

**WHY STALIN NEEDS SLAVES . . . . . by Irving Howe**

**The New** \_\_\_\_\_  
**INTERNATIONAL**

DECEMBER • 1947

THE UAW CONVENTION:

**WHAT Is Walter Reuther?**

By Herman Benson

**JAMES T. FARRELL**  
on  
**The First Irish Marxist**  
**James Connolly**

**J. ROBLES**  
on  
**Trotskyism in**  
**Bolivia**

**The Meaning of the**  
**"Inevitability of Socialism"**

By Hal Draper

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Our next issue marks the greatest anniversary in socialist history—the birth of Marxism itself. One hundred years ago, January 1848 to be exact, the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels was drawn up. . . . Main article next month is "One Hundred Years of Marxism" by Max Shachtman, the national chairman of the Workers Party. . . . All we're saying right now is that it's going to be the kind of issue you'll be reading more than once. . . .

Speaking of re-reading reminds us to mention that the bound volumes of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL will continue to be printed on the eggshell-white offset stock which we had to give up with the October number. . . .

Introducing some of our contributors in this issue . . . J. Robles is a South American comrade of long standing and experience in the Marxist movement. . . . Herman Benson is the Workers Party organizer in Detroit, recently put up a great campaign for mayor in that city. . . . Hal Draper has been organizing in Los Angeles for several years, becomes managing editor of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL with the next issue. . . .

Our back page told you last month that our foreign circulation could shoot up if it weren't for financial and currency problems. . . . Here are three out of the many letters we receive . . .

"I shall be going home to Ceylon. I shall be grateful if you would send me THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, *Labor Action* and other literature to Ceylon . . . I have a friend in Oxford who would be glad to receive THE NEW INTERNATIONAL and *Labor Action* . . ."—G.H.W. (England).

"Thank you for your letter . . . and for your offer of supplies of NEW INTERNATIONAL and *Labor Action* [but] I'm afraid I'm not able to cope with any additional expense. Good luck and best wishes to all members 'over there.'"—J. C. (Oxford, England).

"I have tried to send you the money owing on my account . . . but I could not owing to custom restrictions . . . I am applying for this [importer's] license now and will inform you later of the outcome of my efforts. With best wishes . . ."—B. Palley, Advance Book Shop (Sidney, Australia).

Now, at home . . . Sylvia Booth, our Buffalo agent, ordered 85 extra copies of the September issue (with special article on the UAW convention) and sold practically all of them at a debate on the issues in the UAW struggle, held at the Workers Party headquarters.

May Hauser, Cleveland agent, writes: "We used extra NIs last night at Reuther debate. . . . They got into the hands of UAW members."

Lee Roberts, Detroit agent: "We have sold 109 of the September issue to date, and are keeping our eyes and ears open to discover more meetings to cover. We'll send the left-over issues with one of the comrades going to the UAW convention in Atlantic City." . . . All we can say is: Go thou and do likewise.

**ATTENTION, SUBSCRIBERS**

We regret that difficulties beyond our control have made it impossible to publish the regular November issue of the magazine. All subscribers will, of course, have their subscription extended one month.

# THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

VOL. XIII

DECEMBER, 1947

NO. 9

## WHAT Is Walter Reuther?

### A Report on the Auto Workers' Convention

The delegates to the eleventh convention of the United Auto Workers (CIO) in Atlantic City finished the job they had begun eighteen months before at the previous convention. At that convention R. J. Thomas had been defeated for the presidency and Walter P. Reuther installed in his place. This time the delegates also deposed Secretary-Treasurer George Addes, dropped both Thomas and Richard T. Leonard from the roster of vice-presidents, and replaced all of them with Reuther supporters. The old leadership, which had held a majority on the Executive Board, was overturned and allowed only four seats out of a total of eighteen.

The old regime went down in complete collapse, to smashing—even demoralizing—defeat.

The life expectancy of UAW leaders who cannot keep pace with the rank and file is not very long. In its twelve years' history as an international union, the UAW has already had three different presidents and many, many board members and officers. Few officials die in office in this union.

We are dealing here with workers who built the decisive sections of their union not around conference tables and in law courts but in sit-down strikes and in mass clashes with police and armed thugs. With their flying squadrons, they were victorious, not over five-and-dime manufacturers, but over some of the biggest and richest monopolists in the world, those in the auto industry.

They are self-confident and aggressive. What was new was not the fact that they kicked out the old leadership but the enthusiastic majority with which they installed the new one. At least three-quarters of the time of the convention was taken up with completing the change in leadership. To understand what took place we must know: (1) what the old leadership was; (2) why it was overthrown; and (3) what has replaced it.

For that we have to trace the preceding developments which were climaxed by the eleventh convention.

#### I.

For several years the leadership has been held by a bloc of Addes, Thomas and the Communist Party. These leaders were, on the whole, men who came up from the ranks and who had participated in and even helped to lead the early struggles of the union.

Of the Communist Party forces we need not speak at length here. The Stalinists are among the most reactionary elements in the labor movement. In the UAW they made all the prescribed twists and turns in order to translate the Kremlin's interests out of the Russian into the language of the auto workers.

George Addes, although not a CP member himself, fol-

lowed the CP line quite closely. From the entry of the United States into the war, the policies of this old leadership bloc were highlighted by their fervid adherence to the no-strike pledge which tied labor's hands; by their "equality of sacrifice" program, which meant that labor was to make all the sacrifices; by their scuttling of premium pay; by their denunciation of strikes and strikers as "unpatriotic"; by their worship at the shrine of FDR, capitalism's master-hand; by their advocacy of piecework (under the guise of "incentive pay") for workers who had been through bitter struggles to wipe it out of the industry.

#### Rank-and-File Uprising

Year by year, resistance by the militants to this leadership and its policies gathered strength. In 1942 there was only a murmur against the surrender of premium pay. In 1943, the incentive pay scheme was defeated (with the support of Walter Reuther). By 1944 there was a popular uprising in the ranks. Without the support of a single UAW leader, a rank-and-file caucus was formed and mustered 40 per cent of the votes at the convention! The Workers Party supported and played an important role in this movement.

The most significant fact about the UAW is the rise of a militant, fighting stratum of workers which is anti-Stalinist and at the same time comes into conflict with the policies of the conservative leadership of the labor movement. This cannot be emphasized strongly enough. They are not simply the men of '37. They now know Stalinism and its works. They know something about politics; some want an independent Labor Party. They know that they have to fight not merely their own auto bosses but the capitalists as a class.

These strata are the hope of the union; they are the hope of the whole labor movement. And these fresh, militant, undefeated workers, now emerging into political life for the first time, are also the hope of the revolutionary socialist movement.

These are the men who threw out the old leadership and put Reuther in.

Some people, including the Socialist Workers Party ("Canonites"), do not understand this. That fact is not only a calamity for them but also leads them to follow a reactionary policy in the union.

Walter P. Reuther was a part of the UAW leadership all through the war. But *he* was a labor leader shrewd enough to see where his future lay; he did not neglect to make overtures to the growing militant opposition. We have mentioned his support of the progressive fight against incentive pay. On the no-strike issue, he came up with a compromise—to rescind the no-strike pledge only in those sections which reconverted to

peacetime production, while maintaining it in full force elsewhere. On this the militants spurned him because he did not go far enough.

### Reuther's High Point

The alliance between Reuther and the militants was finally effected by the great General Motors strike of 1945-46.

Here Reuther led a strike which was miles ahead of all the others in the first post-war wave of strike struggles. Its slogans—Wage Increases Without Price Increases! Wage Increases to Be Taken Out of Profits! Open the Books for Trade Union Inspection!—declared in effect that the organized labor movement was the leader and protector of the whole people against the monopolies. Above all, it appealed to the desire of the UAW militants for a new, more radical, progressive social program for the labor movement.

This is what put Reuther in last year. As an official history puts it: "At the tenth convention of the UAW in the spring of 1946, the leader of the General Motors strike, Walter Reuther, was elected president." This phrasing is neither accidental nor misleading: the GM strike and the GM program elected Walter Reuther.

To this day his opponents do not understand what happened.

## II.

Like the rest of the tops of the CIO and AFL, Walter Reuther is a pro-capitalist labor leader. *But he is not an ordinary one. He is a different type.* It is as important to understand the difference as it is vital to remember the underlying similarity.

The triumph and stability of the ordinary pro-capitalist (or bourgeois) labor officialdom rests upon the relative stability of the capitalist system. So long as capitalism remains within democratic forms, this labor leadership is satisfied to take smaller or bigger concessions from the capitalist class and deliver them to the workers. Even when they have started out as militants (like Reuther today), they become attached to the status quo and develop conservative ways of thinking.

But today capitalism is not stable, less and less so even relatively speaking. There are wars, depressions, assaults by the employers on labor. Labor leaders *hate* these periods of shock—it upsets their comfortable equilibrium. They try to muddle along in the old groove as long as possible; they are reluctant to make a change to new methods, even new methods of preserving the same old status quo.

### The Reuther Type

In such periods, when new policies are clearly needed, new leaders can replace those who cannot adapt quickly enough. This was seen in the period of the rise of the CIO, which brought with it a new layer of labor leaders. At the end of the war the CIO leadership as a whole short-circuited potential opposition by itself organizing a wave of strikes, carefully kept within bounds. But from his vantage post in the UAW, Reuther moved out far ahead; he knew the UAW workers best; Thomas and the others could not keep step and they were ousted.

The post-war shock brought Reuther to the fore. Reuther is the type of labor leader who moves up front in periods of growing instability and solidifies himself in the ensuing period of calm (until, with subsequent shock periods, he too is left behind). He knows how to play upon and appeal to the more progressive and even radical yearnings of the workers. All this marks Reuther off from the ordinary, rut-stuck, con-

servative leaders like Green and Murray: he is the leftist labor leader who profits from the radicalization of the UAW ranks.

While it is the nature of our times which throws such leaders to the fore (if only temporarily, till they too can be passed over), the selection of Walter Reuther for this fate was prepared by the man's background. He spent five years or so in that school of the "radical" labor opportunist, Norman Thomas' Socialist Party (apparently at least till 1936 or 1937). During his evening-student days at Wayne University he was the organizer of the Social Problems Club in the turbulent period of the 1932 student movement. His earlier background is indeed a proletarian one. It is such a past which, while no longer determining his social aims, still does color his methods and his slogans.

Reuther knows his union. To all the editors and reporters who stupidly wrote that his victory was a victory for the "right wing" of the UAW, he said: You are deceiving yourself; we are building militant, progressive, fighting unionism. One of his favorite refrains is this: *We are not a nickel-in-the-pay-envelope union. We fight for all the people. We are "the vanguard of America" and "the architects of the future." "We fight today for a better tomorrow."* Inspiring words! But Reuther never gets around to explaining how these excellent ideas are to be effected. The fact is that to do so, labor must take over the government and all of society. For Reuther the words remain merely as a recognition that "pure and simple" trade unionism is not enough.

### In the Capitalist Groove

And so, although Reuther is a more radical type of labor leader, he remains in the capitalist grooves of thinking. *Isn't it necessary to build an independent Labor Party?* He answers: "Don't get too far ahead of the parade." *Are you a socialist, Mr. Reuther?* He answers: "No, I am for free enterprise—minus its defects, of course." (Who on earth is for the defects of free enterprise?) *What do you think of the conservative official policies of Phil Murray and the CIO?* He answers: "How many opponents can I take on at one time?" And so even this *different* type of pro-capitalist labor leader is eventually doomed to seeing the parade pass him by, to being sucked down with the shipwreck of capitalist "free enterprise" and to never getting around to taking on the biggest opponents of labor's interests.

Reuther does not *create* the militant sentiments of the ranks. He articulates them in the form of slogans, and profits from them. At the recent convention Reuther was borne on the shoulders of the men in an enthusiastic demonstration. This was a parable in action. He has been riding on the shoulders of the militants for two years and we have not yet seen how far they will carry him in the end.

## III.

The Eleventh Convention was preceded by a protracted period of intense factional discussion. Few of these debated questions, tiny or big, came to the floor of the convention. The basic reason for this lies not in "bureaucratism" but in the fact that the overwhelming majority of the union was satisfied—even sated—with that discussion, and had come to Atlantic City to *decide* the issues, not to debate them over again. The main weakness of the convention lies not in its failure to chew *these* questions over again but in its failure to grapple with the key social questions facing the labor movement and the nation as a whole. However, a review of

the factional issues will help us to judge the nature of the two contending groups, and will permit a test of the SWP's claim that somehow—since only last year—the UAW militants have deserted the Reuther tendency and gone over to Addes-Thomas. The facts explode this latter invention.

Reuther's election to the presidency in 1946 was a body blow to the Stalinists and a terrible shock to Addes and Thomas, who could not or would not resign themselves to playing second fiddle to Reuther. The policies of their group had been supplied by the Communist Party. (The SWP—having lurched into a love affair with Addes—has suddenly discovered that the CP has little influence in the Addes-Thomas-Stalinist bloc. One does not have to count noses to detect here the *line* of the Stalinists, for which the SWP has become a deliberate agent in the UAW.) But the CP, which has been more and more exposed as a reactionary anti-labor group in the UAW, could not meet the new situation. It did not know whether to attack Reuther from the right or from the left. The anti-Reuther bloc lost all bearings; they had no axis for their policies and fell into a fit of frenzied hysteria. (It is this which the SWP interpreted as "militancy." Like the Addes bloc as a whole, the SWP has now also finally lost all contact with reality; the *Militant* foams over weekly in *Daily Worker* fashion in its writings on the UAW.)

### Maneuvers Boomerang

The Addes majority on the Executive Board first tried to concoct a bureaucratic and unconstitutional merger of the UAW with the small CP-controlled Farm Equipment Workers Union (the FE). They hoped to effect this maneuver before the 1947 convention and thus override Reuther's 124-vote majority at the 1946 convention, by bringing in several hundred new anti-Reuther votes. But this bureaucratic machination miscarried. In a referendum vote of local unions the Addes plan was decisively defeated; more than that, one Addes stronghold after another fell over into the pro-Reuther column. The vote was a rebuke to behind-the-scenes manipulation.

Following this defeat, which foretold their final annihilation at the convention, the Addes camp went wild with desperation. Their propaganda lost all ties with logic and consistency.

They accused Reuther of favoring piece-work and speed-up. But this charge was merely ludicrous in the mouths of those who had themselves led the fight to restore piece work in the industry. (Said one delegate: "Look who's talking—the incentive-pay boys!") They accused Reuther of being a new Homer Martin who would lead the UAW back into the AFL. Yet at the same time they sought the support of John L. Lewis, who had not long before led the miners back to the AFL. They produced a "Moscow Trial" frame-up document purporting to show that Reuther was sympathetic with Gerald L. K. Smith and his anti-semitic doctrines. At the same time they carried on their own sly anti-semitic campaign, accusing Reuther of lining up with *Dubinsky*, of employing a *Weinberg* and an *Abe Zwerdling*. They criticized certain genuinely objectionable features in the GM contract. But as everyone knew, the contracts negotiated by their own followers were no better. Besides, at the same time they were denouncing Reuther for continuing the GM strike for additional months in order to obtain minor concessions. How the contract could have been improved while the strike was called off sooner—this they naturally never explained.

### Stalinist Red-baiting

They denounced Reuther for allying himself with the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU). They fumed against "red-baiting." They attacked Emil Mazey (now the new Secretary-Treasurer) as a leading "reactionary." At the same time they appealed crudely to anti-socialist, anti-"red" prejudices. One need only read the following little piece from the *Daily Worker* (George Morris' column) which appeared during the convention:

Conspicuously omitted from the biographical sketch of Mazey mimeographed for newsmen here are the following facts:

1. That he was for years an active member of the Proletarian Party, an outfit that regarded itself as so "left" that it called the Communists "reformists."

2. That today he is a leading member of the Socialist Party.

3. That he led the fight during the war against the no-strike pledge and that his "militancy" was at its highest point during the war, when he pulled almost daily wildcat strikes at the Briggs plant.

4. That his stalwarts, the delegation of Briggs Local 212, came to the 1944 convention of the UAW carrying tiny American flags which they derisively waved every time someone rose to speak for support of the war effort.

5. That he was prominently involved in the "We-want-to-get-home" movement among Pacific veterans, a movement that was charged to Communists only.

Reactionaries will have a tough time describing the change as an advance for "Americanism" in the UAW.

Unlike his opposition, Reuther followed a clearly discernible and consistent policy as the axis for his moves between conventions and at the last convention itself. He knew that he had been elected by the militants as a result of the GM strike program; he knew that a radical wave had washed him up into the presidency; he felt confident of retaining the support of the militants. Between the conventions he therefore sought a period of stability during which he could achieve the following:

(1) Insure the continued support of those conservatives who were in his own caucus and win over similar elements from the Addes camp by sealing an alliance for mutual support with Phil Murray.

(2) Thereby isolate the Stalinists and decimate the Addes-Thomas-CP bloc.

### Alliance with Murray

To insure the success of this strategy, Reuther had to shift his main emphasis away from the truly radical implications of his GM program, which remained more than ever on paper, and to rely more and more on an appeal to "orthodox" CIO policy. This switch was effected without too much difficulty for two reasons: (1) The period in question coincided with a temporary lull in the UAW. Though the membership had lost many illusions during the first post-war strike wave,

### A CORRECTION

Our readers may have noted that the article on "The Pre-Convention Struggle in the UAW," by Ben Hall, in the September issue, ended quite abruptly. Through an unfortunate oversight at the technical end, the last three pages of Comrade Hall's manuscript were not set up in type and were therefore left out of the magazine. However, a large part of the omitted section is quoted in this issue in the accompanying article on the UAW convention and all important aspects of the question covered. We apologize both to our contributor and to our readers.

it was puzzled and uncertain of the next steps. (2) Reuther had merely to accept the fields of battle marked out by his hopelessly disoriented opponents and reply to the wildest of their accusations.

The alliance with Murray was gained. Reuther succeeded in obtaining the public support of Murray at the convention. That this was one of his key objectives was already indicated at the end of the article on the UAW fight which was written for the September issue of *THE NEW INTERNATIONAL*; but since this article was chopped off before the end by a technical error, we quote the relevant passage now:

The chief spokesman for old-line CIO policy is, of course, Philip Murray. R. J. Thomas, who was deposed by Reuther, was one of Murray's first lieutenants in the UAW. The militant trend which led to his overthrow was therefore a blow at Murray. The adoption of new militant policies means a fight against Murray's policies. Not every UAW militant fully understands this point, but that does not alter the fact.

Reuther waters the flower of his own personal fortune first with criticism and then with praise of Murray and his policies. At a caucus during the Michigan CIO convention in 1946, at a time when Murray was supporting the anti-Reuther bloc, Reuther said: The torch we lit during the GM strike was not carried forward by the steel workers. This gingerly criticism of Murray (who is president of the United Steel Workers) was warmly greeted by the militants. A few months later, however, he wrote: "The CIO cannot spare Phil Murray. There is no one to fill the vital role which he is performing in the labor movement and in the nation. Organized labor and the American people face in the next several months a period of crisis that demands the best and soundest leadership we can produce. We in the CIO need Phil Murray for his wise counsel, his warm humanity, his sober judgment, and his steadying influence."

In recent times Reuther has not deviated in any important respect from the accepted policies of the CIO. To give genuine leadership to the militants who look to him, Reuther would have to offer a new, alternative program. This would necessitate a criticism of Murray and the official policies. But to advance his own personal position, Reuther refrains. He counts among his followers a group of die-hard Murray supporters who join him mainly because the Stalinists oppose him. To criticize official policy Reuther would have to risk a rupture with Murray and with such Murray supporters. But Reuther places first value on his own career as a labor official. He spurs on or discourages the radical elements which make up his main pillar of support as it suits this primary aim.

Reuther's victory will facilitate the radical development of the union, but he himself is a typical quasi-radical opportunist labor leader who subordinates the long-range social interests of the working class to his own immediate needs.

#### IV.

Reuther's dual policy of playing now on the "radical" string and now on the "orthodox" string makes it necessary for him not only to elevate representatives of the militants but also to lure the more conservative small-time union careerists. And so among those with whom he surrounds himself is a group of short-sighted secondary officials.

This is what was behind the proposal, which the recent convention passed by a very tiny majority, to raise the salaries of all top officials by from \$1,000 to \$1,500 a year. Unlike most of his lieutenants Reuther is motivated by far more extensive personal ambitions than a mere \$1,000 plum. And he undoubtedly knew how impressive a gesture it would have been, how inspiring to the ranks, if in his moment of triumph he had spurned any pay increase. It must have been a very tempting thought! But he permitted the increase to be voted, in the first place as a concession to the petty office holders who support him out of more immediate and material considerations.

