

**Resistance Marxist Library**

**The Transitional  
Program & the  
Struggle for  
Socialism**

**Leon Trotsky**

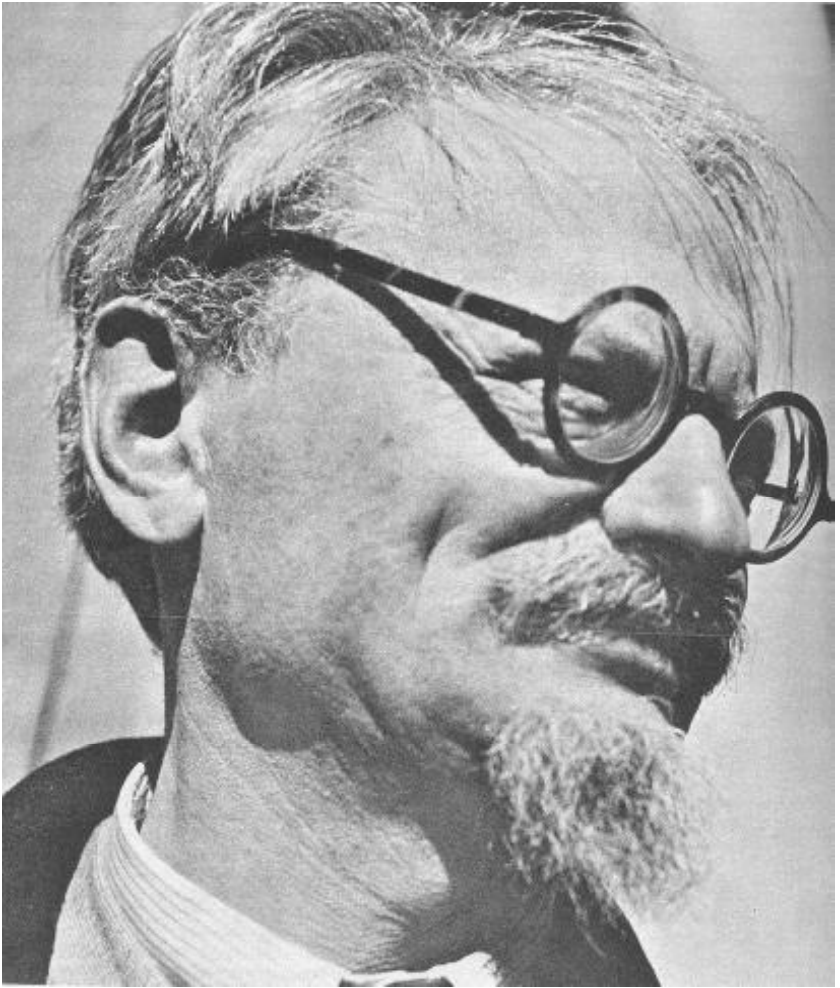
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Leon Trotsky (1940)

# Introduction

*By Doug Lorimer*

## I

The “Transitional Program”, as it later became known, was drafted by the exiled Russian Marxist revolutionary Leon Trotsky and adopted as the basic programmatic document of the Fourth International at its founding conference held on the outskirts of Paris in September 1938 under the title “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International”.

The Fourth International was founded on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War by the Marxist cadres that Trotsky had won around the world in the 1930s to the struggle to defend the revolutionary internationalist politics of the early years of the Third, or Communist, International against the nationalist-reformist politics of the petty-bourgeois Soviet bureaucracy led by Joseph Stalin.

In discussions in Mexico City with James P. Cannon and other leaders of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States prior to the founding conference of the Fourth International, Trotsky pointed out that the “Transitional Program” was “not a complete program”. A complete program, he explained, “should have a theoretical exposition of the modern capitalist society in its imperialist stage”. Further, the document was “not complete because we don’t speak here about the social revolution, about the seizure of power by insurrection, the transformation of capitalist society”.<sup>1</sup>

A complete Marxist program, then, would contain a theoretical exposition of the fundamental characteristics of capitalist society in its imperialist stage, the seizure of political power by the working class and the objective tasks and line of march of the working class in replacing the capitalist social order with a classless, socialist society. Indeed, as was noted in the first complete Marxist program — the “Communist Manifesto” of 1848 — it was precisely their common understanding “of the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results” of the proletarian movement

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that distinguished the revolutionary communists, as the politically advanced contingent of the working class, from the great majority of proletarians.

The “Transitional Program” was more limited in its purpose. While written in parts more in the form of a public manifesto, it was, Trotsky explained in 1938, “a program of action from today until the beginning of the socialist revolution”.<sup>2</sup> The central concept behind the “Transitional Program” was stated in the following passage from the document itself:

The strategic task of the next period — a prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda, and organisation — consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation). It is necessary to help the masses in the process of daily struggle to find the bridge between the present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.<sup>3</sup>

In addressing himself to the problem of formulating such a system of demands, Trotsky based himself on the past experience of the Marxist movement in formulating a series of measures that the revolutionary workers would propagandise and agitate for the proletariat to fight for in order to overturn the capitalist private profit system and replace it with a democratically controlled system of social production oriented toward the satisfaction of human material and cultural needs.

