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STALINISM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

by B. HUNTER
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STALINISM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

BY BILL HUITER

The recent events in Czechoslovakia had a profound effect both on the international relationships between the Great Powers and on the working class movement. An analysis of the events are important for an understanding of the role of the Stalinist Parties.

Even a cursory study of Czechoslovakian economy reveals the deep-going changes which have taken place. Today, the characteristic feature of the economy is not private, but state enterprise. The recent nationalisation measures and the further land reform constituted a blow at the remnants of the old ruling class in an economy where already two thirds of industry was under state control.

What is the role of Stalinism in relation to this social transformation? This is the question workers are asking.

The shattering of the Czech bourgeoisie in February was the result of the sharpening antagonism between the Russian bureaucracy and world imperialism, and the necessity of the former to secure complete control over the buffer states. The attack on the bourgeois remnants is solely due to the economic base on which the bureaucracy rests.

Already before this complete consolidation of their power, the Stalinists had been dominant in Czechoslovakia, a dominance which was determined by the specific conditions in Eastern Europe at the closing stages of the Second imperialist war. We can say, provisionally, that this was due to three main factors:-

- a) The collapse of the bourgeois state with the defeat of the Nazi armies which resulted in the quisling bourgeoisie and their officialdom fleeing the country;
- b) The emergence of Russia as the most powerful force in Europe and its domination of Eastern Europe;
- c) The support given to Stalinism by the masses under the illusion that it was a genuine communist party.

THE SITUATION OF THE CZECH CAPITALIST CLASS

The economic policy pursued by German imperialism left the Czech capitalist class decimated and weakened. Already before the war, the Munich agreement had resulted in large sections of Czech industry passing under German control. Most of the economic assets in the areas then occupied were seized by the German big banks and industrial concerns. Later, after the whole of Czechoslovakia was occupied, German imperialism consolidated its economic domination when the Dresdner and Deutsche Bank took over the Czech banks. As these banks had great interests in industry by means of stocks and debentures, by taking them over, German capitalism thereby gained control of large sections of industry. The expropriation

of Jewish capitalists further weakened the native Czech bourgeoisie. The domination of German capital was expressed particularly through the Hermann Goering Trust. G. Beuer, in "New Czechoslovakia", writes:

"The Goering concern mainly concentrated on gaining control of the armaments industry and coal production... by seizing the Bohemian Discount Bank it gained control of the Poldi Steel Works. Then it seized the famous Skoda Works (Plzen) the largest among the Czech armament works, and the big armaments works in Brno, all the shares of which were state property. Thus the three largest Czechoslovak armaments works came into the possession of the Goering concern. It also seized iron and steel works which could be utilised for the production of armaments such as the Vitkovice Iron Works, the Prague Iron Works, etc. Of the Czechoslovak coal supplies, it took possession of most of the lignite coal industry in North Western Bohemia and the coal production in the Ostrava Karvin district. In co-operation with the Dresdner Bank it controlled about 75% of all North West Bohemian lignite coal production..."

Sections of the non-Jewish capitalists in light industries collaborated with German imperialism. The Radical and petty bourgeois politicians, such as Benes, whose basis had been created in the struggle against the decadent Austro-Hungarian Empire prior to 1914-18, and who had built up Czech capitalism with the aid of French and English capital, saw their future in the Allied camp. Their attitude toward Stalinism was dictated by two factors. First, the support given by the masses to the Stalinists, who after 1941, played the dominant role in the leadership of the resistance movement. Second, the change in the military position of the Soviet Union after Stalingrad and the increasing evidence that it would emerge after the war as the dominant power in Eastern Europe displacing the Western bourgeoisie, particularly that of France which, before the rise of Nazi Germany, had the hegemony of this area.

The recognition of these factors was shown in 1943 when representatives of the Czech emigres went to Moscow to form a Provisional Government together with representatives of the resistance movement. There, in December 1943, President Benes concluded a Soviet-Czech treaty of "lasting friendship and mutual assistance." According to the "TRIBUNE" (5.3.48), he later "advocated a voluntary self-limitation of the democratic parties. These democratic parties, he demanded, should never go into opposition or govern without the Communists."

Faced with the existing relationship of forces, the bourgeois representatives had no option but to concede to the Stalinists in the Emigre National Front Government. This Government was formed out of the "National Front of Czechs and Slovaks" which consisted of four Czech parties, the Stalinists, the Social Democrats, the Czech National Socialists (Benes' Party), and the Clerical Peoples Party - and the two Slovak Parties - Stalinists and Democrats.

THE ROLE OF THE STALINISTS IN THE "LIBERATION"

Stalinist policy in Czechoslovakia, as elsewhere, was dictated not by the needs of the masses, but by the strategic and military interests of the Russian bureaucracy. Until 1941, they played no role in the resistance

movement. But with the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, they took the leadership in the underground struggle. After Stalingrad their support increased. Their programme was by no means revolutionary. On the contrary, it was based on the most virulent forms of race hatred and chauvinism. As in the other occupied countries, they played the main stress on the defeat of the Hitlerite invader in collaboration with the bourgeoisie. But among the working class and the rank and file of the Communist Party who were forced into struggle against the occupation, there was a desire to direct the struggle against German imperialism along class lines. In the later stages, workers committees took over control in practically every factory. In numerous localities, improvised workers' soviets, national committees and workers' militia took over the local government apparatus.

It was a natural consequence of the role of Stalinism that the Communist Party used the capital it had gained in the resistance struggle to hamstring the activity of the proletariat and attempt to destroy the class consciousness and confidence of the masses.

Their aim was to maintain control in the hands of the Provisional Government through the National Committees, in which the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie participated, and to confine the resistance movement within the narrow bounds of military aid to the Soviet Union.

The outcome of the insurrection which took place in Prague in May 1945 when the German army capitulated, was pre-determined by the presence of the Red Army fighting 90 miles to the East, while the American forces waited, arms at rest, for the arrival of the Russian army at the border of the previously fixed zone - hardly 25 miles from Prague.

The National Front Government moved in with the victorious Red Army. The Stalinist policy, in co-operation with the other parties in the National Front, was to re-create in Czechoslovakia a state administration and apparatus on the pattern of the pre-war bourgeois democratic republic. The "ECONOMIST" of 9.2.46 described the situation thus:

"When the country was liberated, the councils and committees were really more powerful than the central Government, which had no armed forces at its disposal and which came in from abroad at the heels of the victorious Russians. For months, therefore, much of the Government's time was taken up with bringing the councils and committees into a more normal relationship with the central authority."

Naturally, by "normal relationship", the "ECONOMIST" means the relationship which exists between the state and the masses in a bourgeois country, where, as Lenin made plain in "STATE AND REVOLUTION", the state apparatus is separate from the masses and without their free participation and control.

In relation to the state apparatus, the role of the Stalinists was counter revolutionary. In conditions where the German imperialists, having smashed the old Czech state, had in their turn collapsed; where the workers had already begun to set up organs which would commence the transition to socialism, a revolutionary leadership of the working class had the duty to deepen and accelerate the process of independent class action, the setting up of workers councils and peasants committees. It would have linked them up to create a central state form covering the whole of national life. On the basis of nationalised industry and the land, it would have commenced

real socialist planning on the basis of workers control and the participation of the masses in every aspect of its activities. However, the Stalinists sought to curb the activity of the masses. The "TIMES" special correspondent in the issue of 25th July, wrote:

"In 1945, when Czechoslovakia was full of the liberating Red Army forces, the Czech communists could have seized complete power, and chose not to do so."

The main reason for this was to prevent the establishment of a Soviet state on the pattern of the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Stalinists made a coalition of "national unity" with the powerless representatives of the capitalist parties in order to prevent the complete consummation of the revolution. But they kept the key positions in their own hands. They created an apparatus of repression under their control, obedient to them and in the image of the state machine controlled by the Stalinists in Russia. The "armed bodies of men" and their appendages which, in the last analysis, constitute the state, remained under the control of the Stalinists. Thus they replaced the shattered Czech capitalist state with a new apparatus of repression. The capitalist representatives in the Government were merely a cover for the formation of a new Stalinist state apparatus which effectively stifled the initiative of the masses.

At the same time, the coalition with the shadow of the bourgeoisie was intended to placate western imperialism in line with the alliances then existing, and to facilitate western economic aid.

The state which the Stalinists built up with the aid of the Social Democrats and the petty bourgeois parties, contained within its framework the National Committees, which acquired similar functions to municipal and rural councils in Britain, based on representatives of permitted political parties which formed part of the National Front. The seats were divided between the parties by the National Front.