#### ACTU Threat

In the election of regional directors, who become members

of the International Executive Board, Reuther maintained an official "hands off" policy. He was not willing to antagonize any of his supporters by indicating a preference among them. In the elections conservative elements were allowed to strengthen themselves within the pro-Reuther camp.

The ACTU, while of little strength in the union ranks or in the Reuther group, is enabled to play an exaggerated role in the secondary apparatus. Its chief aim in entering the Reuther camp is to try to transform the legitimate and progressive anti-Stalinist sentiments of the militants into a reactionary anti-socialist ideology. But they have had, and they will have, little success. Should the genuinely socialist elements in the union desert the militants in the Reuther caucus and (like the SWP) support the pro-Stalinist Addes bloc, they would provide ACTU with its first chance to make real progress. The SWP Cannonites who (from within the Addes camp) howl so angrily against ACTU are in reality facilitating its work of disorienting the militants. In his eagerness for support from all quarters Reuther has made no effort to oppose ACTU.

The Addes bloc was all but annihilated, and the CP in fact isolated, at the convention. The most dramatic illustration of this fact, aside from the criticism by the CP of the "indecision" of the Addes group, was the candidacy of Shelton Tappes for vice-president. For many years the CP has ballyhooed for the election of a Negro to the vice-presidency of the UAW (an aim which we support), but despite its great strength it never did anything about it. At the convention, since all was lost anyway, the CP decided to sweep up what crumbs it could. It sponsored the candidacy of Tappes not only against Reuther's candidate but also against Richard T. Leonard, the candidate of the Addes group. But Tappes received far less than ten per cent of the votes.

The Stalinist *Daily Worker* and the Cannonite *Militant* vie with each other in foaming against the "anti-red hysteria" and the "wave of red-baiting" which "swept the convention." The vocabulary of Stalinism, developed over twenty years, is exhausted in their fantastic descriptions. Such idiocy is possible only for (a) the Stalinists themselves, who hope to ward off every attack, from no matter what source and for no matter what crime, by the cry of "red-baiting"; and for (b) the Cannonites, the SWP, who fancy that they have exclusive patent rights giving them a monopolistic franchise on all criticism of the CP, and that an attack upon any Stalinist crimes and machinations which *they* choose to ignore, condone or abet is . . . "red-baiting."

#### Convention Atmosphere

We wish to refer to one incident at the convention, revealing in its very insignificance, to indicate how different an atmosphere actually prevailed. Toward the very end of the convention, when the delegates were weary and anxious to get home, one delegate asked for the floor to caution against red-baiting. Although clearly out of order at the time, he was granted the floor. He was an obviously honest man sincerely disturbed by the accusations of the Addes group. He spoke on and on, and exceeded his time; yet when he asked for a few additional minutes the request was granted. Through all this the convention, which was pressed for time and becoming restless, listened politely, though bored. This is the convention, we are told by the Stalinists and their Cannonite accomplices, which was "whipped up" into an orgy of "anti-red hysteria."

Reuther's fight against the CP was and is *on the whole*

a progressive fight. That does not mean that it has been conducted in an entirely correct manner. His attacks on the CP as a reactionary anti-labor group, as the agents of Russian foreign policy and as a group which is not at all concerned with the aims and needs of the union movement—all that is correct and is what we have been saying for years.

The formula which he uses in this struggle, however, is false and misleading, and therefore dangerous. His statement of policy rejects "outside interference" and opposes the CP "and all other outside groups." In this policy Reuther is no different from his Addes-Thomas opponents, who employ the identical formula. The line of both caucuses must be rejected on this point.

First: The Reuther caucus rejects *Stalinist* politics in the union only to permit and accept *capitalist* politics, which takes the form of collaboration with and "interference" by the pro-capitalist politicians of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Secondly: We must combat the CP *not* because it is a political group (or an "outside" group) but because it is a certain *kind* of political group—namely, an anti-labor and reactionary agency of Russian totalitarianism.

Thirdly: If the UAW is truly to be more than a "nickel-in-the-pay-envelope union," truly the "vanguard of America" and "the architect of the future," it must and will discuss questions which are not the private affair of UAW members but rather affect the whole labor movement and the whole population. And in this discussion, as in the work of building the union, does not every political and social tendency have the right to participate, to intervene, to "interfere"?

## V.

Reuther's tactics were signally successful in obtaining an easy victory over his convention opponents. That would have been fine if all the labor movement needed were an easy and painless triumph for the Reuther forces. But that is not the case.

The organized labor movement—more powerful, better organized, richer and more experienced—is being pushed backward at the present time. Through its control over industry and government, the capitalist class is seizing one position after another from the giant labor movement. A turn in policy is prescribed for the working class. A new program—new methods of political, social and economic struggle—and wider aims are required if the retreat of the working class is to be halted. THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, *Labor Action* and the Workers Party have indicated the necessary road ahead. By bowing before the outmoded official CIO policy, Reuther facilitated his own victory only to have the convention ignore long-range vital needs of American labor.

### Debate on Taft-Hartley Law

The only important question taken up on the convention floor was the Taft-Hartley law; and this was dealt with in a completely negative fashion by all hands. The issue was raised only in the form of the fruitless and misleading question: At this juncture, are we for or against signing the anti-Communist affidavits required by the law before the National Labor Relations Board hears a union's grievances?

The Reuther group, after some hesitation, decided to favor signing the affidavits now, in order to utilize the machinery of the NLRB. The Addes-Thomas-CP group banked on winning over some militants by an opposition to signing; but they failed completely.

The real issue was—or should have been—how to mobilize the labor movement in action against the slave-labor law, how to defeat it, how to destroy the NLRB as a possible weapon against militant unions.

But no one in the union leadership from any side pointed to any effective course of action to this end, either at the UAW convention or previous to it . . . just as none of them (Addes-Thomas as well as Reuther) had carried on a real struggle against its passage in the first place.

All of the UAW tops have shown that their method of meeting or evading the Taft-Hartley law was by making deals with and appeasing individual capitalists (see the article in *Labor Action* for November 10 of this year on "More Than One Way to Appease the Bosses"). The NLRB could have been eliminated by a general boycott of the whole labor movement which would have stamped it as an anti-union body. But neither the CIO nor the AFL convention fulfilled its responsibilities, and not one UAW leader arose at the CIO convention to propose such a boycott. That includes R. J. Thomas himself. Murray reported to the UAW that the steel workers would not sign; but at the same time he advised all CIO unions which felt it advisable to do so, to go ahead and sign. This makes the steel workers' gesture a meaningless one and not part of a concerted attack which could bear fruit.

In the face of this lack of any program of class struggle previous to or at the convention, and with the knowledge that none would be forthcoming from their leaders, the delegates had to decide whether the no-signature gesture was worth the possible loss of smaller locals which were not in a position to strike. As a result the vote for signing the affidavits was an overwhelming one, estimated at six to one.

### Convention's Main Lack

And that was the *only* serious question to come before the delegates. The Cannonites ascribe this lack to the "sinister" workings of the Reutherites, who insisted on holding the election of officers on the third day instead of on the fifth day as proposed by Addes. The real reasons are far less mysterious and much more susceptible to educational discussion. Reuther, for reasons already described, had no special policy to propose. The Addes group, likewise, was not at all concerned with questions of program but also viewed everything from the standpoint of picking up a few votes in the election: once the election was over, they lost all interest in the "issues." Lastly, the bulk of the delegates, full of illusions about what the mere election of a Reuther administration will be able to do, came to settle the main issue, to install a new pro-Reuther majority.

No resolution on political action came before the convention. None was adopted by the Resolutions Committee, although several locals had gone on record for a labor party (Locals 7, 212, 400, 722 and 659) and many others had come out for a third party. There will not be another UAW convention till May 1949, long after the 1948 elections. The UAW convention, therefore, plays no role of any kind in political preparation of labor for 1948. Several months ago, a national meeting of leading Reutherites in Detroit had voted for a compromise formulation calling for "independent labor political action" (with the support of Emil Mazey, who favors the formation of a labor party); but in his quest for "orthodoxy" Reuther dropped even this formless phrase from his program and replaced it by the totally meaningless "build toward a new political alignment."

The problems of wages, prices and profits, foreign policy and other important questions also never came before the delegates.

## VI.

The immediate future may well usher in a temporary lull of good-will-and-unity around Reuther's slogan: "Teamwork in the leadership — solidarity in the ranks." The faction fight has been settled for the time being. "Enough of fighting among ourselves," say the workers, "let's go out and fight the employers." To get a united leadership they gave Reuther practically everything he wanted, with a generous salary increase to boot. All this to the accompaniment of loud cheers, songs, and noisy demonstrations. Their decision was unmistakable and incontestable. This was an accomplishment, but it was the only important accomplishment of the convention.

Reuther received an overwhelming vote of confidence, but this vote is also a command. He asked for the power to carry out his program. He has received an *order* to do so.

There are no lack of problems ahead. Even if the whole labor leadership wanted to continue their gingerly policy of leave-things-be, the capitalist class would not allow it. American capitalism's needs in the struggle for world domination will not let them rest. There is a constant succession of periods-of-shock in the offing. Above all, the question of labor political action cannot be dodged or waved aside.

The sharper the issues and the harder the fight, the more will Reuther's program of reform be tested. The convention decision makes this test possible. There will be, as always, no shortage of willing critics. The ranks of the UAW have never been timid or humble before their leadership. And we are convinced that from these ranks, instructed by experience and toughened in class struggle, will come battalions of militants who will fight along the lines of the Workers Party program as the architects of the socialist future and the vanguard of a Workers' America.

HERMAN BENSON.

# Why Stalin Needs Slaves

## Forced Labor Under Bureaucratic Collectivism

The experience of all ages and nations demonstrates that the work done by slaves, though it may appear to cost only their maintenance, is in the end the dearest of any. . . . [The slave] can have no other interest but to eat as much and to labor as little as possible. Whatever work he does beyond what is sufficient to purchase his own maintenance can be squeezed out of him by violence only, and not by any interest of his own. (Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*.)

The lowest possible wage which the slave earns appears to be a constant, independent of his work. [In contrast to the free worker] the slave obtains the means necessary to his subsistence in natural form, which is fixed both in kind and in quantity, [whereas the remuneration of a free worker] is not independent of his own work. (Karl Marx, manuscript quoted by Dallin and Nicolaevsky.)

State property becomes the property of "the whole people" only to the degree that social privileges and differentiation disappear, and therewith the necessity of the state. In other words: state property is converted into socialist property in proportion as it ceases to be state property. And the contrary is true: the higher the Soviet state rises above the people, and the more fiercely it opposes itself as the guardian of property to the people as its squanderer, the more obviously does it testify against the socialist character of the state property. . . . If a ship is declared collective property, but the passengers continue to be divided into first, second and third class, it is clear that, for the third class passengers, differences in the conditions of life will have infinitely more importance than that juridical change in proprietorship. (Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*.)

But the workers and Red Soldiers of the Soviet Union fight with a bitterness unmatched in this war because they are defending the *socialist achievements* of a workers' revolution. *Factories, mines, mills, railroads, workshops belong to those who work them. The soil belongs to those who till it.* A man who will not defend such a *treasure* is either a coward or a traitor. (George Collins, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party, in *The Militant*, September 12, 1942. Italics not in original.)

## I.

Slave labor is not an accidental or surface excrescence of the Stalinist regime; it is integral, inherent, irreplaceable. For the foreseeable future, Stalinism,

if it wishes to maintain itself in power, will continue to utilize slave labor as an increasingly important if still auxiliary means of exploiting the Russian people. Even if it wished to, the regime could not longer dispense with slave labor—no more so than it could "democratize" itself. The physiognomy of Stalinism is basically determined; all that can change are secondary aspects.

In this respect a comparison with Nazi Germany is illuminating. The Nazis did not use slave labor to the extent that Stalinist Russia has; under the Hitler regime, labor never became as indispensable a part of Germany's national economy as it has become for Russia under Stalin. This is due not to any superior benevolence on the part of Hitler, but is caused by the difference in the social nature of the two regimes.

Hitler's original reason for setting up concentration camps was largely political: he sought a place to herd every oppositionist or potential oppositionist. Since the Nazis understood that the living death of the concentration camp was more terrifying than rapid physical death, they utilized the camps, with diabolical skill, as a specter of horror to whip fear into the hearts of all those outside the camps. Men who might not have feared a bullet were cowed by Buchenwald.

Since Germany remained essentially a capitalist economy, its industry under Hitler was still largely based on "free labor" (in the Marxist sense; that is, free from ownership of the means of production and thereby forced to sell labor power, but also possessing the freedom to decide whether or not to sell this labor power). For all of the Hitlerite restrictions, there was considerable bargaining between capitalist and proletarian, as well as between capitalists for workers during labor shortages. This was true even during the years of the most stringent war economy. There was not, of course, the classically pure free economy as abstracted in *Capital*—an abstraction that existed nowhere, as Marx knew—but Germany remained, for all the considerable intervention of the state in economic life, a social system in which the major relationship



was between *private* capitalist in control of the means of production and private proletarian selling his labor power.

During the first years of Hitler's rule, the camps impinged only slightly and indirectly on German economy; no one thought of them as a significant source of production. After the outbreak of the war they underwent a change in function: they began to acquire some importance in the country's war economy. Where previously the camps had been indifferent (at best!) to the survival of inmates, their rulers were now forced to use the prisoners to help plug gaps in Germany's labor force. That is why there was even a certain "amelioration" of conditions in a number of camps; if the Nazis were to utilize camp labor they had to keep its members alive and able to work. But even here, it should be noticed, the political rationale of Nazism continued to play a vital role, often seemingly in opposition to the economic interests of the regime. Otherwise, how explain the destruction of thousands of workable human beings (Jews, Poles, etc.) in crematoriums at a time of an acute labor shortage?

Finally there was the large-scale importation of foreign labor into Germany, which again was dictated by immediate military needs. One cannot of course predict with certainty what would have happened in case of a Nazi victory, but it seems likely that in such an eventuality large numbers of the foreign slave laborers would have been returned to their native countries, there to be exploited by Quisling regimes for the benefit of Nazi Germany. One may surmise that the Nazis would not have wanted to keep indefinitely in Germany the politically explosive and economically competitive foreign slave workers. Their permanent residence in Germany might have seriously endangered the status of the highly skilled German working class which the Nazis wished to placate in order the more thoroughly to exploit. The Nazis, then, used slave labor for basic economic functions only when the immediate wartime shortage of labor, caused by unexpected military reverses, forced them to; and even then they used only foreign labor as an adjunct of "free" and capitalistically-regulated German labor. To have literally enslaved the advanced German working class (as distinct from totalitarian control of their lives) would have been absurd from the Nazi point of view, since it would unquestionably have resulted in a *decline* of productivity; and the Nazis were not addicted to *that* sort of absurdity.

Slave labor, then, was always peripheral to German economy, even when Hitler exerted the most rigorous controls. In peacetime the Nazi economy could have continued to function without the use of camp labor.

*This is not the case with Stalinist Russia.*

### **Role of Stalinist Slavery**

Under the Stalinist regime the use of slave labor preceded the war and had only an indirect connection with it. Though slave labor had its origin in the political repression of the Stalinist regime during the years of its consolidation, it soon acquired a new significance. The Kremlin, it is true, continued to utilize slave labor as a punishment for political dissidents, but by the early thirties slave labor had reached an extent and acquired a specific weight in Russian economy that began to make of it an integral *relationship of production* in the Stalinist state. Political considerations may have provoked the creation of labor camps, but now economic need kept those camps in existence and often even forced the manufacture of political pretenses to find new inmates for them.

Here, then, is still another paradox of Stalinism, a system

of paradoxes. In an economy based on nationalized production, a "higher economic form" than private capitalist economy; there arises an immense and integral labor force doomed to social relationships and conditions that hark back to *pre-capitalist* societies. This is another ironic, tragic index of the "law of uneven development."

What is the basic social purpose of slave labor in Russia?

In their indispensable and remarkably documented study of this subject,\* Dallin and Nicolaevsky advance a number of answers to this question, but seem to me to fail to unify them into the necessary leading proposition. But it should in fairness be said that this proposition is implicit in their book.

Slave labor in Russia is an attempt by the ruling bureaucratic class to overcome by the most reactionary and *backward* methods the economic backwardness of the country. As with all such attempts, it leads only to greater internal contradictions, to an aggravation of that very backwardness it is designed to obliterate. Every forced march leaves victims on the sidelines.

Here Trotsky's basic analysis of the decline of the Russian revolution, whatever peripheral disagreements one may have with it, is indispensable. Trotsky related all the political-social developments of post-revolutionary Russia to their context: a wracked, primitive, semi-feudal country with an illiterate population which had only the most tenuous ties with modern culture. Left to its own resources, he insisted, revolutionary Russia could only disintegrate. Though in our opinion he did not accurately predict the nature of this disintegration—a bureaucratic oligarchy resting on and inseparable from nationalized economy\*\* rather than, as he expected, a weakened bureaucracy sliding back to private capitalism—the essential aspects of his analysis remain valid. Even our divergence is based on his premises.

### **Extensive Exploitation**

Slave labor, then, was the Stalinist answer to the high level of productivity of the western capitalist powers. Since Stalinist Russia—for all its propaganda about Stakhanovism and the like—could not even approach the level of productivity reached by the major capitalist countries, its only possible competitive alternative was to exploit labor "extensively" rather than "intensively." By these crude descriptives I mean the following. The exploitation of labor in a highly efficient and technologized economy (by means of careful rationalization, high development of skill and extreme concentration of capital) may be described as "intensive" since labor is exploited to what amounts to maximum efficiency for the given social conditions. That level, with an occasional flashy exception, is clearly excluded for Stalinist Russia and would be possible for it only if it gained control of, and was able successfully to integrate into its economy, one of the major industrial areas of Western Europe. Hence the Stalinists had to resort to "extensive" exploitation of labor (e.g., slave labor) which is ultimately socially wasteful. The mass exploitation of large groups of mainly unskilled slave laborers was certainly not an efficient device, for it soon exhausted considerable sections of them and gave rise to a tremendous mortality rate; but still it achieved some of the regime's production objectives. It is most significant that the Stalinists seldom ban-

\***Forced Labor in Soviet Russia**, by David Dallin and Boris Nicolaevsky, Yale University Press, \$3.75. Unless otherwise specified, all quotations are from this book.

\*\*To avoid misinterpretation, when one says that the Stalinist bureaucracy is inseparable and cannot exist apart from nationalized economy, that is **not** the same as saying that nationalized economy cannot exist apart from Stalinism.

ished scarce and difficult-to-replace skilled workers to slave camps (unless they were genuine political oppositionists); the regime found it more expedient to exhaust as rapidly as possible the labor of peasants and other elements inessential to industrial production.

This is a *general characteristic* of the Stalinist regime, as of all bureaucratic attempts to impose uncorrelated industrialization on primitive economies. Its equivalent is graphically evident in the Stalinist exploitation of Balkan oil fields by wasteful processes which result in higher immediate yields but shorten the life and decrease the total yields of the wells. Interested only in its immediate consolidation of power and imperialistic expansion, Stalinism is quite ready to waste material and human resources.

As broken down into more specific categories, forced labor has the following uses for Stalinist Russia:

1) *It is cheap.* During 1932-33, according to Dallin, the cost of upkeep per camp laborer was slightly over 500 rubles a year. The average wage in Russia during that period was, according to official statistics, 1,496 rubles a year. Dallin comments: "This differential, multiplied by the millions of prison workers and the years of work, is an important element of the government's industrialization fund. General workers' wages rose 174 per cent between 1926 and 1933 (due in part to the inflationary rise in prices); during the same period the cost of food per prisoner increased by only 90 per cent." This meant that the supply of consumer goods available to the bureaucratic strata of the population was in large measure based on the high rate of profit which the NKVD squeezed out of the labor camps, "profits never made in other fields of Soviet economy." While not the dominant means of exploitation in Russia, slave labor provides that margin of fatty increment which allows for the extreme social elevation of the bureaucratic layers. The bureaucracy's "primitive accumulation" is to a considerable extent based on slave labor; how much, it is impossible to calculate.

