fundamental questions. It participated in the "People's" election bloc; entered the government which liquidated workers' committees; engaged in a struggle to reconstitute this governmental coalition; capitulated time and again to the anarchist leadership; conducted, in connection with this, a false trade union policy; took a vacillating and non-revolutionary attitude toward the May 1937 uprising. From the standpoint of determinism in general it is possible of course to recognise that the policy of the POUM was not accidental. Everything in this world has its cause. However, the series of causes engendering the Centristism of the POUM are by no means a mere reflection of condition of the Spanish or Catalonian proletariat. Two causalities moved toward each other at an angle and at a certain moment they came into hostile conflict. It is possible by taking into account previous international experience, Moscow's influence, the influence of a number of defeats, etc. to explain politically and psychologically why the POUM unfolded as a centrist party. But this does not alter its centrist character, nor does it alter the fact that a centrist party invariably acts as a brake upon the revolution, must each time smash its own head, and may bring about the collapse of the revolution. It does not alter the fact that the Catalonian masses were far more revolutionary than the POUM, which in turn was more revolutionary than its leadership. In these conditions to unload the responsibility for false policies on the "immaturity" of the masses is to engage in sheer charlatanism frequently resorted to by political bankrupts.

RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP

The historical falsification consists in this, that the responsibility for the defeat of the Spanish masses is unloaded on the working masses and not those parties which paralysed or simply crushed the revolutionary movement of the masses. The attorneys of the POUM simply deny the responsibility of the leaders, in order thus to escape shouldering their own responsibility. This impotent philosophy, which seeks to reconcile defeats as a necessary link in the chain of cosmic developments, is completely incapable of posing and refuses to pose the question of such concrete factors as programmes, parties, personalities that were the organisers of defeat. This philosophy of fatalism and prostration is diametrically opposed to Marxism as the theory of revolutionary action.

Civil war is a process wherein political tasks are solved by military means. Were the outcome of this war determined by the "condition of class forces," the war itself would not be necessary. War has its own organisation, its own policies, its own methods, its own leadership by which its fate is directly determined. Naturally, the "condition of class forces" supplies the foundation for all other political factors; but just as the foundation of a building does not reduce the importance of walls, windows, doors, roofs, so the "condition of classes" does not invalidate the importance of parties, their strategy, their leadership. By dissolving the concrete in the abstract, our sages really halted midway.

The most "profound" solution of the problem would have been to declare the defeat of the Spanish proletariat as due to the inadequate development of productive forces. Such a key is accessible to any fool.

By reducing to zero the significance of the party and of the leadership these sages deny in general the possibility of revolutionary victory. Because there are not the least grounds for expecting conditions more favourable. Capitalism has ceased to advance, the proletariat does not grow numerically, on the contrary it is the army of unemployed that grows, which does not increase but reduces the fighting force of the proletariat and has a negative effect also upon its consciousness. There are similarly no grounds for believing that under the regime of capitalism the peasantry is capable of attaining a higher revolutionary consciousness. The conclusion from the analysis of our author is thus complete pessimism, a sliding away from revolutionary perspectives. It must be said—to do them justice—that they do not themselves understand what they say.

As a matter of fact, the demands they make upon the consciousness of the masses are utterly fantastic. The Spanish workers, as well as the Spanish peasants gave the maximum of what these classes are able to give in a revolutionary situation. We have in mind precisely the class of millions and tens of millions.

"Que Faire" represents merely one of these little schools, or churches or chapels who frightened by the course of the class struggle and the onset of reaction publish their little journals and their theoretical etudes in a corner, on the sidelines away from the actual developments of revolutionary thought, let alone the movement of the masses.

REPRESSION OF SPANISH REVOLUTION

The Spanish proletariat fell the victim of a coalition composed of imperialists, Spanish republicans, socialists, anarchists, Stalinist, and on the left flank, the POUM. They all paralysed the socialist revolution which the Spanish proletariat had actually begun to realise. It is not easy to dispose of the socialist revolution. No one has yet devised other methods than ruthless repressions, massacre of the vanguard, execution of the leaders, etc. The POUM of course did not want this. It wanted on the one hand to participate in the Republican government and to enter as a loyal peace-loving opposition into the general bloc of ruling parties; and on the other hand to achieve peaceful comradely relations at a time when it was a question of implacable civil war. For this very reason the POUM fell victim to the contradictions of its own policy. The most consistent policy in the ruling bloc was pursued by the

Stalinists. They were the fighting vanguard of the bourgeois-republican counter-revolution. They wanted to eliminate the need of Fascism by proving to the Spanish and world bourgeoisie that they were themselves capable of strangling the proletarian revolution under the banner of "democracy." This was the gist of their policies. The bankrupts of the Spanish People's Front are today trying to unload the blame on the GPU. I trust that we cannot be suspected of leniency toward the crimes of the GPU. But we see clearly and we tell the workers that the GPU acted in this instance only as the most resolute detachment in the service of the People's Front. Therein was the strength of the GPU, therein was the historic role of Stalin. Only ignorant philistines can wave this aside with stupid little jokes about the Chief Devil.