## II

The first such system of transitional measures was included by Marx and Engels in the “Communist Manifesto”. In the section on “Proletarians and Communists”, Marx and Engels argued that the “first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy”. They went on to explain that the working class “will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class”, adding:

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolu-

tionising the mode of production.

These measures will of course be different in different countries.

Nevertheless in the most advanced countries, the following will pretty generally be applicable.

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.

2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.

3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.

4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.

5. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.

6. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.

7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of wastelands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.

8. Equal liability of all to labour. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.

9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equitable distribution of the population over the country.

10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc., etc.<sup>4</sup>

Marx and Engels wrote the "Communist Manifesto" in anticipation of the outbreak of a bourgeois revolution in Germany, which, occurring under more advanced conditions of capitalist development than the bourgeois revolutions in England in the 17th century and France in the 18th, would "be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution". Consequently, in the manifesto they urged the "Communists to turn their chief attention to Germany". The tactics Marx and Engels argued that the proletarian revolutionists grouped together in the Communist League should pursue in Germany were to "fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolutist monarchy, the feudal aristocracy, and the petty bourgeoisie", while at the same time instilling "into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in order that the German workers may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce

along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Germany, the fight against the bourgeoisie itself may immediately begin”.<sup>5</sup>

To facilitate this tactical line, Marx and Engels wrote a short policy platform entitled “The Demands of the Communist Party in Germany”,<sup>6</sup> which was distributed by Communists in Germany on March 31, 1848 and published at the beginning of April by various democratic German newspapers. The platform listed 17 measures which it declared were “in the interests of the German proletariat, petty bourgeoisie and peasantry to work energetically for the implementation of”. Only through the realisation of these measures, it stated, “can the millions of German people, who have up till now been exploited by a small handful, and whom some will attempt to maintain in renewed oppression, get their rights, and the power that they are due as the producers of all wealth”. The platform included measures to achieve a radical democracy (to transfer power into the hands of the producers) and to bring about immediate improvements in the living conditions of the exploited masses, for example:

1. The whole of Germany shall be declared a single and indivisible republic.
2. Every German over twenty-one years of age shall be able to vote and be elected, provided he has no criminal record.
3. Representatives of the people shall be paid, so that workers, too, will be able to set in the parliament of the German people.
4. The whole population shall be armed ...
5. The exercise of justice shall be free of charge.
6. All feudal dues, tributes, duties, tithes, etc., which have oppressed the rural population until now, shall be abolished, with no compensation whatsoever ...
12. All civil servants shall receive the same pay, without any distinction other than that those with a family, i.e., with more needs, will also receive a higher salary than the rest.
13. The complete separation of Church and State. Ministers of all confessions are to be paid only by their congregations ...
15. The introduction of severely progressive taxation and abolition of taxes on consumption.
16. The establishment of national workshops. The state is to guarantee all workers their existence and care for those unable to work.
17. Universal and free education for the people.

But the platform also included a series of measures that made “despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production”, i.e., that were transitional to the centralisation “of all instruments of production in the hands” of the democratic power of the producers:



7. The estates of princes and other feudal lords, and all mines and pits, etc., shall become state property. On these estates, large-scale agriculture is to be introduced for the benefit of all and using the modest modern scientific aids ...

10. One state bank shall replace all the private banks, and its note shall be legal tender.

This measure will make it possible to regulate credit in the interests of the whole population and thus undermine the domination of the big money-men ...

11. All means of transport: railways, canals, steamships, roads, stations, etc. shall be taken over by the state. They are to be transformed into state property and put at the service of the needy.

Marx and Engels' expectation that the German bourgeoisie would lead a revolutionary struggle against the absolutist monarchies and landowning nobility and create a unified German parliamentary nation-state were not fulfilled. During the revolutionary upsurge that swept Germany in 1848-49, the German bourgeoisie vacillated and compromised with the monarchist regimes. The Communists, who could count in their ranks only a few hundred members, were far too weak, numerically and organisationally, and too divided on tactics, to provide any alternative leadership for the popular revolutionary movements, which were eventually crushed by the armies of the monarchies.

### III

Marx and Engels' expectation that a proletarian revolution was impending in Western Europe was based upon the assumption that the periodic crises of overproduction that had erupted since the formation of the world capitalist market at the beginning of the 19th century — in 1825, 1836, and 1847 — were evidence that capitalist relations of production had become a fetter on the fullest possible development of the productive forces and that, at least in the “advanced countries” (Britain, Belgium and France), an epoch of potential anti-capitalist social revolutions had opened. This assessment was forthrightly presented in the “Communist Manifesto”, which argued that:

Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, exchange and property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products,

but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity — the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back in a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered ...

