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Can socialism be built through tyranny?

Max Shachtman on Isaac Deutscher's claim that Stalinist "progress" was a sort of vindication of Trotsky

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Introduction: Trotsky and Deutscher

Post-Trotsky "Trotskyism" became known to a very large reading public in Isaac Deutscher's biography of Trotsky. Its three volumes were published over a decade up to 1963, when the last one, *The Prophet Outcast*, came out. The trilogy was one of the most widely read biographies of the twentieth century. Deutscher's work helped sweep away the mountains of Stalinist calumny under which Trotsky's historical reputation had long been buried, though, as Deutscher himself acknowledged in an introduction to Volume 2, *The Prophet Unarmed* (1959), the main work in discrediting the Stalinist account of the history of communism, which had seemed impregnably established when *The Prophet Armed* appeared in 1954, was done by Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev, when, in 1956, he denounced Stalin as a paranoid mass murderer.

Yet, the "mountain of dead dogs" piled by Stalin on Trotsky and on Trotsky's memory was not the only misrepresentation under which the dead Trotsky lay. Deutscher himself, following after the post-Trotsky "orthodox Trotskyists", James P Cannon, Joseph Hansen, and others, buried the dead Trotsky under another mound of misrepresentations, less gross than Stalin's but perhaps, for that reason, much longer-lasting. It is largely still in place.

Deutscher "constructed" a falsified picture of Trotsky, that might be called "Trotsky for the Sputnik Age". It was a "Trotsky" for the time when the seeming achievement and the prestige of Russian "socialism" ran high, when its ability to compete with and outlast world capitalism was a widely uncontested "fact" of international life. The time was summed up in the launching of the first man-made satellite into space, the Sputnik, which went up on 1957, on the 40th anniversary of the October revolution.

This "Trotsky" was an undeviating Russian patriot, an unqualified defender of Russia and of the idea that it remained a workers' state, on the road to socialism.

It was not the Trotsky that will be found in the writings of the last three and a half years of his life. That Trotsky considered the Stalinist state terminally unviable, and certain to be replaced soon either by a new working-class revolution, or by the restoration of capitalism.

The real Trotsky had shifted ground enormously in September 1939, when he had for the first time accepted that the USSR, as it was at the time, might have to be reconceptualised as some new form of exploitative class society. His sole argument against making that revaluation in September 1939 was that it was "too soon". It would be wrong to make the revaluation, with all its implications for the Marxist theory of historical development, "on the eve" of the decisive test of world war. In that test, he thought, Stalinism would inevitably go under, before either a bourgeois onslaught or a new working-class revolution.

Deutscher and others, in the late 1940s and after, argued that figures like Mao and Tito, who had led Stalinist revolutions, were the legatees not of Stalin but of Trotsky, because Trotsky in the 1920s had argued for world revolution against Stalin's "socialism in one country". But Trotsky, a few days before he died in August 1940, had finished a long article, *The Comintern and the GPU*, in which he defined the leaders of the world's Communist Parties as aspirants to become in their countries what the Stalinist autocracy was in the USSR.

Much of the politics attributed to Trotsky in the third volume (covering the years 1929-40) was not Trotsky's, but Deutscher's, and that of Trotsky's political enemies, the international current of "right communism" named after one of its leaders, Heinrich Brandler.

Deutscher had been a Trotskyist from 1932 to 1940. Given to myth-making about himself as well as about Trotsky, Deutscher put it into circulation that he had broken with Trotsky in 1938 because he disagreed with the decision to declare the small Trotskyist current to be the Fourth International.

He did disagree on that, but he remained active — journalistically active, anyway — in the Trotskyist movement (in Britain) until the fall of France in May 1940, when he disappeared from the Trotskyist press (*Workers' Fight*).

Deutscher then swung over to support for the anti-Nazi side in the World War, and to increasingly uncritical support for Russia. He functioned in the bourgeois press (*The Economist*, *The Observer*) as an apologist for the Russian regime, more sophisticated than the outright Stalinists. He even (in *Tribune*) played the role of apologist for the Katyn massacre.

He swung over to a version of the politics of the Brandlerites, who, while being critical, "liberal", Stalinists, rejected the Trotskyists' commitment to a new working-class revolution ("political revolution") in the USSR. In 1949 Deutscher published a famous biography of Stalin. It drew very heavily on Trotsky's work, but made an essentially positive appreciation of Stalin and Stalinism.

Deutscher became the apostle of the idea that the Stalinist bureaucracy would reform itself out of existence; that the bureaucracy would dissolve painlessly as the USSR developed its industry and its prosperity. He supported the "reforming" bureaucrats under Khrushchev. He backed the USSR against the risings of the East German workers in 1953 and of the Hungarians in 1956, both of which were repressed in the old Stalinist manner.

He published a number of slim volumes on current politics which were characterised by gawping naivety towards the claims and expectations of the Russian leaders. A series of lectures delivered just before Deutscher died (in 1967) struck a sharper note that, had he lived, Deutscher might have developed.

What Deutscher did in his third volume on Trotsky — and it had to be done consciously and deliberately — was "split" the real Trotsky and his real opinion on the USSR into two. He attributed most of Trotsky's radical criticism of Stalinism, and much of Trotsky's speculation about Stalinism as a new form of class society, to the strange Italian writer Bruno Rizzi, and by doing so severely trimmed back Trotsky so that he tallied more with Deutscher's later views.

Most of Trotsky's writings of the last three and a half years, in which the evidence for what I say here is to be found, were out of print for thirty years, available only in specialist libraries and in Trotsky's own archives, sources to which Deutscher had ready access but most of his readers none.

Deutscher died suddenly at the age of 60, in November 1967, as a vastly popular and influential figure on much of the left, and savant-in-residence, so to speak, at the *New Left Review*. His main political role had been to blur and efface the distinction between working-class socialism and Stalinism — a malign role.

Yet Deutscher's death impoverished the left in at least one important respect — on its attitude to Israel. Deutscher, who was of Jewish background, was an anti-Zionist — one of those Jewish socialists who had, in Poland and elsewhere, fought the Zionists and their project of migrating European Jews to Palestine.

But he was not, as such as Tony Cliff were, an unteachable political sectarian on this question. He looked with sympathy on the movement in international Jewry which, in response to Nazi and other anti-semitism, created Israel after World War Two. A valuable collection of his writings on this question, *The Non-Jewish Jew*, was published after his death.

In the aftermath of the June 1967 war, in which Israel defeated the Arab armies and occupied the West Bank, Gaza, and Sinai, Deutscher was interviewed in *New Left Review*. Rightly denouncing Israel, he nevertheless gave signs that to me at least suggest that if he had lived, he would have worked against the development of the "absolute anti-Zionism" and demonisation of Israel that would engulf the left in the decades after his death.

Sixty-eight years after the death of Leon Trotsky, we print Max Shachtman's assessment of Deutscher's first volume.

Sean Matgamna

Deutscher and others argued that figures like Mao and Tito, who had led Stalinist revolutions, were the legatees not of Stalin but of Trotsky

Can socialism be built through tyranny?

By Max Shachtman

A biography of Leon Trotsky written by an author who understands that his life was nothing more than his political ideas and political activities, is of necessity a political document. The fact that this biography is written by Isaac Deutscher gives it more than ordinary importance. He brings to his work the extensive knowledge of his subject acquired through active participation in the revolutionary movements with which Trotsky was so prominently associated and through earnest research into materials not easily available to others. He knows he is writing about a man of heroic gifts and attainments, of such stature that it seems society must rest up for generations before being able to produce his like again.

Deutscher has performed a precious service, in general to all those who are interested in historical truth and accuracy and in particular to those who are interested in the revolutionary movement. Although this book is actually only the first part of the biography he planned to write it covers the period from Trotsky's birth in 1879 to about the mid-period of his life, in 1921, leaving the remainder of his life to be dealt with in a second volume called *The Prophet Unarmed*, it already supersedes, in respect to documentation on the life of Trotsky, everything else that has been published, not so much in particular as on the whole.

A political writer does not have to speak in the first person to reveal his views; they appear even when he speaks in the second and third. Deutscher does not announce his conceptions in his own name, as it were, but they are announced nevertheless. It would appear from his writings, then, that he still regards himself as an opponent of capitalism, a supporter of socialism and not of the more conservative school but of the more radical, and, on the whole, a Marxist. But it is precisely in this last respect that the results are nothing less than a disaster.

After you rub your eyes with your knuckles to make sure you have read what you have read, you ask the question: what was this man doing all those years in the communist and Trotskyist movements (above all in the Polish movement which always had so high and serious a regard for Marxism), that allows him to end up with theories that are at once superficial, preposterous and downright reactionary, even though they are put forward in the name of socialism? To try to answer would lead us too close to aspects of life which are not our field. It will have to do if we say that by the side of exceptional talent in the exhaustive work of bringing together the facts and documents, of honourable contempt for the small-minded carper and the forger, the picayune adversary and the "tomb-robber," of writing skill which is most unusual in a second language, Deutscher discloses a paucity and shallowness in the theoretical domain which is startling by comparison. And it has invariably been a grave weakness in this domain that has proved to be the obstacle to reaching an understanding of Stalinism and worse than an obstacle.

Take, as one example, the disagreement between Lenin and Trotsky during the First World War on the question of "revolutionary defeatism." Deutscher disposes of the matter in a paragraph. It is not a matter of terseness that is involved, although the writer devotes far more space to matters of far smaller importance and greater transparency. It is, however, a matter of the very great theoretical importance of Lenin's position during the war and of its political implications and consequences, at the very least from the standpoint of the historian, not to say the enlightener of readers. To Deutscher, "actually, the difference [between Lenin and Trotsky] was one of propagandist emphasis, not of policy.... Each attitude had, from the viewpoint of those who held it, its advantages and disadvantages." This is pious enough, especially from one who proclaims himself "free from loyalties to any cult," but it does not even scratch the surface below which lie rich ores for the theoretical or historical assayer.

What makes matters worse, is that he does not anywhere pursue the subject to its obvious conclusion, namely: what relation did Lenin's conception or slogan of "revolutionary defeatism" and Trotsky's conception that "the revolution is not interested in any further accumulation of defeats," have to the actual defeats at the end of the war, if not in general then at least in Russia? What relation did they have to the actual revolutions at the end of the war, at least to the Russian revolutions in March and November?

Worthwhile if limited generalisations can be drawn from such an examination. To conclude the subject, as Deutscher does, by saying that "In 1917 these two shades of opposition to war merged without controversy or friction in the policy of the Bolshevik party," is simply to state a truth that has no great relevance to the controversy in question. After all, Deutscher might have used the same phrase with regard to the pre-1917 dispute over the "permanent revolution," but nobody has yet argued that the dispute on this question between Lenin and Trotsky represented "two shades" of opinion.

The other example is precisely the dispute over Trotsky's theory of the "permanent revolution" and Lenin's formula of the "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." The theory which is Trotsky's distinctive contribution to Marxism and to the course of the Bolshevik revolution itself, which is, so to speak, the head and heart of his entire political life, is given surprisingly cursory treatment here. The reader gets a fifth-carbon copy of Trotsky himself, uninspiringly presented, which is a matter of taste, but also uncritically presented, which is something else again.

Why did Lenin combat Trotsky's theory so persistently, not to say violently? Why did he cling so long and so doggedly to his own formula? Were the differences serious, or primarily the product of a misunderstanding on Lenin's part, or of his failure to read Trotsky's elaborated version of the theory — a possibility suggested by Trotsky at one time and repeated by Deutscher? Deutscher gives his view of Lenin's position and summarizes the dispute in these words: "Lenin's formula of a 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' seemed broader and more cautious than Trotsky's 'proletarian dictatorship,' and better suited for an association of socialists and agrarian revolutionists. In 1917 events in Russia were to confirm Trotsky's prognostication."

To reduce the dispute to these terms is an all but incredible feat. We are here altogether uninterested in the monstrous inventions and falsifications concocted by the Stalinists. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the dispute hinged on two radically and irreconcilably different views about the character of the Russian revolution and the nature and prospects of socialism in Russia least of all on whether Trotsky would "prejudge [the] potentialities" of the peasantry and Lenin "would not," and not at all on whether one view was "broader and more cautious" and the other narrower and more reckless. It is hard to believe that an ex-socialist like Bertram Wolfe (in his *Three Men Who Made a Revolution*) presents a far more comprehensive and well-documented picture of the conflict as seen by the two protagonists (regardless of Wolfe's own arbitrary conclusions from the conflict) and even grasps it better than Deutscher does.

As for the second statement — about the confirmation of Trotsky's views in 1917 — that is good enough for an article or a popular pamphlet, or it is good enough "on the whole." As an unqualified assertion in a critical biography of Trotsky it is inadequate. A critical evaluation or re-evaluation of Trotsky's conception of the permanent revolution, without detracting an inch from its remarkable theoretical power and insight into the actuality of future developments, would nevertheless add some observations as to exactly where the "1917 events in Russia" did not confirm Trotsky's prognostications. It would become clear exactly how important, indeed, vitally important from the standpoint of the concrete political struggle during a decisive period in the development of the revolution, this error in the theory would have turned out to be, if Trotsky had not been so free from dogmatism. Trotsky himself has provided the clue to the error and it would not require too great an effort to make it plain, specific and instructive for the political problems of today.

Isaac Deutscher

Here again, Deutscher is either indifferent to theoretical questions or incapable of finding his way among them, even when the political consequences that clearly follow from them are of immense and active importance. It may as well be added that, on the basis of the theories he propounds about Stalinism, the latter is more likely the case. It is a pity. Where he should have his greatest strength, there lies his most glaring weakness. The weakness, we shall see, is not less than fatal. At the least, it is fatal to the entire conception of socialism as a revolutionary movement and as a social objective that was set down in the name of science by Marx and Engels, and supported for a hundred years thereafter by all those who professed their views to any substantial degree.