In the factories, according to the "NEW TIMES" (28.1.48), "...the workers took over for the first time being the management of the industrial plants, turning out the traitors and collaborationists who had served the Nazis." Or as the "ECONOMIST" of 9.2.46 put it: "The Employees Committees tried, in the first fine careless rapture of revolutionary enthusiasm, to dictate how the factories should be managed..." However, the decree establishing the status of these Committees confined them to questions affecting the welfare of the workers, managerial functions being vested in governmental nominees.

A further checking of the initiative of the workers was guaranteed by the method of election to the Works Councils and set up within the Trade Unions. After the consolidation of the National Front Government, when the elections to the factory committees took place, a single list of candidates was presented by the united trade organisation of the enterprise. These trade organisations were dominated by the Stalinists or their fellow travellers in the Social Democratic party, a dominance gained in the first hectic period of the liberation. As the Stalinist, Beuer puts it in his book "NEW CZECHOSLOVAKIA": "Works Councils were elected for one year by direct and secret ballot on the basis of lists of candidates put forward by the united

trade organisation of the enterprise. The elector has the right to delete names." (Our emphasis).

It is not unimportant to mention in this connection that, in spite of this method of procedure, the lists of the Central Trade Union in the spring elections of 1946, were not passed in the voting in about 50% of the enterprises, and new elections with candidates (again put forward by the factory organisations of the trade unions) had to take place. In these elections also, that is, in the second scrutiny, in many important enterprises the lists of the unified trade unions did not receive the required two-thirds majority, so that the Central Trade Union, according to the electoral law, had to appoint the factory committees. This information from Czechoslovakia gives the reason why the "ECONOMIST" correspondent, dealing with the limitation of the powers of the works committees, could declare on 9.2.46: "The result has been a marked reaction even among the workers themselves, not in favour of the old capitalist system, but at any rate against what has taken its place."

THE ECONOMIC CHANGES UNDER THE NATIONAL FRONT GOVERNMENT

On October 24th, 1945, the National Front Government issued a Decree nationalising the key industries and banks, and bringing approximately two thirds of industry under state control. They had already, four months before, issued a decree on the confiscation and allotment of rural property owned by "Germans, Hungarian and Czechoslovak traitors". The nationalisation covered a) the mines, natural resources, and big iron and steel enterprises including armaments; b) certain large enterprises in the food and drink industries; c) the banks; d) insurance companies.

Private enterprise continued to operate smaller undertakings in many industries and dispossessed owners of large properties were entitled to ask leave to start afresh in competition with the state, the latter having a full monopoly only in enterprises exploiting natural resources, producing armaments, or regarded as key industries. Private enterprise in other spheres was also guaranteed protection and continuity, however prosperous it might afterwards become. To quote Fierlinger, in an interview with Beuer at the end of 1945:

"...Through the nationalisation of key industries, banks, etc, the way to better development and greater prosperity will be paved for industries remaining in private hands, as they depend on the controlled organisation of heavy industries and credits with low interest, which will be furnished by the nationalised banks."

The value of the nationalised property, according to the decrees, would be assessed at "current market prices", and compensation paid either in "Government bonds, cash or other values", from a special fund, but that "nationally unreliable" people and "disloyal" Czechoslovaks would not receive compensation.

The pro-Stalinist Social Democratic Prime Minister, Fierlinger, in the interview accorded to Beuer at the end of 1945, stated:

"Of course, all this (the nationalisations, etc) is not to say that Czechoslovak economy is already, or is directly on the way to becoming a socialist economy. The new economy is not the result of a proletarian revolution. It is the outcome of a national democratic anti-fascist

revolution."

Under the concrete conditions in which the German occupation had left Czech economy, even the capitalist remnants recognised that, for the present, there was no possibility of a return to private enterprise in the key sectors of the economy. President Benes, in an article in the Manchester Guardian, December 15th, 1945, declared:

"The Germans simply took control of all main industries, main banks. If they did not nationalise them directly they put them in the hands of big German concerns... In this way they automatically prepared the economic and financial capital of our country for nationalisation. To return the property and the banks to the hands of Czech individuals or to consolidate them without considerable state assistance and new financial guarantees, was simply impossible."

In the first stages after the "liberation", the state appointed administrators in the factories where the German and collaborationist owners had been removed. However, the workers were against any return to the old system of private ownership. As Benes pointed out, a return to individual ownership could have taken place to a limited extent on the basis of state aid; but that the masses would not have tolerated. Individual ownership, alternatively, could have been secured on the basis of foreign capitalist investment; but this, neither the masses nor the Russian bureaucracy would have tolerated.

The policy of the Stalinists was not motivated by the extension of the power of the workers and laying the basis of a socialist state. It was motivated by one thing: to create a "new type of democracy" orientated economically and strategically toward the Soviet Union. The unstable coalition could not last, however much its sponsors might attempt to solidify it with the formula of the "common democratic interests" of the masses and the "that part of the bourgeoisie which had taken part in the national struggle."

According to Beyer the small and medium industries, whose owners had fled during the liberation, were handed over into private Czech and Slovak hands. The Government programme was deliberately calculated to attract the small man, and in the 1946 elections, the Stalinists pledged themselves to maintain private enterprise in small industrial undertakings (employing 39% of the industrial workers), as well as in farms and shops. On June 13th, 1947, the Stalinist-controlled Czech T.U.C. declared the nationalisation programme to be complete.

BOURGEOISIE REGAIN CONFIDENCE - The MARSHALL PLAN

This direct encouragement of the small bourgeois, plus the bridle placed on the Czech workers by the state, and the stabilisation of the economy, contributed to the increasing confidence and accelerated the regroupment of the bourgeois forces. When American imperialism produced the Marshall Plan, the Czech bourgeoisie looked towards it as a further aid, knowing that its operation would lead to a weakening of Russian hegemony.

As a result of the general "western" orientation of Czech economy, the invitation to the first Marshall Plan discussion received immediate

favourable response from the entire National Front Government, including the Stalinists. On July 7th, the Czechoslovak Government accepted the invitation to the Paris Conference. On the same day, Gottwald and Masaryk left for Moscow to discuss economic relations with the Soviet Union. On July 10th, the official Czech news agency announced the withdrawal of the Government from the Paris discussions. Henceforth the Marshall Plan became for the Stalinists the sinister weapon of American imperialism. Stalin blew the whistle: the obedient setter came to heel.

With the polarisation of world forces, with the attraction of the Marshall Plan, the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow was brought sharply up against the realisation that if Czechoslovakia was to be firmly integrated within the Russian orbit, then it could no longer afford to permit the continued existence of a bourgeois pressure-point amenable to American influence.

Before the February events, it was evident that the right wing was growing in strength. It was reported that the membership of their parties was increasing. The "MANCHESTER GUARDIAN" stated on 3rd March 1948, that during the past few months the sale of "anti-communist" literature was mounting noticeably and the "disappointment which many Czechs felt for their non-participation in the Marshall Plan was voiced more and more openly." Results in elections to students faculty committees in December showed a decrease in C.P. vote and an increase for other parties, including the Social Democrats. A certain swing away from the Stalinists among the workers was shown when Erban, a pro-Stalinist, now Minister of Social Welfare, was expelled from the Executive of the Social Democratic Party after a Conference at Brno last November.

When the Stalinists demanded further action against the bourgeoisie for an extension of nationalisations, it is clear they had the support of the workers. Sure of their complete control over the workers, confident that with the dominance of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe overshadowing the whole scene, it would not come to a decisive struggle in which the control would pass out of their leadership, the Stalinists armed sections of the workers and organised a demonstrative general strike for one hour. To widen their base among the peasantry, they proposed an extension of the land reform which had been carried through in 1945 after the peasants had spontaneously seized the land.

In face of this, the remnants of the Czech bourgeoisie were completely impotent. Though the placement of their most loyal adherents in the police force and through their sponsorship of the Action Committees, the Stalinists retained control throughout.

THE ROLE OF STALINISM

Today Czechoslovakia has been brought completely within the Russian orbit. The fundamental mechanics of the process which took place were entirely in accord with Trotsky's analysis of the areas occupied by Russia in the beginning of the war. In speaking of the likely developments in these areas, he said:

"It is more likely, however, in the territories scheduled to become a part of the USSR, the Moscow Government will carry through the expropriation of the large land owners and statification of the means of production. This variant is most probable, not because the bureau-

cracy remains true to the socialist programme but because it is neither desirous nor capable of sharing the power, and the privileges the latter entails, with the old ruling classes in the occupied territories. Here an analogy literally offers itself. The first Bonaparte halted the revolution by means of a military dictatorship. However, when the French troops invaded Poland, Napoleon signed a decree 'SERFDOM IS ABOLISHED'. This measure was dictated not by Napoleon's sympathies for the peasants, nor by democratic principles but rather by the fact that the Bonapartist dictatorship based itself not on feudal, but on bourgeois property relations. In as much as Stalin's Bonapartist dictatorship bases itself on private, but on state property, the invasion of Poland by the Red Army, should, in the nature of the case, result in the abolition of private capitalist property, so as thus to bring the regime of the occupied territories into accord with the regime of the USSR. This measure, revolutionary in character - 'the expropriation of the expropriators' - is in this case achieved in a military bureaucratic fashion. The appeal to independent activity on the part of the masses in the new territories -- and without such an appeal, even if worded with extreme caution it is impossible to constitute a new regime-- will on the morrow undoubtedly be suppressed by ruthless police measures in order to assure the preponderance of the bureaucracy over the awakened revolutionary masses."

