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CONTENTS

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THE QUESTION OF THE SOVIET BUFFER ZONE,
AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR MARXIST THEORY

By Ernest Germain

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THE YUGOSLAV QUESTION, THE QUESTION OF THE SOVIET BUFFER ZONE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR MARXIST THEORY

By Ernest Germain

1. THE PROBLEM

Marxism and New Phenomena

The case of Yugoslavia and its break with the Kremlin is certainly new, unforeseen by Marxist theoreticians of all tendencies. Let us rapidly deal with all those who, at the end of the war, proclaimed the final and definitive "stabilization" of the bureaucracy. Events have inflicted too crushing a refutation for them still to be taken seriously. The Fourth International, in its immense majority, understood the contradictory character of the Stalinist "successes" and the ever more unstable and lacerated character of the Soviet bureaucracy. It is our great theoretical capital which allows us to begin the present discussion with a maximum of guarantees that it will occur on a serious scientific plane. But even the Fourth International had always visualized the crisis of Stalinism as the split of a section of the masses, a section of the apparatus or even a part of the leaders of the USSR and of Communist Parties from the Kremlin. We never envisaged, to use a well-known formula, that the Reiss faction and the Butenko faction would be able to oppose Stalin not only on the plane of ideas and organizations but also on the plane of state powers. That is what is new, unforeseen, in the case of Yugoslavia; that is what is at the bottom of the difficulties we encounter in determining in a precise manner the character of the conflict, of Yugoslavia and of our tasks.

The fact that life produces a greater variety of forms than theory is able to foresee does not at all contradict the universal claims of Marxism. Our point of departure, in all our analyses, is the primacy of material and social reality over all preconceived schemas and, we understand even before embarking on an analysis, that theory -- which is necessarily abstract and schematic -- can never include all features of reality. Men will never be able to "grasp" reality in its totality in theory; they will only be able to do that in action. This is the decisive step forward represented by Marxism over all philosophy, even the most advanced. But if action is to be scientific, conscious, it must begin with the most precise possible analysis of reality and of its dynamics. By recognizing the limitations of theory, Marxism does not degrade it but on the contrary gives it the supreme place belonging to it in the present history of revolutionary movements and in the future history of humanity: that of guiding all action, that of having all human behavior directed by consciousness.

That is why we can preserve our calm every time a new event or a sharp turn occurs which has not been foreseen, and retain complete confidence in the perfection of this incomparable instrument of analysis which is the Marxist method. To be sure, it is precisely when reality seems to confront us with its creative superiority by taking a detour the theoreticians had not been able to foresee, that the superiority of this theory, which alone is capable of understanding the caprices of history, is demonstrated. This is not on our

part a mystical "faith" in the miraculous power of some magic formula. Marxism provides us with a certain number of laws derived from a scientific analysis of the history of human societies, their transformations and their sequence. Its verification is provided by some 100,000 years of human pre-history and history. It is logical and not at all mystical under these conditions to admit that if Marxists are incapable of "foreseeing everything," the same laws which were valid for 100,000 years of human history preserve their validity for a few more years or decades.

It follows that the Marxists have a double duty towards new phenomena like that of Yugoslavia: (1) to submit them to the most rigorous analysis; not to be satisfied with easy solutions which "suppress" theoretical difficulties merely by "suppressing" essential parts of the reality; to faithfully list everything truly new in the phenomenon; to try to explain them within the framework of Marxism's all-sided interpretation of contemporary historic reality, etc. (2) to honestly compare the results of this analysis with the general conclusions that Marxism has reached at this time and, without any spirit of conciliation or eclecticism, to decide whether the results of this analysis invalidate certain hypotheses of Marxist theory as they have been formulated up to now.

This second task is of greater importance than the first. In theory as in action Marxism despises lines of least resistance. The juxtaposition of contradictory theoretical conclusions would transform this coherent system of thought into the confusion of purely empirical theses. One cannot with impunity review, revise, "complete" the Marxist theory of the State, to take one example without at the same time submitting to criticism all the fundamental features of revolutionary strategy and, retrospectively, all the analysis and historic estimates which were based on this theory in its traditional formulation. In this sphere TO BE A REVOLUTIONIST, TO BE A MARXIST MEANS: TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO THINK ONE'S THOUGHTS TO THE END, TO THEIR LOGICAL CONCLUSIONS NO MATTER HOW UPSETTING OR SURPRISING THEY MAY BE. In his trenchant manner Leon Trotsky characterized the difference between the hesitant, trifling, and timid thinking of eclecticism and the bold sweep of Marxist thought which remains true to itself, in the following terms:

"Marxist thinking is very strict and rigorous; it does not permit of holes, gaps, lapses, or crude piecing together of parts. That is why it pays so much attention to facts; does not rely on rumors or memory but verifies the original sources. Philistine thinking, on the other hand, is vulgar, sketchy, groping blindly, unable to look ahead and, naturally feels no need for strict accuracy in fixing facts." ("La Revolution Defiguree.")

There is nothing frightening for us in the need of reviewing fundamental hypotheses of Marxist theory in the light of facts. Marxism is not a series of dogmas but the conscious expression of the historical process. If, for reasons that must be carefully determined, this historical process suddenly takes a "leap" which invalidates fundamental hypotheses of Marxism it would be criminal not to honestly recognize this instead of clinging to texts outmoded by events through veneration, inertia or simply out of timidity of

thought. Yet it would still be necessary to explain exactly what has become invalid, for what reason this has happened and what effect this revision will have upon the rest of the Marxist hypotheses. ON THE OTHER HAND WHAT IS NOT PERMISSIBLE is to tacitly derive one's concrete analysis from conclusions based on this invalidation WITHOUT FORMULATING THEM OPENLY, WITHOUT INVESTIGATING THEIR MEANING AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES, or worse yet, to pretend to remain on the principled ground which has been recognized by Marxist theory up to this point while formulating analyses which have meaning only to the degree that they admit the revision of one part of our theory.

Two Roads As Starting Points For a Revision of our Position
on the Yugoslav Question

There are two different theses used to prove the working class character of the Yugoslav State:

(a) The first holds that Yugoslavia is (and logically has been at least since 1944) a workers' state because the proletarian revolution was victorious there, taking a peculiar and unforeseen form in the Partisan movement during the war.

(b) The second is that Yugoslavia is (and has been since as early as 1947) a workers' state because industry and wholesale trade have been nationalized and the bourgeoisie has lost political power.

These two theses are contradictory because while the first bases itself upon what is peculiar in the evolution of Yugoslavia, on what differentiates Yugoslavia from the other countries in the buffer zone, the second bases itself on what it has in common with the other countries in the Soviet zone of influence in Europe. In other words: while the first thesis implies that Yugoslavia and only Yugoslavia is a workers' state, the second implies that because Yugoslavia is a workers' state all the other countries in the buffer zone are also workers' states or rapidly becoming workers' states.

These two theses are mutually exclusive because it is obvious that if Yugoslavia is a workers' state because the proletarian revolution triumphed in that country during the Partisan movement of 1943-44 the real degree of nationalizations or the subsequent composition of the governments has no essential importance. We all know that six months after the victory of the October Revolution nationalization of industry had hardly begun. Moreover we are also aware that three or four years after the October Revolution, the Red Army led by Trotsky incorporated numerous Czarist generals in its staff. There can be no doubt that the decisive criterion flowed from the victory of the October Revolution and the establishment of Soviet power. This was a workers' state and everything else only indicated tactical problems of this kind: Can a victorious proletarian revolution, and under what conditions and to what degree, maintain bourgeois ownership of the means of production, participation of bourgeois technicians in the state apparatus, etc.? But obviously one cannot at one and the same time apply the criterion of revolution and also that of the transformation of the state and of society by way of evolution several years later without emptying both criteria of their substance. Cpmrades explain to us that Yugoslavia is a workers' state because: (a) the revolutionary movement of the masses had destroyed the old bourgeois state apparatus and because (b) after the halt of the mass movement the leadership of the CP eliminated the bourgeois parties

and the bourgeois members from the government by administrative means. But this explanation is invalid from every point of view.

First of all it is absolutely new and impermissible to define the nature of a state by the fact that before its formation the masses had destroyed the old bourgeois state apparatus. This is to confuse the beginning with the end of the proletarian revolution. Many times in history the masses succeeded in destroying the structure of the old state without having been able to form a new one based on their class. Each time (to take only the example of Republican Spain from July 1936 to May 1937) the Marxists correctly deduced from this that nothing had taken place to change their estimate of the social character of the state. To demonstrate that the Yugoslav state is a workers' state, it is not enough to explain that the masses destroyed the old bourgeois state apparatus; it is still necessary to prove that the new state apparatus erected in 1944-45 was the apparatus of a workers' state. And this is precisely what our friends cannot prove and what explains their theoretical contradictions.

On the other hand, if the elimination of the bourgeois ministers and parties from power by the administrative action of the CP determines the workers' character of the Yugoslav state what bearing does the action of the masses two or three years prior to these events have on this analysis? Did not the same administrative purge occur in Roumania, for example, where no movement of the masses occurred either before or after? Is Roumania therefore also a workers' state or is it not? It is apparent that the criteria utilized by our friends is only capable of leading to confusion.

The Peculiarities of Yugoslav Development

We did not have to wait for the outbreak of the conflict between the Kremlin and the Yugoslav CP to emphasize the fact that Yugoslavia had experienced a peculiar development within the framework of the Soviet buffer zone. As far back as 1946 we pointed out in our first documents on the question of the buffer zone the difference between Yugoslavia and the rest of the buffer zone. The European Secretariat had called the attention of the movement to these differences as early as the end of 1943. (See articles in Nos. 2 and 3 of Quatrieme Internationale).

These peculiarities can be formulated as follows:

(a) The Partisan movement in Yugoslavia was much more deep-going and much more popular than in any other European country with the possible exception of Greece. It had the following of the great majority of poor peasants and led a veritable civil war on the countryside. Contact with the working class was represented by the working class leadership of the CP and by the participation of the working class cadres and sympathizers of the CP. However, the majority of the proletariat was not able to participate in this movement which unfolded in the backward and mountainous regions of the country and did not reach into the great industrial centers until the time of its final victory, that is at the time of the suppression of all popular initiative.

(b) While assuming in the first instance the character of a national uprising and containing an appeal to all classes in the "nation" to take the road of national liberation, the movement of the

Yugoslav partisans had a more plebeian -- communist character (it is difficult to call it proletarian-communist in view of the enormous majority of peasants who made up its ranks) than any other resistance movement of the masses in Europe. This was due not only to extreme exacerbation of social contradiction in Yugoslavia, to conditions of terrible poverty and of a real civil war, but also to the tactical differences between the Yugoslav CP and the Communist parties of the other buffer countries. This factor, which was previously unknown and has only been made public in its full scope today with the publication of the documents of the time, is confirmed by all Nazi literature on the "war of the bandits in the Balkans" where they constantly emphasize the fact that entire groups of partisans claimed to be fighting for a "Yugoslav Soviet Republic," etc.

These peculiarities have considerable importance both for understanding the bonds between the Yugoslav masses and the Yugoslav CP and the bonds between the Yugoslav CP and the Kremlin. It is solely because of these peculiarities of Yugoslav development that the break between the Kremlin and Tito was possible and that the Yugoslav CP has been able to successfully maintain its independence from the Kremlin for 18 months without encountering a Stalinist opposition of any importance in Yugoslavia.

But whatever the importance these peculiarities of Yugoslav development for an understanding of the present crisis and its dynamics, they do not permit the drawing of the conclusion: the Yugoslav partisan movement has culminated in the formation of a workers' state -- the Yugoslav CP says: to the building of the dictatorship of the proletariat -- in Yugoslavia. This contention can only be checked by more closely examining the events which occurred during the two crucial years of the establishment of Tito's power (1944-1945).

The dominant fact of this period was the recognition of the Tito movement by London as the "official" resistance movement in Yugoslavia, the break of imperialism with Mihailovich, the signing of the Tito-Subasich agreement. These different agreements involved the following:

(a) The constitution of a coalition government in which representatives of the traditional bourgeois parties participated along with the Yugoslav "peoples' front" (in practice the CPY);

(b) The temporary constitution of a Regency Council which left suspended the question of the Karageorgevich dynasty and the throne of King Peter; the organization of a plebiscite to decide the next government of Yugoslavia;

(c) The inclusion of the new Yugoslav government in the United Nations, its official recognition by the Big Three as an ally, the military aid given its forces (partisans) by all the allies.

In other words this agreement concluded within the framework of the arrangements made at the Yalta Conference was absolutely equivalent to the one which led Benes, the representative of the Czech bourgeoisie to form his government at Kosice, or Mikolajczik, the representative of the Polish bourgeoisie to "merge" his government with the one established by the Stalinists at Lublin. THE FORMATION OF THE YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT IN 1944-45 FALLS INTO ABSOLUTELY THE SAME FRAMEWORK AS THE POLICY OF GOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION AND CLASS COLLABORATION INSTITUTED AT THAT TIME OFFICIALLY BY THE STALINISTS THROUGHOUT EUROPE.

It is important to note the time this agreement -- like the other agreements in Eastern Europe -- was concluded. It was not the time when the Yugoslav partisans were at the threshold of final victory. Quite the contrary, it was the time when the most serious military defeats were inflicted upon them and when the High German Command itself claimed to have captured their general headquarters and to have destroyed the bulk of their troops.

Although Tito does not admit the gravity of this defeat in his political report to the 5th Congress of the Yugoslav CP (p. 113-114) he nevertheless recognizes that after the attack of the German parachute troops on the general headquarters of the partisans at Drvar the partisan general staff decided to move to the island of Vis. This transfer was effected by Soviet and Anglo-American flyers who had come to the rescue of the Yugoslav partisans. This was a particularly significant moment in the evolution of the struggle of the Yugoslav partisans: the moment when permanent contact was restored between the Russian and imperialist armies. And this was the same moment when negotiations began for the formation of a united Yugoslav government:

"Immediately after its arrival on the island of Vis, at the initiative of the allies, the National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia began to negotiate with the Royal Government of Dr. Subasic in London to find a way of cooperating." (Tito's report at the Fifth Congress of the CPY, p. 113).