Deutscher does not set forth his own conception about the development of the Russian revolution and its relationship to the socialist goal in any forthright way or as any sort of systematic theory. One might say that he is under no obligation to the reader to do so, that he is satisfied to let the reader draw his own conclusions from objectively presented facts of history. Whatever may be said about such an assertion — and we regard it as absurd — the fact nevertheless remains that in one way or another, Deutscher does draw conclusions of his own along the lines of his own theoretical and political views. If one is to express an opinion about these conclusions and views, it is necessary first of all to do what Deutscher fails to do, that is, to bring them together from the various parts of his work in which they are loosely scattered and give them the maximum cohesiveness that they allow for, to make them succinct and explicit to the greatest extent that this is made possible by the diffuse, ambiguous innuendoism and the even irresponsible way in which they are often stated.

BOLSHEVISM AND STALIN

To Deutscher, the Russia of Lenin and Trotsky, the Russia of the Bolshevik revolution, is organically continued in the Russia of Stalin (and his recent successors). Although generally sympathetic to Trotsky's point of view and full of praise for his theory of the permanent revolution in particular, he points out that there was indeed one aspect of the theory that was a "miscalculation."

Not for a moment did Trotsky imagine, however, that the Russian Revolution could survive in isolation for decades. It may therefore be said as Stalin was to say twenty years later, that he "underrated" the internal resources and vitality of revolutionary Russia. This miscalculation, obvious in retrospect, is less surprising when one considers that the view expressed by Trotsky in 1906 was to become the common property of all Bolshevik leaders, including Stalin, in the years between 1917 and 1924. Hindsight, naturally, dwells on this particular error so much that the error overshadows the forecast as a whole. True enough, Trotsky did not foresee that Soviet Russia would survive in isolation for decades. But who, apart from him, foresaw, in 1906, the existence of Soviet Russia?

The important thing in this passage is not that the author is more severe toward the critics of Trotsky's "miscalculation" than toward Trotsky himself, but that he holds that "Soviet" Russia is still in existence despite its long isolation and the triumph of the Stalinist regime in the country. What there is about the regime that warrants calling it a "Soviet" regime today, when there is not a microscopic trace left of Soviet power or even of a Soviet institution, is nowhere discussed or even so much as mentioned by Deutscher. That is evidently the least of his preoccupations.

That Stalinism represents the organic continuation and maintenance of the Bolshevik revolution as it inherited it, or took it over, from the regime of Lenin and Trotsky, is indicated by Deutscher in a dozen different ways as a fact which he considers established. That is not because he is oblivious to the differences or denies them.

The Bolshevik Revolution was the great revolution of democracy and socialism in Russia, and so also was the regime it established in 1917. Since that time, great changes have taken place. The world revolution did not come, yet "Soviet" Russia survived in isolation for decades. *"A man like Trotsky could not imagine that the revolution would seek to escape from its isolation and weakness into totalitarianism."* It is this totalitarianism that Stalinism represents. The masses of the people are held in cruel and ruthless subjection by tyrannical rule. That is true, and Deutscher will not blink at the fact. But it is nevertheless also true, in his eyes, that this rule represents the continuation and even the extension of the same revolution.

The whole theme of his book, as was the whole theme of his earlier biography of Stalin, is, first, that the change from the Lenin/Trotsky regime to the Stalin regime was an inescapable necessity for this revolution in particular. Second, that the change was inevitable not only for this revolution but so it always has been and presumably always will be for every popular revolution in general. And third, that the outstanding and apparently distinctive characteristics of the regime established by the change are not only to be found in the regime that preceded it, and are not only the products of an organic outgrowth from it, but were originally directly but inconsistently prompted by Lenin and Trotsky. Their program is being simply if brutally carried out by their successors.

This theme is more blatantly asserted in the present friendly biography of Trotsky than in the previous unfriendly biography of Stalin. It is not a new one. Up to now, it has been almost exclusively the property of all the opponents of Stalinism who are opponents of the Bolshevik revolution as well, on the one hand; and on the other hand of all the upholders of Stalinism who profess their support of the Bolshevik revolution. It is worthy of special attention again because it is now presented by a supporter of the Bolshevik revolution, in fact by a not entirely reformed former Trotskyist, who is not a Stalinist, and worthier yet because of the arguments Deutscher musters.

STALINISM "NECESSARY"?

Why was the evolution of Stalinist totalitarianism necessary for the revolution?

Because, in the first place, the working class itself could not be relied upon to maintain and develop the socialist revolution. Proletarian democracy may be established in the early days of a socialist revolution, when the fumes of naive illusions befuddle the thoughts of the idealistic utopians who lead it. But if the revolution is to survive, proletarian democracy must be dispensed with, and the Utopians who believe in it, and their place taken by the realistic despot who will rule against the will of the proletarians but for their own good. Deutscher refuses to entertain any vulgar socialist illusions about the working class, the Russian working class in particular, and most particularly in the period of 1917 onward. He calls attention extensively and with a special sort of relish to the fact that the "grotesque sequel to the October insurrection, a sequel to which historians rarely give attention, was a prodigious, truly elemental orgy of mass drunkenness with which the freed underdog celebrated his victory." The reader is left to "draw his own conclusions," as it were, from the highly detailed picture of the saturnalia drawn by Deutscher.

The reader who, out of obtuseness or out of a knowledge of what the "freed underdog" of the Russian revolution was in his all-sided reality, does not draw the right conclusions, is given them directly by Deutscher in his picture of the same underdog three years later. The country, in 1920, was in a severe crisis; and so was the Bolshevik party that led it. In describing its inner debates on the crisis, Deutscher describes the then Workers' Opposition, whose views on workers' democracy he says, and rightly, were later taken up substantially by the Trotskyist Opposition, as follows:

They were the first Bolshevik dissenters to protest against the method of government designed "to make the people believe by force" [the quoted words are from a passage in Machiavelli which is the motto of Deutscher's book-S.] *They implored the party to "trust its fate" to the working class which had raised it to power. They spoke the language which the whole party had spoken in 1917. They were the real Levellers of this revolution, its high-minded, Utopian dreamers. The party could not listen to them if it was not prepared to commit noble yet unpardonable suicide it could not trust its own and the republic's fate to a working class whittled down, exhausted, and demoralised by civil war, famine, and the black market.*

In the second place, there was only one working-class party that could be relied upon to maintain the revolution, and only one, the Bolsheviks. The working class had to be deprived of its right to political existence because it could not be trusted to defend socialism. All other parties, past or future, therefore also had to be deprived of their right to political existence because they could not be trusted to take power in the interests of socialism.

If the Bolsheviks had now [in 1920] permitted free elections to the Soviets, they would almost certainly have been swept from power. The Bolsheviks were firmly resolved not to let things come to that pass. It would be wrong to maintain that they clung to power for its sake. The party as a whole was still animated by that revolutionary idealism of which it had given such abundant proof in its underground struggle and in the civil war. It clung to power because it identified the fate of the republic with its own fate and saw in itself the only force capable of safeguarding the revolution. It was lucky for the revolution — and it was also its misfortune — that in this belief the Bolsheviks were profoundly justified. The revolution would hardly have survived without a party as fanatically devoted to it as the Bolsheviks were.

Rather than grant the right to legal existence only to parties that promise solemnly not to try to win a majority — or if despite their best efforts they win such a majority, promise even more solemnly not to exercise it — it was better to make it a principle of the socialist revolution in Russia that only the Bolshevik party had the right to exist. As a matter of fact, it is in the nature of revolutions to wipe out all parties but one — the one that wipes out all the others in the name and interests of the revolution.

The revolution cannot deal a blow at the party most hostile and dangerous to it without forcing not only that party but its immediate neighbour to answer with a counterblow. The revolution therefore treats its enemy's immediate neighbour as its enemy. When it hits this secondary enemy, the latter's neighbour, too, is aroused and drawn into the struggle. The process goes on like a chain reaction until the party of the revolution arouses against itself and suppresses all the parties which until recently crowded the political scene.

Which is why the advance to socialism required the suppression not only of the working class but also of all parties, including all past and future working-class parties, except one. And even this one had to be, in the nature of things, also suppressed in the end.

And because, in the third place, inside of that one and only party that could be relied upon to save socialism, there was only one point of view that could *really* be relied upon. For once you have two views, you have a contest; and once you have a contest, you may have a split and there are your two or more parties again. And Deutscher knows where that would lead:

Almost at once it became necessary to suppress opposition in Bolshevik ranks as well [as outside these ranks]. The Workers' Opposition (and all) to a point the Democratic Centralists too expressed much of the frustration and discontent which had led to the Kronstadt rising. The cleavages tended to become fixed; and the contending groups were inclined to behave like so many parties within the party. It would have been preposterous to establish the rule of a single party and then to allow that party to split into fragments. If Bolshevism were to break up into two or more hostile movements, as the old Social Democratic party had done, would not one of them — it was asked — become the vehicle of counterrevolution? ...

Barely two years were to elapse before Trotsky was to take up and give a powerful resonance to many of the criticisms and demands made by the less articulate leaders of the Workers Opposition and of the Democratic Centralists, whom he now helped to defeat, and before he, too, was to cry out for a return to proletarian democracy.

The one that could *really* be relied upon was, then, certainly not the point of view or the group represented by Trotsky. For, with all his high-minded idealism and selflessness, what else could he represent when he took up the struggle against the bureaucracy in 1923 except the criticisms and demands of the old Workers' Opposition and the D.C.ists to which he gave a powerful resonance?

And what else could they represent except "the Levellers of this revolution," its "Utopian dreamers"? What else could the party do, speaking through Stalin this time, but refuse to "listen to them if it was not prepared to commit noble yet unpardonable suicide"? Being Utopians, the Workers' Opposition and the Democratic Centralists, like the Trotskyists after them, wanted the party to "trust its own and the republic's fate to a working class whittled down, exhausted and demoralised by civil war, famine, and the black market."

Under the circumstances, then, it follows with brass-stitched logic that the attempt of these inner-party oppositions to restore proletarian democracy in the country, accompanied inevitably by the risk of creating another party, could only promote the ends of counterrevolution and kill (by suicide if not homicide) the prospects of socialism in Russia. Correspondingly, the work of the Stalinists to establish and consolidate a regime which ruled "regardless of the will of the working class," of the will of all other political parties and the will of all other factions of their own party — in fact by crushing and suppressing all of them — was necessary to prevent the counter-revolution and to produce socialism in Russia and elsewhere.

That is how it happened that the revolution which began with the naively Utopian idea of Bolshevism that the road to socialism lies through the fullest achievement of democracy, found it necessary to learn the hard lesson that the road to practical and successful socialism lies through the fullest achievement of totalitarian tyranny.

Thus Deutscher. And he is not at the finish line, he has only just started.

Anyone who imagines that Deutscher is concerned here only with explaining the transformation necessary for a revolution that occurred in a backward country under exceptional circumstances from which a socialist revolution in more favoured countries would be exempted, is luring himself to disappointment. To Deutscher, the evolution to Stalinist totalitarianism was the inevitable outcome of the Bolshevik revolution, in the same way that an equivalent tyranny has always been and must presumably always be the inevitable outcome of any popular revolution. The idea that the masses of the people can ever directly manage and control their destiny is as erroneous as the assumption that such control is essential for human progress in general or socialism especially. How does he reach this not entirely novel conclusion?

Readers of Deutscher's biography of Stalin will recall the theory — "the broad scheme" — by which he explains not only "the metamorphosis of triumphant Bolshevism" into Stalinism but, much more generally, the basic processes which have "been common to all great revo*lutions so far." In the first phase of all these revolutions, "the party that gives the fullest expression to the popular moods outdoes its rivals, gains the confidence of the masses, and rises to power."* Civil war follows.

The revolutionary party is still marching in step with the majority of the nation. It is acutely conscious of its unity with the people and of a profound harmony between its own objectives and the people's wishes and desires. It can call upon the mass of the nation for ever-growing efforts and sacrifices; and it is sure of the response. In this, the heroic phase, the revolutionary party is in a very real sense democratic....

This phase lasts little longer than the civil war. By then the revolutionary party, though victorious, faces a country and a people that are exhausted. A reaction sets in among the people.

The anti-climax of the revolution is there. The leaders are unable to keep their early promises. They have destroyed the old order; but they are unable to satisfy the daily needs of the people. To be sure, the revolution has created the basis for a higher organisation of society and for progress in a not very remote future. This will justify it in the eyes of posterity. But the fruits of revolution ripen slowly; and of immediate moment are the miseries of the first post-revolutionary year. It is in their shadow that the new state takes on its shape, a shape that reveals the chasm between the revolutionary party and the people. This is the real tragedy which overtakes the party of the revolution.

If it obeys the mass of the petulant and unreasoning people, it must relinquish power. But, "abdication would be suicide." In order to safeguard the achievements of the revolution, it must disregard the voice of the people in whose interests the revolution is made.

The party of the revolution knows no retreat. It has been driven to its present pass largely through obeying the will of that same people by which it is now deserted. It will go on doing what it considers to be its duty, without paying much heed to the voice of the people. In the end it will muzzle and stifle that voice. (Deutscher, *Stalin*.)

That was in his Stalin book, and that it was not a momentary aberration is shown in his Trotsky biography, is here this theory is not only expanded upon and underscored, but becomes the heart and soul of his work. *The Prophet Armed* — the title of the book comes from a famous passage in Machiavelli's *The Prince*, where he is discussing the difficulties facing "the innovators" who seek to place an old order with a new. Can they rely on themselves or trust to others, asks Machiavelli?

... that is to say, whether, to consummate their enterprise, have they to use prayers or can they use force? In the first instance they always succeed badly, and never compass anything; but when they can rely on themselves and use force, then they are rarely endangered. Hence it is that all armed prophets have conquered, and the unarmed ones have been destroyed. Besides the reasons mentioned, the nature of the people is variable, and whilst it is easy to persuade them, it is difficult to fix them in that persuasion. And thus it is necessary to take such measures that, when they believe no longer, it may be possible to make them believe by force.