The imposition of the police machine of the character which exists in the Soviet Union will not take place overnight in Czechoslovakia, which has an advanced working class with a tradition of organised struggle. Police measures against the workers will, however, undoubtedly increase as the Stalinists begin to lose support; as the workers (having no wish to return to the old system, but indeed, wishing to defend nationalised property against internal reaction or Western imperialism, are pushed into the realisation that the free development towards a socialist system of society is blocked by the Russian and Czech Stalinist bureaucracy.

While opposing any attempt of British or American imperialism to re-establish capitalism, ~~thx~~ we say, as Trotsky said of the social changes in Poland when the Russian army marched in 1939:

"The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to world revolution... the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism, cloaked by 'socialist' measures can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the proletarian revolution by bureaucratic manoeuvres and so on."

Relative to a genuine struggle for world revolution, to the development of world socialism, to the struggle against the Third World War, Stalinist policy taken as a whole, remains reactionary. It is carried through with complete cynicism in regard to the workers.

In the first stages of the war, Stalinism aided German imperialism, then participated in the resistance movement but suppressed the revolutionary initiative of the masses by curtailing it within the bounds of a reactionary nationalism. It bolstered up the bourgeois remnants, creating a "New Type of Democracy", And finally, when forced by strategic needs and the impossibility of maintaining indefinitely two fundamentally opposed economies --state property and private property-- they eliminated their bourgeois "allies" but not on the basis of the free and conscious participation of the proletarian masses in the control of industry and the state machine, but by the introduction of regimes in the image of that in totalitarian Russia.

There are people who will declare that it is only the end of the process that is important and that the fact that the capitalists and landlords were removed eventually, is alone decisive. However, the methods of the Stalinists in themselves have created vast problems and the elimination of the power of capitalist and landlord cannot be the basis for a genuine development toward socialism under the leadership of the Stalinist agents of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

The Stalinists substituted for Marxist internationalism a reactionary nationalism. The results of this policy were to engender national hatreds by which no advance towards socialism can take place. The expulsion of three million Germans from Sudetenland* a million of whom, according to Benes were workers, led to a 20% loss in industrial capacity and provided a fruitful breeding ground for Western imperialism to stir up national hatreds in preparation for war. With their fellow Stalinists in Hungary and Poland they had disputes over the transfer of minorities. Together, the Russian bureaucracy and the Yugoslavian Stalinists became the largest mortgage holders in Hungarian economy, draining 18% of its industrial output.

Those who have forgotten, or never learned, that Marxist internationalism is not a pious phrase but a policy of dire necessity in view of the world division of labour and the impossibility of development to communism on the part of any single country without the aid of the world proletariat, may believe that by the expansion of the Russian orbit in Eastern Europe, the problems of building socialism have been solved. Were these changes in property forms linked with a policy of workers' democracy and world revolution, then we could truly say that some of the worst difficulties were being overcome. If Stalinism was a revolutionary force, propagating an economic

*In 1930 census, out of 100 persons gainfully employed in industry and trade the following percentages were German:

<u>BOHEMIA</u>	<u>MORAVIA AND SILESIA</u>
Glass 60	Textile 53.3
Paper 58	Paper 36.7
Textile 55.9	Graphics 34.8
Mining 44.6	Engineering 18.7
China 42.3	Glass 13.1
Water 40.7	Shoes 13.7
Gas 3	
Engineering 25.9	

plan for the construction of a Socialist United States of Europe on the basis of the freest exchange of its resources - a plan which of necessity would hinge on Germany instead of reparations and occupation;-- if capitalism^{was} being substituted not by a bureaucratic and despotic totalitarian police regime, but on a regime based on workers democracy and control - such a movement would not be Stalinism. It would be a revolutionary internationalist force of irresistible attraction to the workers of the world which would completely undermine European and world capitalism.

The seizure of Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe does not solve the basic problem for the Soviet Union. The betrayal of the revolution in the West by Stalinism in 1945-47 and the subsequent reaction; the Marshall Plan manoeuvre of American imperialism is changing the relationship of forces on a world scale to the disadvantage of the Soviet Union.

In Czechoslovakia itself, the workers will find that they will be divested of all political rights. There will not be the vestige of workers' control of the state or the economy. Before there can take place in Czechoslovakia a flowering of proletarian democracy and rule as the transition stage towards communism, a political revolution will be required against the dictatorship of the Stalinists. History moves in a complicated fashion. Events in Czechoslovakia can only be understood on the basis of the degeneration of the revolution in Russia; on the one hand we see the viability of nationalised economy; on the other the shackles which Stalinism places on the proletariat in its advance towards the establishment of European and world communism.

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THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT IN GREECE

25-1-48

BY G.D.

EDITORIAL NOTE: We have just received the following article from our Greek comrades which deals with the character, the social base of, and the attitude of the revolutionary Marxists towards the guerilla movement in Greece. Our comrades write: "We think that it is necessary and interesting for the British working class to learn the Marxist point of view on this important international question. Though the article was written in haste, it represents the official position of our Party, which publishes the illegal "Workers Struggle." They write further: "Here the situation is getting more terrible every day. Many comrades are in prison, exile and concentration camps. Up to now, none of our militants have signed the infamous denunciation of Communism, and we are therefore very proud."

The Editors of "W.I.N." entirely subscribe to the article, its analysis and its conclusions. One passage, however, we do not accept. Namely, the reference to the "imperialist" aims of the Yugoslavs and Bulgarians, which reads as follows: "Another danger (to the guerilla movement) is that, if it remains unaided by the working class of Greece and by the world proletariat, it will degenerate and pass under the total dependence on the Yugoslavs and Bulgarians who will use it for their own imperialist aims and the expansionist aims of the Soviet bureaucracy which demands an outlet to the Aegean sea." The Stalinist bureaucracy will seek to use the guerilla movement, as it did the Polish and Eastern European movement. But we believe it would be wrong both in theory and in fact, to speak of the "imperialist" aims of the Yugoslavs and Bulgarians. Imperialism, in the modern Marxist scientific sense of the term, especially since Lenin, means essentially the export of finance capital in the field of economy, and an aggressive annexationist policy in the field of territorial expansion to back up, supplement, and consolidate the economic control by political subjugation. While the Yugoslavs and Bulgarians may aid the Greek guerillas with the same expansionist aims as the Russian Stalinists, this is not an imperialist policy as understood in the Marxist movement.

1

The guerilla movements manifested themselves on a large scale during the period of the second imperialist war, particularly in the backward peasant countries of South Eastern Europe.

The classic form of the class struggle of the proletariat for its economic and political emancipation is through strikes, demonstrations, etc, the peak of which is the general strike and the armed insurrection which brings the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the proletarian regime.

All these struggles of the workers take place in the towns: in the factories and the streets. They do not take place in the mountains. This leads to the conclusion that the guerilla struggle which is carried out

mainly by groups of peasants, in which workers, intellectuals and other petty bourgeois elements participate, does not constitute a pure form of class proletarian struggle.

What is then the guerilla movement? What are its aims, its mentality, its perspective? And finally, what is the position of the working class in regard to it?

In order to reply to these questions, and finally to define the position of the revolutionary Marxists in regard to the guerilla struggle, it is necessary for us to describe briefly the guerilla movement in Greece which has become an international question and which threatens to become the pretext for more serious dissension among the great powers.

2

After the heroic armed struggle of the popular masses during December, 1944, and the shameful Varkiza Agreement by which Stalinism handed over the best fighters of the working class and the peasants to the talons of the reaction, there followed an orgy of terrorism, imprisonments and rape. Armed hooligans of the reaction massacred without rendering account to anyone.

The resistance of the masses in the towns and the villages was unbending. In 1945, magnificent strikes, demonstrations and militant assemblies took place, which were seen in Athens for the first time. The same in the other towns of Greece.

Hundreds of thousands of workers, salaried employees, peasants, intellectuals, declared their faith and their will to struggle in order to put an end to the sovereignty of reaction which was supported by the British imperialists. The slogans and policy of the Trotskyists began to find more and more response among the masses. But even in this case, the Stalinists stabbed the workers in the back with the slogan of "making friends." Although this slogan found no response, the Stalinists continued propagating it for months and months.