These gentlemen do not even bother with the question of the social character of the revolution. Moscow's lackeys, for the benefit of England and France, proclaimed the Spanish revolution as bourgeois. Upon this fraud were erected the perfidious policies of the People's Front, policies which would have been completely false even if the Spanish revolution had really been bourgeois. But from the very beginning the revolution expressed much more graphically the proletarian character than did the revolution of 1917 in Russia. In the leadership of the POUM gentlemen sit today who consider that the policy of Andres Nin was too "leftist," that the really correct thing was to have remained the left flank of the People's Front. The real misfortune was that Nin, covering himself with the authority of Lenin and the October revolution, could not make up his mind to break with the People's Front. Victor Serge who is in a hurry to compromise himself by a frivolous attitude toward serious questions writes that Nin did not wish to submit to commands from Oslo or Coyoacan. Can a serious man really be capable of reducing to petty gossip the problem of the class content of a revolution? The sages of "Que Faire" have no answer whatever to this question. They do not understand the question itself. Of what significance indeed is the fact that the "immature" proletariat founded its own organs of power, seized enterprises, sought to regulate production while the POUM tried with all its might to keep from breaking with bourgeois anarchists who in an alliance with the bourgeois republicans and the no less bourgeois socialists and Stalinists assaulted and strangled the proletarian revolution! Such "trifles" are obviously of interest only to representatives of "ossified orthodoxy." The sages of "Que Faire" possess instead a special apparatus which measures the maturity of the proletariat and the relationship of forces independently of all questions of revolutionary class strategy . . .

Britain's War Remains Imperialist

It is not altered by the Alliance with
the Soviet Union

by ANDREW SCOTT

The latest "theories" of the leaders of the Communist Party bring to the foreground the question of the attitude of Marxists toward wars. When is a war "just"? When is it "unjust"? Under what conditions does an "unjust" war become transformed into

a "just" war? And, to be concrete, has Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, and the fact of the Anglo-Soviet alliance transformed Britain's unjust, imperialist war into a "just" war for the defence of the Soviet Union and the freedom of Europe from tyranny?

The questions are not new. They have been in the minds of revolutionary socialists during the whole period of the imperialist wars for the re-division of the world. Above all, they had to be answered during the period of the first World War, and no one answered them more consistently, more lucidly or in a more thoroughly Marxist way than Lenin. Before going on to analyse the present situation and discuss the new "theories" of Dutt, Pollitt and the other Communist Party leaders, it will be instructive to observe Lenin's method of judging wars, and to study his application of the method of dialectical materialism to this greatest and most pressing question of our time.

LENIN'S FIGHT AGAINST SOCIAL CHAUVINISM

There were two main stages in Lenin's fight against those "Socialists" who claimed that the war was "just" on the part of their country and that they must accordingly support their own ruling class. The first stage was between the beginning of the war and the February Revolution. The German Social Democrats, the British Labour Party, the Second Internationalists of the whole Continent, deserted their former stand of opposition to the war and gave support to their ruling class, with various justifications. Against a general acceptance of the declared aims of the ruling class as a measure of the "justness" of the war, Lenin fought with all his power throughout the war. While German "Socialists" were preaching the necessity of supporting the war to "smash the hold of British imperialism", and while British "Socialists" were justifying their support by pointing out the necessity to wipe out "Prussian militarism", Lenin urged that Marxists must not judge wars by the aims that the ruling class said they were fighting for. The real measure was the politics which had been pursued by the various countries before the war and were being continued inevitably during it.

"Every war," he said, **"is inseparably connected with the political system which gave rise to it. The politics which a certain country, a certain class in that country, pursued for a long period before the war, are inevitably pursued by that very same class during the war; it merely changes its form of action."**

Lenin traced these politics meticulously for all the countries engaged in the war and showed how they were not dropped but merely carried on "by other means", that is, by force of arms. Britain was fighting to hold on to and extend her gigantic colonial system, she was fighting to maintain the power of her capital throughout the world—"there is not a spot on the whole globe that this capital has not laid its heavy hand on; there is not a patch of land that is not enmeshed by a thousand threads in the net of British capital." France was fighting to remain the "usurer of the whole world". Germany, to seize from her rivals who had been earlier on the field a share in the plunder. Russia for an extension of her empire.

"REVOLUTIONARY DEFENCISM"

That phase of Lenin's fight continued until February 1917 when the first Russian Revolution took place, and a new theory in regard to the war emerged. "Now," said the Russian Liberals and near-Socialists, "we have made a revolution, we are a revolutionary people, we are a revolutionary Democracy. The war on our side is now transformed into a just, revolutionary war. We are fighting to defend the Revolution." But this was not so. The Czar had been overthrown, but the capitalist and the landlord were enthroned. The war was a continuation of their politics. And these were the politics of annexation and of secret treaties for dividing

up Europe and Asia. Lenin did not spare the "defencists". "The new 'revolutionary' national defence is merely the use of the lofty concept revolution to cover up the sordid and bloody war for the sordid and disgusting treaties. The Russian revolution (of February) has not changed the character of the war." At the same time, of course, Lenin pointed out:

"We cannot deny the possibility of revolutionary wars, that is, of wars arising out of the class struggle, conducted by revolutionary classes, and having direct, immediate, revolutionary significance."

But the war which Russia was waging between February and October was not such a war, and Lenin and the Bolsheviks continued to oppose it. This opposition did not take the form of merely denouncing the war. Instead, Lenin showed the conditions necessary for a genuine revolutionary war, the conditions under which the Bolsheviks would be "revolutionary defencists".

"We are not pacifists," he wrote, **"and we cannot repudiate a revolutionary war. Wherein does a revolutionary war differ from a capitalist war? The difference is, above all, a class difference: Which class is interested in the war? What policy does the interested class pursue in that war? . . . We must demonstrate in practice that we shall wage a really revolutionary war when the proletariat is in power. Putting the matter thus, we offer, I think, the clearest possible answer to the questions as to the nature of the war and of those who are carrying it on."**

And when the Russian proletariat had taken power and were forced to wage war, the war they waged was a revolutionary war, a just war. In deeds and not just in words they were fighting for freedom, for the rights of small nations, for a system which would really end wars and bring a genuine peace, for the defence of the rule of the workers. No longer was the war on Russia's part a continuation of the politics of the capitalist class. It was now a continuation of the politics of the workers in power.