By 1920, says Deutscher, the Bolsheviks were faced with the choice which every revolutionary party in power faces, in its essence, at one time or another: Let the masses speak, and they will remove you from power and destroy the revolution; stifle the masses, and "it would deprive itself of historic legitimacy, even in its own eyes."

The revolution had now reached that cross-roads, well known to Machiavelli, at which it found it difficult or impossible to fix the people in their revolutionary persuasion and was driven *"to take such measures that, when they believed no longer, it might be possible to make them believe by force."* (*The Prophet Armed*.)

To vouchsafe democracy to the masses may have meant the removal of the Bolsheviks from power, and as we have seen above, Deutscher does not believe they had the right to give up power. That would have encouraged the White Guards to resort to arms; and the Bolsheviks *"could not accept it as a requirement of democracy that they should, by retreating, plunge the country into a new series of civil wars just after one series had been concluded"*.

But there is a deeper reason, in Deutscher's mind, why

Forced labour

the crushing of the proletariat was inevitable — and by that, it should now be clear, Deutscher means desirable from the standpoint of preserving the revolution. That reason, too, lies in the very nature of the revolution — not the Russian alone, but all revolutions. Every "great revolution" has its Utopian extremists who do not understand that the revolution cannot really satisfy the unreasonable demands of the masses it inspired, of the masses who assured its triumph, of the very masses who were told that the revolution will satisfy their demands. With the best intentions in the world, these Utopians — Levellers in Cromwell's England, Hebertists in Robespierre's France, and in Bolshevik Russia the Workers' Opposition, the Democratic Centralists and then the Trotskyist Opposition can only imperil the revolution, its conquests and its future. *They are among those who cry in alarm that the revolution has been betrayed, for in their eyes government by the people is the very essence of the revolution. Without it there can be no government for the people. The rulers find justification for themselves in the conviction that whatever they do will ultimately serve the interests of the broad mass of the nation; and indeed they do, on the whole, use their power to consolidate most of the economic and social conquests of the revolution. Amid charges and countercharges, the heads of the revolutionary leaders begin to roll and the power of the post-revolutionary state towers over the society it governs.* (*Stalin*.)

It is not necessary for us to emphasise that Deutscher applies this conception — the new tyranny against the people nevertheless does, "on the whole," use its power to strengthen the conquests of the revolution — to the revolution that established capitalism and to the revolution that is to establish (and according to him, has already established in Russia) socialism. The analogies between the industrial revolutions that consolidated the social revolutions in both cases, he finds "are as numerous as they are striking." He summarises the "primitive accumulation of capital" that marked the bourgeois revolution in England as "the first violent process by which one social class accumulated in its hands the means of production, while other classes were being deprived of their land and means of livelihood and reduced to the status of wage earners." A similar process took place under Stalin in the Thirties.

Marx sums up his picture of the English industrial revolution by saying that "capital comes [into the world] dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt." Thus also comes into the world — socialism in one country.

In spite of its "blood and dirt," the English industrial revolution Marx did not dispute this marked a tremendous progress in the history of mankind. It opened a new and not unhopeful epoch of civilization. Stalin's industrial revolution can claim the same merit. (*Stalin*.)

That a new despotism is the inevitable product of every revolution, after its first stage, should not generate unperforated gloom. For if the masses cannot be trusted to continue the revolution they began or, in any case, made possible, they may console themselves with the thought that the despots are tyrannising over them for their own good. Even if against their will, and by cruelties which drip blood and dirt from every pore, the achievements of their revolution are being protected in the only way that is practical-by suppressing them. A new and not unhopeful epoch lies ahead. It is a relief to know it.

The final proof of this not wholly discouraging theory lies, in Deutscher's revelation, in the concrete circumstances from which it is contemporaneously deduced. They show the organic link between Lenin and Trotsky and their regime, and Stalin and his regime. There is no rupture between the two but a relentless continuity. Deutscher claims to have

. . . traced the thread of unconscious historic continuity which led from Lenin's hesitant and shamefaced essays in revolution by conquest to the revolutions contrived by Stalin the conqueror. A similar subtle thread connects Trotsky's domestic policy of these years with the later practices of his antagonist. Both Trotsky and Lenin appear, each in a different field, as Stalin's unwitting inspirers and prompters. Both were driven by circumstances beyond their control and by their own illusions to assume certain attitudes in which circumstances and their own scruples did not allow them to persevere — attitudes which were ahead of their time, out of tune with the current Bolshevik mentality, and discordant with the main theme of their own lives. (*The Prophet Armed*.)

The world revolution, the extension of the revolution westward which was to save Russia from the disintegration to which its isolated position, according to the Bolsheviks, surely doomed it — was it one of their illusions?

REVOLUTIONARY "ILLUSION"?

Precisely, says the now disintoxicated Trotskyist. If Lenin and Trotsky "had taken a soberer view of the international revolution" they might have *"foreseen that in the course of decades their example would not be imitated in any other country… History produced* [sic] *the great illusion and planted and cultivated it in the brains of the most soberly realistic leaders…"* (Ibid., p. 293.) *"What was wrong in their expectations was not merely the calendar of revolutionary events but the fundamental assumption that European capitalism was at the end of its tether. They grossly underrated its staying power, its adaptability, and the hold it had on the loyalty of the working class."* As for the organisation of the Communist International, which was to organize, stimulate and lead the world revolution, it was an illusion and a mistake "fathered by wish, mothered by confusion, and assisted by accident."

Yet, a veritable horror of isolation reigned among the Bolsheviks, Trotsky more than any of them. Since world revolution proved to be an illusion, year after year, the Bolsheviks were driven — *"true . . . in the heat of war, under abundant provocation, without grasping all the implications of its own decision"* — to break out of isolation by embarking for the first time, in violation of their hallowed principles, upon the course of revolution by conquest. The first time was in the 1920 war with Poland. *"If the Red Army had seized Warsaw, it would have proceeded to act as the chief agent of social upheaval, as a substitute, as it were, for the Polish working class."* It is true that Trotsky and Stalin were against making the attempt to pursue the defeated forces of Pilsudski that were retreating back to Poland. But Lenin was for it. The attempt failed.

Lenin [then] grew aware of the incongruity of his role. He admitted his error. He spoke out against carrying the revolution abroad on the point of bayonets. He joined hands with Trotsky in striving for peace. The great revolutionary prevailed in him over the revolutionary gambler.

However, the "error" was neither fortuitous nor inconsequential.

Because it was not fortuitous, it reasserted itself. If Lenin did not persevere in the course of revolution by conquest (the "revolution from above" in contrast to the revolution of the masses which was an illusion), it was, among other reasons, because of his "scruples," that is, his revolutionary socialist principles, ideals and traditions. The difference in Stalin's case is simply that he was not burdened with such scruples and inhibitions. With the failure of this first attempt, Lenin's, at revolution by conquest, the revolutionary cycle, which the First World War had set in motion was coming to a close. At the beginning of that cycle Bolshevism had risen on the crest of a genuine revolution; toward its end Bolshevism began to spread revolution by conquest. A long interval, lasting nearly a quarter of a century, separates this cycle of revolution from the next, which the Second World War set in motion. During the interval Bolshevism did not expand. When the next cycle opened, it started where the first had ended, with revolution by conquest.... In 1945-6 and partly even in 1939-40 Stalin began where he, and in a sense he and Lenin had left off in 1920-1.

The victory of socialism in Poland as the product of the proletarian revolution — "a genuine revolution" — was an illusion. The victory of socialism in Poland as the product of invasion, occupation and subjugation by the armed forces of a totalitarian despotism, that is not an illusion. It is simply Stalin's uninhibited continuation of Lenin's course. It is a comfort to hear this.

As in foreign policy, so in domestic policy. In 1920, with the revolution at that crossroads, so familiar to Machiavelli and now even better understood by Deutscher, *"Trotsky ... stumbled ... he initiated courses of action which he and the Bolshevik party could carry through only against the resistance of the social classes which had made or supported the revolution."* His proposals for loosening the bonds of War Communism, an anticipation of the New Economic Policy soon to be advocated by Lenin, having been rejected by the party leadership, Trotsky proposed in its stead to carry the policies of War Communism to the bitter end, as it were. He "advanced the idea of complete state control over the working class."

The reference is to Trotsky's proposals during the so-called trade-union dispute in 1920 for the "militarisation of labour" and the "incorporation" of the unions into the state machine. The divorce between dictatorship and proletarian democracy, which Stalin carried to its inevitable conclusion, was clearly obvious. But Lenin refused to proclaim the divorce. For although he, too, *"was aware that government and party were in conflict with the people… he was afraid that Trotsky's policy would perpetuate the conflict."* And even Trotsky was his own antidote to the program he proposed.

Accustomed to sway people by force of argument and appeal to reason he went on appealing to reason in a most unreasonable cause. He publicly advocated government by coercion.... He hoped to persuade people that they needed no government by persuasion. He told them that the workers' state had the right to use forced labor. . . . He submitted his policies to public control. He himself did everything in his power to provoke the resistance that frustrated him. To keep politically alive he needed broad daylight.

Trotsky did not direct the transformation of the revolution into a despotism not only because circumstances then prevented it but because it was not in his character to do it. But a different one was available, luckily for socialism. *"It took Stalin's bat-like character to carry his [Trotsky's] ideas into execution."* Neither Trotsky nor Stalin, each for his own reasons, would admit this. But it was true.

There was hardly a single plank in Trotsky's program of 1920-1 which Stalin did not use during the industrial revolution of the Thirties. He introduced conscription and direction of labor, he insisted that the trade unions should adopt a "productionist" policy instead of defending the consumer interests of the workers; he deprived the trade unions of their last vestige of autonomy and transformed them into tools of the state. He set himself up as the protector of the managerial groups, on whom he bestowed privileges of which Trotsky had not even dreamed. He ordered "socialist emulation" in the factories and mines; and he did so in words unceremoniously and literally taken from Trotsky. He put into effect his own ruthless version of that "Soviet Taylorism" which Trotsky had advocated. And finally, he passed from Trotsky's intellectual and historical arguments ambiguously justifying forced labour to its mass application.

Therein lay and still lies Trotsky's victory in spite of all, the victory of which he himself was one of the outstanding victims. That is what Deutscher means by titling the last chapter in the present work *"Defeat in Victory ... .. All armed prophets have conquered, and the unarmed ones have been destroyed."* Trotsky could not, in the crucial hour, arm himself against the people so as to make them believe by force after persuasion had failed to sustain their beliefs. Stalin could. He became the true prophet armed.

The revolution itself had made that necessary, for such is its nature; it made it inevitable; it prepared for it willy-nilly. Fortunately, the new prophet armed proved, again, to be one of those rulers who, "on the whole, use their power to consolidate most of the economic and social conquests of the revolution." The result has been the victory of socialism in Russia, and not only in Russia but wherever else-and that reaches far across two continents by now-the armed prophet has extended the revolution by conquest. In the crude environment in which the revolution was obliged to entrench itself for so long, it could only produce a "brand of socialism," as Deutscher puts it.

The brand of socialism which it then produced could not but show the mark of its historic heritage. That socialism, too, was to rise rough and crude, without the vaulting arches and spires and lacework of which socialists had dreamed. Hemmed in by superi-

or hostile forces it soon delivered itself up to the new Leviathan state-rising as if from the ashes of the old. (P. 521.)

As every good American knows, you can't get something for nothing. For the blessings of Stalin's "brand of socialism," which lacks such gewgaws as arches, spires and lacework, hundreds of millions are paying with the Leviathan-state. If, to realize these blessings, the totalitarian regime was indispensable, it is not entirely to Stalin's discredit that he knew or felt which was the right way and took it absolutely. And Trotsky, the gifted revolutionary Utopian? *"It was another of history's ironies that Trotsky, the hater of the Leviathan, should become the first harbinger of its resurrection."*

This is as good as an epitaph, even if it is written before the second volume of the biography has appeared. But only in a manner of speaking. It is not merely a matter of Deutscher having written a libel of Trotsky, and not of Trotsky alone. In his biography of Stalin he already showed how far he has travelled from Marxism. His biography of Trotsky shows he has not retraced a step but gone farther away and to ever stranger fields. Deutscher has put a cross over himself. It is his own epitaph as a revolutionist and a socialist that he has written.

If justice were half as prevalent as prejudice, Deutscher's book would be acclaimed far more widely than it is likely to be. Even those who did not find cheer in its main theories would find quiet solace in it, from one standpoint or the other. The revolutionary socialists — the Utopians — are presently in such a small minority that they do not count; besides he abandoned them to their own devices years ago. But the others, those who make up the big majorities and the big minorities, for them the book should be a box of bonbons.

The Stalinists — if not the official Stalinists then the sophisticated Stalinist, the openly cynical Stalinist, the Stalinoid by design and the Stalinoid by gullibility — might ask for better, but not expect it. What else has he been saying in justification of his whole regime, his whole course, his whole political philosophy — not of course on the platform before the vulgar mob but in the less exposed intimacy of the enlightened? There it is safer to explain the simple truth that the donkey is a donkey, and should be grateful that the driver is determined to lash him toward the new and not unhopeful pasture where he may some day roam unsaddled, unleashed and with an abundance to nibble on.

The professional Mensheviks of both schools have equal delights in store for them, equal parts of confirmation for each bias. The one school, all the way down to and including Shub, who feed their detestation of the Bolshevik revolution on its Stalinist outcome, can feel vindicated by this avowal from a hostile camp that there could be no other outcome — they never said otherwise. The other school, represented by the late Th. Dan, who justified their late-in-life capitulation to Stalinism, can feel, at least secretly vindicated by the thought that the Bolshevik revolution which they opposed was indeed led by irresponsible utopians. Leftist Labourite demagogues and ignoramuses, to whom Marxian theory was always a redundant nuisance we can well do without in Britain, and social-democratic or radical "neutralists" in France, should feel easier about their conciliatory inclinations toward the slave state when it is brought home to them so clearly that, unlike the capitalist states where the workers are oppressed and exploited in the name of capitalism, they are oppressed and exploited in Russia in the name of a brand of socialism which has opened a not unhopeful epoch of civilization.