[T]he bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an overriding law ... its existence is no longer compatible with society ...<sup>7</sup>

In the wake of the failure of the bourgeois-democratic revolutionary movements of 1848-49, however, and with further economic studies in 1850, Marx and Engels revised their assessment of the epoch. As Engels was to note in his 1895 introduction to Marx's 1850 work "The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850":

History has proved us, and all who thought like us wrong. It has made it clear that the state of economic development on the Continent at the time was not, by a long way, ripe for the elimination of capitalist production ...<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Marx and Engels revised their conceptions of the conditions required for a successful proletarian-socialist revolution. Commenting on this change, Engels wrote in the above referred to introduction:

When the February Revolution broke out, all of us, as far as our conceptions of the conditions and course of revolutionary movements were concerned, were under the spell of previous historical experience, particularly that of France. It was, indeed, the latter which had dominated the whole of European history since 1789, and from which now once again the signal had gone forth for general revolutionary change. It was, therefore, natural and unavoidable that our conceptions of the nature and the course of the "social" revolution proclaimed in Paris in February 1848, of the revolution of the proletariat, should be strongly coloured by the memories of the prototypes of 1789 and 1830 ...

But if we disregard the concrete content in each case, the common form of all these revolutions was that they were minority revolutions. Even when the majority took part, it did so — whether wittingly or not — only in the service of a minority; but because of this, or even simply because of the passive, unresisting attitude of the majority, this minority acquired that appearance of being the representative of the

people ...

The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organisation, the masses themselves must be in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for, body and soul. The history of the last fifty years has taught us that. But in order that the masses may understand what is to be done, long, persistent work is required ...<sup>9</sup>

In the context of this two revisions of their revolutionary perspective, Marx and Engels argued that the immediate task of revolutionary socialists was to organise the broad mass of workers to fight for reforms within the framework of the still ascendant capitalist society, while carrying out educational propaganda for the ultimate goal of socialism.

By championing and leading the daily struggles of the workers for immediate improvements in the living standards and political liberties and propagandising for socialism, the Marxists were able to win a mass base in the last two decades of the 19th century. This approach was codified in the programs of the big workers' parties that arose during the second half of the 19th century, the most famous of which was the Erfurt program of the German Social-Democratic Party adopted in 1891.

#### IV

The Erfurt program, which was drafted by Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein, was divided into two parts having no link or bridge between them whatever. First, there was a theoretical part which contained the so-called maximum program calling for the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by socialism and, following this, a "practical" program of immediate reforms that the socialist party fought for within the framework of capitalist society (the so-called minimum program).

However, at the very time that this approach was being codified throughout the Socialist International, the objective conditions which had justified it — that capitalism was in an ascendant, progressive stage — were ceasing to exist. From the end of the 19th century competitive capitalism based upon the dominance of industrial capital was superseded by monopoly capitalism based upon the dominance of finance capital (the merging of banking and industrial capital through monopolistic joint-stock companies). The developed capitalist nations were also creating a world imperialist system by converting foreign lands into colonies and semicolonies.

In his 1880 pamphlet, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific", Engels had already anticipated the decisive features of this new stage of capitalism:

If the [recurring economic] crises demonstrate the incapacity of the bourgeoisie for

managing any longer modern productive forces, the transformation of the great establishments for production and distribution into joint-stock companies, trusts and state property shows how unnecessary the bourgeoisie are for that purpose. All the social functions of the capitalist are now performed by salaried employees. The capitalist has no further social function than that of pocketing dividends, tearing off coupons, and gambling on the Stock Exchange, where the different capitalists despoil each one another of their capital ...<sup>10</sup>

The emergence of joint-stock companies and of monopolistic trusts, Engels observed, expressed the “partial recognition of the social character of the productive forces forced upon the capitalists themselves” and the transformation of the capitalists into “superfluous class” of “dividend-mongers”.

By the beginning of the 20th century, these features had become generalised within the developed capitalist nations and, consequently, the objective conditions for replacing the anarchistic economy of capitalism with a socially planned economy — a sufficient level of development of the objective socialisation of the labour — had matured in the developed capitalist countries that dominated the world economy. As a result of the maturing of these objective conditions, capitalist relations of production had become fetters on the development of humanity’s productive forces, opening an epoch of social revolution. The first and most striking manifestation of this was the 1905 Russian revolution, which Lenin described as a unique combination of bourgeois-democratic revolution (in its social content and immediate aims) and proletarian revolution (in its methods of struggle and in the vanguard role played in it by the working class).<sup>11</sup>

The great majority of the leaders of the socialist parties, however, failed to understand the meaning of this epochal change. The previous necessity of going through a temporary phase of struggle whose tactics aimed at obtaining limited immediate economic and political concessions from the capitalists was elevated by them into a permanent perspective. Instead of preparing the masses for future revolutionary action, they advanced the perspective that capitalism could be reformed to such a degree that socialism could be reached by parliamentary legislation and gradual steps instead of by social revolution. This line led to their becoming politically co-opted into the service of the capitalist class.

