

TRINIDAD, BRITISH WEST INDIES — "Today while travelling by train I picked up part of a paper entitled THE WESTERN SOCIALIST. It was my first real introduction to socialism. The paper has convinced me that socialism is the only cure for humanity. Enclosed is ten dollars for literature on your list which I would like to read. Please rush as I am anxious to speed the glad tidings."

WORCESTER, MASS. — "Please send me twelve issues of THE WESTERN SOCIALIST. Never believed much in socialism until I read your magazine. Gives a new slant on the matter. May be what we need after all. Want to know more about it."

THE LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA — CANADA — "Please be advised that the Library of the University of Ottawa will appreciate receiving THE WESTERN SOCIALIST. [Readers are urged to get libraries within their vicinity to display complimentary copies of the WS which we are willing to send for the period of one year. We now have hundreds of leading college and public libraries throughout the world making the WS available to their readers]."

FOREIGN SECRETARY — SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN — LONDON "Our 43rd Annual Conference is over. It was a grand three days. In my opinion, one of the best conferences ever. No fireworks or oratorical displays. We had the largest delegation in our history and everyone got down to the business in hand in a good methodical manner. The organization was splendid, from the accommodating of provincial delegates to the sale of literature . . . It is good to meet comrades from Scotland, from Manchester, from Birmingham and other places; comrades whom one only sees once per annum . . . I am, at the moment, actively engaged in forming a new branch in Kingston-on-Thames, with every prospect of success."

LOS ANGELES COMRADE — "I wish you would put a bit in your paper to let the Canadian comrades know that Com. George Armstrong's wife, known as MA

Armstrong in Winnipeg, was buried here last Monday. I'm sure that the many comrades who enjoyed her warm and generous hospitality will sadly regret her passing."

SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN — LONDON — (cable) FRATERNAL GREETINGS FROM ALL COMRADES IN GREAT BRITAIN. BEST WISHES FOR SUCCESS. [Message to Party Conference in Boston.]

DETROIT COMRADE — (Telegram) — CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES FOR A BIGGER AND BETTER CONVENTION. LONG LIVE DETERMINATION TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD. [In a following letter, our comrade writes. "I sent a telegram to your convention and when I had finished reading it to the WU operator she asked me if she could ask a favor of me, that she was very much interested in learning something about Socialism and wished me to mail her some literature. I of course told her I would be glad to, and later mailed her Jan., Feb., and March issues of WS . . . I will do my part in ultimately meeting her and trying to develop and orientate her to our cause."]

NEW WESTMINSTER, CANADA — "I'll make one suggestion for what it may be worth. Having in mind that our chief task is the making of socialists, a process which has enjoined us to create a language of our own — the language of the working class. The terminology of that language is little understood by the ordinary peddler of the commodity labor-power. Hence, I would suggest that our Declaration of Principles be permanently placed inside the front cover page, and on the inside of the back cover page an Index Dictionary be a permanent feature defining such terms as capital, labor-power, value, materialist conception of history, etc."

MIAMI, FLORIDA — "Here's a good clipping from the "Miami Herald" of April 3rd: 'Coal operators as a group have no cause for pride in their resistance to costly safety recommendations, but they are

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# THE WESTERN SOCIALIST

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## TROTSKYISM TODAY

article by  
SPA member

On paper, the Trotskyist movement ("Fourth International") is quite an impressive organization. It claims parties and sections in about 30 countries. It has 2 weeklies in the United States—the "Militant" and "Labor Action." It possesses a number of bi-monthlies, weeklies and monthlies in England, France, Germany, and many other countries.

What is the reality behind the facade? What is the real strength of the Trotskyists? What has happened to them since Trotsky was murdered in August, 1941? Where are they going?

In order to answer these questions exhaustively, it would of course be necessary to examine Trotsky's theories one by one—to follow him into the maze of "Thermidors," "Permanent Revolution," "Objective Situations," and what not. This, however, is not intended here. It will only be necessary to examine his views on the nature of Russia and to show how the contradictions inherent in them have led his followers into unparalleled absurdities.

### Trotsky on Russia

In his book "The Revolution Betrayed" (1937) he denies that Russia is state capitalist. "Nobody knows exactly what (state capitalism) means." A couple of lines later he tells us what he thinks it means: "The substitution of state

property for private property." (p. 245.) We are then informed that this is "progressive," while state-ism, i. e., state intervention on the basis of private property and with the goal of preserving it is "reactionary." Why, then, is Russia not state capitalist? Very simple. "The first concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state to occur in history was achieved by the proletariat with the method of social revolution and not by capitalists with the method of state trustification. Our brief analysis is sufficient to show how absurd are the attempts to identify capitalist state-ism with the soviet system. The former is reactionary, the latter progressive." (p. 248.)