The proposal of the Trotskyists to form self defence groups, which at that time in conjunction with the workers' struggles would certainly have broken the reaction, was rejected by the Stalinists as an "anti-national provocation". The workers' struggles continued insistently and with determination, but under a compromising and irresolute leadership. At the same time, however, ideological misapprehension appeared among the masses, and firstly among the fighters who adhered to Stalinism. As a result of this situation, the Stalinists started a polemic against the Trotskyists and at the same time agreed to take part in open discussions which took place towards the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946.

The reaction, taking advantage of the confused situation of the masses as a result of the traitorous policy of their leadership, organised themselves continuously and dealt blows when the opportunity arose against the working class.

This situation lasted all through 1946. The masses, in spite of their heroism and self sacrifice, started to become disappointed because they could not see a way out. They started to lose confidence not only in

in their leadership, but also in themselves. An attack by the reaction from all fronts on the trade union and political liberties of the workers followed, and has today reached its climax in the establishment of a police state in which the spy and the thug reigns.

The distance from this point to the creation of the guerilla movement was not long. In large numbers, the condemned peasants and workers took the path which they knew since the occupation and reached the mountains from where they would fight for democratic freedoms.

From this brief history of the labour movement in Greece, every worker understands that if the working class had come victorious out of the previous struggles and safeguarded its democratic liberties which were being trampled upon, there would be no reason for the hunted workers and peasants to take to the mountains. This is why we Marxists state that the guerilla movement is a form of struggle which follows the defeats of the workers in the towns.

3

The post-war guerilla movement manifested itself as a spontaneous popular movement of all the hunted fighters, who, fleeing the terrorism of the state and para-state organisations, took to the mountains. It must be taken into consideration that the Stalinists were at first hostile to this movement, still advocating the slogan of "making friends." Let it, incidentally, not be forgotten that the first "captain" of the E.L.A.S., Aris Velouhiotis, who refused to submit to the treacherous Varkiza Agreement and desired to continue the armed struggle in the mountains, was chased by the Government troops and "mysteriously" killed. The Stalinist finger is not missing from this affair either. Many old fighters of the guerilla movement whisper something about betrayal.

Each defeat of the workers in the towns increased the numbers of guerillas in the mountains. The first small battled between guerillas and Government troops started to develop into proper battles. At first isolated privates and later whole groups and army units started joining the guerillas. At the same time the "purge" of the army of the "anti-nation" elements was intensified. In the beginning, the "undesirable elements" were given temporary releases or leave of absence for an indefinite period, but later the camps in Crete were created together with the modern Dachaus at Makroniso and Yura. In spite of all this, the unwillingness of the army to fight the guerillas continues to be great.

With the growth of the dimensions of the guerilla movement, Stalinism started to embrace it, at first hesitatingly, and later with greater willingness. Stalinism in this struggle, as always, had not forgotten its treacherous mission. The "honest democratic understanding", the creation of a "national democratic government" (of the Papandrea type), and the rusty slogans of "national independence" and equal political friendship with all the great allies -- these were, and are, the whole content of Stalinist policy. The Stalinists do not fight for the workers' interests. In the same way they do not fight for the guerillas and their interests. In their capacity as agents of the Stalinist Soviet bureaucracy, they are struggling to serve the interests of their masters. By an agreement with the local bourgeois class they are trying to neutralise it, to persuade it not to be

so pro-American and so anti-Soviet, and not give the "fatherland's soil" to the late great allies, to be used as bases for the war against the Soviet Union which is now being prepared.

Instead of issuing the slogan of an all-peoples resistance against the attacks of the reaction and its imperialist patrons; instead of combining the armed struggle of the guerillas with the struggles of the working class in the towns; the Stalinists betrayed the strikes and the struggles of the working class on the one hand, while on the other they were trying to achieve an "honest agreement" which would grant them a portfolio in a bourgeois cabinet.

4

We have defined above briefly the various forms of proletarian class struggle and where they take place. The guerilla movement has no similarity with any of these forms of struggle. What is it, therefore, that determines the class character of the guerilla movement in the permanent class struggle?

Many people desire to present this guerilla movement as a continuation of the guerilla movement of the time of the occupation. If we accept this as correct, which it is not, even those who support this view must admit that there is a very great difference between those two guerilla movements. The guerilla movement at the time of the occupation was created and developed in the period of the imperialist war, aligned itself with one imperialist camp and fought against the other imperialist camp. Its aim was clearly "national liberation." With the delirious chauvinism of its leadership who cultivated mainly the hatred against the German soldiers, it prevented the international fraternisation of the troops of the two fighting camps or blocs. Its dependence on the Middle East Command Headquarters transformed it objectively into an instrument of the imperialist war and its continuation.

The great difference, therefore, between the two movements, lies in the fact that the first was fighting against a foreign invader, while the second carries out a direct civil war against a bourgeois Government and its state machine. And this is a great, an essential difference.

However, many of the characteristics of the first guerilla movement exist in the second: its dependence on Stalinism, its petty bourgeois intellectual leadership, its dependence, through Stalinism, on the Russian bureaucracy, etc. But the fact that it carries out a war against its class enemy gives it the potentiality, at a certain definite stage, of passing over the heads of its treacherous leadership, and becoming an invaluable ally of the proletariat in the towns, to whose struggle it does not cease even now, to be of assistance.

5

The guerilla movement is composed in its majority, of peasants, petty bourgeois, with a percentage of "workers." In the first spontaneous period of the movement, there existed within it a considerable democracy, and the leaders used to be elected from below on the basis of their ability. With the passing of the movement under the totalitarian influence of the Stalinist machine, it was made bureaucratic. The leaders are appointed

on the basis of their servility to the Stalinist bureaucrats and against the will of the base of the struggling guerillas. With the creation of appointed General Staffs, procedural castes, chiefs and sub-chiefs, and the announcement of the appointed Government of the Stalinists, the Stalinist noose has been placed round the neck of the whole movement.

In spite of this, as we said above, the "lower" leaders who are in direct touch with the fight side by side with the guerillas, come from the petty-bourgeois intellectual class (school teachers, junior ex-officers of the bourgeois army) and in many cases are peasants or "workers." Owing to the present peculiarity of the movement, the terrible centralised discipline which existed during the occupation, does not exist. This does not mean that the Stalinists have ceased to direct and guide the struggle of the guerillas, or that the Stalinists have turned "democratic." This looseness of cohesion which results from the lack of severe discipline, allows initiative to the lower leaders who are in direct contact with the masses. In a turn of events, they may wrest themselves free from the Stalinist influence under pressure from the masses. This situation creates first class opportunities for revolutionary Marxists to influence and guide the guerilla movement towards a correct road of struggle for class liberation under the leadership of the working class.

The present guerilla movement is also free from the Stalinist "brass hats" of the bourgeois army who were at the head of E.L.A.S. But the chief characteristic of this movement, on the subjective side, are the changes in the mentality of the fighters and their freedom from the old deception and illusions -- mainly the nationalistic ones. With a correct approach, and with the gaining of experience, the internationalist revolutionary ideas can find a greater response than they found during the war period.

As a conclusion from the above analysis, comes the deduction that the guerilla movement, owing to its composition, its petty bourgeois radical leadership, its aims, its aspirations, its slogans and its final objectives, and chiefly owing to the form of struggle it carries out (on the mountains), is a popular revolutionary movement.

6

The guerilla movement runs the serious risk of being struck down, dissolving and degenerating. The first danger for it would be if it fell under the blows of the Government and its imperialist sponsors. This danger, no matter how serious it is, or appears to be, can be removed with the struggle of the world proletariat against world imperialism, and particularly Anglo-American imperialism, which directly helps the struggle of the Greek guerillas.

Another danger is that, if it remains unaided by the working class of Greece and by the world proletariat, it will degenerate and pass under the total dependence of the Yugoslavs and Bulgarians who will use it for their own imperialist aims and the expansionist aims of the Soviet bureaucracy which demands an outlet to the Aegean sea. This danger has made its appearance with the "totalitarian" control which the Stalinists have imposed on the movement. But the majority of the guerillas do not fight as a conscious instrument of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its lackeys. They fight for democratic political, trade union and economic freedoms. This fact alone,

gives to the movement a dynamic which under certain conditions, can give an unusual push to the revolutionary movement of our country, reaching up to the very overthrow of capitalism. But this needs the conscious class intervention of the proletariat of the towns which, at the head of the popular masses and naturally of the guerillas, would guide the struggle up to its final logical conclusion: the overthrow of capitalism.

Insofar as the guerilla movement fights against local reaction, dislocates the state machine and fights for freedom, the revolutionary proletariat of our country, as well as that of all other countries, supports it with all its power. At the same time, however, the revolutionary vanguard of the workers emphasises and warns the movement of the dangers which threaten it, chiefly those of the treacherous adventurist policy of the Stalinist leadership.