This drift toward parliamentary reformism was promoted by the capitalist rulers in the imperialist countries through use of part of their monopoly super-profits to grant more secure conditions of employment to a minority of workers — generally the “native-born”, unionised, skilled male workers. This layer of workers was therefore cushioned from the shocks of the capitalist business cycle and enjoyed material advantages over the mass of workers in the competition among workers to sell their

labour power (material advantages reinforced by racial, sexual and national privileges). The “protected” upper strata of the working class — which Engels called the “aristocracy of labour” — became a medium for the inculcation of class-collaborationist illusions within the working class.

The bulk of the trade union officials, parliamentary representatives and apparatus functionaries of the big socialist parties — who were drawn from the labour aristocracy or from these parties’ petty-bourgeois fellow-travellers — began to put the defence of the privileges of the labour aristocracy ahead of any vigorous fight for the needs and interests of the working class as a whole.

Through a variety of political sops and avenues providing opportunities for personal enrichment the imperialist states transformed these opportunist labour leaders into conscious and professional political agents of the imperialist bourgeoisie within the labour movement, into advocates of a class-collaborationist political alliance based on achieving piecemeal reforms within the framework of defence of the “national interests” of the imperialist powers.

This process of “bourgeoisification” of the Social-Democratic parties manifested itself most starkly with the outbreak of World War I, when the opportunist labour leaders in each of the imperialist countries abandoned even the verbal pretence of support for international working-class solidarity and threw themselves into supporting the predatory war aims of their “own” ruling class.

The drift toward class-collaborationist reformism in the Socialist International met with opposition from figures like Rosa Luxemburg, V.I. Lenin, and Leon Trotsky. They saw the possibility of a socialist victory in the near future. Most significant of all, Lenin saw the need to build a revolutionary combat party made up of professional revolutionaries to assure that victory, and he set about building such a party against opposition from all sides.

## V

In confronting the question of how the proletariat could lead the peasant masses to carry to completion a bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia as a step toward a socialist revolution, Lenin revived the concept of transitional measures. In the face of the economic chaos and the worsening threat of famine from Russia’s involvement in the First World War, he advocated that the Bolsheviks carry out propaganda for a workers’ and peasants’ government, based on the alternative organs of state power the workers and peasants had themselves created (the soviets of workers’ and soldiers’ deputies), that would introduce a series of revolutionary measures “transitional to socialism”. In his April 1917 pamphlet “The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution”,

Lenin wrote:

Under no circumstances can the party of the proletariat set itself the aim of “introducing” socialism in a country of small peasants so long as the overwhelming majority of the population has not come to realise the need for a socialist revolution.

But only bourgeois sophists, hiding behind “near-Marxist” catchwords, can deduce from this truth a justification of the policy of postponing immediate revolutionary measures, the time for which is fully ripe; measures which *have been* frequently resorted to during the war by a number of bourgeois states, and which are absolutely indispensable in order to combat impending total economic disorganisation and famine.

Such measures as the nationalisation of the land, of all the banks and capitalist syndicates [government-organised production and distribution cartels — DL], or, at least, the *immediate* establishment of the *control* of the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies, etc., over them — measures which do not in any way constitute the “introduction” of socialism — must be carried out in a revolutionary way. Without such measures, which are only steps towards socialism, and which are perfectly feasible economically, it will be impossible to heal the wounds caused by the war and to avert the impending collapse.<sup>12</sup>

Propaganda for such “transitional measures” — the best example of which was Lenin’s September 1917 pamphlet “The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It” — played a central role in winning the masses to support the Bolsheviks’ perspective of the transfer of “All Power to the Soviets”. In this pamphlet Lenin set down five principal measures which he argued would be “essentially equivalent to that of the programme of any truly revolutionary government that would wish to save Russia from war and famine”. These were:

- (1) Amalgamation of all banks into a single bank, and state control over its operations, or nationalisation of the banks.
- (2) Nationalisation of the syndicates, i.e., the largest, monopolistic capitalist associations (sugar, oil, coal, iron and steel, and other syndicates).
- (3) Abolition of commercial secrecy.
- (4) Compulsory syndication (i.e., compulsory amalgamation into associations) of industrialists, merchants and employers generally.
- (5) Compulsory organisation of the population into consumers’ societies, or encouragement of such organisation, and the exercise of control over it.<sup>13</sup>

Lenin stressed that many of these measures of state control over economic life had been implemented during the First World War by the German imperialist state. The following extracts from his pamphlet graphically illustrate how Lenin explained the connection between the implementation of these measures by a revolutionary-

### democratic state and the transition to socialism:

Everybody talks about imperialism. But imperialism is merely monopoly capitalism.