The conclusion of this agreement of June 16, 1944, was accompanied by two extremely important declarations:

(1) Declaration of the Royal Yugoslav Government in London calling ". . . all our people to rally into one united fighting front under the leadership of Marshal Tito. . ." (p. 115)

(2) Declaration of the National Yugoslav Committee of Liberation saying, "We are therefore, underlining once more that the leadership of the National Liberation Movement in Yugoslavia concerns itself with the only and most important aim -- the struggle against the invader and his aides and creation of a democratic, federative Yugoslavia, and not establishment of communism, as some of our enemies claim." And the reporter adds the following significant words, "This statement was, of course, a correct one at that time." (Underlined by us.) (p. 117)

The time of the conclusion of the Tito-Subasich agreement has not only military and international political significance. It is equally of the greatest social importance. For it was concluded at the time when the Partisan army was preparing to occupy the large cities, the industrial and administrative centers. Up to that time the sweep of the Partisan armies had been accompanied by the creation of a network of popular committees constituting genuine organs of local power in the mountainous and backward areas of the country. But the primitive character of this power is indicated in the concrete examples given by Tito himself on the characteristics of this power and on the differences which separated the Yugoslav CP and Mihailovich's Chetniks (White Guards) on this question. The only questions posed were the organization of supplies, the suppression of the black market and an agreement not to reconstitute the police force. THE REAL QUESTION OF

THE RECONSTITUTION OF A STATE APPARATUS IN YUGOSLAVIA WAS POSED AT THE TIME THE PARTISAN ARMIES APPROACHED THE BIG CITIES. AND THIS WAS PRECISELY THE TIME WHEN THE TITO-SUBASICH AGREEMENT WAS CONCLUDED!

If we do not wish to fall prey to a grotesque interpretation of history according to which Tito "deceived" not only London and Washington, but even the Kremlin, about his intentions we can only come to one conclusion: THE STATE APPARATUS CREATED IN THE BIG LIBERATED CITIES IN 1944-45 while presenting a multitude of exceptional characteristics, CANNOT BE CHARACTERIZED AS A WORKERS' STATE APPARATUS. Many facts are available to confirm this conclusion:

(1) The central government took no nationalization measures. "The first appearance of a socialist type (?) in our economy did not follow formal nationalization but rather the confiscation of the property of the traitors to the nation." (Report by Kidrich to the Fifth Congress of the Yugoslav CP, p. 7).

"The essential economic positions which passed into the hands of the state through confiscation, seizure and sequestration represented the solid foundations for the development of our socialist economy. THE ENTERPRISES WHICH WERE TAKEN OVER BY THE PEOPLES' STATE WERE STILL NOT, IT IS TRUE, OF THE PURE (?) SOCIALIST TYPE. EXPLOITATIVE RELATIONS HAD BEEN ABOLISHED THERE BUT THE INHERITED CAPITALIST FORCES OF LABOR STILL PREDOMINATED." (Kidrich, p. 26 -- my emphasis, E.G.)

Let us add that nationalizations -- and this is not a formal matter since the same nationalizations constitute the essential basis of the argumentation of those who favor the theory of the workers character of Yugoslavia and of the buffer zone! -- were in fact enacted in Yugoslavia after they had been enacted in Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Let us note also that a leading comrade of an important section of the International who was in Belgrade in the Spring of 1945 observed important capitalist factories operating under the direction of the "progressive" owners. . .

(2) The central government did not take any measures against the interests or political will of the great majority of the petty-bourgeois population of Yugoslavia, the middle bourgeoisie. The Serbian peasant party led by Jovanovich remained an integral part of the Yugoslav Peoples' Front even after the destruction of the bourgeois opposition and the breakup of the coalition government. (It was only eliminated in 1947 by the purely administrative method of a trial. Kidrich describes this process in the following way: "The path of our revolution not only permitted, but even required -- and it succeeded in attaining -- a continuous alliance with the middle peasant despite their wavering and hesitation.")

(3) The central movement pushed aside the committees which were no longer mentioned in speeches and official documents during the whole year of 1945 and most of the year of 1946 (although they were mentioned in the Constitution as "bases of power"). In all the documents of the Yugoslav CP there is not even the slightest indication of the spontaneous formation of committees in the large liberated cities in 1944-45 as there had been on the countryside. All the facts at our disposal

confirm the impression that in the cities these committees were constituted from above, bureaucratically, without the participation of the masses, on the basis of proportional representation of the parties belonging to the Peoples Front and the government.

It is well to recall on this question that the Yugoslav leaders speak of a Peoples Front in the following terms:

"The old bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties did not join it as a whole but many democratic and patriotic (?) groups and the masses from these parties did." (Report by Kardelj to the Fifth Congress of the Yugoslav CP, p. 34).

(4) The formidable sweep of the partisan armies took place after the capitulation of Italy. THROUGH AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE BADOGLIO GOVERNMENT AND TITO all the arms of the Italian occupation troops in Yugoslavia passed into the hands of the partisans. This fact is admitted by Kardelj in the above-mentioned report. Is this compatible with the construction of a "workers' state apparatus" by Tito, or did imperialism "allow itself to be deceived" once again?

(5) While up to the beginning of 1944 the internationalist spirit had been predominant in the ranks of the Yugoslav partisans, and the Yugoslav CP, contrary to the policy followed by the other CP's under the occupation, endeavored to maintain this internationalist spirit (creation of Bulgarian, Italian and German detachments in the partisan ranks.) (This attitude changed sharply after the formation of the central government in which, it should not be forgotten, the bourgeois Subasich held the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs). The mass deportation of the entire German minority was undertaken in 1945, and the occupation of Istria and Trieste let loose real orgies of chauvinism in which the Italian minority was subjected to such a terror that it remains violently hostile to Communism to this day.

All this confirms the conclusion already formulated above: the state apparatus reconstructed in 1944-45 was not a workers' state apparatus. The revolutionary movement of the Yugoslav masses was stopped before reaching its goal, and this stoppage of the mass movement was the price paid by the Yugoslav CP for its recognition by imperialism and by the royal clique of Subasich. Stopped before achieving its aim, the movement of the masses remained dormant up to 1948. If, later, as in the other buffer zone countries the CP in power eliminated the bourgeois parties and took radical nationalization measures these were done by purely administrative methods. The CP in power did not appeal to the masses at any time before the split with the Kremlin. IF THE ACTION OF THE MASSES BEFORE 1945 PRESENTS FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES WITH THAT OF THE OTHER BUFFER ZONE COUNTRIES, IT DOES NOT PLAY ANY ROLE BETWEEN 1945 AND 1948, THE PERIOD DURING WHICH ALL THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OVERTURNS OCCURRED IN YUGOSLAVIA.

Let us note in passing that the Yugoslav CP itself was not aware that it had set up "the dictatorship of the proletariat" in 1944-45. Widespread discussions took place in its midst during the whole year of 1946 on the question of the character of the New Yugoslavia. Two members of the political bureau, Hebrang and Jujovich, who at that time were directing Yugoslav economy, considered Yugoslavia to be state

capitalist and acted accordingly. This opinion, in passing, is today revived by the "official" Stalinist theoreticians throughout the world. As far as we are concerned we do not believe in the slightest that Yugoslavia or the buffer countries are "state capitalist" but it is extremely instructive to read what Kidrich said of how this discussion ended:

"In 1946, firmly sharing with Comrade Tito the position of the Socialist construction of our country, the central committee put an end to the continual discussions. Our state apparatus was reorganized, as well as all the economic institutions. We began to lay down the foundations of the socialist organization of our economy, of accumulation and of a financial plan. We organized state economic enterprises of a socialist type. . . ." (p. 27 -- my emphasis, E.G.).

They began to do all that in 1946. . . truly we could not find a better confirmation of our thesis! The mass movement, stopped in 1944-45, did not succeed in arriving at fundamental transformations in the structure of the state apparatus and of the economy. It was only in 1946, after the halt of the mass movement, that these transformations were undertaken by administrative action as in the other countries of the buffer zone. Whatever their importance in understanding the subsequent developments in Yugoslavia, the peculiarities of Yugoslav development do not permit the characterization of this country as a "workers' state." This characterization is thus possible only if one considers the question of nationalization and the "control of the state," that is the question of what there is in common between all the buffer zone countries.

II. THE CRITERION

The Metaphysics of Nationalized Property

Two years ago, on the eve of the World Congress, the comrades of the Johnson-Forrest tendency accused the majority of the International and the author of this article in particular of "economism": we were accused of basing our reasoning on the formula -- nationalization of the means of production equals workers' state.

We immediately refuted this absurd accusation. We said that only the nationalization of the means of production resulting from the proletarian revolution was a criterion for the existence of a workers' state. Only if one considers the economic transformations produced by the October Revolution in their entirety has one the right to consider for the USSR such formulas as "mode of production," "relations of production" and "property relations" as three equivalent formulas expressing the existence of the proletarian revolution on the economic, social and juridical arena respectively. But it does not at all follow that any nationalized property whatever is to be identified with a non-capitalist mode of production and therefore with a revolution in the productive relationships. Such a conception would in fact be "economist," that is, a serious phenomenological deviation from Marxism. But that was never Trotsky's conception or that of the present majority of the Fourth International.

Today the comrades of the RCP and several comrades who favor the theory of the working class character of the Yugoslav state revive the

accusation of the Johnson-Forrest comrades against us in an inverse sense: they accuse us of having abandoned Trotsky's conception which, according to them, identified nationalized property with the workers' state. Naturally, by applying themselves to the task they can find here or there in Trotsky's articles ambiguous formulas which can be interpreted in an "economist" sense. But these formulas have exactly as much value as certain quotations from Lenin concerning the possibility of "the victory of Socialism in Russia" which are presented uncritically by the Stalinists.

What is involved in both cases are not systematic theoretical expositions of the question but elliptical formulations in polemical articles whose real significance cannot be understood without considering them in context. On the whole in his theoretical writings, dealing especially with this question, Trotsky shows a preference for the formula "nationalized property established by the revolution" whose meaning has been clarified above. In fact there is implied in this discussion the possibility and extension of bourgeois nationalization and we should not hesitate to recognize that, in this field, the extraordinary weakening of capitalism outside of the USA has pretty much changed the situation in the last two or three decades. In 1925 Trotsky wrote in "Wither England" that nationalization of the British coal industry was impossible without a proletarian revolution. This definition was absolutely correct at the time -- and the comrades of the RCP who explained that Trotsky "was wrong" on this matter do not understand either what was correct in this thesis or why it is now outmoded. But the serious weakening of British imperialism not only brought about the possibility of this nationalization in 1945-49 but even made it necessary for the survival of British imperialism.

Similarly, two decades ago, no Marxist would have admitted the possibility of a bourgeois nationalization of the major French banks, since French imperialism was the rentier and banker imperialism par excellence. Today, the second part of this thesis having lost all reality, the first part has been realized without creating any major disturbance in the miserable life of the French bourgeoisie. Nationalization of Mexican oil companies, the Argentine railroads, the entire "industry" of Burma and other similar measures fundamentally reflect two combined phenomena which are the expression of the progressive decomposition of world capitalism: in the advanced countries the bourgeoisie is forced to nationalize certain key sectors in order to maintain the solvency and the survival of the principal industrial sectors; in backward countries the bourgeoisie is forced to nationalize some key sectors of industry and other sectors, its poverty and capital preventing it from managing them on the basis of private property.

This is not the place here for an analysis of the larger historic significance of these two processes; but their reality is undeniable. The decomposition of capitalism is deepening and this tendency manifests itself more and more in the tendency toward the fusion of economy with the state and it becomes more and more dangerous for Marxists to operate with such formulas as "the bourgeoisie is incapable of nationalizing 50% or 60% or 80% of industry" without specifying either the time, the place or the conditions which determine this "impossibility." In fact, everyone knows that Engels in a famous passage admitted the possibility of a nationalization of all bourgeois property by the

bourgeois state modeled after the stratification of the German railroads by Bismark. And if Trotsky precludes this total nationalization in a no less famous passage in his "Revolution Betrayed" the only arguments he cites are the differences of interest between different bourgeois groups and the temptation such a state would present for the revolution. The value of these arguments, however considerable, nevertheless has a limited significance in two precise instances: (a) that of backward countries where the bourgeoisie is only in the process of formation (internal dissensions of the Albanian or Burmese bourgeoisie evidently cannot be considered decisive historical factors); (b) that of political regimes, which having politically expropriated the bourgeoisie and imposed measures upon it which while expressing its historic interests, can be greatly contradictory to its immediate interests (of Nazism in its last years; Mussolini's "Social Republic," etc.)

Considering all these factors we define as metaphysical the reasoning of comrades who say: Yugoslavia (and most of the buffer zone countries) are workers' states because industry and wholesale trade is almost completely nationalized. In effect these comrades make an abstraction of decisive factors in estimating the character of these nationalizations: who instituted them, when, in whose benefit, and under what conditions. They isolate a historic factor from its context and reduce what should be a profound historical analysis to a simple syllogism, in fact to a tautology and to a begging of the question. For in saying that Yugoslavia is a workers' state because industrial property is nationalized, they presuppose that these nationalizations are workers' nationalizations, that is to say they presuppose what they have to prove. . .