However, in all cases, the guerilla movement is doomed if it remains without help from the working class of the towns and the world proletariat. The only effective assistance which can be given to the new guerilla movement is the mobilisation of the workers in the towns, which, on the basis of the most immediate economic demands, will enter the struggle combining the economic with political demands, a general amnesty, freedom of the press, speech and assembly. The guerilla movement with its armed struggle, will give invaluable aid to this struggle of the workers. Once the struggle of the workers succeeds in obtaining the most elementary democratic trade union freedom, automatically there ceases to exist any reason for the existence of the guerilla movement in the mountains -- the armed workers, peasants, intelligentsia will then form people's civil guards which will safeguard the conquests. But this is another question which we are not examining here.

The duties of the revolutionary proletariat and its party towards the guerilla movement are, therefore, quite clear: support of the armed struggle of the peasants and the guerillas and at the same time, the call for the mobilisation of the workers in the towns as the only way out for the revolutionary movement in our country.

7

The Stalinists, in exploiting the movement in the interests of the counter-revolutionary Soviet bureaucracy, and as a scarecrow against American imperialist intervention, have announced the formation of a "Government of Free Greece." The revolutionary Marxists who base their struggle on the revolutionary class consciousness of the masses, cannot in any case recognise a Government composed of people appointed, and which includes in its ranks none but Stalinists of the kind of Mpartziotas (Phanis) and Co.

We support a provisional Government democratically elected by the armed peasants, workers and the population of the areas occupied by the guerillas. Our attitude in regard to the Markos Government is the same as that in regard to any other appointed anti-democratic, counter-revolutionary government. In support of the struggle of the armed guerillas? Yes. With all our powers! Against the treacherous Stalinist leadership? Yes! The way shown by the revolutionary Marxists is all too clear. It is the way of the ruthless class struggle, which is the only way which leads to victory.

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SLAVE CAMPS IN RUSSIA

BY V. CHARLES

The outside world has long been aware of the existence of numerous concentration camps within the borders of the U.S.S.R. Not even the highly skilled propaganda machine which Stalin has at his disposal has been able to conceal this fact. But it has been extremely difficult to discover the scope of these camps. How many are there? How many human beings live out their lives behind barbed wire fences? Who are they, and what sort of lives do they lead? Very little official information is available.

Workers delegations and dignitaries of the political, scientific or literary world who visited the Soviet Union, never came near these places. They saw the show places, such as Bolshevo, an establishment for "criminals" which is described as a "self governing community" containing university, hospital facilities, stores, apartment houses with special quarters for married inmates, busy industrial factories, recreational provisions, etc, and where the workers are reported to receive the same wages and work under the same conditions as the workers outside.

Forced labour settlements? Concentration camps? Why are the Stalinists so reticent in explaining their existence and their scope? Even millions of Russian citizens can only guess their extent and nature. As for the inmates themselves -- few returned to the civilised world to tell the tale of horror they lived through.

But now and then individuals did manage to evade the vigilance of the ever-watchful NKVD (formerly GPU) and escape over the frontiers. Apart from the individual testimonies, on July 30th, 1941, thousands of Poles were amnestied under the terms of the Stalin-Sikorski Agreement. They had spent a year behind barbed wire in the Soviet Union. Not all of them were enemies of the Soviet Union before they became prisoners in that country. Many were communists or communist sympathisers.

Recently Hollis and Carter published a book "FORCED LABOUR IN SOVIET RUSSIA" by David J. Dallin and Boris I. Nicolaevsky. Even if one allows for the undoubted anti-Soviet prejudices of the authors (in the preface they seek to establish that Stalinism is the "natural product" of Bolshevism), no-one can discount the weight of carefully sifted evidence here amassed. (They provide photostatic reproductions of official documents from no fewer than 32 "Corrective Labour Camps".)

STALINISTS REPLY IN "RUSSIA TODAY"

In an article in "RUSSIA TODAY" entitled "Slave Labour Bogey" by Henry Pratt Fairchild, (February 1948) an attempt is made to whitewash the camps and subtly to cast doubt upon the reports which have percolated through to the West. Despite his efforts to sidetrack the whole issue by dealing with the special show prisons such as Bolshevo, mentioned above, he notes in passing that "There are no political criminals in this type of community..." For the political opponents of Stalinism - many of them men and women who built the Bolshevik Party and fought against the counter-revolution -- there are only the more dreaded settlements of the frozen Tundra or the Arctic North.

First Fairchild argues the strength and support for the Stalin regime, then he is forced to admit to the terrible repressions 30 years after the revolution, repressions which were undreamed of even during the civil war, even allowing for exaggerations in the book. This is what he writes:

"It is true that political criminals in the Soviet Union are regarded as much more dangerous and culpable wrong-doers than ordinary law-breakers, even murderers, and also that there is a much higher proportion of political criminals in the Soviet Union than in the United States, both in comparison with the total population and with criminals in general. The reasons for this are obvious.

"CURB DISLOYAL ELEMENTS

"The Soviet Union is still struggling with the aftermath of a difficult and costly revolution, to say nothing of a series of military attacks by outside powers, and it feels that its national defence calls for, and justifies, more stringent measures toward disloyal elements than would be the case in a more firmly established State. This should not be difficult for Americans to understand at the present moment. A witness before the un-American Committee of Congress recently testified that there are 5,000,000 Communists and members of "front" organisations in the country. If this is true, and if the United States ever comes to feel such insecurity with respect to its democracy that it seems necessary to imprison all persons presumed to be of doubtful loyalty - and we are moving rapidly right now towards this fantastic situation - we shall then have a body of political prisoners not wholly out of proportion to those in the Soviet Union."

The fact that the Stalinist regime treats political prisoners worse than criminals or murderers is in itself an indication of the strength of the opposition. This opposition is not composed of elements of the capitalist or landowning class, as in the days of the civil war. They have mostly been absorbed by the bureaucracy. It is in the main, ordinary workers and peasants, and revolutionary critics of the regime, who oppose the inequalities existing in the Soviet Union and the abuses of the bureaucracy.

But the most significant aspect of the article - written by a Stalinist in an official organ, is the admission to at least 7 to 8 million slave labourers in Russia. On Fairhead's analysis, 5 million in proportion to the population of the United States (say 150,000,000) is one in thirty of the population; applying the same proportion to the Soviet Union which has a population of say, 200,000,000, means that there are 7 million slaves or "political prisoners", as he euphemistically calls them. (Fairhead assumes that if America imprisoned 5 million communists, "we shall then have a body of political prisoners not wholly out of proportion to those in the Soviet Union.")

WHO ARE THE PRISONERS?

The term "political offender" as employed in Stalinist Russia, covers a very wide field indeed. Classed as political offenders are all who are politically opposed to Stalin: Trotskyists, Right Oppositionists, Mensheviks, old Bolsheviks who opposed Stalin on one aspect or another of his policy, Stalinists who have fallen into disfavour. But also classified as

"political offenders" are peasants who resisted enforced collectivisation, "national deviationists" from the various national minorities (Kazaks, Uzbeks, Kirghiz, Mordovians, Caucasians, Ukrainians, and so on); foreign Communists (Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, etc) who sought asylum from political persecution in the Soviet Union; Russian communists - good Stalinists for the most part, who have fallen out of favour for one reason or another. (One escapee, a former Lieutenant-Colonel in the Red Army, tells of a member of the Communist Party whom he met in one of the camps, whose only "crime" was his friendship with a Communist leader who was convicted during the "great purge.")

To these have been added, in the past few years, literally tens of thousands from the Soviet borderland. When the Baltic States, Eastern Poland, Bessarabia were incorporated into the USSR, whose masses of people were arrested and transported to concentration camps in various parts of the Soviet Union. Koreans and Chinese, German and Italian prisoners of war, Russians returned from Hitler's prison camps -- all have gone to swell the ranks of Stalin's slave labour camps.

In addition to the Corrective Labour Camps, the practice of banishment and exile has also been revived on the model of the old Czarist regime.. In the early twenties, there was some form of banishment and exile introduced to deal with the enemies of the revolution, but in those days persons banished were free to choose their place of residence and occupation anywhere else in the country. Exiles were permitted a certain degree of real individual freedom within a prescribed locality.

Since the 1930's a new form of exile has come into being. Whole masses of people, who were considered either "inimical or dangerous" where they originally lived, were transported elsewhere and forcibly settled. Ironically they were referred to as "settlers" or "voluntary immigrants", and they were used to populate the vast empty spaces of Siberia and the Soviet Far East.

