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By M. Pablo

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DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE EUROPEAN
COUNTRIES IN THE SOVIET BUFFER ZONE

(Text approved by the International Secretariat and submitted for approval to the Third World Congress of the Fourth International.)

The evolution of the European countries in the Soviet buffer zone since 1949 has unfolded along the line of an accelerated integration of these countries into the economic and political orbit of the USSR.

On the economic level this evolution has taken the fundamental line of a beginning of coordination and effective planning among their economies and with that of the USSR on the one hand, which has, on the other hand, considerably weakened their dependence upon the international capitalist economy and market.

Since 1949 we have observed the putting into effect of a series of long-range plans (five to six years) which to the degree of their realization, detach these countries from a part of their ties with the external capitalist market and progressively fuse their economy into a whole which is more and more organically bound to the planned economy of the USSR.

These plans come after the effective statization of almost the whole of heavy and light industry, of foreign commerce as well as important sectors of internal trade, of transportation, after a series of restrictive measures upon property and the private agricultural market, and after the generally successful execution of the first short-range plans (one to three years) which permitted the restoration of the economy to pre-war levels and the repairing of the destructions caused by the war.

From now on the statized economy is regulated by the requirements of the plan as in the USSR.

These developments have already effected a reversal of the previous tendency so far as the exchanges of these countries with the international capitalist market is involved.

At present the exchanges of these countries amongst themselves and with the USSR take up more than half of their foreign commerce and are being amplified in this direction.

On the social level, the state apparatus of these countries is more and more being assimilated to that of the USSR by the creation, above all since the end of 1949, of bureaucratic Peoples' Committees and by the evermore extensive installation in all echelons of "reliable" elements enjoying the confidence of the Soviet bureaucracy which are replacing the old bourgeois elements.

These elements are now being recruited at an accelerated pace from the new workers' aristocracy that the regime favors by its methods of payment for labor, the Stakhanovist movement, etc.

The state apparatus is thus "sovietized" both in its form as well as in its social composition by imitating the forms belonging

to the state apparatus of the USSR and by recruiting its functionaries among the new privileged sections. Moreover, it is being "russified" by placing in the most decisive posts of command in the civil, political and economic administration as well as in the police and in the army, elements directly manipulated by the Kremlin, and often genuine Russian functionaries taken from the appropriate nationalities.

Finally, on the political level, if the destiny of these countries is not yet decided in an historical sense, it has been insofar as their immediate fate is concerned.

It becomes clear that the evolution of the international situation has not progressed along the line of a prolonged compromise between imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy which could place the status of these countries in question, but rather on the contrary along the line of accelerated preparation for war, wherein each seeks to consolidate its present sphere of influence.

The only possible exceptions are the cases of the Soviet zone in Austria, which still remains for the time being an integral part of the Austrian state and on which a compromise involving the withdrawal of the occupation troops is not yet excluded, and that of Albania which lacks direct connection with the rest of the buffer zone and has no economic base of its own.

On the other hand, the entire recent evolution of Eastern Germany, its structure and the putting into effect of its five-year plan, and the deepgoing modifications introduced into the state apparatus rather constitute an indication that Moscow, having lost hope of a general compromise particularly in regard to Germany, is passing over toward the decisive integration of this area into the rest of the buffer zone. However, it is no less true that the political and economic structure of this area still remains quite different from that of the rest of the buffer zone.

On the other hand, the whole of the economic, social and political overturns which have occurred in the buffer zone have now acquired such a scope that the reintegration of these countries into the capitalist orbit can no longer be envisaged as possible by "cold methods" but only through a veritable capitalist counter-revolution (with the possible exception of Eastern Germany).

The example of the civil war now going on in Albania, which is moreover by far the weakest link in the entire buffer zone, between the forces in the pay of native reaction and imperialism, and the forces bound up with the present regime, is conclusive on this point.

Taking account of all the modifications effected since 1949 in the economy as well as in the state apparatus of the buffer zone countries, within the framework of a new international evolution, it is necessary to state that the structural assimilation of these countries into the USSR has now become essentially accomplished and these countries have ceased to be basically capitalist countries.

