

Fourth International

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Trotsky

and the

Spanish Revolution

by Pierre Broué

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JURAD SOBRE ESTAS LETRAS
ANTES MORIR QUE CONSENTIR

The Ironies of Isaac
Deutscher

Robert Black

Empiricism and the
British Labour Movement

Ian A. McCalman



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*Cover Photograph: Spanish Republican
troops move off to the front.*

Editorial

IT is almost one year since the International Committee of the Fourth International held its Third Conference in London. The achievements of that Conference have proved invaluable in the intervening period. In a political struggle against the petty-bourgeois groups around 'Spartacist' in the USA and **Voix Ouvrière** in France, the continuity of the theory and practice of Bolshevism—the Fourth International was defended and firmly established.

From the point of view of the building of this Fourth International, the Conference declared the unity of the revolutionary struggle of the working class all over the world. The heroic struggle of the workers and peasants in Vietnam is a struggle for the international working class, for the defence of the gains of the Chinese and Vietnam revolutions. The defence of working-class organisations against the capitalist state in Europe draws the workers into a political struggle whose only outcome can be the struggle for power. In China, in the USSR and Eastern Europe, the workers are drawn into a fight against bureaucracy as the only way of preserving the gains of the proletarian revolution.

Internationally, then, the crisis of the imperialists forces them to place intolerable strain upon the traditional forms of class-collaboration. All the past conquests of the working class are threatened. They can be defended only by a revolutionary struggle against the capitalist state, which is forced to organise the attacks. It is in this sense that the founding 'Transitional Programme' of the Fourth International corresponds more and more precisely to the deepest needs of the proletariat.

In this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1917 Russian Revolution more than ever the fight against imperialism can be taken up only by those who oppose implacably the politics of the Soviet bureaucracy. The cynical preparations of Kosygin and his

collaborators for a sell-out through secret diplomacy and U.S. military pressure of the Vietnamese revolution is the clearest indication of this. One of Kosygin's first acts after becoming Soviet Premier was to intercede in the conflict between the Indian and Pakistan bourgeoisie in the Tashkent negotiations. The essence of this action was to ensure, as far as possible, social and political stability behind the imperialist lines in South-East Asia.

The Stalinist bureaucracy indulges in all manner of pressure on Johnson and Wall Street for a settlement in Vietnam, within the framework of 'peaceful co-existence'. Sensing the tensions in the Democratic Party, which reflect the indecision of sections of the American big bourgeoisie under pressure of petty-bourgeois and working class doubts and opposition to the war, the Soviet bureaucrats will announce the stepping-up of supplies to North Vietnam. Kosygin on his European tour will explore the possibility of using de Gaulle's tactical differences with Johnson. But the real alternative to the U.S. war in Vietnam is the revolutionary action of the international working class, and particularly in Europe and the USA.

It is particularly criminal, therefore, that some who even call themselves 'Trotskyists' are working with Stalinists and pacifists, and have rejected the line of revolutionary defeatism in relation to the Vietnam war. In France, Stalinists, Radicals, Social-Democrats, and 'left' Gaullists supported a public campaign for relief funds for Vietnam. The list of their signatures was completed by Pierre Frank, claiming to add his name 'on behalf of the Fourth International!' In the USA, leading representatives of the Socialist Workers' Party condemned the revolutionary defeatist line of the Workers' League on the grounds that such a line implied the wish to see Americans killed in Vietnam! In Canada, the pro-SWP 'Workers' Vanguard' commended

those who combined anti-Vietnam-war demonstrations with the commemoration of the 1914-1918 war dead!

What a confirmation of the conclusions of the International Conference of April, 1966! The International Committee was formed to ensure the continuity of the Fourth International against those revisionists who looked to the Soviet and Stalinist bureaucracy to play a progressive' role in history. These revisionists wanted to scrap that section of the Transitional Programme which insisted on a war to the death against 'the gang of Cain-Stalin' as a condition for the preparation of the revolutionary leadership. The revisionists have very quickly evolved to a position where they adopt the Stalinist policies of capitulation to bourgeois pacifism, which remains as always an instrument of imperialism.

At the International Conference it was found absolutely essential to reject and eventually exclude those (Spartacist and **Voix Ouyière** who demanded scepticism and rejection of our theory, programme and struggle to build the revolutionary party. Precisely at the point where the Stalinists and the Pablo revisionists must be answered directly by the struggle of the alternative leadership, the middle-class sceptics want to lay aside all stress on the uniqueness and independence of revolutionary Trotskyist theory and organisation. Behind the 'matter-of-fact' opposition to our perspectives lay a great hostility to theory, and rejection of the historical role of the working class.

It is of historic significance that the building of a revolutionary youth organisation in Europe is taking place on the sound basis of an explicit rejection of bourgeois pacifism (see the International Youth Manifesto preparing for an international conference of youth organisations). This too owes much to the preparations by the International Conference in London in April 1966. One of the decisions of that Conference, proceeding from the analysis of crisis of imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy, was to work through a Youth Commission of the International Committee for an international revolutionary youth conference and organisations. In particular, the sections of the IC would work through their youth organisations for participation in the anti-NATO and anti-war demonstration called by the Jeune Garde Socialiste (Belgium) for October, 1966.

In the event, Liège proved a great testing ground for revolutionary and revisionist perspectives in the socialist youth movement. The delegations of the British Young Socialists and the French 'Révoltes' (totalling nearly 1,000) not only provided the numerical majority of the demonstration, but their political slogans inflicted a severe defeat on the revisionists. On Vietnam, they carried the clear line 'Victory to the National Liberation Front!', and 'The Enemy is in our own Country!' But to these were added banners of solidarity with the Hungarian revolutionaries of 1956. And all these slogans were united by the slogan shouted by one thousand revolutionary youth: 'Long Live the Fourth International!'

It was this **political line** which drove the organisers of the march to threaten police intervention against the revolutionary slogans. True to type, the revisionists found themselves driven more quickly to the logical end of their revisions by every step forward of the revolutionary vanguard. That is only as it must be, because their main role is to oppose and divert whenever possible that vanguard. Some may have thought that the behaviour of the revisionists at Liège was a result only of their wrong tactics, i.e., placing their temporary alliance with various Stalinist and pacifist elements above revolutionary politics.

But that is an error. Their tactics are the consequence of their political line. So high is the premium on consciousness in our epoch of the crisis of leadership, that every flaw in the relation between theory and practice has within it the seeds of class betrayal. Such was the revisionism of Pablo. If we now consider certain developments since the Liège demonstration, then we see that the differences there were by no means simply tactical.

In the first place, the SWP and its Pabloite collaborators set in motion a vicious campaign of provocation and calumny against the IC, through a personal attack on Gerry Healy, national secretary of the Socialist Labour League (the so-called 'Tate affair'). Covering up their own betrayals on the Vietnam war, analysed above, they made a desperate effort to isolate and break the Socialist Labour League, and thereby the IC, calling for an investigation of the SLL by

centrist and 'left' elements, in fact professional anti-Trotskyists. Aided by the followers of Posadas in Britain (who equated the SLL with Fascists) and by Robertson's Spartacists in the USA, they passed out the worst kind of personal vilification and slander, dropping all pretence of a political struggle against the IC. Robertson was thus forced to occupy his true position vis-a-vis the building of the independent revolutionary leadership. Having condemned our 'over-estimation' of our own importance, and having rejected our characterisation of the social crisis in the advanced countries, he took only a few short months to arrive at this much agreement with the revisionists. We thus see that both on the objective situation and its development, on the radicalisation of working-class youth on an international basis, and on the relations within the Trotskyist movement, the London Conference of 1966 was an essential preparation for revolutionaries.

What stage have we now reached? The sections of the IC in Western Europe and North America have a particularly heavy responsibility. In the struggle against the integration

of the trade unions into the state and against the Vietnam war, youth is to the fore, and is providing the cadres for the Fourth International. In Eastern Europe, Russia and China, it is among the youth that great new forces are coming on to the scene. Every step made towards a revolutionary youth international in Western Europe prepares a gigantic response in these countries ruled by the Stalinist bureaucracy, just as it provided the key to further advance within each particular capitalist country. Already the Conferences of 'Révoltes' and the Young Socialists have laid their main emphasis on internationalism, and have demonstrated the great possibilities for a new, alternative revolutionary leadership in France and Britain. The urgent task facing all Marxists is now therefore the International Youth Assembly of July 29th—August 5th, 1967, the main step towards the international youth conference. This assembly must bring together all the forces of proletarian youth fighting on the Trotskyist programme. It is only on this basis that the next step can be prepared. That is the lesson of the 1966 IC Conference and what has followed.

TROTSKY and the Spanish Revolution

by PIERRE BROUE, written as introduction to a Spanish language edition of Trotsky's writings on the Spanish Revolution

FOREWORD

This essay, specially written for this collection at the request of Jorge Alvarez, was not intended to retrace, even in outline, the stages of the Spanish revolution which covered the peninsula with blood from 1936 to 1939. I can simply refer those of my readers who wish to complete their knowledge of this or that particular point to the work which I devoted, together with my friend Emile Temime, to **La Révolution et la Guerre d'Espagne**. (Les Editions de Minuit, 1961.)

We deal here simply with a sketch of Trotsky's positions in this Spanish drama, the last proletarian revolution between the two wars and the prologue to the second world war—a drama which concerns us all, whether we think it or not. For I think that the Russian revolutionary, outlawed by Stalin, posed, in terms which remain valid today, whatever his detractors and some of those who praise him may say, the problem of the crisis of humanity as that of revolutionary leadership.

Spain in 1936 was the last battlefield on which, during Trotsky's lifetime, armed workers and peasants confronted the class enemy in a revolutionary struggle. The Spanish war was, in fact, the preface to the Second World War, the first year of which was marked by Trotsky's murder. But Spain was also the first field of activity of the GPU outside the Soviet Union on a large scale. At the same time as the old Bolsheviks were dying in the cellars of the GPU in Moscow during the purge and the trials, Stalin's murderers were liquidating in Spain all those revolutionaries vaguely defined as Trotskyists. And yet, no party and no group which played any real role in the Spanish revolution was Trotskyist. The POUM, exterminated by the Stalinists in 1937, hotly denied being Trotskyist, and in any case Trotsky did not spare them in his political writings.

Trotsky's biographers, and especially Deutscher, pass very quickly over the Spanish Civil War, the role which Trotsky tried to play in it, and the place it had in his thought and action. This is most probably not an accident. For Isaac Deutscher, indeed, the struggle for the building of

the Fourth International was, on Trotsky's part, a considerable mistake, since the objective was utopian. But Trotsky's position on the Spanish events cannot be understood outside his overall perspectives of the time and especially his central aim of the period: the building of a revolutionary leadership, of a world party of the revolution, the Fourth International. The blows that Stalin and his henchmen struck at the anti-stalinist revolutionaries like the POUM on the Spanish battlefield were in fact aimed at the Fourth International.

The tasks of the Spanish Revolution

Trotsky did not wait until 1936 to become interested in the Spanish question. The third volume of his *Works*, published in French, contains several hundred pages on Spain, which represent only a few of his articles and part of his correspondence: Trotsky's writings on Spain compare honourably with his writings on Germany, the country which, it will be recalled, he correctly estimated to be the key to the world situation at the time of Hitler's and the Nazis' rise to power.

The revolution which began in Spain with the fall of the monarchy and the flight of Alfonso XIII should, of course, have resolved the tasks which Marxists call 'bourgeois-democratic'. But it would be a dangerous mistake to believe that the weak Spanish bourgeoisie, represented politically by the Republican parties, had the strength to carry out this democratic revolution. 'The Spanish Republicans', writes Trotsky, 'remain entirely on the basis of the present property relations. We can expect from them neither the expropriation of large landed property, nor the liquidation of the privileged position of the Catholic Church, nor the radical cleansing of the Augean stables of the civil and military bureaucracy'. In conformity with the theory known for thirty years as the 'Permanent Revolution', brilliantly confirmed positively by the Russian Revolution and negatively by the defeat of the Chinese revolution of 1927, he thought that it was only under the dictatorship of the proletariat that the democratic tasks of the revolution would be achieved, along with the beginning of socialist transformation. The problem is thus essentially that of the revolutionary policies of the proletariat, of its ability to rise against both the oligarchy of the old regime and the bourgeoisie.

In an article dated January 24, 1931, analysing the political situation in Spain, Trotsky commented on the scale of the strike movement in Spain as well as its entirely spontaneous character. He categorised the period as a 'period of the awakening of the masses, of their mobilisation, of their entry into the struggle'. 'With these strikes' he wrote, 'the class begins to consider itself as such.' However, the spontaneous nature which gives the labour movement all its strength at a given moment, risks becoming, at the next stage, the source of its weakness and defeat. A labour movement abandoned to its own fate, 'without a clear programme, without leadership' inevitably finishes by being confronted with 'a perspective without hope'. The Socialists (the PSOE) had collaborated with the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera: they now followed in the wake of the republicans. 'If the Socialist Party', wrote Trotsky, 'had conquered the majority of the proletariat, it would only be able to do one thing: hand over the power conquered by the revolution into the pierced hands of the republican wing, which would, automatically, let it slip back into hands of the present holders.' The Spanish Communist Party was very weak, deeply divided by the methods of the leadership imposed on it by the Stalinised Communist International. It

went through split after split, and thus largely discredited itself in the eyes of a part of the conscious workers, who reproached it as much for bureaucratic methods of leadership as for its servile submission to the orders of Moscow, notably the adoption of 'adventurist' slogans during the 'Third Period'. The real revolutionary cadres were expelled or turned away. The masses turned their backs on the party.

In truth, the revolutionary vanguard, the most combative elements of the proletariat, were organised in the CNT, where, Trotsky stated, 'selection has taken place over a number of years'. He wrote: 'to consolidate this organisation and to transform it into a real mass organisation is a duty for every advanced worker and above all for the Communists.' They would inevitably come up against the small conspiratorial group of anarchists of the FAI who control it. The mobilisation of the proletariat on the democratic transitional slogans could only be done with soviets—the 'juntas'—but it will demand, from the revolutionaries, a struggle on two fronts inside the labour movement: against the 'parliamentary cretinism' of the socialists and against the 'antiparliamentary cretinism' of the anarchists. 'The anarchists', he wrote, "'deny" politics at the very moment when it takes them by the throat, then they give way to the politics of the class enemy.'

To win the masses to organised, bold revolutionary politics, to wrench them away from the influence of the socialist and anarchist leaders, to establish in the form of the 'juntas' the superior class organisation, to prepare the victorious insurrection and the complete liquidation of the old state machine, this was the first political task of the Spanish revolutionaries. To resolve it Trotsky believed three conditions necessary: 'a party and again a party, and again a party.' But in Spain this party did not exist. In 1931 Trotsky wrote: 'If the leadership of the Comintern proves to be incapable of offering anything to the Spanish workers but bureaucratic leadership and splits, then the real Communist Party of Spain will be formed and steered outside the cadres of the Comintern. In any event, this party must be built.'

It is to this task that the Spanish militants of the international Left Opposition applied themselves, organised in the *Izquierda comunista*. Their tasks seemed perhaps more realisable in Spain than that of the oppositionists in any other country. The Spanish oppositionists had in their ranks some of the best elements of Spanish communism: pioneers of the movement like Andres Nin, who

came to communism whilst he was secretary of the CNT and had been secretary of the red trade union international; Juan Andrade, who had brought the majority of the socialist youth to the Comintern on the morrow of the war; and many others of great value. Their journal *Comunismo* was distinguished by the quality of its research and theoretical studies and by its effort to make a concrete analysis of the Spanish situation. In the labour movement, the anti-parliamentarianism of the anarchists and the parliamentarianism of the socialists co-existed, each serving the other as a foil, but the slogans of the *Izquierda comunista* showed a way out to the militant who had been led astray by the other tendencies. The road opening up to a communist party of the Bolshevik type was indisputably more accessible than in many other countries. This is probably why some militants became impatient and proposed to abandon the position of 'opposition' to a non-existent party and to go ahead and build a new communist party. Trotsky fought against them energetically in the discussion. For him, the question was to correct the Communist Parties and especially the Communist International itself, by a vigorous political struggle. One single analysis must prevail for the tactics of all revolutionary communists on an international scale. No supporter of the Opposition must leave the International of his own free will and give up the defence of the ideas of its founders inside it so long as there was any chance of correcting it. The 'Trotskyists'—who called themselves 'Bolshevik-Leninists'—remained in opposition, and the majority of the *Izquierda comunista* followed Trotsky in those years when the centre of the struggle moved to Germany and the attempt to correct the International took the form of merciless criticism of Stalin's catastrophic policies which were opening up the way for Hitler.