It's all very clear and simple now, isn't it? (1) State capitalism is progressive. (2) State-ism is reactionary. (3) Russia is progressive. (4) Therefore—it can't be state capitalism.

Some people, of course, would question whether the Russian Revolution was achieved "by the proletariat" and wouldn't be satisfied with MERE technical advance as an index of "progress" or "reaction." But these people Trotsky dubbed "the ultra left" and considered hardly worthy of attention.

### The Bureaucracy

Who are the rulers of Russia? Are they a class? Trotsky says "No." "The Soviet Union has no

possessing classes in the proper sense of the word, still she has a very privileged commanding stratum, **who appropriate the lion's share in the sphere of consumption.**" (p. 19) (our emphasis). "We cannot deny that it is something more than a bureaucracy. It is in the full sense of the word the **sole privileged and commanding stratum** in the soviet society." (p. 249). (Our emphasis.) "Bourgeois norms of labor and distribution still prevail." (p. 259). Yet this sole privileged stratum which gets the lion's share and is based on bourgeois norms is not a class. Why not? Because (a) means of production are nationalized; (b) the "stratum" has neither stocks nor bonds; (c) it can't transmit property rights to its heirs (p. 248-249).

The Trotskyites have been telling us for the last ten years that nationalization "without workers control" is just state capitalism. If this is so, have we got "workers control" in Russia? If so, what is the "sole privileged stratum" doing there? What or whom does it control? We also recall a small matter of state bonds carrying interest. We remember the millionaire collective farmers. As for inheritance, we "discover" a little decree of April 1, 1935 (i. e., before Trotsky's book was published), which sanctioned the transfer of **state loan bonds, bank accounts,** and negotiable paper to individuals other than the legal heirs. In addition, the decree of March 14, 1945, abolished the last restriction on inheritances. Contradictory to Trotsky's support of Russia as a workers' state, whatever that is, is his recognition that: "The right of testament is inseparable from the right of property. The victory of the bureaucracy in this decisive sphere would mean its conversion into a new possessing class" (p. 254), and would lead to a **"complete liquidation of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution."** (p. 249.) (Our emphasis).

True, the official monthly of the

official Trotskyist wing in the U. S. (S. W. P.) published the decree. What was its comment? Did it admit that the "bureaucracy" had become a class? Did it recant and tell its readers that now there was a "complete liquidation" of the alleged conquests of an allegedly proletarian revolution? Nothing of the sort. "A study of this decree discloses a further deep incursion under the Kremlin regime into the economic foundations of the USSR." (Fourth International, April, 1946, p. 99.) That was all.

#### Degenerated Workers' State

We saw at the beginning that Trotsky denied that Russia had state capitalism. What then was his view? Fundamentally, he maintained that it was a society which was neither capitalist nor socialist, whose social foundations, however, were "progressive" and essentially sound. A revolution in Russia, in his opinion, would have to be a **POLITICAL** and not a **SOCIAL** revolution—it would have to sweep away the "ruling stratum" but would not have to alter the social structure. This conception of a "degenerated workers' state" is still upheld today by the official Trotskyists. Trotsky and his disciples claimed it was possible to support the "progressive" base, while at the same time oppose the "reactionary bureaucracy." To give their own phrasing: "While explaining to the Soviet and world proletariat the dangers which the Stalinist bureaucracy holds in store for the world revolution by its reactionary policy, and while calling for the immediate overthrow of the bureaucracy, the Fourth International does not revise its position on the character of the USSR as a degenerated workers state . . . [It] does not lose sight of the importance for the proletariat of defending against imperialist and reactionary attacks, the nationalized and planned economy of the USSR and the progressive economic reforms in

the countries controlled by the USSR." (Resolution of the Intern. Confer. of the Fourth Int'l. in "Fourth International," June 1946, p. 172.)

Few of the Trotskyists seem to realize that this concept marks a complete throwing overboard of the fundamental principles of Marxism. It presupposes that you can divorce the political superstructure of a country from its economic basis. It presupposes that a country can in some way evolve towards socialism with a "reactionary" and anti-socialist ruling class in the saddle. It presupposes, further, that Stalin's concept of "Socialism in one country," which the Trotskyists allegedly reject, has some foundation in reality.

The practical consequences of this erroneous concept have landed the Fourth International in a maze of contradictions from which it vainly attempts to escape from time to time. During the war, for instance, it admitted that it was an imperialist war, yet maintained that workers everywhere should support the "progressive basis" in Russia, at the same time fighting against the "bureaucracy." How this could be done was never shown. It should be obvious that support, in any shape or form, of the "progressive basis" meant, in practice, support of the "bureaucracy."