The classical bourgeois opponents of socialism, ranging all the way from the academicians of the von Mises and Hayek type to plain blatherskites like Kerensky, owe lavish thanks to Deutscher for such a rich replenishment of their thinning arsenal of arguments, dating back to Spencer, that all efforts at freedom based on collectivism cannot but lead to the Servile State, the new tyranny, and that the high minded socialist idealist is at best a Utopian moreover one who, it turns out, is more dangerous to socialism than to capitalism itself.

The new snobocracy, the neo-pseudo-proto-Machiavellians, has a rich morsel here over which to quiver with delight ever so fastidiously, for ever since they had the theory explained to them third hand by second rate dabblers in Machiavelli, and Mosca, Michels and Pareto, they have understood how preposterous is the Marxian myth that the working class and it alone has the historic mission of emancipating itself and therewith all of humanity.

The tired and retired radical of yesterday, and his name is indeed legion, can find here some justification for the clod-of-earth existence to which he has degraded himself, as can his blood-kin, the ex-radical cynic and sceptic now turned pusher and climber up the ladder of bourgeois respectability-financial, social, literary, academic or all together. For what else have they been saying for some time now except that the struggle for socialism can lead only to totalitarianism and that the working class, as the socialist self emancipator, has failed atrociously to live up to the confidence which they vested in it for so many months and in some cases for as long as a year?

Whether this motley public does justice to Deutscher's book or not, we have our own responsibility to discharge. It obliges us to say:

If Deutscher's theory is valid, it is not as an explanation for the "brand of socialism," as he calls it. It is the end of socialism. And so, in one sense, it is. It is the end of socialism for an entire generation. That generation is finished and clone for so far as the fight for human dignity is concerned. It started well, even magnificently. It has ended, except for a handful of individuals, in a state of utter demoralization, helpless and hopeless victim of Stalinism and all other forms of reaction associated with it in one way or the other.

Deutscher is an example of that generation, and one of the sorrier ones. His conscious, rational life he devoted to the fight for proletarian socialism, the only socialism there is or ever will be. In the accursed years of worldwide reaction and despair we are living through, he has abandoned that fight to become the vehicle of a theory which is a mockery of Marxism, a grotesque libel against socialism, unscientific through and through and reactionary from top to bottom. It is an unabashed apology for Stalinism in the name of socialism. It could take shape only in a mind that has come apart under the steady blows of reaction instead of understanding and resisting it. If I did not know from my disheartening discussions with Deutscher, here and in England, that he has lost all belief in the socialist capacities of the working class, and that he refuses to follow the logic of his view by becoming an out-and out Stalinist only because he considers himself a "civilized" person, his writings would anyhow make it plain enough. His writings are a capitulation to the Stalinist reaction; at best, if the best is insisted on, they represent his resignation to Stalinism, and in the round the difference is not worth quibbling over.

If the generation of yesterday is finished, we are as confident that a new generation is entering the scene to pick up the socialist banner again as one did after the dark and critical years opened up by the first world war. Its mind must be as clear as can be of all the accumulated rubbish in which the old generation has been choked and blinded and worn to death. Deutscher's theory is part of that rubbish. If for no other reason than that, we shall try to clear it away.

BOURGEOIS AND PROLETARIAN

At the basis of Deutscher's apology for Stalinism — an apology which we have stigmatized as the end of socialism — lies an utterly fantastic miscomprehension of the difference between the bourgeois revolution which assured the triumph of capitalism and the proletarian revolution which is to assure the triumph of socialism.

Deutscher only gives open and crass expression and besprinkles with Marxian jargon those ideas which have poisoned the thinking of tens and hundreds of thousands, and even more, and disposed them to passionate partisanship for Stalinist reaction, at the worst, or to cynical capitulation to it, or to terrified resignation to it, or at best, to piteous hopes for its self-reformation.

One of the most important keys to the understanding of capitalist society is this: in order to rule socially, the bourgeoisie does not have to rule politically. To this should be added: in order to maintain its rule socially, the bourgeoisie is often unwilling and most often unable to rule politically. And to go back, as it were, to the beginning, this should be added too: the bourgeois revolution which has the aim of establishing the social power of the bourgeoisie does not at all have to aim at establishing the political power of the bourgeoisie; indeed, it establishes the bourgeoisie as the social power in the land even when it is carried out without the bourgeoisie or against the bourgeoisie or by depriving the bourgeoisie of political power in the land. And covering all these conceptions is this: no matter who the leaders and spokesmen of the bourgeois revolutions were, or what they thought, or what they aimed for, the only possible result of their victory was the establishment of a new, if more advanced, form of class rule, class exploitation and class oppression by a minority over the majority.

These insights, thoroughly acquired, automatically give the Marxist an understanding of bourgeois society, from its inception to its close, that is far superior to anything that any bourgeois scholar or statesman, no matter how liberal, can possibly attain. While the bourgeois flutters and fumbles, the Marxist already has the key to such apparently disparate phenomena, as for example, the New Deal and Fascism.

Deutscher nowhere shows that he possesses this key. If he ever had it, everything he has written on the subject of Stalinism shows that he has thrown it away. There is no doubt about it, for it is precisely in the five above quintessential respects in which the bourgeois revolution differs from the proletarian revolution, that Deutscher makes the two analogous. The disastrous result could have been anticipated and so it was, for the differences between the two are not only fundamental but irreconcilable.

At its inception, as it was emerging from the economic era and developing the economy, the interests and the class character that distinguish it, the young bourgeoisie needed only one thing to guarantee its rule over society: to remove the fetters with which feudalism restricted the expansion -- no matter how or by whom or for what immediate reason -- the dominance of self-expanding capital was assured and with it the class dominance of its owners. The political power, the state, under whose sway these barriers were eliminated, might be constituted out of bourgeois, non-bourgeois, anti-bourgeois. But, once the traditional barriers of feudalism were thrust aside, capital rapidly and spontaneously took command of the economy as a whole, incessantly revolutionizing and transforming it, inexorably sweep -- and doing all this with or without the conscious efforts or support of the state power.

To be sure, where the state power was exercised in close harmony with the new, developing economic power, there the capitalization of the economy proceeded more rapidly and smoothly. But what is important here is the fact that even where the state power sought in one way or another to impede the capitalization, that process continued nevertheless, more slowly, either by bending the state power to its needs or by replacing it by one better adapted to them.

The modern world went through an epoch of change from feudal to bourgeois society because under the conditions of the time there was no way of releasing the productive forces with which society was pregnant, of expanding them to an undreamed of extent, than the capitalist way. For this reason, both feudalism and communism were doomed in that epoch, even where their representatives held or had the chance to hold political power. The one was doomed because it was obsolete and the other because it was premature; the one was doomed because the productive forces were already so far developed that they could develop no further under feudalism and the other because the productive forces were not yet sufficiently developed to permit the establishment of communism.

There lies the basic reason why, no matter who held the political power during this long epoch, the capitalist economy, the capitalist mode of production and exchange, was strengthened, expanded and consolidated. This made the capitalist class the "economically dominant" class in society, that is, established its social rule regardless of the form assumed by the state. In turn, again regardless of the form assumed by the state, the fact that it maintained the dominance of capitalist property and therewith the capitalist mode of production, made it willy-nilly a capitalist state.

Or, to put it in other words: the social power, the class power, the state power of the capitalist class is determined and assured by its economic power, that is, its ownership of capital, of the capitalist means of production and exchange. Without this economic power, the bourgeoisie is nothing, no matter what else it has on its side, even if it is the direct aid of God's vicar on earth is nothing and less than nothing. With it, the bourgeoisie is the ruler of society, no matter what else is against it.

That is still a very general way of indicating the relationship between the political and economic power in the bourgeois state. As soon, however, as the relationship is examined as it developed concretely, a much more revealing light is thrown upon it and we can move much more surely to the heart of the present-day problem. The sum of the concrete experiences from which our generalizations are derived shows that the earlier the bourgeois revolution was carried through -- the more thoroughgoing it was, the more revolutionary was the bourgeoisie, the more directly did it lead the revolution against the old order, the more freely did it arouse the revolutionary and democratic spirit of the people as a whole.

By the same token, the later the bourgeois revolution was carried through the more stultified and distorted were its results, the more conservative and even reactionary was the bourgeoisie, the more prudently did it shun the role of leader of the revolution, the more eagerly did it seek guidance and protection from despotism and dynasties, and the more antagonistic was its attitude toward the mobilization and activity of the populace as a whole. This can be set down as a law of the development of the bourgeois revolution. It flows from the nature of bourgeois society, not as an abstraction, but as it naturally unfolds.

Call the bourgeois revolution progressive or not, necessary or not (Marxists of course regard it as progressive and necessary), its objective aim is incontestable: the establishment of a new social order in which a new class is brought to power in order to rule over, exploit and oppress the majority of the people. The new social order, no matter what else is said about it, cannot be conceived of without the class rule, class exploitation and class oppression which are the very conditions of its existence.

At the beginning of the revolution and the constitution of the new order, its prophets, its idealists, its inspired supporters among the toilers, may well have been moved by other considerations. But even if no one sought to deceive them, they could only deceive themselves. If they looked for that revolution to bring equality and freedom for all, they were mistaken in advance and for certain. Freedom and equality in the bourgeois revolution mean, fundamentally, the free market and equal right of all commodities to exchange at their value; and at best, all political and human freedoms that do not destroy the freedom needed by the owners of capital to exploit the proletariat. More than that could not be granted by the leaders of the

bourgeois revolution and the upholders of the new order regardless of who they were, what they thought, what they wanted, or what they did.

But this is a situation which only reflects one of the basic contradictions not only of the bourgeois revolution but of bourgeois society as a whole. It is a contradiction rooted not in the conflict between easily tired masses and untiring revolutionists, utopians and realists, but in the conflict between irreconcilable classes. The early bourgeois revolutions did indeed bring forth Utopian leaders and movements. Deutscher, with a faint trace of affectionate condescension, speaks of them as the "high-minded, Utopian dreamers" of the revolution. Among them he includes the Levellers of the English Revolution, the extreme communistic left in the time of the French Revolution, and the Democratic Centralists and Trotskyists in the Bolshevik Revolution. To some of them, not to quibble about words and decorum among "Marxists," the term Utopian does apply. But it applies solely and exclusively for reasons inseparably connected with the class character of the bourgeois revolution.

To the primitive proletariat (or pre-proletariat) of that revolution, there corresponded a primitive communist or pre-communist movement. Such movements appeared in Cromwell's day, in Robespierre's day, in the days of the German peasant wars, to mention only a few. The struggle against absolutism and feudalism was to be crowned, in their conception, by a more or less communistic equality for all. What was it that fatally doomed these movements and the struggles they conducted, noble and idealistic in purpose though they were, as Utopian? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but the fact that while the development of the productive forces, among the most important of which is the proletariat itself, had reached the level which made possible and necessary the class rule of the bourgeoisie (and the subjugation of the proletariat implied by it), that level was not yet high enough to make possible the rule of the proletariat and the inauguration of a free and equalitarian society of abundance.

It is exceedingly interesting to note what Engels says about this social phenomenon, trebly interesting in connection with Deutscher because firstly, he quotes from Engels in a deplorably chopped-down version; secondly, it does not seem to occur to him that the application of Engels' thought to the subject he is treating would destroy his whole construction, root and branch; and, thirdly, because everything which Engels wrote to lead up to the section quoted might, so far as Deutscher is concerned, have been written in untranslated Aramaic. The whole of his *Peasant War in Germany* is devoted by Engels to this problem as it manifested itself in 16th-century Germany, and his forewords are as if written to illuminate the present debate. In writing about the plebeian revolutionary government over which the peasant leader, Thomas Muenzer, presided in Thuringia in 1525, Engels deals with a dilemma facing a revolutionary leader who comes before his time, as it were.

The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class which he represents and for the realisation of the measures which that domination would imply ... he necessarily finds himself in a dilemma. All he can do is in contrast to all his previous actions, to all his principles and to the present interests of his party; what he ought to do cannot be achieved.... Whoever puts himself in this awkward position is irrevocably lost.

QUOTING ENGELS

That is how far Deutscher quotes Engels. Toward what end? To emphasize the suggestion that even Lenin may have been thinking (in 1918) that the Bolshevik Revolution was premature, "a false spring," thus reminding Marxist ears that "Marx and Engels had repeatedly written about the tragic fate which overtakes revolutionaries who "come before their time" as exemplified by Engels' commentary on Muenzer. And toward what "broader" end? To support "Marxistically" his view that Stalin only carried on in a despotic way the proletarian revolution which Lenin (and Trotsky), because of their dilemma, could not carry out in that way or in a democratic way which would correspond to "all his principles and to the present interests of his party." But that is not at all the sense of Engels' view, and as soon as we supply the words which Deutscher supplanted with three periods between the last two sentences he quotes, the reader will be able to judge what Engels was talking about:

In a word, he [the leader of the extreme party who takes power prematurely] *is compelled to represent not his party or his class, but the class for whom conditions are ripe for domination. In the interests of the movement itself, he is compelled to defend the interests of an alien class, and to feed his own class with phrases and promises, with the assertion that the interests of that alien class are their own interests. Whoever puts himself in this awkward position is irrevocably lost.*

And further:

Muenzer's position at the head of the "eternal council" of of Muehlhausen was indeed much more precarious than that of any modern revolutionary regent. Not only the movement of his time, but the whole century, was not ripe for the realization of the ideas for which he himself had only begun to grope. The class which he represented not only was not developed enough and incapable of subduing and transforming the whole of society, but it was just beginning to come into existence. The social transformation that he pictured in his fantasy was so little grounded in the then existing economic conditions that the latter were a preparation for a social system diametrically opposed to that of which he dreamt. (*The Peasant War in Germany*)

Post-Trotsky Trotskyism — in parts there was capitulation to Stalinism

We cite Engels at some length not because a quotation from Engels automatically settles all problems, and not even because the best way to know what Engels said is to read what he said. We cite the quotation because it underscores the contrast and the gulf between the supra-historical mystique with which Deutscher invests all revolutions without exception, and the concrete manner in which a Marxist analysed the class conflicts in every revolution and the specific economic conditions underlying them. From the way in which Engels deals with the problem, we get an entirely different conception of what exactly is the "tragic fate" of the Levellers, Babouvists and other Utopian revolutionary movements.