The 1934-1935 turn

Hitler's coming to power—the crushing of the German working class without a struggle because to the end it was tied down by the policies of the Stalinist and social-democratic apparatuses—was the decisive turning point of the inter-war period. It gave notice of the coming second world war and the inescapable approach of decisive struggles between the working class and the fascists, shock-troops of the counter-revolution. The Communist International accepted the policy dictated by Moscow without turning a hair, trumpeted the infallibility of its leaders, denied the importance of the defeat in Germany, directed all its blows against internal criticism, and sabotaged the

establishment of a workers' united front, which alone would have constituted an effective weapon against the troops of Hitler. For Trotsky, the defeat in Germany was the 'August 4, 1914' of the Comintern, i.e., the equivalent of what the support of the Second International's leaders for the imperialist war had been to Social-Democracy. The Second and Third Internationals were no more than corpses, and henceforth it would be in vain to try to bring them back to life by struggling inside them to 'correct' them. The Bolshevik-Leninists must give up their standpoint of internal opposition: from henceforth they must work to build the revolutionary leadership which the working class lacked, and must harness themselves to the building of a new International, the Fourth. Whilst directing political activity to the formation of a workers' united front, they must train independent revolutionary nuclei in order to wrest away from the old leaderships the militants of the younger generations.

The development of the class struggle in Spain seemed to provide favourable ground for carrying out this plan. In fact, the *Izquierda comunista*, during its few years' work as a communist opposition, had made serious progress. Its minimum programme was a series of transitional demands aimed at raising the level of consciousness of the masses in struggle and leading them into further struggles, and was summed up in this way by one of its leaders:

'The immediate demands possible were: the working day, wages, equality of the working day for both sexes, security for the working class, collective contracts; the demands of the democratic revolution: confiscation and distribution of the great estates, separation of church and state, full freedom to meet and hold demonstrations, etc.; general demands against the reaction: a demand for responsibility, confiscation of all property—agricultural and urban, personal and real estate—of the monarchist reactionaries; political demands capable of organising the masses for their own defence and bringing them nearer to the seizure of power: united front against reaction, trade-union unity, workers' committees in the factories, the farms and the barracks . . . Other important demands not immediately realisable but capable later of making a bridge from the bourgeois to the socialist republic, included workers' control of production, the total disarming of all bourgeois bodies and the arming of the proletariat.'

The *Izquierda Comunista* grew rapidly: in 1932 it contained at least 2,000 members, recruited amongst the youth of all political backgrounds and from all trade unions, not only in Catalonia, and especially Barcelona, but in Madrid, the two

Castilles, Bilbao and in the Asturias, Salamanca, Andalusia and Extremadura. Its influence among the advanced workers in the socialist and communist parties and in the CNT and UGT grew unceasingly. This took place under conditions where the bankruptcy of the socialist policy of compromise with the bourgeois parties was exposed, as well as the anarchist policy of isolated uprisings. There also became apparent the need for a workers' united front, which the Spanish Communist Party fought against with all its strength, just as it had done in Germany, under the pretext of the prime need to fight the socialists, called by the Stalinists 'social fascists'.

In Catalonia, the *Izquierda Comunista* agreed on the necessity to form a united front, with another organisation originating in opposition to the communist party and to the Stalinist line of the third period. Under the leadership of Joaquin Maurin, another pioneer of Spanish communism, and of other cadres of the communist movement in Catalonia, there was established, starting from a split in the *Federacion Comunista Catalano-Balear*, the *Bloque Obrero Campesino* (Workers' and Peasants' Alliance), which took out of the communist party in Catalonia all the worthwhile militants that were left. According to Trotsky, Maurin's opposition was a 'right opposition' of the type that Brandler developed in Germany, Lovestone in the USA, and Tasca in Italy. Ideologically, it was linked with the 'rightists' inside the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Bukharin tendency, and it grew essentially on opposition to the sectarian policy of the Communist Party and the Comintern during the 'third period', the rejection of the 'united front' and the accusation of 'social fascism' aimed at the socialists. Trotsky wrote of the right opposition groupings that they 'had no clear programme for action' and, even worse, that 'they had been won over by the prejudices that the epigones of Bolshevism . . . had spread so widely'. After the publication of the manifesto of the *Bloque Obrero y Campesino*, he wrote, in June 1931, that this document was 'as it is, pure "Kuomintangism" transplanted on to Spanish soil'. He was soon to reproach the Maurinists for opportunism in their relations with the petty-bourgeois nationalist movements of Catalonia, their refusal to criticise the Stalinist policy inside the USSR, and their efforts to convince the Moscow leaders that the leadership of the Spanish Communist movement should be given to them. He warned, in his correspondence, time and again against Maurin and the *Bloque* and called for a merciless criticism of what he considered as a

kind of 'centrism' even worse than the 'official centrism' of Stalinism, in fact, the Maurinist opposition created confusion which harmed the development of the *Izquierda*: it was only in Madrid that the Bolshevik-Leninists were able to win the majority of members of a communist party federation. Elsewhere, and notably in Catalonia, the confused and often contradictory policies of the *Bloque*, its opportunism in practice, together with its criticism of principle, made it play the part of a screen between the *Izquierda* and the dissatisfied communist militants in the party rank and file.

It was in the Socialist Party, and especially amongst its youth, that the radicalisation of the Spanish working class and the progress of Trotskyist ideas in its vanguard was most clearly evident. It is well known that the bankruptcy of the socialist policy of class collaboration with the republican governments provoked a deep crisis in the party ranks, followed by the emergence of a powerful left wing, paradoxically led by the old workers' leader Francisco Largo Caballero, who, learning from his reformist experience, rallied spectacularly to revolutionary politics and declared himself in favour of the proletarian dictatorship. Carried forward by extraordinary enthusiasm, Largo Caballero thus considerably accelerated the movement of radicalisation which had caused him to change. His disciples, the leaders and members of the Socialist Youth and the intellectuals who surrounded him and who edited the UGT journal *Claridad*, were a clear expression of this phenomenon and of the immense consequences that it contained. Thus, Luis Araquistain, his unofficial spokesman, wrote in 1934 in the preface to *Discursos a los trabajadores*, the organ of the UGT: 'I think that the Second and Third Socialist Internationals are virtually dead; reformist, democratic and parliamentary socialism that the Second International represented is dead; and so is the revolutionary socialism of the Third International which received from Moscow the *santo y sena* for the entire world. I am convinced that a fourth International must spring up, founded on the two that have died, taking from the one the revolutionary tactic and from the other the principle of national autonomy. In this sense, the attitude of Largo Caballero, which is that of the Spanish socialist Party and of the UGT, seems to be the attitude of the Fourth International, that is, a carrying forward of historical socialism.' Even making allowances for the demagogic exaggerations of life-long opportunist leaders who had rallied but late to revolutionary politics, the current in favour of the 'bolshevisation' of the Socialist Party and

of its joining in the building of the Fourth International was extremely vigorous among the rank and file, as is shown by the resolutions of the regional conferences of the youth and the content of their journals and demonstrations.

At the same time, the CNT was going through a deep crisis. Whilst the rightist tendency of the 'treintistas', led by the ex-secretary Angel Pestana, was openly moving towards a kind of reformist trade unionism, the vigorous reaction of the FAI did not prevent the growth in consciousness amongst the majority of anarcho-sindicalist militants that 'apoliticism' was nothing more than a kind of passivity, which benefited only the class enemy. During, and despite, the hesitations and twisting of its leaders, the left socialists included, the Asturian working class fought with its well-known energy in the October insurrection. The leaders of the CNT who, except in the Asturias, had kept out of the mass movements by refusing to join the *Allianzas Obreras* set up by the call of the *Izquierda* and of the *Bloque*, ran an even greater risk: isolation from the powerful movement for revolutionary proletarian unity (the *Union de los Hermanos Proletarios*) which swept the country after the October insurrection and which the official communists joined at the last minute.

For Trotsky, no hesitation was possible. On the eve of huge class struggles and of the future realisation of the united front between the Stalinists and the reformists on a platform of 'defence of democracy', under the immediate threat of the counter-revolution, the small Bolshevik-Leninist organisations did not have time enough to play a decisive role in the class struggles, especially if they were excluded from the socialist-communist united front which was being established. Despite their progress, they were still numerically small, lacked links with the working-class masses, which were still attracted by the large organisations, and were unable to capture to their advantage in a reasonable time the spontaneous current of radicalisation which was shaking up the reformist dust in the socialist party. Already in August 1934, on the morrow of the fascist riot of February 6 in Paris and the first reply of the socialist-communist united front, the French Bolshevik-Leninists grouped around *La Verité* entered the SFIO (Socialist Party), where they were in the process of solidly establishing their influence among the best lefts of the Seine Federation and in the ranks of the youth.

The ground was even more favourable in Spain, where the radicalisation was deeper and the influence and prestige of the Trotskyists greater. The

journal of the Madrid socialist youth, *Renovacion*, contains many appeals to the Trotskyists, which it calls

'the best revolutionists and theoreticians in Spain and urged them to join the youth movement and the Socialist Party, to bring about bolshevisation.'

Trotsky thought that it was necessary to take full advantage of the situation and to establish a solid faction inside the Socialist Party, making it a centre of attraction able to influence the Communist Party members surprised by the abruptness of the opportunist turn by their party as well as the CNT militants bewildered by the impotence of the opportunist turn by their party, as well as and able too to give a really Bolshevik form to this spontaneous radicalisation which, lacking revolutionary leadership, was in danger of being led astray by the Stalinists and left socialists, who were determined to be revolutionary only in words.

But Trotsky was not able to convince his Spanish comrades. Whilst the majority of the French Bolshevik-Leninist carried out the 'turn', the majority of the Spanish organisation refused to do so. The minority, which was favourable to Trotsky's theses, did not go so far as to break the discipline of the organisation which, after a long and difficult discussion at the end of 1934, refused to enter the Socialist Party. Instead, the leadership of the two organisations, the *Izquierda Comunista* and the *Bloque Obrero y Campesino*, in the following year on September 25, 1935, held a unification congress, giving birth to a new party: the POUM (*Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista*). Thus, at first sight paradoxically, the political regrouping in Spain and the radicalisation born from the events of 1933-35, gave rise to a new Communist Party born from the fusion of the right and left oppositions, a 'Trotsky-Bukharinist bloc' as the Stalinist Koltsov wrote: Instead of the struggle for a new party through political differentiation, as specified by Trotsky, his former disciples substituted a path of fusion of the old apparatuses, declaring at the congress of unification:

'The great revolutionary Socialist (Communist) Party will be formed by grouping into a single entity the nucleus of existing Marxist revolutionaries, together with the new wave of revolutionists motivated by Marxist unity and those elements which, demoralised by subdivisions in the labour movement, have been temporarily inactive . . .'

going so far as to proclaim that the POUM intended to merge with the big party at a congress which would take place

' . . . as soon as the principle of Marxist unity

triumphed in the Socialist and Communist Parties.'

Trotsky, rightly from his point of view, was to consider as a betrayal the passing of the former leaders of the Izquierda Comunista over to the positions which had always been those of Maurin and the Bloque: for them, it could no longer be a question of working for the building of the Fourth International, but only of fusing the two former Internationals, which were considered by Trotsky to be corpses. It is not surprising that at the international level the POUM quickly joined the London Bureau, the liaison organisation between the different groups which had split from the Socialist or Communist Parties of their countries, but had in common the refusal to struggle for a 'new International'.

From then on, there was no political force in Spain, however tiny, able to oppose the pressure exerted by the right wing Socialists and Stalinist Communists for an electoral alliance with the bourgeois Republicans. The coming fusion of the socialist youth and the communist youth into the JSU, which from 1936 on was to be the mass base of Spanish Stalinism, and the joining of all working-class organisations in the bourgeois programme of the Popular Front were, in a certain sense, implied in the decision of the Spanish Trotskyist leaders, Andrade and Nin, to refuse to enter into the Socialist Party and instead to choose unification with the 'right' Communists of Maurin. G. Munis expresses Trotsky's thoughts on this matter when he writes:

'The ghastly tragedy of civil war, the systematic destruction of the revolution by the popular front, the particularly criminal role of Stalinism and the consequent triumph of Franco had as premises, the recomposition which occurred in all sectors of the working class movement in 1935. Taught by previous experience, the masses followed a procedure which was a reversal of that of the parties. The former took to the left, becoming radicals and afire with a socialist consciousness, the latter fled to the right, forming a closed circle of collaborating organisations.

'At the very moment when the masses were about to make an attack on bourgeois property and on the state, all the parties, some to a greater extent than the others, were bowing in reverence to that same state.'

Whilst in 1934 those fighting for the Fourth International to be set up against the reformists and the Stalinists had a real influence and possibilities to extend it and consolidate it, fighting directly against the supporters of class collaboration, by the end of 1935 there was no group in the labour movement to uphold the need for ruthless

ideological demarcation and the denunciation of class collaboration under the mask of unity. This is what Trotsky called the betrayals of his former comrades in struggle, with which he bitterly reproached them until his death.

From the Popular Front to the Revolution

Deported from France in 1935, and despite the numerous difficulties that he met in his Norwegian abode, Trotsky had analysed the 'Popular Front' as it had arisen in France on the initiative of the new directives given to the Communist Party by the Stalinised Third International. The noisy rallying of the French Communists to the declaration of Stalin 'fully approving the policy of national defence' of Pierre Laval's reactionary government, on the morrow of the Franco-Soviet Pact, the expulsion of revolutionary elements from the Communist Parties and Socialist Parties, as part of the new 'Holy Alliance', the efforts of the leaders of these parties to canalise the radicalised French workers along parliamentary paths and into the alliance with the Radical Party, their condemnation of the spontaneous and 'savage' movements of the arsenal workers of Brest and Toulon, in the name of solidarity with the bourgeois Republican Parties, gave its true face to the French Popular Front: a rehabilitation of the Radical Party, the party of imperialism and of the French bourgeoisie, the crushing of the revolutionary aspirations of the French proletariat in the name of the principles of bourgeois democracy and a purely parliamentary perspective.

The Spanish Popular Front Agreement, signed in Madrid on January 15, 1936, was written in the same ink as its French equivalent. Every historian of the time took pleasure in stressing its extremely moderate character, which was in fact as little revolutionary as possible. The parties which signed it had established a common programme, to serve among other things, 'the form of government to be established by the Republican Parties of the left with the support of the working-class forces, should they be victorious'. They invoked 'public peace' to justify the amnesty and maintained 'in all its strength the principle of authority'. The declaration set out in these very words: 'The Republicans do not accept the principle of nationalization of land and its distribution gratis to the peasants.' Its economic programme, under the sign of the 'general interests of the economy' and of 'national production' foresaw the creation of 'Institutions of economic and technical investigation whereby the state not only was in a position to acquire elements for its political direction but the

individual managers as well, so that they could exercise their own initiative.' It specified that the Republican Parties would not accept 'the measures for nationalization of the banks . . . control by the working-man . . . sought by the representatives of the Socialist Party.' And it stated that 'the Republic envisaged by the Republican Parties is not a Republic directed by social or economic motives of class but by a plan for democratic freedom and moved by public interest and social progress.' The declaration ended by the statement by the subscribing parties that 'International politics will be orientated to the principles and methods of the League of Nations.'

The Agreement was signed by the representatives of the Republican Parties, the Socialist Party and the UGT, the Socialist Youth, the Communist Party, the Syndicalist Party of Pestana and . . . by the representative of the POUM, Juan Andrade. Twelve days earlier, the editorial of the POUM paper, *La Batalla*, of January 3, 1936, had written under the title 'The Crucial Year of our Revolution': 'two roads are open before us, and only two: either the march to socialism, to the second revolution, or a shattering retreat and the triumph of the counter-revolution. . . . We are now about to enter into a period of great struggles on the march to socialism.' The POUM adopted Maurin's declaration: the only alternatives are 'fascism or socialism'. How then, can we explain its support for the Popular Front? How can we explain its appeal to workers to vote for this electoral alliance which permitted the establishment of a bourgeois republic, and forbade itself any attack against property and the bourgeois order? The leaders of the POUM explained their action by the desire to do everything to prevent the electoral victory of the right and the desire to obtain the immediate freeing, through the amnesty, of thousands of worker militants still detained after the defeat in the Asturias together with the tactical desire of not cutting themselves off from the masses, of not isolating themselves from the powerful unitary current among the masses, expressed now in enthusiasm for the Popular Front. Was there any sensitivity to the criticisms of Trotsky, which were immediate and which condemned the 'centrists' of the POUM for their complicity with the Stalinist-bourgeois coalition? Was there a lively reaction from any of the POUM's members, surprised at what was, after all, a rather brutal turn? In any case, the POUM, although its only MP, Maurin, voted for Azana, immediately declared that it retained its inde-

pendence and only signed the pact with the exclusive intention of ensuring the defeat of the right at the elections. These precautions did not prevent Trotsky from showing that the policies of the POUM, precisely because of the criticisms that it made of the Popular Front after having signed the Agreement, made it the left cover of the coalition and linked it to the bourgeoisie through the intermediary of the big workers' parties.