"JUST" BY CONTAGION!

Now comes a new theory. According to Palme Dutt and the other Communist Party leaders of this country, the imperialist war being waged by Britain has been transformed into a just war, not by a "class difference", not by the proletariat taking power, but by the acquisition of an ally who is waging a just war. As Palme Dutt puts it:

"The second phase of the war, the reactionary war of the Western imperialist Powers for the redivision of the world has passed into the third phase of the war, the just war for the liberation of the peoples against German Fascism . . . In this way the participation of the Soviet Union has transformed the character of the war."

Or in the words of another Communist Party writer, Quastor:

"The situation in the whole world has been radically changed, and with it has been changed the character of the war by Hitler's extension of it to the Soviet Union."

And William Rust writes in World News and Views of Oct. 18, 1940 of:

"The alliance with the Soviet Union, which transformed the war."

This new theory is such a travesty of Marxism, and stands in such glaring contradiction to the whole method of materialist dialectics and to the clear facts of the present situation that it seems impossible that Dutt & Co. should be able to pass it off on the members and sympathisers of the Party as a Socialist theory. It is only because of the devotion of these members to the

workers' state and their urgent desire to help to defend it that the leaders of the party are able to dress up their complete betrayal of Marxism as a "realistic", "revolutionary" policy.

Does Dutt really believe, does he expect any serious-thinking workers to believe that Churchill and the British capitalist class are now waging a "just war for the liberation of the peoples against German Fascism"? What has caused the change, then, we ask Dutt? A change in the politics which were "pursued for a long period before the war"? But the same class is in control. They are still fighting for the same interests--their profits, markets, Colonies, etc. And they can fight for no other interests. They are still fighting to keep India under their own subjection and to keep Africa enslaved.

CHURCHILL'S REAL AIM

And in Europe they are certainly not fighting for the "liberation of the peoples." Dutt knows very well that if ever the British capitalists do release the peoples of Europe from German Fascism it will only be to impose on them the chains of a British imperialism which the "freed" peoples will not find so very different from their former bondage. And Dutt knows very well too that if Churchill and Roosevelt "defend" the Soviet Union from Hitler, it will only be in order that they may exploit its vast wealth themselves. Dutt knows that this is true and has said as much. True, he aid it immediately Germany attacked Russia, and before the new line had had time to come through from Moscow. True, also, he said the opposite once the line did come through. But he took his words seriously enough to print them in World News and Views, July 5, 1941, and here they are:

"But they (the British imperialists) by no means wish to see a victory of the Soviet Union, with its liberating consequences for Europe. They count, instead, on the basis of the weakening of both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, on establishing their own domination in Europe, and eventually to return to their ultimate aim of crushing the Soviet Union. There is no room for illusions on these ulterior aims of the imperialists."

Nevertheless, Palme Dutt is now as busy as anybody in spreading the illusion among the workers that Churchill and Beaverbrook are really fighting to defend the Soviet Union and to free Europe. Has anything changed in the meantime to justify this? The signing of the Anglo-Soviet Pact? But pacts do not make the "class difference" which Lenin postulates. Pacts today, as Eden has stated, have only a "brief butterfly existence". There is not even any reason to believe that Churchill's pact with Stalin will resemble a long-lived rather than a short-lived butterfly. There is also the example of the pact with Hitler made with the Soviet Union, which was to guarantee peace between the two countries for "a thousand years" and which Stalin said was "sealed with the blood" of the two peoples. That pact paved the way for Hitler's one-front victories in the West and allowed him, two years later, to turn and wage a one-front war against the Soviet Union in the East.

In passing, we may ask Dutt why it is that his theorem only works one way? That is, why is it only the "just" war that affects the "unjust" one, and not also the reverse? Does Sikorski's reactionary war for, as the C.P. has said, "the return to power of the semi-Fascist Government of Colonel Beck and General Sikorski", not spread its contagion to the lily white skin of Churchill's crusade for democracy? Does the war of the Greek capitalists for the return to their semi-

Fascist rule not spread its odour to the deodorised British ally? Or has Sikorski, like Churchill, been purified by contact with Stalin. Has King George of the Hellenes perhaps been persuaded to fight for a Soviet Greece? We must beg Dutt to follow his profound conclusions through to the end and let their bright light illumine the darkest and most remote corners of history. They will in this way serve their chief purpose by exposing themselves.

BOURGEOIS ATTITUDE TO PACTS

The Churchill-Stalin pact no more changes the politics of Britain's war than the Hitler-Stalin pact changed the politics of Germany's war. Like the former pact, it is a measure of convenience and, when the time comes, will be scrapped as cynically and brutally as Hitler's pact. When that moment comes, the British working class must be fully conscious and prepared for Churchill's anti-Soviet moves, for on them will fall a great responsibility for defending the Soviet Union. To fail to prepare them for that time, to spread the illusion that the pact is more than a scrap of paper in Churchill's eyes, is to assure that when British imperialism turns to tear the workers' state in pieces, the working-class will be confused, disorganised and unable to rally their ranks for a real defence of the Soviet Union.

Nothing fundamental changed between Palme Dutt's warning against Churchill's anti-Soviet designs, and his sudden discovery a couple of weeks later that the war was now "Just" and that, as Pollitt put it:

"Speculation on how long this co-operation will last, how soon before a switch is made, are fatal at the present time. They represent defeatism in its worst possible form . . ."