### **Blood Instead of Machinery**

2) *It is possible to employ slave laborers with a minimum investment of capital.* In the huge projects—canal building, forestry, road building, etc.—on which slave laborers were employed, almost all of the work was done by simple, unskilled processes. Vast expenditures of cheap, docile and easily replaceable slave labor were substituted for machines and technical skill. Since there is nothing other than natural limits to prevent a continuous lengthening of the working day and since the *immediate*, though not ultimate, expenditures for the upkeep of slave labor remain stationary regardless of the amount of labor performed, the bureaucratic dictatorship is able to squander unskilled labor recklessly. In fact, it could be less concerned about human waste than about deterioration of machines; for while machines had to be replaced by expensive outlays of *valuta* both at home and abroad, Stalinist Russia had at its disposal a virtually inexhaustible supply of labor. Human blood replaced the machine.

In 1937 the NKVD actually assigned to its branches over the country *quotas on the number of prisoners* to be sent to labor camps. If nothing else, this fact alone would strongly tend to substantiate the analysis of Russian slave labor made here: that it is integral to Stalinist economy.

3) *Slave labor eliminates, or at least lessens, the problem of labor discipline.* The slave laborer is a completely depersonalized being, a unit manipulated at will. (Some of the accounts of horrors in the Russian camps rival anything that

happened in Nazi Germany. If anything, from a certain point of view it is more horrible deliberately to work human beings to death than to gas or burn them. Some may disagree about this; as Molotov would say, it is "a matter of taste.")

By setting up slave camps, the regime was able to "solve" an industrial problem: how to deal with restless workers who shifted from factory to factory in search of better conditions. (In the camps, one could not quit or be absent or late.) But it solved an even more acute problem. All of the major slave labor projects were and are in extremely undesirable locations and are assigned extremely difficult tasks: Arctic gold mining, the Baltic canal, Siberian forestry. To entice "free" workers to these areas, the Stalinist regime would have had to pay wages higher than those it paid the most skilled workers in the cities. But since it was precisely these projects which, with the exception of lumber destined for the foreign market, were least immediately profitable and were based on the slenderest capital investments in relation to possible yield (many were military projects which would never yield any return) the government could not possibly offer such wage incentives. Its only alternative was forced labor.

## **II.**

The disadvantages of slave labor are well known; they are pithily expressed in the quotation from Adam Smith at the head of this article. The Stalinist economists, too, must have been aware of these disadvantages and tried to overcome them.

In ancient Rome slave-owners were aware of the problem of incentives: why should a slave work hard if he had nothing to gain from his work? The Roman slave-owners solved this problem, or tried to, by offering very real incentives to a portion of their slaves, especially the enslaved Greek intellectuals. Some were able to buy their freedom, others to gain a status which, while formally still slavery, was actually a step up the social ladder, and still others gained material advantages though their status remained the same. The mass of the slaves, however, were assigned to such primitive, unskilled tasks that it made slight difference in terms of yield whether or not the slave felt much incentive; for such tasks the whip was enough.

In Stalinist Russia the problem of incentive has been tackled "scientifically." A devilishly skilled series of social gradations have been instituted in the slave camps (here, no doubt, the Stalinists learned from the Nazis) which offer laborers incentives in the form of slightly better food, clothing and living conditions if they exert themselves. All of these levels are wretched enough, but if a worker refuses to exert himself at all he dooms himself to a quick death, since the lowest level is below subsistence level. Yet his choice is between a quick and a considerably prolonged death, for the camp worker is caught in the vicious circle of expending more energy to get more food to expend more energy to get more food . . .

Dallin quotes from Camp Order No. 9 of the Administration of Dmitrevski Camp of 1936:

A camp inmate fulfilling his production norms up to 79 per cent under the increased rations is issued 600 grams (21 ozs.) of bread daily; if he fulfills from 80 to 90 per cent, 700 grams daily; from 100 to 109 per cent, 800 grams (28 ozs.); and from 110 to 124 per cent, 800 grams plus the right of obtaining 200 grams from the stalls (canteens).

Yet for all these "incentives" (many of them deliberately calculated so that the amount of energy required to get the additional increment of food is greater than the amount of energy that can be gained) slave labor remains most wasteful. Dallin calculates, and quite convincingly, that no slave labor

system in history has been so wasteful of human beings as that of Russia.

### Inefficiency of Slave Labor

The reasons are not hard to discover. "A private slave-owner who invested capital in his slaves was concerned about their well-being and existence just as he was concerned about his animals. In a state economy, which is not required to invest money in its labor force, this motive for providing minimum care for the slaves does not exist. . . . *When manpower perishes, the slave-employing agency sustains no loss of investment.*"

Nonetheless "the efficiency of forced labor, despite incentives and compulsion, was and is on an extremely low level. The *average* efficiency of a slave laborer has certainly been below 50 per cent of that of a free Russian worker, whose productivity in turn has never been high." The evidence adduced by Dallin for this statement cannot here be conveniently reproduced, but it is overwhelming.

If nothing else, this fact serves as an indication that Stalinist Russia, for all its squandering of human beings, will not *by its own resources* be able in the near future to reach a level of productivity even approaching that of the advanced capitalist countries. Each bureaucratic forced march engenders subterranean crises, economic dislocations, moral disintegration. In a totalitarian stratified society it is even less possible to divorce political from economic events and both from moral and intellectual implications than it is in a capitalist country. In Russia no crisis can remain "departmentalized": it strikes the totality of social life.

Nor is it difficult to imagine what an undercurrent of resentment and hatred the Stalinist regime has engendered among the masses. The forced-labor camps produce the most terrible moral conditions: "deceit, spying, corruption—and above all the omnipresent concomitant of totalitarianism, *fear*. (Godfrey Blunden's novel, *Room on the Route*, was a most vivid portrait of how fear is the dominant emotional current of Russian life.) What regressive social and political tendencies may result from this large-scale barbarism it is impossible to predict. One thing is clearer, however, than ever before: nothing remotely resembling socialism or democracy, nothing that has the faintest similarity to the aspirations of humanity for security and freedom can be built on this society. It must be destroyed.

### III.

Dallin's book is divided into two sections: a full compendium of revelations about life in the labor camps and a historical account of their development. Though this article has been devoted to a discussion of the implications of the material he adduced, other and certainly more dramatic articles could be written about the terrible accounts of those who have escaped from the camps and about slave labor in Russia as a function of the history of Stalinist Russia in general. I should especially like to mention the brilliant chapter by Nicolaevsky called "The Land of White Death," which details the development of gold-mining slave camps in the northern Kolyma region, "a desolate land at the very edge of the world, in the coldest wastes of the Arctic."

This chapter reads as if it were written by Jules Verne, Edgard Allen Poe and Franz Kafka—but none of these inadequate comparisons suggest the quality of sheer horror which it produces as one reads this account of Stalinism's bestiality. (Whoever wishes to experience the full significance of modern

totalitarianism should subject himself to the experience this writer had: read "The Land of the White Death" directly after David Rousset's story of Buchenwald, *The Other Kingdom*.)

Were a full analysis of the materials in Dallin's book attempted here, we would have to quarrel in fundamental terms with his Menshevik bias by which he attempts, quite unsuccessfully, to suggest that the slave-labor camps of Stalin are the logical and unavoidable outcome of Lenin's regime. To show that brutality and inhumanity and repression still existed under the Bolsheviks is not at all to prove that they are the seeds of Stalinism; it is merely to indicate the conditions under which the young workers' state had to function. Bolshevism tried to overcome the heritage of backwardness and authoritarianism by heroic if unfulfilled measures; Stalinism consolidated and raised to unprecedented heights these aspects of Russian autocracy. But since our purpose here is not to dispute Dallin's political views but to discuss his materials, we can drop this question for a more appropriate occasion.

### Men Into Beasts

The human implications of slave labor have necessarily been slurred over in this attempt to grasp their sociological implications. Yet we must not forget that we are dealing here with the fate of millions of human beings; men with hopes and aspirations and dreams, even as you and I; men who have been degraded to the level of sub-beasts. If the abstraction of theory seems to lead away from the human, it is always in order the more adequately to lead back to the human. I should therefore like to end by quoting from one of the accounts of escaped Polish prisoners who had been dragooned by the thousands to fill Stalin's slave camps:

Half-naked, barefoot, and nearly dead, we reached a place in the deserted, terrible, frozen "tundra" where a post bore the sign of "Lagpunkt No. 228." With almost superhuman effort we dug *zemlyankas*, i.e., pits filled with mud and barely covered with branches and earth. Our nourishment was rye flour (raw) kneaded with water. In the night men crowded in the *zemlyanka* sleep on branches thrown over the mud, warming themselves by contact with one another's bodies. Moans, curses, cries, threats resound during the night. . . . At 4 a.m. the *naryadchik* (chief) sounds reveille by hitting the blade of a saw with the haft of some instrument. There is no need of dressing, since no one ever undresses. Breakfast consists of the second half of the flour portion received during the evening before. . . . The work is construction of a road running parallel to the near-by railroad. Snow has to be removed with spades; the deeply imbedded brakes of the tundra and other plants have to be uprooted and the soil leveled off. The quota is 20 square meters per worker. With limbs stiffened by the frightful cold, one has to keep moving and working in order to avoid freezing. . . .

Sometimes the following scene could be observed near the kitchen: numerous prisoners would be squatting expectantly outside the door. Suddenly the cook would appear and throw out the slop and remnants. Everybody would rush, push, fight and rummage in the garbage for some putrid food. . . . In an instant, not a trace of food would be left. And the men, who were no longer men, would return to their former position and wait, with their eyes fixed on the kitchen door. . . .

The working conditions were almost always deadly for us. We were forced to work in temperatures of 40 degrees Fahrenheit. . . . We had to cut trees in the forests even when the snow was waist deep. . . . In the summer, while mowing in this marshland, men had to stand knee-deep in water or mud for 10 or 12 hours. . . . Scurvy was widespread, wounds opened, and abscesses suppurred. Gangrene was frequent, often necessitating amputation of fingers, hands and feet. . . .

The climate alone was enough to kill the southerners. For a year or a year and a half a "hero" prisoner would do Stakhanovite work and accomplish 120 or 150 per cent of his quota. Then one

night he would die in his sleep, without a moan, of a heart attack, and in the morning his companions would find beside them a "healthy corpse"—healthy, because he had died suddenly without having been ill.

In the 17th camp the rate of mortality was very high. . . . There were many cases of suicide. In September of 1940 in the barrack where I lived a Viennese Jew, Frischhof, hanged himself from his cot. The Germans had held him in Dachau for 11 months; he had endured that imprisonment but could not stand this one. . . .

The readers of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL must be especially interested in the fate of the most steadfast political opponents of the Stalinist regime. Here is a section of a report:

I shall relate an authentic story which I heard in prison, and which throws light on the fate of the Trotskyists. Several dozen of the most important among them were deported to Vorkuta. While they were still together, they decided to eternalize their memory by a last manifestation of their inflexible will, and thus remain victorious, even if sent to hard labor.

They presented a list of demands, claiming the right (1) to be isolated from common criminals; (2) to be employed only for work corresponding to their professions, i.e., intellectual work; (3) never to be separated from one another.

They implemented these demands by a threat of a hunger strike until victory or death. The NKVD of course turned down their demands. The Trotskyists then started a hunger strike which lasted for 120 days without interruption. During the time the camp authorities forcibly administered artificial nourishment. In spite of this, many died. When all efforts to break their spirit proved ineffective, the Trotskyists were separated with the help of a pack of fierce dogs unleashed in their barracks.

The sick men were carried out by the soldiers. They were sent in various directions and, after a while, nobody mentioned them. It is pretty certain they were shot, since no one of them has ever been seen since.

This is the regime which George Collins, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party, declared in a statement never repudiated by his party to be one in which "factories, mines, mills, railroads, workshops belong to those who work them"; the regime which the Socialist Workers Party and the other "official" caricatures of Trotskyists declare to be a "degenerated workers' state," and which they call upon the workers of the world to defend!

IRVING HOWE.

## THOMAS MANN'S "WAR GUILT"

Thomas Mann, the famous novelist who is also the idol of the liberal German emigration, was attacked by Alfred Haussman in a Swiss paper some weeks ago. Haussman quoted, from memory, a letter which Mann had written to the Nazi minister Frick in 1934.

Although Haussman's main point — that Mann had applied for permission to return to Germany — has proved to be erroneous, still the publication was rather compromising for this leading exponent of the nauseating theory of the "collective guilt" of the German people.

For it became obvious that Thomas Mann had made rather strange concessions to the Nazis in order to obtain the renewal of his passport—especially strange when we remember that this was by no means a life-and-death question for the famous Nobel Prize winner, who was then living in Switzerland and had a choice among almost all the countries of the world which were only too eager to open their doors to such a prima donna.

To our knowledge Haussman's letter has not been published in this country. Obviously our free press didn't like it. Full space, however, was given to Mann's reply to Haussmann's attack. This reply, couched in polemical and general language, did not increase our knowledge of the contents of that mysterious letter. At any rate Mann did not take that opportunity to publish it, though it afterward turned out that he considers it a very valuable literary and biographical document. (It is hard to believe that he had no copy in his files.)

Later the *Neue Zeitung* in Munich published Mann's original letter, on August 11, 1947. Unfortunately we have not been able to obtain a copy of this issue. But on August 22 the New York German-language weekly *Der Aufbau* published a lengthy article on the letter, interpreting it and polemizing in favor of Mann. This article contains a few quotations.

According to *Der Aufbau*, Mann's letter to Frick's ministry was obviously occasioned

either by his desire to obtain a passport or by his complaint against its refusal. According to the same source, Mann wrote to the Nazi authorities that his political aims had been wrecked, these aims having been the achievement of the "humane, peaceful and European solution of the German question by means of a bourgeois-Socialist front aiming at the construction of a real social and democratic republic." Mann wrote that he was "not the fool who would revolt against the verdict of fate, which had decided with sufficient certainty" in favor of the Nazis, and that it would be senseless to continue battling against a victory achieved "without any doubt for a long period of time." For this reason Mann promised to remain silent, to remain silent also abroad where he had resolved to live. He considered the exile "a leave from the national community" (Mann uses the Nazi term *volksgemeinschaft*) "for an uncertain but limited period."

If Mann had written nothing but best sellers on the psychological intricacies in the relations between Joseph and Potiphar, his letter would be of minor interest. He has, however, become also a political writer. He has been advocating the severest punishment for the German people by reason of their "collective guilt"; he has expressed satisfaction over their mutilation and starvation; he has publicly applauded an American general who threatened to shoot German demonstrators demanding an increase in food rations above 600 calories or so; he has never tired of exhorting his fellow Germans to confess and repent their guilt instead of asking for bread!

Perhaps Mann does not know that for the rest of the German people emigration was a thousand times more difficult than it was for him; that even the mere application for a passport would have meant certain and horrible death for most applicants not lucky enough to reside in Switzerland.

The just but pitiless judge Thomas Mann has established the unatonable guilt of the German people—but what exactly are they

guilty of? If we are not mistaken, they are guilty of *having been of Mann's opinion*; of having considered it *foolish to revolt*; of having believed that it would be *senseless to continue battling* against the decision of fate, the achieved victory of the Nazis! But in face of the mountain of guilt on the chest of every German, Mann, grants no recommendation for leniency on grounds of circumstances — for example, the circumstance that revolt through action inside Germany was a little more difficult than revolt abroad through the written word.

Yet however monstrous the Germans' guilt may be in the eyes of Thomas Mann, there is at least one crime which most of them did not commit: the promise to remain silent, a promise offered voluntarily and given from a safe haven abroad!

W. BROOK

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# The "Inevitability of Socialism"

## The Meaning of a Much Abused Formula

The meaning of the formula, "the inevitability of socialism," is not a new question, but there has arisen an attempt to give it a new importance and a new emphasis as well as a distorted meaning.

The dust which is being kicked up on the subject comes in the first place from the direction of J. R. Johnson, formerly of the Workers Party, and also from the theoreticians of the Cannonites (Socialist Workers Party). It is first of all a theoretical-philosophical question, a question of scientific Marxism (which does not mean that it has no political implications!). But the motivation for its elevation to its present status is an attack upon the Workers Party position that Stalinist Russia is a new exploitive social order which is neither capitalist nor working class, a social order for which we use the label "bureaucratic collectivism."

Associated with this position (on which we differ from Trotsky's last-held views) is our use of the warning: "Socialism or barbarism—these are the alternatives before humanity in our epoch," in the use of which we are at one with Trotsky. The combination of the two, however, apparently arouses in the aforementioned comrades a violent reaction. This takes the form of heatedly denouncing as un-Marxist any suggestion that capitalism can be possibly followed by a society other than socialism; crystallizes in a mechanical formulation of inevitability; and accuses us of "abandoning Marxism" in posing the existence of historical alternatives.

When the founts of theoretical ignorance are exhausted along these lines, there not infrequently follows the slanderous insinuation that the Workers Party *predicts* or expects the worldwide coming to power of bureaucratic collectivism, which naturally entails an abandonment of the socialist perspective and any reason for continuing the socialist struggle. But here we shall consider only the attempt to lay a theoretical base for these slanders. For this we must go back to fundamentals of Marxist theory and dialectical materialism.

We begin where the Cannon-Johnson view tries to grapple with the subject in really "deep" and "scholarly" fashion. It is in any case necessary to start this far back. A Johnson disciple, Dickson Woods (in a recently circulated piece on the subject), offers us a springboard when he states what he believes to be the heart of the scientific question, as follows:

If one poses two or more possible lines of future historical development and sees the equal possibility of the realization of any one of them, he is claiming, in effect, that history is a matter of chance.

We have to analyze (a) the Marxist kernel of thought which this writer had in mind in framing this sentence, and (b) the way he has managed to convert this Marxist thought into nonsense.

### Principle of Determinism

The Marxist "kernel" is the Marxist view of determinism and causality. This may be briefly stated in the following propositions:

(1) Marxism is materialist in philosophy. The world of matter and energy is an objective reality which does not depend for its existence upon the prior existence and activity of

any mind or supernatural force. On the contrary, mind—thinking, ideas, mental phenomena in general—are derivative. They exist, to be sure, and are not illusion; but they exist only as products of a special organization of matter—namely, a material brain.

(2) This world of nature, of which man and his works are a part, is governed by natural laws. This is the actual assumption upon which science works and which alone makes science possible, even if the scientist addresses prayers to a god on Sundays or professes to think otherwise when he leaves his laboratory and writes an article on philosophy. There is no "consciousness" or "purpose" or "will" behind nature's constant change and motion, even when this natural change is seen to be proceeding not helter-skelter but in a definite direction, in accordance with natural law.

(3) To say that natural laws exist is the same thing as saying that: every event that takes place is the product of a given *cause* or combination of causes. The Marxist view of causality has another and equally essential proposition: the same concatenation of causes will ever produce the same effects. Certain scientist-would-be-philosophers have put forward the fantasy that, when hydrogen and oxygen combine to form water, we are witnessing not an inevitable coupling of cause and effect, but merely a highly probable succession of two events which have no inherent connection. Presumably, it is possible that some day some one may put hydrogen and oxygen together and get a highball instead, or nothing at all. However, if something like this were actually to happen, no scientist would rest until he had discovered what change in the conditions had brought about the different effect—i.e., what change there was in the concatenation of causes. Marxist materialism rejects such an idealist version of causality and insists upon the strict determination of given events by determinate causes.

### Chance and Accident

(4) There is thus left no room at all for what is called "chance determination," or "accident" *as opposed to causation*. It will be necessary to explain what chance and accident *do* mean; but they do *not* mean that at one or another time or in connection with even one event out of a billion, the principle of causality is "suspended" or inoperative, or that any event is not completely determined by certain prior events.

What then do the words "chance" and "accident" mean to a materialist determinist? They are left with only a *relative* meaning, but with a meaning nonetheless.

Thus, in the year 480 B.C., the Persian Empire staged an assault upon Athens by sea and land forces which was overwhelming in its numerical superiority. However, several hundred ships of the Persian fleet were destroyed in a storm before they even saw action; and not long after, another number of Persian men-o'-war were destroyed in another storm while trying to outflank the Greek fleet. As a result, the Greek navy was not crushed, though the soldiers of Leonidas perished to the last man at the pass of Thermopylae; and later in the year the Greek fleet was able to administer an almost an-

nihilating blow to the Persian sea forces in the historic battle of the Bay of Salamis. Thus Athens, Greece and Greek civilization were saved—or so the historians tell us!