When, a few months later, Franco's military pronunciamiento exploded, prepared with the connivance of the Popular Front government, whose only concern was to restrain the mass movement, to reassure the right and to protect the army and the officer corps, Trotsky once again stressed the class nature of the Popular Front: 'When the bourgeoisie is forced to carry out an alliance with the organisations of labour, through the intermediary of its left wing, it then has even more need of the officer corps as a counterweight.' The policy of the Republican Popular Front government towards the army, allowing it to prepare openly its overthrow, was not the result of its 'blindness' or of any mistake, but simply the policy of the Spanish bourgeoisie. In Trotsky's eyes, of course, the most guilty were the labour leaders who allowed the fraud of the Popular front to be carried out. He wrote: 'We can now see very much more clearly the crime that the leaders of the POUM, Maurin and Nin, committed earlier this year. Every thinking worker can ask them—and will ask them—: "did you not foresee anything? How could you sign the programme of the Popular Front, making us give confidence to Azana and company, instead of filling us with the greatest mistrust of the radical bourgeoisie? Now, we will have to pay for your mistakes with our blood".' He added: 'The rage of these workers against Nin and his friends must be of a specially pronounced kind, for they belonged to a tendency which some years ago gave an exact analysis of the policy of the Popular Front, and which repeated this analysis at every stage, concretising it and making it more precise. Nin cannot plead ignorance (a feeble excuse for a leader) for he must have read the documents which he once signed.'

However, some people could still believe in the possibility of rapprochement. The POUM was far from homogeneous. The experience of six months of Popular Front government obviously condemned the January Agreement in the eyes of many militants. Above all, the workers' reply to the military coup d'état had transformed overnight the political atmosphere in Spain: the armed workers were

in control of the streets and were everywhere setting up the power of their committees, destroying the army, the police and the bourgeois law courts, seizing the factories and the land. Trotsky and Nin were once again in agreement that the spontaneous revolutionary action of the Spanish workers and peasants had carried them to a higher level even than that of the Russian Revolution of 1917 in its first stages. The International Secretariat of the Fourth International delegated Jean Rous to Barcelona to meet Andres Nin. Negotiations took place on the question of the 'entry' of the Trotskyists into the POUM: the POUM leadership agreed to publish on the front page of *La Batalla* a weekly article by Trotsky, and promised to demand for him the right of asylum. Then, brutally, everything was broken off. Was this really because of the clumsiness of Rous, as several witnesses suggest? Or was any compromise impossible after the latest attacks of Trotsky against Nin and Andrade, as others declared? We can, however, believe that the tactical disagreements were deeper than the revolutionary enthusiasm of the first days allowed to appear; the POUM was to make a move which Trotsky judged even more serious for the revolutionaries than the 'crime' that they committed in signing the Popular Front Agreement.

The entry of the POUM into the Catalan government

Commenting on the formation in Madrid of a Popular Front government on September 6, including republicans and communists, and presided over by Largo Caballero, Andres Nin declared: 'the present government doubtless represents a step forward compared with the previous government, but it is a Popular Front government, a government which corresponds to the situation before July 19, when the workers' insurrection had not taken place, and in this respect . . . it represents a step backwards. There is thus no other way out but a workers' government. The slogan for the entire working class for the coming period is "Out with the bourgeois ministers, and long live the government of the working class"'.

A few days later, on September 26, under the patronage of the Catalan Republican President of the Generality, Companys, a new government was set up on the Madrid model: Andres Nin himself was a member of it, with the title of 'Councillor for Justice'. It is this government of the Generality that will decree and carry out the effective dissolution of the revolutionary committees and the liquidation of the situation of 'dual power', estab-

lished by the workers' response to the military insurrection. Companys' biographer was to describe this political episode as follows:

'Companys, who has recognised the right of the workers to govern and has also shown himself to be prepared to abandon his position, manipulates the situation with such skill that gradually he re-establishes the legitimate organs of power, undermines any action taken by the committees and reduces the labour organisations to the mere role of auxiliaries accessories and executives. Within four to five months a normal state of affairs had been established.'

Commenting on the refusal by the workers' organisations of the Popular Front (of the CNT and the POUM as of the Communist and Socialist Parties,) to take the power on the morrow of July 19 in the so-called republican zone, Trotsky was to write: 'to renounce the conquest of power, is to leave it voluntarily to those who hold it, to the exploiters. The basis of any revolution has consisted and consists in carrying a new class to power and thus giving it the opportunity to carry out its programme . . . The refusal to take power inevitably throws any working-class organisation into the marsh of reformism and makes it the plaything of the bourgeoisie; it cannot be otherwise, given the structure of society'. This was in striking agreement with the point of view of president Azana, the spokesman of the republican bourgeoisie, who wrote, with some cynicism:

'Because of the suppression of military insurrection and at a time when the government lacked any combined means of action, there was an uprising of the proletariat which was not directed against the government itself. . . . A revolution must have the support of the mandate, must take over the government, must direct the country in accordance with its views. This had not been done. . . . The old order could have been replaced by a revolutionary one. This was not so'.

Andres Nin, commenting on the entry of his party into the Catalan government, declared on the radio: 'the struggle which is beginning is not the struggle between bourgeois democracy and fascism, as some people think, but between fascism and socialism.' The Journal of the POUM youth, *Juventud comunista*, indirectly revealed the hesitations and oppositions inside the POUM leadership on this question when it wrote: 'There are in the chamber too many representatives of the petty bourgeoisie, who have given us so many demonstrations of their ineptitude and short-sightedness. In our case, our party entered the government because *it did not want to be out of step* in these very grave times, and it believed that the socialist revolution

could receive some impetus from the Catalan government.' (My emphasis. P.B.) In fact, Andres Nin who, twenty days previously, had declared at a meeting in Barcelona that the dictatorship of the proletariat already existed in Catalonia, went on to say: 'In these circumstances, it is incomprehensible that there should be a government in Catalonia made up of representatives of the republican left (Esquerra), and it is absolutely incomprehensible that there should be in Spain a government with bourgeois ministers'. But he handed the task of eliminating the bourgeois ministers over to the anarchist leaders, saying: 'If the anarchist comrades take charge of the situation and make a few sacrifices, before long there won't be a single bourgeois minister in Spain'.

Trotsky retorted: 'Nin has, in practice, turned the Leninist formula into its opposite; he has entered a bourgeois government whose aim was to plunder and to stifle all the gains and all the supports of the socialist revolution. The basis for his thought was approximately as follows: since this revolution is a socialist revolution 'in its essence', our entry into the government can only further it . . . Did not Nin recognise that the revolution was socialist 'in its essence'? Yes, he proclaimed it, but only in order to justify a policy which undermined the very basis of the revolution'. In another article, he stated: 'Certainly, the POUM attempted theoretically to base itself on the theory of the permanent revolution (and this is why the Stalinists called the Poumists Trotskyists), but the revolution is not satisfied with mere theoretical recognition. Instead of mobilising the masses against their reformist leaders, the POUM tried to convince these gentlemen of the advantage of socialism over capitalism'.

The entry of the POUM into the Catalan parliament finally severed relations between Trotsky and the party. However, the dialogue between them was to continue until the crushing of the POUM and the liquidation of the revolutionary conquests by the Stalinist-bourgeois coalition government of Negrin and the restored bourgeois state.

The Spring 1937 discussion

From this point of view, we are lucky enough to have access to two important documents: the speeches made by Andres Nin in Barcelona on March 21 and April 25, 1937, and an article by Trotsky, replying to the first speech, dated April 23, on the eve of the May Days.

Nin declared: 'The POUM, and with it the entire vanguard of the proletariat, realises that the

revolutionary upsurge which began on July 19 has considerably retreated, that the revolutionary process is going through a period of pause, and that the workers' positions are much weaker today than they were six months ago'. Recalling the dislocation of the bourgeois state machine in July and August 1937, the fact that the proletariat 'imposed its will and its decisions' because it was armed, and the fact that 'power was in the streets', he remarked: 'Today, Companys, in the name of the bourgeoisie, dares to tell the workers to keep quiet and to obey'.

Nin then analysed the 'symptoms of the retreat that the revolution is now going through': he saw them in 'the process of rebuilding of the mechanism of the bourgeois state', 'the campaign for the creation of a non-political regular army', the desire of the Madrid government to revoke the Catalan freedoms, the proposed reform of the 'services and organisations entrusted with public order', which notably were to forbid those concerned with public order to belong to political or trade union organisations. This whole process, according to him, began with the elimination of the POUM from the Catalan government in December.

In an attempt to analyse the causes of this 'counter-revolutionary process', Andres Nin first of all took up 'the political role of reformism in our revolution, supported by that international organisation which still has the cynicism to call itself "communist"'. 'Reformism', he said, 'confined itself, and still confines itself in Catalonia, in Spain, to play the part which it has played on a world scale: that of being the bourgeoisie's watch dog.' He then pointed out the responsibility of the CNT leadership in the retreat 'which was able to take place, in the absence of any clear understanding in that organisation of the problem of power as the essential problem of the revolution'. He specified: 'the mistaken attitude of that organisation has had some important consequences in the counter-revolutionary process. Without it, in any case, the retreat that we are now experiencing would have been impossible'.

The remedies were within reach, time still remained, and 'all is not yet lost'. Turning to the Anarchist leaders, Nin declared: 'The CNT must examine its conscience, give up its old prejudices which have been one hundred times overtaken by events'. Was it a question of a violent struggle for power? 'No, with the positions which the working class still holds today, it can take power without resorting to violence'.

He once again confirmed that the war and revolution were inseparable, and that this war

was a revolutionary war, as the political importance of the victory at Guadalajara showed, gained as it was by revolutionary propaganda amongst the Italian troops. He demanded greater repression against the agents of fascism. reprisals for the bombing, and concluded that for victory they needed 'One flag. The red flag of the proletarian revolution. One government. The workers' and peasants' government, the government of the working class'.

On April 25, during a conference on 'the problem of power in the revolution', Nin completed and clarified his views. According to him, 'the formulae of the Russian revolution, applied mechanically, would lead to defeat. We must take not the letter, but the spirit of the Russian revolution'. Although it is true that in Spain, as in Russia, the bourgeoisie was unable to carry out the democratic revolution, there were, nonetheless, important differences between the situation in Russia in 1917 and the present situation in Spain: the Spanish reformists were very much more powerful and benefited from Anglo-French support and the desire of these supporters to turn the civil war into an imperialist war. The bourgeoisie had sought refuge inside the so-called workers' parties. Also, the Russian working class had no democratic tradition. In Spain, the existence of trade unions, parties, labour organisations, explained why soviets had not sprung up. And finally, in Spain, Anarchism was a mass movement, which it was not in Russia, and this imposed 'new problems and different tactics': 'the problem is for the revolutionary instinct of the CNT to be changed into revolutionary consciousness, and for the heroism of the masses to be changed into a coherent policy'. And the POUM leader turned to the leaders of the FAI and of the CNT, calling on them to form a revolutionary workers' front which would 'call and convene a congress of delegates from workers' and peasants' trade unions and from the fighting units, which would establish the basis of the new society and from which would be born the workers' and peasants' government, the government of victory and of the Revolution'.

At the same time, as he was weighing up the problems of the Spanish revolution, Trotsky asked 'Is victory possible?' It was from henceforth indisputable that the Popular Front Republican regime of Largo Caballero was trying to turn the army into 'the democratic guardian of private property'. The duty of revolutionaries was clear: to defend bourgeois democracy, even in armed struggle, but without taking any responsibility for it, without entering its government, preserving

complete freedom of criticism and of action, and preparing the overthrow of the bourgeois democracy at the following stage. 'Any other policy,' he stated, 'is criminal and has no hope of cementing bourgeois democracy, which is inevitably doomed to collapse, whatever the immediate outcome of the civil war. It was because it defended property that the Popular Front prepared the triumph of fascism: 'without a proletarian revolution, the victory of democracy would merely mean a detour in the road to the very same fascism'.

Trotsky stressed the fact that Nin admitted that the revolution had retreated. He wrote: 'Nin forgets to add: with the direct co-operation of the POUM leadership who, under the cover of 'criticism', adapted to the socialists and to the Stalinists, or in other words, to the bourgeoisie, instead of *opposing at every stage their party to all other parties* and thus preparing the victory of the proletariat. We predicted to Nin, six years ago, at the very beginning of the Spanish revolution, what would be the consequences of this fatal policy of hesitation and adaptation.'

Contrary to what Nin believed, it was not the expulsion of the POUM from the Catalan government, but its entry, which marked the beginning of the reaction. In fact, Trotsky stated, 'they should say: "our participation in the Catalan government made it easier for the bourgeoisie to strengthen itself, to chase us out and to openly take the road of reaction"'. Basically, the POUM was still half in the Popular Front. The POUM leaders plaintively *exhorted* the government to take the socialist road. The POUM leaders respectfully requested the CNT leaders to understand, at long last, Marxist teaching on the state. The POUM leaders considered themselves to be the "revolutionary advisers" to the leaders of the Popular Front'.

What was to be done? 'The masses must be openly and courageously mobilised against the Popular Front government. It is necessary to reveal to the syndicalist and anarchist workers the betrayal of those gentlemen who call themselves anarchists, but who are really just simple liberals. Stalinism must be mercilessly castigated as the worst agent of the bourgeoisie. You must feel yourselves to be the leaders of the revolutionary masses, and not the advisors of a bourgeois government.'

The victory of the revolution would be far from ensured, even if the 'Republican' army defeated Franco: this victory, in fact, 'would necessarily mean the explosion of a civil war inside the Republican camp'. In this new civil war, the proletariat would only be able to win if there was at its head an inflexible revolutionary party, which

had managed to gain the confidence of the majority of the workers and of the semi-proletarian peasants. But if this kind of party does not appear at the critical moment, the civil war inside the Republican camp threatens to lead to the victory of a Bonapartism which would be very hard to distinguish from the dictatorship of General Franco. This is why the Popular Front is a detour on the road to the same fascism.'

The main problem for Trotsky, just as it had been in 1931, was that of the party, of the revolutionary leadership. And this is why he took up Nin once again—saying before the Dewey Commission: 'He is my friend. I know him very well. But I criticise him very vigorously.' He wrote: 'Nin sententiously announces that "the revolution is in retreat" whilst in fact preparing . . . his own retreat. . . . If Nin was able to reflect on his own words, he would understand that if the leaders of the revolution prevent it from rising to the dictatorship of the proletariat, it must inevitably descend into fascism. It was so in Germany, it was so in Austria, it will be so in Spain, only in a very much shorter time'.

According to Trotsky, Nin and his friends did not analyse the situation correctly and, above all, did not go through to the end in the conclusions that had to be drawn. 'When Nin says that the Spanish workers can still today take power by peaceful means he is telling a flagrant untruth. Already today, power is in the hands of the chiefs of the military and of the bureaucracy in alliance with the Stalinists and the anarcho-reformists. In the struggle against the workers, these gentlemen lean on the foreign bourgeoisie and on the Soviet bureaucracy. To speak, in these conditions, of the peaceful conquest of power is to deceive oneself and to deceive the working class. In the same speech, Nin says that they want to disarm the workers, and advises the workers not to give up their arms. The advice is good. But when one class wants to disarm another and this class, and especially the proletariat, refuses to give up its arms, this means precisely the approach of a civil war'. And Trotsky attacked Nin's perspectives, which he called 'mealy-mouthed': 'Nin's mealy-mouthed and false perspective for the peaceful conquest of power is the reverse of all Nin's radical reasoning on the dictatorship of the proletariat'. The essence of Nin's politics lies in this: 'It enables him to avoid drawing the practical conclusions from his radical reasoning and to continue in his policy of centrist oscillation . . . The policy of the POUM corresponds, neither by its content nor by its tone, to the sharpness of the

situation. The POUM leadership consoles itself by thinking that it is 'in front' of the other parties. That is very little. One must base oneself, not on other parties, but on events, on the march of the class struggle.'