There was no change in the politics which were "pursued for a long period before the war" by the British capitalists, and which, in Lenin's words, "are inevitably pursued by that very same class during the war." All that changed was the order from Palme Dutt's master in the Kremlin.

Dutt attempts to cover up his treachery by pointing out that Marx and Lenin, while giving a broad, general directive for the period, could not possible have foreseen details:

"World history," says Dutt, "always works itself out with a greater richness and complexity, with more twists and turns, than even the most powerful political insight, the insight of the great masters of Marxism, could attempt to plot out beforehand in detail."

Certainly the twists and turns of Palme Dutt have worked themselves out with a greater richness and complexity, and with more twists and turns than Marx or Lenin could have foreseen. But that, no more than the Stalin-Churchill pact, alters the nature of the war which Britain is waging. It is not the twists and turns of imperialists, manoeuvring desperately to retain their empires and profits, that alter the nature of wars, but only the broad, deep, sweeping change brought about by a new class coming to power, a new force striving to rid the world of imperialism.

THE NEW "THEORY" TESTED

Suppose this new method of judging wars--the contagious or "who-is-our-ally" method--is applied in other parts of the world. Suppose, for instance, that in the course of the imperialist process of driving Japan out of the Pacific, America becomes allied with China. Now China is undoubtedly waging a just, defensive war

against Japan's imperialist aggression.* According to the new theory, therefore, America's imperialist war would become transformed into a holy crusade in defence of the freedom and independence of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and the workers of the U.S.A. would be obliged to give full support to Roosevelt.

Every class-conscious worker will see how farcical this is. If America "saves" China from Japan, it will only be in order to get the "Four Hundred Million Customers" together with the raw materials of China for herself. Such a pact with China would parallel the present pact with Russia which aims at saving Russia—for Britain and America. The new theory produces the fantastic conclusion that the whole essence of America's war in the Pacific would be transformed, not by a change in the politics of one side or the other, but by a change of allies. It is just as fantastic to imagine that the essence of the present war is changed on Britain's part by a mere matter of "allies". That essence is that the two most powerful groups of imperialist powers—on one side the German, and on the other the Anglo-American—are fighting to see who shall dominate and exploit the world. The Soviet Union will be one of the richest prizes for the victor, just as China will be another. And yet these "defenders" of the workers' state tell the British workers that they must support one imperialism against the other.

WHO "USES" WHOM?

To say that they are "using" Churchill and Roosevelt temporarily is like the claim of a passenger in a runaway train to be "using" the extra speed of the train to reach his destination more quickly. In the first place, he is unlikely to reach his destination at all; in the second, even if he does reach it, he will be in no condition to "use" anything—ever. An essential pre-requisite to being able to "use" anything is control. It is he who is in control who "uses", and it is Churchill and the capitalist class, and not the Communist Party, who are in control in the present situation.

But let us return to Lenin:

"Can war be explained," he asks, **"if it is not connected with the preceding politics of the given state, the given system of states, the given classes? I repeat; this is the fundamental question which is constantly forgotten; and the failure to understand it transforms nine-tenths of the arguments about war into useless wrangling and the bandying of words."**

The test described by Lenin is the only valid yardstick for assessing wars. When it is applied to the war being waged by Russia at the present time, we see that it is a just war; it is a continuation of the politics of a workers' state which, in spite of the Stalinist degeneration, still retains the property forms which were fought for and won in October 1917. Applying the same Leninist criterion to Britain's war, we see that it is the continuation of the politics of an imperialist state and of an exploiting class.

THE GENUINE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

What, then, are the conditions necessary to transform Britain's imperialist war into a genuine, revolutionary, just war which would really defend the Soviet Union against German imperialism? They are, briefly, that the workers should take the military and the state power into their own hands, that they should fashion their own military and state instruments. In that case the war would become on Britain's as well as Russia's part, a continuation of the politics of the working class and would be historically progressive and just.

A PACT NEED NOT MEAN BETRAYAL

And until this is done, what is the Soviet Union to do? Refuse aid from the imperialist Government? Of course not! Nobody but a fool would suggest this. But the signing of such a pact must not mean that the working class of the country with which it is signed should give up or moderate their struggle against their ruling class. A pact signed by a workers' state with a capitalist state, especially a war pact, represents the greatest possible danger to the workers' state. It is, in effect, a measure of desperation. It is an action taken only because the workers of that state have not yet taken power into their own hands. To use the pact as a reason for their giving up the struggle for power means to commit suicide.

Pacts can be signed, material aid accepted, but, as Trotsky has said, "For this purpose, there is not the slightest need to call black white and re-baptise bloody brigands as 'friends of peace'." But this is exactly what Stalin and his hacks are busily engaged in doing. Not only do they advise the British workers to give up the class struggle, but they re-baptise the "bloody brigands" Churchill, Beaverbrook, Roosevelt & Co. as friends of peace, defenders of the Soviet Union and fighters for democracy.

If it is doubted whether it is possible to have an alliance and yet maintain a position of ideological opposition to the "ally", let the doubters observe Churchill. His alliance is cynically and openly based on the interests of British capitalism. He does not take back one word he has said about Communism. He continues to ban the paper of the Communist Party in Britain. He openly protects Moore-Brabazon. But, it may be objected, his actions in sending the munitions of war to the Soviet Union—are they not a concession to Communism? No! Churchill reckons, not on "saving" the U.S.S.R., not on enabling it to drive the German Army back across Europe, but on using it in order to weaken and hold up for a time German imperialism so that in the end the mutually weakened Germany and Soviet Union will fall to the Anglo-American war machine which is now under construction.