Is it correct that the complete stratification of the means of production and exchange "automatically" testifies to the existence of a workers' state? Yes, if one considers this formula as applying solely to the history of societies taken in their historic aspect. No, if one considers it as applying equally to all concrete situations, for example, to transitional situations. In effect what is the correct meaning of this formula? It means, as we have already indicated above that property relations are normally the juridical expression of productive relationships which on the social plane represent the reality of a given mode of production. These three expressions (economic, social and juridical) are normally conjoined as hundreds of classical Marxist references indicate.

"The way (the method) by which people get their livelihood, produce the commodities needed for their existence, depends on the nature of their instruments of labor, their raw materials, in a word. . . on their means of production. . . To the evolution of production (translate: the method of production) there corresponds an evolution of society. However, the forms of society and the reciprocal relations of its members (the class relations or social relations) are most intimately bound up with the property forms which identify and maintain them. Consequently the evolution of production goes hand in hand with an evolution of property." ("The Erfurt Program" by Karl Kautsky, 9th edition, our translation.)

But it is evident that the equivalence of these three expressions does not mean either their identify or their complete coincidence in

time. Thus, feudal and semi-feudal forms of property were abolished in France at a time when the feudal or semi-feudal mode of production was, if not non-existent for a long time, at least quantitatively negligible in the national economic life. It is true that a proletarian revolution of the classic type will as a rule accomplish the overturn in all three domains at once without great intervals between them. But in our epoch when capitalist society is decomposing and the proletarian revolution is considerably delayed, we are confronted by transitional cases, cases of combined development in which the property relations can be overturned without the economy thereby automatically becoming an economy orienting away from capitalism toward socialism and without permitting us to conclude that what we have is a workers' state. A striking example is given by the Popular Republic of Outer Mongolia. This country is the first example of a country treated like those of the buffer zone by the USSR. It has a constitution faithfully modelled on that of the Soviet Union. A quasi-complete statification of the means of production and exchange has been proclaimed and undoubtedly realized there. But it is impossible to designate Outer Mongolia as a "workers' state" for the simple reason that neither a proletariat, a bourgeoisie or even a numerous class of agricultural proprietors exists or has ever existed, and almost the entire population consists of nomadic shepherds. The mode of production is much closer to primitive communism than to modern socialism. Nevertheless, we find there the most advanced property relations in the world. Combined development has thus given to all the metaphysicians a brilliant lesson they would do well not to forget when they study the transitional society of the buffer countries.

Three Types of Nationalizations

Irritated by all these theoretical considerations, the supporters of the theory of the proletarian nature of the buffer countries accuse us of deliberately mixing things up. "How can you talk of the French or British nationalizations in connection with the nationalizations in the buffer zone? Have not these latter been imposed upon the bourgeoisie up to the point of their almost total expropriation? Fundamentally, there exists only two types of nationalizations: bourgeois nationalizations, nationalizing "losses," carried through by the bourgeoisie for its benefit, and proletarian nationalizations, whether measures of a workers' state either degenerated or not degenerated, tending toward the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. In what category do you place the nationalizations in the buffer zone?"

Unfortunately, the law of combined development, transitory situations and other dialectical caprices of history, have far from finished with playing tricks upon theorists who reason metaphysically. To be sure, since Marxism fundamentally recognizes in our epoch only two types of state, bourgeois states and workers' states, there are fundamentally only two types of nationalizations so far as their social nature is concerned: bourgeois nationalizations and proletarian nationalizations. However, this assertion does not at all imply that a combination of these two types is excluded, appearing under special, exceptional, transitory conditions: nationalizations which, while being bourgeois from an historical standpoint--the government instituting them being a bourgeois government -- are nevertheless imposed against the will of the bourgeoisie and are directly contrary to its interests.

Thus Mussolini, during the period of his "Social Republic of Salo" took a series of measures against the will and interests of the entire Italian bourgeoisie, measures whose boldness increased as the possibility of their realization diminished. According to "The Economist" of May 5, 1945, "the fascist Republic of Mussolini nationalized the whole industrial system of North Italy." Was Mussolini's government a workers' government on this account ("since it took measures contrary to the interests of the whole class?") No one would draw such a conclusion. Mussolini headed a government which was bourgeois both in its historical origins and structure, a government which however was not serving the Italian bourgeoisie but the German bourgeoisie. Here are "new" cases of a kind that the death agony of capitalism will constantly provide.

Everyone knows that numerous governments of the Latin-American and semi-colonial countries in general can very often exclusively represent the interests of an imperialist power and act in utter contradiction with the interests of the "native" bourgeoisies. That will not prevent a Marxist from characterizing them as bourgeois governments.

But we have more recent examples of nationalizations: Burma and Czechoslovakia. Burma displayed the decision, ever since the proclamation of independence, to set up a regime of statification of the means of industrial production, the land and the banks. In fact, Burma has been given a constitution copied after the Yugoslav Constitution, declaring that all the wealth of the land and its subsoil, all the industries and all the banks belong to the people. Would there be anyone among us who would designate Burma on this account a "workers' state"? (Moreover, it is interesting to note that the Burmese Constitution also declares that power emanates from the Peoples' Committees. It is time to understand that words and formerly clear formulas have alas! today been filled with a content which varies according to those who use them. . .)

On the other hand, since its formation at Kosice the Benes government -- as well as the first Polish coalition government in which Mikolayczik participated -- drafted a project for nationalizing all heavy industry, all banks except one, all the big enterprises of light industry and all the more important foreign trade enterprises. These nationalizations affected from 60% to 80% of all Czech capital. Can these nationalizations be placed on the same level as the French or British nationalizations? Certainly not. In the latter instance what is involved is the nationalization of deficit enterprises or nationalizing enterprises whose particular interests impede the general interests of the capitalist class. The bulk of the bourgeoisie profit so much from these measures that the British Conservatives for example do not at all propose to abolish them. In the first case, on the contrary, what is involved are nationalization measures limiting the capitalist class to a secondary and insignificant sector of economic life and practically depriving them of the commanding levers of the national economy. A combination of special circumstances (previous expropriation of the national bourgeoisie by German imperialism; the vacuum created by the latter's downfall; the incapacity of the bourgeoisie to fill this vacuum because of its extreme lack of capital; pressure of the masses; the tendency toward structural assimilation imposed by the Soviet bureaucracy controlling the country, etc.) forces the bourgeois-

ie to allow such measures with the feeling of death in its soul. Do these measures thereby become measures of proletarian nationalization? Certainly not. History has permitted itself the luxury of combining in a somewhat inelegant manner outstanding traits of the two types of nationalizations, and those who try to make their way through this situation with the aid of oversimple criteria will succeed only in losing themselves in the thickets of contradictory characteristics.

However, we know that the dominating feature of the economic evolution of the buffer countries since the end of the war consists precisely in this fact: that by virtue of the aforementioned combination of circumstances, differing in degree from one country to another, but in general everywhere tending to overturn the entire economic structure, the key sectors of economy have slipped away from the bourgeoisie and from private property to become either state property or property of the mixed Soviet companies or Soviet shareholding corporations. We further know that the bourgeoisie could not avoid these measures in any case, since they lacked capital to take over the place vacated by the downfall of German imperialism. This poses the following question: Can the capitalist nature of the economy of these countries be gauged by the extent of the nationalizations, that is to say, by the fact that in Czechoslovakia and in Poland the enterprises of light industry together with the merchants remain as the sole representatives of the middle bourgeoisie, the big bourgeoisie having disappeared? Can one seriously defend the thesis that the "destruction of capitalism" has consisted, for example, in Czechoslovakia in the measures of "consummating" nationalizations in February, 1948, which have led to the nationalization of 75% to 80% of industry? Does not such reasoning lead to absurdity?

In our opinion, one conclusion imperiously imposes itself: IN THESE TRANSITIONAL SITUATIONS, THE LAW OF COMBINED DEVELOPMENT CAN PRESENT CASES IN WHICH THE STATIFICATION OF THE GREATEST PART OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE CAN BE THE WORK OF A NON-WORKERS' STATE. IN SUCH SITUATIONS, THIS STATIFICATION THEN CEASES TO BE AN AUTOMATIC CRITERION PROVING THE EXISTENCE OF A WORKERS' STATE (degenerated or not). IN SUCH SITUATIONS THE PROPERTY RELATIONS CAN, DURING A BRIEF PERIOD, FAIL TO CORRESPOND TO THE DOMINATING MODE OF PRODUCTION, that is to say, a predominantly capitalist mode of production can be accompanied by the statification of the means of production.

The Metaphysics of "Groups of Armed Men"

The supporters of the theory of the proletarian nature of the buffer countries are too strongly aware of the shakiness of their whole argumentation, based on the statification of the means of production, not to seek salvation elsewhere. They thus arrive quite naturally at the question of the nature of the state. Actually, Lenin often insisted on the fact, and Leninists have always recognized, that the victory of the socialist revolution (that is to say, establishment of the Soviet power) is itself the decisive criterion proving its own existence. The state resulting from such a revolution is "proletarian" to all intents and purposes, even if the economic relations have not yet undergone any immediate overturn.

But, except for Yugoslavia, not one of the buffer countries, even in the opinion of the comrades against whom we have to polemicize,

exhibits sufficiently clear and simple characteristics to permit us to draw a "self-evident" conclusion of the kind referred to above. However, the combination of the economist argument and of the state-ist argument presents, precisely in the case of transitional situations and more especially in the buffer countries, all the characteristics of a vicious circle: to prove the proletarian nature of the state, the almost complete nationalizations are invoked; but to prove the proletarian character of the nationalizations one invokes. . . the proletarian character of the state! Certain comrades, first of all those of the RCP, have sought a way out of this vicious circle by resorting to a phenomenological metaphysics of "groups of armed men," a worthy pendant to the metaphysics of "statified property."

Every Marxist knows that Engels, in one of his jewel-like formulas, so brilliant and full of significance, characterized the state as "a group of armed men." This formula certainly suffices to explain to novices the Marxist theory of the state and to find one's way in cases which are comparatively simple, including that of a "normal" socialist revolution. But when that eternal kill-joy, combined development, takes a hand in the game, giving rise to transitional and paradoxical situations unforeseen in the texts of the classics, Engels' formula, like every formula, is absolutely incapable of being substituted by itself for a rigorous and documented analysis. To try and demand from this formula an ad hoc answer to all new, exceptional, transitional cases that history will produce and that it cannot give runs the risk of discrediting in an absolutely unmerited manner the old Engels and the Marxist method in general.

The state is "a group of armed men." That means in normal cases: the state is the dominant armed class (a rule especially applicable to a normal socialist revolution), or else it is a special body of armed men directly serving a dominant class. However, history has for a long time already brought forward cases of Bonapartism, where the state becomes a band of adventurers, politically expropriating the bourgeoisie and plundering its treasuries, even while defending its historical interests. Since then we have seen, toward the end of the German and Italian Fascist regimes, the state becoming a band of armed adventurers, who, in the name of defending the "historical" interests of the ruling classes, threaten to drag the latter toward physical extermination. Consequently, it is impossible to judge on the basis of its action during a brief period the class nature of a state simply by posing the question: for whose benefit does it work?

But some supporters of the theory of the proletarian character of the buffer countries go even further. Thus, the comrades of the RCP explain that, in order to answer the question: "What is the social nature of the state?" it simply suffices to answer the question: "Who controls the state?" Since from all evidence the bourgeoisie of the buffer countries no longer controls the state apparatus which has now fallen into the hands of the Stalinists, for these comrades it logically follows that the state has ceased being a bourgeois state.

Just what does this vague formula: "To control the state" signify? It appears that the RCP comrades, wrongly applying the definition of "groups of armed men" given by Engels, conceive the "control of the state" exactly in the same manner as the Shachtmanites and the bour-

geois journalists: those control the state who control the police and the army. And since the Stalinists have undoubtedly seized control of these "groups of armed men," they have therefore conquered political power and destroyed the bourgeois state. . .

Under normal conditions, the police and the army are the surest instruments of a ruling class. But in periods of overturn, in exceptional and transitory situations, the police and the army reflect in their chaotic evolution rather the dissolution and elimination of the exploiters than the establishment of their domination. Most of the belligerent countries in Europe at the end of the war were deprived both of a police and an army amounting to anything. In the buffer countries, the Stalinists succeeded from the beginning of the occupation in taking over the key positions controlling the army and the police. Nevertheless at the head of the army they placed as a rule the old cadres of the bourgeois army with a semi-fascist past. Thus the "groups of armed men" found themselves in Finland, a country remaining classically bourgeois, under the control of the Stalinist minister Heinc up to the beginning of 1948. Does that make Finland a proletarian country which subsequently experienced a victorious "counter-revolution" at the moment when Heinc was expelled from the government? Likewise in Austria a Stalinist, Hauner, received in 1945 the Ministry of the Interior and control over the police. And how can it be explained that following the coups d'etat which gave control of Czechoslovakia and Hungary to the Stalinists the armies of these two countries continued to be controlled for some months by generals (Pika, Palfy) whose bourgeois character is indubitable and who were moreover subsequently dragged before the courts as foreign agents? No mental gymnastic can rid us of embarrassment with the aid of the over-simple formula of "groups of armed men."

Still more over-simplified is another criterion applied by certain supporters of the theory of the proletarian character of the buffer countries. They say: the world bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie remaining in the buffer zone are violently hostile to the governments of these countries. The only class which gives these governments a measure of support is the working class. Does not that prove the class character of these states? Once again, a criterion which is very precise when applied to normal conditions and for an entire historical period, loses its meaning when utilized for a given transitional situation. Furthermore, it is a serious methodological error to confuse the nature of the state with the nature of the government. We have many times observed governments of a bourgeois state which, because they were composed in large part or exclusively by representatives of workers' parties, enjoy enthusiastic support from the entire working class and open or hidden hostility from the national and international bourgeoisie. Is it necessary to mention here the Labor Party government which illustrates this thesis in a striking fashion? Does the fact that the government of republican Spain was bitterly fought by the national and world bourgeoisie and most enthusiastically supported by the entire world proletariat take anything away from our analysis of the Spanish republican state as a bourgeois state?