Thus, Nin's revolutionary phrases did not convince Trotsky that the POUM had reformed. 'You must', he wrote, 'fearlessly cut yourself off from the umbilical cord of bourgeois public opinion. You must break from the petty bourgeois parties including the syndicalist leaderships. You must go to the masses, in their deepest and most exploited layers. You must not lull them with illusions about any future victory which will come of its own accord. You must tell them the truth, however bitter. You must teach them to be suspicious of the petty-bourgeois agents of capital. You must teach them to rely on themselves. You must link them indissolubly to their own destiny. You must teach them to build their own combat organisations—the Soviets—in opposition to the bourgeois state.'

He asked: 'Can we hope that the POUM will make this turn? Alas, the experience of six years of revolution leaves no room for such hopes. The revolutionaries inside and outside the POUM would reveal themselves to be bankrupt if they reduced their own role to exhorting Nin, Andrade, and Gorkin in the same way as these latter have exhorted Caballero, Companys and the others. The revolutionaries must speak to the workers, to the rank and file, against the hesitations and vacillations of Nin'. On the latter point, this was a platonic declaration: the militants organised in the *Voz leninista* group, the Spanish section of the Fourth International, and their comrades, all very young and almost all of foreign extraction, organised in the rival *El Soviet* group, would have neither the means nor the time to speak 'to the rank and file' to denounce Nin, either inside or outside the POUM, whose destruction was approaching.

Las Jornadas de Mayo (the May Days)

The action of the May Days was to break off all discussion irrevocably between the factions. Confronted by the provocation that the men of the CPSU organised against the workers of the Telefonica the Barcelona workers replied by a spontaneous uprising. To Trotsky 'this event shows what a gap had been dug between the anarchist and the POUM on the one side and the working masses on the other. The concept spread about by Nin that the "proletariat can take power by peaceful means" has been demonstrated to be absolutely false'.

According to Nin, the movement took place because the problem of reaction had not been put in political terms and 'the accumulated irritation of the working class' had finally provoked 'a violent explosion followed by a spontaneous and chaotic movement without any immediate perspectives'. The POUM took its place by the side of the workers: 'The course of the armed struggle, the impetus of the revolutionary workers and the importance of the strategic positions taken were so great that we could have taken the power'. However, he specified: 'our party, a minority force in the labour movement, could not take on the responsibility to put forward this slogan, especially as the leaders of the CNT and of the FAI, by asking the workers in the most urgent manner, in speeches broadcast by the Barcelona transmitters, to give up the struggle, sowed confusion and disarray amongst the workers'. The POUM too, pointing to the promise to withdraw the Force Publique and not to disarm the workers, on the morning of the 7th, called on the workers to give up the struggle and to return to work: 'The attempt (at provocation) having been brought to nothing by the magnificent response of the working class, withdrawal now becomes necessary'.

In this document, draw up for the May 12 Central Committee meeting of the POUM, Andres Nin wrote on this subject: 'We are proud to announce that the attitude of our party effectively contributed to the ending of the bloody struggle . . . and to preventing the labour movement from being crushed by ferocious repression'. On May 28, *La Batalla* was suppressed. On June 16 Nin himself was arrested, to be murdered by Stalin's men. The policy of the POUM did not prevent the ferocious repression which beat down on all the Spanish revolutionaries; during the insurrection Trotsky wrote: 'It is necessary to arm the revolutionary vanguard against everything that is ambiguous, confused, equivocal, in the upper layers of the proletariat, both nationally and internationally. Whosoever does not have the courage to oppose the Fourth International to the Second and Third will never have the courage to lead workers in decisive battles', summing up in a sentence what Nin's political line had represented for him during these years of the Spanish revolution.

The general lessons of the Spanish revolution

Thus despite the years devoted to the training of real Communist cadres in the *Izquierda comunista*, despite the real influence gained during 1933-35 among the Spanish advanced workers, Trotsky

found himself reduced, at the time of the revolution, to a commentator—some say a prophet—the very opposite of the role which he had hoped to play. From this point of view, we are indebted to him for brilliant analyses which perfectly explain some aspects of the class struggle on this battlefield.

On civil war—and its particular aspects—he wrote: 'In civil war, far more than in ordinary war, politics dominate strategy. Robert E. Lee, as a military commander, had certainly more talent than Grant, but the policy of abolishing slavery ensured Grant's victory. During the three years of our civil war our enemies were often superior in military technique and art, but, in the end, it was our Bolshevik programme that carried the day. The worker knew very well what he was fighting for. The peasant hesitated a long time, but, having compared the two regimes through his experience, he finally supported the Bolshevik camp. In Spain, the Stalinists, who command from on high, put forward the formula which Caballero adopted: *first* the military victory, *then* the social reforms. Not seeing any basic difference between the two programmes in reality, the working masses, and especially the peasants, remained indifferent. In these conditions, fascism will inevitably win, because it has military superiority on its side. Bold social reforms are the most effective weapon in civil war and the fundamental condition for a victory over fascism'.

On world perspectives: 'If fascism wins in Spain, France will be caught in a trap from which it will not be able to escape. Franco's dictatorship will mean the inevitable acceleration of the European war in the most difficult conditions for France. It would be useless to add that a new European war would bleed the French people to its last drop of blood and would lead it to a decline that would at the same time be a terrible blow to the whole of humanity.'

On Stalinism and its role in the Spanish revolution, he wrote: 'Stalin has certainly attempted to carry on to Spanish soil the external procedures of Bolshevism: political bureaux, commissars, cells, GPU etc. But he had emptied these forms of their socialist content. He had rejected the Bolshevik programme, and with it soviets, as the necessary form of mass initiative. He placed the techniques of Bolshevism at the disposal of the bourgeoisie. In his bureaucratic narrowness, he imagined that commissars in themselves were enough to ensure victory. But commissars for private property were only able to ensure defeat. . . . Neither the heroism of the masses nor the courage of isolated

revolutionaries was lacking. But the masses were left to themselves and the revolutionaries were brushed aside, without a programme and without a plan of action. The military commanders were more concerned with crushing the social revolution than with gaining military victories. The soldiers lost confidence in their commanders, the masses in the government; the peasants held aloof, the workers grew tired, defeat followed defeat and demoralisation grew. It was not difficult to foresee all this at the beginning of the civil war. Whilst it gave itself the task of saving the capitalist regime, the Popular Front was vowed to military defeat. Turning Bolshevism upside down, Stalin carried out successfully the role of grave digger of the revolution.'

'The Spanish revolution shows yet again that it is impossible to defend democracy against the revolutionary masses by any other means than fascist reaction. And conversely, it is impossible to carry out a real struggle against fascism except by the methods of the proletarian revolution. Stalin fought against Trotskyism (the proletarian revolution) by destroying democracy with Bonapartist measures and with the GPU. This refutes once again and for all time the old Menshevik theory which gives the socialist revolution two independent historical chapters, separated from each other in time. The work of the Moscow executioners confirms in its own way the correctness of the theory of the permanent revolution.' This is the most general conclusion, a conclusion which, it must be admitted, the revolutionary events in the world for the last quarter century have in no way contradicted; indeed, quite the contrary.

The revolutionary party

It remains that the Spanish working class did not have in 1936-39 the instrument which had ensured the victory of the revolution in Russia, a revolutionary party; according to Trotsky, it was in this failure of the revolutionaries that lay the basic reason for the defeat of the revolution. According to him 'despite its intentions the POUM was, in the last analysis, the main obstacle on the road to building a revolutionary party'. Its destiny is worth thinking about. Trotsky wrote on this subject: 'the problem of the revolution must be delved into to the very bottom, to its last concrete consequences. Politics must conform to the basic laws of revolution, that is, to the movement of classes in struggle and not to the fears and superficial prejudices of the petty-bourgeois groups who call themselves Popular Front and many other things. The line of least

resistance in Revolution is revealed as the line of worst failure. The fear of isolation from the bourgeoisie leads to isolation from the masses. Adaptation to the conservative prejudices of the labour aristocracy means the betrayal of the workers and the revolution. Excessive prudence is the most fatal imprudence. This is the main lesson of the collapse of the most honest political organisation in Spain: the POUM, a centrist party.'

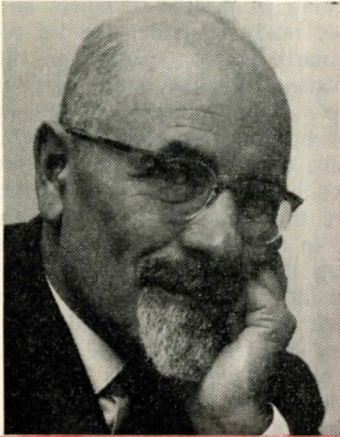
However, it remains true that, once again, since Stalin's victory in the Soviet Union, Trotsky was right in Spain only in a negative way: the Spanish 'Bolshevik-Leninists' were no more able than the German or French Trotskyists to build the revolutionary instrument that he called on them to create. The Fourth International, at that time, was incarnated by that man alone, a giant dominating in his thought and his experience of a quarter of a century of revolutionary struggles, over his supporters and over his adversaries. The impotence and the fatal divisions among the Spanish Trotskyists, their tragic inability to direct into the path of Marxism the groups of young socialists and militant libertarians, like the *Friends of Durruti*, which were, undeniably, developing in their direction, reveals a record no more attractive than that of the POUM leadership. Must we conclude, as some do, that Trotsky, in working unceasingly to build the Fourth International, was still caught up in an old, outdated dream, the dream of World Revolution, and that the age of revolution, which opened with October 1917, had also ended with it? This would be to display extraordinary optimism in capitalism's ability to organise the world and ensure its domination of man, an optimism and confidence that nothing in the history of mankind since the tragic hours of the fall of Barcelona has confirmed. Quite the contrary: Spain, under Franco, is there to remind anyone who might tend to forget.

The great lesson which comes out of Trotsky's works, and especially from the pages devoted to the Spanish revolution, is the conviction that humanity—that is, the class in which lies its future, the working class—is finally master of its destiny and that it must, by using the mechanism of historical laws, put an end to the capitalist regime. Whoever does not believe in the capacities of the working class, or in the necessity of its liberation from the yoke of exploitation; in a word, whoever does not believe in the revolution and is by that very fact against it, will certainly declare the building of the Fourth International to be 'Utopian'. On the other hand, all those who believe that humanity is not wedded till the end of time to terrorist

dictatorships, to Hitler or Mussolini, to Trujillo, Chiang Kai-shek or Lacerda, to concentration camps, to napalm bombing and atomic incineration, to pogroms and lynchings, all those who believe that lost battles reveal lessons which enable victory to be won one day, these people know that the question of a world revolutionary organisation is posed: the International.

These people will think over the lines which Trotsky devoted to the final warning of history before the second world war and will remember that revolutions, those locomotives of history, as Marx called them, can sometimes overtake the best intentioned revolutionaries. The bankruptcy of Nin, a revolutionary of integrity, was written in his political errors. A revolutionary Marxist cannot declare that 'the dictatorship of the proletariat exists', whilst the bureaucratic machines are busy transforming into empty shells the committees which, through the mobilisation of the masses, could have become real soviets, and whilst there remained, even if it was only a 'phantom', as Trotsky said, a bourgeois state which thirsts for revenge

and will not be lacking in pseudo-socialists and pseudo-revolutionaries ready to undertake its rebuilding. A revolutionary Marxist cannot, on the pretext of 'not isolating' himself, and of 'not marching out of step', adapt to the prejudices of the masses, dictated by the reformist machines, refrain from criticism, make himself the adviser of leaders brought to power by the first revolutionary wave, exhort the same leaders who are afraid of the masses to revolutionary action, in a word, renounce being the faithful interpreter of the historical needs of the workers and poor peasant masses, their revolutionary leadership. When a revolutionary of rare merit, like Andres Nin, commits such mistakes, history is there to testify that future generations must pay for them, for decades, with their flesh and blood. This is the kernel of Trotsky's message on Spain, a message addressed to revolutionary militants who may be tempted to think that there might be, on the path of the struggle for power, some short cuts and substitutes for the organisation of the working masses for conscious action.



by Robert Black

The Ironies of Isaac Deutscher

THE TOTAL AND final separation from the organizations, policies and methods of Pabloite revisionism was the most crucial struggle that the Fourth International has had to carry through in its post-war history. The documents and discussions relating to the struggle between the various tendencies involved have been reproduced in past issues of *Fourth International*, and a further study of these texts is essential for a full understanding of the political role of Deutscher, which is the main subject of this article.

While of necessity the struggle against revisionism took place within the confines of the various sections and bodies of the Fourth International, it would be a grave error—an underestimation of the pressure that capitalism exerts on the Marxist movement—to see the question only in these narrow terms. Pabloism was analysed and fought against in all its theoretical and practical manifestations as a *petty-bourgeois* adaptation to the dominance of bureaucracy, both Stalinist and Social Democratic, within the working class.

The practical consequence of retreat and capitulation to the bureaucracy was the liquidation of cadres and entire sections of the Fourth International into the 'left' segments of these bureaucracies and their peripheral organisations and cliques. In the semi-colonial areas, supporters of the 'United Secretariat' entered left bourgeois nationalist governments, and as in the cases of Algeria and Ceylon, actively assisted in the oppression of the working class and poor peasantry by their participation in what were essentially capitalist governments subservient to imperialism.

The theoretical justification for this liquidationist policy was based on a so-called objective drive towards socialism, which was so powerful that it rendered the Stalinist parties incapable of betrayal. Under the impact of a world crisis or war, the Stalinist bureaucracies and parties would be compelled to take the power both as a result of mass pressure from the workers below and also in order to defend the territory of the Soviet Union from imperialist attack. Pablo and his supporters attempted to cover their retreat from Trotskyism by arguing that no less a person than Trotsky had developed a conception of the bureaucracy, particularly after the Stalinist annexation of eastern Poland, which permitted the adoption of such a political perspective. The struggle against Pablo became therefore a struggle for the defence and enrichment of the analysis carried through by Trotsky of the Soviet bureaucracy, an analysis that embodied within it not only an examination of the social and political structure of the Soviet

Union in the period of the Stalinist reaction, but a characterization of political trends and tendencies that crystallized out of the struggle between the bureaucracy and the Soviet and international working class. The break from Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy by Pablo led on inevitably to a denial of the Transitional Programme, to a rejection of the political programme which had as its foundation Trotsky's fifteen-year struggle against Stalinism and for the traditions of Marxist internationalism.

Pablo's defection from Trotskyism, which involved a revision of the Transitional Programme to correspond with the 'new reality' of world Stalinism, had its roots in profound changes in the relationship between the classes in the post-war world. The continued, if uneven, decline of imperialism, the victory of the Chinese Revolution and the break-up of capitalism in Eastern Europe, all demanded an even closer tie-up between the bureaucracies and imperialism in order that they could achieve some form of stability after the social upheavals precipitated by the Second World War. This search for social stability refracted itself most sharply in the intermediate layers between the monopolist bourgeoisie and the hard core of the industrial proletariat.

It is these layers, swollen in the imperialist states to a considerable size, which have dominated the world of 'official' politics. An important section of this intermediate layer seeks its economic and political stability by serving the capitalist class through its intervention in the life of the working class in alliance with the leaders of the labour aristocracy.

As several Marxist analyses of this class have brought out, it seeks this stability through what it considers to be the most appropriate political channels—sometimes through Social Democracy, at other times through liberalism, and on other occasions again, via its support for fascism. What this class is always forced to reject as thoroughly alien to its intermediate position between the two major classes is the existence, basis and historical outcome of the class struggle. Middle-class radicalism, its progressive role exhausted with the French Revolution and Jacobinism, and already found wanting in the abortive 1848 bourgeois revolutions in Germany and Austria, is a basically reactionary political force and conflicts with Marxism on all the main questions of political theory and action.

Today large sections of the middle class, and particularly their radical spokesmen, attempt to resolve this problem of stability through both a

leaning upon and also a curbing of the power of the working class. This alliance with the reformist leaders of the working class is sought as a necessary counterweight to the power and rapacity of monopoly capital, which often stands in the way of the economic and social advancement of the middle class. The middle-class radical therefore readily sees the bureaucracy, quite often even its 'left' face, as precisely that force which he can turn to in order both to pressurize the ruling class into reforms, and also to hold in check the power of the working class as a force in its own right.