Very different is Stalin's alliance, for it results in Stalin holding before the world masses a whole series of illusions regarding "democratic" capitalism. The illusion, for instance, that a peace imposed on Europe by Churchill and his class can be anything but an imperialist, repressive, "peace" which will be maintained by the guns of British imperialism and will lead to another war. The illusion, also, that the Atlantic Charter is anything but a cynical fraud intended to dupe the masses of the entire world.

PRITT'S COROLLARY

The "peace" which is to follow an Allied victory gives Lawyer Pritt another reason why the alliance with the Soviet Union has changed the nature of Britain's war. This stooge of Stalin presents the world with the profound theory that such a peace is bound to

* It is not possible in the limited scope of this article to deal fully with the wars of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples. But Marxists recognise clearly the "justness" of these wars. Not only do they tear the oppressed peoples from their backwardness and foreign domination, but they administer heavy blows against the exploiting imperialists. No illusions, of course, can be permitted regarding the degree of "democratic development" which will result from these wars in isolation, for the genuine liberation of the colonies will, as Trotsky puts it, "be merely a gigantic episode in the world socialist revolution". But the war of the Chinese people against Japan, a war of the Indian people against British rule—these cannot be recognised by Marxists as anything but just. They are the continuation of the politics of the exploited masses struggling for freedom from imperialist bondage.

be "just" for the simple reason that the Soviet Union will have a say in it. Here are Pritt's words, taken from his pamphlet "Together Against Hitler".

"It is now, for the first time, impossible for the defeat of Hitler to be accompanied by the survival, or the establishment, or the growth, of Fascism in Germany, or Italy, or France, or Britain, or any other country; and equally impossible for any peace of a Versailles or "Vansittart" character to be imposed by the British Government. There are strong assertions, but they are justified. The presence of the U.S.S.R. in the war, with the British Government definitely allied to it, makes the war plainly one of half the world against the purely Fascist countries; and the presence of the U.S.S.R. at the peace conference excludes the oppression of the people of any defeated country."

Lawyer Pritt, in spite of his professional attempts to insert covering clauses for every emergency, forgets one detail: unless genuine aid is given to the Soviet Union, there is little likelihood that it will be represented at any "peace conference" at all. And that aid can only come from the workers acting independently. Pritt's very policy of class-collaboration assures that the Soviet Union will not be present at the "peace conference", for it will not exist. Either its open enemy, German imperialism, or its "ally" Anglo-American imperialism, will have destroyed it.

PEACE IS A CONTINUATION OF POLITICS . . .

But suppose for a moment that the U.S.S.R. were represented at a peace conference after the Allies had defeated Germany. In what way, then, would a severely weakened Soviet Union dissuade the imperialist bandits from imposing a Versailles, or a "Vansittart" peace on Europe? Marxists have always pointed out that there cannot be a genuine democratic peace until the European workers and peasants take their destiny into their own hands. Only decrepit Liberals or unscrupulous demagogues can hold out to the oppressed and blood-drenched peoples of Europe the illusion that there can be a genuine, lasting, democratic peace while capitalism continues to rule the Continent. The mere presence of the Soviet Union at the "peace conference" would not exert some magic influence which would dispel the class interests of the representatives of imperialism. War puts to the supreme test the relation of forces existing between the nations. The peace which follows it embodies the will of the powers which have proved to have the greatest force. If the politics of peace are continued in war, so also are the politics of the war carried on into the peace. And the universal domination for which Britain and America are fighting in this war will simply have the stamp of the approval of the capitalists set on it by the "peace".

The example of Brest Litovsk reveals Pritt's "theory" for the miserable betrayal of Marxism that it is. The Soviet Union was forced at that time, because of its own weakness to accept a harsh and oppressive peace dictated by the German ruling class and military chiefs. But, far from making any pretence that their presence at the peace conferences had influenced the peace in the direction of a just, democratic peace, they declared in their manifesto immediately they had signed at Brest:

"We do not conceal from anyone that we consider the present capitalist Governments are incapable of making a democratic peace. Only the revolutionary struggle of the workers against their present governments can bring such a peace to Europe. Its full

realisation will be guaranteed only through the victorious revolution in all capitalist countries."

These words apply with as much force today as when they were written 23 years ago. Indeed, they apply with even more force, for, in the meantime, the horrors of imperialism, the fratricidal butchery of its wars, the blood-stained contradictions of a system which drives the great Powers relentlessly towards seeking domination of the whole world—all these have in the meantime become emphasised and debased a thousand times.

Even granting that the war were allowed to end in an imperialist way, and that the Soviet Union were allowed to survive and sit at the "Peace" table—then we can say with assurance that its presence there would alter the imperialist nature of the peace just as little as did the presence of the Bolsheviks at Brest Litovsk. But the Bolsheviks at least did not call black white or re-baptise bloody brigands as friends of peace.

EPOCH OF CONVULSIONS OF CAPITALISM.

The nature of our epoch does not readily allow mistakes on the part of the workers' leadership to go unpunished. The writhings of capitalism in its death agonies are dangerous to onlookers who do not understand how to finish off the monster. Above all they are dangerous to those who would approach it with the aim of forming an "alliance". Already we have seen the results of such "tactics" throughout the Continent. The workers of Spain were led unwillingly by the Communist Party leaders into a "Popular Front" with the contorting beast, and a whip of its tail sent them reeling. In the same way the French masses made a "friendly" advance to their deadliest enemy—and suddenly found themselves lying on their backs.

The Dutts, the Pollitts, the Pritts of Europe and the world subdivide the dying but still dangerous monster into its various parts. One part, they assure the workers, is more dangerous than another. At one time the head, at another the tail, at still another the heart. And it is necessary to form an "alliance" with the less dangerous against the more dangerous parts.