The Utopians of the early days were Utopians only because objective conditions were not ripe for the victory of their class or for the social order that they dreamed of, but only for the victory of a new-exploiting class. They were Utopians only because even if they somehow gained political power for a while all they could do with it was "to defend the interests of an alien class, and to feed his own class with phrases and promises, with the assertion that the interests of that alien class are their own interests." They could only help establish the social rule of a new exploiting class.

Engels' commentary on Muenzer is no more isolated or accidental in the works of the two great Marxists, than is the use of that commentary by Deutscher. The same thought voiced by Engels is supplemented and rounded out in the familiar comment made by Marx in 1848 about the social problem faced by the Jacobins in the Great French Revolution more than two centuries after Muenzer.

In both revolutions [the English revolution of 1648 and the French of 1789] *the bourgeoisie was the class that really stood at the head of the movement. The proletariat and the fractions of the citizenry that did not belong to the bourgeoisie either had no interests separate from those of the bourgeoisie or else they did not yet constitute independently-developed classes or class segments. Hence, when they clashed with the bourgeoisie, as for example from 1793 to 1794 in France, they fought only for the carrying out of the interests of the bourgeoisie, even if not in the interests of the bourgeoisie. The whole of French terrorism was nothing but a plebeian way of finishing off the foes of the bourgeoisie, absolutism, feudalism and philistinism*. (*Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von K. Marx and F. Engels, Vol. III.*)

With the true significance of the Utopians, be they primitive communistic or jacobinistic movements, now indicated by Marx and Engels, the true significance — historical, social, class significance — of the brilliant Florentine's "prophet armed" becomes evident. The fact that the Levellers of all kinds and the Jacobins of all kinds came "before their time," does not suffice to have them leave the political scene with an apologetic bow. The social reality that follows the revolution only strengthens their determination to carry through the revolution to the ends they dreamed of originally, and in the interests of the broadest masses of the toiling people. The trouble is that the social reality of the bourgeois revolution is and cannot but be the class rule of the bourgeoisie. The more apparent that becomes, the more pronounced is the tendency of the masses to "believe no longer."

What is this tendency, after all? Nothing but the first important manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms between bourgeoisie and proletariat, which proves to be a permanent characteristic of bourgeois society till its last gasp, which is indeed the motive force determining the course of this society to the end. And inasmuch as the bourgeoisie must strive for the maximum degree of stability and order in which to carry out and maintain its social functions, this disorganizing tendency which appears with its ascension to power (and even before) must be kept in restraint.

It is then, and only for that reason, that the "prophet" must be at hand. He is absolutely indispensable to the class rule of the bourgeoisie because "it is necessary to take such measures that, when they [the exploited classes] believe no longer, it may be possible to make them believe by force." No wonder Marx thought so highly of Machiavelli, that unmoralising, realistic, arch-intelligent thinker of the new order and the modern state.

The "armed prophet" turned out to be the only thing he could be, what he had to be: the armed power, the police and prisons, required to preserve the oppression and exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. The "armed prophet" is nothing but the armed bourgeois state. Everything is as it should be, for the bourgeois order cannot exist without class exploitation, and that cannot be maintained without the armed prophet who makes them believe by force.

But is that how it should be, or how it has to be, or how it may be, in a socialist society, or in a social order which can be legitimately regarded as a "brand of socialism"? That has become the life-or-death question for the socialist movement. Deutscher's answer is equal to pronouncing the death sentence upon it.

Deutscher is overwhelmingly fascinated — you might also say obsessed — by undiscriminating, uncritical and unthought out analogies between the bourgeois revolutions (the French in particular; but never the American, it is interesting to note) and the Bolshevik revolution. He explains the outcome of the latter only in terms of the evolution of the former. But if his comparisons are to make any sense, they must be tied together into some sort of systematic thought (if this is not too outrageous a demand to make in our times, when the intellectual disorder and frivolity are the peevish but popular form of rebellion against any kind of disciplined and systematized thinking). In which case we will for sure get the following seven tightly-linked points:

1. The Trotskyist Opposition, in fighting for workers' democracy, that is, for the rule of the workers, disclosed its Utopian character.

2. What the Opposition wanted was not only the program of the Democratic Centralists before them, but basically the program for which and with which the Bolsheviks in general won the Revolution of 1917.

3. The Bolshevik revolution itself, then, was Utopian.

4. That was so not only and not even because the socialist proletariat and the socialist revolutionaries came to power "before their time," but precisely because for the necessarily short time that they are in power, they are, like Thomas Muenzer, "compelled to represent not his party or his class, but the class for whom conditions are ripe for domination... compelled to defend the interests of an alien class."

5. The Lenins and Trotskys, under relentless objective pressures, could only prepare the ground for the direct and despotic rule of the alien class represented by the "prophet armed" who is needed to make the people believe by force — Stalin.

6. Under the aegis of the new but this time energetic and forward-driving revolutionary despot, the alien class in power nevertheless establishes a "brand of socialism," without the working class and against the working class inasmuch as "the revolution" cannot be entrusted to a class that "had proved itself incapable of exercising its own dictatorship."

7. The totalitarian dictatorship against the working class is nevertheless "promising," as capitalism once was, presumably because while the present "brand of socialism" in Russia (and China? and Poland? and East Germany?) established by a class alien to the proletariat (that is, exploiting and oppressing it), will be (or may be?) succeeded by another (less totalitarian?) "brand of socialism" carried out by a class which is not alien (or not so alien?) to the working class, which exploits and oppresses the working class not at all (or not so much?), or which is (perhaps?) carried out by the working class itself which can at last (for what reason?) be "entrusted" with the task of a socialist reconstruction of society (superior to the present "brand"?).

There is one difficulty, among many others, with this chain of monstrous and downright reactionary ideas which rattle around in Deutscher's mind. It is the difficulty facing every capitulator to Stalinism who is himself not an authentic Stalinist but who has lost all belief in the self-emancipating capacity of the proletariat: Not a single one

of them dares to present these ideas directly, candidly and simply to the proletarians themselves! How we should like to attend a working-class meeting at which any of the multitude of Deutschers of all varieties would say in plain language:

"The socialist revolution, which you will make in the name of democracy and freedom, cannot be allowed to submit to your fickle will ('the nature of the people is variable,' says Machiavelli). It is you who will first have to submit to the totalitarian rule of revolutionary despots. For theirs is the inescapable task of wiping out all the Utopians who were your idealistic but quixotic leaders and of making you believe by force that they are establishing a brand of socialism."

Yet — the question is put by people, especially those who have been influenced by analogies once drawn between bourgeois Bonapartism and what Trotsky so questionably called "Soviet Bonapartism" (and Deutscher is one of those who have been very badly influenced by the very bad analogy) — yet, is it not an historical fact that the ruling class can be brought to power by another, in the manner in which Bismarck of the German Junkers consolidated the power of the German capitalist class? And is it not a fact that the bourgeoisie has more than once been deprived of its political power and yet maintained its economic, its social power? By analogy, is that not substantially the same thing that has happened to the Russian proletariat under Stalinism?

The alloy in Trotsky's argument was already a base one; in Deutscher it is far worse because he mixes into it what was so alien to Trotsky —a wholesale capitulation to Stalinism, that is, a capitulation to Stalinism historically, theoretically and politically.

We have already indicated how and why the early plebeian and even communistic enemies of feudalism, who did indeed come before their time, could not, with the best will or leadership in the world, do anything but establish and consolidate the class rule of the bourgeoisie, even when for a brief period they took political power without or against the bourgeois elements. The very primitiveness, the very prematurity, the very Utopianism of these plebeian movements made it possible for a long time for the bourgeoisie to arouse them against feudalism and to be allied with them in the common struggle. What risk there was, was tiny. But the bourgeois social order is a revolutionary one. It constantly revolutionizes the economy; it creates and expands the modern class; it expands immensely the productive forces, above all the modern proletariat. And before the struggle with the old order is completely behind it, the bourgeoisie finds itself representing a new "old order" which is already threatened by an infant-turning-giant before its very eyes, the modern socialist proletariat.

Now comes a "new" phenomenon, the one already implicit in the futile struggle of yesterday's Utopians against yesterday's bourgeoisie. What is new is that the bourgeoisie dares less and less — to the point finally where it dares not at all — stir up the masses against the old privileged classes of feudalism. What is new is that the bourgeoisie fears to take power at the head of a mass movement which may acquire such impetus as will at an early next stage bring to power the new revolutionary force, the proletariat, as successor to the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie tends now to turn to the reactionaries of the old order as its ally against the young but menacing proletariat. Engels marks the dividing line between two epochs of the development of bourgeois society with the year 1848 — the year of a number of revolutionary proletarian uprisings throughout Europe:

And this proletariat, which had fought for the victory of the bourgeoisie everywhere, was now already raising demands, especially in France, that were incompatible with the existence of the whole bourgeois order; in Paris the point was reached of the first fierce struggle between the two classes on June 23, 1848; after a fortnight's battle the proletariat lay beaten. From that moment on, the mass of the bourgeoisie throughout Europe stepped over to the side of reaction, and allied itself with the very same absolutist bureaucrats, feudalists and priests whom it had just overturned with the help of the workers, in opposition to the enemies of society, precisely these workers. (*Reichsgruendung und Kommune.*)

It is out of this relationship between the classes that the phenomenon of Bismarckism (or Bonapartism) arose. The bourgeoisie, faced with a revolutionary opposition, needed a "prophet armed" to protect itself from this opposition and it found one:

There are only two decisive powers in politics [continues Engels]: *the organized state power, the army, and the unorganized, elemental power of the popular masses. The bourgeoisie had learned not to appeal to the masses back in 1848; it feared them even more than absolutism. The army, however, was in no wise at its disposal. But it was at the disposal of Bismarck.* (*Ibid.*)

In a letter to Marx (April 13, 1866), dealing with Bismarck's proposal for a "universal suffrage" law which was a part of the war preparations against Austria, Engels extends his analysis of Bismarckism beyond the field of German class relations and to the bourgeoisie in a more general way:

. . . after all Bonapartism is the true religion of the modern bourgeoisie. It is always becoming clearer to me that the bourgeoisie has not the stuff in it for ruling directly itself, and that therefore where there is no oligarchy, as there is here in England, to take over, in exchange for good pay, the management of state and society in the interests of the bourgeoisie, a Bonapartist semi-dictatorship is the normal form. It carries through the big material interests of the bourgeoisie, even if against the bourgeoisie, but it leaves it no share of the domination itself. On the other hand, this dictatorship is in turn compelled against its will to promote these material interests of the bourgeoisie. (Marx-Engels *Gesamtausgabe, III, 3.*)

And again, some ten years later, looking backward on the significance of the rise of Bismarck-Bonapartism, Engels pithily analyses its essential characteristics:

Even the liberal German philistine of 1848 found himself in 1849 suddenly, unexpectedly and against his own will faced by the question: Return to the old reaction in a more acute form or advance of the revolution to a republic, perhaps even to the one and indivisible republic with a socialistic background. He did not stop long to think and helped to create the Manteuffel reaction as the fruit of German liberalism. In just the same way the French bourgeois of 1851 found himself faced by a dilemma which lie had certainly never expected — namely: caricature of Empire, Praetorian rule, and France exploited by a gang of blackguards — or a social-democratic republic. And he prostrated himself before the gang of blackguards so that he might continue his exploitation of the workers under their protection. (*Selected Correspondence.*)

The whole of Bonapartism implies the existence of a revolutionary danger from below ("they believe no longer") with which the ruling class of exploiters cannot cope in normal ways, against which they must summon the more-or-less open dictatorship of a reliable armed force (again the "prophet armed"), to which they have to yield political power in order to preserve their social power. And whatever form it has taken, regardless of where and when, from the time of the first Bonaparte to the last Hitler, it was always a matter of the bourgeois being so terrified by the revolutionary spectre that he "prostrated himself before the gang of blackguards so that he might continue his exploitation of the workers under their protection."

Whether consciously or only half-consciously, in cold blood or in panic, the bourgeois was right from his class standpoint, and he showed that he grasped the problem a thousand times more firmly and clearly than Deutscher has with all his superficial and helplessly muddled analogies. The bourgeois knows that his social power — the dominant power that his class exercises over society and the relative power that he as an individual exercises in his class and through it upon all other classes — rests fundamentally upon his ownership of capital, of the means of production and exchange, and upon nothing else. It is not titles or privileges conferred upon him by monarchs or priests, and not armed retainers within his castle walls, but ownership of capital that is the source of his social might. Deprive the bourgeoisie of this ownership, and it becomes a nothing, no matter who or what the political power may be. But if the political regime is republican or monarchistic, democratic or autocratic, fascist or social-democratic, clerical or anti-clerical, so long as it maintains and protects the ownership of capital by the bourgeoisie and therewith the capitalist mode of production, then, regardless of what restraints it may place on one or another derivative power of the capitalist class, it is the political regime of capitalism and the state is a capitalist state.