The taking into tow of all these countries after the last war by the Soviet bureaucracy, the influence and decisive control it

exercises over these countries, contained the possibility and even in the long run the inevitability of their structural assimilation into the USSR, by virtue of a certain relationship of forces at home and abroad, between the Soviet bureaucracy, the native bourgeoisie, imperialism and the masses.

For a long period which by and large extended from 1945 to about 1948, the Soviet bureaucracy maintained these countries in an intermediate status of varying degrees because it was not yet ready to consider its break with imperialism as final and because of the necessity arising from its own nature of eliminating the native bourgeoisie by cold methods, without genuine revolutionary action by the masses over which it tried at the same time to impose a rigorous control.

This intermediate status corresponded sociologically more and more to a regime of dual power both on the economic and the political planes, the economic structure remaining fundamentally capitalist. Beginning with 1949 this duality manifestly gave way to regimes which stabilized a structure essentially characterized by property and productive relations qualitatively assimilable to those of the USSR, that is to say, characteristic of an essentially statized and planned economy (except for the Soviet zone in Austria and Albania, where a regime of dual power still exists).

Parallel with this process, the political power, which for a long time had been assumed by different combinations between the Stalinist leaderships and the representatives of the former bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties, now passed exclusively into the hands of the Stalinists and was thus transformed in its form as well as in its social composition.

The form of political power still remains marked by important differences from one country to another and in their entirety with that of the USSR, as is likewise the case so far as the form of political power in a capitalist regime is concerned. But it is above all by virtue of their economic base, of the structure essentially common to all the countries of the buffer zone, characterized by new production and property relations belonging to a statized and planned economy, essentially like those of the USSR, that we have to consider these states as now being deformed workers' states. These states have arisen not through the revolutionary action of the masses but through the military-bureaucratic action of the Soviet bureaucracy, thanks to exceptional circumstances created by the last war, and they are not administered directly by the proletariat but by the bureaucracy. The bureaucratic deformation of these states is of the same magnitude as that characterizing the USSR, the proletariat being totally deprived of political power just as in the USSR.

Consequently, as in the USSR, there is likewise posed as the task of the revolutionary vanguard of these countries a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy and open the road for the free development of socialism.

The further evolution of these countries and their immediate future are now bound to the fate of the conflict being prepared between imperialism and the USSR, these countries, China, the other colonial revolutions and the international working class movement.

Taking into account the class character of these countries and the reactionary war aims of imperialism, the Fourth International is neither neutral nor indifferent so far as the defense of these countries against imperialism is concerned. Just as in regard to the USSR, the Fourth International is for the unconditional defense of these countries against imperialism. It considers their structure of statized and planned economy as a conquest which must be safeguarded against imperialism, independently of the policy followed by the governments vassalized to Stalinism in these countries.

That does not in any case signify the abandonment of our political opposition to these governments nor the subordination of our struggle for the world Revolution to this defense. The contrary remains true. The Fourth International, within these countries, makes common cause with the proletarian and poor peasant masses who struggle against their exploitation and against the national oppression imposed by the grip of the Soviet bureaucracy and it stands for the total independence of each of the countries in the buffer zone and for their organization into a freely agreed-upon federation.

In all the positions formerly taken on the question of the class nature of the countries of the Soviet buffer zone in Europe, the Fourth International has not ignored or hidden the tendency to structural assimilation of these countries into the USSR any more than the transitional state in which these countries found themselves.

We have on the other hand indicated from the first that, under a certain correlation of forces between the Soviet bureaucracy, imperialism and the masses, the bureaucracy could even accomplish this assimilation.

During an entire period (1945-1948) it was really impossible to conclude that such a relationship of forces favorable to the bureaucracy had been established and consequently to consider the fate of the countries in the buffer zone as decided for the entire immediate future.

Nevertheless it must be recognized that the International was prevented from having a precise evaluation of the evolution in the buffer zone, of the pace and the scope of assimilation, because of a series of restrictive considerations like those which were set forth in the "Theses on the USSR and Stalinism" of the Second World Congress, asserting that "the genuine destruction of capitalism (in the buffer zone) is possible only through the revolutionary mobilization of the masses and the elimination of the special forms of exploitation introduced by the bureaucracy into these countries." On the other hand, in the Resolution of the Seventh Plenum of the IEC (May 1949) on "The Evolution of the Countries of the Buffer Zone," where we more positively envisaged the possible perspective of a structural assimilation accomplished by the action of the Stalinist bureaucracy itself, we still insisted on "the abolition of frontiers which it could effect through the incorporation of certain or all of these countries into the USSR, or that it could accomplish through the constitution of a Balkan-Danubian federation formally independent of the USSR but a genuine unified framework for the planning of the economy."