But the beast has already demonstrated its complete unity. Was the body threatened by the workers in France?—Then the head in Germany was called to the rescue. Was the heart threatened by a deadly danger in Spain?—Then the whole of the rest of the body made it its duty to protect this vital organ by assuring that there was no "intervention".

The epoch is one of ever-recurring universal wars for the redivision of the world into colonies, spheres of influence, markets, etc. Marx and Engels pointed this out even last century, and Lenin and Trotsky have shown the whole dialectics of the process in motion during this. Lenin summed up the nature of the epoch very well in the following passage from his "Socialism and War".

"Capitalism, formerly a liberator of nations, has now, in its imperialist stage, become the greatest oppressor of nations. Formerly progressive, it has become a reactionary force. It has developed the productive forces to such an extent that humanity must either pass over to Socialism, or for years, nay, decades, witness armed conflicts of the 'great' nations for an artificial maintenance of capitalism by means of colonies, monopolies, privileges, and all sorts of national oppression."

That is the real picture of our epoch. Not a picture in which the capitalists on one side are painted in shining white, and those on the other in deepest black. But one in which the whole process of capitalist decay is summed up.

THE WAR IS UNCHANGED

It is within the framework of such a picture that we must see the war which Russia is waging. The war of the Russian masses is just and for the defence of the fundamental gains of October. But it does not affect in the smallest degree the unjust, oppressive war for the domination of the world which is being fought by Germany on the one side, and Britain and America on the other. In all its aspects and on both sides that is reactionary. It is a war caused, not by good intentions on one side and bad on the other, but by the imperialist convulsions of the epoch. It is a war which has gone through, not three phases, as Palme Dutt would have us believe, but has from the beginning to the present time been equally reactionary on both sides. It is a war which continues the politics of the capitalist class. It is a gigantic, world-wide war for universal domination in which Hitler's attack on Russia, and Churchill's "defence" of it occur only as passing incidents in the eyes of the imperialists. Hitler, forced by the whole logic of the position of German capitalism along the road of world conquest was the first to attack Russia. Churchill and Roosevelt, forced by their position along the same road, but not yet powerful enough to destroy German power, make full use of Russian resistance to gain time for themselves. But, as we have said, once they **have** armed sufficiently, and both Russia and Germany have weakened each other

enough, the "peace-loving" leaders of the Western Powers will fall on both.

The nature of their war is changed only in words. And it was against judging the phenomena of history, particularly war, by mere words that Lenin warned the workers. Beneath the surface are the interests, the politics for which the war is being fought. These interests and these politics are not changed, and the nature of the war is not changed on the part of a capitalist state by the mere signing of a pact with a workers' state that is genuinely fighting a just war.

The war will only become just and revolutionary on Britain's part when the workers take the military and state power into their own hands. Only then will it be waged genuinely for the smashing of fascism, for the rights of small nations, for the defence of the Soviet Union. For it will then be a continuation of the politics of the working class, and will be fought for the true interests of the masses everywhere. Meanwhile, the continuation of the class struggle in Britain, the leading of the workers toward power, cannot, as the Communist Party leaders claim, injure the Soviet Union. On the contrary, its success will be the only guarantee against Churchill repeating on a bigger scale his intervention against the Soviet Union in 1919. And the only guarantee also against a third and even more fearful world war which will inevitably follow if capitalism is allowed to survive the present holocaust.

Monstrous Ukase Exiles Volga Germans

Exposes Farce of "Socialism In One Country"

by JOHN G. WRIGHT

On September 8, the Kremlin finally made public the text of the ukase which exiles Soviet citizens en masse to Siberia because of their racial origin! This monstrous ukase reads:

"THE PRAESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE USSR HAS FOUND IT NECESSARY TO RESETTLE THE ENTIRE GERMAN POPULATION OF THE VOLGA REGIONS TO OTHER DISTRICTS" (Times, September 8).

During the first world war, bloody Czar Nicholas resorted to repressive measures against his subjects of German birth. Toward the end of 1916, the Czarist regime, fanning racial hatreds, began preparations to exile all Volga Germans to Siberia. The date set for this mass expulsion was April, 1917. Here is how Stalin's official "Soviet Encyclopedia", summed up the fate of the Czarist ukase:

"The overthrow of the autocracy prevented the execution of this barbaric measure. When the colonists appealed to the Provisional Government to repeal this law, Kerensky agreed only to 'suspend the execution of this ukase.' This ukase was repealed only by the Great October Socialist Revolution which put an end to national oppression and which opened up the broad highway for the development of national culture, socialist in content and national in form" (**Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia**, vol. 41, p. 595, Moscow 1939).

These lines were printed two years ago in 1939—the year of the Stalin-Hitler pact. Now Stalin reminds the Volga Germans that the Czar has found an emulator.

BACKGROUND OF THE VOLGA GERMANS

The German settlements on the Volga date back to the middle of the Eighteenth Century when Catherine the Great invited foreigners to settle there. Deep in the interior of the country, this territory of 28,000 square kilometers, now bordered by Saratov and Stalin-grad **oblasts** (areas), is even further removed today from the arena of military operations than it was in the days of Czar Nicholas. The original settlers predominantly came—between 1764 and 1864—from Westphalia, Bavaria, Saxony, Swabia, Alsace-Lorraine and Switzerland. The privileges originally granted them were gradually pared away. At the outbreak of the first imperialist slaughter their status was that of another oppressed nationality in what Lenin called "the Czarist prison of nations." The October revolution emancipated them.