Basically, it is the private ownership of capital that enables the bourgeoisie, in Marx's oft-repeated words, "to determine the conditions of production." From that point of view, Marxists have never had any difficulty in explaining the political difference between the monarcho-capitalist state and the republican-capitalist state, the autocratic or fascist-capitalist state and the democratic capitalist state, and at the same time the fundamental class or social identity of all of them.

NORM OF CAPITAL

Or, to put it otherwise: the "norm" of capitalist society is not democracy or even the direct political rule of the bourgeoisie. The norm of capitalism is the private ownership of capital. If that norm is abolished, you can call the resulting social order anything you want and you can call the ruling class anything you want — but not capitalist.

How is it with the working class, however? Its unique characteristic, which distinguishes it from all preceding classes, may be a "disadvantage" from the standpoint of the shopkeeper, but from the Marxian standpoint it is precisely what makes it the consistently revolutionary class and the historic bearer of the socialist future, is this: it is not and it cannot be a property-owning class. That is, its unalterable characteristic excludes it from any possibility of monopolizing the means of production, and thereby exploiting and "alienating" other classes.

In the period between the class rule of capital and the classless rule of socialism stands the class rule of the workers. And it is precisely in this period that the unique characteristic of the proletariat is either corroborated in a new way, or else we may be dead certain that its class rule has not yet been achieved or has already been destroyed. For once the power of the bourgeoisie has been overturned, and the private ownership of the means of production and exchange has been abolished (more or less), it is on the face of it impossible to determine who is now the ruling class by asking: "Who owns the means of production?"

The question itself is unanswerable. The revolution has Just abolished ownership of the means of production. The bourgeoisie has been expropriated (i.e., deprived of its property). But the proletariat does not now own it; by its very nature it cannot and it never will. Until it is communistically owned, really socially owned (which means, not owned at all, inasmuch as there are no classes and no state machine), it can exist only as nationalized property. More exactly: as state property. What is more, there is no longer a capitalist market to serve as the regulator of production. Production is now (increasingly) planned production; distribution is planned distribution. Anarchy of production and the automatism of the market must give way more and more to consciously planned production (and of course distribution). This is the task of the state which now owns the means of production and distribution.

As yet, it should be obvious, we know and can know nothing about the class nature of the state in question or the social relations which it maintains. And we cannot know that from the mere fact that property is now statified. The answer to our question can come only from a knowledge of who is master of the state, who has political power.

There is the point, precisely there! The bourgeoisie is such a class that if it retains ownership of the economy, the political regime protecting that ownership maintains, willy-nilly, the rule of capital over society. The proletariat, on the contrary, is such a class that if it retains mastery of the state which is now the repository of the economy, then and only then, in that way and only in that way, is it assured of its rule over society, and of its ability to transform it socialistically.

The bourgeoisie can turn over the political power, or allow the political power to be taken over completely, by a locum tenens, to use Deutscher's favourite term for "deputy," so long as the dictatorial deputy preserves the ownership of capital which is the fundamental basis for the power of the bourgeoisie over society in general and over the threatening proletariat in particular. But once the proletariat is deprived — and what's more, deprived completely — of all political power, down to the last trace of what it once had or has in most capitalist countries, what power is left in its hands? Economic power, perhaps? But the only way of exercising economic power in Russia (or China, Poland and Albania) is through the political power from which it has been so utterly excluded by the totalitarian bureaucracy.

We know how the bourgeoisie, be it under a democracy or an autocracy, is able to "determine the conditions of production" which in turn enable us to determine who is the ruling class in society. But under Stalinism, the workers have no political power (or even political rights) of any kind, and therefore no economic power of any kind, and therefore they do not "determine the conditions of production," and therefore are no more the ruling class than were the slaves of Greek antiquity.

The "true religion" of the bourgeoisie is Bonapartism because, as Engels wrote about Bismarck, he carries out the will of the bourgeoisie against its will. That, in two respects; in that it protects private property from the revolutionary class that imperils it; and in that it, maintains private property as the basis of society. To maintain it is all that is essential (not ideally desirable in the abstract, but absolutely essential) to carrying out the will of the bourgeoisie, for the "coercive power" of competition and the "blindly operating" market keep everything else running more or less automatically for bourgeois economy-running into the ground and out of it again, into the ground and out of it again, and so on.

But what sense is there to this proletarian, or Soviet or socialist Bonapartism? None and absolutely none. Against what revolutionary class that threatened its social power did the Russian proletariat have to yield political power to a Bonapartist gang? We know, not just from quotations out of Marx and Engels, but from rich and barbaric experiences in our own time, why and how the bourgeoisie has yielded political power in order to save its social power (which is, let us always bear in mind, its right to continue the exploitation of the proletariat). What "social power" was saved by (for) the Russian proletariat when it yielded political power to Stalinist "Bonapartism"?

"Social power" means the power of a class over society. Under Stalinism, the working class has no such power, not a jot or title of it, and in any case far less than it has in almost every capitalist country of the world. And it cannot have any social power until it has in its hands the political power.

Or is it perhaps the case that the Stalinist bureaucracy carries out the will of the proletariat against the will of the proletariat, that is, in the language of Deutscher, the Marxist-by-your-leave, tries "to establish socialism regardless of the will of the working class"? It turns you sad and sick to think that such a point, in the year 1954,

Forced labour meant coldness, semi-starvation, over-work

has to be discussed with a "Marxist," and such an urbane and ever-so-bloodlessly-objective Marxist at that. But we know our times, and know therefore that what Deutscher has the shamelessness to say with such above- the-common-herd candour is what has so long, poisoned the minds of we-don't-know-how-many cynics, parasites, exploiters, slaveholders and lawyers for slaveholders in and around the working-class movement. So it must after all be dealt with, but briefly.

Bourgeois Bonapartism (the only Bonapartism that ever existed or ever can exist) can carry out the will of the ruling bourgeoisie against its will, and do it without consultation of any kind. The political ambitions, even the personal ambitions, the imperialist ambitions of the Bonapartist regime coincide completely with the self-expansion of capital, as Marx liked to call it. Each sustains the other. In the course of it the will of the bourgeoisie, which is nothing more than the expansion of capital-the lifeblood of its existence and growth-is done.

Even where the Bonaparte represents, originally, another class, as Bismarck represented the Prussian Junkers, the economic interests of that class, as it is by that time developing in the conditions of expanding capitalist production, are increasingly reconciled with the capitalist mode of production and exchange. (The same fundamental process takes place as noted by Marx in the English revolution, when the bourgeoisie unites with the landowners who no longer represented feudal land but bourgeois landed property.) But where the state owns the property, the "socialist" Bonaparte who has established a political regime of totalitarian terror has completely deprived the so-called ruling class, the proletariat, of any means whereby its will can even be expressed, let alone asserted. Indeed, the totalitarian regime was established to suppress the will of the proletariat and to deprive it of all social power, political or economic.

If Deutscher is trying to say — as Trotsky so often and so wrongly said — that by "preserving state property" the Stalinist Bonapartes are, in their own way, preserving the class rule or defending the class interests of the proletariat, as the bourgeois Bonapartes did for the bourgeoisie in preserving private property, this comparison is not better but worse than the others. By defending private property, the Bonaparte-Bismarck-Hitlers made it possible for the bourgeoisie to exploit the working class more freely, a favour for which the bourgeoisie paid off the regime as richly as it deserved. But by defending and indeed vastly expanding state property in Russia, the Stalinist bureaucracy acquires a political and economic power to subject the working class to a far more intensive exploitation and oppression than it ever before suffered. If it protects the country from the "foreign bourgeoisie" (as every qualified exploiting class does), it is solely because it does not intend to yield all or even part of its exclusive right to the exploitation of the Russian people.

And finally, if Deutscher is trying to say that socialism has to be imposed upon the working class against its will, if need be, or even that socialism (a "brand of socialism") can be imposed upon the working class against its will, he is only emphasizing that he has drawn a cross over himself and over socialism too. You might as well try to make sense out of the statement that there are two brands of freedom, one in which you are free and the other in which you are imprisoned.

The proof of the pudding is before us. If a vast accumulation of factories were not merely a prerequisite for socialism (and that it is, certainly) but a "brand of socialism," then we had it under Hitler and we have it in the United States today. If the expansion of the productive forces were not merely a prerequisite for socialism (and that it is, without a doubt) but a "brand of socialism," then we have had socialism under Hirohito, Hitler, Roosevelt and Adenauer.

Under capitalism, the working class has been economically expropriated (it does not own the means with which it produces), but, generally, it is left some political rights and in some instances some political power. Under feudalism, the landed working classes were deprived of all political power and all political rights, but some of them at least retained the economic power that comes with the ownership or semi-ownership of little bits of land. It is only under conditions of ancient slavery and in more recent times of plantation slavery, that the slaves — the labouring class — were deprived of all economic power and all political power. Those who most closely resemble that ancient class are the working class under Stalinism. They are the modern slaves, deprived of any political power whatever and therefore of all economic power.

"BRAND OF SOCIALISM"

If this is the product of a "brand of socialism," necessitated because the working class did not will socialism (why should it?), then the whole of Marxism, which stands or falls with the conception of the revolutionary self-emancipation of the proletariat, has been an illusion, at best, and a criminal lie at worst. But even that would not be as great an illusion and a lie as the claim that Stalinism will yield its totalitarian power as the bureaucracy gradually comes to see that its benevolent despotism is no longer needed in the interests of social progress.

What Engels wrote to the German party leaders in September, 1879, in Marx's name and in his own, is worth recalling:

For almost forty years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving force of history, and in particular the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the great lever of the modern social revolution; it is therefore impossible for us to cooperate with people who wish to expunge this class struggle from the movement. When the International was formed we expressly formulated the battle-cry: the emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself. We cannot therefore cooperate with people who say that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must first be freed from above by philanthropic bourgeois and petty bourgeois.

That remains our view, except that to "philanthropic bourgeois and petty bourgeois," we must now add: or by totalitarian despots who promise freedom as the indefinite culmination of the worst exploitation and human degradation known, with the possible exception of Hitler's horrors, in modern times. That view Deutscher has discarded. On what ground he continues to proclaim himself a Marxist passes understanding.

There remains Deutscher's justification of Stalinist "socialism" in the name of Russia's backwardness, and the responsibilities for Stalinism which he has ascribed to Lenin and Trotsky. It is one of the favourite themes of the apologists, but it has the right to be dealt with.

Drive the apologists for Stalinism out of all their other trenches and they will take tenacious refuge in the last one. It is their deepest one and affords them the most obdurate hold on their defences. It is buttressed with solid learning direct from Marx, has historical breadth, roots in economics, and the sociological sweep that lifts it above the transient trivia of journalistic polemics. It is the trench, one might almost say, of the Old Crap "die ganze alte Scheisse," as it is written in the original Marx.

In brief: socialism (or the most eminently desirable brand of socialism) presupposes a most advanced stage of the development of the productive forces which alone can assure abundance for all and therewith freedom; but for forcibly-isolated and exceedingly poor Russia to be brought to such a stage required the crude, violent, at times unnecessarily expensive but basically unavoidable excesses (alte Scheisse) of the practical realists. The proof of the pudding lies in the statistics and who is so quixotic as to argue with statistics?

Under socialism
a) Production — enormous increase
b) Capitalists — enormous liquidation
c) Bureaucratism — enormous, but:
1. inevitable, or
2. necessary, or
3. exaggerated, or
4. declining, or
5. self-reforming.

Net, after all deductions: an understandably inferior brand of socialism, but socialism just the same.

On this score, as on so many others, Deutscher feels, like scores of contemporaries, that his demoralisation invests him with a special right or obligation to cruise freely, with accelerator lashed to the floor and steering gear disconnected, from imprecision to imprecision and muddle to muddle.

The conception was first elaborated by Trotsky, who while not himself an apologist for Stalinism but a most implacable critic, nevertheless provided the apologists with far more weapons than they deserved. In Trotsky, the idea was developed much more persuasively and roundedly than in Deutscher. Above all, the former was free of

those unpleasant observations which the latter weaves into all his writings in deference to the low-grade antisocialist prejudices of the intellectual philistine. In its thought-out form, it is to be found in the most probing and most instructive of Trotsky's studies on Stalinist Russia (and therefore the one which, re-read, most plainly shows the basic mistake in his analysis), *The Revolution Betrayed*, which he wrote in 1936. Early in the book he says:

Two years before the Communist Manifesto, young Marx wrote: "A development of the productive forces is the absolutely necessary practical premise [of Communism], because without it want is generalized, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old crap must revive". . . the citation, merely an abstract construction with Marx, an inference from the opposite, provides an indispensable theoretical key to the wholly concrete difficulties and sickness of the Soviet regime.

Employing this key, he comes to the conclusion that the "old crap" is represented by the transformation of the Soviet state into "a 'bourgeois' state, even though without a bourgeoisie" in so far as the Stalinist totalitarian regime "is compelled to defend inequality — that is, the material privileges of a minority — by methods of compulsion." That the bureaucracy should have established such a regime, he continues later, has its basis in

... the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all. When there is enough goods in a store, the purchasers can come whenever they want to. When there is little goods, the purchasers are compelled to stand in line. When the lines are very long, it is necessary to appoint a policeman to keep order.

But hasn't the totalitarian state become even harsher with the rise in production? Yes.

Soviet economy had to lift itself from its poverty to a somewhat higher level before fat deposits of privilege became possible. The present state of production is still far from guaranteeing all necessities to everybody. But it is already adequate to give significant privileges to a minority, and convert inequality into a whip for the spurring on of the majority.

In different terms, Deutscher draws, or seems to draw, similar conclusions:

... after its victory in the civil war, the revolution was beginning to escape from its weakness into totalitarianism....

Rich in world-embracing ideas and aspirations, the new republic was poor with the accumulated poverty of over a thousand years." It mortally hated that poverty. But that poverty was its own flesh and blood and breath....