Thus, during the "liquidation of the Kuleks" campaign, families of the "liquidated" kuleks were transported wholesale to these new regions. "Members of 'suspicious' nationalities or inhabitants of border regions were moved great distances." Wherever a new "socialist offensive" was opened, streams of new "settlers" arrived, guided to their destinations by the GPU. This process was considerably speeded up on the outbreak of the war. When the Autonomous Volga-German S.S.R. was dissolved by decree on August 28th, 1941, a considerable part of its population of 605,000 was "resettled" in the Altai area of Western Siberia and elsewhere, and after the abolition of the Chechen-Ingus ASSR and the Crimean ASSR by the decree of June 25th, 1946 many people from this part of the Soviet Union shared the fate of the Volga-Germans.

In this way, Stalin accomplished the "miracle" of industrialising and populating the Trans-Urals.

AN EYE -WITNESS ACCOUNT

An example is given in "FORCED LABOUR IN SOVIET RUSSIA" of the wife of a German Communist, herself a well-known Communist leader, who was arrested in Moscow in June, 1938 (her husband was arrested and disappeared a year earlier). She had belonged to an anti-Stalin faction of the German Party

in 1931-32. That was enough to earn her five years "corrective labour" six years later.

She gives a graphic description of the journey to the desolate Kazakhstan steppe, "crowded together like cattle", and of the "settlement" with its "clay huts with thousands of lice, bugs and fleas." "We lived" she writes, "on the level of ^{the} Kazakh nomad but without his mutton, steak and koumiss; we spent the short hours of the night lying on wooden boards or on the ground, without straw sacks, without blankets, only to line up for work at sunrise."

After spending two years there, the writer of the above, together with 39 other Germans were taken to Brest-Litovsk by the G.P.U. in 1940, where they were handed over to the Gestapo. She spent the next five years in the Nazi concentration camp of Ravensbreuck, from which she was only released by the German collapse.

ECONOMICS OF SLAVE LABOUR

Slave labour is notoriously wasteful. With no interest in his work, the slave only performs as much work as he is compelled to do by the overseers' whip. In return, he is provided with the subsistence minimum of food, below which neither life nor work is possible.

In Stalin's camps an effort has been made to overcome these difficulties, by the introduction of a scheme of differential awards. Food rations and "privileges" are distributed according to the productivity of each labourer. At the end of each working day a "work certificate" is made out for each prisoner. These eventually go to the food-supply department and serve as the basis for determining what rations each will receive the next day.

"The minimum norms are continually being raised, compelling the prisoner to strain more and more to attain his 100 per cent norm. The desire for more food drives some men to complete exhaustion, since the nourishment from the larger ration does not supply the extra energy they expend to get it.

"The food given the prisoners is far from uniform. There have been times when the rations were so appalling that hundreds died of starvation. In 1938-39 a change for the better occurred in most of the camps. In 1940 the situation became worse again and after the outbreak of the Soviet German war in 1941 famine became the normal condition in many camps. The prisoners would dig out rotting cabbage from rubbish heaps and roast rats. This naturally resulted in increased mortality." (Forced Labour in the SU)

In Ot Prestupleniya ktrydu (From Crime to Labour) by I.L.Averbakh, published in Moscow in 1936, we get the following details of how the differentiation in rations works:

"How much differentiation there exists in nutrition can be judged from the contents of Camp Order No.9 of the Administration of Dmitrevski Camp, concerning the norms of bread rations for general issue and special purchase. A camp inmate fulfilling his production norms up to 79% under the increased rations (for particularly hard work) is issued 600 grams (21 ozs) of bread daily; if he fulfills from 80 to 99%, 700 grams daily; from 100 to 109% 800 grams (28 ozs) and from 110 to 124%, 800 grams plus the right of obtaining 200 grams from the stalls; those producing

125% and above are entitled to obtain 1,000 grams and 200 grams from the stalls."

Despite the "incentives", the shortcomings, which are almost a law of slave economy, have not been eliminated. In a broadcast from Moscow on May 24th, 1934, the late People's Commissar Krylenko, complained of a "careless attitude toward public property, hitches and shortcomings of various kinds, raw materials and tools lie around uncared for and are improperly utilised, and we have snags instead of a capable organisation of work." He also stated that the crops grown in corrective labour colonies were 40% lower than the average for the Soviet Union.

Forced labour is chiefly used in those branches of Soviet economy where simple manual labour, involving no expenditure of modern machinery, can be profitably employed, such as forestry, canal and road construction, railways, and so on. It is precisely because of the lack of accumulated capital, which is itself the result of Russia's economic backwardness, that the Stalinist bureaucracy has resorted to this primitive and cruel use of human labour.

IN THE DAYS OF LENIN AND TROTSKY

Quoting Engels, Lenin said in "STATE AND REVOLUTION":

"As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as, along with class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the former anarchy of production, the collisions and excesses arising from these have also been abolished, there is nothing more to be repressed..."

There would be no need for prisons in the new society brought into being. The "criminals" would not be punished, but would be educated to become useful members of society.

The Criminal Code introduced in the first years of the Soviet Republic embodied these socialist views. "Education of prisoners was to be fostered. Parole was introduced on a large scale." Russian treatment of crime gained world-wide recognition as one of the most progressive features resulting from the Russian revolution. The old-style prison labour was abolished, payment for any work within the places of confinement being on the same scale as that prevailing outside - that is, trade union rates. The whole aim of the system was to correct and not to punish. People confined in places of detention were human beings and were treated as such. They were even allowed a certain degree of self government, Newspapers, libraries and cultural entertainment was mandatory and frequent lectures were provided. Publications, managed by the prisoners for the prisoners, were to be encouraged.

Such was the penal code in the early days of the Soviet Union. But instead of a diminution of repressive measures, under the Stalin regime, the lot of prisoners is to be compared only with that which existed in Nazi Germany.

PRODUCTIVE FORCES DEVELOPED - SLAVE LABOUR AN AUXILIARY TO THE ECONOMY

The slavery to which human beings are subjected - among them the flower of the revolutionary Marxist movement of Russia and Europe - is an indictment not of Bolshevism, but of Stalinism. The political superstructure of the Soviet Union has been turned by Stalin into a machine so totalitarian and oppressive that all and any opposition is regarded as the worst form of crime. These camps testify to the correctness of Trotsky's analysis that the Stalinist state machine, far from withering away, has become more and more oppressive.

However, despite this, it must be said that slave labour in Russia is an auxiliary element in the economy. The great economic successes of the economy are based, not on slave labour, but on the development of industry on the basis of the proletariat. Despite this terrible aspect of the regime, there has taken place a tremendous increase in the productive forces, above all an increase in the number of industrial workers. In this, the contradictions within Russian society are heightened, and prepare the way for the downfall of the bureaucracy.

Marxists have always estimated the development of any given society from the standpoint of the development of the productive forces. The economic foundation of the regime in Russia still rests on nationalised property. And it is this which determines our attitude towards Russia. While supporting the economic foundations, on the basis of which the successes have been achieved, the Fourth International struggles against the superstructure of political tyranny which has been erected upon it.

To the uncontrolled domination of the bureaucracy can be ascribed the introduction of slave labour, which is but the other side of the squandering of the resources of Russia both human and material, even in the "free" sectors of industry.

In the long run, the successes of the economy will undermine the basis of the bureaucracy. Even the slave labour, by its use for industrialisation and the opening up of new stretches for industrialisation in the vast spaces of Russia, including Siberia and the Arctic Circle, prepares the way for the revenge of the masses. The industrialisation brings into being a gigantic proletariat. The developing economy will come into greater conflict with the uncontrolled bureaucracy. Expressing the needs of the economy, the Russian workers will destroy the parasitic apparatus which expresses itself in abominations which challenge the worst excesses of decaying capitalism.

The Soviet Union will return to the Marxist heritage of the October revolution, but on a higher economic foundation. Slave camps, together with the servitude of the proletariat will become a nightmare memory of the past as the Russian workers, together with the workers of Europe and the world commence a real transition to communism.

The crimes of Stalinism will be neither forgiven nor forgotten. This slave labour is an economic aberration of the rule of officialdom, drunk with power and without responsibility to the masses. History will call them to account.

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WORKERS' CONTROL AND COLLABORATION WITH THE U.S.S.R

By L. TROTSKY

We publish below an article written by Leon Trotsky in 1932 on workers control and management of production. Printed as a chapter of the book "WHAT NEXT - VITAL QUESTIONS FOR THE GERMAN PROLETARIAT" this article will be of great interest to our readers in view of the discussions now taking place in the labour movement on the question of control and management of industry, particularly nationalised industry.

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Whenever we speak of the slogans of the revolutionary period, the latter should not be construed in too narrow a sense. The Soviets should be created only in a revolutionary period. But when does that begin? One cannot consult the calendar and thus learn. One can only feel one's way through action. The Soviets must be created at the time when they can be created.*

The slogan of workers' control over production relates, particularly and in general, to the same period as the creation of Soviets. But neither should this be construed mechanically. Special conditions may draw the masses toward control over production considerably prior to the time when they will evince themselves ready to create Soviets.