It has turned out that the revolutionary action of the masses is not an indispensable condition for the bureaucracy to be able to destroy capitalism under exceptional and analogous conditions and in an international atmosphere like that of the "cold war." That does not mean that the bureaucracy completely deprived the masses of action in order to destroy the bourgeoisie. It mobilized the masses bureaucratically, in a degree varying from country to country and according to the given conditions, organizing them, for example, into "committees" of various kinds which played a certain role in disarming the bourgeoisie and in its economic and political expropriation. This bureaucratic mobilization of the masses, which is still proceeding in the struggle against the vestiges of the possessing classes and especially against the well-to-do peasantry and the Catholic Church, is necessary because the bureaucracy is not an independent social force, a class, but supports itself partly upon the proletariat to struggle against the bourgeoisie even while lacing the masses at the same time into the straitjacket of its bureaucratic and police control.

It has turned out on the other hand that in the same conditions and on the basis of an effective statization of the means of production, it is possible to initiate the process of a planned economy without formal incorporation into the USSR, without formal abolition of the frontiers and despite the special forms of exploitation that the bureaucracy still maintains in these countries and which remains an ever-present obstacle to the planning and free development of their economy.

So far as the theoretical significance of the evolution of the buffer zone and the judgment that can be made regarding the role of Stalinism, the Fourth International remains firmly as ever on what has been said on this subject in the above-mentioned resolution of the Seventh Plenum of the IEC.

June, 1951.

APPENDIX

(Extract from the Resolution of the Seventh Plenum of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, reprinted in International Information Bulletin, June 1949.)

The Theoretical Significance of the Buffer Zone Development

13. The appearance of new transitional regimes, as in the case of the buffer countries, regimes of transition between capitalism and the USSR, is not the result of chance nor the effect of negligible historical accidents. Only incurable pedants can conceive of capitalism and socialism as fixed entities, established once and for all, to which a living historic process must conform, a process contradictory and rich in the crystallization of ever new combined forms. In reality, the appearance of mixed transitional regimes and their combined character is the clearest expression of our historic epoch, which is defined by:

- a. an ever more advanced disintegration of capitalism;
- b. the conditions of extended delay of the world revolution, essentially the result of the counter-revolutionary Stalinist leadership of the world labor movement;
- c. the existence of the USSR not only as a power continuing to polarize the revolutionary aspirations of an important part of the world proletariat, but also as a state power having a military-political weight of its own, and with a logic of expansion of its own.

Only in the light of these three factors can the appearance and the development of a new and combined phenomenon like that of the Soviet buffer zone be understood and the limits of its real historic import be defined.

14. Ascertaining the existence of such transitional regimes does not at all upset our evaluation of the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism nor our evaluation of Stalinism as a disintegrating force in the USSR and as a force organizing defeats of the world proletariat

- a. An evaluation of Stalinism cannot be made on the basis of localized results of its policy but must proceed from the entirety of its action on a world scale. When we consider the state of decay which capitalism presents even today, four years after the end of the war, and when we consider the concrete situation of 1943-1945, there can be no doubt that Stalinism, on a world scale, appeared as the decisive factor in preventing a sudden and simultaneous crash of the capitalist order in Europe and in Asia. In this sense, the "successes" achieved by the bureaucracy in the buffer zone constitute, at most, the price which imperialism paid for services rendered on the world arena -- a price which is moreover constantly called into question at the following stage.