That capitalism in Russia has also become monopoly capitalism is sufficiently attested by the examples of the Produgol, the Prodamet, the Sugar Syndicate, etc. This Sugar Syndicate is an object lesson in the way monopoly capitalism develops into state-monopoly capitalism.

And what is the state? It is an organisation of the ruling class — in Germany, for instance, of the Junkers and capitalists. And therefore what the German Plekhanovs<sup>14</sup> (Scheideman, Lensch and others) call “war socialism” is in fact wartime state-monopoly capitalism ...

Now try to *substitute* for the Junker-capitalist state, for the landowner-capitalist, a *revolutionary-democratic* state, i.e., a state which in a revolutionary way abolishes all privileges and does not fear to introduce the fullest democracy in a revolutionary way. You will find that, given a really revolutionary-democratic state, state-monopoly capitalism inevitably and unavoidably implies a step, and more than one step, towards socialism!

For if a huge capitalist undertaking becomes a monopoly, it means that it serves the whole nation. If it has become a state monopoly, it means that the state (i.e., the armed organisation of the population, the workers and peasants above all, provided there is *revolutionary* democracy) directs the whole undertaking. In whose interest?

Either in the interest of the landowners and capitalists, in which case we have not a revolutionary-democratic, but a reactionary-bureaucratic state, an imperialist republic.

Or in the interest of revolutionary democracy — and then *it is a step toward socialism*.

For socialism is merely the next step forward from state-capitalist monopoly. Or, in other words, socialism is merely state-capitalist monopoly *which is made to serve the interests of the whole people* and has to that extent *ceased* to be capitalist monopoly.<sup>15</sup>

After the Bolshevik-led worker-soldier insurrection on November 7, 1917 (October 25 in the old Russian calendar) had transferred all state power to the soviets (councils) of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies, the Soviet state proceeded to implement these measures of control over the capitalist monopolies, of “despotic inroads into the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production”. However, the capitalists' resistance and sabotage — encouraged by the beginning of Anglo-French military intervention in middle of 1918 — forced the Bolsheviks to advance much more rapidly than they had wanted to “centralise all the [industrial] instruments of production” in the hands of the Soviet state. This led, at the end of the Russian Civil War in 1921, to a partial retreat — the New Economic Policy.

## VI

Basing itself on the experience of the Russian Bolsheviks in 1917, the Communist International explicitly rejected the Social-Democratic conception of confining its day-to-day propaganda and agitation to a “minimum program” of immediate reforms attainable within the framework of capitalism. In the “Theses on Tactics” adopted by its 3rd congress, held in June-July 1921, the Comintern stated:

The Communist parties do not put forward minimum programs which could serve to strengthen and improve the tottering foundations of capitalism. The Communists’ main aim is to destroy the capitalist system. But in order to achieve their aim the Communist parties must put forward demands expressing the immediate needs of the working class. The Communist must organise mass campaigns to fight for these demands regardless of whether they are compatible with the continuation of the capitalist system. The Communist parties should be concerned not with the viability and competitive capacity of capitalist economy, but with proletarian poverty, which cannot and must not be endured any longer. If the demands put forward by the Communist correspond to the immediate needs of the broad proletarian masses, and if the masses are convinced that they cannot go on living unless their demands are met, then the struggle around these issues becomes the starting-point of the struggle for power.

In place of the minimum program of the centrists and reformists, the Communist International offers a struggle for the concrete demands of the proletariat which, in their totality, challenge the power of the bourgeoisie, organise the proletariat and mark out the different stages of the struggle for its dictatorship. Even before the broad masses consciously understand the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat, they can respond to each of the individual demands. As more and more people are drawn into the struggle around these demands and as the needs of the masses come into conflict with the needs of capitalist society, the working class will come to realise that if it wants to live, capitalism will have to die. This realisation will be the main motivation in their struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The task of the Communist parties is to extend, deepen and unify the struggle around these demands ...

The Communist parties should make certain that the demands they put forward not only correspond to the [needs] of the broad masses, but also draw the masses into battle and lay the basis for organising them. Concrete slogans that express the economic need of the working masses must lead to the struggle for control of industry — control based not on a plan to organise the economy bureaucratically and under the capitalist system, but on the factory committees and revolutionary trade unions ...