Brandler and his left shadow-- Urbahns-- have used the slogan of control over production, independently of the political background. This has served no purpose other than to discredit the slogan. But it would be incorrect to reject the slogan now, under the conditions of the looming political crisis, only because on the face of it the mass offensive doesn't exist as yet. For the offensive itself, slogans are necessary which would define the perspectives of the movement. The period of propaganda must inevitably precede the penetration of the slogan into the masses.

The campaign for workers' control can develop, depending upon the circumstances, not from the angle of production but from that of consumption. The promise of the Brüning government to lower the price of commodities simultaneously with the decrease in wages has not materialised. This question cannot but absorb the most backward strata of the proletariat, who are today very far from the thought of seizing power. Workers' control over the outlays of industry and the profits of trade is the only real form of the struggle for lower prices. Under the conditions of general dissatisfaction, workers' commissions, with the participation of worker house-wives, for the purpose of checking up on the increase cost of margarine can become very palpable beginnings of workers' control over industry. It is self-evident that this is only one of the

* Let it be borne in mind that in China, the Stalinists worked against the creation of Soviets during the period of revolutionary upsurge; whereas, when they decided upon an insurrection in Canton during the wave of recession, they appealed to the masses to create the Soviets on the very day of the insurrection!

possible manners of approach and it was given only as an example. Here the matter will not as yet concern the management of industry; the working woman will not go so far at once, such a thought is far removed from her mind. But it is easier for her to pass from the consumer control to the productive control and from the latter to the direct management, depending upon the general development of the revolution.

In contemporary Germany, under the conditions of the present crisis, control over industry signifies control not only over the operating but also over the partly operating and shut down industries. This presupposes the gaining over for control of those workers who worked in those industries prior to their dismissal. The task thereby must consist of setting the dead industries into motion, under the leadership of Factory Committees on the basis of an economic plan. This leads squarely to the question of the governmental administration of industry, i.e., to the expropriation of the capitalists by the workers' government. Workers' control, in this wise, is not a prolonged, "normal" condition, like wage scale agreements or social insurance. The control is a transitional measure, under the conditions of the highest tension of the class war, and conceivable only as a bridge to the revolutionary nationalisation of industry.

The Brandlerites accuse the Left Opposition of having snatched from them the slogan of control over production after having jeered at this slogan for a number of years. The accusation has quite an unexpected tone! The slogan of control over industry was first issued, on a wide scale, by the Bolshevik Party in 1917. In Petrograd, the charge over the entire campaign in this sphere, as well as in others, was placed in the hands of the Soviet. As an individual, who watched this work and participated in it, I bear witness that we were never obliged to turn to Thalheimer-Brandler for initiative, or to make use of their theoretical information. The accusation of "plagiarism" is formulated with considerable carelessness.

But that it not the chief trouble. The matters are much worse with the second part of the accusation, - until now, the "Trotskyists" have argued against a campaign under the slogan of control over production, but right now they come out for this slogan. The Brandlerites see herein our inconsistency! As a matter of fact they only reveal a complete ignorance of revolutionary dialectic, which is packed into the slogan of workers' control by reducing it to a technical prescription for "mobilising the masses." They condemn themselves when they cite the fact that they have been repeating for a number of years the slogan which is suitable only for a revolutionary period. The woodpecker who has drilled away at the bark of an oak tree, year in and year out, in all probability at the bottom of his heart, also holds to the conviction that the woodman, who had chopped down the tree with the blows of his axe, has criminally plagiarised from him, the woodpecker.

For us therefore the slogan of control is tied up with the period of dual-power in industry, which corresponds to the transition from the bourgeois regime to the proletarian. Not at all, contradicts us Thalheimer, dual-power must signify "equality (!) with the proprietors"; but the workers are fighting for their complete leadership of industries. They, the Brandlerites, will not allow the revolutionary slogan to be "contaminated" (that is the way they put it). To them, "control over production signifies the management

of the industries by the workers." (January 17, 1932). But why then call management as control? In the language of all mankind under control is understood the surveillance and checking of one institution over the work of another. Control may be active, dominant, and all-embracing. But it remains control. The very idea of this slogan was the outgrowth of the transitional regime in industry when the capitalist and his administrators could no longer take a step without the consent of the workers; but on the other hand, when the workers had not as yet provided the political prerequisites for nationalisation, nor yet seized the technical management, nor yet created the organs essential for this. Let us not forget that what is broached here concerns not only the taking charge of corporations, but also the sale of products, and the supplying of factories with raw materials, and new equipment, as well as credit operations, etc.

The correlation of forces in the factory is determined by the force of the general onset of the proletariat upon the bourgeois society. Generally speaking, control is thinkable only during the indubitable preponderance of the political forces of the proletariat over the forces of capitalism. But it is wrong to think that in a revolution all questions must needs be and are solved by force: the factories may be gained with the aid of the Red Guard; their management requires new legal and administrative prerequisites; and over and above that, knowledge, routine, and organs. A certain period of apprenticeship is required. The proletariat is interested in leaving the management during that period in the hands of an experienced administration, but compelling it to keep all the books open and establishing a wide awake supervision over all its affiliations and actions.

The workers' control begins with the individual workshop. The organ of the control is the factory committee. The factory organs of control join together with each other, according to the economic ties of the industries between themselves. On this stage, there is no general economic plan as yet. The practice of workers' control only prepares the elements of this plan.

On the contrary, the workers' management of industry, to a much greater degree, even in its initial steps, proceeds from above, for it is inseparable from state-power and the general economic plan. The organs of management are not factory committees but centralised soviets. The role of the factory committees remains important, of course. But in the sphere of management of industry it has no longer a leading but an auxiliary role.

In Russia, where following the bourgeoisie, the technical intelligentsia was convinced that the Bolshevik experiment would endure only a few weeks, and therefore had steered its course towards all sorts of sabotage and had refused to enter into any agreements, the stage of the workers' control did not develop. Moreover, the war was destroying the economic structure by changing the workers into disoldiers. Therefore there is comparatively little in the Russian experience to be found in relation to workers' control, as a special regime in industry. But this experience is all the more valuable for the opposite reason: it demonstrates that even in a backward country under the general sabotage of not only the proprietors but also of the administrative-technical personnel, the young and inexperienced proletariat, surrounded by a ring of enemies, was able nevertheless to assemble the management of industry. What wouldn't then the German working class be able to accomplish!

The proletariat, as has been said above, is interested in seeing to it that the transition from the private capitalist to the state capitalist and then to the socialist method of production be accomplished with the least economic convulsions and the least drain upon the national wealth. That is why, while nearing power and even after seizing power, by way of the boldest and most decisive struggle, the proletariat will evince a complete readiness to establish a transitional regime in the factories, plants and banks.

Will the relation in industry in Germany during the period of revolution be composed differently from those in Russia? It is not easy to answer this question, particularly from the side lines. The actual course of the class struggle may not leave place for workers' control, as a special stage. Under the extreme tension of the developing struggle, under the increased pressure of the workers on the one side and the sabotage on the part of the proprietors and administrators, on the other, there may be no room left for agreements, even though temporary. In such a case, the proletariat will have to assume together with the power, the full management of industry. The present semi-paralysed state of industry and the presence of a great army of unemployed make quite possible such a "condensed" way.

But, on the other hand, the presence of mighty organisations within the working class, the bringing up of the German workers in the spirit of systematic activities, and not of improvisations, and the tardiness of the masses in swinging towards revolution which can tip the scale in favour of the first way. Therefore it would be inexcusable to reject beforehand the slogan of control over production.

In any event, it is obvious that in Germany, even more than in Russia, the slogan of workers' control has a purport apart from that of workers' management. Like many other transitional slogans, it retains an enormous significance independent of the degree to which it will be realised in reality, if realised at all.

By its readiness to establish transitional forms of workers' control, the proletarian vanguard wins over to its side the more conservative strata of the proletariat, and neutralises certain groups of the petty bourgeoisie, especially, the technical, administrative, and banking staffs. Should the capitalists and the entire upper layer of the administration evince an utter irreconcilability by resorting to methods of economic sabotage, the responsibility for the severe measures that spring therefrom will fall in the eyes of the nation not upon the workers but upon the "hostile" classes. Such is the supplementary political purport of the slogan of workers' control along with the above mentioned economic and administrative purport.

In any case, the extremes of political cynicism are attested by the fact that those people who have issued the slogan of control in a non-revolutionary environment, and thereby have given it a purely reformist character, accuse us of centrist duality, because of our refusal to identify control with management.

The workers who will reach the questions of the management of industry will not wish nor will they be able to become drunk with words. They have become

used in factories to dealing with materials, less flexible than phrases, and they will comprehend our thoughts better than bureaucrats; genuine revolutionary thinking does not consist in applying force everywhere and at all times, and far less in choking with verbal enthusiasm over force. Where force is necessary, there it must be applied boldly, decisively and completely. But one must know the limitations of force, one must know when to blend force with a manoeuvre; the blow with an agreement. On anniversaries of Lenin's death the Stalinist bureaucracy repeats coned phrases about "revolutionary realism" in order the more freely to jeer at it during the remaining 364 days.