- b. From the world point of view, the reforms realized by the Soviet bureaucracy in the sense of an assimilation of the buffer zone to the USSR weigh incomparably less in the balance than the blows

dealt by the Soviet bureaucracy, especially through its actions in the buffer zone, against the consciousness of the world proletariat, which it demoralizes, disorients and paralyzes by all of its politics and thus renders it susceptible to some extent to the imperialist campaign of war preparations. Even from the point of view of the USSR itself, the defeats and the demoralization of the world proletariat caused by Stalinism constitute an incomparably greater danger than the consolidation of the buffer zone constitutes a reenforcement.

c. In the buffer zone itself, where objective as well as subjective conditions were ripe for an immediate overthrow of capitalism in 1943-1944, Stalinist policy has led to the temporary strengthening of the anti-proletarian forces, created a thousand new obstacles on the way to the abolition of capitalism and thus caused the whole painful and jerky process of assimilation, dragging this process out over a number of years and rendering the proletariat in the main apathetic and even hostile, whereas the revolutionary movement of the proletariat could have achieved the liquidation of capitalism in these countries in a much shorter time and with a minimum of overhead charges.

d. As a result of the very expansion of the Soviet bureaucracy under the concrete conditions noted above, the objective contradictions in the situation of the buffer zone tend to penetrate into the very heart of the bureaucracy and of Soviet economy, multiplying the tensions and antagonisms which already exist within them abundantly, and to prepare the ground for the development of manifold centrifugal tendencies (Tito tendency on the one hand, Gomulka-Akerman tendency on the other).

15. Historically, the above-mentioned conditions not only indicate the reasons for the appearance of transitional regimes but also circumscribe the limits of the viability of the Soviet bureaucracy:

a. On the social plane, the overthrow of the Soviet bureaucracy remains certain within the framework of a world decision in the class struggle, which is inevitable one way or another in the long run.

b. On the military-political plane, this overthrow remains equally inevitable if the world proletariat does not succeed in crushing imperialism in time, with such an eventuality also entailing the downfall of the bureaucracy.

The appearance of transitional regimes of the buffer zone type thus merely gives expression to the interlude character of the historic period proceeding from 1943 up to the present: an interlude between the low point of the world-wide decline of the proletarian revolution and the new world revolutionary upsurge, which has only been seen in its rough outlines up to the present; an interlude between the Second World War and the final clash between imperialism and the USSR. Only within the framework of this limited interlude, do the buffer zone and all the phenomena associated with it appear in their true light as provisional and temporary. And in this framework, the real nature of Stalinism appears more pronounced than ever in the sense indicated by the Fourth International.

ON THE DURATION AND THE NATURE OF THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION
FROM CAPITALISM TO SOCIALISM

By M. Pablo

What I wrote in my article on "The Class Nature of Yugoslavia" and subsequently in the article "Where Are We Going?" on the subject of the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, its probable duration and its nature, has called forth a series of comments and divergent reactions in our movement. That compels me to undertake a further explanation of this question which has a considerable interest, it seems to me, not only from the theoretical but also from the practical viewpoint.

I actually wrote and emphasized that this transitional period would probably take a few centuries. Comrades who find this probable duration excessive may not have paid enough attention to this precise point: that what is involved is the whole interval in which the transition from capitalism to socialism will be consummated.

The taking of power is not yet socialism in the economic and social meaning of this term in the Marxist vocabulary. I use the term socialism in its classical sense as first defined by Marx himself, in reference to the regime where the productive forces will have acquired a degree of development permitting the effective progressive abolition of the classes, of the state, of the distinction between physical and intellectual labor, and between the city and the countryside.

The consummated socialist society is the direct vestibule to the communist society in which the formula of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," will actually be applied and which will put an end to the various "birthmarks of the old society" -- as Marx wrote -- which the society emerging from capitalism after the taking of power by the proletariat still bears "in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually."

This period of transformation of capitalism into socialism, this latter term being understood in its economic and social content, and not simply its political significance (taking of power by the proletariat) is from all evidence an entire historical period extending over a few centuries.

The Marxist classics have conceived of this matter, it seems to me, in this general sense, independently of the nuances we may distinguish between the various exponents.

In his letter to Bracke on the Gotha program dated May 5, 1875, Marx speaks of the "period of the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society into communist society," to which period there also corresponds "a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." One indication of the probable duration of this period, in Marx's estimation, is contained in the key passage of the Criticism of the Gotha Program where Marx gives an economic and social analysis of the future society. Let us review the essential points of this passage

which will also serve as well for a better comprehension of the specific character of this period of transition.