Sudden changes in the course of economic and political events, such as the international crisis after 1929, or the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact in 1939, can create havoc amongst the most politically oriented of the petty bourgeoisie. After 1930 the German middle class defected en masse from its traditional bourgeois-democratic and mildly nationalist parties and swung into line behind Hitler's Brown Shirts. From the recesses of petty-bourgeois respectability, vast layers of the German middle class, particularly its youth, turned into street-fighting toughs and desperadoes.

This middle-class instability manifests itself even, and in fact most accurately, inside the Marxist movement. The defection of the Burnham-Shachtman group to bourgeois democracy and patriotism illustrated that often the radical middle-class elements within the revolutionary party are pulled more by their own social milieu than by the discipline, programme and method of the party. Even those who at one stage began to take up a struggle against Stalinism, and who were drawn towards Trotsky's struggle for the new International, were unable to see Stalinism in anything other than moral terms, and hence were unable to make the theoretical and class break from middle-class radicalism to revolutionary Marxism. To make this breakthrough to Marxism and the working class demands a complete rupture with the 'official' world of left politics, which at bottom is nothing but a highly sophisticated compromise with the status quo. Trotskyism is not a protest at the iniquities of imperialism and Stalinism, but a preparation of the working class for their overthrow.

Pabloism was the form that this petty-bourgeois adaptation to radicalism and the power of the bureaucracy took within the Fourth International. What was at stake in the fight against it was not simply the preservation of a fixed programme. It was a fight to defend the Marxist conception of the revolutionary role and independence of the

working class and the party through which it finds its highest expression. Pabloism was a rejection of this constant Marxist orientation towards the working class, and expressed a search, empirical in its nature, for other, already established and influential forces which could carry through the overthrow of capitalism.

Always outside the ranks of the Fourth International, but destined nevertheless to play an important part in the development of revisionism within it, Isaac Deutscher has been the epitome of this turn away from the working class and capitulation before the power of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is perhaps one of the most important facets of the struggle against the revisionists in the Fourth International that their most sophisticated theoretician was never a member of the International, and was in fact responsible for the opposition put up by the Polish delegation against its foundation at the First Congress of 1938. (Deutscher gives the full details of his own role in these events on pages 421-422 of *The Prophet Outcast*.) Pabloism only accepted in 1953 what Deutscher had already decided in 1938 and had been arguing ever since—that the Fourth International was irrelevant to the struggle for world socialism, and that the goal of the Marxist pioneers was to be realized through some agency other than an authentically communist international.

Deutscher was the highly skilled pioneer of a revision of Trotskyism to which the leaders of the Socialist Workers' Party, by a series of rather crude improvisations, evolved their way pragmatically over a period of ten or more years. In examining the philosophical and political position of Deutscher, as he reveals it in the series of essays recently published under the title *Ironies of History*, we can probe yet deeper to the roots of revisionist method, and bring out the class and philosophical origins of its attack upon the positions of revolutionary Marxism.

The point has already been made that the essence of revisionism is not just the formal rejection of this or that aspect of the programme of the Marxist movement, of the Transitional Programme. The fight to defend programme has a deeper significance. Revisionism is an attack by capitalism, usually mounted through middle-class radicals, on the independence of the working class from *all* other classes of capitalist society. This independence, as all the experiences of the class struggle have proved, can only be developed and consummated through the building of a world revolutionary party to lead the workers to power and to build socialism. Revisionism therefore aims

its main shafts *at the party*, as the concrete embodiment of the fusion of Marxist theory with the unconscious drive of the working class towards power.

As a body of theory, revisionism is consistent only for its eclecticism, for its borrowing from the ragbag of discarded bourgeois philosophies. Bernstein leaned heavily on the moral philosophy of Kant and the utilitarianism of the English Fabians. The 'left liquidators' or 'Otzovists' within the Bolshevik faction, led by Bogdanov and Bazarov, dipped into the well of the subjectivist school of Ernst Mach and Richard Avenarius, while Burnham espoused 'scientific politics' based on the mathematical logic of Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead. These defectors from Marxism formed a *philosophical* bloc with the bourgeoisie—a bloc which corresponded to their alliance with this same class on the question of the party.

Deutscher discovered empirically in his fight against Trotskyism and the Fourth International that certain formulations of Hegel were useful in rounding his 'objectivist' revision of the world outlook of dialectical and historical materialism. In order to bring out clearly the class essence and origin of Deutscherism as a *political* tendency, in conflict with those forces struggling to rebuild the Fourth International of Trotsky, it is necessary to pay close attention to the interpretation he gives to the Hegelian categories, and to the precise way in which he selects those which best suit his aim of reducing the struggle for socialism to an 'objective' and 'inevitable' process. What must be stressed is that the driving force behind Deutscher's employment of a half-assimilated Hegelian philosophy of history is the rejection of Trotsky's designation of our epoch as one of a *crisis of leadership*.

From this denial of the central, decisive role of leadership flows the flirting with Hegel—an exercise which reveals the sympathy that Deutscher feels for the German philosopher's *system* as opposed to his dialectical *method*.

The very title of the selection of essays under review—*Ironies of History*—indicates the close affinity that the author has for bourgeois objectivism. In his review of E. H. Carr's work, *Socialism in One Country* (*Labour Review*, December 1958), Deutscher makes great play of the Hegelian system in order to justify politically his own position in relation to the founding and building of the Fourth International, and to the theoretical heritage bequeathed to it by Trotsky. For Deutscher, no new International was required, as Stalin 'found himself to be carrying out, in his own way, some of the

major policies expounded by his defeated enemy'.¹ As he is at great pains to point out throughout these essays, 'here, the Hegelian "List der Geschichte", the sly irony of history, comes into its own. Circumstances force men to move in the most unforeseen directions and give their doctrines the most unprecedented contents and significance. Men and their doctrines thus serve purposes diametrically opposed to those they had envisaged'.² Hegel put it in almost identical terms: 'Reason is as cunning as it is powerful. Cunning may be said to lie in the inter-mediative action which, while it permits the objects to follow their own bent and act upon one another till they waste away, and does not interfere with the process, is nevertheless only working out its own aims.'³ This is clearly not only Hegel's, but also Deutscher's conception of history. The proletariat does not come on the historical scene as a class in its own right, as a subjective force *for itself*, but remains only an object *in itself*, having its power mediated through the Stalinist bureaucracy, which acts as a proxy and temporary agency of class consciousness on behalf of the working class.

This same bureaucracy, despite all the subjective intentions and reactionary policies which flow from its social privileges, finds itself forced by the sheer weight of historical logic to implement piecemeal the programme of world revolution, albeit with great reluctance. With Pablo, Deutscher therefore faces with equanimity the prospect of 'centuries of deformed workers' states'. This objectivist conception of the class struggle liquidates the central role that class consciousness plays in the development of that struggle. It is the total negation of revolutionary Marxism.

The bureaucratic extension of the nationalized property relations from the Soviet Union into Eastern Europe after the Second World War led to an impressionist revision of Trotsky's analysis of the bureaucracy by Pablo and his supporters in the leadership of the Fourth International. Like Deutscher, they argued that the bureaucracy could, under certain conditions, play a progressive, that is to say, revolutionary role, and that flowing from this, the bureaucracy could no longer be considered as completely counter-revolutionary. This involved a revision of all the analysis undertaken by Trotsky of the bureaucracy, from *The New Course* in 1923 to the last mature works, *The Revolution Betrayed* and *In Defence of Marxism*. Pabloism sought to destroy that analysis and the political programme of action that was based upon it. What Pablo and later Hansen chose to say in the crass language of the empiricist and the

pragmatist, Deutscher has always attempted to cloak in the most orthodox 'classical Marxist' traditions.

The revolution is indeed both cunning and ironic, choosing as it did to work through Stalin and not Trotsky. In Deutscher's essay, *The Failures of Khrushchevism*, he sketches out the mechanics of this historical cunning: 'However, history has not been moving in a vicious circle. What has remained of the old barbarism and of Stalinism has been gradually diluted to suit the needs of national and international progress. Now the retrograde elements of Khrushchevism are perhaps being similarly reduced.'⁴ Thus we see this 'objective', though devious, drive towards socialism, mediated and refracted through Stalinism, and 'gradually diluted' to meet the requirements of the liberal and the radical in pursuit of 'national and international progress'.

Deutscher is as overawed as Pablo by the sheer weight and pressure of this historical logic, which is driving us all irresistibly towards socialism: 'How these ambiguities have been piling up! Stalin employed barbarous means to drive barbarism out of Russia; Khrushchev was destroying Stalinism in a Stalinist manner, and now Brezhnev, Kosygin and their associates are trying to deal with the confused balance of Khrushchevism in a more or less Khrushchevite fashion.'⁵ Where is the Soviet working class in this process? Where indeed is Marxism as anything more than a useful set of categories for analysing and commentating on the outside world? Marxism in the hands of a Deutscher becomes a passive and one-sided reflection of reality. It is not a preparation for the future, but an apology for the past and a justification for the present. No doubt Deutscher finds full sympathy with the definition of Philosophy given by his mentor: 'as the thought of the world, it appears only when actuality is already there cut and dried after its process of formation has been completed. . . . The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the fall of dusk'.⁶

Deutscher's passive projection of the Marxist method is shared by the ex-Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers' Party. For the leaders of this wreck of a once combative party, Marxism begins with the deed. In the case of Cuba, a socialist and revolutionary consciousness was established *after* the

1 *Ironies of History*, p. 237.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 236.

3 Hegel, *Smaller Logic*, OUP 1959, p. 350.

4 *Ironies of History*, p. 142.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 142.

6 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, OUP 1962, p. 13.

revolution, after what they claim to be the taking of power by the Cuban working class. Marxism therefore, like Hegel's philosophic owl, appears on the scene only after the working class has carried through its historic tasks. Marxism helps us to explain more easily what has already taken place, helps us to appreciate better the deeds of others. If Hansen and Deutscher are correct, then of course, the revisionists' break from the propositions of Leninism and the building of the party must also be supported.

Hansen and the other leaders of the SWP share with Deutscher the belief that history is a cunning process, which even with the socialist revolution to use again Hegel's apt words, 'permits the objects to follow their own bent and act upon one another till they waste away'. Admitting, as do both the SWP and Deutscher, that socialism can be achieved without class consciousness, without the intervention of Marxists in that struggle, their final step must be to renounce the party. And this they have done in the Pabloite organ *World Outlook*, of December 16, 1966, in which they dream instead of 'the renovation of the World Communist Movement in a new mass international—to the formation of which the Fourth International has made and will continue to make an indispensable contribution. . . .'

As Trotskyists we recognize only one International, that founded by Trotsky in 1938 and continued in the fight against attacks from the revisionists by the work of the International Committee of the Fourth International. Any other position on this, the most central of all questions of Marxist theory, is a capitulation to the liquidationists of the Pabloite camp, who now conceive of their role as a midwife to assist in the birth of a new international, made up in the main of the rejuvenated elements of world Stalinism. Here, as all along the line, the revisionists now share common ground with Deutscher.

What is the political role of Deutscher, played by one who claims to have been an enemy of Stalinism 'first as a member of the Communist Party, and then as a Marxist *belonging to no party*'.⁷ (Emphasis added.) What is this Marxism that belongs to no party, fights for no programme, trains no cadres and builds or believes in no international? We have already noted that Deutscher's method is Marxist in its vocabulary only, that behind the phrases of 'classical Marxism' there is concealed a bourgeois conception of history and social development which reveals itself in a hostile attitude to the task of building a conscious leadership to carry through the task

that history poses to mankind and its proletarian vanguard. Profound pessimism about the ability of the working class to break free from bureaucracy and act in its own right lies at the base of such a world outlook. Deutscher, in sharing it with thousands of other worn out and dispirited radicals, becomes the spokesman for several generations of radicals who were attracted by the power of the working class to change society only to have their expectations and often Utopias dashed on the twin rocks of Stalinism and Social Democracy. The betrayal of the October Revolution by a certain section of the Bolshevik Party leadership has been elevated by this middle-class radical element into a mistrust of parties *in general*, into a rejection of organizational forms that appear to the empiricist and impressionist to be identical with those of Stalinism.

The havoc wrought by Stalinism within the working class finds its reflection in those sections of the middle class pulled towards Marxism. Stalinism has deepened to an enormous extent the theoretical scepticism already endemic within the petty bourgeoisie—and in so doing strengthened both its own rule and that of imperialism by disorientating elements that would otherwise have been able to make the break from radicalism to Marxism and the building of the Fourth International. Deutscher is thus the product of a whole epoch of class struggle, whose main feature has been the betrayals and defeats inflicted on the working class by its treacherous or ill-prepared leaderships. Deutscher, in turning away from leadership, searched, as did Pablo, for forces already present that could carry through the overthrow of capitalism. It is here that the gulf opens up between Deutscher and revolutionary Marxism.

Even though Deutscher turns to Hegel for his philosophical inspiration (though, we might add, in the process doing scant justice to Hegel) he invests such categories as he borrows with a political content that is shaped by the struggle between classes in the epoch of imperialist decay and the fight for revolutionary leadership. Hegel's thought was nurtured by a vastly different accumulation of political and intellectual experiences, and represented a high point in the evolution of bourgeois science and culture. Hegel's interpretation of the dialectic of history, even though grasped and presented idealistically, was a conquest of thought which Marx, Engels and Lenin understood to be historically progressive. Deutscher's political theory and his role in the struggle for

⁷ *Ironies of History*, p. 151.

working-class leadership can only be judged as reactionary, even taking into account his popularization of the life of Trotsky and his refusal to endorse the Stalinist lies and slanders on the history and leaders of the Russian Revolution. Ours is not a literary estimation, nor for that matter only a philosophical one, but is essentially political. It is on the question of programme and method that Trotskyism clashes most sharply with the biographer of Trotsky.

To take but one example. Towards the end of *The Prophet Outcast* Deutscher tries to convey the impression that Trotsky retreated from a position of revolutionary defeatism in the first year of the Second World War: 'In the article his mind wandered between France, humiliated and saddled with a "treacherous senile Bonapartism", and the vastly different American scene. But he had no time to develop these inchoate thoughts; his voice in the dictaphone was to remain the only trace of his last inconclusive gropings in a new direction.'⁸ Trotsky appears here as someone revising his own programme, as retreating from the position of revolutionary defeatism. If the text of this and other writings by Trotsky on the problems of the Second World War are studied carefully, what becomes apparent is not that Trotsky was for the defence of the so-called 'democratic' allies against the fascist powers, but that the formation of a revolutionary and not pacifist programme of struggle against fascism and war took into account the feelings of workers and the illusions shared even by the most advanced sections of the labour movement. Trotsky was not for the defence of an imperialist United States. That is a slander. Trotsky was for participation by the Socialist Workers' Party in the life of workers as the latter sought to guide the war into democratic and anti-fascist channels. The Transitional Programme took into account this desire of workers to defend their class organizations against fascism—but at the same time did not adapt to the illusion that this defence could be achieved by supporting a war of one's 'own' ruling class, however democratic its pretensions, against the capitalist class of another nation. The post-war developments of American imperialism have proved that any other standpoint on the Second World War leads inevitably to defencism and social chauvinism.

Trotsky argued for participation in the war by the Fourth International. But on a certain programme: 'we are ready to defend democracy with you, only on condition that it should be a real defence, and not a betrayal in the Pétain

manner'.⁹ Struggling for a concrete and non-sectarian presentation of the Marxist programme of struggle against imperialist war, a war that Trotsky sought to turn into war against imperialism, he employed formulations that would enable the SWP to obtain a sympathetic hearing from the more class-conscious workers. In doing so, he was following in a tradition he acquired from Lenin in the struggle of the Bolsheviks against the first imperialist war.

Deutscher attempts to present this deepening of a method and a tradition as a 'groping in a new direction'. The opposition to the Fourth International undertaken by Deutscher involves therefore a clash with all its essential programmatic foundations. Distortion and revision become part of the biographical and literary work of Deutscher, and are for us its most important aspect.