Further, this idiotic (there is no other word for it) idea leads them to gasp for breath at every new turn of Russian Imperialism. Every week, "The Militant," every month the "Fourth International" speak of **"further degeneration," "new inroads," "chauvinistic tendencies,"** without ever reaching a point where this "degeneration" stops.

With such blindness do they cling to this concept of a "degenerated workers' state" that they are incapable of discerning the real role of the Russian ruling class in Europe today. Control of parties and trade unions by the secret police becomes "progressive."

#### Sloganeitis and Jargonese

What of the rest of their activities? Are they likely to lead to socialist understanding? Are they helping in educating the workers toward socialism?

The answer is No.

ALL the parties, sections, groups, etc., claiming to be Trotskyist, whether inside or outside their official organization, are out-and-out reformist organizations; moreover organizations which uphold erroneous and dangerous concepts of "leadership."

In order to make the argument more universal and applicable to the whole of the Fourth International, we shall take the general "Transitional Demands" which form the broad basis of all local Trotskyist programs. These include: Sliding scale of wages; Price and Market Control by Committees of Housekeepers, Poor Peasants, and Small Merchants; Division of available work among all available hands; Workers' Control of factory management of supply, of hiring and firing, and over-all production through the medium of Factory Committees; Nationalization without Compensation under Workers' control, etc. ("Fourth International," June, 1946, p. 181.)

Whatever may be said about these "demands," at least one can roughly understand what they mean. The same, however, cannot be said of the 101 slogans the Trotskyist put forward with regard to Europe, India, etc. It is over these slogans and the precise "meaning" and "interpretation" of them that most of the European splits and minority disagreements occur.

What is supposed to happen when these slogans are put before the "masses?" Simply that they are alleged to express the "subjective desires" of these "masses"; the masses are to recognize this, and, with the right slogan, presto, flock to the Trotskyist parties, making them mass parties. Then, having

sown illusions that these slogans and transitional demands will in some way be achievable and will solve the "urgent problems of the masses," the Trotskyists will turn round, tell the masses that the demands and slogans REALLY don't solve anything, and "lead" them to "Socialism" (Trotskyist variety). Note well that even if these demands were carried out, they would not remove the exploitative class character of its program.

Simple, isn't it? When, however, the slogans fail to attract the "masses," the next conference recognizes "errors in our perspective", and alters or even reverses the previous slogans. This writer confesses to being unable to make head or tail of most of the material published on this question. It seems to him as if it is merely the stringing together of vague, contradictory, and often meaningless jargon. What the relation of it all to the actual struggle for socialism is supposed to be, he cannot say. If there is any relation, he has been unable to discover it.

#### How they get votes

The Trotskyists follow the usual practice of reformist vote-catching. In France, they went as far as to propose a pact with the Communist Party for the withdrawal of candidates, in return for support for other candidates. The C. P. rejected the offer. In the U. S. they not only put forward their own candidates, but endorse "progressive labor" candidates. That the workers voting for Trotskyist candidates do not vote for them because they understand their program is obvious.

To give but one example: In the last United States elections the Socialist Workers' Party and the Workers' Party (Trotskyite organizations) put forward a number of candidates. In New Jersey, the SWP had a Mr. Kohlman as Governor and a Mr. Breitman as senatorial candidate. Kohlman got 9,829 votes.

If these had been genuine pro-Trotskyist votes, i. e., votes of workers who had understood the Trotskyist position and supported it by their votes, one would have expected a similar vote for Breitman. But he polled only 4,978 votes. What had happened to account for the difference of 5000 votes? Let "The Militant" official weekly of the SWP tell you:

"The difference in votes between Kohlman and Breitman is attributed to the fact that Breitman had the most unfavorable position in the senatorial column of the ballot." ("Militant," Nov. 30, 1946, p. 1.)

This shows clearly that 5000 workers must have voted without even understanding what they were voting for.

#### "Leftwing" Stalinists

What then, if our analysis is correct, is the real role of the Trotskyists today?

Any reader, familiar with the history of the Stalinists, will have noticed the similarity of Trotskyism with the Communist Party in its so-called "revolutionary period." And here, indeed, is the clue. Trotskyism, in the main, is nothing but the "left wing" of the Communist Party. In spite of the mutual vituperation between the two Trotskyism is following the same path as Stalinism. The "slogans," the "transitional demands," the self-styled "vanguards," the splits, the expulsions, the increasing bureaucratization of the party—these are nothing new. They have happened before in the rise and decline of the Stalinist. They are happening now in the rise and decline of the Trotskyist.