Now it is easy enough for the Marxist to show that, much as this particular Greek victory was aided or perhaps even decisively won by the “accidental” quirks of Aegean weather, these chance storms cannot be credited with any substantial effect upon the course of history and society, including the “saving” of Greek civilization. But this is not the point. While the Marxist assigns a minor role to such “accidents” in history, and then only in determining the form and tempo of historical events, the question for us here is *how we can speak of “accident” at all*—major role or minor role—in a world where all events are determined by particular causes. Didn’t the Persians have a run of “hard luck”? But, on the other hand, what is hard luck in a deterministic universe?

This is no difficulty for dialectical materialists. It is obvious firstly that the anti-Persian storms were *historical accidents* but they were not *meteorological accidents*. The principle of causality applies to these storms with complete force, but *their* causes lay in the weather conditions and not in social conditions. When an event whose causes lie in one field (in this case, meteorology) has an effect on events in another field (here, society), it appears as *an accident in relation to the latter field* . . . just as mountains whose tops show through sea-level appear as islands in relation to the ocean while they remain mountains in relation to the solid crust of the earth. Our storms, then, were not “accidents,” but they were *historical accidents*.

We saw above that a strict determinist denies the existence of chance and accident as the objective determinant of events; we now see that he recognizes chance and accident as an existing relationship from a human-subjective point of view. His yes or no depends on *which question is being asked*.

We should mention another relationship to which the name “chance” is commonly and usefully given, even when it is a “rigid” determinist that is talking. The classic example of chance is the throw of the dice. But the physical forces which cause a seven to turn up rather than a two are far from mysterious or indeterminate. What introduces the element of “chance” into crap-shooting are two facts: (1) we probably do not *know* all of the causal factors involved, though they are far from unknowable; and (2) whether we know or do not know them, the player is unable to *control* the causal forces. In fact, efforts to control them are frowned upon in the game.

But these two considerations—human knowledge and control of events—are quite irrelevant to the question whether immutable cause-and-effect (strict determinism) is operating. On the objective plane of natural law, there is no “chance” operating in a dice game; from the human-subjective point of view, we can and do speak of chance. Thus again, our yes or no depends on the nature of the question being asked. We emphasize this because we shall meet with this situation again.

### Objective Aspect of Determinism

(5) The point of view of Marxism is, therefore, strict determinism. We can now give the determinist viewpoint an especially sharp and uncompromising formulation. If we look at the world objectively (not from the human-subjective angle explained), then we must be willing to conclude that:

(a) Every event is the *inevitable* result of all preceding events. Given *all* preceding events, *it could not have happened otherwise*. And this inescapably produces the corollary that—

(b) With regard to any *future* event posed, there are only two alternatives. *That event is either inevitable or impossible*. All the events which have already taken place determine those which *will* take place, with the relation of cause to effect. And if, as we have said, a given constellation of causes can produce only a certain determinate effect, then the italicized statement is unavoidable. It is not a question of the simple alternatives: “The event either will take place or it will not take place.” The italicized statement means: “The event either *must* take place or it *cannot* take place”—*inevitable or impossible*. There is nothing “in-between” on the objective plane of the world of natural law which we have been discussing.

If this statement, however, seems too sweeping or exaggerated to any reader who thinks he otherwise accepts fully the principle of determinism, the impression is undoubtedly due to a misunderstanding which it will be the business of this section to clear up presently. For one thing, it may appear as if we have already settled the question of the inevitability of socialism, at least for socialists. If *any* future event is either inevitable or impossible—whether it be rain tomorrow, a third world war, the next throw of the dice, or the election of Dewey to the presidency—then certainly this is also true of socialism. It would then appear that he who denies the inevitability of socialism is either (a) affirming the *impossibility* of socialism, or (b) rejecting the principle of determinism; that is, in Woods’ words, “claiming in effect that history is a matter of chance.”

That such at least is the Woods-Johnson mechanical train of thought is obvious from the former’s document.

For he obviously is under the impression that the propositions on determinism which we have laid down condemn anyone who “poses two or more possible lines of future historical development and sees the equal possibility of the realization of any one of them.” After all, if any future event is either inevitable or impossible, how can one speak of “equal possibility”? More to the point, how can one speak at all of *any* “possibility” or “probability” since all is determined?

### Relativity of Human Knowledge

So we must return to the method we used in analyzing the meaning of chance and accident. What we will find here again is that our mechanist is overlooking *the relativity of human knowledge and truth*. It is characteristic of such mechanical-materialist vulgarizers of Marxism that they amiably enfold dialectical materialism in a crushing and lethal embrace.

We remind ourselves that we have said: *Any future event posed is either inevitable or impossible; there is nothing “in-between” on the objective plane of the world of natural law*. To make clear the import of this statement and in particular of the second part of it, let us take an example from the same field that was involved in our case of accident in history: the weather and meteorology. We return to their field precisely because there is hardly another science which so frequently uses the words “possible,” “probable,” “likely,” “maybe,” and similar expressions in-between inevitability and impossibility.

The weather report for tomorrow reads “Probably rain.” Apparently, according to this, rain tomorrow is neither inevitable nor impossible. Yet we would agree that the weather is the result of the operation, or interaction, of many physical and chemical forces, all of which are as determined, caused and obedient to natural law as our earlier case of the union of hydrogen and oxygen in a test-tube. Given all the events which have already taken place, rain tomorrow or no rain

tomorrow is already in the cards—determined—inevitable.

But the weather bureau does not *know* all the events which have already taken place.

We say: "given *all* the events." Should we rather say: "given all the meteorological events," or "all the events having to do with the weather"? This would not change the matter, since the weather bureau does not know these either. But as a matter of strict accuracy, the qualification would be wrong. Just as the weather can affect social history, so other fields can affect the weather—always then appearing, we remember, as "meteorological accidents." Thus, an aviator sowing dry ice in the clouds must also be taken into account if one aims at *inevitability*—and social history affects the weather. Sunspots and other astronomical events take us onto a broader field; volcanoes have affected even worldwide weather (Krakatao) and take us to geology, which itself has biology among its causal substrata; etc., etc. We merely insist that when the sweeping concept of inevitability is involved, only formulations concerning *all* preceding events are acceptable.

At any rate, the weather bureau does not know enough. In order to make an "inevitable" prediction, it would have to know not only all preceding events but all the relations between them, especially all the relations which we call scientific laws.

Let us imagine that Woods—who objects in the name of dialectical materialism to posing historical possibilities because history is not a matter of chance—is the Marxist head of the weather bureau and tells us:

A.—Rain tomorrow is either inevitable or impossible.

Q.—Like everything else?

A.—Without exception.

Q.—Good, I see you are a Marxist. But what I want to know is, Will it rain?

A.—I *think* it will.

Q.—That means you *think* it is inevitable?

A.—Well, rain is certainly possible. In fact, I think it's probable.

Q.—Then that means you think rain is *probably* inevitable...?

A.—Well, the probability of its being inevitable is greater than the possibility of its being impossible... .

Q.—Uh-huh. And what's the forecast on the temperature—warmer or cooler?

A.—I don't know.

Q.—You mean either is possible?

A.—I mean I'm not sure which is inevitable.

Q.—As far as you know, a higher temperature is as likely to be inevitable as a lower temperature is to be impossible?

A.—Something like that.

Q.—Then there is an *equal possibility* of one or the other?

A.—NO, NO, NO! For that would mean that the weather is a matter of chance!

Even under complete communism, when dialectical materialism will already be the dominant philosophy, the above will still be a bedlam-piece. The citizen of even the third generation after the revolution will not have any difficulty in reconciling the equal possibility of "warmer" or "cooler" with a deterministic view of the weather.

### The Meaning of Possibility

What has happened is that two questions have been confused. They are, in terms of our running example: (1) Is tomorrow's weather already determined by the operation of natural law? (2) What do *we know* about the determination? Granted that the indicated outcome is either inevitable or impossible, how shall we formulate *our* state of knowledge as to which is true?

It is in answer to the second of these questions that the words "probable," "possible," "equally possible," etc., take

on a meaning for the determinist, indeed for the "rigid" determinist. *These words are measures of human knowledge and ignorance* in the face of the ramifying complexity of the causal chain leading up to the simplest event.

When we affirm the proposition that any future event is objectively either inevitable or impossible, we are answering a very important question about the nature of the universe. But when we are called upon to answer a question about a specific future event, all we can do is to manifest our state of knowledge, the limitations of human capacity and the relativity of human truth, in language that runs up and down the spectrum of probability.<sup>1</sup>

When the Marxist poses alternatives for future historical development—even "equally possible" alternatives—he is considering the weight of evidence leading to one conclusion or the other, and not at all impugning his deterministic convictions. Dispute is possible on the degree of certainty permitted by the evidence; but it is not the principle of determinism which can settle that question.

### "Socialism or Barbarism"

Thus, the Fourth International since its foundation has presented the great alternatives of our epoch as: socialism or barbarism.

Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period, at that—a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind... .

The capitalist world is mortally wounded. In its agony it exhales the poisons of fascism and totalitarian war, which threatens to subject the workers and farmers everywhere once more to a new and horrible servitude, and to unleash the forces of destruction which will shatter modern civilization... .

Humanity can be saved from the new barbarism that menaces it only under the leadership of the revolutionary working class... . (*The Founding Conference of the Fourth International*, pp. 16, 56-57, 58.)

And much more to the same effect. Our mechanistic dogmatists—such as the SWP's theoretician Warde, J. R. Johnson or his disciples—cannot make head or tail of this concept.<sup>2</sup> Since it was written into the "books" by Trotsky himself, it is obviously immune from overt attack; but it cannot be fitted into the ritual. The same is true with regard to the *Communist Manifesto* which poses the alternatives of the class struggle ending "either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."

And completely bewildering to these muscle-bound Marxists was Trotsky's bombshell in *The USSR In War*, where he speaks of "the historical alternative, carried to the end" as either socialism or a totalitarian bureaucratic slave society, "if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed on it by the course of development." We will discuss presently the impermissibly pessimistic con-

1. There is another facet to the meaning of probability which does not concern us here. This is probability as "relative frequency." E.g., the probability of a blindfolded man picking a black ball from a sack which contains ten black and a hundred white balls—"mathematical probability"—or the probability of a man of sixty dying in ten years—"statistical probability." In the last analysis, however, this probability exists as a manifestation of the lack of human knowledge and control, and not because of the lack of a cause-and-effect relationship. The attempt to interpret all expressions of probability in statistical terms has no possibility of success; this view would exclude probability in connection with *unique* events. Thus, what would be the meaning of the statement, "My husband phoned that he's working late at the office but he's **probably lying**," in terms of statistical probability?

2. Outside the Trotskyist movement, add Paul Mattick, whose pamphlet, *The Inevitability of Communism*, walks around the question just as uneasily. This ancestor of Johnsonism notes "the alternatives presented by the *Communist Manifesto*—communism or barbarism" but he does not permit himself to be dissuaded that history is inexorably fated to achieve communism through the spontaneous revolutionary action of the masses *without* the conscious intervention and leadership of a vanguard party.

clusion which he draws from the latter possibility. What is of interest now is that Trotsky freely speaks of historical alternatives and discusses our degree of certainty. In his follow-up article (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 30-31) Trotsky sharpens the point:

Some comrades evidently were surprised that I spoke in my article ("The USSR in the War") of the system of "bureaucratic collectivism" as a theoretical possibility. They discovered in this even a complete revision of Marxism. This is an apparent misunderstanding. *The Marxist comprehension of historical necessity has nothing in common with fatalism. Socialism is not realizable "by itself," but as a result of the struggle of living forces, classes and their parties.* The proletariat's decisive advantage in this struggle resides in the fact that it represents historical progress, while the bourgeoisie incarnates reaction and decline. Precisely in this is the source of our conviction in victory. *But we have full right to ask ourselves: What character will society take if the forces of reaction conquer?*

Marxists have formulated an incalculable number of times the alternative: either socialism or return to barbarism. After the Italian "experience" we repeated thousands of times: either communism or fascism. The real passage to socialism cannot fail to appear incomparably more complicated, more heterogeneous, more contradictory than was foreseen in the general historical scheme. Marx spoke about the dictatorship of the proletariat and its future withering away but said nothing about bureaucratic degeneration of the dictatorship. We have observed and analyzed for the first time in experience such a degeneration. Is this revision of Marxism? . . . what social and political forms can the new "barbarism" take, if we admit theoretically that mankind should not be able to elevate itself to socialism? We have the possibility of expressing ourselves on the subject more concretely than Marx. *Fascism on the one hand, degeneration of the Soviet state on the other, outline the social and political forms of a neo-barbarism. An alternative of this kind—socialism or totalitarian servitude—has not only theoretical interest, but also enormous importance in agitation, because in its light the necessity for social revolution appears most graphically.*<sup>3</sup>

Note that it is here not a question of an "equal possibility," which is a term dragged in neither by Trotsky nor the Workers Party. It is a question simply of the existence of historic alternatives. That is why Trotsky in this passage, and we, emphasize: only in the light of these historic alternatives does the struggle for social revolution take on a meaning—and "most graphically" so when the alternative to socialist victory is the slave state already outlined by the decomposition of modern society.

It is our conviction that the socialist revolution will triumph. There is no question of "equal possibility." But this conviction is based on an examination of evidence—in the first place, upon our Marxist analysis of the social forces at work, the truth of which, like all human truth, is tested and confirmed only in practice (in struggle). It is not a conviction deduced from a *priori* reasoning concerning determinism, though fully founded on the deterministic principle.

### Fatalist View of Inevitability

We can now characterize the nature of the Johnson formulation on the inevitability of socialism.

It is *fatalism*, a species of *immanent predestination or preordination*. It has nothing in common with Marxism and dialectical materialism. Pushed to its logical end (which, to be sure, is too much to expect from its sponsors) its roots are clearly visible in *idealism*, as is necessarily true of all varieties of fatalism. It may be objected that I have up to now been characterizing it as "mechanical materialism." This is a well-known phenomenon in the Marxist analysis of philosophy and,

far from being disconcerting, should have been expected. Mechanical materialism regularly tends to turn into its opposite, idealism—this is the philosophic analogue of the tendency of sectarianism to turn into its opposite, opportunism, on the political field.

Dialectical materialists reject this fatalist view of the "inevitability of socialism" formula. Its political meaning will be discussed later.

### Trotsky's Formulation

Before we turn to examine what the "inevitability of socialism" *does* mean, there is still another interpretation we must note. If anything it is the opposite of the Johnson concept; at least it topples over in an opposite direction.

Trotsky, for one, put it forward in passing in 1921 (*The First Five Years of the Comintern*, p. 299) in a very interesting passage:

. . . all the efforts of the bourgeoisie, all the energies expended by it in maintaining class equilibrium, manifest themselves invariably at the expense of the economic soil on which the bourgeoisie rests, at the expense of its economic base. The bourgeoisie and the working class are thus located on a soil which renders our victory *inescapable—not in the astronomical sense, of course, not inescapable like the setting and rising of the sun, but inescapable in the historic sense, in the sense that unless we gain victory all society and all human culture is doomed.* And the passage continues in a way which underlines the difference between this "astronomical sense" and this "historic sense":

History teaches us this. It was thus that the ancient Roman civilization perished. The class of slave-owners proved incapable of leading toward further development. . . There was no other class to supersede it and the ancient civilization perished. We observe analogous occurrences in modern history too. . . As warriors of revolution, *we are convinced*—and the objective facts corroborate us—that we as the working class, that we as the Communist International, will not only save our civilization, the centuries-old product of hundreds of generations, but will raise it to much higher levels of development. *However*, from the standpoint of pure theory, *the possibility is not excluded* that the bourgeoisie, armed with its state apparatus and its entire accumulated experience, may continue fighting the revolution until it has drained modern civilization of every atom of its vitality, until it has plunged modern mankind into a state of collapse and decay for a long time to come. The month before, Trotsky had expressed a similar thought (p. 293):

With the aid of these [state] organs, which in relation to the economic foundation represent a "superstructure," the ruling class may perpetuate itself in power for years and decades after it has become a direct brake upon the social development. If such a situation endures too long, an outlived ruling class can drag down with it those countries and peoples over whom it rules.

*Hence arises the necessity of revolution.*

We shall comment later on the last sentence of this passage. Right now we are mainly concerned with Trotsky's formulation: "inescapable in the historic sense, in the sense that *unless we gain victory all society and all human culture is doomed.*"

### "Inevitable Alternatives"

This would seem to be a very peculiar explanation of the term inevitable (inescapable). First of all, Trotsky makes a distinction between historic inevitability and "astronomical" inevitability (astronomy being merely a representative of so-called exact science). He cannot be making a distinction between the validity of the principle of determinism in one or the other field. He is recognizing the difference between *our ability to establish inevitability* in one or the other field. In the field of history, Trotsky defines inevitability as the inescapability of one or the other of a limited number of *alterna-*

3. Emphasis in all quotations throughout this article is mine, unless otherwise noted.



tives—that is, he merely establishes the existence of *inevitable alternatives*.

To be sure, it is legitimate to do so. In fact, in common parlance the word “inevitable” is often enough used in such context: “*Unless* he makes some terrible blunder, his election is *inevitable*,” “*If* reinforcements do not arrive, the army is *doomed* to defeat,” “*As long as* capitalism exists, war is *inevitable*,” etc. But the existence of *inevitable alternatives*, or our ability to establish their existence, is not itself a distinction in kind between history and astronomy or the “exact” sciences.

To take Trotsky’s astronomical example, the setting or rising of the sun is inevitable—*unless* the sun becomes a nova and converts the earth into a wisp of burnt ash (an event which might have a bearing upon the inevitability of socialism also); and since no astronomer can assure us that this *cannot* happen the day after tomorrow, it would seem that here too we have only alternatives from our human-subjective point of view. There are differences between the two cases but they are not such as to make Trotsky’s formulation adequate.

For if Trotsky is saying that socialism is inevitable *unless* barbarism wins out, then it would be equally true to say that *barbarism is inevitable unless* socialism wins out. A glass of water which is half full is the same as a glass of water which is half empty. We have therefore succeeded in establishing (following Trotsky’s formulation) the inevitability of *both* socialism and barbarism, which is disconcerting since it “proves” too much and not enough. Or rather, to put the matter less paradoxically, all that Trotsky has really asserted here is the inevitability of the disjunction “socialism or barbarism,” and not at all the inevitability of socialism, which is in effect abandoned.

This is in fact the approach which Professor Sidney Hook chose to take to the question in his book *Toward the Understanding of Karl Marx*, written while he still considered himself a Marxist. Hook wrote:

We are now in a position to understand what Marx really means when he speaks of the historic inevitability of communism. Communism is not something fated to be realized in the nature of things; but *if society is to survive*, communism offers the only way out of the impasse created by the inability of capitalism, despite its superabundance of wealth, to provide a decent *social* existence for its own wage-earners. What Marx is really saying is: either *this* (communism) or *nothing* (barbarism). That is why communists feel justified in claiming that their doctrines express both the subjective class interests of the proletariat and the objective interests of civilization. The objectivity of Marxism is derived from the truth of the disjunction; the subjectivity from the fact that *this* is chosen rather than *nothing*. Normally a recognition of the truth of the disjunction carries with it a commitment to communism. But the connection is not a *necessary* one any more than the knowledge that milk is a wholesome drink makes one a milk drinker. . . . It is only when one accepts the first term of the disjunction—which is a psychological, and, if you please, an ethical act—that he has a right to the name [of Marxist]. (Page 113-114. Emphasis in original.)

The reader will note that the conclusion to which Hook directly drives Trotsky’s formulation is that the acceptance of socialism is a moral choice. This is one of the observations which tends to drive the epigones into a frenzy. Indeed it is a conclusion drawn not from Trotsky’s inadequate interpretation of the meaning of the “inevitability” formula, but from his assertion of the existence of historic alternatives. And if it is taken in the context which Hook *here* gives it (not that

given by the Hook of today) the conclusion is unobjectionable.<sup>4</sup>

With all this behind, we can now turn to a positive analysis of the meaning of the formula “the inevitability of socialism.” Even so some ground still has to be cleared.

### Inevitability and Certainty

The concept of “inevitability” is closely bound up semantically with that of “certainty.” Now just as we saw there was both an objective and a human-subjective moment (aspect) to the first question, so is it also with “certainty.” Thus consider the statements: (1) “It is certain to fail.” (2) “I am certain it will fail.”

These two statements may carry different implications. The first has the connotation that the proposition is objectively provable; the second, the connotation “I am (morally) convinced of this but cannot prove it,” as in the case where the disputant, fresh out of argument, stamps a foot and says, “But I’m *certain* I’m right!”