The Volga Germans were among the first to be granted autonomy in the federation of the Soviet republics. On October 19, 1918 Lenin signed a decree establishing the autonomous **oblast** (area) of the Volga Germans. Stalin was then the Commissar for Nationalities. The above-

quoted article in the "Soviet Encyclopedia" does not fail to underscore that:

"Comrade Stalin paid from the very beginning great attention to the question of self-determination of the Volga Germans."

These descendants of the original colonists fought staunchly against the White Guards. The extent of their participation in the Civil War may be gauged by the fact that in the last year of the Civil War, the population of this area dropped from 453,000 in 1920 to less than 350,000 in 1921, i.e., a loss of more than 20 per cent. In 1926 the Autonomous Volga German Socialist Republic was formally established.

According to official 1936 figures, the population of this territory numbered about 500,000 of whom a little less than two-thirds (66.4 per cent) were of German origin; 20.4 per cent Russians and 12 per cent Ukrainians. Today, there are not more than 300,000 German-born inhabitants in this region whose advancement constituted one of the boasts of Stalin's regime.

WHAT THE STALINISTS SAID YESTERDAY

The German-born Volga peasants were only yesterday hailed as models of collective farming. The Stalinist tales of successes of mechanised agriculture in this area would fill a whole library. Suffice it to quote the stereotyped panegyrics with which the article in the "Soviet Encyclopedia" concludes:

"The further development of the national economy and culture of Volga German Autonomous Socialist Republic and her rapid progress to a better and a still happier life are guaranteed by the Stalinist Constitution, by the firm Stalinist leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and by the boundless devotion of the toilers of the Autonomous Volga German Socialist Republic to the cause of communism."

In 1941, this Autonomous Republic is abolished as a danger to the state. What an admission of bankruptcy!

Today Stalin violates Article 13 of his own "Constitution" which "guarantees" the rights of national minorities. Why? The official explanation reads:

"According to reliable information received by the military authorities, thousands and tens of thousands of diversionists and spies among the German popu-

lation of the Volga are prepared to cause explosions in these regions at a signal from Germany" (N. Y. Times, September 8).

Let us grant for the moment that the Kremlin, contrary to its custom, is this time telling the truth. Could there be a greater condemnation of Stalin's regime than this admission that after all the "successes" there remain thousands, nay, tens of thousands who await only a signal from the Nazis to rise against the Soviet power? Why should the loyalty of these thousands be swayed so easily? What better material for propaganda could Hitler expect than that now supplied him by the Kremlin?

And this ukase comes on the heels of assurances on the part of all of Stalin's pen prostitutes that his blood purges and his frameups have "rooted out the enemies of the people."

A G.P.U. CONFESSION

The Times dispatch relating to the ukase against the Volga Germans contains the following comment, passed by the Kremlin censors:

"No Germans from the Volga have reported the existence of purportedly large numbers of dissidents who have been uncovered."

This terse statement is as revealing as the tell-tale formulas of the Kremlin concerning "diversionists" and "spies."

Here we have an official admission that the G.P.U. is uncovering "dissidents" in large numbers. In the language of the Kremlin every dissident, everyone critical of Stalin is a "diversionist and a spy." Today they are being discovered in the Volga region. And tomorrow?

The ukase of August 28 constitutes a "warning" to all dissidents that they will suffer the fate of the Volga Germans. Henceforth, every dissident wherever "discovered" will be officially linked with "diversionists and spies." By the mass expulsion to Siberia of these German-born Volga scape-goats, Stalin seeks to stir up racial hatred and with this as a cover to prepare the ground for similar mass purges in other areas.

But at the same time, the latest ukase of the Kremlin reveals that the opposition to the bureaucratic regime is growing among the population. The Soviet masses are heroically defending the Soviet Union. They are not fighting for the perpetuation of the bureaucrats.

How Stalin's Purge Beheaded The Red Army

TROTSKY WARNED THAT STALIN'S MURDER OF THE RED ARMY LEADERS WOULD ENDANGER DEFENCE OF SOVIET UNION

By LEON TROTSKY

The following extracts are from an article written by Leon Trotsky in 1937, shortly after Stalin's execution of the eight leading generals of the Red Army—The Editors

In the past few months hundreds, probably thousands of public servants have been shot in Soviet Russia. The executed include the most eminent personages in the Soviet government, the majority of whom were heroes of the Russian revolution. It is as if, in America, the Roosevelt administration were to shoot half the cabinet, a score or so of the United States Senate, the Presidents of a dozen leading corporations, and the head of the Department of Justice—for treason!

And now the latest chapter in blood-letting is the decapitation of the Red Army. More than all the other Moscow trials put together, this act has had the widest repercussions in world opinion. Is the Red Army as strong as we thought it was? the German general staff is asking itself. Among the enemies and allies of

Russia, a revision of opinion is in process which may have the profoundest effects in world politics, and which cannot but affect the question of war and peace in the world arena.

* * *

On May 22, 1937 Marshal Tukhachevsky was suddenly removed from his post as Vice-Commissar of Defence and transferred to a minor post in the provinces. Within the next few days the commanders of the military districts and other prominent generals were likewise transferred. These measures boded nothing good. It was evident that the ruling tops had come into serious conflict with the officers' corps.