For decades Bolshevism had to entrench itself in its native environments in order to transform it. The brand of socialism which it then produced could not but show the marks of its historic heritage. That socialism, too, was to rise rough and crude, without the vaulting arches and spires and lacework of which Socialists had dreamed. (*The Prophet Armed.*)

Let us try to convert these loose literary flutterings into more precise thoughts related to more precise realities in order to judge whether the "poverty of society in objects of consumption" (Trotsky) or the "accumulated poverty of over a thousand years" (Deutscher) produced Trotsky's "degenerated workers' state" or what is Deutscher's more extravagant synonym for the same thing, the "rough and crude . . . brand of socialism" — or it produced something as different from a workers' state and socialism as a prison is from a presentable home.

The part played by poverty in the transformation of the Bolshevik revolution is too well known to require elaboration here. Poverty which is induced by a low level of industrial development never has been and never will be the foundation on which to build the new social order. That was known in Russia in 1917, as well as before and after. Without exception or hesitation, every Bolshevik repeated the idea publicly a thousand times: *"For the establishment of socialism, we ourselves are too backward, poor and weak, and we can achieve it only in class collaboration with the coming proletarian powers of the more advanced western countries. Our strategical objective, therefore, requires laying primary stress upon the advance of the world revolution and, until its victory, working for the maximum socialist accumulation which is possible in a backward, isolated workers' state."* In these thoughts the science of Marxism was combined with the virtues of political honesty and forthrightness, sagacity and practicality.

The big difficulties manifested themselves, it is worth noting, in this: the more the victory of the world revolution was delayed (and contrary to Deutscher's hindsight, it was delayed primarily by the course and power of the newly-rising leadership of the revolutionary state), the more restricted became the possibilities of any socialist accumulation. It is not a matter of accumulation "in general," which is always possible, but socialist accumulation. That signifies a harmonious social expansion resulting from such cooperation in the productive process as requires less and less strain on the body, nerves and time of the labourer and less and less public coercion, on the one hand, and on the other, affords more abundance and the possibility for unhampered intellectual development to everybody, increasingly free from inherited class divisions and antagonisms of all kinds.

From 1918, when Lenin first outlined the masterful and brilliant conception that later got the name of NEP (New Economic Policy), through the NEP itself, through the struggle of the Trotskyist Opposition, through the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and down to the days of the "self-reforming" bureaucracy that has followed Stalin, all important questions, conflicts and developments that have appeared in Russia were related to or depended upon the problem of accumulation.

THE LEFT OPPOSITION

The fight of the Russian Opposition coincided with the end of the possibilities of a socialist accumulation in Russia given the continued repression (or undermining, or retardation) of the revolution in the West. It was therefore as significant as it was fitting that the Opposition intertwined its program for a socialist accumulation inside Russia with that stiff-necked fight against the theory of "socialism in one country" which was the obverse of its fight for the world revolution.

In this sense, the defeat of the Opposition put an end to the socialist accumulation in Russia as decisively as it put an end to the socialist power in the country. But it did not put an end to accumulation of any kind, any more than it eliminated political power of any kind. The defeat merely changed the form and content of both. It had to. No society with class divisions, and therefore class conflict, can hold together for a day without a political power, that is, a state power. And no society, least of all in modern times, can live without accumulation. There was accumulation in Russia under the Tsar, and accumulation of another kind under Lenin, and accumulation of still another kind under Stalin. The whole question revolves around the "kind." Trotsky noted that:

In its first period, the Soviet regime was undoubtedly far more equalitarian and less bureaucratic than now [that is, in 1936]. *But that was an equality of general poverty. The resources of the country were so scant that there was no opportunity to separate out from the masses of the population any broad privileged strata. At the same time the "equalizing" character of wages, destroying personal interestedness, became a brake upon the development of the productive forces. Soviet economy had to lift itself from its poverty to a somewhat higher level before fat deposits of privilege became possible.* (Op. cit.)

There isn't a line in all of Deutscher's analysis that even approaches this in the clarity with which it points to the answer of the "riddle" of Stalinism. Yet for all its compact clarity, it requires modification and some close study.

Let us start with the provocative statement that the "equalizing" character of wages "became a brake upon the development of the productive forces." The idea is absolutely correct, in our opinion. It remains correct if it is expressed in a broader and more general way, always remembering that we are speaking of an isolated, backward Russia: The political power of the workers, represented and symbolized, among other things, by the equalizing character of wages, became a brake upon the development of the productive forces. Does that mean that with a proletarian power the productive forces could no longer develop? The term "brake" must not be understood in so absolute a sense. It merely (and "merely" here is enough) meant that such a political power did not allow the productive forces to develop as fast and as strongly as required by the concrete social needs of the time. This formulation brings us a bit closer to the reality.

The fact is that with the introduction and expansion of the NEP, which, with Lenin, presupposed the unwavering maintenance and strengthening of the state power of the proletariat, there was a steady development of the productive forces all over the land, a rise in the socialist accumulation in particular, and a gradual rise out of the depths of the "accumulated poverty." But (still remembering the fatal absence of the world revolution) the general development of the productive forces soon disclosed its dual nature: the rise of the socialist forces of production and the rise of the private-capitalist sector of production, not only in agriculture but also in industry and commerce.

The character of the economic development as a whole was called into question with challenging sharpness. The whole literature of the time (1923-1930), as well as the whole of the factional conflict, hinged on the question: Russia-toward capitalism or toward socialism? To overcome the trend toward capitalisation of the economy, a trend with powerful roots in the retarded and petty-bourgeois character of Russian agriculture, required not only a vast but above all a rapid industrialisation of the country. When Lenin used to say, "Germany plus Russia equals socialism," he meant nothing less than that advanced Germany, controlled by a socialist proletariat, would make it possible for backward Russia so to industrialize itself as to assure a socialist development for both countries. But what could Russia do if forced to rely upon her own resources?

The proletariat in power could not produce an industrialisation of the country rapid enough to overcome the bourgeois tendencies surging up with such unexpected speed and strength from its primitive agriculture and it was not strong enough to assure a socialist development in both spheres of economic activity. To do that, it would have had to subject itself to such an intensity of exploitation as produced the surpluses that made the capitalist classes, in their heyday, the beneficiaries of all pelf and privilege and at the same time the superintendents of the miraculous economic achievements that have at last made it possible for man to rise from his knees.

The trouble, as it were, was this: others can exploit the working class, but it cannot exploit itself. So long as it has the political power, it will not exploit itself nor will it allow others to do so. That is why the workers' state, the workers' power, the workers' democracy established by the revolution turned out, in its enforced isolation, to be a brake on the development of the productive forces at a pace required by the relation of class forces in Russia in the Twenties. And that is why, again in its enforced isolation, the workers' power had to be destroyed to allow free play to the development of productive forces in Russia.

By whom? What force would take over the power in order to carry out this exploitation that was demanded for Russia's industrialisation under the extraordinary concrete conditions of the time?

Trotsky says that "the resources of the country were so scant that there was no opportunity to separate out from the masses of the population any broad privileged strata." But this is patently wrong. On the basis of the same or even less easily available or more poorly managed resources, Tsarist society had "separated out" and maintained such privileged strata in the form of the capitalist and feudal classes. It is not to the scant resources or to them alone that we need look for the answer. There simply was no bourgeoisie on hand to take over the organiza-

Carving out an infrastructure for the Stalinist system

tion and management of Russian society and the exploitation of its resources (the proletariat included) implied by its rule: there was none on hand and, as it turned out, none in sight capable of such a task.

The native bourgeoisie? In agriculture, it did not exist at all, except in the form of an incohesive rural petty bourgeoisie which needed an urban bourgeoisie to organize, lead and dominate it. In industry, it was confined to the periphery of production and the field of trade. If the comparatively potent bourgeoisie of pre-Bolshevik Russia never really raised itself to the position of ruling class, either before or after the Tsar was overturned, the ludicrous remnants of it, even if supplemented by the neo-bourgeois elements of the NEP period, could hardly hope to achieve the same position "except as tools or vassals of the world bourgeois".

The foreign bourgeoisie? Abstractly, yes. Concretely, no. Such was the unusual and unforeseen concatenation of social and political forces, that the world bourgeoisie completely failed to unite in a resolute assault upon the Bolshevik regime of 1917-1920, thus making its survival possible. It could only dream of another attack in the following years. And when it seemed on the brink of finding a practical, effective rallying centre for a renewed assault with the rise to power of Hitler (the "super-Wrangel" that never materialized), the conflicts and contradictions in its own midst were so acute, or else so easily exploited by the now Stalinized Russia, that more than half the world's bourgeoisie found itself in the deadly combat with Hitler that assured the survival, not the crushing, of the Stalinist state.

Society, like nature, abhors a vacuum. The more complex and modern the society the greater is its abhorrence- and more ingenious and variegated are its improvisations. Scant though Russia's resources were, they had enough magnetic power to attract from the nethermost regions of society a new coagulation that was to perform — one way or another — the social task awaiting it. In so doing it was to consolidate itself as a new, reactionary ruling class, which established and continues to maintain its domination over society by means of the most ruthless, most unashamed, most intensely organized, centralized, and consciously directed terror against the people it exploited that has ever been known in history — without exception.

It is true that it performed its task. It industrialised the country to a tremendous extent, unforeseen by itself, its friends or its foes. It accomplished, in its own unique way, the absolutely inevitable revolution in agriculture, subordinating it to industry, integrating it into industry, in a word, industrializing it (the work is not complete, but the trend is utterly irrepressible). But to achieve this goal in the only way that this social force can achieve it, it destroyed (as it was destined to do) the power of the working class, destroyed every achievement of the Bolshevik revolution, established the power of the most absolutist ruling class in the world, and reduced the entire population to the grade of slaves, modern slaves, not plantation slaves, but slaves, who are deprived of any and all public recourse against the most exploitive and oppressive regime known to our time, with the possible — and we stress the word — exception of Hitlerism.

That is how the "old crap" revived and that is what its revival has meant. To Trotsky, the "old crap," meant as an indictment of the bureaucracy and a rebuff to its apologists (it is no accident that his *Revolution Betrayed* has as its last chapter an attack on such "friends of the Soviet Union" as the Webbs and Durantys, of whom Deutscher is only a present version), nevertheless left the proletariat the ruling class of Russia. To Deutscher, the "old crap," meant as an apology for the bureaucracy, is a brand of socialism which lacks only vaulting arches, spires and lacework which were the dream stuff of socialism. Not, however, to Marx, let us note, if we go back to the original text in which Trotsky found his now familiar quotation.

Marx, in his violent attack upon the German "critical critics," is presenting his ideas on communism in systematic polemical form even though they are still taking shape for their climactic presentation two years later in the Manifesto. He is seeking to free communism from all trace of utopianism, of wishful-thinking, you might say, of abstract idealism. He wants to show the scientific foundation under its inevitable unfoldment as the last historic achievement of the self-emancipating proletariat, which "must first conquer political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest." But if this political power is to lead to effective communism, he points out again and again to "the premise-less Germans," it must be preceded or based upon material conditions prepared by the past, that is, by capital. Without such things as the development of machinery, extensive utilization of natural power, gas lighting, steam heating, water supply, and the like, *"the communal society would not in turn be a new force of production — devoid of a material basis, reposing upon a merely theoretical foundation, it would be a freak and end up only as a monastic economy."*

He goes further to emphasize his point. The "alienation" which is as characteristic of capitalism as of all class societies, can be abolished only if two practical premises obtain:

It must become a power so intolerable that the mass makes a revolution against it inasmuch as it faces them with the contradiction between their own propertylessness and the *"existing world of wealth and culture, both of which presuppose a great increase in productive power — a high degree of its development."* Such a development *"is an absolutely necessary practical premise also because without it only want is generalized, and with want the fight over necessities would likewise have to begin again and all the old crap would revive."*

It is a thought scattered and repeated through hundreds of pages of Marxian writings, especially against the Utopians and "pure-and-simple" anti-capitalists. The thought is as clear as day: the "old crap" is not a deformed workers' state or a crude brand of socialism. It is the revival of the old, even original and not very far advanced rule of capital, that is, of class domination, of class exploitation and oppression, of the struggle of each against all.

Is that precisely what happened in Russia? The abstract generalization as thought out by Marx was manifested in and applied concretely to a country with unique class relations at a given stage in its development as a unique part of a world capitalism at a specific stage in its development. The "old crap" of class rule revitalised not in its old capitalist form but in a new, anti-capitalist but nonetheless anti-socialist form.

From a reading of Deutscher's books and articles, there is not to be found so much as a hint that the question of the exploitive class character of the bureaucracy has been submitted to his critical scrutiny. Only by implication can the reader permit himself the inference that, if the question has been considered at all, the indicated conclusion has been dismissed without appeal. To Deutscher, the bureaucracy is the "locum tenens" of the socialist proletariat which is incapable of self-rule, just as Napoleon, Cromwell and Bismarck were the deputies of the capitalist bourgeoisie, each despot opening up progressive vistas' for the class he (or it) represented, consolidating the revolutionary gains and prospects of his (or its) class, and more of the same wisdom which is now familiar to us.

In the first place, the theory of the "old crap," in Deutscher's version, completely and shatteringly destroys his entire theory of the Russian revolution, which is as much as to say that it makes tabula rasa of four-fifths of what he has written on the subject. His "basic" explanation, i.e., apology, for Stalinism consist of a general theory of all revolutions. According to it, the Stalinist bureaucracy rose to take command of the Russian revolution for exactly the same reasons that the Cromwells, Napoleons and Bismarcks rose to take command of the bourgeois revolutions in England, France and Germany. It lies in the nature of all revolutions, it is a law of all revolutions.

But all that becomes patent rubbish the minute he advances the theory that negates it utterly, that is, that Stalinism rose in Russia because, unlike the West with its wealth, culture, traditions of respect for the human personality, etc., etc., she was "poor with the accumulated poverty of over a thousand years," so that the "brand of socialism" which "Bolshevism" then produced "could not but show the marks of its historic heritage."