Marx insists on the fact that the society issuing from capitalism after the taking of power could not be immediately a "communist society such as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges."

On the economic and social level, this society is still regulated by bourgeois right which even though being a constant improvement in respect to a thoroughgoing bourgeois right, "is nevertheless still stigmatized by bourgeois limitations. The right of the producers is proportional to the labor they supply; the equality consists in the fact that measurement is made with an equal standard, labor."

Nevertheless, the needs of individuals not being equal, "with an equal output, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on." But "these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society." (Our emphasis.)

According to Marx, all this will disappear when the socialist phase of the post-capitalist society will be completed and the higher communist phase will begin, that is to say, when "the enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor, from a mere means of life, has itself become the prime necessity of life; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly." (Our emphasis.)

In my opinion, it becomes clear, from these passages, that Marx even while considering, as he says in his above-mentioned letter to Bracke, that "the program (of the Party) does not now deal with this (the period of transition) or with the future state in communist society," envisaged an entire historical period between capitalist society and its transformation into a consummated socialist society (in the economic and social sense, we repeat, of the term).

Let us now come to Lenin. He found himself both compelled and disposed by the conditions of his time to speak much more concretely on this transitional period and its character, especially after the taking of power in Russia. Trotskyists know the puerile manner in which Stalin and his school have tried to buttress their theory of "socialism in a single country" with Lenin's name by means of quotations falsified not only in their spirit but even in their letter.

The essence of their perversion consists in giving to the term "socialism" that Lenin actually employed in a number of his articles with the meaning of the possible "taking of political power" in a single country, the meaning of completing the economic and social content of socialism, a completion in a possible socialist society which can be built in a single country.

In reality, both in the spirit and the letter of innumerable writings on this question Lenin does not envisage the possibility of achieving a socialist society except on a world scale.

And in what time intervals? Here are some typical quotations: "It is hardly to be expected that our next generation, which will be more highly developed will effect a complete transition to socialism." (Report of April 29, 1918 to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Government.)

On December 3, 1919 Lenin declared to the Congress of Communes and Artels: "We know that we cannot establish a socialist order at the present time. It will be well if our children, perhaps our grandchildren, will establish it." (Our emphasis. -- Works Vol. XVI, p. 398.)

This estimate by Lenin acquires its full importance when it is added that Lenin is not here envisaging the duration of the achievement of socialism in backward and isolated Russia alone but socialism on a much more extensive scale through the victory of the revolution he expected and on which he counted in Europe, and especially in Germany.

But naturally, up to now it has been Trotsky who was obliged and who could express himself most concretely on the probable duration and the nature of the period of transition from capitalism to socialism.

To combat the confusion and falsifications to which the Stalinist school had subjected such fundamental conceptions of Marxism as what ought to be understood politically, economically and socially, by the term socialism, Trotsky was above all forced to emphasize the material conditions which characterized a truly socialist regime.

"Socialist society can be built," Trotsky considered, "only on the most advanced productive forces, on the application of electricity and chemistry to the processes of production including agriculture; on combining, generalizing and bringing to maximum development the highest elements of modern technology". . . "Socialism must not only take over from capitalism the most highly developed productive forces but must immediately carry them onward, raise them to a higher level and give them a state of development such as has been unknown under capitalism," ("Third International After Lenin," p. 52 -- Our emphasis.)

Trotsky believed that the "genuine socialist development" dependent on a high development of the productive forces, advanced well beyond the levels obtained by the most advanced capitalist countries, would begin after the victory of the proletariat, "at least in several advanced countries." Trotsky thereby spoke "of the epoch of genuine socialist conception" which would be inaugurated only at that stage. ("Third International After Lenin," p. 54.)

However it is later in "The Revolution Betrayed" that Trotsky was able to best express his views on all these questions, the aim of the analysis set forth in this book being to grasp the real development of the Revolution in our epoch by proceeding from the concrete experience of the USSR.