Moved by the interests of Soviet defence, the commanders of the districts and the responsible generals, might have intervened in Tukhachevsky's behalf. Did they do so? In all probability the whirl of transfers and arrests in the month of May and during the first

days of June can be explained only by panic in the Kremlin. On June 1, Gamarnik either shot himself or was shot. The commanders of the military districts no sooner arrived at their new posts than they were placed under arrest and turned over to the court. On June 9, the following were arrested: Tukhachevsky, who had just been appointed to Samara; Yakir, who had just been transferred to Leningrad; Uborevich, commander of the White Russian Military district; Kork, head of the Military Academy; Putna, former military attache at Tokyo and London; Primakov, a cavalry general; Feldman, chief of the personnel section of the General Staff; Eideman, head of the Ossoaviakhim. Two days later, all eight were sentenced to death and on the following day shot.

THE LEADERS OF THE RED ARMY

The army must have been stirred to its very depths. In the mind of everyone was the question: Why kill the legendary heroes of the civil war, the talented field commanders and organisers, the heads of the Red Army who, only yesterday, were the mainstay and hope of the regime? Let us first recall briefly who they were. The actual leaders of the army in recent years were two men: Tukhachevsky and Gamarnik.

Both came to the fore during the civil war, not without the intervention of the author of these lines. Tukhachevsky gave indubitable evidence of outstanding talent as a strategist. Tukhachevsky was a very young man at the time and had made a leap from the ranks of Czarist officerdom to the camp of Bolshevism. Thereafter he apparently applied himself assiduously, if not to the study of Marxism, then to military science. He acquired a knowledge of modern military technique and, not unsuccessfully, played the role of mechanizer of the army.

Jan Gamarnik, born of a Jewish family in the Ukraine distinguished himself during the civil war by his political and administrative talents—to be sure, on a provincial scale. For a period of ten years Gamarnik held important posts at the very centre of the party apparatus, and was in daily collaboration with the GPU. Is it conceivable that in such circumstances he could have conducted two policies, a public one for the external world, the second private? In our opinion, impossible.

Why, then, did the axe descend on these two leaders of the army?

REASONS FOR THE PURGES

As educator of the commanding staff and future generalissimo, Tukhachevsky could not but value talented military leaders. Putna was one of the most outstanding officers of the general staff. Tukhachevsky undoubtedly intervened in behalf of Putna as he must have done in the case of other officers drawn into the web of the GPU.

Voroshilov is Russia's Commissar of War, Commander-in-Chief of the army. What was his part in all this? Up to now, Voroshilov's policy was determined to a far greater extent by his ties with Stalin than by his ties with the army. Voroshilov, moreover, a man of limited horizon and rather a scatterbrain, could not but have cast jaundiced glances in the direction of his far-too-talented vice-commissar. Such could very well have been the source of the conflict.

As the head of the political department of the army and navy, Gamarnik was obliged not only to deliver his collaborators into the hands of Vyshinsky, but also to participate in the fabrication of false charges against them. It is highly probable that he came into conflict with the GPU and complained about Yezhov, the new head of the GPU—to Stalin! This in itself was enough to endanger him.

Let us see who the others were.

If Tukhachevsky, an officer in the Czar's army, became a Bolshevik, then Yakir, a young tubercular student, became a Red commander. From the very outset, he revealed the imagination and resourcefulness of a strategist. Veteran officers more than once cast astonished eyes on the gaunt commissar, as matchstick in hand he traced moves on military maps. Yakir had occasion to prove his devotion to the revolution and the party in a much more direct manner than Tukhachevsky. When the civil war ended he plunged into serious study. The authority he enjoyed was great and well-merited.

Alongside Yakir we may place Uborevich, a somewhat less brilliant but thoroughly tested and reliable field commander of the civil war. It was these two men who were entrusted with the defence of the Western frontier, and they prepared themselves for years for their roles in the coming great war.

Kork, a graduate of the Czarist military academy, successfully commanded one of the armies during the critical years, was later given command of a military district and, finally, placed at the head of the Military Academy in succession to Eideman.

For the last few years, Eideman directed the Ossoaviakhim, through which is effected the connection between the civil population and the army.

Putna was an educated young general with an international outlook.

In Feldman's hands was concentrated the power of direct supervision over the commanding personnel. This alone indicates the measure of confidence which he enjoyed.

Next to Budenny, Primakov was unquestionably the most outstanding cavalry commander.

It would be no exaggeration to say that in the Red army there is left not a single name, with the exception of Budenny that, as regards popularity, not to speak of talent or knowledge, is comparable to the names of the alleged criminals.

THE NEW "LEADERSHIP" OF THE RED ARMY

When Tukhachevsky was demoted, a very informed person wondered: who will henceforth take charge of the work of Soviet defence? Marshall Yegorov, a lieutenant-colonel during the World War, was appointed to Tukhachevsky's post, (and was later shot). The new chief-of-staff, Shaposhnikov, is an educated executive officer of the old army, devoid of strategic talent and initiative. And Voroshilov? It is no secret that Voroshilov, the "old Bolshevik" is a purely decorative figure. While Lenin was alive, it never entered anybody's head to include him in the Central Committee. During the civil war, Voroshilov, while displaying an indubitable personal courage, showed a complete lack of military and administrative talent and, besides, a narrow, utterly provincial outlook. His only qualification for a seat in the Political Bureau and the post of People's Commissar of Defence, is that he supported at Tsaritsin, the opposition of Stalin to that military policy which insured victory in the civil war. Incidentally, neither Stalin nor the other members of the Political Bureau ever entertained any illusions concerning Voroshilov as a military leader. Just because of this, they had surrounded him with qualified collaborators.

Thus the decimation of the leadership of the Red army was carried through with the full knowledge of what it implied!

To the Red army, Stalin has dealt a fearful blow. As a result of the latest judicial frameup, it has fallen several cubits in stature. The interests of the Soviet defence have been sacrificed in the interests of the self-preservation of the ruling clique.