As we have already indicated, Deutscher's use of Hegel is based on a very one-sided and partial assimilation of the life's work of the German idealist. His predilection for the 'ironic' and the objective which he sees in Hegel has its counterpart in his neglect, which is not accidental, of that side of Hegel's thought which emphasised the subjective and conscious side to development, his fervent affirmation of man's aspiration to freedom, which Hegel regarded as being his very essence. Human freedom Hegel saw as being realizable through struggle and through an understanding of what was necessary in order to win his freedom. Thus freedom was consummated through the struggle for consciousness, through the knowledge of necessity. We find that it is precisely *this* side of the younger Hegel, nurtured in the epoch of the French Revolution, that was carried over by Marx in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts—1844* and later in his *Theses on Feuerbach*. It is the discovery of the materialist and class basis to human development and consciousness, grasped one-sidedly and idealistically by Hegel, that embodies the revolutionary breakthrough in science achieved by Marx and Engels. In a sense, Deutscher is to be placed in a pre-Marxist category in his denial of the materialist class basis to human knowledge, and clinging as he does to objective idealism in order to be able to justify his opposition to the construction of Marxist parties based on the struggle between material interests embodied in classes, political programmes and leaderships. As the references

8 Quoted in Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*, p. 502.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 502.

to the text of his writings bring out, socialism is an *idea*, which works out its inner contradictions through the historical process. It is not the programme and expression of class interests but rather a 'World Spirit' which manipulates programmes and classes in such a cunning and paradoxical fashion that only those such as Deutscher, being far removed from the scene of the drama, can grasp the design and complexity of the process in all its detail.

Deutscher sees and presents man and particularly the working class as a passive object. Those who struggle to give conscious direction to human development, to build working-class leadership, are seen by Deutscher as heroic or tragic figures, battling against forces and an historical design which is destined to take another, paradoxical course. It is in this light that he presents both Lenin and Trotsky. Thus great men are not so much leaders as prophets, born tragically ahead of their time, crushed by objective events and able only to register an impassioned protest against the irony that has consigned them to oblivion and vilification. Deutscher takes comfort that gradually, the thoughts and words of his prophets are implemented by the very forces that betrayed the life's work of Lenin and Trotsky—the Soviet bureaucracy. Deutscher substitutes the tragic aspects of Trotsky's life for his central message and for the task to which he devoted himself to his dying day—the construction of revolutionary leadership. The very 'cult' of Trotsky, built up by intellectuals such as Deutscher, obscures the highest point in his whole life's struggle: the integration of the traditions and principles of Bolshevism into the founding of the Fourth International. Deutscher's Trotsky trilogy serves this end and this end only.

The ability of Trotsky to carry through such a struggle for the new International was based upon his assimilation in the course of the class struggle of the whole continuity of Marxism, from its origins in the crisis of German idealism and bourgeois political economy through to the founding of Bolshevism by Lenin and their joint fight for the consolidation and theoretical education of the sections of the Communist International.

'Deutscherism' is a challenge to this continuity. It fails even to assimilate those elements within bourgeois philosophy which fertilized the mind of the young Marx. It is deaf to the Hegel of the 'Phenomenology', to the Hegel who asserts that in the struggle for consciousness 'the process of bringing all this out involves a twofold action—action on the part of the other and action on the

part of itself. . . . But in this there is implicated also the second kind of action, self activity. . . . The relation of both self-consciousnesses is in this way so constituted that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle. They must enter into this struggle, for they must bring their certainty of themselves, the certainty of being for themselves, to the level of objective truth. . . . And it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; only thus is it tried and proved that the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence. . . .'¹⁰

Like Hegel thirty years before him, Marx came up hard against the political backwardness of Germany. Hegel sought a reactionary political solution in his later years, abandoning the idea of freedom for the 'power-protected inwardness' of the Prussian bureaucracy, while Marx looked forward to the new social force that was emerging as yet slowly from within a semi-feudal Germany. 'In politics Germans thought what other nations did. Germany was their theoretical conscience. . . . German philosophy is the ideal prolongation of German history.'¹¹ Marx realized that the solution to the problem of German, and therefore human society, lay in the grasping of the relationship between thought and action, between theory and practice.

Against both the purely activist tendency that sought *merely* the abolition of philosophy by 'turning its back to it and its head away from it', and also those who 'thought it could make philosophy a reality without abolishing it', Marx saw the unification of thought with reality as being possible only 'in the formation of a class with radical chains'—the industrial proletariat. Marx at this point broke for ever with German idealism, subsuming its dialectical method within his broader reworking of bourgeois political economy and revolutionary French socialism. Deutscher, because he has been unable to follow through Marx's dialectical synthesis of the high points of bourgeois thought and science, stands outside of all the subsequent enrichments of Marxism. The central issue at stake in the break with Hegel was on the question of the relationship between thought and human practice—and it is on this question that we find Deutscher, the 'Marxist belonging to no party', most vulnerable.

If the real revolutionary essence of Marx's break

10 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, Allen and Unwin 1961, pp. 232-233.

11 Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, in *On Religion*, Moscow 1957, p. 49.

from idealism is not understood in relation to the role played by the emergent proletariat in the crystallization of his world outlook, then any analysis of the contemporary political scene, any biographical work or historical research cannot become enrichments of the Marxist literary heritage, for they leave out the one question upon which all others devolve—the party. Instead of classes and their parties, ever-changing forces in a living struggle in which the working class seeks to take the power *consciously* through the party, we have, with the Deutscher schema, a working out of a paradoxical, supra-human design over which the human actors have no control. The process unfolds, not through the contradictions contained within capitalism, but by the gradual self-realization of an abstract history through a series of *logical* contradictions contained within the categories of progress. In this schema, Marxism is not an active element which derives its power from its conscious grasp of the real relationships between things and men, but serves as a means of recording the progress of history, as if the commentator were somehow able to place himself outside the universe and all its vast complex of interrelated processes. Marxism of this variety is the veritable abdication of working-class leadership, as it by implication denies the necessity to intervene in this process to guide it to fruition. That is the meaning of Leninism, of 'What is To Be Done' and all Lenin's writings on the party.

Intellectuals such as Deutscher, who feel the pull of the incisiveness of Marxism as an analytical tool, still remain unable to develop Marxism beyond a highly sophisticated impressionism because they see the working class through the prism of the bureaucracies that dominate and betray it. Only those who begin with the first proposition of the 'Communist Manifesto', that all history is the history of class struggles, can fight their way through to the working class against all those false leaderships that seek to adapt it either directly or indirectly to the rule of imperialism. It is because all the great Marxists proceeded from the objective contradictions at work within capitalism, and not from any hastily gained impressions filtered through the narrow categories of middle-class radicalism, that they became able to harness and unleash this enormous class power at the moments of deepest capitalist crisis. That was the contribution of Lenin—and yet, from these essays, it would appear to have passed Deutscher by.

Deutscher, for all his 'objectivism', is a product of the international class struggle, and has in fact

adjusted himself most adroitly to the prevailing 'market trends' in his post-war political and literary activity. His biggest opening came of course, as an almost professional anti-Stalinist, with the death of Stalin and the events following the famous Khrushchev 'secret speech'. It is very instructive to see exactly how Deutscher rode this particular tiger.

We would agree with Deutscher that this speech was a most significant turn in the developments inside the Soviet Union. But exactly what twist did he and the Pabloites give to that speech? Which side they chose to exaggerate, and which aspects they sought to play down or even deny, is most revealing from the point of view of Marxist method. For the revisionists, this speech served as evidence of a liberal wing *within* the bureaucracy—a wing which could be given 'critical support' against the 'hard line' Stalinists of the Molotov faction. (As time went by, 'support' tended more and more to displace any elements of 'criticism'.) Far from this speech being seen as evidence of a deep-going crisis within Stalinism, a crisis produced above all by the pressure of the radicalized student and working-class youth within the Soviet Union, it was presented as proof of the possibility of an internal regeneration within Stalinism itself. In so far as any intervention was made by the Pabloites following the secret speech, they played the same role as that of Deutscher, namely to bolster illusions amongst wavering Stalinists that the Communist Parties and the Soviet bureaucracy were capable of self-reform and liberalization. It was Deutscher himself who was the pioneer of this theory, and like all pioneers, he had to undergo the taunts of those who were only a short time later to embrace him.

The death of Stalin in 1953 was, according to Deutscher 'the end of the Stalinist era'.¹² But this was precisely the conclusion drawn by Pablo from the same event! As if the death of a single person, however exalted his governmental status, could mark the break up of a whole social layer upon which the rule of this person rested, reinforced as the bureaucracy was with all the powers of the modern state and supported politically by the most high-powered international publicity agency the world has yet seen. But that is just Deutscher's role, to separate out Stalinism as the politics of one man from the social dominance of a bureaucracy which to date has outlived him by fourteen years. Stalinism presented in this way appears as an aggregate of moral excesses, and not

¹² *Ironies of History*, p. 153.

the policies of a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy which can only be removed from its usurped positions of power by a violent political revolution.

How did the International Committee of the Fourth International see the 'secret speech'? Above all, as a confirmation of the perspective of political revolution, as developed by Trotsky against both opportunism and sectarianism on the question of the class nature of the Soviet Union. An intervention was made where possible by supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International in all the Communist parties racked by the 1956 crisis of Stalinism. The basis of this intervention was not support, however 'critical', for any so-called 'liberal' wing of the bureaucracy, but the need to understand and destroy Stalinism as a counter-revolutionary agency within the working class. We saw the Soviet, Polish and Hungarian events of 1956 from the standpoint of building the Fourth International. Any other position led along the road to capitulation to the bureaucracy.

For Deutscher, the death of Stalin served as an excellent opportunity to develop his ironies of history. Like Stalin, Lenin had died just at the right time. 'If Lenin had lived longer, he would have had to become either a Stalin or a Trotsky, for these two men embodied two opposed solutions to the dilemmas of the 1920s. He was saved the agony of this choice by a timely death. Yet Lenin could have probably become neither a Stalin nor a Trotsky—in a sense both these characters were blended within him. Illness and death gripped him, while he stood at a cross road at which he was incapable of choosing any of the roads that lay ahead.'¹³ An historical sleight of hand on questions of fact lays the basis for the introduction of his favourite paradoxes and ironies. But what are the realities of the period to which he refers? Deutscher is well aware that Lenin had long since chosen the only possible Marxist road ahead, and that he did not balk at the so-called 'cross roads' of the early 1920s.

Deutscher, who has been fortunate enough to have had full access to the Trotsky Archives, must know that Lenin, far from being torn between a 'Stalinist' or 'Trotskyist' solution to the problems of the revolution, had formed a political bloc with Trotsky to fight Stalin as the personification of bureaucratic conservatism and nationalism within the party and state apparatus. In another context, Deutscher would be only too willing to avail us of these facts. To his credit, he did make them public through his writings when the over-

whelming majority of political experts—both Stalinist and pro-capitalist—did all in their power to prove that Stalin was the logical and chosen continuator of the Leninist cause. But here, Deutscher makes concessions to just these people, whose whole literary lives have been devoted to the propagation of lies concerning the history of the Communist movement.

The reasons why he does so are obvious. Deutscher argues that Leninism died with Lenin. Trotsky's fight and contribution was not for the Fourth International—he sees that as 'a futile venture'—but as a preserver of the integrity of 'classical Marxism'—as 'the Prophet Outcast'. The 'other half' of Lenin, Stalin, carried on the practical work of defending the gains made by the revolution, even if in a crude and barbaric way. Stalinism seen in this light is not of course a *break* from the Marxist tradition, but a variation within it, or as Deutscher himself puts it, 'Stalinism represented an *amalgamation* of Marxism with the semi-barbarous and quite barbarous traditions and the primitive magic of an essentially pre-industrial, i.e., not merely pre-socialist but pre-bourgeois society'.¹⁴ Not, one notices, the *destruction* or *negation* of Marxism and Bolshevism, but their mutation into 'the version of Marxism suited to a country in which barefoot muzhiks working their land with sokhas, wooden ploughs, formed the overwhelming majority'.⁵ Stalinism as a form of peasant Marxism is indeed an intriguing theory, but one for which the mass of Soviet peasantry will have little sympathy.

Deutscher explains how Stalin carried through, in his own perverse and ironic way, the programme of October Revolution: 'After the second world war, Stalin, still waving the flag of socialism in one country (irony), found himself carrying the revolution into half-a-dozen foreign countries . . . He out-Trotskyed Trotsky, as it were, who had never thought of spreading revolution in such a manner.'¹⁶

Not only in international affairs, but within the Soviet Union itself, reason's cunning worked through the murderer of the Bolshevik party: 'All the same, under Stalinist tutelage the Soviet people have come of age culturally. They owe to that tutelage at least as much as they have suffered from it . . . The core of the Stalinist achievement consists in this, that he had found Russia working with wooden ploughs and is leaving her

13 Ibid., p. 182.

14 Ibid., p. 21.

15 Ibid., p. 184.

16 Ibid., p. 237.

equipped with atomic piles. He has raised Russia to the level of the second industrial power of the world.¹⁷

Despite this gloss which Deutscher attempts to put on the history of Stalinism, Trotsky's writings on the Soviet Union, together with all the fresh evidence (much from Soviet sources) that has come to light in recent years, prove up to the hilt that the economic, military and cultural advances made by the Soviet people have been made despite and in conflict with the bureaucracy. Only those who, consciously or otherwise, bow down before the bureaucracy can attempt to argue that it was Stalin who modernised the Soviet economy. That the Soviet economy survived the ravages of the empirically conceived crash industrialization, forced collectivization and slave labour camps is hardly due to the wisdom of Stalin, but rather proof of the immense loyalty of the Soviet working class to the planned economy established by the revolution. It was the moral and political capital of the October Revolution that saved the Soviet Union from internal collapse and external invasion at the moments of its deepest crisis. But Deutscher in his 'Obituary of Stalin' makes no such distinction. He insists that somehow, somewhere, the communist conscience of the revolution was preserved in the bureaucracy.

Evidence of this he finds in the most unlikely of places: 'By spreading education, by arousing the people's intellectual curiosity (sic) and by keeping alive the socialist tradition of the revolution [even if he was not to allow this revolution's leaders to remain alive, R.B.] Stalinism has in fact accumulated many of the elements that should eventually go into the making of an extraordinarily high political consciousness.'¹⁸ And who are the continuators of this task of 'socialist accumulation'? 'Paradoxically (of course), circumstances have forced Malenkov and Khrushchev to act, up to a point, as the executors of Trotsky's political testament . . . It is not done well, but the wonder is that it is done at all.'¹⁹

As if with the same voice as the Pabloites, Deutscher joins the chorus against the political revolution: 'No matter how much one may dislike Stalin's epigones, one must acknowledge that they have proved themselves capable of a much more sensitive response to the need for reform than was generally expected of them.'²⁰

Grovelling before the Stalinist bureaucracy, the bureaucracy that murdered a whole generation of revolutionaries, that handed the German working class over to fascism and paved the way thereby for the second world war, can go little further.

This counter-revolutionary machine for the destruction of class consciousness Deutscher is able to present as 'up to a point, the executor of Trotsky's political testament.' The stand that Deutscher takes, with all his ironies and paradoxes, is in defence of the bureaucracy against the building of the Fourth International. He makes no secret of his fear of the political revolution in the Soviet Union: 'It is possible for a spontaneous mass movement to acquire suddenly a very stormy momentum and to outstrip the growth of political consciousness. Such a movement may well upset the nation's political balance before it has itself acquired a clear awareness of aims, a positive political programme, and a firm and confident leadership.'²¹ How interesting! Suddenly, leadership becomes decisive, a political programme imperative and class consciousness essential. Deutscher draws attention to these deficiencies in the struggle against the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, not in order that Marxists should be encouraged to build such a leadership and develop such a programme, but precisely in order to write off the political revolution, to present it as an undertaking that might get out of hand, leading to a sequence of events similar to those in Hungary, which he claims, along with other rather dubious authorities, 'developed into a fully-fledged struggle between communism and anti-communism'.²² No comment is required on this lamentable endorsement of the lies of the State Department and the Kremlin.

Glibly Deutscher spins out his Hegelian web. Lenin dies, containing within himself both Stalin and Trotsky, the realist and the prophet. Stalin, through the irony of history, 'negates' Trotsky, but having carried out his allotted task, is negated in his turn by Khrushchev. Then—further irony: Khrushchev is negated by Brezhnev and Kosygin. This version of the 'negation of the negation' (which would have both Hegel and Marx turning in their graves) takes place without any sight or sound from the Soviet working class. They, clearly, are barred from 'negating' the bureaucracy!

The manoeuvres and inner tensions within the bureaucracy Deutscher prefers to see as 'the emergence of various schools of thought' reflecting 'real contradictions inherent in a living his-

17 Ibid., pp. 184-185.

18 Ibid., p. 41.

19 Ibid., p. 42.

20 Ibid., p. 25.

21 Ibid., p. 48.

22 Ibid., p. 45.

torical process and real dilemmas confronting a living movement'.²³ On the contrary, they are the desperate attempts by a doomed social formation to preserve for as long as possible the political and economic privileges that the bureaucracy has filched from the working class over a period of forty or more years. Not regeneration, but degeneration, is the reality of Soviet and world Stalinism. As against an intervention in this crisis to sharpen it and hasten the break-up of Stalinism, Deutscher counsels caution and patience, assuring us that 'Stalinism is breaking down and dissolving; and it is the Stalinists themselves who are the subverters of their own orthodoxy'.²⁴ Once again, the irony of history!