One or the other! Both it cannot be.

Either Stalinism (or "revolutionary despotism") is the invariable result of all revolutions, at least for a long stage in their development, in which case the reference to Russia's poverty is irrelevant.

Or, Stalinism is the inevitable result of a particular revolution, of an attempt to establish socialism in a backward country which was materially unprepared for it. From this it follows that Stalinism would not result from a revolution in a country or countries which have the material and cultural prerequisites for socialism. In this case the whole theory of "the prophet armed" in all revolutions is pretentious nonsense, and worse than that reactionary nonsense (and even hilarious nonsense since its author cannot rightly say if the "prophet armed" is represented by the tragic hero of his work or by the man who murdered him).

That's in the first place. And normally that would be enough for one man and more than enough. But there is also a second place.

BUREAUCRACY: A CLASS?

Out of the clear blue, we learn that Deutscher has, in fact, been asking himself whether the bureaucracy is a new exploiting class or not. In his books up to now? No, for as we said, there is no trace of such an announcement in them. But in one of his recent articles, as translated from the French review, Esprit, in Dissent (Summer 1954, p. 229f.) we note his awareness that there is a point of view that holds the Stalinist bureaucracy to be a new ruling class.

The managerial and bureaucratic class, it is said, has a vested interest in maintaining the economic and social inequality of the Stalin era. It must therefore preserve the whole apparatus of coercion and terror which enforces that inequality.

This argument assumes that there exists:

a. a high degree of something like class solidarity in the Soviet bureaucratic and managerial groups; and

b. that the ruling group is guided in its policies by a strong awareness of, and concern for, the distinct class interest of the privileged groups. These assumptions may or may not be correct — in my view the evidence is still inconclusive. A weighty argument against them is that we have repeatedly seen the privileged and ruling minority of Soviet society deeply divided against itself and engaged in a ferocious struggle ending with the extermination of large sections of the bureaucracy. The victims of the mass purges of 1936-1938 came mainly from the party cadres, the managerial groups, and the military officers corps, and only in the last instance from the non-privileged masses. Whether these purges accelerated the social integration of the new privileged minority, or whether, on the contrary, they prevented that minority from forming itself into a solid social stratum is, I admit, still an open question to me.

The argument Deutscher invokes against the theory that the bureaucracy represents a class, is downright trivial. If applied to any number of the ruling classes that have existed throughout history, it would rule them out of that category instantly. But for a moment that is beside the point. What is positively incredible is to read that Deutscher has been writing all this time about the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia (and elsewhere) and about how it has established socialism in Russia, or some brand thereof, without having determined in his own mind if this bureaucracy is a new exploiting class or not.

In our time, we have made our fair share of mistakes about the famous "Russian question" and according to some not wholly friendly critics, we have even oversubscribed our quota in this field. But yet we can say, with tightly reined pride, that we do not have and do not want anything like this to our dubious credit.

To speak of Russia as a socialist society (and with such casualness) while the exploitive class character of those who established this "brand of socialism" is still "an open question to me" that requires a brand of Marxism that it has not been our misfortune to have encountered anywhere else to date.

Yet we realise that there is one hurdle that many Marxists find it impossible, or at least exceedingly difficult, to take: the class character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the class character of the society they have established and defended with such murderous ardour. It is by no means superficial, this reluctance, and by no means trivial, as are so many of the views that are expressed with amazing light mindedness in Deutscher's works. It is in harmony, this reluctance, with virtually a century of Marxian and historical tradition. Who else, in most of the past hundred years, but an abstractionist, a pedant, a constructionist, would have sought a field for contemporary political speculation outside the perspective of capitalism or socialism? Support of one automatically implied (except for a few incorrigible or romantic feudalists) opposition to the other and vice versa. "Down with capitalism!" was as plainly the battle cry of socialism as "Down with socialism!" was the battle cry of capitalism.

But with the advent of Stalinism, which is so unique that it continues to baffle and disorient tens of millions, and tens of thousands of the intellectual and political vanguard in particular, it becomes increasingly absurd, not to say criminal, to be imprisoned, in our analysis of it, by two dimensions, as it were: since it is so obviously not socialism, it must perforce be some sort of capitalism — or, since it is obviously not capitalism, it must of necessity be some brand of workers' or socialist regime. History allows only one or the other.

History is not an obsequious engine whose wheels are so set that it can only move forward along a route firmly prescribed by Marxism, without pauses, without ever running backward and without ever leaving the main rails to go off on a blind spur. Neither is it a precisely organized Cook's tour which meticulously sets a timetable for all nations and peoples to travel through primitive communism, then through chattel slavery, then through feudalism, then through capitalism, then through the dictatorship of the proletariat, then through the dictatorship of the secretariat, to be allowed entry finally into the best brand of socialism, with vaulting arches, spires and lacework included — but with wandering off on side trips of any kind strictly forbidden. To attribute to Marxism such a conception of the historical route of march is, in Plekhanov's words, "an interesting psychological aberration."

Society has wandered off on side excursions and even blind alleys before, just as it is doing in some countries today, though we are strongly convinced that the wandering is not for long, not as long as the historical era of capitalism and certainly not as long as the historical era of feudal stagnation.

Of all the Marxists who, in our own day, allowed themselves to think out theoretically the possibilities of a new exploitive society, Bukharin stands out as the most searching mind, and that over a long span of time. It may further help those avowed Marxists who are immobilized between the two rigidly-conceived social dimensions to read what Bukharin wrote almost on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution.

In discussing the growth of state capitalism, he insists, and quite rightly, that the "capitalist mode of production is based on a monopoly of the means of production in the hands of the class of capitalists within the general framework of commodity exchange." Thereupon he adds this

Members of the Left Opposition inside Russia demonstrate their continued opposition: even those who recanted and went over to Stalin were killed along with those who continued to defy the regime.

most remarkable theoretical extrapolation:

Were the commodity character of production to disappear (for instance), through the organization of all world economy as one gigantic trust, the impossibility of which we tried to prove in our chapter on ultra-imperialism, we would have an entirely new economic form. This would be capitalism no more, for the production of commodities would have disappeared; still less would it be socialism, for the power of one class over the other would have remained (and even grown stronger). Such an economic structure would most of all resemble a slave-owning economy where the slave market is absent. (N Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy*.)

The Stalinist state did not, of course, arise out of capitalism and the development of a state capitalist economy, but out of an economy that was socialist in type. But is not the terse definition of a new exploitive class society, where commodity production has disappeared (more or less) and the ruling class has concentrated all ownership and control into one hand, the state's, perfectly applicable to the slave-state of Stalinism?

NEW EXPLOITATION

In 1928, after eleven years of the Bolshevik Revolution and with God-knows-what unspoken thoughts roaming about in the back of his mind, the same Bukharin had occasion to return to the same subject from a somewhat different angle, in the course of a speech delivered to the Program Commission of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. In discussing, from the purely theoretical standpoint, the possibility of classical capitalist economic crisis in a society in which all the means of production are owned by the state (naturally, not by a proletarian state), he points out that in such a society "only in world-economic relations do we have trade with other countries, etc." Thereupon he continues with these equally remarkable insights:

Now, we raise the question whether in such a form of capitalism which actually represents a certain negation of capitalism, because of the fact that the internal market, the circulation of money, has disappeared a crisis can occur. Would we have crises there? I believe not! Can there exist in this society a contradiction between the restricted consumption of the masses (consumption in the physiological sense) and the growing productive forces? Yes, that may be. The consumption of the ruling class grows continuously, the accumulation of the means of production, calculated in labour units, can grow to enormous dimensions, but the consumption of the masses is retarded. Perhaps still sharper here is the discrepancy between the growth of the consumption of the masses. But just the same we will not find any crises.

A planned economy exists, an organized distribution, not only with regard to the connections and reciprocal relations between different branches of industry but also with regard to consumption. The slave in this society receives his share of fodder, of the objects that are the product of the total labor. He may receive very little, but just the same crises will not take place. (*Kommunistische Internationale*, 1928, No. 33/34.)

Is this not an astoundingly apt description of the most basic relations in Stalinist society? Bukharin did not hesitate to call such a society slavery, even if of a modern kind, but it would never occur to him to speak of such an abomination as socialism of any brand whatever. Or if, at a tragical stage of his life, he did speak of the Stalinist inferno as socialism, the pistol of the GPU was already jammed against the base of his skull. Deutscher has no such excuse.

Let us say that we close our mind to Deutscher's utterly wretched apology for the Stalinist dictatorship, his pseudo-historical justification for the massacre of the "Utopians" by the regime of the new Russian slave owners, his sophomoric theories about revolutions in general, his logical preposterousness which would be derided by anyone accustomed to think with his mind instead of with his pyloric valve. To forget all these things is next to impossible but let us say it is done. Then we would have to reduce Deutscher's violence against the basic tenet of socialism — the self-emancipatory role which is exclusively assigned to the revolutionary proletariat to a case of the opinion that capitalism can give way only to socialism The opinion is as erroneous as it is common. Understandable fifty years ago, for adequate reasons rightly so, it is inexcusable today, in the light of the Stalinist experience. The common notion has to be revised for accuracy, and the revision, far from upsetting the provisions of Marxism, amplifies and above all concretizes them:

Capitalism, nearing the end of its historical rope, is decreasingly able to solve the problems of society on a capitalist basis. The problems will nevertheless be solved anyhow and are already being solved. Where the proletariat takes command of the nation, the social problems will be solved progressively, and mankind will move toward the freedom of a socialist world. Where the proletariat fails for the time to discharge its task, the social problems will be solved nevertheless, but they will be solved in a reactionary way, solved at the cost of creating a dozen new social problems, solved by degrading and enslaving the bulk of mankind. That is the meaning today of the conflict between capitalism and socialism, socialism and Stalinism, Stalinism and capitalism.

That is the meaning that can and must now be read into the historical warnings of the great founders of scientific socialist theory and the proletarian socialist movements. They did not and could not hold that the decay of capitalism, which is a spontaneous and automatic process, would just as spontaneously and automatically assure the victory of socialism — of any brand.

In the most mature and instructive of his works, the *Anti-Duehring*, Engels clarifies the standpoint of Marxism on this score, not once but repeatedly:

By more and more transforming the great majority of the population into proletarians, the capitalist mode of production brings into being the force which, under penalty of its own destruction, is compelled to carry out this revolution.

... modern large-scale industry has called into being on the one hand a proletariat, a class which for the first time in history can demand the abolition, not of one particular class organization or another, or of one particular class privilege or another, but of classes themselves, and which is in such a position that it must carry through this demand or sink to the level of the Chinese coolie. (P. 178.)

. . . if the whole of modern society is not to perish, the revolution of the mode of production and distribution must take place, a revolution which will put an end to all class divisions. (P. 179)

... [the bourgeoisie's] own productive powers have grown beyond its control and, as with the force of a law of Nature, are driving the whole of bourgeois society forward to ruin or realisation. (My emphasis — MS.)

These do not have their value in determining if Engels was gifted with apocalyptic vision — that has no importance. But they reveal how Engels judged the relationship between the disintegration of capitalist society and the part of the proletariat in the process — victim of the outcome or master of a regeneration. The failure up to now of the proletariat to play the latter part successfully is not our subject here. Except to say that ninety-five per cent of those "socialists" who have in effect capitulated either to the American bourgeoisie or the Stalinist bureaucracy are possessed in common by a thoroughgoing disbelief in the capacity of the proletariat to play that role, we leave the subject for another occasion. But it is incontestable that up to now it has not played the role triumphantly.

And the result of this failure? Is it perhaps the victory of a "rough and crude… brand of socialism" established without the proletariat and against it, not only in Russia but also in China (where the even vaster poverty should produce an even rougher and cruder and more monstrous form of "socialist" totatalitarianism, should it not?), and throughout Eastern Europe (with some modest but unmistakeable aid from Deutscher), and even in far from backward Czechoslovakia and Germany? Not at all. The essence of Engels' insights, amazing for their content even though they could not be marked off with clear lines, has been confirmed by the events.

For its failure, the proletariat has already paid the penalty, in the Stalinist countries, of its own destruction, that is, its reduction to modern slavery; in more than one sense it has been driven to the level of the Chinese coolie; where bourgeois society is not transformed by revolution it is transformed into the ruin of Stalinism; the alienation ("to use a term comprehensible to philosophers") which the development of capitalism brings man to the verge of abolishing, is enhanced by Stalinism to a degree which does not have its equal in our memory.

We have no greater confidence in the longevity of Stalinism than of capitalism, less if anything. It is not reasonable to believe that at the time when the greatest of all class societies is approaching its death, the meanest of class societies is entering a new and long life. But short-lived or longlived, it will not quietly pass away. It will have to be pushed into its delayed oblivion. The essential precondition for the social emancipation from Stalinism is intellectual emancipation from its mythology, be it in the crass form in which it is presented officially or in the form of urbane and cynical apologetics in which it is presented by Deutscher. In either form it implies the end of socialism, for it would indeed be an unrealizable Utopia if conceived as anything but the direct achievement of a self-conscious, self-mobilized socialist proletariat. The rebirth of the proletarian socialist movement requires not the revival of the mythology in a revised form but its entire demolition.

March, 1954

1. One of the outstanding, curiosa of political terminology today is the persisting but anachronistic reference to "Soviet Russia" in journals of every political line. Where the press speaks of "socialist Russia" that too is wrong, but it is understandable. But there is plainly less Sovietism in Stalinist Russia than in Germany, France. England or the United States.

2. It is from the chapter on Feuerbach in the Marx-Engels Deutsche Ideologie. The quotation as given in The Revolution Betrayed is inexact, and evidently suffers from double translation (from German into Russian and then from Russian into English. For all of its roughness, the translation in Trotsky does no violence to the thought of the original. Cf. the original German in the first version.