But let us go still further. Leninists have never denied the possibility of the transitory existence, during moments of the breakup of capitalist society, of workers and peasants governments, within the

framework of the bourgeois state which has not yet been overthrown. Such governments would be characterized by a concentration of all efforts to accelerate the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Such would be, if one wishes, governments which "openly" prepare civil war, which would undertake in exceptional circumstances the role played by the Petrograd Soviet on the eve of October. In fact, history has given concrete examples of such governments: the Socialist-Communist governments of Saxony-Thuringia constituted in 1923. We know that these governments failed in their tasks. We know that they committed opportunist errors which seriously curbed the surge of the masses toward the taking of power throughout Germany. We know that the Communists were prisoners of the parliamentary cretinism of the left-Socialists, themselves captives of the reformist Social-Democratic wing, the open agency of counter-revolution. But no one can deny that a whole series of measures taken by these governments (the convocation and participation in the Congress of Factory Committees; beginning of the arming of the workers, etc.) goes far beyond the framework of the policy of a bourgeois government. Nevertheless, these measures were taken at a moment when the state, to all appearances, preserved all the characteristics of a classical bourgeois state.

These considerations will permit us further on to give a more exact definition of the nature of the Yugoslav government and state. But another important factor ought to be considered in analyzing the states in the buffer zone. These are Bonapartist states, but Bonapartist states of a special type: the state there does not defend the interest of any of the fundamental classes of the national society, neither the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, nor the peasantry. It is at the service of a force alien to the national society; it is in the service of the Soviet bureaucracy. Precisely in their relations with the "national" bourgeoisie these states come close to the function of other types of state that we have already enumerated above and which were in the service of a power foreign to the national society: governments of certain semi-colonial countries, Mussolini's republic of Salo, quisling governments without a national base, etc. To be sure, these special types of Bonapartist governments, "independent" of the national society, were wholly in the service of a foreign imperialist power; the Bonapartist governments of the buffer zone are in the service of the Soviet bureaucracy. From this difference important conclusions will flow when we analyze the problem of structural assimilation. But this difference changes nothing in the manner of approaching the problem which should be guided by this special modification of the Bonapartist type.

Shachtman and some of those who inherit his turn of mind pose the following sticker to us: you say that the buffer countries are capitalist countries. You say that their governments are semi-fascist governments (contemporary Bonapartism most often having a semi-fascist character), that is to say, according to the definition given by Trotsky in the "History of the Russian Revolution," they represent "the concentrated power of the bourgeoisie." Is it not grotesque to characterize as the "concentrated power of the bourgeoisie" governments which have expropriated the capitalists to an extremely high degree and submits them to all sorts of terror?

This reasoning is faulty in its basis, that is, in its definition of bourgeois Bonapartism. There are actually two types of bourgeois

Bonapartist governments in modern history. One of these two is the classic type of Napoleon Bonaparte, of Napoleon III, of Von Papen and von Schleicher in Germany before Hitler, of Dolfuss in Austria, etc. With considerable differences from one case to another, all these governments can be more or less classified under the category "concentrated power of the bourgeoisie." But there is also another type of Bonapartist government, of which the two best examples are those of Robespierre, beginning with his turn to the right (repression of the de-Christianisers and Hebertistes), and of Kerensky (beginning with the uprising of Kornilov). These two powers were Bonapartist because they raised themselves above the classes and attempted to govern through an "independent" and "impartial" apparatus. But their Bonapartism, far from representing the concentrated power of the bourgeoisie, represented their isolation from the bourgeoisie as well as from the laboring masses. This definition explains their precarious position which led to their easy overthrow -- in the case of Robespierre on the part of the bourgeoisie, in the case of Kerensky on the part of the proletariat. The governments of the buffer countries would without any doubt be overturned with the same ease, in certain cases by the bourgeoisie, in others by the proletariat, if the sole solid factor of their power was taken away: the weight of the Soviet bureaucracy, a foreign force, upon the society of the buffer zone. We thus see that the history of Bonapartism for the past 150 years permits us to define these governments as a type which does not contradict in any way the conclusions of our sociological analysis of these countries.

From all the preceding we can now draw a much more general conclusion: In the case of transitional, exceptional situations, it is just as impossible to judge the social nature of an economy and of a state by basing ourselves exclusively on property relations as by basing ourselves exclusively on property relations as by basing ourselves on the question: "In whose interests is the state acting?" or "Who controls the groups of armed men?" These transitional situations can only be judged by weighing all of the factors, the predominant mode of production as well as the property relations, the historic origins and the structure of the state as well as its function, the dynamics of the given society and the different variants of development which can be deduced from the given transitional situation. Only such an analysis of the whole permits us to indicate not merely the process of transformation to which these societies are subjected, but also the precise point which this transformation has reached.

Is a Revision of the Marxist-Leninist Theory of the State Necessary?

Another theoretical question is posed by consideration of the social nature of the buffer states.

According to the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state, the bourgeois state cannot simply "transform itself" into a workers' state by the operation of a seizure of commanding posts and the submission to control by a workers' party of the "groups of armed men." According to the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state, the transition from the bourgeois state to the workers' state can only come about by means of the violent destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus and the establishment of a new type of state apparatus, the apparatus of a workers'

state. The partisans of the theory of the working class nature of the buffer states have quietly dropped this whole fundamental part of Marxist theory, without giving the slightest explanation as to why they have abandoned it. It is up to us to look more closely at what happened to the state apparatus in the buffer zone and to determine whether these events necessitate and justify a revision of the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state.

The destruction of the old state apparatus has taken place partially in Czechoslovakia and to a large extent in Yugoslavia and in Poland. In the first case, the agent operating in this destruction was German imperialism insofar as Bohemia and Moravia was concerned, and the Soviet occupation insofar as Slovakia was concerned. In the second case, the action of the partisans was predominant; but a considerable part of the old state apparatus, especially in the areas that had been detached from the old Yugoslavia, was likewise destroyed by the action of German imperialism. In the third case, it was, so to speak, exclusively the action of German imperialism which destroyed the old apparatus of the Polish state from top to bottom and took its place directly. As to Finland, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria, the old state apparatus, although not intact (in Hungary especially the military and terrorist operations of German imperialism after the summer of 1944 dealt some very heavy blows), nevertheless remained essentially intact and in a position to function.

The establishment of a new state apparatus was thus posed practically only for Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland. In the other buffer countries, the Stalinists began to "penetrate" the existing state apparatus with greater or lesser success. What took place in the first three countries mentioned? As far as Yugoslavia goes, we have already treated this question and arrived at the conclusion that it is difficult to characterize the state apparatus rebuilt in 1944-45 as a workers' state apparatus. But let us give the comrades holding the theory of the working class nature of the buffer countries the benefit of the doubt in respect to Yugoslavia. In Czechoslovakia the state was rebuilt with all the pieces that could be found of the old pre-1938 republic. The bourgeois character of this state apparatus does not permit even a shadow of a doubt. In Poland, although the remnants of the old pre-1939 Polish state structure were less compact -- essentially due to the concentration of an important part of these within the Anders army which remained abroad -- they nevertheless formed once again the skeleton of the new state apparatus as it resulted from the agreement concluded between the Social-Democratic party, the Peasant Party of Mikolajczyk and the Stalinist party (with wide participation from former National-Democrats, the extreme right-wing bourgeois party of pre-war Poland, in administrative commanding posts). We thus come to the conclusion that, Yugoslavia aside, all the other buffer countries in 1945 had a bourgeois state apparatus, which was not destroyed but conquered by the Stalinists.

The extremely serious theoretical question which is posed before all the supporters of the concept of the working class nature of the buffer countries is this: are there conditions under which the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state no longer applies, conditions in which a bourgeois state can become a workers' state by the simple capture of commanding posts by a workers' party? What Trotsky wrote in 1939 concerning the structural assimilation of the Baltic countries, of Eastern

Poland and of Karelia does not at all solve this problem, because through the integration of these countries within the USSR, their old state apparatus was actually destroyed. The new fact adduced by Trotsky in 1939, and which we consider part of Marxist theory, is that this destruction can, under exceptional conditions, be the work of the Soviet bureaucracy instead of being the work of the proletarian revolution. But the problem which the supporters of the concept of the working class nature of the buffer countries must face is that there was no destruction of the state apparatus in the period when, according to these comrades, the nature of the state was completely overturned. They can therefore only draw two conclusions: either to try to demonstrate that these states were no longer bourgeois states from the beginning of the Soviet occupation (an impossible task, in complete contradiction with the facts) or to admit openly that under special conditions, the transition from the bourgeois to the workers' state can actually come about without the violent destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus and the establishment of a new type of state apparatus. To refuse to do one or the other means for these comrades to shut themselves off within an unprincipled eclectic system, to refuse to formulate theoretically what they tacitly admit in their political analysis.

Now, if we press these comrades, the only explanation of the "exceptional" conditions we can get from them is a recital of the general conditions determining the establishment of the buffer zone: disintegration of capitalism during the war, more or less limited revolutionary upsurge, predominating role played by the Soviet bureaucracy in this part of the world, etc. But to admit that these conditions suffice for the transformation of the bourgeois state into a workers' state by "cold" means, without a previous destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus, without the creation of a new type of state apparatus, is to admit to the letter the theory of the "New Democracy," which is formulated by the Stalinist theoreticians in exactly the same form:

"In view of the military crushing of the Fascist aggressor states, the rapid aggravation of the general crisis of capitalism and the close collaboration (this is a slight euphemism -- E.G.) with the USSR and the states of the People's Democracy, the countries of the People's Democracy have seen themselves offered the possibility of realizing by means of the regime of People's Democracy (that is, by the "cold" evolution of the state apparatus -- E.G.) the transition from capitalism to socialism." (Report of P. Pospelov to the Memorial Meeting on the 25th Anniversary of Lenin's Death, in Moscow -- From "For a Lasting Peace, etc.," Feb. 1, 1949, p. 2).

At the last meeting of the Central Committee of the PCI, various comrades accused us of introducing this analogy into discussion intentionally, in order to "scare the movement." This accusation is absurd. Marxists, to our knowledge, have never been "scared" by the theoretical conclusions of their political reasoning. On the other hand, if we mention the Stalinist theory of the "New Democracy," it is not at all with the aim of "discrediting" this or that opinion within the movement. On the contrary, our aim is to show these comrades that, despite all their contempt for theory the Stalinists, in this specific field, show more foresight and more theoretical courage than our advocates of the concept of the working class nature of the buffer states. The Stalinists have understood that it is necessary to give a theoretical expres-

sion to every empirical political definition. And, in this respect, they are ahead, and not behind, the Trotskyists who characterize the buffer states as workers' states but refuse to consider the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state in the light of their definition.

It is customary in dealing with the question of Yugoslavia as well as that of the buffer countries to refer to the famous question of the "relationship of forces." Those who characterize these states as workers' states explain that fundamentally, the transformation of the nature of the state in the buffer zone expresses the favorable relationship of forces for the bureaucracy as against the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in this country. Similarly certain comrades say: It is true that there had been class collaboration, but the dialectic taught us that there is an element of struggle in every collaboration and an element of collaboration in every struggle. The basic question is to know in whose favor was this situation resolved. Just as we have many times seen in the past "labor" ministers captives of the bourgeois government, why can't we characterize the bourgeois ministers in the buffer countries as captives of the workers' governments? Hasn't the outcome of events shown that the relationship of forces was favorable to the CP? In so far as this relationship of forces has undergone a radical change it has transformed the nature of the state. The exterior form by which this transformation has manifested itself is of little importance: whether this was through a pseudo-revolution as in Czechoslovakia or a simple parliamentary decree as in Roumania. The principal thing is the change in the relationship of forces.

This argumentation appears at first glance alluring as well as ingenious. But it is enough to reflect a bit to understand that far from resolving the problem it only poses it under a particular form. Because in the final analysis no one ignores the fact that in the life of classes as well as in nations the "relationship of forces" undergoes ceaseless modifications and most drastically so in periods of social upheavals. WHAT CHARACTERIZES THE MARXIST-LENINIST THEORY OF THE STATE IS PRECISELY THE AFFIRMATION THAT THIS CHANGE IN THE RELATIONSHIP OF FORCES DOES NOT SUFFICE FOR REALIZING IN LIFE A TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOCIAL NATURE OF THE STATE; THAT FOR THIS IS REQUIRED AS A "MIDWIFE" THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OLD STATE APPARATUS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A STATE APPARATUS OF A NEW TYPE. The argument from the "relationship of forces" only repeats what is said just as well by other adherents of the theory of the proletarian nature of the buffer countries such as the Stalinists, namely that in the particular condition of the buffer countries this transformation of the nature of the state was possible without the previous destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus.

Painful though it may be, we must revise essential parts of our theory if the facts compel us to do so. We are not doctrinaires but revolutionary Marxists. But in our opinion the revision or reformulation of our Marxist-Leninist theory of the state is not at all imposed upon us. But all those who characterize the buffer countries as workers' states are obliged to undertake such a reformulation. We await it with curiosity, patience and a bit of skepticism because we fear we will have to wait a long time.