Thus the words “inevitable” and “certain” may tend to *fuse* their objective and human-subjective moments—if you wish, to *confuse* them. There is thus a tendency for the word “inevitable” to be used in contexts which give it the connotation neither of a predetermined fate nor of an assigned degree of probability; but rather merely the connotation of asserting high confidence and conviction.

In Marxist literature we meet this element especially in agitational passages or perorations. We might call it the hortatory use of the word. It is interesting that the *Communist Manifesto*’s first part *begins* with the historical analysis of the alternatives of “revolutionary reconstitution or common ruin” but that it *ends* in a brilliant peroration climaxed by: “Its [the bourgeoisie’s] fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.” The logical purist might object that the expression “equally inevitable” makes as much sense as “equally dead,” but he would be making the mistake of believing that Marx and Engels are here trying to write with philosophic rigor.

The fact is that it is practically impossible to use language without leaving much unexpressed and “understood.” Thus—to use an example I did not have the felicity to invent—if a young man phones his girl and asks, “Is anyone home right now?” and she says, “No,” and he says, “Then I’ll be right over,” it is easy to point out that the question is nonsense and the answer is wrong, since the young man knew all the time that there *was* someone home, namely the girl he was talking to. This is a particular kind of example because the reaction may be, “Well, that’s a piddling quibble,” by which it is conveyed that there is little possibility of a misunderstanding arising in this case from the elliptical nature of the question and response.

In so far as one attempts to avoid ellipsis, one gets the (perhaps justifiedly) cumbersome jargon of philosophical treatises.

4. Provided, naturally, the word “moral” or “ethical” is itself first taken in the Marxist sense. The acceptance of socialism (rather than “barbarism”) is a moral choice for the **individual in relation to society**, but it is not a moral choice **hanging over society**—the latter does not exist. This is no more than to say that there are no “eternal” or supra-social moral principles, but only “good” or “bad” moral choices in terms of **social ends**. In class society this means: in terms of class antagonisms. It is because the interests of the working class coincide with those of humanity that **revolutionary morality** is today the only truly human morality. As for this latter, there is no use going into it here when anyone can buy and read one of the most brilliant works in Marxist literature, Leon Trotsky’s **Their Morals and Ours**. What bothers the epigones most is not their ignorance of the Marxist meaning of “moral choice.” It is the fact that **any** “choice” implies historic alternatives, and this is still what they cannot understand.

On the other hand, as soon as a question is raised, the "understood" is obviously not understood and has to be made explicit.

### Limitations of Marxist Formulas

This is what we now have to do with the formula "the inevitability of socialism." *Because all formulas are by their very nature elliptical.*

A formula is an attempt to reduce a more or less extensive group of facts to a shorter generalization. But a generalization can never be completely equivalent to the facts which it generalizes. Its value lies in that it can *usually* be substituted and that it usually works in such substitution; but the process of generalization requires that one leave out part of the data. All generalizations, all formulas, can have only *relative* validity. The old saw, "All generalizations are false, including this one" has its counterpart in "All Marxist formulas are wrong, including this one."

Any formula is an attempt to tie up reality in a bundle and put a label on it. The infinite complexity of reality does not lend itself to this. This is the dilemma of the natural scientist no less than of the social scientist: both have to dissect a living organism in order to study it. As soon as you dissect it, you are no longer studying a living organism. Yet it has to be done. The scientist must understand that much or most of the time he is studying phenomena abstracted out of context, and that necessary as this step is, it is not the end of his investigation but the beginning of a dialectical understanding of the phenomena in their dynamic interrelations. Formulas are dead pieces of living reality. Just as a scientific laboratory may be full of very useful jars filled with organs pickled in formaldehyde, so Marxist literature is full of very useful formulas.

To take one example where a hundred would not be too much for the re-education of muscle-bound Marxists:—Lenin's writings during 1917 hammered away at the socialists who became defensists under Kerensky, with the formula "The character of the class in power determines the character of the war," "The criterion is, first of all: which class is in power, which class continues to rule . . .," etc. This was a generalization from a certain number of facts about the nature of the capitalist state and imperialism. But when the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, this formula stood a small section of the Trotskyist movement on its ear. The party and Trotsky came out in favor of military defense and material support (not political support) to the Loyalist government as waging a progressive war. "What! but isn't the capitalist class in power in this Loyalist government of Azana's? Doesn't the capitalist class continue to rule?" The Lenin-quotations were exhibited. We countered in essence with another *but wider formula* of Lenin's: War is a continuation of politics by other means, and the character of a war is determined by the character of the politics of which it is a continuation. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, in the case of capitalist-imperialist states, the politics from which their wars flow is . . . capitalist imperialism. In Spain, we analyzed the concreteness of events and determined that the politics from which the Loyalist war flowed was primarily defense against fascism. The sectarians could never understand how it was possible for Trotsky to go *behind* a formula committed to paper by Lenin.

Above every formula is the Marxist method. A formula takes on meaning and is tested in every application of it. Every formula involves some exaggeration of an aspect of the truth, which is made bigger than life-size in order to emphasize it. One cannot avoid using formulas but one can avoid making

them into fetishes. Anything else is an abandonment of dialectical materialism, whether or not it be accompanied by loud outcries of love and faith for that first victim of pseudo-Marxist dogmatism. It is not really paradoxical to note that the aspect of Marxism which has been most frequently turned into a dogma pickled-in-formaldehyde is dialectical materialism itself.

### Historic Inevitability of Socialism

This understanding of Marxist formulas is an essential context for understanding the meaning of the "inevitability of socialism" in the light of the Marxist method. Without it one is doomed to oscillate between the fatalistic view of inevitability on the one hand, and on the other the conclusion that all one can do is speak of the socialist perspective in terms of varying degrees of possibility or probability.

What we have to do is to *fill out* the formula "the inevitability of socialism." If it is objected that we are "reading something into it," then we have explained in vain why it is of the very nature of formulas that this must continually be done.

Easy to see, first, is the fact that "the inevitability of socialism" is *not even the complete formula*.

Trotsky's passage indicated this at least: that the Marxist concept is that of the *historic inevitability* of socialism. (Hook also correctly filled out the term.) The difference should be readily appreciated on the basis of our previous discussion of the operation of causes in different fields.

Historic inevitability means: inevitable on the basis of the *social-historic* causes and tendencies operating.

This should rid us at once of the wiseacre who thinks he has refuted the Marxist concept when he asks: "Is socialism still inevitable if a wandering star crashes into our sun and wipes out the solar system?" or some similar "sticker" (usually astronomical or geological in nature). The trouble with this kind of "annihilator" of Marxism is that he shares the Johnson interpretation of "inevitability" and *cannot* stomach it. The distinction we have made is the valid kernel of Trotsky's distinction "inescapable in the historic sense."

But the very use of the term "historically inevitable" forces a second realization. We said it means: inevitable on the basis of the social-historic causes and tendencies operating. In other words, what we are asserting is the existence of an *inevitable tendency*.

We must now examine what it means to juxtapose these two words, inevitable tendency. Does one cancel the other? That is, is it true that as soon as we speak of a tendency we can no longer speak of inevitability?

Not at all. In fact, any assertion of inevitability by human beings can only be an assertion about precisely an inevitable *tendency*. This applies with full force to the so-called "laws" of our exact sciences. It is only to the popular-science layman that they describe what *must* happen; scientists themselves are more aware that what they describe are forces or causal factors acting in a certain direction and inevitably tending to bring about a given result. The "law of gravity" does *not* assert that "what goes up must come down." It simply says that what goes up will inevitably tend to come down.

The same thing is true of Marxist formulas. Thus, the "law of the fall in the rate of profit" becomes in the hands of careful Marxist economists "the law of the *tendency* of the rate of profit to fall," etc. Again: our sectarians at the time of the Spanish Civil War might have managed to understand

Marxism if they had read their pet formula "The character of the class in power *tends to* determine the character of the war."

It will be seen that the use of "inevitable" in connection with the word "tendency" first of all asserts the existence of determinate causes behind the tendency. If anything, the objection can be made that "inevitable tendency" is not contradictory but, quite the opposite, tautological. For does not *every* tendency stem from determinate causes?

### Meaning of "Inevitable Tendency"

Here we only run again into the difference between objective inevitability and the relativity of human knowledge. Thus, Prof. Morris R. Cohen (in a different connection) cites the example of "a correlation of 87 per cent between the membership of the International (really American) Machinists' Union and the death rate of the state of Hyderabad" in India, for a period of twelve years. This "tendency," however, was not the result of any operative cause linking up the two phenomena; in other words, it was "accidental."

In the field of history there are also tendencies set up by non-historic ("accidental") factors which may be temporary and doomed to peter out and disappear. The tendency toward socialism, however, *inevitably* arises from the conditions of man's social progress toward the conquest of nature—in the last analysis, inevitably arises from the social nature of man—and this is merely expressed in fewer words when we say: *inevitably arises from history*. This is the content of the Marxist formula.

This not only distinguishes the tendency toward socialism from tendencies set up by non-historic factors. It also permits us to understand the disjunction "socialism or fascism" (or "socialism or barbarism") and its relation to the historic inevitability of socialism.

True, the tendency toward fascism, which we see, is not set up by non-historic factors. Its causes are also rooted in the field of society and history, in the decay of modern capitalism. But on the basis of the Marxist analysis there is an all-important difference between the tendency toward socialism and the admittedly existent tendency toward a "slave state." If this latter is beaten back by the definitive triumph of the proletariat in socialist revolution, then it is *dead*, consigned to the famous garbage-heap of history. But if *fascism* triumphs, *the tendency toward socialist freedom still must and will continue to re-assert itself under fascism itself, or—note!—under a bureaucratic slave society*.

This is the difference which is pointed to by the formulation of the historic inevitability of the socialist tendency. In this context, the tendency toward the "slave state" is a *conjunctural* tendency; the tendency toward socialism derives its historic inevitability from its causal roots deep in the very nature of man's society.

It is Antaeus—the Titan who, dashed to earth, comes back with strength renewed from contact with Earth, his mother. The Greek myth tells us that Hercules finally vanquished him by holding him aloft in the air and strangling him. Ruling-class society cannot do this to its Antaeus; for with relation to the working class it is both Hercules and Gaea—both its antagonist and its earth-mother. Herein too lies the historic inevitability of the socialist tendency.

### Inevitable Only Under Capitalism?

This is also why it is wrong to *limit* the applicability of the historical inevitability of socialism to the conditions of capital-

ism; that is, to make it mean *only* "inevitable under the conditions of capitalism."

Even with regard to the past: it would not be correct to say that the *tendency* toward socialism came into existence only with the birth of capitalism. What came into existence then, and could come into existence only then, was *scientific* socialism (Marxism)—the coming-of-age of the tendency toward socialism as a conscious movement understanding its own nature—and the possibility of victory. Before capitalism, socialist strivings were part reminiscence and part anticipation—partly a nostalgic memory of primitive tribal communism and partly a leap into the future far as human eye could see, the two elements inevitably merging in varying proportion in the like of a Spartacus or a Thomas Muenzer—but, however embryonic, never absent. No other status was possible under the then level of the productive forces. All this with regard to the pre-capitalist past, when, to be sure, assertion of the existence of a tendency toward socialism must be understood in its context.

But the important question is not with regard to the pre-capitalist yesterday but to the post-capitalist tomorrow. To believe that, with the disintegration of our doomed social order of today, the tendency toward socialism will die out *unless it is actually realized* is to misunderstand its roots.

If the theoretical alternative discussed by Trotsky is realized—a bureaucratic-collectivist "slave state"—then the fact that the means of production are now in the hands of a totalitarian state-power certainly would *change the forms* of the socialist struggle but could not eradicate it. From a struggle to take the factories out of the hands of the exploiters and *therefore* to take the state out of their hands, it would become a struggle to take the state out of their hands and *thereby* the factories. Starkly—even more starkly than today—would the social task be presented to the masses: the state "owns everything" but we do not own the state; the target is visible without camouflage.

In present-day terms, the socialist struggle becomes a struggle for "political democracy"; but this language would be as inadequate and obsolete to describe the social reality as when a savage describes a gun as "the arrow that kills from afar." For the *content* of "political democracy" under such conditions becomes not a harking back to outlived *bourgeois* democracy but becomes *synonymous* with proletarian, socialist revolution and economic democracy. The seizure of the state power by the proletarian democracy already finds the means of production collectivized. The speculations of Burnham concerning the possibility of his "managerial society" evolving toward political liberty are poppy-cock; for any *real* "political liberty" in such a state means the voluntary abdication of the ruling class—and this has never happened in the history of human exploitation.

We have pursued this question this far for its "theoretical interest" (to use Trotsky's expression) with regard to the practice of narrowly limiting the historic inevitability of the socialist tendency to the conditions of capitalism. *There is an equal and opposite mistake*: namely, to try to use this line of thought to "prove" that the socialist struggle would indeed be "easier" (in some sense) under conditions of bureaucratic-state centralization and control of production. This is akin to the present-day Cannonite argument that the proletarian revolution is, in some sense, "easier" in Stalinist Russia because it would not have to expropriate the factories from a private capitalist class. I do not have to emphasize, I trust, that at least for an historic period the victory of the "slave state" on

any world scale would be a severe setback to the socialist goal and a hurling back of civilization itself. I am at the moment concerned only to insist that the historic inevitability of socialism loses nothing of its force in a hypothetical post-capitalist but non-socialist society.<sup>5</sup>

It is also necessary to point out a consequence of the view that the "historic inevitability" is limited to the conditions of capitalism. This is simply that it cuts the ground from under any consistent interpretation of the meaning of this formula. For if the victory of the "slave state" means that the tendency toward socialism is dead, that the latter also is consigned to the afore-mentioned garbage-heap of history, then it is impossible to make any distinction between the "inevitability" of the socialist tendency and the "inevitability" of a bureaucratic-state tendency. Certainly the distinction which we made above becomes impossible and there is no tenable substitute. *Then*, indeed, and only then does the victory of socialism as against barbarism become only a matter of possibility or high probability or some other shade of the spectrum. This consequence is not the reason for rejecting this false concept, but it should give pause.

It is all the more necessary to belabor this point since, in the momentum of his polemic against us in 1939, Trotsky ran headlong against it.

I have already referred to this passage in *The USSR In War* where he speaks of "the historic alternative, carried to the end":

Either the Stalin régime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalin régime is the first stage of a new exploiting society. If the second prognosis proves to be correct, then, of course, the bureaucracy will become a new exploiting class.<sup>6</sup>

And this passage continues:

However onerous the second perspective may be, if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except only to recognize that the socialist program, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a

5. Around here we find the common ground in theory between Johnson and his *bête noire*, the IKD. The basis of both is the belief that the advance of "barbarism" over socialism would tend to wipe the latter off the agenda. Johnson does *not* see this happening now; the IKD does; therefore they appear as diametrically opposed in political conclusions, in the same sense that sectarians and opportunists are diametrically opposed. The IKD interprets the decline of capitalism into barbarism as "a reversal... of all relations, foundations and conditions valid for the ascending development of capitalism"; as "the exact counterpart" in reverse of this ascending development; as creating "conditions in economics, politics, social relations, etc., which are like the conditions of the epoch of the origins of capitalism" with "ever more backward-reaching features"; as "shoving society back to the barbarism of the Middle Ages," etc.; and concludes that socialism can no longer base itself on the working class but on an "all-sided" (by which they mean "all-class") struggle for the "democratic political revolution." Necessarily, on the basis of this view of the tendency toward barbarism as a rewinding of the capitalist film in reverse, they see the Stalinist degeneration as a reversion to **capitalism**, as does Johnson.

6. It is not germane to the present point, but it should be mentioned that the alternatives as formulated here by Trotsky are not mutually exclusive. The Workers Party, for example, believes that "the Stalin regime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society," and *also* that this abhorrent relapse has thrown up a new exploiting class already. Trotsky's implicit assumption throughout is that bureaucratic collectivism cannot exist in one country even as an abhorrent relapse, even as temporarily as a workers' state can exist in one country (and still does, in Trotsky's view). This is because, in the article quoted, he is arguing not against the position of the Workers Party (which was not developed until 1941) but against the position of one Bruno R., who (according to Trotsky) did maintain that the new slave society is now "replacing capitalism throughout the world (Stalinism, fascism, New Deal, etc.)." This latter view is also the position of Dwight Macdonald and (with an additional "managerial" vagary) of James Burnham. It is, of course, rejected by the Workers Party. The fact that Bruno R. and Macdonald use the same term that we do, "bureaucratic collectivism," is found very enlightening by the Cannon-Johnson epigones—in exactly the same way as Burnham and Macdonald are illuminated by the discovery that both Stalinists and Trotskyists speak of "socialism" or a "working class state."

Utopia. It is self-evident that a new "minimum" program would be required—for the defense of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society.

It is indeed self-evident that the revolutionary Marxist's program of immediate and transitional demands would be different in many ways from the one we fight for today, but Trotsky's meaning here seems to be that such a "minimum" program would have to be the *whole* program, no struggle for socialism being possible. Socialism becomes a Utopian dream—unrealizable—i.e., *impossible*. Thus we see the interesting transformation: by limiting the "inevitability of socialism" to "under the conditions of capitalism," the formula is turned into "the *impossibility* of socialism under any other conditions."

A few pages later, Trotsky again uses the adjective "self-evident":

Yet it is absolutely self-evident that if the international proletariat, as a result of the experience of our entire epoch and the current new war, proves incapable of becoming the master of society, this would signify the foundering of *all* hope for a socialist revolution, for it is impossible to expect any other more favorable conditions for it; . . .

But immediately after making this "self-evident" categorical assertion about "the foundering of *all* hope for a socialist revolution," Trotsky makes refutation unnecessary by adding: ". . . *in any case no one foresees them now, or is able to characterize them.*"

As far as our present point is concerned, it is not necessary to foresee or characterize "more favorable conditions," about which we have already said what is needed; we merely maintain that the "second prognosis" would not in any case make socialism a Utopia.

This line of thought about the hypothetical future has an immediate bearing upon the real present. Trotsky is saying: if *all* countries were like Stalinist Russia, socialism would be a Utopia. But *one* country today is like Stalinist Russia—namely, Russia. Is the struggle for socialism possible there? And if it is, is it *only* because capitalism still exists in the rest of the world? Does a proletarian revolution have any roots in Russia itself or does it depend *solely* on the working-class movement abroad? Such implications from Trotsky's polemical mistake get uncomfortably close to what we heard about Nazi Germany after the crushing of the labor movement there: salvation can come only from outside; the forces within are "finished." Furthermore: *one* country like Stalinist Russia means—a workers' state, which we must defend against capitalism as representing the future of humanity; *all* countries like Stalinist Russia mean—the impossibility of socialism!

No sense can be made along these lines.

### Historic Alternatives and "Pessimism"

Why does Trotsky fall into this projection of pessimism into the future? The answer is clear from his context: he is pushing hard against another kind of false pessimism, and has pushed himself over in the opposite direction. The paragraph we have just quoted continues straight on into the following, just as if the same thought were being expressed:

Marxists do not have the slightest right (if disillusionment and fatigue are not considered "rights") to draw the conclusion that the proletariat has forfeited its revolutionary possibilities and must renounce all aspirations to hegemony in an era immediately ahead. [And so on in an excellent vein along the same line.]

In other words, what Trotsky is gunning for is the pessimism of those (he mentions Bruno R. and Hugo Urbahns) who maintain the impossibility of socialism in *our* epoch, and is thus himself led into proclaiming the impossibility of socialism

in the epoch of the "second prognosis," catching himself up only at the last moment. It is "self-evident" from our discussion that one does not follow from the other, and that both "impossibilities" are wrong.

As we set out to do, we have been tracing the "theoretical interest" of the historic alternatives previously emphasized by Trotsky and summarized in the "socialism or barbarism" road-fork—tracing this theoretical interest as it bears upon the problem of the historic inevitability of socialism. It is, however, characteristic of the Cannon-Johnson epigones of Trotsky that they view with distaste any such theoretical interest. When, in the tradition of Marxism and in the words of Trotsky, the Workers Party has said: "Socialism or barbarism—these are the alternatives before humanity in our epoch," and when we further point to the phenomena which today "outline the social and political forms of a neo-barbarism," they exclaim with horror: "Pessimism! Lack of faith in the working class! Abandonment of the socialist perspective!"

As if *pessimism* is the conclusion which flows from the existence of these historic alternatives! Exactly the contrary. We repeat loudly and insistently with Trotsky:

*"Hence arises the necessity of revolution."*

And again!