The objections raised against single-issue demands and the accusations that campaigns on single issues are reformist reflect an inability to grasp the essential



conditions of revolutionary action. This was the case with the opposition of certain Communist groups to participation in trade unions and in parliament. It is not a question of appealing to the proletariat to fight for the ultimate goal, but of developing the practical struggle which alone can lead the proletariat to the struggle for the ultimate goal.<sup>16</sup>

In November 1922 the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) adopted a “Draft Resolution for the Fourth Congress of the Comintern on the Question of the Program of the Communist International”, which was submitted for discussion at the congress by Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek and Bukharin. The draft resolution affirmed the “necessity of fighting for transition demands subject to appropriate reservations making these demands dependent on concrete conditions of place and time should be stated explicitly and categorically in the national programmes” of each Communist party. It argued that the “theoretical basis for all such transition or limited demands should be definitely stated in the general programme” of the Communist parties and these general programs “should clearly state the basic historical types of transition demands of the national parties depending on cardinal differences of economic structure, as for example, Britain and India, and such like”.<sup>17</sup>

However, as the Comintern became Stalinised in the 1920s, it abandoned the idea of transitional demands. After some ultraleft convulsions, the main orientation of the Stalinised Comintern became the search for opportunist alliances with various wings of the bourgeoisie (Popular Front, Governments of National Unity, etc.) deemed favourable to diplomatic alliances with the USSR. The Communist parties in the West turned, first in practice, and then consciously, to the reformist and class-collaborationist orientation that socialism could be achieved through gradual reforms carried out by winning “socialist” majorities in bourgeois parliaments.

Following the bureaucratic degeneration of the Comintern, it was the movement of communist oppositionists led by Leon Trotsky that defended and enriched the work done by the first four congresses of the Comintern in the field of developing a transitional program. After a number of initial efforts by national sections of the International Communist League (for example, the Action Program of 1934 of the Ligue Communiste in France),<sup>18</sup> Trotsky drafted the “Transitional Program” for its successor organisation, the Fourth International.

## VII

Trotsky’s “Transitional Program” formulates a series of measures aimed at mobilising the masses into actions which correspond to their present level of consciousness in order to lead them, through the education they receive from the Marxist party in the

course of these actions, to the level of consciousness necessary to conquer political power.

Three kinds of demands are advanced in the “Transitional Program”:

- *Immediate* demands are specific measures to defend or improve the standard of living or the working conditions of the masses within the framework of the capitalist system, e.g., demands for higher wages, reduced working hours, increased government spending on social services.
- *Democratic* demands involve the defence and extension of the equal right of working people to participate in the administration of state policy (e.g., freedom of association, right to strike, free speech, the armed organisation of the population, election of all officials, etc.) as well as demands for formal legal, civil and political equality for specially oppressed sections of the population (e.g., equal rights for women, young people, gay men and lesbians, oppressed nations and racial groups).
- *Transitional* demands constitute the heart of the “Transitional Program”. They involve, as Marx and Engels put it in the “Communist Manifesto”, measures directed toward wresting, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, toward centralising the means of production in the hands of the proletariat organised as the ruling class. Taken separately, these measures therefore “appear economically insufficient and untenable” but “in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production”. They have particular relevance in countering the devastating impact of the economic chaos created by decaying capitalism — permanent inflation of prices and mass unemployment. If militantly fought for by masses of workers, they can, as Trotsky noted, act as “bridge” from “today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class” and point them toward the need for the conquest of state power by the proletariat. Most of the demands in the “Transitional Program”, notably the proposals for a sliding scale of wages and hours, workers’ control of production, and the expropriation of the private banks and of “key branches of industry or the most parasitic group of the bourgeoisie”, belong to this category.

Under certain circumstances, agitation around any of these different types of demands can serve to mobilise working people in mass anti-capitalist struggles. It is the mobilising potential of any of these types of demands at any particular conjuncture in the class struggle that is of primary interest to revolutionists. It is a basic fact of political life that people who are united with others in struggle are more open to radical ideas and new forms of action than those who are atomised and quiescent.

**VIII**

Commenting upon Trotsky's "Transitional Program", Joseph Hansen — a former secretary of Trotsky's in the late 1930s and a longtime leader of the US Socialist Workers Party — noted that:

Whether the struggle centres around immediate, democratic or transitional demands, revolutionary Marxists advocate methods of battle in which the proletariat is strongest, i.e., utilisation of its strategic position in the capitalist economic system and mobilisation of its numbers on a mass scale.

It should be observed that in the struggle for socialism, immediate, democratic, and transitional demands are but means to an end. In fighting for immediate demands, for instance, the workers gain organisational cohesiveness and battle experience of prime importance in more far-reaching struggles.

However, only as they gain consciousness of their interests as a class do workers take the goal of socialism as their own and begin utilising the means open to them to achieve that goal. The rise of a revolutionary party is the surest indicator of the development of that class consciousness, for it places at the disposal of the masses the main lessons of past revolutionary experience (embodied in the theory handed down and developed since the time of Marx and Engels). The party also provides cadres tested in the class struggle and in revolutionary politics. The party in turn enters the revolutionary process as the decisive subjective component, assuring a socialist victory if the objective conditions are ripe for it. The need to construct such a party was what Trotsky had in mind when he wrote, in the opening sentence of the "Transitional Program": "The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat."<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, the fundamental purpose of the "Transitional Program" was to provide the Marxist cadres of relatively small propaganda groups with a line of march and a method for constructing mass revolutionary workers' parties.