That this interpretation is correct is manifested by the acute embarrassment the Trotskyist movement suffers when the Stalinists take what is called a "left turn." This has happened recently with the clash of American and Russian Imperialisms. Once more the

Stalinists use pseudo-revolutionary phraseology. Alas! it then happens that there is little difference between the "genuine slogans" of the Trotskyists and the "false slogans" of the Stalinists. How to explain to the "masses" that the Trotskyists are the "REAL," "GOOD" leaders and the Stalinists the "FALSE," "BAD" leaders? How indeed?

Thus we read the following lament: "Our theoretical criticism of Stalinism had not succeeded in gaining a hearing among . . . workers in the past." But a "continuation of the open class-collaborationist (C.P.) line would have led to splits and significant resignations." But the new "left turn," we are told, "will halt that process for the time being and cement these critical elements to the Communist Party again . . . **The swing of large sections of the workers to the Communist Party as a temporary phase is inevitable.**" (From a resolution adopted at the 1946 conference of the "Revolutionary Communist Party" (Trotskyist) in their organ "Socialist Appeal," London, Sept., 1946.) (Their emphasis.)

This is indeed an admission of political bankruptcy. As for the question of "good" and "bad" leaders, what an anonymous reviewer of some Trotskyist booklets on Spain said years ago holds good in general: ". . . The question that comes to one's mind is this: Why did not the 'revolutionary masses' follow the 'good leaders?'" "Well," say the "Marxist," "the revolutionary Marxist vanguard was not strong enough to build a strong Bolshevik Party in Spain, which would have applied correct and uncompromising revolutionary leadership and achieved in Spain the victory gained in Russia in 1918." "But why was not the revolutionary vanguard strong enough to do all those things?" "The revolutionary vanguard was not strong enough because the masses followed the misleaders." "But why did the revolutionary masses, hot in their

revolutionary upsurge, follow the misleaders?" "Alas, we are back where we started from. This idealistic nonsense, presenting social change as a game of leaders and slogans, is sold to all comers as revolutionary Marxism." ("International Review," No. 1, 1939, page 16.)

#### What is Trotskyism's Attraction?

It is essential for socialists to know the real strength and the why and wherefore of political movements to which they are opposed. In spite of all that has been said above, it would be a mistake to dismiss the Fourth International with a shrug of the shoulders. It has attracted to its ranks a number of workers; it has some, if little, influence in the trade unions and manages to infuse its adherents with great enthusiasm. Well-organized and successful drives are conducted by it, and it has been able to raise relatively large sums of money for propaganda purposes. It is only if we attempt to answer the why and wherefore of all this that we can understand the reasons for its relative strength. And unless we understand these reasons, our arguments and opposition is weakened.

The main reasons, to this writer, appear to be the following: (1) The fundamentally subjective approach of Trotskyism to history, which gives the illusion to those participating that they are "doing" something. (2) Linked with this, its fundamentally romantic character, the playing at revolution, with a capital "R." (3) The undoubted sincerity of the large sections of Trotskyists. (4) The reluctance to give up the illusion of the "Soviet Myth," at the same time unable to entirely withstand the weight of evidence on the real conditions in Russia. (5) The wave of sympathy and also the publicity which was the result of the Moscow "Witchcraft" Trials.

We must leave out points 3, 4 and 5 for reasons of space.

On the first two points we cannot do better than quote a writer who has expressed the real issue extremely well.

"I have long suspected that the vogue which Trotsky has enjoyed among American radical intellectuals must be attributed much less to his towering achievements as a practical socialist theoretician than to a central trait in the heart of his theory which makes of him in many respects a very poor representative of Marxian thought. I refer to his voluntarism and subjectivism.

"Though he succeeded in wrapping his essentially voluntaristic theory in Marxian cloth, Trotsky NEVER WAS REALLY ABLE TO GRASP THE ESSENCE OF MARXIAN THOUGHT, NAMELY THAT THE TIME FOR A SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION COMES ONLY WHEN A DESIRE FOR SOCIALIST ACTION HAS SEEPED DEEPLY INTO THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE MASSES, and that there is no way of attaining a socialist goal if there is no self-activity of the masses. His vanguard theory is based on the belief that a group of enlightened minds, possessed of a strong will, is capable of marching the masses toward freedom. The cause of freedom coincides with the cause of the vanguard.

"In America, the masses, for a variety of historically ascertainable reasons, never have felt the need for socialist activity. The radical intellectual therefore has always been TEMPTED TO LEAD THE MASSES TO SOCIALISM 'BEHIND THEIR BACK,' to act on behalf of the masses instead of with them. There is that frustrating gulf between what the radical intellectual feels to be necessary and the desperately slow process of mass awakening. The urge to overcome this lag through radical action of a minority is almost impossible to withstand . . .