What are the fundamental conclusions of this book on these points?

a. The taking of power, which is on the order of the day for all countries in our epoch and which is therefore possible in each country separately, does not immediately establish a socialist regime, in the economic and social meaning of this term, but a transitional regime "between capitalism and socialism or preparatory to socialism." This regime will apply "socialist methods for the [solution of] pre-socialist tasks."

b. The epoch of "genuine socialist development" will begin with the victory of the Revolution on an international scale, that is to say, encompassing at least a number of advanced countries, on the foundation of a level of productive forces at least equal from the start to that "to which the most advanced capitalism has attained."

c. Contrary to what Marx thought, and even Lenin who "based himself wholly upon the Marxist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat,"* it is impossible to abolish "bureaucratic deformations"

* "Lenin did not succeed . . . either in his chief work dedicated to this question (State and Revolution), or in the program of the party, in drawing all the necessary conclusions as to the character of the state from the economic backwardness and isolation of the country." (The Revolution Betrayed, p. 58.)

immediately after the taking of power and before having reached a certain level of productive forces much higher than the level of the most advanced capitalism, and these cannot be combatted by "purely political" measures (election and recall at any time of all plenipotentiaries, abolition of material privileges, active control by the masses). "A socialist state even in America, of the basis of the most advanced capitalism, could not immediately provide everyone with as much as he needs, and would therefore be compelled to spur everyone to produce as much as possible." (The Revolution Betrayed, p. 53.)

d. Bureaucratic tendencies and deformations are not confined to the development of the backward and isolated USSR alone. "The tendencies of bureaucratism, which strangles the workers movement [in capitalist countries], would everywhere show themselves even after the proletarian revolution." (Revolution Betrayed, p. 55, our emphasis.)

"But it is perfectly obvious that the poorer the society which issues from a revolution, the sterner and more naked would be the expression of this "law", the more crude would be the forms of bureaucratism and the more dangerous would it become for socialist development." (Page 55 - Our emphasis.)

e. "A development of the productive forces is the absolutely necessary practical premise (of Communism), because without it want is generalized, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old crap must revive." (Marx, quoted by Trotsky in The Revolution Betrayed, p. 56.).

It therefore conforms to Trotsky's spirit (if not to the very letter of his writings) that the transformation of capitalism into

socialism will actually take an entire historical epoch, filled with bureaucratically deformed transitional regimes, and that these inevitable bureaucratic deformations (which have basically economic causes) will disappear only to the degree that the Revolution conquers in the advanced countries and the level of the productive forces reaches and surpasses that of the most advanced capitalism.

From this there naturally follows the prime importance of the Revolution in the advanced countries and of the international victory of the Revolution in order to speed socialist reconstruction and attain as rapidly as possible the full economic and social content of socialism.

I believe that what I wrote in my two articles on the probable duration and the characteristics of the transitional period completely conforms with these real views of Trotsky on these questions.

So far as the duration of the transitional period is concerned I added in "Where Are We Going?" the remark that it should not be forgotten that we are already in the second century since the publication of the Communist Manifesto which put the Socialist Revolution on the order of the day, and more than 50 years since the beginning of "imperialism, the last stage of capitalism."

Can one seriously believe that all the rest, that is to say, the actual transformation of capitalism into socialism is no more than a matter of a few decades?

Even in the event that in the near future the Revolution succeeds in the United States, this indispensable and by far the most important sector of the capitalist system in which is concentrated the highest degree of development of productive forces capitalism has known, the consummation of a world socialist society would remain a work of long duration.* On the other hand, in the much more probable

*Were it only to raise the level of the productive forces and economic progress of the rest of the world up to that of the USA.

event at the present moment that the victory of the world proletarian revolution would yet have to undergo the experience of a third war, with all the destructions caused by it, including this time the USA itself, it would naturally have to cope with still more extended delays and supplementary difficulties.

These views have nothing "pessimistic" in them. What in our opinion would really be illogical, childlike and mechanical is a conception according to which the most profound transformation of society (emerging from its thousand-year barbarism) in all its economic, moral and intellectual relations could be miraculously effected along a straight and direct line of development.

And what is the practical importance of insisting so much on the probable duration and the character of the transitional period? It appears considerable to us. It is first of all a question of arming the communist cadres of our movement with a historical perspective and with clear notions of the aims to be attained so that they can master whatever is conjunctural and avoid any activist impatience

or impressionism. It is also a question of rendering them capable of grasping the development of the Revolution in our epoch in its real and concrete manifestation unhampered by any formalistic thinking.