Regardless of the applicability at any given moment in the class struggle of any of the specific demands contained in it, what is most significant about Trotsky's "Transitional Program" is that it points to the method for bridging the gap between the present size and influence of the Marxist forces and the mass forces required to overthrow capitalist rule. This transitional method consists in approaching the masses at whatever level of consciousness and organisation they stand today and in drawing them, through progressive struggles and political explanations, toward a higher level of thought and action, that is, in the direction of the socialist revolution.

A succinct example of this method is provided by Trotsky in his discussion in the "Transitional Program" of how revolutionists can solve the problem of creating an

armed organisation that involves the majority of the population, a problem that belongs to the issue of creating a consistent and complete democracy. He begins with spontaneous mass actions; in this case strikes, factory occupations and picket lines. Then he proceeds to the probable response of the capitalists — the use of violence. He then outlines how revolutionists should respond to such developments: by conducting systematic propaganda in the trade unions for workers' self-defence guards to counter the use by the capitalists of the police, armed thugs, and the bourgeois army. As these self-defence measures become broader and the class struggle intensifies, the revolutionists should conduct propaganda, then agitation, and finally action, for the organisation of mass-based permanent armed workers' detachments — a workers' militia — to guarantee the security of the mass workers' organisations, meetings, and press. Through such persistent propaganda, agitational and organisational work, always based on the experience of the masses themselves, the revolutionists can imbue the proletariat with an understanding of the irreconcilable antagonism between their class interests and those of the capitalist class and its armed organisations, and the necessity to replace the latter with their own centralised armed organisation.

The transitional method of imbuing the proletarian masses with revolutionary class consciousness and leading them on to the road of the struggle for state power did not, of course, originate with Trotsky. He learned it from Lenin and his successful application of it in building the Bolshevik party. To fully grasp the transitional method containing in Trotsky's "Transitional Program" therefore requires far more than simply studying this single document. It requires learning how the Bolshevik party was built and how it was able to organise and mobilise the Russian proletariat to carry out the world's first socialist revolution. ■

# The Death Agony of Capitalism & the Tasks of the Fourth International

*By Leon Trotsky*

## **The objective prerequisites for a socialist revolution**

The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.

The economic prerequisite for the proletarian revolution has already in general achieved the highest point of fruition that can be reached under capitalism. Mankind's productive forces stagnate. Already new inventions and improvements fail to raise the level of material wealth. Conjunctural crises under the conditions of the social crisis of the whole capitalist system afflict ever heavier deprivations and sufferings upon the masses. Growing unemployment in its turn, deepens the financial crisis of the state and undermines the unstable monetary systems. Democratic regimes, as well as fascist, stagger on from one bankruptcy to another.

The bourgeoisie itself sees no way out. In countries where it has already been forced to stake its last upon the card of fascism, it now toboggans with closed eyes toward an economic and military catastrophe. In the historically privileged countries, i.e., in those where the bourgeoisie can still for a certain period permit itself the luxury of democracy at the expense of national accumulations (Great Britain, France, United States, etc.), all of capital's traditional parties are in a state of perplexity bordering on a paralysis of will. The "New Deal,"<sup>1</sup> despite its first period of pretentious resoluteness, represents but a special form of political perplexity, possible only in a country where the bourgeoisie succeeded in accumulating incalculable wealth. The present crisis, far from having run its full course, has already succeeded in showing that "New Deal" politics, like Popular Front politics in France,<sup>2</sup> opens no new exit from the economic blind alley.

International relations present no better picture. Under the increasing tension of

capitalist disintegration, imperialist antagonisms reach an impasse at the height of which separate clashes and bloody local disturbances (Ethiopia, Spain, the Far East, Central Europe) must inevitably coalesce into a conflagration of world dimensions. The bourgeoisie, of course, is aware of the mortal danger to its domination represented by a new war. But that class is now immeasurably less capable of averting war than on the eve of 1914.

All talk to the effect that historical conditions have not yet “ripened” for socialism is the product of ignorance or conscious deception. The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only “ripened”; they have begun to get somewhat rotten. Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. The turn is now to the proletariat, i.e., chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.

### **The proletariat & its leaderships**

The economy, the state, the politics of the bourgeoisie and its international relations are completely blighted by a social crisis, characteristic of a prerevolutionary state of society. The chief obstacle in the path of transforming the prerevolutionary into a revolutionary state is the opportunist character of proletarian leadership: its petty-bourgeois cowardice before the big bourgeoisie and its perfidious connection with it even in its death agony.

In all countries the proletariat is racked by a deep disquiet. The multimillioned masses again and again enter the road of revolution. But each time they are blocked by their own conservative bureaucratic machines.