The Metaphysics of Structural Assimilation

But the supporters of the theory of the proletarian nature of the states in the buffer countries do not desist.. According to them, all the theoretical questions we pose concerning nationalizations, the state apparatus, the conditions of their social transformation, etc., are idle questions. They resume the offensive invariably with the same argument: all these questions must be considered in the light of the action of the Soviet bureaucracy, in the light of the considerations which Trotsky set forth beginning with 1939 concerning the Baltic countries, Eastern Poland and Finland when treating with the subject of their structural assimilation. Thus Comrade Pablo wrote on this subject in his article "On the Class Nature of Yugoslavia": "The term workers' state (degenerated or deformed) is employed by the orthodox Trotskyist tendency in a very precise sense: to designate a society whose formation was not (and is not) possible without the revolutionary action of the masses (and occasionally, within given conditions and limits, comes about by the military-bureaucratic action of the Soviet bureaucracy)..." And Comrade Michele Mestre wrote in her report presented to the Central Committee of the PCI (October 1-2, 1949):

"When the Soviet bureaucracy is sufficiently powerful to insure its domination over a country (elsewhere she speaks of "countries which fall under its influence" -- E.G.) or a regime with a capitalist structure it must, in order to exploit the country it occupies, destroy the capitalist productive relations to be able to assure the ties between its economic regime and that prevailing in the USSR. Its exploitation cannot be realized otherwise than through the expropriation of the capitalists, of the landlords, and the statification of the means of production." (P. 15.)

Let us leave aside for the moment the numerous contradictions contained in the foregoing passages to which we shall presently return. Let us see first whether these two formulations are truly "orthodox," that is, whether they actually conform, as the two comrades claim, to the Trotskyist conception of structural assimilation as it was developed by Trotsky in 1939. The principal passages of Trotsky devoted to this question are well worth quoting in their entirety. Here they are:

I. "Most of the occupied territories will doubtlessly become part of the USSR. In what form?

"Let us for a moment conceive that in accordance with the treaty with Hitler, the Moscow government leaves untouched the rights of private property in the occupied areas and limits itself to "control" after the fascist pattern. Such a concession would have a deep-going principled character and might become a starting point for a new chapter in the history of the Soviet regime; and consequently a starting point for a new appraisal on our part of the nature of the Soviet state.

"It is more likely, however, that in the territories scheduled to become a part of the USSR, the Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large land-owners and statification of the

means of production. This variant is most probable not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist program but because it is neither desirous nor capable of sharing the power, and the privileges the latter entails, with the old ruling classes in the occupied territories.... Stalin's Bonapartist dictatorship bases itself not on private but on state property, the invasion of Poland by the Red Army should, in the nature of the case, result in the abolition of private capitalist property, so as thus to bring the regime of the occupied territories into accord with the regime of the USSR.. This measure, revolutionary in character -- 'the expropriation of the expropriators' -- is in this case achieved in a military-bureaucratic fashion. The appeal to independent activity on the part of the masses in the new territories -- and without such an appeal, even if worded with extreme caution it is impossible to constitute a new regime -- will on the morrow undoubtedly be suppressed by ruthless police measures in order to assure the preponderance of the bureaucracy over the awakened revolutionary masses." ("In Defense of Marxism" - pps. 18-19.)

II. "My remark that the Kremlin with its bureaucratic methods gave an impulse to the socialist revolution in Poland, is converted by Shachtman into an assertion that in my opinion a "bureaucratic revolution" of the proletariat is presumably possible. This is not only incorrect but disloyal. My expression was rigidly limited. It is not the question of "bureaucratic revolution" but only a bureaucratic impulse. To deny this impulse is to deny reality. The popular masses in western Ukraine and Byelo Russia, in any event, felt this impulse, understood its meaning, and used it to accomplish a drastic overturn in property relations.... Shachtman refers to Lithuania, Esthonia and Latvia where everything has remained as of old. An incredible argument! No one has said that the Soviet bureaucracy always and everywhere either wishes or is able to accomplish the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. We only say that no other government could have accomplished that social overturn which the Kremlin bureaucracy notwithstanding its alliance with Hitler found itself compelled to sanction in eastern Poland. Failing this, it could not include the territory in the Federation of the USSR." ("In Defense of Marxism," pps. 130-131, underlined by us.)

III. "'But where is the civil war in Finland which you promised?' demand the leaders of the former opposition, who have now become the leaders of the 'third camp.' I promised nothing. I only analyzed one of the possible variants of the further development of the Soviet-Finnish conflict. The seizure of isolated bases in Finland was as probable as the complete occupation of Finland. The seizure of bases presupposed maintaining the bourgeois regime throughout the rest of the country. Occupation presupposed a social overturn which would be impossible without involving the workers and poorer farmers in civil war.... In reality there was no necessity whatever for logically 'deducing' a possible civil war in Finland from a sociological definition of the USSR -- it was sufficient to base oneself on the experience in eastern Poland.... There was not the slightest ground for doubting that under analogous conditions the Kremlin would find itself compelled to repeat the same operation in Finland. That was all I pointed out. But conditions changed during the course of the struggle." ("In Defense of Marxism," pps. 174-175, underlined by us.)

We see clearly there are two fundamental differences between the texts of Comrades Pablo and Michele Mestre and that of Comrade Trotsky:

1. Comrade Trotsky says that the bureaucracy will be forced to destroy capitalism in the regions which it incorporates into the USSR. Pablo speaks vaguely of "new societies" outside the USSR, and Michele Mestre uses alternately such terms as "countries it controls, it dominates, it exploits," etc., instead of "regions it incorporates." The difference here is a major one. Trotsky's position is in effect not at all a new theory but a simple axiom: within the borders of the USSR capitalism and the Soviet bureaucracy cannot coexist. The position of Michele Mestre is an entirely new theory with far-reaching consequences: the bureaucracy is forced to destroy capitalism outside the USSR wherever it "dominates" (vague as this term maybe).

2. Comrade Trotsky says and repeats every time that this incorporation of foreign regions within the borders of the USSR is impossible without the action of the masses. Comrade Michele Mestre accuses the International of having spread on this subject false conceptions to those of Trotsky (whereas the International has in reality repeated literally what Trotsky has said on the subject).

However, these two differences between the conception of Trotsky and that of Pablo and Michele Mestre are not at all "formal"; they are fundamental. Involved here are the differences between the problems posed by the destruction of feudalism by the bourgeoisie and the problems posed by the destruction of capitalism by the proletariat (or by the workers bureaucracy).

When the bourgeois revolution was accomplished, the bourgeoisie had already previously become masters of the national economy; it had already previously gathered in its hands the essential sources of wealth, the essential means of production. For this reason the "making" of the bourgeois revolution could be a simple decree (like the decree of the night of July 4th, 1789 suppressing all semi-feudal privileges in France). We know that, even under extremely favorable conditions, the bourgeoisie could succeed in completely destroying feudal and semi-feudal survivals only to the degree that the masses carry through this revolutionary work by their own actions, momentarily escaping the control of the bourgeoisie. It does not remain any the less true that the destruction of semi-feudal economic relations has already become a fact before the bourgeois revolution which is essentially confined to the destruction of juridical forms (naturally this does not prevent them from being sources of revenue for tens of thousands of parasites and from involving a division of national surplus value unfavorable to the bourgeoisie).

The destruction of capitalism poses an entirely different problem. Far from having conquered the essential sources of national wealth before taking power, the proletariat will be obliged to leave a good part of it in the hands of the small and medium-sized bourgeoisie for years after the seizure of power. The bourgeois revolution consummates an economic process already three-quarters completed; the proletarian revolution opens an economic process (the expropriation of private owners of the means of production) which requires years for completion. At the moment when the political destruction of bourgeois

power is posed, its economic destruction implies the substitution of new relations for tens of thousands of vital economic relations in industry, trade, agriculture, technology, etc. This most profound revolution that humanity has known cannot be simply the result of a decree or of purely administrative measures. It can only result from the effective destruction of those tens of thousands of capitalist relations which constitute the whole of social life at the time power is seized. This requires action prolonged both in extent and in depth which can only result from the activity of hundreds of thousands of producers. The substitution of millions of "new men" for thousands of employers, traders, middlemen, speculators, and kulaks requires, according to all evidence, the assistance and intervention of these millions. Unless we wish to follow Chaulieu and his kind onto the absurd road of "classes which deliberately constitute themselves," it is obvious that the action of the masses is an indispensable element in every destruction of capitalism.

To be sure, both human imagination and history agree on this point: another means of effectively destroying the tens of thousands of real relations constituting bourgeois society is to physically destroy the men participating in them, by killing or deporting all capitalists, big and medium peasants, the middle classes, etc. The bureaucracy did this in the Baltic countries in 1939-40 where the entire big and middle bourgeoisie was physically exterminated. The concentration of the terrorist, military and police apparatus of a country, numbering almost 200 million inhabitants, against the wealthier population of the smallest countries in Europe, numbering altogether some six million inhabitants, made possible this new "solution." Here is a "destruction of capitalism" which did not actually require the action of the masses. BUT THIS VERY FACT GIVES ADVANCE INDICATION OF THE LIMITS OF STRUCTURAL ASSIMILATION, and emphasizes all the more the decisive importance of the factor "incorporation into the USSR" which provides the condition under which the terrorist apparatus of the bureaucracy is able to more or less effectively carry through this work of the "destruction of capitalism." Let us add that outside the territories incorporated into the USSR in 1944, this destruction has nowhere been realized, apart from the case of Yugoslavia. IT IS NOT AT ALL ACCIDENTAL THAT THIS DESTRUCTION HAS ONLY BEEN REALIZED PRECISELY IN THE TERRITORIES INCORPORATED INTO THE USSR WHERE IT WAS FORCED UPON THE BUREAUCRACY, as Trotsky so brilliantly demonstrated in 1939!

* * *

The Special Forms of Exploitation Introduced by the Bureaucracy in the Buffer Zone

This comparison between the position of Comrade Trotsky and that of Comrade Michele Mestre serves not only to demonstrate the identity of viewpoint between Trotsky and the Seventh Plenum of the International Executive Committee. It likewise casts a new light on the inherent contradictions in the position of Comrade Michele. In effect, on one hand she affirms, in the passage previously cited from her report, that in the countries which it "dominates," the bureaucracy is forced to destroy the relations of capitalist production in order to be able to exploit these countries. On the other hand she indi-

cate, in the same passage that this destruction of the capitalist productive relations in countries dominated by the bureaucracy is a necessity "in order to assure the connection between the economic regimes" of these countries "and that prevailing in the USSR." Finally in another passage of her document (p. 5) she writes:

"In all these countries, the bureaucracy introduces special forms of exploitation (mixed companies, Soviet shareholding corporations, preferential trade treaties and so forth) which appear in the framework of the economy of these countries like forms of capitalist exploitation. These special forms of exploitation resulting from the nature of the USSR (?) were only the expression of the incapacity in which the bureaucracy found itself, given the situation of the workers' movement (?) at the outset of the transformation of the nature of this zone of influence."

And she specifies -- moreover quite correctly, for "the situation of the workers' movement" is absolutely inadequate to explain the reasons for the particular policy of the bureaucracy in the buffer zones -- on page 4 of her document, that if Stalin has not proceeded since 1944, unlike 1939, to the structural assimilation of the buffer countries that is attributable; (a) to the relationship of forces with imperialism; (b) to "the internal crises in the USSR which compelled the bureaucracy to act as swiftly as possible to try and solve the difficulties flowing from it. The subjugation, the plunder and the war tributes imposed upon the buffer countries came as the consequence."

It is time to introduce some order into these manifestly self-contradictory ideas. First of all it must be admitted that the sequence of events in the buffer countries has been incontestably different from that experienced in 1939 and 1940 in Eastern Poland and the Baltic countries:

(a) In the latter case because German imperialism had abandoned the bourgeoisie of these countries to Stalin; because of other factors in the relationship of forces on which we need not dwell, the bureaucracy began by mobilizing the masses in order to crush the native bourgeoisie, then turned against the workers' movement and, in passing, completed the physical destruction of the bourgeoisie by mass deportations.

(b) In the first case, for a combination of reasons that we have many times set forth, the bureaucracy began by concluding agreements with the bourgeoisie and by bureaucratically regimenting the movement of the masses. It turned against the bourgeoisie at the moment when the workers' movement was frustrated and completely amorphous. THE FOLLOWING THEORETICAL QUESTION WAS THEREBY POSED FOR ALMOST ALL THESE COUNTRIES, with the possible exception of Czechoslovakia: CAN THE SOVIET BUREAUCRACY ACCOMPLISH WITHOUT MOBILIZING THE MASSES IN ANY WAY THAT WHICH, ACCORDING TO TROTSKY, MADE SUCH A MOBILIZATION INDISPENSABLE?

Furthermore Michele Mestre evidently confuses exploitation with social parasitism. The term "exploitation" cannot be employed for the parasitism of the bureaucracy within the USSR, at least not in a classical sociological sense; even as an agitational term it is

somewhat superficial. The exploitation of the buffer countries, on the contrary, is an exploitation in the sociological meaning of the word, which, as Comrade Michele Mestre herself reminds us, operates according to the laws of capitalist exploitation. The Yugoslav Communist Party has testified to this fact in quite correct terms worth citing here:

"The experience of our country after the war has demonstrated that there can likewise exist an exploitation through direct investments of foreign states even when these are managed by a socialist country...

"The application of the principle of the world market and world prices, that is to say capitalist prices, in relations between industrial countries and insufficiently developed countries constitutes exploitation of the latter. There exists above all an enormous difference in the productivity of labor between developed and insufficiently developed countries; furthermore, the big economically developed countries act like monopolies in trade with the insufficiently developed countries; finally, through their domination over the world market give a one-sided structure to the export of undeveloped countries. In this way, through this entire mechanism, the world market becomes an instrument for exploiting insufficiently developed countries...Experience shows us that the exploiting character of trade on the basis of the principle of the world market does not change, even when it is used in economic relations between socialist countries." (Speech by Josef Vilfan, Yugoslav delegate to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission - Tanjug Daily Bulletin, October 11, 1949. Our emphasis.)

In other words: inside the USSR the bureaucracy is a parasitic force which skims the cream from the national product. It utilizes forms of plunder which are not forms of capitalist exploitation. Outside the USSR, the bureaucracy is able without any social difficulty to utilize forms of capitalist exploitation. In this way the USSR exploited the Chinese-Eastern Railroad for many long years. The same can be said of investments made by the USSR in capitalist countries like France (banks, shipping companies, real estate, etc.). Also of this type are the enterprises the USSR took over following the armistice treaties consisting of the old German properties in Roumania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Finland and Austria. Of this type are the Soviet shareholding corporations in Eastern Germany and the mixed companies scattered throughout the buffer zone.