"Trotsky could easily appeal to the imagination of the American intellectual, — this hero who so boldly seemed to defy history, who challenged it with his assertion that there should be a new international because he willed it so, and who never could understand that organizations are the final crystallization of a

long ripening of mass consciousness, that AN INTERNATIONAL CAN BE BUT THE CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT OF A NEW MASS MOVEMENT, NOT ITS STARTING POINT . . .

"For most American radical intellectuals, the class struggle always has been more of an esthetic than a sociological concept. "Class struggle" was not the uninspiring routine of organizing, the painful and tedious process of education, the slow building up of a circle, a group, of an organization; it was barricades and red flags, bloody battles and resounding proclamations." (Louis Clair in "Politics", Oct., 1946. p. 326.) (Our emphasis.)

Whatever may be said of Clair's opinion of Trotsky as "a practical socialist theoretician," we think that this quotation hits the nail right on the head. It shows why the genuine socialist movement is still small—because it realizes that the "desperately slow process of mass awakening" cannot be speeded up by slogans or revolutionary sounding resolutions. It shows that the Trotskyists are just another group of people in search of a "short cut," a royal road which would avoid the "painful and tedious process of education." It is this fact, and the consequent self-created glamorization of the Trotskyist movement which seems their main "strength" (in the sense that it evokes enthusiastic support without knowledge to back it up), but, in reality, constitutes their main weakness.

For, let there be no mistake, socialist understanding, as the essential prerequisite for socialism, cannot be brought about by a whisk of a magic wand with the head of Trotsky carved upon it. The process of spreading socialism is not a romantic process. Those who seek to bridge the gap between capitalism and socialism by taking short cuts inevitably land in a morass of reformism, disillusionment, and apathy.

HENRY HOLMES

## AN INTRODUCTION TO CAPITALISM

Value, Price, and Profit, Karl Marx, Kerr ed., 128 pp.

Any analysis as complete as the research into capitalist economy undertaken by Karl Marx in **Capital** necessitates such an attention to detail as to make the work a difficult one for the novice. This is an inescapable consequence of the scientific method of investigation. Therefore **Value, Price, and Profit** is an especially useful work, since it is, as Dr. Aveling says in his preface, in a partial sense an essence of the first volume of **Capital**. It should not, however, in any sense be regarded as a substitute, since there is so much that is necessarily left unsaid in the shorter work.

At the General International Congress of 1865, the contentions had been put forward by one of the delegates, a Mr. Weston, that it was useless for the workers to seek a rise in wages because, altho a rise money wages would be maintained real wages (the quantity of goods which can be bought with the money wages) would be maintained at the former level by a rise in the prices of commodities. In essence the delegate was arguing that prices are determined by wages, an argument still put forward by capitalists today in their opposition to wage increases, even tho, as Marx points out, that theory was fundamentally destroyed by Ricardo in 1817. It was to expose the fundamental errors of Mr. Weston's argument and to arrive at a correct understanding of the matter that Marx wrote **Value, Price, and Profit**.

Altho in opposing wage increases, capitalists argue that prices are determined by wages; on the other hand, in opposing attempts to control the commodity market they argue that prices are determined by supply and demand. Such is the venality of capitalist "economists".

Nevertheless, the latter view is correct, as Marx demonstrates, and from day to day commodity prices fluctuate in response to the changes in supply and demand.

Over a period of time the ups and downs in the price of a commodity tend to cancel each other out, bringing to light an average price around which the market price fluctuates. Price, on the average, coincides with the value of a commodity. If the nature of value can be explained, the rest offers comparatively little difficulty. How then, Marx asks, is value determined?

The value of one commodity may be expressed as equal to the value of various quantities of countless other commodities, as a pair of shoes is equal to a bushel of wheat, 5 oz. of silver, a quart of brandy, etc. Yet since however it is equated, the value always remains the same, "it must be something different from and independent of these different rates of exchange with different articles." In other words if the values of given amounts of two quite different commodities can be equated to each other (and this is what is actually done with all commodities in purchase and sale, money serving only to facilitate the act), then the commodities must have some quality in common which determines their values.

Now, since the values of commodities are social functions of those things, and not natural functions, these values must arise from some common social substance. This substance is labor, of which all commodities are the product. But value arises not from just any labor, but from social labor, from labor which not only produces an article satisfying some social want, but which itself forms a part of the total labor of society. Furthermore, since it would be absurd to assume that the lazier or the clumsier the worker, the more