From all these examples of Deutscher's methodological approach to the nature and role of the Stalinist bureaucracy, it becomes clear that his attack upon the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International is based upon a revision of materialist dialectics. What exactly does he mean by 'de-Stalinisation proceeds in dialectical contradiction'?²⁵ The dialectic, least of all in its social application, is not something that just happens, that 'proceeds'. It is first of all a material *struggle* between opposed forces, in human society, between classes. This struggle is grasped *consciously* precisely by those who participate in it at its highest point, where the contradictions find their clearest and most acute expression—in the building of revolutionary parties to carry this conflict through to its fruition. The dialectic is thus not an objective process only—contained within this objectivity is its opposite, the subjective factor of human, class consciousness, of Marxist theory and the party. But this is exactly what is missing from the 'dialectics' of Deutscher. The conscious, subjective side of human practice he sees as a purely cognitive process, as awareness of, but not participation in, the contradictions of the living world.

The attack on the dialectic, open in the case of Bernstein and Burnham, more restrained and masked in the case of Pabloism, is the hallmark of revisionism. The abandonment of the dialectic, or the liquidation of its materialist content, as with Deutscher, is not simply an abstract question of correct or incorrect formulations, but is a class retreat which denies the fundamental opposition between the working and capitalist classes, and between the working class and the bureaucracies that hold it back from coming to grips with the rule of capital. Deutscher will pay lip-service to the existence of the former only to deny the latter. For him, far from the bureau-

cracy acting as a barrier between the working class and independent political action, Stalinism contains 'many of the elements that should eventually go into the making of an extraordinarily high political consciousness'.

Of course, Deutscher is against the bureaucracy. But, you see, 'necessity works through such human material as it finds available'.²⁶ Instead of the political revolution, he therefore proposes 'genuine social control over the bureaucratic Establishment'.²⁷ In lieu of a genuine communist International, Deutscher suggests that 'social control over the bureaucracy would at the very least make it much more difficult for the latter to pursue its nationalist intrigues and political power games against the other "workers' states"'.²⁸

Deutscher is able to develop this reformist programme for the Soviet Union because he proceeds from a false analysis of the bureaucracy. He draws attention to 'the dual role Stalinism has played in Russia's life, degrading her morally and enslaving her but also transforming her into a modern, industrial and educated nation'.²⁹ The dialectical relationship between the bureaucracy and the Soviet and East European working class is confused and obscured by Deutscher with his introduction of the idea of the 'dual role' of Stalinism. This, it must be remembered, was the formulation used by the Pabloites to facilitate their capitulation to Stalinism after 1953.

Trotsky developed his understanding of the nature and role of the Soviet bureaucracy, not in a contemplative way, but through a struggle to defend that which was progressive in the Soviet Union from that which held back and distorted the productive forces and the international struggle to overthrow capitalism. The fight for a Marxist programme for the USSR had to be waged on two fronts: against those who capitulated to the bureaucracy when it swung to the left in order to defend itself against attacks upon its social support in the nationalized property relations (the 1928-1929 capitulators Radek, Preobrazhensky and Smilga) and also against those who capitulated directly to imperialism by a refusal to defend these same property relations established by the revolution and manipulated by the bureaucracy to defend its own rule and social

23 Ibid., p. 140.

24 Ibid., p. 24.

25 Ibid., p. 20.

26 Ibid., p. 23.

27 Ibid., p. 127.

28 Ibid., p. 141.

29 Ibid., p. 243.

privileges (the so-called schools of 'state capitalism' and 'bureaucratic collectivism').

Naturally, in waging these theoretical wars on two fronts, an eclectic and not dialectical conception of the bureaucracy is gleaned from the writings of Trotsky unless his starting point of the Fourth International and his method of dialectical materialism is grasped. The bureaucracy is not 'on the one hand' reactionary, and 'on the other hand' progressive, according to whether it is under attack from the working class or imperialism. It is a social formation, a parasitic growth conditioned by the course of the international class struggle over many decades, and being a regime of transition not bound up with any legitimate historical class interests or mode of production, exhibits forms of behaviour that can only be understood in terms of its position in relation to the continued struggle between the two major classes of capitalist society. Here, as elsewhere in *The Prophet Outcast*, Deutscher attempts to convert Trotsky's defence of the Soviet Union against the 'bureaucratic collectivists' into something vastly different, an unconscious admission by Trotsky that the Soviet bureaucracy was in itself a progressive force. But throughout his writing on this bureaucracy, Trotsky makes the point that even when compelled to defend the last gains of the Russian Revolution in order to protect the economic basis upon which it rests, it does so in a counter-revolutionary way, as in the case of Finland and Poland in 1939-1940, in a high-handed and bureaucratic fashion which alienates the international working class, and stores up such deep resentments against the bureaucracy that they might threaten to overflow into hatred of the gains of the revolution itself. Only in this very specific sense can we speak of the dual role of the Stalinist bureaucracy—and only those who intend to prepare for its overthrow can continue to defend and enrich the political and social analysis made by Trotsky of this counter-revolutionary agency, which at the death will choose in its vast majority to go with its imperialist masters. Naturally, once we concede to Deutscher the correctness of his theory of the dual role of Stalinism (which amounts to a great deal more than a bureaucracy) we are treading the path back to the camp of the opportunists.

If we agree with Deutscher that 'if all major decisions on policy and strategy were taken by Stalin alone, as Krushchev says, then it is at least illogical to deny Stalin all credit for the results',³⁰ then we cannot but extend this revaluation of the bureaucracy to the role of Social Democracy and

Stalinism in Western Europe. Could not 'left' critics of the trade-union and Social-Democratic bureaucracy in Britain argue that since we place the responsibility for the defeats of the working class on its shoulders, should we not, to be consistent, give it its due credit for all the advances that the working class has made in the same period? From the 'dual role' of the Soviet bureaucracy, we must proceed to the dual role of *world* bureaucracy. That is the logic of Pabloism—and also Deutscherism. Social control over these bureaucracies, and not their removal, becomes the slogan of the day, this pressure being exerted by centrist leaders guided from behind the scenes by Marxist or even 'Trotskyist' advice bureaux.

In travelling along the path to Deutscher, Pablo and his supporters in the SWP drew all these logical conclusions from their failure to understand the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy in relation to the struggle for leadership. From that position it is only a short step to declare openly that the Fourth International is irrelevant, unnecessary—and impossible.

The process of 'unification' within the ranks of the revisionists shares an intimate relationship with the political evolution of Deutscher. In 1956, following the Khrushchev speech, James P. Cannon warned members of the SWP on the dangers of sharing Deutscher's illusions in the capacity of the Soviet bureaucracy for self-reform. He advised Trotskyists to have no truck with 'Deutscherism, which leaves out the Soviet masses as if the bureaucracy were a rational autonomous power', a theory which 'turns out to be the ideology best suited to assist the demagogy of the Khrushchevs'.³¹ In March 1956, Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, defended the Transitional Programme and its perspective of the political revolution. But already by 1958 there were clear indications that his warnings had gone unheeded. In an empirical attempt to break out of their political isolation, the SWP leadership began to chase after ex-Stalinist elements who, in many cases, were moving to the right, even further away from revolutionary Marxism and towards middle-class radicalism. Of course, the programme of the political revolution came under sharp attack from these quarters, whose dominant orientation was towards bourgeois and not proletarian democracy. It was Hansen who began first to toy with Deutscher's analysis of the bureaucracy in his attempts to bring the SWP closer to this middle-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³¹ *The 20th Congress and World Trotskyism*, New Park Publications 1965, p. 35.

class group of ex-Stalinists—the process of so-called ‘regroupment’.

In an article entitled ‘Proposed Roads to Soviet Democracy’, Hansen openly declared war on the political revolution. The whole article is written in an apologetic tone, playing down the violent form that the overthrow of the bureaucracy must take (and this was nearly two years after Hungary): ‘The programme of the political revolution is not held as a dogma by the Socialist Workers Party . . . It can be modified or revised if certain events require it.’³² The counter-revolutionary role of this bureaucracy is similarly played down—indeed, almost denied: ‘As such, whether under attack from the side of capitalism, or, in an opposite way, from the Russian workers, with enough pressure the bureaucracy may be obliged to take a proletarian, even revolutionary orientation.’³³ Why then, we must ask Hansen, the Fourth International?

Reaching out for the liberal ex-Stalinists, he suggested a more amenable formulation than the overthrow of the bureaucracy: ‘It is much closer to reality to view the programme of the political revolution as the total series of reforms gained through militant struggle, culminating in the transfer of power to the workers.’³⁴

The publication of the third volume of Deutscher’s biography of Trotsky gave Hansen another opportunity to come closer to its author. In the chapter dealing with Trotsky’s writings on the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy, Deutscher concludes that ‘the chances of revolution are still as slender as they were in Trotsky’s days, whereas the possibilities of reform are far more real’. In a footnote to this, Deutscher adds, ‘I underlined this circumstance in my book *Russia after Stalin* (1953) and in many articles published at the end of the Stalin era. The American Trotskyists then devoted a whole issue of their theoretical organ, *The Fourth International* (Winter 1954) to the theme “Trotsky or Deutscher”; and James P. Cannon, their leader, vehemently denounced me as a revisionist and as “the Bernstein of Trotskyism”. My sin was that I had forecast that in the next few years there would be no chance of a “political revolution” in the USSR and that a period of reform from above was opening.’³⁵

What was Hansen’s reply to this reiteration of Deutscher’s stand on the political revolution?

‘From the viewpoint of the world Trotskyist movement, Deutscher’s agreement on the validity of Trotsky’s programme establishes the possibility in principle of practical collaboration with him. . . .’ (My emphasis, R.B.)³⁶ What does it

matter if Deutscher regards as ‘stillborn’ the very organisation that Hansen claims to represent, and whose ‘practical collaboration’ he now offers Deutscher?

To smooth the way for this joint work, he even apologises for the stand taken by Cannon against Deutscher in 1954! ‘Some harsh and even unjustified things were said of Deutscher . . . To many Trotskyists Deutscher’s position appeared as an alternative programme which could prove to be a bridge to Stalinism. . . It turned out, however, that Deutscher was not interested in recruiting from the Trotskyist movement or in organising a section of his own, still less a cult. This spoke strongly in his favour’. With the publication of Deutscher’s writings on the Soviet Union, and their increased appeal for wavering members of the American Communist Party, ‘Deutscher’s position under these circumstances proved to be a bridge from Stalinism to Trotskyism. Trotskyists could not be against that kind of public facility. They therefore began undertaking their own self-reform—in relation to Deutscher.’³⁷ So far had the pragmatism of the SWP debased Trotskyism, that Hansen was willing to trade the whole heritage of Bolshevism for the sake of a ‘public facility’ for the propagation of Deutscherism—which, Hansen assures us, is neither a section nor a cult.

Their estimation of Stalinism became the common ground for unity between the Pabloites, Deutscher and the SWP. In the essay ‘Three Currents in Communism’ Deutscher develops a case for the inner regeneration of the Stalinist movement through the logic of its own internal divisions. Again invoking Hegel, he argues that ‘any political movement (or any philosophical school of thought) as it grows and develops cannot help unfolding the contradictions inherent in itself and its environment; and the more it unfolds, the richer its content and vitality.’³⁸ This position is shared by the revisionists of the ‘United Secretariat’, as the extract from their ‘World Outlook’ has already established.

Deutscher’s orientation towards various wings of Stalinism forced him to take a reactionary stand on the question of the second Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956. What was posed here in real

32 *International Socialist Review*, Spring 1958, p. 46.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

35 Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*, p. 312.

36 *International Socialist Review*, Winter 1964, p. 14.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

38 *Ironies of History*, p. 68.

life—the political revolution against the bureaucracy—had been written about and discussed for years by all sorts of people claiming to be sympathisers of Trotsky. What was Deutscher's attitude to this shattering upheaval in Hungary, an uprising which to this day leaves a deep scar on the face of world Stalinism?

Just prior to the outbreak of the Budapest uprising and its brutal suppression by the Kremlin, Deutscher was able to write that 'the break with Stalinism is now felt in every aspect of Soviet activity and thought: in domestic and foreign policies, in education, in philosophical writing, in historical research, and indeed, in the whole atmosphere of Soviet life'.³⁹ Within weeks, Deutscher's analysis of Soviet society lay in ruins. The Hungarian working class and youth showed scant respect for Deutscher's 'reforms from above' or for that matter for the tanks of the Red Army. The Fabianism of Pablo and Deutscher was demolished in the streets of Budapest by the first armed confrontation between the bureaucracy and the proletariat of the workers' states, as well as being theoretically laid bare by the political struggles inside the Fourth International itself.

Little wonder that Deutscher was later compelled to pass off the Hungarian revolution as an attempt 'unwittingly to put the clock back, while Moscow sought once again to wind up with the bayonet, or rather with the tank, the broken clock of the Hungarian Communist revolution'.⁴⁰ All communist roads must lead through the Kremlin—even if they pass over the corpses of 20,000 Hungarian workers on the way. Any sharp and open break with bureaucracy has to be condemned, as it fails to conform to Deutscher's ideal of the regeneration of communism from *within* and not *against* the bureaucracy: 'The emergence of various schools of thought reflects real social contradictions inherent in a living historical process and real dilemmas confronting a living movement'.⁴¹ What is striking is the similarity between this estimation of Stalinism and that adopted at the Pabloite 'unification' congress of 1963: 'An early victory of the political revolution in the Soviet Union would at the same time hasten the process of proletarian revolution inside the imperialist countries in an even more decisive manner. . . It would lead rapidly to the disappearance of the bureaucratic Stalinist leaderships in the old CPs, which would split in various directions, principally into a left-reformist wing

and a genuine revolutionary-socialist wing'.⁴²

The basic contradiction of the epoch, the construction of revolutionary leadership in the struggle against all tendencies which adapt to or are themselves part of the bureaucracy, is evaded, even denied. Here the Pabloites and Deutscher join hands. What was once tacit has now become explicit precisely because the building of such a leadership is a practical task flowing from all the struggles of the international working class, from Vietnam and Peking to Moscow and New York.

As such, Pabloite revisionism serves as an outpost of Stalinism. It presents a danger to the Fourth International in as much as the centrist illusions which it disseminates can link for a brief period with the level of consciousness of workers faced with the necessity of a fight against bureaucracy, but who are as yet unable to grasp the full implications of that fight. For the working class, this changed attitude represents a big step forward, for at once it raises in their minds the question of a new leadership. But precisely now the Deutscherite comes forward, advising workers to take things steady, not to rape the historical process, but to allow the bureaucracy, with, of course, a certain amount of popular pressure, to unfold all its richness and complexity. Centrism takes up a position to the left of the bureaucracy all the better to serve it through its role as a 'loyal opposition'. Reforms—by all means. Social control—of course. The *overthrow* of the bureaucracy—never.

The agreement that centrists may appear to have with sections of radicalized workers is on just those questions that have still to be clarified in the struggle against the bureaucracy. Such centrists flourish in a world of propaganda groups where their programmes run no risk of being put to the test by workers in struggle. Therefore to fight against centrism, against the theories of Deutscher, is to develop the struggle against these propaganda methods which have for so long cramped and held back the political strengthening of many sections of the Fourth International. The tracing through of the methodological, philosophical and political features of Deutscherism will assist in the preparing of the Fourth International to lead decisive class battles of tomorrow.

39 Ibid., p. 18.

40 Ibid., p. 46.

41 Ibid., p. 140.

42 *International Socialist Review*, Fall 1963, p. 121.

Empiricism and the British Labour Movement

by Ian A. McCalman

THE PRESENT CRISIS of the Labour Party is expressed in one form by the controversy which was conducted in 1965 and early 1966 within the ranks of its most sophisticated spokesman, that group known as the 'New Left'. In a series of articles by Tom Nairn, Perry Anderson and E. P. Thompson, there have emerged what may at first sight appear to be fundamental disagreements as to the nature of the Labour Party.

However, all three agree that in order to understand the nature of the Labour Party's crisis, it is necessary to examine the assumptions, or philosophy of the party, and to investigate the historical roots of that philosophy.