*"In its light the necessity for social revolution appears most graphically."*

This will never be understood by our pseudo-Marxist mechanics. To these theoreticians of inevitability, Trotsky's writings on this question will always be an aberration to be hushed up like a daughter's fall from virtue for a respectable bourgeois. The latter may console himself with "Well, anyway she still goes to church," and the former console themselves with quoting Trotsky's attacks on the version of bureaucratic collectivism which is *not* held by the Workers Party—but for them "socialism or barbarism" will ever be only a phrase with a purely ceremonial character, like certain parts of the marriage ritual for most people. *It can be used in agitation, of course . . . kind of jolts people when you hit them with it . . . but as soon as you study our catechism, comrade, you'll find out we don't really mean it . . . scientifically speaking, socialism is inevitable, after all . . . this talk about historic alternatives is Shachtmanite revisionism. . . .* Thus is agitation interpreted as hypocrisy, and theory as dogma.

### Political Psychology of Fatalism

The Cannon-Johnson accusation of "pessimism," directed against the posing of "socialism or barbarism" as historic alternatives, is logically and politically absurd; but that is not to say it has no meaning. Confusing the historic inevitability of socialism with a fatalist dogma of socialism as inevitably the next stage of society, they conclude: "If you believe 'barbarism' is also possible (or 'equally possible'), then you have lost faith in the revolutionary potentialities of the proletariat and are on the road to giving up the struggle for socialism."

This political and logical absurdity has, however, a corollary reflecting back on its maker: "In order to maintain *my* will to struggle, I must continue to believe that there is no alternative to socialism in our epoch, that socialism is fated to ensue; I cannot permit myself to think in Trotsky's terms because it would undermine my faith."

We know what we would say to a worker who would refuse to fight and struggle unless guaranteed the impossibility of defeat. But there is a political-psychological force concealed behind such phenomena.

The name of Achilles comes to us from Greek legend as the symbol of the brave and valiant warrior. Yet we also learn that this exemplar of courage was endowed with a practical invulnerability in battle by the magic of the gods. In terms of logic we can ask: How can we ascribe courage to him who need fear no wound? In terms of psychology we can ask: Was not his "courage" due to the comforting knowledge of his invulnerability? And in answer to both questions we can say: Here we see fatalism as a *substitute* for faith in oneself.

The fanatical Calvinist, convinced by the doctrine of predestination that his doom to hell or election to heaven was already written on God's ledgers at birth, yet was spurred to good works to save his soul. Logically this was also absurd and a thousand philosophers have proved it. Why should a man be spurred to *activity* to bring about that which is already preordained? Psychologically there is less difficulty. The Calvinist stayed on the straight and narrow path for no other reason than to *reassure himself* from day to day of the fact that he was indeed among the elect.

In politics we see this process at work as frequently and as clearly. It is indeed behind the hortatory use of the concept of inevitability of socialism, even when this latter is not distorted into fatalism. In the Cannon-Johnson tendency, it becomes the basis of politics for them—a *substitute* for faith in the historic process of the Marxist sense, a *substitute* for "revolutionary optimism," a substitute for the will to struggle, a means of *reassuring themselves* with the ersatz of dogma against the danger of yielding to defeatist moods. It is in the company of the contradictory phenomena of the cowardly bully or of the morbid arrogance generated by an inferiority complex.

The defeats of the working class have left their mark on the brow not only of the renegades from Marxism but also of its loyalists. Defeatist moods are not only manifested in an open flight from revolutionary faith in the class struggle. Within the Trotskyist movement we see the two forms of the process: the IKD on the one hand, Johnson (out-Cannoning Cannon) on the other.

What this explains is not only the fact that Cannon-Johnson distort the Marxist meaning of the inevitability of socialism, but even more the fact that Johnson works himself into such a lather on the subject—what it explains is the pinnacle of importance to which he raises the holding of his saving dogma. For his faith is at stake. The great Marxists have asserted confidently, vigorously, and cogently their conviction of the coming triumph of the proletarian revolution and their belief in the historic inevitability of socialism, and we follow in their footsteps; but no *revolutionary* Marxist has tried to center his politics on it, on a crudely fatalist version of the formula at that (the two have to go together). This is a phenomenon of our own day. It is the reverse side of the coin on one side of which is inscribed the thesis of the fourth chapter of James Burnham's *Managerial Revolution*.

In 1921 Trotsky, at the head of the greatest revolutionary organization the world has ever seen, with the first workers' state in history in existence, after four years of the first worldwide revolutionary upsurge—Trotsky could explain in passing that although "we are convinced" that the working class will triumph, "the possibility is not excluded" that the exploiters may drag down "modern mankind into a state of collapse and decay for a long time to come," and warn eloquently that "unless we gain victory all society and all human culture is doomed," and conclude "hence arises the necessity of revolution." But in 1947, after almost three decades of proletarian

defeats, his epigones find it necessary to exclude such theoretical interests from the pale of thought! This is the picture that tells the tale.

### Fatalism and Reformism

A second impact of the theory of predestined inevitability is to be noted, as expected, on the question of organization. We asked with regard to our fanatical Calvinist: *Why should a man be spurred to activity to bring about that which is already preordained?*

Logically there can be only one consistent organizational conclusion. But there is no law which obliges any man to be logically consistent, and there are many which often force him to drop his eyes when the logic of politics stares him pitilessly in the face. We have not one but three answers to consider in reply to the paradoxical question: *What kind of organization do you need to bring about a foredoomed event?*

(1) *No party organization is necessary at all.* This is the consistent conclusion. Needless to say, it has never been held by any organized movement! There is Paul Mattick, of course. I have heard it from the breed known as the "parlor pink" who is utterly convinced that socialism is coming apace, who is naturally delighted at the prospect, and who is so void of doubt on the subject that any stir on its behalf is a work of supererogation. But such, alas, are the defects of human nature that even this admirable specimen of consistency occasionally wrenches himself from the strict demands of logic in order to contribute a few dollars when Norman Thomas runs for president.

(2) *No revolutionary party organization is necessary.* In socialist history, the classic exponents of the plain-simple-and-flat inevitability theory were the theoreticians of the Second International, and in particular of the German Social-Democratic reformists. They also deduced from an extensive textual acquaintance with Marxism that socialism was coming wafted on the wings of the "objective historic process." Being students of Marx as well as practical reformist politicians, they were both able and willing to transfuse this theory of the "historic process" with a few more drops of Marxist blood. For had not Marx said:

History does nothing; it "possesses no colossal riches"; it "fights no fight." It is rather man—real, living man—who acts, possesses and fights in everything. It is by no means "History" which uses man as a means to carry out its ends as if it were a person apart; rather History is nothing but the activity of man in pursuit of his ends.

The activity of man, then, is also a part of the historic process—in fact, a part without which "History" fails to "process" at all—and so socialist organization is necessary. But had not Engels described how capitalism is being transformed by "the invading socialist society"? Capitalism is being changed over into socialism, as inexorably as petrifying wood changes into stone, molecule by molecule. If socialism is inevitable anyway, then all that has to be done is to build the *movement*, and the *goal* will take care of itself. A socialist movement—yes; revolution—no. Insurrection has become obsolete since Marx discovered the objective historic process to take care of the business for us. The "inevitability of socialism" becomes the "inevitability of gradualness." Marx turns in his grave, Engels being unable to do so since his ashes had been consigned to the sea.

### Fatalism and the Party Question

The First World War, the Russian Revolution and the revival of revolutionary Marxism by the Bolshevik movement exploded this reformist claptrap. Cannon and Johnson stand

on the shoulders of this movement: they cannot go back to the Social-Democratic version of inevitability without breaking with it. But their theory of inevitability nevertheless shadows their concept of organization.

Let us be clear about the relationship between the two. The Social-Democrats did not deduce their reformism from their theory of inevitability. The latter played the role of "Marxist" justification for the former. Given a period of expanding capitalism, an apparent prospect of limitless reforms, a period during which the labor aristocracy of the advanced countries grew fat on the crumbs of imperialism, *the reformism of the Second International was the yielding of the socialist movement to the degenerative social tendencies and forces of its times.* Their theory of inevitability, created out of scraps of Marx-quotations, was on the one hand the ideological manifestation of this process, and on the other, its rationalization and bridge with the past.

In our epoch, the degenerative social influences which arise from the noxious exhalations of a decaying world and which breathe their vapors also on the revolutionists, are no longer those of an expanding capitalism and a bribed labor aristocracy. *Today the odor that permeates the world is that of the "totalitarian servitude" whose outlines have become visible.* The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of the ruling class. Capitalist ideology is transformed; even "totalitarian liberalism" appears—and what shall we say of revolutionists?

Where sin runs riot, even a deacon may slip; where license reigns as the norm, even the strait-laced lady may begin to look with less horror on an innocent flirtation; and I have read that dentists may get to like the odor of a decayed tooth. And so, while our "capitalist-democrats" propose universal conscription for the militarization of the youth—Cannon enunciates the principles of a monolithic "Trotskyist" party. And while Freda Kirchwey bewails American imperialism but concludes that its foreign policy must be upheld in the main—Johnson decides that though he does not approve of Cannon's monolithism, he yet belongs at his side. He explains that Cannon's unfortunate tendencies toward Stalinization will be taken care of by the objective historic process. There is the third answer:

(3) *No democratic party organization is necessary.* As long as we are for soviets, shop-committees, the self-mobilization of the masses, and against retrogressionism, the inevitability of socialism will be at our right hand in beneficent vigil. Social fatalism plays the same role today as it did for the Social-Democrats.

### The Last Thousand Feet

While writing this, I have been reading the book just published by James Ramsay Ullman on the history of the seven attempts to climb Mt. Everest, summit of the world. It is a history of continuous defeats since the First World War. Yet there were no insuperable technical obstacles. More than once men have struggled to within a thousand feet of the goal—some turned back to defeat, Mallory and Irvine went on to death. But no one has come forward with the theory that there is something inherent in the nature of men and mountains which makes the Everest dream utopian. And Ullman says:

That the world's highest mountain will some day be climbed is inevitable—as inevitable as the crossing of the oceans, the spanning of the continents, the discovery of the poles. Perhaps the victory will be won on the next attempt; perhaps not for generations. But still men will try, and more men . . . and those men will get to the top.

And if you ask *why* they will struggle, he answers:

"Have we vanquished an enemy?" George Mallory once asked himself, standing with his companions upon a high, hard-won summit and looking down at the long way they had come. And there was only one answer: "None but ourselves."

So Leon Trotsky wrote: "The present crisis in human culture is the crisis in the proletarian leadership." Man struggles

to conquer and control nature through a half million years of technological revolution and today finds himself up before the last obstacle: his own society—the last thousand feet. It too will be spanned with the historic inevitability of man's ascent to humanity.

HAL DRAPER.

# The First Irish Marxist

## A Portrait of James Connolly

I  
The Irish national revolution can be viewed as a historical laboratory of the so-called national question. As the Irish rebelled, or threatened to rebel again and again during the nineteenth century, the movement included elements from various classes and groups within the country. To be sure, it is a commonplace to state that a national revolutionary movement comprises elements from more than one social class; nonetheless, this commonplace must be stressed in any study of the Irish national revolution. Just as there has been unity, there has also been disunity. Differences within the Irish movement have often been focused in terms of an opposition between the social question and the political question, interpreting the latter to mean the central aim of achieving national sovereignty or independence.

The Irish movement was energized by the Great French Revolution. The United Irishmen, organized at the end of the eighteenth century, were directly influenced by the men of the Great French Revolution. Wolf Tone, a leader of that period, would serve as but one illustration of this fact. John Mitchell, one of the strongest and bravest figures of 1848, was condemned as a felon and deported to the far Pacific. Even though there was a strong conservatism and aristocratic feeling in his nature, even though he defended the South against the North in the American Civil War, he, nevertheless, showed a Jacobin streak. One might say that Mitchell suggested both the tory socialist and the Jacobin. Michael Davitt, one of the leaders of Parnell's party, continued the tradition of these rebels. James Fintan Lalor, the hunchback, who was one of the most fiery and eloquent of all nineteenth century rebels, based his thinking on the events of the Great French Revolution. And he was, also, encouraged by the revolutions of 1848 on the continent, as when he wrote:

*Mankind will yet be masters of the earth. The right of the people to make the laws—this produced the first great modern earthquake [the great French Revolution]. . . . The right of people to own the land—this will produce the next. Train your hands, and your sons' hands, gentlemen of the earth, for you and they will yet have to use them. (Italics in original.—J. T. F.)*

Men such as Lalor and Davitt did not separate the social and the political question. Involved in the thinking of the major Irish rebels was an acceptance of the dignity of the individual which flows out of the traditional ideas of individualism. The Irish rebels were painfully aware of the degradation of the Irish people: they saw and knew the conditions of squalor and misery which were forced upon them. Mitchell saw the corpses of those who starved in the famine; he saw the wretched laden famine ships leaving for other lands. In Ireland, we can clearly see one of the psychological derivations of conditions of oppression and injustice. Poverty and a lack of sovereignty in a poor nation create attitudes of dependency.

Except in rare moments of revolutionary momentum, the poorest sections of the masses of the people usually develop dependent attitudes. Robespierre, in one of his great speeches, declared that the Jacobins desired to create a nation in which men would rise "to the full stature of humanity." The poor usually fail to attain anything approximating that full stature. And the Irish rebels did not need to indulge in psychological theorizing in order to know about facts such as these. They grasped truths like these in their direct contacts with the Irish people. In this way, the notion of attaining manhood was linked with the idea of rebellion. In other words, rebellion offered them the road to manhood, not only for themselves, but also for the Irish people as a whole. On the one hand, they wanted to lead the Irish on the road to freedom; on the other hand, they saw the differences between themselves and the great masses of their fellow Irish. By rebellion, they were finding the way to the fullest possible attainment of their own manhood: feelings such as these served to link their personal experiences with their reading of Irish history. And those who saw most clearly realized that the attainment of their ends required consideration of the social, as well as of the political question.

### The First Irish Marxist

At the present time, there are endless discussions of the question of personality and politics. Such discussions can often be interpreted as a consequence of the revolutionary defeats and failures of recent decades. A concept of personality was implied in the thinking of some of the outstanding Irish rebels of the nineteenth century. This is seen in the idea of the nation in Irish culture which was held by some of the nineteenth century Irish rebels. The young Irelanders saw in culture—in poetry, balladry, literature—a means of whipping, lashing, encouraging the Irish into a feeling of pride and dignity in their own manhood.<sup>1</sup> Such a conception is unmistakable in the writings of Thomas Davis, or in the cultural writings of John Mitchell. A clear illustration is the introduction which Mitchell wrote to the poetry of James Clarence Mangan. Briefly, these men desired a nation of men, men in a qualitative sense of that word. Their desires motivated a trust in the potentialities of their fellow countrymen. And their trust was not con-

1. I am well aware that this statement can raise (all over again) questions concerning literature and propaganda. Inasmuch as I have dealt in detail with these questions in *A Note on Literary Criticism*, and in other writings, I shall not go into them here where the discussion would raise side issues. It might be said, however, that men such as Mitchell and Thomas Davis revealed the best taste of their times. To criticize their taste, *ex post facto*, is merely to quarrel vainly with history and to raise sterile questions. The concept of the nation in Irish culture has remained to the present day, although this concept has gone through various permutations. But it should be added that taste does not flow directly out of concepts. The fact that Irish rebels such as John Mitchell had a political conception of culture in Ireland does not mean that they were crude in their reading habits.

fined to their ideas on culture, but was also integral in their political words and deeds. This trust underscored their lack of fear of violence and force. They tried to use all the means at their command to rouse the Irish people. When arrested, Lalor proudly flung the word, "felon" back into the faces of his jailers. After his arrest, and just prior to his deportation, John Mitchell refused to sign a statement urging his followers not to attempt his rescue from jail. The aim of national independence signified a nation of individuals with dignity; it envisaged an Ireland in which Irishmen would attain "the full stature of humanity." Samuel Johnson once remarked that "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." This is often true, yet it is sometimes false. In nineteenth century Ireland, patriotism was a first step on the road to manhood.

These comments should suggest aspects of the tradition which James Connolly represented in the Ireland of his day. The first Irish Marxist, he was the heir, the continuator and the expositor of this tradition. His real predecessors were those who did not sacrifice the social question for the political question; he fused both aspects of the Irish national tradition in his own works and in his own political life. He was an extraordinary figure during the early years of the twentieth century, not only in the Irish movement, but more broadly in the world movement for workers' emancipation. The intellectual fruits of his life are to be found in his work, *Labour in Ireland*.<sup>2</sup> This book is not only fundamental for a study of modern Irish history, it is also a contribution to the world library of socialist thought.

## II

James Connolly has been the subject of a recent biography by R. M. Fox, an English socialist. Mr. Fox has lived in Ireland for years, and is widely read in the history and the literature of Ireland. Besides this recent book, *James Connolly: The Forerunner*,<sup>3</sup> Fox has written other books on Ireland. His volume, *Green Banners*, is a story of Irish struggles, valuable for its assemblage of facts and material. His work, *The Irish Citizen Army* is valuable for similar reasons, and, also, because it serves as a reminder of the significance of this organization, the first army of the working class in the twentieth century. It was written at the request of the organization of veterans of the Irish Citizen Army. Relatively few Englishmen are capable of writing objectively about Ireland and about the personalities of the Irish movement. Mr. Fox, like Raymond Postgate, author of an excellent biography of Robert Emmett, is something of an exception. He brings sympathy, energy, command of the facts, and knowledge of the history of the British and the European socialist movements to his work. At the same time, I feel it necessary to note that he sometimes succumbs to that parochialism which is fairly pervasive in Irish political thinking. (I would add parenthetically that there was no parochialism in Connolly.) His sympathy seems to fall over into an emotional identification with the Irish which, at times, is not devoid of localism and even sentimentality. And with this, his identification is part of the process whereby he establishes Irish nationalism as a criterion of judgment. Unlike Connolly, his biographer has not "fused" his socialist ideas with his adopted Irish nationalism.

However, it seems to me that there is an integral connection between Fox's virtues and his deficiencies. His writings can help to revive interest in the social side of the Irish

tradition. He is retelling the story of the Irish struggle, refreshing memories concerning Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army, and emphasizing the best elements in the Irish tradition.

Fox's lucid account of the life of Connolly is based on the best sources. On the one hand, Fox offers paraphrases of Connolly's ideas, and gives full quotations from his writings; on the other hand, his recitation of the events in Connolly's life definitely conveys a sense of the man. Connolly's daughter, Nora Connolly O'Brien, wrote a moving personal account of her father, *Portrait of a Rebel Father*, which well might be read in conjunction with Mr. Fox's biography. It is personal and intimate, and the emotions motivating it are truly beautiful.

### Some Boyhood Experiences

R. M. Fox pertinently writes: "The story of the poor boy who becomes rich and successful has always made a strong appeal. But this is a story of far greater splendour—of a boy who did not become rich and yet his career remains an inspiration to all who strive for social justice." It is the story of James Connolly. The son of poor parents, he was a self-educated worker. Forced emigration from Ireland was no hearsay tale for him. Both Connolly and his father could find work in England or Scotland, but not in Ireland, where, before their time, the English had seen to it that manufacturing could not exist. His own family story was but part of the general story of forced emigration from Ireland. He was born in a gloomy Irish cabin in 1870. His father was a farm laborer. The family had to leave Ireland for Scotland. There, he became a child laborer. At one time, he was placed on a box in the factory in order that he might appear to be taller than he was when the factory inspector came around. While still a youth, he worked at many jobs. He did work of the type which destroys the health and morale of men and women, let alone boys. He studied history, politics, literature, by candle light in an Irish cabin, or in a city tenement after harsh hours of work. He studied Marx, and his economic views were based on Marx, particularly on *Capital*. He became a Socialist in Scotland while still in his teens. But in his first period as a Socialist, he was quiet and did not thrust himself forward. He listened, observed, studied; learned what he could from older comrades before he came forth to assert and express his own views. When, in his youth, he did step forward, he became one of the leading Socialists in Glasgow. He married, worked as a Socialist, shared the hard life of the workers. In 1897, Connolly returned to Ireland to organize for Socialism. He lived there as did the exploited workers, and founded the Irish Republican Socialist Congress. As early as 1900, he participated in international socialist congresses, and at these meetings he generally supported the left wing. In Dublin, he played the role of an agitator, an organizer and an editor. He shared in the organization of the famous anti-British demonstrations in the year of the jubilee of Queen Victoria. In 1904, he came to America. Here, he worked at various jobs including that of an insurance agent, and he participated in the activities of the American labor and socialist movements. He was associated with Daniel De Leon, with the Industrial Workers of the World, and later, with the Socialist Party in the time of Eugene V. Debs. He had political disagreements with De Leon and these were exacerbated because he was a practicing Catholic. His experiences in America were of prime importance in his

2. *Labour in Ireland*, Dublin, 1922. It includes *Labour in Irish History* and *The Re-Conquest of Ireland*.