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The prostituted theoreticians of reformism attempt to discover the dawn of socialism in the emergency decrees against the workers. From the "military socialism" of Hohenzollerns to the police socialism of Brüning!

Left bourgeois ideologists dream of a planned capitalist economy. But capitalism has had time to demonstrate that in the line of plans it is capable only of draining the productive forces for the sake of war. Disregarding everything else, in what manner can the dependence of Germany - with its enormous figures of import and export - upon the world market be regulated?

We, on our side, propose to begin with the sector of the German-Soviet relations, i.e., the working out of a wide plan of collaboration between the Soviet and German economy in connection with and supplementary to the second five year plan. Tens and hundreds of the largest factories could go ahead at full steam. The unemployment in Germany could be entirely liquidated-- it would hardly take more than two or three years-- on the basis of an economic plan, which would embrace from all sides only these two countries.

The leaders of capitalist industry in Germany, obviously, cannot make such a plan, because it means their social self-elimination. But the Soviet government, with the aid of German workers' organisations, first of all, the trade unions and the progressive representative of German technology, can and must work out an entirely practical plan, capable of opening truly grandiose perspectives. Now petty will appear all these "problems" of reparations and supplementary toll pfennigs in comparison to the possibilities which will be opened by coupling the natural, technical and organisational resources of the Soviet and German national economies.

The German Communists are spreading wide-scale propaganda concerning the successes of Soviet upbuilding. This work is necessary. They fly into sugared embellishments. That is entirely superfluous. But worse yet, they have been unable to link together both the successes and the difficulties of the Soviet economy with the immediate interests of the German proletariat; with unemployment, with the lowering of wages, and with the general economic impasse of Germany. They have been unable and unwilling to pose the question of Soviet-German collaboration on a strictly practical as well as deeply revolutionary basis.

During the first stage of the crisis-- more than two years ago-- we posed this question in print. And the Stalinists immediately set up a hue and cry that

we believe in ^{the} peaceful co-existence of socialism and capitalism, that we want to save capitalism, etc. They failed to foresee and understand just one thing, to wit, what a potent factor in a socialist revolution a concrete economic plan of collaboration could become, if it be made the subject of discussion in trade unions, and at factory meetings, among workers of operating as well as of shut down industries; and if it be linked with the slogan of workers' control over production, and subsequently with the slogan of seizing power. For international planned collaboration can be realised only under government monopoly of foreign trade in Germany, and the nationalisation of the means of production, in other words, under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Along this road, one could pull new millions of workers, non-party, social-democrat, and Catholic, into the struggle for power.

The Tarnows are scaring the German workers with the prospect that the industrial break-down as a consequence of the revolution would result in frightful chaos, famine, etc. Let it be kept in mind that these same people supported the imperialist war which could bring to the proletariat in its train nothing save tortures, hardships and degradation. To burden the proletariat with the agonies of war under the banner of the Hohenzollerns -yes! Revolutionary sacrifices under the banner of socialism? - No, never!

Discussions concerning the topic that "our German workers" would never agree to suffer "such sacrifices" consist in simultaneously flattering the German workers and vilifying them. Unfortunately, the German workers are too patient. The Socialist Revolution will not exact from the German proletariat one hundredth of these sacrifices that were swallowed up in the war of Hohenzollern-Leipart-Wels.

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LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

Two outstanding facts emerge from the 47th Annual Conference of the Labour Party which met at Scarborough during Whitsun. 1. It is clear that the organised workers of Britain are still solidly aligned behind the Labour Government, and; 2. The left wing, which in 1947 had at least the semblance of organisation - the "Keep Left" group, - is today disoriented and leaderless.

On the main questions, the leadership was able to ride comfortably over its critics. It came out of the Conference having accomplished the task it set itself. It avoided any sharp divisions and, above all, it avoided being bound down seriously to any programme for the future election.

Resolutions on nationalisation of land, distributive trades, coal distribution, shipping and shipbuilding had been passed to the E.C. without debate. Undoubtedly, certain sections of the leadership would have liked to postpone steel nationalisation, but fearing the reactions of the rank and file, were forced to guarantee "nationalisation of the relevant portions" of this industry in the near future. However, they secured the rejection of the demand for steel nationalisation in this session, by an overwhelming majority, which gives them time in which to evolve some system of state ownership or control over portions of the steel industry which will not provide a bitter opposition from the capitalists, and at the same time take the edge off the criticism from their own rank and file.

Awkward resolutions binding the leadership to carry out the decisions of the rank and file never reached the floor of the Conference. Conference did adopt, against the wishes of the Executive, a resolution against the reduction of food subsidies, and one on tied cottages similar to the one passed last year. However, with their present credit among the rank and file, the leadership can afford to deal with these resolutions as they did with the resolution on Equal Pay passed in 1947.

The most serious problem for the leadership arose out of the Government's policy on profits and wages. However, conference passed a resolution by an overwhelming majority, welcoming "the initiative of the Government in attempting to establish a policy for wages, profits and other incomes." Their victory here was gained with the aid of Dalton, who calmed delegates critical of the Crippsian policy of voluntary limitation of dividends, by hinting that the programme of nationalisation would depend on the conduct of private enterprise in relation to profits during the next period.

The second big debate took place around the administration of nationalised industries. A resolution demanding changes in the methods of making appointments to Boards so that the workers would "have a much bigger say in their control" was moved by the Amalgamated Engineering Union, seconded by the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen. It was supported by the Union of Post Office Workers, the National Union of Railwaymen, and many other delegates. As the "MANCHESTER GUARDIAN" of 20th May, pointed out,

"Had a vote been taken, with some powerful trade unions being prepared to support the resolution, there might have been an awkward situation for the Government." However, the leadership avoided this by persuading the movers to agree to the resolution being left to the consideration of the Executive without a vote being taken. It should be noted that this move did not pass without some protest from some of the trade union delegates.

On foreign policy, Bevin again carried the day with a vote of 4,097 to 224,000. Successive Labour Party Conferences since the advent of the Labour Government, have gone steadily to the right on issues of foreign policy. The bureaucratic manoeuvres of Stalin have increased the anti-Russian sentiment within the Labour Party. Commenting on the Conference in the "DAILY WORKER" on 22nd May, J.R. Campbell remarked: "The majority blame the Russians and quite vile anti-Soviet sentiments were applauded which a few years ago would have been angrily hissed." The platform skillfully utilised this and posed questions of foreign policy as a choice between the Labour Government or the Kremlin, Bevin or Zilliacus.

Undoubtedly Transport House's "anti-red" drive has had an effect. For the first time in years, the voice of Stalinism was almost unheard at a Labour Party Conference. (Zilliacus who put the Stalinist position on foreign policy, hastened to assure the Government that he wholeheartedly approved of its policy at home.) By expelling the right winger Edwards, the Executive effectively reduced the Platts-Mills expulsion and the Nenni affair to a damp squib.

Almost every bourgeois paper drew the conclusion from the Conference, the ambiguous phrases of Shinwell's presidential address and the speech of Morrison, that here was a recipe for slowing down. The "DAILY TELEGRAPH" was typical in its headline comment: "Socialist Conference strikes new note of caution." Morrison - who, incidentally, blossomed forth as the fervent champion of the House of Lords -- stressed the need for "consolidating if not reforming and changing the organisation of socialised industries if the public interest and experience show that to be necessary." The attitude of the platform to the character of the next election programme was in line with the obviously inspired leader in the "DAILY HERALD" at the beginning of the Conference. "Next time there will be fewer citadels of reaction to storm, we shall therefore need to think more in terms of the creative enrichment of life than of introducing overdue reforms."

The "OBSERVER" of 23rd May, commented that the "policy of the National Executive has been endorsed in resolution after resolution and the most controversial issues have caused hardly more than a shrimps ripple." However, it should be noted that, while in the past two Conferences, foreign policy has aroused the greatest degree of criticism, this year the major debates were on wage freeze and nationalised industries; in other words, on home affairs. However, the existence of the post-war boom, full employment, the low ebb of the class struggle, have enabled the leaders of the Labour Party to maintain the confidence of the mass of the workers, and delayed any sharp exposure of the inadequacy of their programme. They were able to exploit the cry for "unity" in face of the coming election. Scarborough has left the left wing in the Party an extremely hard and steep road to climb, It must find a programme which will rally the advanced workers in the Party and the Trade Unions. It must be a programme with a conscious socialist direction in home and foreign affairs, firmly based on the daily experiences of the workers, a programme which can become a real challenge to Transport House in the pre-election year of 1949.