In order to find a guiding line through the confusing welter of arguments, we shall take as our starting-point the article by Perry Anderson, entitled 'Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism'.¹ To simplify, the argument of Anderson (and of Nairn) is that the basic fault of the Labour Party has been its tendency to 'muddle through', to grope blindly from one problem to the next, without a clear understanding of its role and the difficulties facing it. Edward Thompson, Anderson claims, is an inheritor of this tradition. His method, we are told, is rhetorical, moralizing and populist, 'lacking in any ordinary empiricism'.

Whence arises this 'pseudo-empiricism'? It is an inheritance from the English bourgeoisie; to quote Nairn, 'acute ideal consciousness is a necessary condition of "real" empiricism, of the vital capacity to respond directly to and learn swiftly from practical experiences. The British ruling class has avoided this necessity: it had been able to adopt a kind of fetishistic pseudo-empiricism as

its ideological banner, because it had never been forced to undertake any great, conscious practical reformation of society. What is British "empiricism" and British faith in practical "instinct" except systematized indifference to ideas? And how did this anti-ideology come into existence? Because hard facts, the demands of practical experience, had never coerced the bourgeoisie into looking for something better—its good fortune had preserved that basic stupor of outlook which a popular expression calls "muddling through". Piously accepting this stupor as the last word in realism, British socialists had shrunk socialism to fit it.²

A weak bourgeoisie produced a weak ideology, a pseudo-empiricism. According to Anderson and Nairn, a timid middle class crept on to the stage of history, and remained until the present century in permanent subjection to the landed aristocracy, socially and culturally, its outlook permeated by the aristocracy's ritualism and traditionalism.

Thompson has, quite rightly, taken Anderson and Nairn to task for this interpretation of English history, but unfortunately with more flippancy than scholarship.

Anderson's argument appears to suggest that no qualitative changes take place in history, it being all one long process of gradual change, the bourgeoisie taking over imperceptibly from the landed aristocracy. Seen in this light, the English Revolution of the seventeenth century assumes a rather pedestrian character. Anderson assures us

1 *New Left Review*, No. 35, January-February 1966.

2 Tom Nairn, 'The Nature of the Labour Party', in *Towards Socialism*, p. 197.

that 'It was not a pure bourgeois revolution in any sense'. Perhaps, but it is doubtful whether any revolution has ever attained the status of this Platonic category.

Naturally Anderson emphasises the role of the gentry in the Civil War. Valid as this may be, an undue preoccupation with the gentry tends to obscure the basic nature of the revolution. A study of its course reveals that the appeals for support by Parliament were mainly made to the 'middling people', the artisans and tradesmen, the citizenry, (dare we say it) the bourgeoisie. Contemporary opinion was moreover overwhelmingly on the side of Clarendon, when he wrote that on the side of Parliament 'some gleanings of the gentry, the yeomen, farmers, clothiers and the whole middle rank of the people were the only active men'. Although there have been many direct attacks upon and revisions of the Marxist interpretation of the Revolution in the last decade these have failed to substitute any coherent explanation of the social upheaval.³

Anderson's failure to see in the Revolution a fundamental social conflict distorts his examination of empiricism. The Revolution was not only a conflict of classes, but also of values, of ideas. It is through social conflict that important ideas are articulated and developed. The participants in this controversy in the New Left approach the problem of the origins of empiricism in a mechanistic manner. In their view, empiricism, and ideas in general, appear to arise out of society in an automatic 'passive' fashion.

It is true that the inductive approach which is central to empiricism was extended in use in the first half of the seventeenth century in accordance with the needs of a rising 'wave' of bourgeoisie. But it was only in the course of the social revolution of the 1640's that Baconian ideas of inductive science become clearly articulated and widely disseminated, in the works of lesser known scientists and popularisers.⁴ The clash of the philosophies of 'Order' and empiricism in the field of political theory⁵ was the expression of a conflict between two modes of society. Empiricism, far from being a weak, vague philosophy was the clearly expressed, powerful ideology of a dynamic social class.

Anderson and Nairn's efforts to depict the subsequent history of the bourgeoisie as that of playing permanent second fiddle to the landed aristocracy is unconvincing. Recent researches (such as those of Mingay, F. M. L. Thompson and Kitson-Clark), have tended to emphasise the continuous over-riding power of the landed aristocracy right

into the twentieth century. But this emphasis is misleading. As Marx pointed out, we should distinguish between a governing and a ruling class. Successive waves of the English bourgeoisie have been so powerful that they have been content to allow the gentry to govern, so to speak, controlling, the State by proxy. The continuous governing role of the gentry is a testimony to the power of the English capitalist class.

This excursion into English history is necessary for an understanding of the distortions of Anderson and Nairn. Their argument is roughly as follows: the English bourgeoisie has been traditionally weak, hence its ideology has been a 'fetishistic pseudo-empiricism'; therefore what is now needed is a new empiricism, 'real empiricism'. On the contrary, it is our argument that the empiricism which has pervaded the Labour movement has been, in a sense, powerful and clearly delineated, and that the way out of the present crisis in theory and practice is not through the formulation of a 'new empiricism', but through combatting empiricism, through the development of an alternative way of looking at society, through the development of dialectical materialism.

What all three writers fail to see is that so powerful is empiricism, so pervasive and eclectic, that it permeates almost the entire Labour movement, including the New Left, and obscures and distorts their own understanding of society in general, and of the Labour bureaucracy in particular.

The eclecticism of empiricism is clear from its birth. The common assumption that empiricism and rationalism are naturally two sides of the same coin is based upon a misconception. Before the Lockean marriage of empiricism and rationalism in the later seventeenth century those people called 'Empiricks' were in the main mystics and not rationalists.⁶ The Empiricks, the 'chemical physitisians' of the seventeenth century, held views which were a curious amalgam of empirical and

3 Verification of this statement requires a lengthy discussion, which cannot be adequately dealt with in an article of this nature. We hope to produce shortly critiques of different interpretations, e.g., the 'Namierite' method (e.g., see *Members of the Long Parliament*, by Messrs. Branton & Pennington); and the 'mechanical' approach of many Stalinists and ex-Stalinists.

4 C. Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*, Oxford 1965, chapt. III.

5 W. Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism and Politics*, London 1964.

6 See J. Needham's essay in *Science and History*, vol. II.

mystical ideas. This eclectic nature of empiricism, as Lenin pointed out, has allowed it to coexist with the most curious forms of idealism,⁷ especially within the British labour movement. Secondly the longevity and pervasiveness of empiricism is seen in that it has been the central tradition of British philosophy through Berkeley, Hume, Russell, Ryle and Ayer, and has been the core of thinking within the greater part of the Labour movement.

The Fabians, whose thought has so greatly influenced the Labour Party, were steeped in empiricism. Their ideology, strongly influenced by Benthamite Utilitarianism and positivist sociology, was expressed in their belief in the arithmetic of reformism. Believing in the 'unpretentious methods of empiricism' (Sydney Oliver), they rejected all abstract economics and theories of class struggle. They clung to the faith that by cautiously adding one reform on top of another, they would somehow, some day, arrive at socialism. The central question of class power did not enter into their calculations. Despite recent efforts by some historians to minimise the effects of the Fabians in the early growth of the Labour Party, it is undeniable that their influence has been strong, and since 1945 almost overwhelming.⁸

Edward Thompson, despite his rejection of Anderson's thesis of pseudo-empiricism, has argued that the influence of any kind of empiricism upon the Labour movement has been exaggerated. He informs us that 'an examination of the actual record would show our authors (i.e. Anderson and Nairn) have greatly exaggerated the influence of the Fabians, and if we leave aside the direct influence of Communism, most of the intellectuals who had an important influence upon the British labour movement between 1920 and 1945 were either social reformers within a Liberal tradition (J. A. Hobson, Beveridge, Boyd Orr), or "marxisant" independents (Brailsford, Laski, Strachey, Cole), or ethical socialists (Tawney, Orwell) whose contributions were somewhat more than "sentimental moralizing".⁹ Agreed, but does this make them any less empiricist in their methods.?

As for the ethical socialists, it is curious perhaps to find Tawney and Orwell in the same brackets—Orwell, with his profound contempt for all theories, and Tawney who usually begins with a call for 'theory' (which theory he never tells us) and ends with a prayer. Similarly the Liberals in the labour movement have never developed any alternative method to empiricism. The close connection between empiricism, Liberalism and social democracy was made clear by Bertrand Russell in a diatribe against Stalinism in 1946, 'I conclude

that, in our day as in the time of Locke, empiricist Liberalism (which is not incompatible with 'democratic' socialism) is the only philosophy that can be adopted by a man who, on the one hand, demands some scientific evidence for his beliefs, and, on the other hand, desires human happiness more than the prevalence of this or that party or creed.¹⁰

Thompson's misconception of the theoretical influence of the British Communist Party is of a more serious nature. We have stressed already that combating empiricism demands developing an alternative method. What theoretical developments have the British Stalinists attained? It is granted that many intellectuals in their ranks have shown great ingenuity and scholarship in applying certain Marxist concepts to the interpretation of phenomena, but that is a very different thing from the development of Marxist theory. Marxism means a development of revolutionary theory in a living relationship with revolutionary practice. But the Stalinists have never tried to build a revolutionary party. Hence their theoretical stagnation, revealed in the pages of 'Marxism Today' and their other publications.

This theoretical bankruptcy is seen clearly in the New Left group itself. Despite their eternal calls for 'theory', Anderson and Nairn never clearly state what theory it is they are demanding. Unable to develop any alternative, they fall back upon good old empiricism. But it is empiricism with a difference, they claim. Anderson tells us, 'We have tried to move beyond this (i.e. pseudo—empiricism) . . . by looking at actual empirical reality'. Nairn calls for 'real empiricism'. They demand that we should closely examine 'the facts, hard facts'. Thompson goes one better, and appeals to the 'Grand Fact'. We are back with Locke.

The confusion of these three writers is shown in their failure to define 'empiricism'. This may be described as 'the doctrine that all our knowledge (with the possible exception of logic and mathematics) is derived from experience'. Knowledge is primarily the product of observation and experiment. Whilst not disregarding the need for hypotheses, it stresses the importance of the inductive methods. The empiricist invariably claims that 'he approaches the facts in an unbiased way

7 *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

8 Lenin on the influence of Fabians on the growth of the Labour Party see *Fabian Socialism and English Politics* (1884-1918), A. M. McBriar.

9 'The Peculiarities of the English', in *The Socialist Register*, 1965, p. 339.

10 *Philosophy and Politics*, 1946.

without preconceptions, without theory, and in this, is superior to the "dogmatic" Marxist, with his fixed theories. But no one starts without theories. The very selection of certain facts as the ones to add up (or to be impressed by) indicates the allocation of a certain significance to these as against the countless other "facts" or "sides" of reality. Those who claim to be objective, avoiding theory in the first place, in fact only use a muddled and less explicit theory: such a theory is, in fact, shaped by the dominant ideology of the society in which they live. Its everyday prejudices may go by the name of "sound common sense", but they are the definite prejudices of a definite class society'.¹¹

Marxists, on the contrary, see the facts in relation to a continuous process of social development. In order to grasp the significance of the 'facts', they see the need to understand that changing process, the general nature of such change. In a class-divided society, there is a continuous conflict between the relations of production and the forces of production, expressed in a conflict between the ruling class and the working class, in modern capitalist society, between the capitalist class with its agents and the industrial proletariat. It is in relation to this general process of conflict, that Marxists try to assess the significance of the 'facts'. Equipped with this conscious theory of social change, they come to an examination of the particular aspects.

'The facts' are therefore not fixed, self-contained entities, but are fluid, and ever-changing, part of a general process of social change. The motive force of such change is the continuous conflict of opposites within each concept, a dialectical conflict. Dialectics does not mean the imposition upon reality of some mechanically learned 'laws' or 'rules' of dialectics, such as 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis'. 'Dialectics attempts to probe to the essential self-movement of the phenomenon itself; the relation between its different aspects can then be shown as parts of a unified process, not just separate determinations whose only interrelation is one imposed by the demands of consistency in thought.'¹² Dialectical thinking therefore transcends empiricism and traditional logic. Trotsky graphically explained this difference. 'Dialectical thinking is related to vulgar thinking in the same way that a motion picture is related to a still photograph. Motion picture does not outlaw the still photograph but combines a series of them according to the laws of motion. Dialectics does not deny the syllogism, but teaches us to combine syllogisms in such a way as to bring our under-

standing closer to the ever-changing reality.'¹³

If this is so, why then do the empiricists of the 'New Left' not adopt this way of thinking? However, the question posed is not simply that of adopting an alternative mode of thought, irrespective of their political standpoint. In order to look at the world dialectically, they must accept a distinct theory of social change, a theory which posits that in our society there is a deepening conflict between the working class and the ruling class, and that the resolution of this conflict can only come about through the taking of power by the working class and the establishment of socialism. This can only be achieved through the building of a revolutionary party of the working class.

Neither Thompson nor Anderson nor Nairn looks at society in this way; they do not see the working class as an independent social force which can burst the integument of capitalist society. They do not base themselves upon the needs and potentialities of the working class. Unwilling to ground themselves upon this independent social force, they become subject to the dominant class and its ideology. They accept the limitations imposed by this class and ideology, viewing many of its distinctive features as fixed 'facts', which can be re-arranged in different patterns, but not fundamentally changed. They accept that the working class is a heterogeneous mass to be manipulated and controlled. They accept the continued existence of the Labour bureaucracy, and think in terms of applying pressure to it rather than destroying it.

There is a close connection between empiricism and the belief that socialism can be achieved by exerting pressure upon the established bureaucracies. The views of Anderson and Nairn are very close to those of Joseph Hansen of the American S.W.P. and the other revisionists of that ilk. Hansen, defending the idea that the bureaucracies of Algeria, Cuba and elsewhere could be pushed to the left, denounced those in Britain who argued against this as 'dogmatists'. He demanded acceptance of the 'given fact', of the presence of the bureaucracies, and, in language remarkably similar to that of the gentlemen on the New Left, called for 'empiricism systematically carried out'. However, once more the bankruptcy of empiricism has been revealed. The bureaucracies show a stubborn refusal to be 'pushed to the left' and are in fact careering rapidly in a rightward direction. It was no coincidence that in the same

11 C. Slaughter, *Lenin on Dialectics*, 1965, pp. 40-41.

12 *Ibid.*, p. ??.

13 *In Defence of Marxism*, pp. 50-51.

month as Harold Wilson introduced laws against right to strike, Castro denounced Trotskyists as agents of American imperialism.

This close connection between methods of logical analysis and political orientation must be emphasised. We have a striking recent illustration of this connection. These centrists of the New Left group are little more than sophisticated spokesmen for their less articulate comrades on the Left-wing of the Labour Party. They share the same empirical approach to political questions. During 1966 those 'Lefts' had ample opportunity to mobilise the working class against the Prices and Incomes Bill. But they consistently refused to do so, revealing their contempt for any theoretical understanding of the role of the Labour government and its legislation in relation to the class struggle. Empirically they concentrated all their energies upon futile manoeuvres to amend the Bill. There could be few clearer examples of the disastrous results of 'real empiricism', of 'empiricism systematically carried out'.

On the other hand the connection between dialectics and revolutionary politics is not fortuitous. Only those who have worked for the construction of a revolutionary party of the working class have shown themselves capable of the finest dialectical thought. Lenin considered

dialectics the hall-mark of the revolutionary. Trotsky spent the last years of his life fighting that group led by James Burnham and Max Schachtman in the S.W.P., who denied the relevance of dialectical materialism to 'concrete political questions'. Burnham argued that logic was a highly specialized subject, that it was virtually useless in politics, that it was more important to get to grips with the immediate questions of fascism, unemployment and war (this was in 1940). Trotsky argued in reply that these 'concrete political questions', these 'hard facts' were merely abstractions from a process of continuous change, and that it was necessary to understand that change in its totality, before assessing their significance.

Empiricism has therefore resulted in very confused political thinking. Yet Anderson, Nairn and Thompson, despite their apparent disagreements, remain adamant empiricists. They justify this by arguing that the English working class is traditionally reformist. They single out the conservative influence of the trade unions upon the growth of the Labour Party. What begins as an explanation of empiricism becomes a justification of it. The conditions of the evolution of British capitalism have been such as to encourage empiricism in the Labour movement, therefore we must accept it. Such is the logic of 'real empiricism'!

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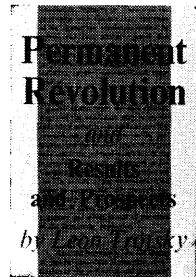


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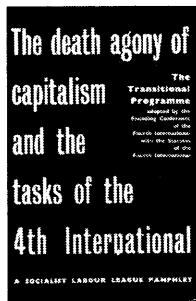
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