3. *James Connolly: The Forerunner*, by R. M. Fox, Tralee, Eire. The Kerryman Press, 250 pp., 10/6 net.



later career. Here, he saw, at first hand, the capitalism in an advanced country. This helped him to see the problems of Ireland more clearly than could many of his contemporaries. Here, also, his association with the IWW showed lasting influences. His own conceptions of industrial unionism as well as of strike tactics and agitational methods, were all influenced by the Wobblies.

Connolly returned to Ireland in 1907 and became an organizer in Belfast for the Irish Transport Workers Union, playing a major role in the organization and the development of the Irish Labor movement in the North of Ireland. He became associated with Jim Larkin, and went to Dublin to participate in the leadership of the Dublin transport strike. He helped to organize the Irish Citizen Army, led it in the Easter Rebellion, was wounded during the fighting, and was one of the leaders who was executed. He was carried to his execution in a chair because of his wounds. When his wife visited him for the last time, he tried to comfort her. Telling her not to cry, he added: "Hasn't it been a full life? And isn't this a good end?" On learning that his son had been in jail, his face lit up, and he remarked: "He was in the fight. . . . He has had a good start in life, hasn't he?"

### III

In most of the photographs of Connolly, he looks like an ordinary, almost an undistinguished, man. Judging from these pictures, he might be any Irish bar tender, small business man, craftsman. He was a simple, quiet man, careful, precise, thoughtful and determined. Capable in theory although self-taught, he was also highly practical. No Irish contemporary of his could match his qualities, his strategical understanding and his extremely clear sense of tactics. He studied with the most practical of aims: in order to learn how best to carry forward the Irish struggle. And, in turn, he saw the Irish struggle as part of the struggle of the workers all over the world. He studied the revolutions of the past in Ireland and on the continent in order to teach himself, and the Irish, how they might strike their own blows for freedom most effectively. In various articles, he tried to bring the experiences of other countries to the Irish. Democratic, both in theory and practice, he asked every member of the Irish Citizen Army if they wanted to go through with the fight they were going to make in the Easter Rebellion. They did.

A few personal anecdotes and stories about Connolly will perhaps best give a sense of the man. These are taken from Mr. Fox's book and from other sources. In *Portrait of a Rebel Father*, Nora Connolly O'Brien tells how once at Mass, the priest violently denounced Connolly in a sermon. Although Connolly was not mentioned, it was clear to him and to his daughter, and also to many others present, that he was the object of this attack. The daughter was disturbed and distressed; she wanted to squirm, to do something. But Connolly sat unruffled, listening with no sense of strain or agitation showing on his face. Afterwards, she asked him why he had not done anything, why he had not, at least, walked out of the church? He answered: "Well, Nora, because they lose their dignity, we don't have to lose ours."

In 1915, during the course of a strike on the Dublin quays, the police were harrassing the strikers. Clerks had been forced to work as scabs. Connolly, on learning of the continued police treatment of the workers, declared that this would have to stop. He called out a squad of the Irish Citizen Army. They reported for duty wearing their

dark green uniforms, and armed with rifles and bayonets. They marched to the picket line in formation; there, they marched along at the side of the pickets, informing the police that they had come to protect their striking class brothers. The pickets were no longer molested; the clerks inside fled. Soon after this incident the strike was settled.

### The Irish Citizen Army

Not long before the Easter rebellion, the British sent the police out to raid rebel papers, and to confiscate copies of these and the equipment used in printing them. The police arrived at Liberty Hall, headquarters of the Irish Transport Workers, and, also, of the Irish Citizen Army. Connolly asked them if they had a warrant. They had none. He drew his revolver and declared that they would not be allowed to search the hall. When they returned with a warrant in order to search the premises for copies of nationalist papers, Connolly, revolver in hand, stood by the door leading into the room in which was printed the paper that he edited. He told the police that he would shoot the man who entered this room, insisting that the warrant did not apply to it. The police searched the rest of Liberty Hall, found no nationalist papers, and departed. Connolly's paper was, at that time, not suppressed. Following this raid, Connolly sent out orders for the mobilization of the members of the Irish Citizen Army. Irish workers downed their tools, left wagons in the streets and rushed to Liberty Hall. Some even swam the Liffey to get there. They reported in working clothes, rifles in hand.

Connolly was arrested during the labor battles of 1913. He went on a hunger strike, and was released from prison, weak from want of food. Once when he was lecturing in America, he was interviewed by a reporter. This journalist had questioned other Irishmen, and many had claimed that they were descended from the kings of Ireland. More generally, the journalist had a fixed notion that Irishmen always boasted of the grandeur of their country and of their own ancestry. He asked Connolly a question about his ancestors, and added that he wanted to know if they had owned estates or castles in the old country. Connolly answered: "I have no ancestors. My people were poor and obscure like the workers I am speaking to now." Recalling his youth and his early readings, he once said: "I always remember the first time I sent . . . for a bundle of *Penny Readings* and how delighted I was when they came. . . . It was always so difficult for me to get to read as a boy that I thought it wonderful to receive a parcel like this."

When he led the Irish Citizen Army out for the Easter Rebellion, he told the members that they would be given the post of honor: they would attack. And he also told them to keep their rifles because some of those (the Nationalists) with whom they were joining to fight, would not be willing to go as far as the workers must go: they might need their rifles again.

Connolly was a man of genuine simplicity and of deep humanity. No problem of the Irish workers was too small for him to give it his attention. No sacrifice was too great for him when his ideas were at stake. His writings were clear, simple, direct, and marked by flashes of genuine eloquence. *Labour in Irish History* and *The Re-Conquest of Ireland* were written over long periods of time under conditions of great difficulty. He had to work for his own living, and to carry on his practical political activities. He

had none of the leisure of the trained scholar or the professional intellectual. The completion of these works were, in fact, triumphs of his own will, revelations of his persistence and determination. And these books are, as Robert Lynd stated, "of infinite importance to Ireland." Their importance is not solely to Ireland, but to the whole world.

Connolly was not only a brave and bold fighting man: he was, also, a bold and stimulating thinker. Having attempted to suggest some sense of Connolly the man, let us now consider his ideas.

JAMES T. FARRELL

(Part II will appear next month)

# Trotskyism in Bolivia

## Political Tendencies Following the General Strike

### I.

Three currents can be distinguished in post-revolutionary\* Bolivian politics:

1. The clearly defined current working for the economic and political restoration of the feudo-bourgeoisie, represented by the Republican Union at whose head stands Bolivia's president, Dr. Hertzog.

2. The Stalinist current, calling for national unity and demonstrating it in the nature of its leadership, Guachalla (ex-ambassador to the United States) and Arze (Stalinist leader). The program of this current is also economic restoration for the feudo-bourgeoisie disguised as the "bourgeois revolution." This tendency was supported by a section of the mine-owning bourgeoisie (Armayo-Hochschild), by the middle class and the petty-bourgeoisie, the artisans, and the backward layers of the working class.

3. Finally, there is the current of the rebellious proletariat, which is quite complex in character, and is burdened by certain traditional left-overs and nationalist impurities. Its program is the democratic revolution as the road toward Socialism. This current was represented by the mining proletariat of the Bolivian plateau, a minority of the urban proletariat, by the Marxist intellectuals, and rebellious sections of progressive white collar workers (bank employees). Politically it was represented by the POR (Revolutionary Workers Party), official Bolivian section of the Fourth International, by the Miners' trade union and by the Miners' parliamentary bloc.

Although Bolivia is a backward, semi-feudal and semi-colonial country, these three currents can be distinguished with sufficient clarity, revealing in embryonic form the problems and contradictions of the future Socialist revolution in the South American continent. By virtue of its one-sided economic development, its backward social structure, and political dependence, the social and political contradictions are more advanced and take on a greater clarity of outline in Bolivia than in the neighboring countries, providing Marxist theory with a great many lessons.

### Role of the Stalinists

In the first period, the Stalinists appeared to be the main opponents of the feudo-bourgeois current. Allied with bourgeois "liberalism" and leading the petty-bourgeois, it almost won the national elections under the banner of "National Unity." Its "progressive" and "democratic" slogan, "the bour-

geois revolution," won over a part of the proletariat. It seemed as if the Bonapartist tendency was about to find its instrument in the Stalinist party. However, international developments, North American pressure, the massacre of the workers in Potosi directed by the Stalinists, and the political action of the Trotskyists underlined the decay and political defeat of Stalinism. The bourgeois right formed a cabinet of "national unity" with the Stalinists. This, above all, was the final step leading to the political defeat of the latter.

The mine owning bourgeoisie expected the PIR (Stalinist "Party of the Revolutionary Left") to defeat the mine-workers, that is, the miners' union, the POR (Trotskyists), and the Miners Parliamentary Bloc (Trotskyists and mine unionists). But without having political power in their hands, the Stalinists were incapable of carrying out the tasks assigned them by the Patino mining interests. They could not disarm the workers and hand them over to the bourgeoisie. After the Catavi strike, the largest mine center owned by Patino (the tin king), the PIR ministers, criticized by the bourgeoisie and the workers, lost the battle for their party. Before betraying the proletariat, they had handed the native peasants over to the bourgeoisie, thus betraying the program of the bourgeois revolution. The cabinet of national unity was dissolved.

Previously divided into a rightist majority and a Stalinist minority, the bourgeoisie now united against the working class and the Stalinists, forming a cabinet of the Republic Union. The bourgeois revolution proposed by the PIR in an alliance with the "progressive" bourgeoisie evaporated, leaving as its only heir a native brand of Bonapartism. The bourgeoisie chose its own purely bourgeois variety of Bonapartism instead of the Stalinist type. The native Bonapartist program is realistic and concrete. "Down with revolutionary dreams! Down with the bourgeois revolution! We must restore mine production, and since the real price of tin has fallen we must lower wages and force the workers to greater productivity." *In a word, economic restoration at the cost of the proletariat.* As for the countryside, an end to experiments and novelties. For the Indians who ask the division of the land and the abolition of servitude, a rain of blows and massacre.

From a political point of view it is a "strong" government against the workers and native peasants, but democratic toward the bourgeoisie itself. It is a Bonapartist government in a permanent state of siege, covered by the fig leaf of a servile and domesticated parliament. After a short period of activity in the government, the Stalinists capitulated to this program, demonstrating their exhaustion and preparing their decline. Confident that this capitulation would take place, the bourgeoisie launched its attack upon the proletariat in order to realize its program.

\*The revolution to which Comrade J. Robles makes reference broke out on July 21, 1946, when the Bolivian masses overthrew the totalitarian Villaroel regime. For a comprehensive account of this event and ensuing developments in Bolivia's stormy political life see Comrade L. Velasco's article in the August, 1947, issue of *The New Internationalist*.—Tr.

## II.

After the Stalinist capitulation, the only force remaining as an effective obstacle to the native bourgeois and Bonapartist program of economic restoration was the mine proletariat. The Patino mineowners declared it was necessary to fire the rebellious workers and hire new and more docile ones. The government supported this program which was directed against the miners' union and ordered troops into the mine districts. The appointment of the new Minister of Defense, Zilvetti Arze, known as a butcher of the workers, grave digger for the Penaranda government, involved in the famous massacre of Catavi, appeared to the workers as an act of provocation. The miners federation called a general strike in the mines supported by the whole working class. Were the strike a success, the Hertzog government would inevitably fall. But the strike was not as successful as the Federation expected it to be. The urban workers did not support the strike with any great degree of effectiveness. Of course, a workers' coordinating committee was created in which there participated the CSTB (Federation of Bolivian trade unions, dominated by the Stalinists), the railroad workers federation, also Stalinist dominated, the factory workers federation which is unaffiliated, and the bank employees' union, and many other minor unions (bakery, construction, carpenters, etc.). The Stalinists were in the committee only to obtain leadership of the organization of the strike *and then break it*. The strike-breaking role of the Stalinists reveals their reactionary character, their servility before the bourgeoisie, and their fear and hatred of the independent workers' movement. When the transportation workers came out against the strike, its fate was settled. Under these circumstances, the only group to keep the spark of resistance alive in La Paz was the bank employees union, which the government feared more than the workers strike. The government was unable to make arrests in this strike because involved was a question of members of the middle-class!

### The Meaning of the Strike

The strike of the factory workers was broken by the attitude of the Stalinists; and the government proceeded energetically to the arrest of the secretary general of the factory workers' union, Quiros, thereby beheading the strike. In addition the strike was only partially successful in the mining centers. Although the Stalinists could not break the spirit of the miners' independent union, the combined pressure of the Stalinists and the Republican Union party weakened the union, frightening and corrupting the more backward and vacillating layers of mine workers. The government knew how to mobilize not only its agents among the proletariat, but its middle-class organizations as well, the so-called "revolutionary leagues" who covered the walls with such slogans as "down with the strike," "death to Lechin" (secretary of the miners union).

The state of siege proclaimed by parliament finished off the strike of the bank employees. *The Stalinists voted for the state of siege in parliament. Only the eight votes of the miners' parliamentary bloc were cast in opposition.* The Bonapartist regime triumphed, and since it was a native and not a Stalinist Bonapartism, the Stalinists crawled on their bellies begging the tolerance of the latter. The president promised this tolerance on the condition that they would be "well-behaved children." Now the right wing has an almost open road in realizing its program of national "economic restoration" at

the cost of the workers and peasants, in the first place at the expense of the exhausted mine-workers. After their attempt to realize the bourgeois revolution by massacring the workers and tolerating the slaughter of the peasants, the Stalinists are also accepting this solution. It is certain that they are following this course in agreement with the instructions of the Chilean Communist party in order to "survive" and fulfill the role of Stalin's fifth column in the future international conflict.

As for the Bolivian feudo-bourgeoisie, it now is worthy of the trust and confidence of Peron as well as the United States. It is many years since so strong and consolidated a government existed in Bolivia. It is a Bonapartist government with parliamentary trappings, with a "domesticated" congress that voluntarily submitted to the "state of siege" with its own resolution as "representatives of the nation," the almost majority Stalinist party being an accomplice to the act. Although the mine proletariat has not been massacred, nor its parliamentary representation arrested, it has been politically defeated because of the bad organization of the strike and the accusation that it acted under the instigation of the defeated Nazi-Fascist regime. The middle-class is convinced that the mine workers strikes threaten its existence and "standard of life." The public employee trembles for the government budget, threatened by the decrease in mine exports. The proletariat is completely isolated, first of all from the peasants who were massacred in front of everybody's eyes, including the workers, and secondly from the middle class. In this respect the termination of the bank employees' strike was somewhat symbolic.

## III.

To attribute the defeat to lack of organization and the weakness of the Bolivian proletariat would be somewhat old-fashioned, idealistic and scholastic. The roots are more profound and penetrate to ideological and theoretical sources.

According to the account of a member of the Central Committee of the POR (Revolutionary Workers Party), official Bolivian section of the Fourth International, the ideological reasons for the strike derive from the Argentine Trotskyist organ "Octubre," whose errors have been subjected to criticism by Comrade Luis Velasco in his work on structural changes in Latin America.\*\* This magazine, famous for its support of Peron, considering him the realizer of the "bourgeois-democratic" revolution not only in Argentina but in all South America, attacked the Bolivian POR for vegetating in the shadow of the Bolivian right wing instead of allying itself with the defeated MNR (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement), in order to embark on the road of the democratic revolution in Bolivia together with the revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie. This article was circulated extensively in Bolivia and had an almost decisive influence in launching the badly organized and premature general strike against the government, which ended in strengthening the Bonapartist tendency.

### How the Trotskyists Participated

The secretary-general of the mine workers' union, Lechin, an ex-member of the MNR, who now vacillates between the position of the POR and that of his past, or more accurately, the political influence of his ex-friends, was greatly impressed by this article and pushed the declaration of the strike through the miners union and the miners parliamentary

\*\*Comrade L. Velasco's important theoretical article on Latin America will appear soon in *The New International*.—Tr.

bloc. The POR was dragged along by this tendency. The capitulation of the POR to the "Octubre" tendency was well prepared by the theory of the "democratic revolution" as the immediate task in Bolivia, possible without the aid of the international proletariat, which would include the taking of power by the POR and the Miners Federation.

Exemplified in the pamphlet written by Lavalle and the parliamentary deputy, Lora, this theory separated itself from the position of the Peruvian Marxist theoretician, Mariategui, who clearly stated that the Peruvian (or Bolivian) revolution would be Socialist and International. Lora considered Mariategui's point of view mistaken and availed himself of the terminology used in the Mexican review, "Clave," which speaks of the "proletarian" revolution in order to avoid the contradiction between the terms "Socialist" and "Democratic," interpreting the proletarian revolution as democratic and not socialist in character, which fulfills the unfinished tasks of the democratic revolution *in passing*.

This theoretical deviation prepared the adventurist atmosphere in the POR and facilitated the role of the MNR agents among the workers. They desired the defeat of the government at all cost, and hoped to waste the strength and driving power of the working class as well as to bring about this defeat, and thus climb to power on its back to incorporate their regime in Peron's South American bloc. It is the judgment of the "Octubre" article that the South American petty-bourgeois of the Peronista type in Argentina, Aprista in Peru, MNR in Bolivia, is revolutionary in character and therefore worthy of workers support. This thesis found the soil well prepared in the Bolivian POR, according to my informant.

For various reasons, the spontaneous character of the miners' movement being in first place, the role of the Fourth Internationalist party, was very limited. Because the party lacked hegemony over the movement, some POR members tried to lead the miners directly, permitting themselves to be dragged along at times by the elemental movement. The Miners Parliamentary Bloc, which includes eight deputies and senators, is an amalgam of Trotskyists and trade unionists with a nationalist past. Only three deputies are members of the POR, the others are ex-nationalists. The limited role of the POR was quite evident in the strike; only the unions of secondary importance (bakery workers, construction workers, bank employees in part) followed the slogans of the Fourth Internationalist party; the others marched behind their union leaders, doubtful and ex-nationalist elements.

The strike ended with the victory of the right. And what if it had ended in the victory of the miners? Would the POR have been capable of organizing a workers' government and unleashing the democratic revolution? I am afraid not, and I am afraid it would have had to resort to the recommended alliance with the MNR elements, which would have *obviously ended in a militaristic and nationalistic government*. This was the solution toward which the disreputable MNR elements marched in venturing the road of the general strike.

The South American petty-bourgeois is not, as "Octubre" would have it, revolutionary. On the contrary it is reactionary, capable only of installing a pseudo-fascist or Bonapartist government, and is completely incapable of setting the bourgeois revolution in motion. For this reason, any alliance with it, no matter how temporary, whether with the nationalist wing which sympathizes with Peron, or with its Stalinist wing, constitutes a grave error and a betrayal of the Socialist revolution and the proletariat.

#### IV.

The growth of Bolivian Trotskyism has been spontaneous, a superficial product of economic and social contradictions, and of a political revolution in the most backward South American country. It advanced further than Trotskyism in the neighboring countries and the international working class movement. *Hence its child-like and messianic faith in its historic mission and ability to release a continental revolution and accomplish a democratic revolution in a single country*. From the same causes sprang the necessity of making concessions to the nationalist elements in the trade unions, and above all in the miners union. Here too, we have the explanation for the exaggeration of trade union influence, and the greater weight of the miners' representation over that of the Fourth Internationalist party, the POR.

Bolivian "PORism" is one of the most interesting phenomena in all South America. But its main weakness is its ideological backwardness, its faith in the possibility of the "democratic revolution" in a single country as backward as Bolivia. This explains its capitulation to the "Octubre" position, and its concessions to the remains of the defeated nationalist movement, the MNR. However, the Bolivian section of the Fourth International is faithful to the conservative Fourth International majority. It repeats the slogan of the "unconditional defense" of the USSR, and continues to find nourishment in the theory of the "objectively progressive" role of world Stalinism. Its Centrist internationalist position turns out to be opportunistic adventurism in national political activity. Its alliances and concessions to nationalism have been accompanied by instances of "united fronts" with the Stalinists. It is a Trotskyism that is semi-Stalinist in its theory and activity, a limited movement tinged with disreputable provincials and nationalists. Its social base, the proletariat of the mines, is backward and is crushed by the terrible conditions of existence at an altitude of 4,000 to 5,000 meters. This proletariat lives in miserable hovels, is badly dressed and badly fed, suffers from the eternal cold, and is the victim of alcohol, which offers the only escape from this frightful existence.