The fact that a workers bureaucracy operates, within the framework of a capitalist economy like a capitalist entrepreneur is neither new nor surprising. Before 1914 the German Social Democratic Party exploited the well-known Singer Sewing Machine factories; did they thereby cease to be capitalist properties? The French Communist Party exploits a gigantic printing plant employing hundreds of workers, does that cease to be a capitalist enterprise? Even in Lenin's time the USSR exploited railroads in China. Did these railroads thereby become "socialist" property within a framework of a capitalist economy? Why should what is clear in all these precise cases suddenly become incomprehensible in the case of Roumania or Finland? Naturally, it is false to say that these "special forms of exploitation" result

from "the nature of the USSR" or from the nature of a workers' bureaucracy. They result on the contrary from the nature of the capitalist economy into which this workers' bureaucracy finds itself projected! The bureaucracy has been compelled to fall back upon these special forms of exploitation in the buffer zone because it has been unable to plunder these countries through the same forms with which it plunders Soviet economy. By wishing to demonstrate too much Comrade Michele Mestre demonstrates precisely the contrary to her own thesis: the special character of the Soviet forms of exploitation in the buffer zone is the clearest proof of the socially different character of the buffer zones and the USSR!

But there is still more. Regardless of the reasons why the bureaucracy introduced these special forms of exploitation into the buffer zone, they are today a fact. They therefore manifestly demonstrate that it is false to say that the bureaucracy needs to destroy capitalism in a country that it "dominates" before being able to exploit it. Roumania, Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, from 1944 to 1948 exist to prove this point and no one characterized these countries as "workers' states" during this period. That does not at all invalidate the thesis of Trotsky who said only that the bureaucracy does not want to share the social surplus product with a bourgeoisie in those regions it incorporates into the USSR. In the rest of the world, the bureaucracy, as we know, sees itself obliged to "share" with the bourgeoisie even leaving it the lion's share!

On the other hand, the following question is posed: Do these notorious special forms of exploitation that the bureaucracy has introduced in the buffer zone facilitate or impede the economic "ties" (that is to say integration) between the buffer zone and the USSR? Here the reply has been given equally by theory (see the thesis of the World Congress) and by the facts. These "ties;" this economic integration as it becomes closer and closer, demands the abolition of these special forms of exploitation. The bureaucracy has been obliged to begin effecting this abolition: in Bulgaria, it has returned to the Bulgarian government the German property seized in 1944; it is preparing to dissolve the Soviet shareholding corporations in Eastern Germany. In the light of these facts we can pick up the thread of our reasoning in another way: **THE SOCIALLY DIFFERENT CHARACTER BETWEEN THE ECONOMY OF THE BUFFER ZONE AND THE ECONOMY OF THE USSR IS DEMONSTRATED AMONG OTHER THINGS BY THE FACT THAT THE SPECIAL FORMS OF EXPLOITATION, INTRODUCED INTO THESE COUNTRIES BY THE SOVIET BUREAUCRACY AND CORRESPONDING TO THE NATURE OF THEIR ECONOMY, PROVES AN OBSTACLE TO INTEGRATING THEIR ECONOMY INTO SOVIET ECONOMY.**

We can expand this formula and give it a more analytical expression. The economic policy of the bureaucracy in the buffer zone, a policy of plunder and capitalist exploitation, arose from the immediate needs of the Soviet bureaucracy in the framework of the reconversion crisis of Russian economy. As is always the case this immediate policy ran counter, not only to the historic interests of the USSR but even to the long-term aims pursued by the bureaucracy. Structural assimilation of the countries in the buffer zone into the USSR means an economic burden for the USSR; it is at the same time the bureaucracy's only means of definitively blocking off these countries from economic political and military utilization by imperialism. The

conflict between these two contradictory aims of the Soviet bureaucracy -- the exploitation of the buffer zone, and its stabilization as a defense area -- marks the contradictory character of the evolution of the buffer zone, explains why, even disregarding the relationship of forces, the bureaucracy has not been able to integrate these countries into the USSR or to structurally assimilate them. But to understand the contradictory character of this process it is necessary to begin by laying bare this "projection outside the USSR of the contradictory nature of the Soviet bureaucracy." It is necessary to break with every mechanical and metaphysical conception of the structural assimilation of the "dominated" countries, as a process exclusively determined by "the relationship of forces." In a word, it is necessary to think dialectically. Three years ago Comrade Marcoux, while disclosing the special forms of exploitation of the bureaucracy in the buffer zones, simply denied the tendency towards structural assimilation. Today Comrade Michele Mestre, while rediscovering the tendency towards structural assimilation, is led like Comrade Marcoux was yesterday to isolate her discovery from the context of other factors brought to bear on the situation. Once again the lesson is clear. THE EVOLUTION OF THE BUFFER ZONE CAN BE UNDERSTOOD ONLY IF NO ELEMENT IS TAKEN IN ISOLATION (THE RELATIONSHIP OF FORCES, THE "CONTROL OVER THE STATE," THE SPECIAL FORMS OF EXPLOITATION, THE TENDENCY TOWARDS STRUCTURAL ASSIMILATION) ONLY THROUGH AN ANALYSIS OF ALL THESE FACTORS CAN WE DISENTANGLE THE MOTIVE FORCES REGULATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUFFER ZONE. AND IT IS ONLY AFTER HAVING SPECIFIED THESE MOTIVE FORCES THAT WE CAN DETERMINE THE STAGE AT WHICH WE HAVE ARRIVED TODAY.

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III. THE ANSWER

The Nature of the Buffer Zone

By basing ourselves on all the preceding, as well as on the documentary information we have published elsewhere, we can give a more precise and more theoretically weighted answer to the question of the social nature of the buffer zone.

What we have in the buffer zone is a group of countries where capitalist society seriously shattered by the political, economic and social results of the war, has been maintained in a special form by the Soviet bureaucracy from the time it took over these countries on the terms of its agreement with imperialism regarding the division of Europe into spheres of influence.

This policy of the Soviet bureaucracy has been the outcome of its immediate economic aims, of its desire to suppress the independent workers' movement, of its relations with world imperialism, of its general political orientation (to utilize the buffer zone, like the Communist Parties throughout the world, as small change in its deals with imperialism). If, except for Finland and Austria, this has not ended in the restoration of a classical capitalism but in an entirely special type of capitalism, that is above all due to the exceptional weakening of the national bourgeoisie of these countries during the war which rendered impossible the reestablishment of private property in the means of production especially in heavy industry.

The policy of the bureaucracy essentially aims at transforming these countries into an area of economic, political and military defense and, at their economic exploitation. That is why, with appreciable nuances, all the governments these countries have known since the Soviet occupation have been Bonapartist governments of a new type: governments serving the Soviet bureaucracy, defending in the first instance the interests of this bureaucracy which in these concrete cases do not coincide either immediately or historically with the interests of the proletariat or of the national bourgeoisie.

But to the degree and in the measure that international contradictions are aggravated, imperialism utilizes every economic and political position left to the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie as a springboard for its anti-Soviet policy. In order to preserve the defense zone constituted by the buffer countries, the Soviet bureaucracy has been obliged to utilize both the governments of these countries in its service and its own military police apparatus to eliminate step by step the bourgeoisie from the political and economic life of the country. This elimination will be thorough-going and complete only to the degree that the assimilation of these countries into the USSR will be accomplished, that is to say to the degree that, with or without formal abolition of the frontiers, the economy, police, army, propaganda administration, clergy, etc. of these countries will have the same relations with the Kremlin as those of the Ukraine or Georgia, or, if you wish, of the Baltic countries. So long as this assimilation will not have attained this stage, the buffer zone will remain an uncertain area, a battleground of antagonistic international forces, and the bureaucracy cannot definitively count either on its economic aid nor on the army of these "independent" countries since a change in the relationship of international forces will diminish its weight upon them.

The fundamental tendency of the bureaucracy face to face with these countries, is therefore, for political, military and social much more than for economic reasons, that of their effective structural assimilation into the USSR. But this tendency ran up against powerful opposing currents, to wit:

(a) The attraction exercised upon these countries by the economic power of imperialism and the inability of the bureaucracy to supply the economic needs of these countries.

(b) The shortsighted policy of plunder pursued by the bureaucracy in these countries, and its tendency to avoid assuming the burdens resulting from an effective integration of their economy into Soviet economy.

(c) The orientation of the bureaucracy to utilize the buffer zone economically as a bridge toward the world capitalist market, and politically as small change in its deals with imperialism.

(d) The exceptional difficulties attending the task of the terrorist destruction of the middle and small bourgeois classes of all these countries, more deeply rooted and consolidated in national life than was the case in Russia.

(e) The exceptional difficulties confronting the bureaucracy in maintaining a monolithic police dictatorship over these countries, a dictatorship tending to produce in the ranks of the Communist Parties in power the social contradictions it is trying to stifle in the country, which threatens to plunge the Communist Parties into a permanent crisis.

(f) The political, ideological and moral pressure of imperialism and of world bourgeois opinion upon the Soviet bureaucracy and upon the ruling Communist Parties in the buffer zone.

(g) The underground but no less real opposition of the laboring and national masses in the buffer zone both against the economic exploitation of these countries and against the police dictatorship and national oppression which is already beginning to break out to the degree that the tendency towards structural assimilation becomes more definite.

For all these reasons, structural assimilation of the buffer zone has not been achieved and these countries present differences of a qualitative nature to the structure of the USSR:

(a) On the economic level this difference is expressed in the fact that there corresponds to the forms of stateized property dominating industry, trade and banking a mode of production which is still capitalist. The law of value still operates under its capitalist form (equalization of the rate of profit) in the buffer zone, through its relations with the capitalist world market and the weight possessed by the peasant market within its economy. This new historic case -- a capitalist mode of production without a national bourgeoisie in power -- can only represent a transitional stage of short duration, and essentially expresses the special historical origins of the buffer zone: extreme weakening of the bourgeoisie since 1944, dominating position of the USSR, etc.

(b) On the political level this difference is expressed in the fact that the Bonapartist state serving a force alien to the society of the buffer zone does not result in the destruction of the bourgeois state and its replacement by a state apparatus of a new type but is rather the product of the "degeneration" (from the capitalist standpoint) of the bourgeois state conquered by the Communist Party under these special conditions.

Historically, this difference is expressed in the fact that since the USSR is the product of a proletarian revolution and that all the territories annexed to the USSR receive from this fact the inherent qualities of a society issuing from a proletarian revolution, the buffer zone remains to this very day still the product of a compromise, of a modus vivendi between the Soviet bureaucracy and world imperialism, where each of the forces confronting each other can still advance or retreat by surprise as well as step by step, where transformation in both directions remain absolutely open through the cold method, where the return of one, of many or even all these countries can result from the bargaining between the Kremlin and Wall Street, and does not demand either a world war or civil war.

That does not at all signify that we have in these countries, classical bourgeois countries, that we can say the bourgeoisie is in power there, or that we can apply to them standards traditionally marking a bourgeois state. But the differences between this "bastard" that we conventionally call "bourgeois" (or, if one wishes: "a degenerated bourgeois state on the road to structural assimilation with the USSR") and the bourgeois (norm), are by no means as great as those between the "monstrosity" that the USSR today represents from the sociological point of view and the "norm" given by Lenin for a workers' state.

Our definition is also rendered more precise by the description given in the resolution of the Seventh Plenum of the International Executive Committee, and by a listing of the different variants of future development of these countries, a certain number of which can be enumerated as follows:

1. Return into the imperialist orbit against the resistance of the bureaucracy (in case of war, from an imperialist coup de force, from a coup de force of anti-Soviet "national" forces, etc.).
2. Return into the imperialist orbit through the cold road (with tacit acquiescence of the bureaucracy, leaving a Communist Party within the country as a source of trouble, but incapable of counterbalancing the anti-Soviet forces).
3. Return into the imperialist orbit by way of deals between the Kremlin and Wall Street.
4. Return into the imperialist orbit through a break "to the right" (under bourgeois, peasant, etc., pressure) of the apparatus of a Communist Party with the Kremlin.
5. Independent development in a socialist direction, through a break "to the left," under pressure from the masses of a Communist Party with the Kremlin, or by means of a victorious uprising of the working masses against the Stalinist dictatorship.
6. The re-integration into the Soviet orbit by a coup de force of a country which had previously emerged from it.
7. Re-integration into the Soviet orbit through deals with imperialism of a country which had previously emerged from it.
8. Maintenance of the present situation during a certain transitional period which from every standpoint risks rendering more and more probable one of the variants from one to five.
9. Acceleration of structural assimilation to the point where the economy is actually integrated into the Soviet economy and the state is actually a branch of the GPU.
10. Formal incorporation into the USSR.

These ten variants are all open today and none of them can be considered as improbable. The second has already been realized in

Finland and Austria. The first is absolutely open in Eastern Germany in case the Soviet troops evacuate their occupying zone. The third was realized in Azerbaijan in 1946. The fifth is currently being realized in Yugoslavia. The fourth remains possible in China (that is why, let it be said in passing, it is dangerous to use formulas like "Mao Tse-tung will certainly be another Tito"). The sixth or seventh remains possible for Finland and even for Austria, Germany and Yugoslavia. The eighth is most probable for countries like Hungary and Poland. The ninth is very probable for Roumania and Bulgaria. The tenth is perhaps the least probable today, except in case of war thus confirming what we have said from the beginning about the buffer zone.