The developments which have taken place during and after the last war, the formation of the European buffer zone, the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions, the other colonial revolutions now going on in Asia, have called forth divergent reactions in the revolutionary vanguard.

A number of elements have interpreted these events as the expression of a "progressive" historical role of Stalinism and have been led to "conciliation" with it, to "idealize" it or to pure and simple capitulation before it, especially in countries where the pressure of Stalinism remains exceedingly great.

Other elements undergoing a contrary class pressure, which becomes much greater to the extent that we approach the crucial testing moment, refuse to draw any distinction between the social character of the regimes and movements and their temporary Stalinist or Stalinized leaderships, and reject the one along with the others.

These elements have an "ideal" conception of the real and concrete revolutionary process in our epoch, and admit it only in its pure forms, the "norms" described by Marx and Lenin.* They consider

* In their writings before the Russian Revolution.

the bureaucratic deformation of the proletarian power which has marked the Russian Revolution, and, because of its degeneration, a considerable part of the revolutionary process in our time, as the pure and simple negation of all class content, different from capitalism and which has been attained only through the struggle against this latter and the destruction of its foundations, that is to say, the relations of production and of property corresponding to it.

Situated between these two tendencies, we are obliged to reaffirm and to defend the fundamental criteria of Marxist theory and the key ideas given by the Trotskyist analysis of the USSR and of Stalinism. We have patiently explained under what exceptional specific conditions the Soviet bureaucracy has been led to the economic and political expropriation of the bourgeoisie in the countries of the European buffer zone and under what exceptional conditions the Yugoslav CP and the Chinese CP were propelled to power by the powerful movement of the masses. In this light we have analyzed and demonstrated most particularly the Yugoslav experience and the crisis of Stalinism in the other countries of the buffer zone, the elements of crisis and of differentiation which exist in the expansion of Stalinism.

We have especially emphasized this fundamental idea of our theoretical arsenal, that the bureaucratic deformation of the proletarian power and particularly the monstrous form it has taken with the Soviet bureaucracy in the USSR will be eliminated only with the triumph of the revolution on an international scale embracing the advanced countries.

But whoever speaks of Revolution speaks above all of the abolition of capitalism, the abolition of its productive and property relations and the establishment of new relations. Here is the decisive factor.

The Stalinist form of the bureaucratic deformation of proletarian power has taken shape only in the case of a backward and half-barbarous country which remained for a long time isolated from new important advances of the world revolution.

The political expropriation of the proletariat and the formation of an omnipotent and uncontrollable bureaucratic caste like that existing in the USSR is excluded in the event of an international triumph of the revolution embracing the advanced countries, and especially in the event of a victory in the United States.

We have never written or wanted to suggest that the political expropriation of the proletariat after the taking of power on an international scale could be envisaged as possible, and even less that it can stretch over centuries. Such an affirmation would be theoretically equivalent to admitting the theory of "bureaucratic collectivism," that is to say, the possibility of an historical regime intermediate between capitalism and socialism. On the contrary, we have written this word for word ". . . the (proletarian) power will inevitably become swiftly bureaucratized and would risk culminating in a complete expropriation of the proletariat if the revolution remains isolated in a country encircled by imperialism." (Now emphasized.) ("On the Class Nature of Yugoslavia," Internal Bulletin of the IS, October 1949.)

"The modifications of the norm of proletarian power, we wrote further on, would diminish only to the degree that the basis of proletarian power would pass beyond the framework of a single country and would embrace an ever more important sector of world economy." (Now emphasized.)

Even for the USSR we have not admitted that the development of the bureaucracy favored by powerful economic causes would necessarily and fatally transform "the Bolshevik party and through it, the whole Communist International into organs of the bureaucracy." ("On the Class Nature of Yugoslavia").

We locate the downfall of Stalinism in the unfolding of the struggle already engaged between imperialism and the Revolution in all its forms: the USSR, the "Peoples Democracies," Yugoslavia, China, the colonial revolutions now in progress and the international revolutionary movement.

This struggle will not last for centuries but a much briefer period.

It will lead, as we have many times repeated in all our writings, through the abolition of capitalism and imperialism, also to the downfall of the Bonapartist power of Stalin and of Stalinism.

That is the foundation of our optimism and our revolutionary perspectives.

June, 1951