#### Theory and Ideology

The Bolivian miners were Villaroelists and Nationalists whom the defeated regime mobilized against the traditional right with demagogic phrases and certain social gains. Now this proletariat has turned toward the POR in order to find support against the mine feudo-bourgeoisie. But this ideological turn is quite superficial. The factory and urban proletariat, like the entire industry of the country, is still in its swaddling clothes. The majority of the cadres of the POR are recruited from the middle class.

*The Bolivian section of the Fourth International succeeded in becoming an independent political force which could face the united attack of the entire feudo-bourgeoisie and the Stalinists. Even the unsuccessful and badly prepared general strike demonstrated the relatively tremendous strength of this movement, and almost shook the bourgeois government to its foundations. If only we could see similar examples of such independent revolutionary attitudes in America and Europe, even including the risk of the errors and defeats of the Bolivian Trotskyists!*

I believe that this sentence is the most positive judgment and defense against all negative and enemy criticism. The revolutionary development in Bolivia demonstrates the international possibilities of the revolutionary workers' movement and of Marxism. At the same time it exposes the dangers,

errors and weaknesses involved. In order to conquer the errors and backwardness, it is necessary to turn in new directions. It is necessary to defeat conservatism, centrism, opportunism and the endless chewing over of the inheritance bequeathed us by Trotsky.

In Europe we cannot cut the cord which ties us to Stalinism. The majority of Trotskyist parties tend more and more toward becoming a left opposition to Stalinism. In South America an even greater danger is represented by the Peronista, Aprista, nationalist penetration of certain sections of the Trotskyist movement. In Europe, the official Fourth Internationalists are fascinated by the "bourgeois revolution" realized by Stalin in Eastern Europe. In South America they can-

not free themselves of that fatal illusion, that will-o-the-wisp, the *fata morgana* of the "bourgeois revolution," of the revolutionary role of the nationalist petty bourgeoisie. Both phenomena reflect the same problem: the ideological backwardness, the conservatism, the pro-Stalinist reformism, or pro-nationalism of our movement.

If we are to embark on a new road, if we are to form an independent revolutionary workers' movement, it is necessary to conquer this backwardness and rearm with new weapons. *The evil lies not in Bolivia nor in South America. The evil lies in the world leadership of the Fourth International.*

Lima, Peru, October, 1947.

J. ROBLES.

(Translated by Abe Stein)

## WHY SWP BLOCKED UNITY

[Our August issue carried an article by Albert Goldman, "SWP Unity Line Changes Again," plus the text of speeches by J. P. Cannon and M. Stein, leaders of the Socialist Workers Party, in which they explain their new rejection of the unification of the Workers Party and the SWP. This material, published in accordance with our policy of keeping this "unity question" under the light of day, was considered and the whole situation examined by the recent plenary session of the National Committee of the Workers Party, which adopted the following resolution. As will be obvious to readers who have followed the documentary material on this point (published in full only in THE NEW INTERNATIONAL), the question of WP-SWP unity is finished to all practical intent, done to death by the Cannonites. The Workers Party statement draws the necessary conclusions.—Ed.]

The National Committee of the Workers Party, after reviewing all the developments relating to unity with the Socialist Workers Party in the past year, deems it necessary to re-state the position of the Party.

The Workers Party, seconding the initiative taken by the then Minority of the SWP in proposing the merger of the two organizations more than two years ago, promptly declared in favor of re-unification. Our Party considered that the unity would signify a big step forward in the advancement of the revolutionary movement here and abroad, provided the unification were achieved on a solid basis. In the course of the first attempt to reunite the two organizations, our Party demonstrated beyond question that it was prepared to make every conceivable concession to the SWP in the interests of unity, short of the abandonment of our own political line and of the democratic rights that every member and every group within a revolutionary party should freely enjoy, including the right to propagate its political line in an orderly and responsible manner. Our Party stated repeatedly and unequivocally that in spite of the wide breach between the political and theoretical positions of the two organizations, representing two tendencies of the Trotskyist movement, these differences were compatible with common membership in a

single, united Party, provided that discipline in action and party democracy were fully and equally assured and that the formal unification were preceded and prepared by a local and increasingly close practical collaboration between the two parties in all possible phases of the class struggle. This position was maintained by our Party with unwavering consistency. This is still our position.

The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party evaded its responsibility for a long time by refusing to take a position in favor of or in opposition to unity or to practical collaboration between the two parties. It met the proposal for unity inside its own party with violent attacks upon the Minority aimed at discrediting and isolating it. At no time in the course of the few discussions with the Workers Party in that period did the SWP accept any of the proposals on unity made by our Party, or put forward any counter-proposals of its own. Finally, at its last national convention, the leadership of the SWP obtained a "unanimous" vote in opposition to unity with our Party, in condemnation of the Minority which first advocated the unity, and in expulsion of the two remaining leaders of the Minority—the first time in the history of the American Trotskyist movement when members were expelled for their dissident political opinions. In addition, the convention just as "unanimously" adopted the notorious document proposed by the leadership in which our Party was condemned as a "petty-bourgeois" tendency and the Fourth International was called upon to declare that those holding our political and theoretical views were, by virtue of that fact alone, excluded from membership in the International. This put a definitive end to the first attempt to achieve unity between the two parties. The responsibility for the conclusion rests exclusively upon the shoulders of the SWP leadership.

Early this year, upon the intervention of a representative of the Secretariat, a second attempt to achieve unity was begun. Once again our Party declared itself ready to make such a unity possible. It even went further in making concessions to the SWP and adopted a resolution on unity aimed at nothing less than saving the face of the SWP leadership in order to facilitate a 180 degree turn-about-face on its part

in the matter of unity. In no respect, however, did our Party find it necessary to make any significant, let alone fundamental, alteration in the position it had taken earlier on the unity question.

The National Committee of the SWP thereupon adopted, again unanimously, a resolution in favor of unity with the Workers Party. This complete reversal of the position against unity adopted a short time earlier at its convention, was accomplished without any reference to the previous position, without any acknowledgment of it or any explanation of the reasons for changing it. The bureaucratic opposition to unity was simply replaced by a bureaucratic support to unity.

The misgivings created in our Party by the SWP's resolution in favor of unity were enhanced by the first proposal made to us by the SWP leadership. Our Party had committed itself to abide by the decisions of the Extraordinary Party Convention on the conditions that it be permitted to participate in the Convention with full rights and that the unification of the two parties be achieved. The first proposal of the SWP to our Party was that we could choose between a unification accomplished after the EPC or an immediate unification; but that in the latter case, discussion of the EPC would terminate on the spot. Since the latter proposal would mean that the united party would be deprived of the opportunity, the right and the obligation to discuss the vital problems to come up for decision at the EPC, the Workers Party promptly declined the second choice and agreed with the first.

### SWP Blocked Collaboration

Meanwhile, it became clear that the SWP leadership not only did not contemplate any serious and substantial steps toward preparing a solid foundation for the unity, but that it envisaged only such a unity as required the capitulation of the Workers Party. Except for a couple of minor and in no case decisive exceptions, all the proposals made by our representatives for practical collaboration between the leadership and the ranks of the two parties in order to prepare a firm ground and a healthy atmosphere for the actual unity, were rejected by the SWP representatives. The latter acted toward the Workers Party not

as toward an independent organization with which it was obligated to work out in common and on the basis of equality the means of consummating a merger, but as toward an organization which was already transformed into a grouping within the SWP, subordinated to it and subject to its discipline. Hence, their refusal to work out a united position with our Party in the election campaigns conducted in recent months. Hence, their refusal to arrange for joint meetings of the party fractions in the mass organizations, or joint meetings of any kind between the two memberships. Hence, the attack upon one of our sympathizers as an "informer" and a "tool of the State Department," made in the press of the SWP and without consultation with our Party. Hence, the antagonism disseminated in the SWP against our Party because it prefaced the publication of the Joint Statement of the two parties on unity with an editorial explanation of its own in LABOR ACTION. Hence, the circular letter of X to the SWP membership, not aimed at preparing the latter for comradely and fruitful collaboration with the Workers Party, prior to the unification and inside a united party, but aimed at misrepresenting and maligning our Party, at mobilizing the SWP ranks for a factional assault upon it instead of for unity with it, and above all at creating and stimulating among the SWP ranks a demand for the capitulation of the Workers Party as the condition for unity.

#### **No Capitulation**

In order to bring all this duplicity and maneuvering to the surface where it could be scotched, the Workers Party declared bluntly that it had never conceived or agreed to a unity based upon a capitulation or upon the cession of any of its democratic rights within the united party. This declaration produced a highly desirable result in that it finally elicited from the SWP leadership an equally blunt declaration of its position. In the "unofficial" speeches of the two leaders of the SWP, they made it crassly clear that practical collaboration between the two parties was possible only where the Workers Party accepted the policy and decisions of the SWP and that unity between the two parties was possible only if the Workers Party capitulated to the SWP.

The open proclamation of this position, which is not only unacceptable to the Workers Party but which it is not even interested in discussing, means that the second attempt to achieve unity between the two organizations has also been smashed. Once again, the responsibility for the failure rests upon the shoulders of the SWP leadership. It has ruined for a long time the possibility of unifying the ranks of the revolutionary movement and thereby gravely undermined the possibility of unity of the movement abroad.

So far as the Joint Statement of the two parties on unity is concerned, the Workers Party records the fact that the past actions of the SWP leadership have reduced the Statement to the significance of a paper declaration. Now, after the engineering of the Johnsonite split from the Workers Party and the proposal of the SWP to admit this faction into its ranks, it has eliminated even

the formal significance of the Joint Statement and rendered it totally inoperative and meaningless—and worse than meaningless because it has made it a hypocritical deception. Our Party has neither the desire nor the need to engage in formalistic hypocracies or picaresque show-window maneuvers by pretending allegiance to a document which has been reduced to a mockery. In view of the actions of the SWP, the Workers Party has no further grounds for being bound by the provisions of the Joint Statement, including the provision which deals with the acceptance of members or former members of the SWP into its ranks.

The Workers Party considers, further, that it has the task of making clear its position on unity, the record on unity, and the responsibility for the failure of the attempt to achieve it, before the membership of the SWP, the radical working class public in general, and the international Movement.

At the same time, it is clear that our Party cannot and need not devote a disproportionate amount of its time and energy to this task. The future of the Workers Party is by no means determined by its attitude toward the SWP nor by its relations with it. To convert the Party into an organization which is primarily concerned with the SWP, or into an organization whose chief claim to political existence is its pro-unity position, would mean to sterilize the Party.

Our Party will triumph or be defeated only insofar as its program and policies are confirmed and sustained in the class struggle. Our Party favored unification with the SWP not because it suffers from any fetishistic attitude toward unity in general, but because a unity with the SWP, accomplished on a sound basis, would have made it more easily possible to overcome, by our joint comradely efforts, the stultifying bureaucratic regime now prevalent in the SWP and the radically false theories and political line which animate it, thus making the united revolutionary movement not only a numerically stronger but a politically more effective factor in the working class of this country. Unity for any other purpose could not possibly have any importance for our Party. No, although the road of unity has been solidly blocked off by the SWP leadership, the road along which we can propagate our program among the advanced workers remains wide open and available to us to the fullest extent of our capacities.

#### **Roots of SWP Policy**

It is necessary to understand that the failure of the unity is due only in part to maneuverings and the bureaucratic intolerance of the SWP leadership, which feared the presence in its ranks of hundreds of trained, able and devoted militants whose political line differs from that of the leadership and threatens its domination. The SWP leadership has done everything it could to extend and to deepen the political differences between the two parties, in order thus to assure the continued division between them. Instead of growing agreement, the lines between the two tendencies grow more clear-cut and politically irreconcilable. The tendency represented by the SWP leadership is that of the right

wing of the Fourth International. This characterization is determined not by the purely ceremonial and therefore inconsequential "radical" phrasemongering to which it is addicted on occasion, but the fundamental theoretical and political line to which it is increasingly committed. The objective aim of this line is the conversion of the working class and revolutionary movement into a "left wing" of counter-revolutionary Stalinism (as the objective aim of social reformism is the conversion of the working class into the left wing support of bourgeois democracy, democratic imperialism). On this score, our Party has no mere tactical difference with the SWP tendency, but a fundamental and politically unbridgeable difference. Our Party is more firmly than ever opposed to any defense of Stalinist Russia and Stalinist imperialism. The SWP not only continues to favor the defense of the Stalinist counterrevolution but even supports the GPU regime in Poland and other occupied countries against the popular national movement of resistance to Stalinist imperialism. Our Party is in general opposed to support of or alliances with the reactionary Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries. The SWP favors support of these totalitarian organizations as against the democratic reformist tendencies in the working class.

In the light of this division, the recent capitulation of the Johnsonites becomes all the clearer and more reprehensible. It only underlines the purely literary character of its own ultra-radical phrasemongering and the farcical nature of its theoretical and political position.

#### **Neither Washington Nor Moscow!**

If the tendency represented by our Party would have an independent political role to play even if it were part of a united Party together with the SWP tendency, this holds with multiplied force under conditions when our Party is organizationally independent. The formula, "Neither Washington nor Moscow—for the class independence of the proletariat and world socialism!" not only sums up the revolutionary position of the genuinely Marxian movement of our time but draws the line clearly between our Party and the SWP tendency and between our Party and all brands of petty bourgeois centrism and reformism.

Basing itself upon the position it has repeatedly set forth, our Party has the duty to intervene actively and firmly in the life of the Movement as a whole. Early this year, the Party committed itself to participate with full rights in the deliberations of the EPC and to abide by its eventual decisions, but only on the condition that unity would be achieved between the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party. This condition went and still goes without saying, for without it there would be created the absurd situation in which two independent parties would exist with the same program and political line. In other words, our commitment was only another way of stating what we had stated for two years, namely, that our tendency was prepared to act as a disciplined minority of a united party provided it was guaranteed its democratic rights within that party. In view of the fact that the SWP leadership, in connivance with the Johnson fac-

tion, has now eliminated the possibility of unity, our party, while still committed to presenting and fighting for its views, including its position on unity, before the assemblies of the EPC, reserves the full right to establish its position toward the decisions adopted at the EPC at a regular convention of our party to be held after the EPC.

The Workers Party holds that the uninterrupted crisis of the movement can be resolved in a revolutionary way only by a fundamental change of the position now dominant in it on the key questions of the class nature of the Stalinist state; of the slogan of "unconditional defense" of that state; of the support of Stalinist imperialism in the occupied countries or the support of the popular democratic movements of resistance against Stalinist imperialism; of the position taken by the official movement on the national resistance movements in general; of the position taken by the official movement toward the Stalinist and social-democratic parties; of the conception now held of the character and the role of the Fourth International, which is sectarian through and through; and finally of the bureaucratic conception of democratic centralism advocated by the present leadership of the movement, inspired by the SWP leadership. The main task of the Workers Party before the EPC, during its sessions and afterward, is to mobilize the maximum amount of support for the course which it advocates. Toward this end, our party openly seeks to establish a bloc of all sections of the movement which occupy a left-wing position on the main questions in dispute and which aim to prevent the reduction of the movement to the role of "left wing" of Stalinist reaction, a role which means in the long run the abandonment of the basic positions of socialist internationalism.

This is the fundamental concern of the Workers Party with regard to the EPC, and all other considerations are subordinate to it.

#### Secretariat Cannot Effect Unity

At the same time, the Workers Party makes clear in advance that it rejects in toto the pretensions of the leadership of the Secretariat and those members of the CIC who are aligned with it, to the role of a "third party" in the matter of the unity negotiations between our party and the SWP. The events of the past period have showed conclusively that the Secretariat leadership has acted consistently as the factional agent of the SWP leadership, not only with regard to our party but also with regard to other sections of the movement. It has thereby not only failed to discharge its elementary obligation to act in accordance with the functions that properly belong to such a body, but it has forfeited the right to be considered a responsible and objective authority in the movement. It has not only pushed the disastrous theoretical and political positions of the SWP leadership to an extreme throughout the world, and heavily compromised the authority and prospects for growth of the movement but it has taken responsibility for the indefensible factional excesses of the SWP leadership and acted as its factional agent in all sections of the movement, even to the extent—when it considered it factionally nec-

essary—of ignoring its basic political solidarity with such sections. In connections with its political struggle against this leadership, the Workers Party therefore considers it an obligation to join with all those who are actuated by objective and non-factional considerations in the effort to restore a healthy democratic regime and an objective and authoritative leadership to

the movement as a whole, as an indispensable prerequisite to ending the chaos and disintegrative tendencies which now afflict it and to rendering possible its long-postponed reorientation and progress.

National Committee of the  
Workers Party

November 5, 1947.

## Book Review . . .

**BETRAYAL IN THE PHILIPPINES, by Hernando J. Abaya, with an introduction by Harold Ickes. A. A. Wyn, New York, 1946.**

Abaya's book gives a look behind the Truman administration's own iron curtain and chronicles the method by which American imperialists and their compradore native assistants kept this Pacific colony subjugated through invasion and counter-invasion.

To get this picture, however, a little reading between the lines is necessary. It is also necessary for the reader to suffer through long and numerous quotes from Roosevelt, Truman, MacArthur, and so on. Abaya writes like a Filipino Drew Pearson. That is, he has facts, names, places, and a sense for inside news. Also like Pearson, the material is poorly organized—at times so much so as to be confusing—but the material is there, and from the very mass of it arises the story of the occupied and "liberated" Philippines.

The point that strikes the Marxist reader time after time is how real the "Third Camp" of labor and the colonial people really was. The most eloquent testimony to this still very much alive force was the pains taken by American, Japanese and Filipino capitalism always to keep a circle of bayonets around the masses, no matter what the inter-imperialist war might bring.

Belligerently muddled people—like Ickes—see only the shameful fact that the present Philippine government of Roxas is made up of men who collaborated actively with the Japanese. The truth is that these collaborators were loyal to their more important struggle—the class struggle against the Filipino peasantry.

With the defeat of American forces in the Philippines in 1942, the compradore Filipino bourgeoisie undertook a division of labor. Quezon, Osmena, and a few others fled to Washington to keep up good relations with the old American overlords. Laurel, Roxas and the majority of the native capitalists and landlords stayed behind—to help the new Japanese overlords, to be sure—but also and primarily to direct Japanese bayonets against their real enemy, the peasantry.

The working masses were watching. The American "protector" had proved weak. The native rulers flip-flopped, bickered and lost both prestige and their grip on the repressive state apparatus. And most important of all, arms were all over the place for

the seizing. The peasantry struck out on its own. By the time American troops returned, a virtual dual power existed in central Luzon.

MacArthur's return signaled a drive to smash the Hukbalahap (peasant resistance movement). Before the Japanese had surrendered, the terror against the peasant resistance was begun. At the same time, Osmena's first move upon returning was to extend a hand to his class brothers, the leaders of the puppet republic—the Japanese one, that is. The book clearly shows MacArthur's role in this—he was not only the main party to white-washing the collaborators, but actively fostered the rapprochement of the Osmena and Roxas wings of the Filipino bourgeoisie. Throughout his role of establishing American dominance, MacArthur relied primarily on machine guns rather than his much publicized "personal prestige" in the islands.

The book concludes with the account of how the collaborationist wing rose to power over the Osmena wing after Philippine "independence"—with the active connivance of MacArthur, High Commissioner McNutt, and the Truman administration. After all, Roxas & Co. had the experience of a previous puppet "independence" under their belts.

The book does not tell in so many words of the eventual Stalinist domination of the peasant section of the resistance movement. This is all too clear, however, from the program of the political arm of the resistance—the Democratic Alliance. It is the self-defeating "democratic revolution" approach of Stalinism. The Stalinists tried to lead the peasants into the Osmena camp, and the Roxas-MacArthur-McNutt machine rolled over them to victory.

To this day, however, the peasants of Luzon retain their arms and organizations. Their ally, the Filipino labor movement, continues to grow. This is the best insurance against another *Betrayal in the Philippines*.

GERALD MCDERMOTT.

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We have cut our expenses to the bone. Nevertheless, the October issue of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL did not come out before the middle of November. To get back on our regular date line we have omitted the November issue. Because of rising costs, we are still not in the clear. But we know we have enough friends and readers to support the appearance of a 32-page magazine regularly and on time.

The recent national Active Workers' Conference of the Workers Party pledged the raising of a press fund of \$15,000. Part of this fund has been allocated to the support of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL.

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