From every standpoint, from the exposition of these variants as well as from the study of the concrete evolution of the buffer zone there imperiously emerges this conclusion: every conception of a uniform process of the buffer zone is absolutely and radically wrong. On this level we can say that, whatever the unavoidable errors have been which we have committed because of imperfect documentation and the unforeseeable complications which have been produced, the majority tendency in the International was the only one not only in our movement but in world public opinion, in understanding from the beginning this essential fact: the buffer zone, which is the object of the contradictions and the interplay of interests of many antagonistic forces, will not go through a common and undeviating evolution.

We know that metaphors are too often used to mask and not to disclose the essential features of an historical problem. Nevertheless, we think that the theoretical aspects of the question of the buffer zone can be most easily delineated with the help of a metaphor. The destruction of capitalism, as we have known it and theoretically conceived it, whether it be through the proletarian revolution or through the incorporation of certain regions into the USSR, is a simultaneous accelerated process in many fields: economy, relations between classes, state structure, norms of property, law, etc. In the buffer zone, the destruction of capitalism that the bureaucracy has been obliged to inaugurate is on the contrary a retarded and non-simultaneous process. It presents itself like a film from which each scene has been cut into its component pictures and is subsequently unrolled slowly picture by picture. The policeman loads a revolver, takes aim, the shot is fired and the victim falls -- these pictures, if they were spliced together in precise succession would have a determinate logical meaning if their correlation and their succession were drastically modified, then they would confront us with entirely new problems. Therein is at one and the same time the peculiarity of the buffer zone and the theoretical difficulty we encounter in characterizing this peculiarity in a precise manner.

The Nature of Yugoslavia

The analysis of the peculiarities of the development of Yugoslavia, as well as the preceding considerations on the buffer zone, permit us now to answer the question concerning the social nature of Yugoslavia.

We have already pointed out that unlike the other countries in the buffer zone what we have in Yugoslavia is not an aborted revolution

but rather an arrested revolution. The force which arrested it for what the Yugoslav Communists, at the time of their Fifth Congress, still shamefully called "reasons of foreign policy," (see Kardelj's report: "The New Yugoslavia and Socialism," p. 38), was the Kremlin. So long as the policy of the Yugoslav Communist Party let itself be guided by the needs of the foreign policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy, it was halted on the road to revolution, by the reconstruction of a state apparatus, bourgeois in its structure by pushing aside the committees, by introducing structural reforms in an administrative fashion:

"The principle form of the....assault delivered on the main capitalist positions in our economy were the trials brought against the reactionary criminals which were throughout regularly concluded by the confiscation of their goods." (Boris Kidric: "The Building of Socialist Economy in Yugoslavia," p. 25).

To be sure the scope of these reforms and the speed with which they were introduced differed from everything experienced in the other countries of the buffer zone. In the latter countries these were the work of governments serving the Kremlin and more or less isolated from the nation itself, while in Yugoslavia they were made possible by the magnificent revolutionary upsurge of the Yugoslav masses during the war. Nevertheless they likewise differed from the work of a proletarian revolution in the fact that they were not the product of the development of this upsurge stage by stage up to the construction of a proletarian state and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie by the action of the masses, but resulted from the curbing of this upsurge by the leading apparatus of the Communist Party and the substitution of administrative action for action by the people. The definition we can give for Yugoslavia between 1944 and 1948 is that of a country where an arrested proletarian revolution has not culminated in the construction of a state apparatus of a new type, but where the exceptional weaknesses of the bourgeoisie has no longer permitted the reconstruction of bourgeois state power. In other words, we have a typical example of the workers and peasants government whose possible existence is theoretically admitted in our Transitional Program, but which it defined as necessarily being a brief transition toward the dictatorship of the proletariat. If this transition has not been brief in Yugoslavia, if it actually has taken years before taking shape, that is because an external force has delayed if not prevented it: this force is the Soviet bureaucracy.

Only if the development of Yugoslavia is viewed in this light can a precise historical meaning be given to the break between Belgrade and Moscow. The reasons for this break reside, as has been many times explained, in the impossibility for the Soviet bureaucracy to establish complete monolithic control over the Communist Party in power. But pointing out these reasons only poses the problem and does not resolve it. For we have always, and quite correctly, given a sociological interpretation to the splits produced within Stalinism. We have explained the birth of tendencies in the Bolshevik Communist Party as fundamentally reflecting specific social forces. We have explained the sociological significance of the Reiss and Butenko fractions mentioned in the Transitional Program. Today we must pose the same question regarding the Yugoslav Communist Party. The reply

to this question is self-evident. We characterize the split -- with all the reservations, limitations, and customary qualifications -- as that of a current reflecting a proletarian revolt against the anti-proletarian, counter-revolutionary policy of the Kremlin. We cannot understand the historical sweep of this revolt without following the reasoning indicated above. Historically, the Yugoslav proletariat is revolting against the halting of its revolution by the Soviet bureaucracy and preparing to lead it to the end. That is why we say that the break with the Kremlin re-opens the road for the Yugoslav proletariat and the Communist Party of that country, towards the consummation of the socialist revolution halted in 1944. The facts confirm this analysis. The committees pushed aside beginning with 1945 and scarcely mentioned in passing in the Yugoslav press in the course of the following year suddenly see themselves placed in the center of the theoretical and practical attention of the Communist Party since the break with the Kremlin. In his report to the Fifth Congress of the Yugoslav Communist Party, Kardelj explains:

"This year, all the organizational weaknesses of our state apparatus became especially clear because exceptionally difficult tasks were set before it. It was shown that the lowest and the smallest units in this apparatus -- both in the National Committees and in the Ministries -- are still insufficiently developed and elaborated organizationally speaking. The consequences of this were felt especially in certain economic branches." (My emphasis - E.G., p. 58-59).

In March 1949, the question of reinforcing the committees in their capacity as organs of power was openly posed before the national assembly once more in a report by Kardelj. At that time there were constant and growing appeals for "the popular committees to become on the one hand genuinely popular, that is to say that they permit the laboring masses and their representatives to have a full measure of control and participation in the activity of the state administration. And that on the other hand they become technically suited to better fulfill their tasks." (Report to the Fifth Congress, pps. 50-60). These appeals have even recently taken an entirely special form (thus the letter of greeting from the Central Committee of the Slovenian Communist Party on October 12, 1949 to Tito openly pronounces itself "FOR THE CONTINUED DEMOCRATIZATION OF OUR POPULAR POWER" -- Tanjug Bulletin, Oct. 13). All these facts do not at all fit into the schema of a proletarian revolution having triumphed in 1944, being subsequently bureaucratized and beginning to degenerate and then being revived in the very course of bureaucratization through the break with the Kremlin. On the contrary they entirely fit our interpretation of a proletarian revolution halted by the action of a Soviet bureaucracy and which, having freed itself from this anchor, is now bounding forward thanks to a new wave of enthusiastic revolutionary activity pervading the masses and their communist vanguard.

Some comrades might object: but has this process of consummating the socialist revolution, which was previously slowed down, has this transformation of a workers' and peasants' government into a dictatorship of the proletariat (of a special form) already attained a point where we can call Yugoslavia a workers' state (and not: a degenerated workers' state)? The answer to this question is difficult, for it can be given only in the light of facts which are missing: how do the

committees actually function in Yugoslavia?; to what degree do the fine words in the preceding paragraph correspond to the present Yugoslav reality. But questions and answers seem to us purely incidental for the International and its tasks at the present time, the recognition of the existence of a break to the left with Stalinism; the definition of the Yugoslav Communist Party -- as a proletarian and progressive revolutionary current, extreme left centrist if you wish; the definition of the present historical situation in Yugoslavia as that of a new revolutionary upsurge of the masses now in the course of consummating the socialist revolution, amply suffices to define all the implications of the conflict which opposes the Kremlin to Yugoslavia, to define all the tasks of our movement confronted with this unexpected and extremely favorable development for the progress of the international revolution. At the same time, the description we have given of the Yugoslav situation and of the stage it is currently passing through permits us to recognize that everything is still in a situation of flux, and that relapses or leaps forward in diverse directions remain absolutely possible in the months to come. This definition although somewhat more "vague," is preferable to all more rigorous and simple formulas which run the risk of enclosing the perspectives of our movement in relation to Yugoslavia in dilemmas that events will perhaps not at all respect.

The Defense of Yugoslavia

Certain comrades believe that if we do not frankly and literally declare, with retroactive force, that Yugoslavia is a workers' state, degenerated or not, our defense of Yugoslavia against the attacks of the Soviet bureaucracy will be "devoid of principle." This has been a favorite theme among the few rare disciples of Shachtman who still remain on this unfortunate planet. Their sectarian blindness is equalled only by their evident bad will to understand what is really involved.

We do not at all find ourselves "disarmed" in the face of this formalistic criticism. The defense of the USSR has never been for us "the fundamental dogma of Trotskyist politics" as our adversaries wanted to characterize it. Trotsky and the Fourth International have repeated innumerable times that the defense of the USSR must be subordinated to the defense (or to the interests) of the world revolution. It did not matter to us whether the state issuing from the revolution of July 1936 in Spain was bourgeois or not in order to determine the absolute necessity of defending the Spanish revolutionary movement against all the blackmail, oppression and exploitation (even at that time!) of the Kremlin. We vehemently protested against the Kremlin's extortion of Spanish gold in exchange for the delivery of munitions without in the least permitting ourselves to be caught in the ridiculous trap of an argument of this type: "What do you mean by defending the gold of a bourgeois state against a workers' state!" What we defended was not at all whatever remained bourgeois in that state, but whatever was revolutionary in the still predominant movement of the masses. Trotsky likewise replied to wiseacres during the discussion of 1939-40 who posed questions to him about his attitude in the eventuality of the Russian army invading India shaken by revolution: "We will defend the Indian revolution!", without bothering whether at a given moment this revolution had already succeeded in giving

birth to a fully developed workers' state, or whether there only existed a dual power. All these examples are perfectly clear for us. What is involved is the defense of a developing revolution against a counter-revolutionary intervention by the Kremlin. That does not create the slightest complicated theoretical problem for us, neither yesterday in the case of Spain or India nor today in the case of Yugoslavia.

We say that we do ~~not~~ stand in the USSR against imperialism whatever survives of the conquest of October; but that does not at all imply that we would find ourselves in any situation whatever, at any moment whatever at the side of the USSR in a conflict arraying it against a non-workers state. We have never characterized Yugoslavia as an imperialist or even a classical bourgeois country. We have not even given this definition for any one of the countries in the buffer zone at the present stage. We have also specified as exactly as possible what we mean by the definition "degenerated bourgeois state," a purely conventional definition for the buffer countries with the exception of Yugoslavia. This definition does not at all imply that these countries are imperialist or imperialist bastions. Consequently the necessity of defending the USSR against these countries no longer has any historical meaning: we can expand the question and say that at the moment that imperialist countries or imperialist bastions (like Finland) are not involved, every conflict in which the Soviet bureaucracy tries to trample on the right of self-determination, either of a semi-colonial or colonial country, or of a capitalist country where the bourgeoisie finds itself crushed in war or by the movement of the masses, will find us irreconcilably opposed to the Kremlin. No one has a right to invoke today "the question of the defense of the USSR," even for bourgeois Germany. For four years we have demanded the withdrawal of the Soviet occupation troops from Germany; we have defended the right of the German people to determine their own destiny against the Soviet bureaucracy, even independently of the social nature of Germany. Why cannot we do this for Yugoslavia which is in full process of revolutionary transformation?

On this occasion, it would be useful to initiate a parenthetical discourse on the right of self-determination as such, and on its relevance to Leninist strategy, including its relation to a workers' state. There is a very rich literature on this subject which unfortunately is unknown to the greater part of our movement. Let us recall, for example, that Lenin and Zinoviev declared many times during the First World War that they would have been partisans of national defense in Belgium and Serbia in 1914 if the attack upon the national independence of these countries had been isolated, and not involved in an imperialist World War. And let us recall that Lenin, arguing against Bukharin in the beginning of 1919 affirmed the necessity of applying the right of self-determination to bourgeois states like Finland against a workers' state like the USSR, if this separation helps raise the Communist consciousness of the workers:

"Look at Finland; she is a democratic country, more developed, more cultured than we are. In Finland a process of separation, of differentiation of the proletariat is proceeding, proceeding in a peculiar way, far more painfully than was the case with us. The Finns have experienced the dictatorship of Germany; they are now experiencing the dictatorship of the Entente. And thanks to the fact that we

recognize the right of nations to self-determination, the process of differentiation has been facilitated there. I very well recall the scene when, at the Smolny, it was my lot to hand a document to Svinhufvud...the representative of the Finnish bourgeoisie, who played the part of a hangman. He amiably shook my hand, we exchanged compliments. How unpleasant that was! But it had to be done, because at that time the bourgeoisie was deceiving the people, was deceiving the toilers by declaring that the Muscovites, the chauvinists, the Great-Russians wanted to stifle the Finns." (N. Lenin: Report Delivered on the Party Program at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), March 19, 1919. Selected Works, Vol. VIII, p.341).

Does that mean that in the event of war we would in any case support Yugoslavia against the USSR (or as in the above cited instances, republican Spain or revolutionary India, or a Germany in revolt?) To draw such conclusions would be once again to think in a metaphysical and undialectical manner, to again abstract from the totality of the situation precisely that which should form the basis of our judgment. If a Russian attack upon Yugoslavia could be isolated from the conflict between world imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy, then we could assure Yugoslavia in advance of our unconditional support, even in case of war, without having the slightest need to declare it a workers' state. But unfortunately, such isolation appears more and more impossible. Tito himself has just declared most significantly that war on Yugoslav soil would inevitably become a world war. Let us say in passing, that is exactly why we regard this war as extremely improbable at the present stage. But clearly, if this war should break out, we would have to determine our attitude by a careful study of the exact relations between the Yugoslav struggle against Stalinist aggression, a progressive and highly revolutionary struggle, and the anti-Soviet struggle of imperialism, a reactionary and counter-revolutionary struggle in which we have no intention of remaining "neutral;" not to speak of giving any form of support to it. Our concrete attitude must then depend upon the concrete forms of the imperialist intervention in the conflict.*

*The analogy here with the Spanish civil war is complete; let us recall that Trotsky many times stated that we would have to change our attitude if the civil war had been transformed into a world war.

So long as this intervention remained a secondary feature of the situation (delivery of arms, credits, etc.), we could continue to support Yugoslavia by appraising the conflict as an isolated one. But from the moment that imperialist intervention began to assume the primary role in this highly improbable war; for example, as soon as imperialist aerial squadrons used Yugoslav soil as bases for bombarding the territory of the USSR, we would declare that the isolated conflict had been transformed into a world war and that Yugoslavia had been crushed between Stalinist pressure and the imperialist power of attraction. In such a world war we would be obliged to apply our strategy of defending the USSR, however painful that may seem in respect to martyred Yugoslavia.

To make this analysis still more concrete, it is necessary to state that Yugoslavia cannot remain for years as it is today, and especially cannot remain so in the event of war against the USSR. Actually, whatever the homogeneity of the Yugoslav CP leadership today, the social forces rending the country could not but produce a differentiation within the Yugoslav CP into four fundamental currents:

(a) A rightward current, ready to go beyond specific limits in making concessions to imperialism.

(b) A centrist current, attempting to solve the increasing difficulties by administrative methods, by reinforcing the state apparatus, etc.

(c) A Stalinist current, inclined in the last analysis to capitulate to the Kremlin rather than to Wall Street (a current lacking confidence in the ability of the world proletariat to rally to Yugoslavia's aid in the event of a bloody conflict.)

(d) A leftward current, which, confronted with the growing foreign pressure, would strive to expand the mass base of the regime, democratize the power and more and more appeal to the world proletariat (which would, for example, in the case of military attack, call for the formation of international brigades rather than call upon imperialist aid.)

In case of war, an increasingly energetic intervention of imperialism could only result in a shift in the relationship of forces within the Yugoslav CP and its leadership, reflecting a shift in the relationship of forces within the country.*

*If such a shift does not eventuate, Western imperialism would prefer, as in Spain, to conclude a compromise with its international enemy at the expense of Yugoslavia.

The change in our position in respect to an eventual war, under such conditions, would result not only from imperialist intervention but also from a new halt and recession of the revolutionary forces in Yugoslavia, in a fatal turning point for the Yugoslav revolution. Our position would remain as consistent in this eventuality as in the other.

Contrariwise, those comrades who, to justify our present defense of Yugoslavia, believe it absolutely indispensable to characterize Yugoslavia as a workers' state, would find themselves confronted with insurmountable methodological difficulties in case of armed conflict between Yugoslavia and the USSR. What position would they take in the war between two workers' states, one degenerated and the other less so, but more and more closely allied with imperialism? Do these comrades exclude the possibility that in the course of military conflict imperialism could actually seize bases in Yugoslavia? And how could they interpret that in the light of their conception of the social nature of Yugoslavia? Do they believe that could come about only as the consequence "of a civil war?" Would Yugoslavia thus be

retransformed into a bourgeois country "by the cold road?" Or, worse still, do they consider it necessary to continue defending it against the USSR, even if its territory serves as an imperialist base of operations? It is evident that, far from facilitating the formulation of our perspectives and our policy, the characterization of Yugoslavia as having become a workers' state in the full meaning of the term can only create supplementary difficulties, both from the theoretical viewpoint and the viewpoint of action. Our definition on the contrary permits combining an extreme boldness in action with an extreme prudence in theory, the most salutary combination for the future of our movement!

The Historical Perspectives in the Light of the Present Discussion

Arriving at this point in our analysis, we can leave the buffer zone and Yugoslavia and turn to more fundamental problems. "Every sociological definition is at bottom an historical prognosis"; this lucid formula of Trotsky's enables us to understand the decisive implications of the present discussion for all our perspectives and the very role of the Fourth International in contemporary history.

Two different appraisals of the stage of development Stalinism has reached today lies at the base of the discussion on the buffer zone. The reasoning of comrades who define most of the other countries of the buffer zone as workers' states implies that the USSR has more or less definitively succeeded in stabilizing its domination over Eastern and Central Europe without the need of actually incorporating the economy of these countries into Soviet economy. But this destruction of capitalism, this constitution of workers' states was possible in Eastern and Central Europe without a proletarian revolution, from the time that: (a) the USSR attained an overwhelming military and economic superiority over these different bourgeois countries; (b) capitalism found itself in an advanced state of decomposition there because of the war, etc.; (c) the workers' movement did not experience a strong enough upsurge to free itself from the Stalinist strait-jacket.

Unusual as these conditions may be, they are intimately bound up with the very character of our epoch. In event of the outbreak of a new world war before the internal crisis in the USSR overturns Stalinism, or before the proletarian revolution triumphs in the rest of the world -- an unlikely eventuality which is however not at all excluded -- THE SAME FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS WOULD BE REPEATED THROUGHOUT ALL WESTERN EUROPE AND THE GREATER PART OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA. Propelled to this point, the sociological definition of our comrades then becomes a concrete perspective: a perspective of the possibility of a growth and increasing development of Stalinism on an international scale in the years and decades to come!

On the other hand, the opponents of the theory of the "buffer zone countries as workers' states" start from a completely different perspective. They start with the hypothesis that it is impossible for the Soviet bureaucracy to more or less securely establish its domination over these countries without actually incorporating their economy into

that of the USSR. Consequently they believe that the bureaucracy is far from having attained its aims, today, in Eastern and Central Europe, and that it is doubtful whether it will ever attain them for the whole of the buffer zone. This analysis fits into the more general perspective that Stalinism has already attained and passed beyond the peak of its evolution and is at the beginning of its final disintegration. Even should war break out under conditions permitting the Russian army to occupy all Europe and the greater part of Asia -- which seems much more unlikely to us than to the above mentioned comrades -- that would not at all be, in our opinion, the beginning of the destruction of capitalism in these countries, but on the contrary the repetition on an infinitely larger scale of the initial policy of the bureaucracy in the buffer zone, that is: essentially counter-revolutionary action, alliance with the "local" bourgeoisies; more and more pronounced economic chaos, accelerated decomposition of the planned economy inside the USSR itself.

Up to now, we have justified our entire attitude toward Stalinism by judging its activity from the standpoint of the world revolution. We have never abandoned the criteria of historical materialism which consists in judging modes of production by their capacity for developing the productive forces. We have never condemned Stalinism from an abstract moralistic point of view. We have based our entire judgment upon the incapacity of Stalinist methods to effect the world overthrow of capitalism. We have explained that the shameful methods employed by the Kremlin cannot promote but only serve to impede the cause of the world revolution. We have explained the impossibility of overturning capitalism on a global scale "by any means whatsoever" when there is only one method to apply: that of the revolutionary mobilization of the proletarian masses through their organs of proletarian democracy. And we have appraised -- and condemned -- the structural assimilation of this or that province or small country into the USSR precisely from this point of view, by saying: what counts today is not the expropriation of the bourgeoisie on small bits of territory but the world destruction of the capitalist regime; and, so far as this world destruction is concerned, the lowering of the workers' consciousness, the demoralization and destruction produced on a world scale by the crimes of Stalinism are infinitely heavier in their consequences than these few isolated "successes."

Obviously the hypothesis of the destruction of capitalism, not in Esthonia or in Roumania or even Poland, but in all Europe and the greater part of Asia would transform our attitude toward Stalinism from top to bottom. The destruction of capitalism among more than half of humanity, embracing all the important countries of the world except for the United States, would radically change the balance of historical advantages and disadvantages of Stalinist activity. OUR CRITERION OF STALINISM FROM THE STANDPOINT OF ITS INEFFECTIVENESS AGAINST CAPITALISM WOULD LOSE ALL ITS MEANING.

Certain comrades, vaguely recalling the famous quotation from Trotsky in 1939, have tried to respond to this line of argument by claiming that the establishment of a relationship of forces favoring the bureaucracy against the proletariat and permitting the bureaucracy to attain its ends over entire continents, would signify in reality the complete prostration of the proletariat. That would then open the perspective of barbarism.

We cannot admit such reasoning as serious. Has the establishment of favorable relationship of forces between the Stalinist bureaucracy, heading the second military machine in the world, and the Polish proletariat, for example, signified the "complete prostration" of the latter? Can it not be admitted that the workers can fight valiantly for years only to succumb temporarily thereafter to the superiority of the Stalinist bureaucracy? Contrary to Shachtman, we have never characterized the social regime prevailing in the USSR as barbarism. In the final analysis, the development of the productive forces going on there augments the proletariat in number and in quality and far from definitively destroying them, increases the revolutionary powers of the latter. If the buffer zone today or the buffer zone tomorrow is defined as socially equivalent to the USSR, why should not the same reasoning be applied? Indeed, far from being a regime of barbarism, based on "the definitive prostration" of the proletariat, the social regime spreading throughout Europe and the greater part of South East Asia would be a regime superior to capitalism from the viewpoint of the development of the productive forces, and, in the end, would heighten the revolutionary and socialist qualities of the proletariat, instead of destroying them. The comrades adhering to the theory of the proletarian character of the buffer countries are far from envisaging this eventuality, but it would be the logical conclusion of the road on which they have embarked and would oblige us to revise from top to bottom our historical appraisal of Stalinism. We would then have to examine the reasons why the proletariat has been incapable of destroying capitalism on such extensive territories where the bureaucracy has successfully achieved this task. We would also have to specify, as certain comrades of the RCP have already done, that the historical mission of the proletariat will not be the destruction of capitalism but rather that of building socialism, a task which the bureaucracy by its very nature cannot solve. We would then have to repudiate the entire Trotskyist argument against Stalinism since 1924, a line of argument based on the inevitable destruction of the USSR by imperialism in the event of an extremely prolonged postponement of the world revolution. Even today, certain comrades explain that "the destruction of Stalinism will come about by its extension." All these revisions of Trotskyism would be perfectly justified if they corresponded to the facts, BUT IT IS NECESSARY TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO FOLLOW THROUGH THIS LINE OF THINKING TO THE END AND TO FORMULATE THE CONCLUSIONS IMPOSED BY THE FACTS!

It is evident that this thesis of the workers character of the buffer zone opens the way to Shachtmanite perspectives of the "three possibilities" once the simple question is put to the comrades defending it: What are your prognoses regarding the unfolding of an eventual war? If these comrades wish to be self-consistent they would have to reply that the Third World War could end in three fundamentally different ways, either by the victory of the world revolution; either by the victory of imperialism; or by the military victory of Stalinism, which would subsequently "decompose" owing to the impossibility of maintaining a monolithic control over the most advanced countries, etc. ONE CANNOT ADMIT THESE "THREE POSSIBILITIES" AND MAINTAIN AT THE SAME TIME THE STRATEGY OF THE INTERNATIONAL TOWARD THE COMMUNIST WORKERS; A STRATEGY FUNDAMENTALLY BASED UPON THE STALINIST INEFFECTIVENESS AGAINST CAPITALISM; UPON THE INEVITABILITY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE USSR BY IMPERIALISM IN CASE THE INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTION IS

DEFEATED. It would then be necessary for us to fall back upon a criticism of Stalinism based on its treatment of the working class in the countries it "dominates" and in that way likewise share the fundamental strategy of Shachtmanism.

We Remain Faithful To Our Program

On the contrary, the official interpretation of the Fourth International of the nature of the buffer zone maintains in its entirety our program as it is, with its full implications on the plane of perspectives, of the character of our epoch, and of the historical role of our movement. We proceed from the following definition of the present historical period: it is an intermediary period, opened by the revolutionary upsurge of 1943-44 which was powerful enough to render impossible any immediate continuation of the imperialist war aiming at the destruction of the USSR but not sufficiently strong to permit the liberation of the workers' movement from Stalinism. Whether war or revolution will come at the close of this intermediary period, it can have only two fundamental outcomes: either the triumphant proletarian revolution, liquidating both capitalism and the Stalinist dictatorship in the USSR, or the victory of capitalism liquidating what remains of the conquests of October. What has happened in the buffer countries does not invalidate but confirms this fundamental analysis. The history of the buffer zone has proved that Soviet expansion is not synonymous with the destruction of capitalism; that on the contrary this destruction, requiring the actual incorporation of countries (or provinces) into the USSR, contains so many difficulties if it is accomplished apart from the action of the masses that it takes years, not in order to realize it, but even to be started within a still very limited territorial framework. Our position therefore answers in advance all hypotheses regarding the eventual unfolding of the Third World War and wholly maintains our argument concerning the fundamentally ineffective nature of the anti-capitalist action of Stalinism. What the masses can realize through their revolutionary activity in several months, the bureaucracy cannot realize by administrative-terrorist methods beyond a very narrow territorial limit.

The discussion on the buffer zone is therefore essentially a discussion of the dynamics of Stalinism, on its place in the labor movement and in contemporary history. Only if conducted in this sense can it be understood for what it is: not a scholastic dispute on the degree of "bourgeois property" surviving in this or that country, but a discussion involving the entire future of humanity!

We believe our movement has demonstrated its fundamentally revolutionary and communist character by its ability, under very difficult conditions and without the enlightened guidance of Leon Trotsky, to avoid all fundamental errors, either to the right or to the left, in evaluating what has happened in the buffer zone since 1944. Any revision, either current or retrospective, of the results of this analysis, implying both a revision of the criteria employed and a revision of the Marxist theory of the state, could only have disastrous consequences for the Fourth International. It is the task of all revolutionary workers, all militants conscious of our essential historical mission to prevent them, the primary condition for a new upsurge of the workers' movement is to conserve the Marxist-Leninist heritage.

October 20, 1949