The Spanish proletariat has made a series of heroic attempts since April 1931 to take power in its hands and guide the fate of society. However, its own parties (Social Democrats, Stalinists, Anarchists, POUMists) — each in its own way — acted as a brake and thus prepared Franco’s triumphs.<sup>3</sup>

In France, the great wave of sit-down strikes, particularly during June 1936, revealed the wholehearted readiness of the proletariat to overthrow the capitalist system.<sup>4</sup> However, the leading organisations (Socialists, Stalinists, Syndicalists) under the label of the Popular Front succeeded in canalising and damming, at least temporarily, the revolutionary stream.

The unprecedented wave of sit-down strikes and the amazingly rapid growth of industrial unionism in the United States (the CIO) is the most indisputable expression of the instinctive striving of the American workers to raise themselves to the level of the tasks imposed on them by history.<sup>5</sup> But here, too, the leading political organisations,

including the newly created CIO, do everything possible to keep in check and paralyse the revolutionary pressure of the masses.

The definite passing over of the Comintern to the side of the bourgeois order, its cynically counter-revolutionary role throughout the world, particularly in Spain, France, the United States and other “democratic” countries, created exceptional supplementary difficulties for the world proletariat.<sup>6</sup> Under the banner of the October Revolution, the conciliatory politics practised by the “People’s Front” dooms the working class to impotence and clears the road for fascism.

“People’s Fronts” on the one hand — fascism on the other; these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution. From the historical point of view, however, both these resources are stopgaps. The decay of capitalism continues under the sign of the Phrygian cap in France as under the sign of the swastika in Germany.<sup>7</sup> Nothing short of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie can open a road out.

The orientation of the masses is determined first by the objective conditions of decaying capitalism, and second, by the treacherous politics of the old workers’ organisations. Of these factors, the first of course is the decisive one: the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus. No matter how the methods of the social betrayers differ — from the “social” legislation of Blum to the judicial frame-ups of Stalin — they will never succeed in breaking the revolutionary will of the proletariat.<sup>8</sup> As time goes on, their desperate efforts to hold back the wheel of history will demonstrate more clearly to the masses that the crisis of the proletarian leadership, having become the crisis in mankind’s culture, can be resolved only by the Fourth International.

### **The minimum program & the transitional program**

The strategic task of the next period — a prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda, and organisation — consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation). It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Classical Social Democracy, functioning in an epoch of progressive capitalism,

divided its program into two parts independent of each other: the *minimum program*, which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the *maximum program*, which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. Between the minimum and the maximum program no bridge existed. And indeed Social Democracy has no need of such a bridge, since the word *socialism* is used only for holiday speechifying. The Comintern has set out to follow the path of Social Democracy in an epoch of decaying capitalism: when, in general, there can be no discussion of systematic social reforms and the raising of the masses' living standards; when every serious demand of the proletariat and even every serious demand of the petty bourgeoisie inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state.

The strategic task of the Fourth International lies not in reforming capitalism but in its overthrow. Its political aim is the conquest of power by the proletariat for the purpose of expropriating the bourgeoisie. However, the achievement of this strategic task is unthinkable without the most considered attention to all, even small and partial questions of tactics. All sections of the proletariat, all its layers, occupations and groups should be drawn into the revolutionary movement. The present epoch is distinguished not for the fact that it frees the revolutionary party from day-to-day work but because it permits this work to be carried on indissolubly with the actual tasks of the revolution.

The Fourth International does not discard the program of the old "minimal" demands to the degree to which these have preserved at least part of their vital forcefulness. Indefatigably, it defends the democratic rights and social conquests of the workers. But it carries on this day-to-day work within the framework of the correct actual, that is, revolutionary perspective. Insofar as the old, partial, "minimal" demands of the masses clash with the destructive and degrading tendencies of decadent capitalism — and this occurs at each step — the Fourth International advances a system of *transitional demands*, the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime. The old "minimal program" is superseded by the *transitional program*, the task of which lies in systematic mobilisation of the masses for the proletarian revolution.

### **Sliding scale of wages and sliding scale of hours**

Under the conditions of disintegrating capitalism, the masses continue to live the impoverished life of the oppressed, threatened now more than at any other time with the danger of being cast into the pit of pauperism. They must defend their mouthful of bread, if they cannot increase or better it. There is neither the need nor the opportunity to enumerate here those separate, partial demands which time and again arise on the



basis of concrete circumstances — national, local, trade union. But two basic economic afflictions, in which is summarised the increasing absurdity of the capitalist system, that is, *unemployment* and *high prices*, demand generalised slogans and methods of struggle.

The Fourth International declares uncompromising war on the politics of the capitalists which, to a considerable degree, like the politics of their agents, the reformists, aims to place the whole burden of militarism, the crises, the disorganisation of the monetary system and all other scourges stemming from capitalism's death agony upon the backs of the toilers. The Fourth International demands *employment* and *decent living conditions* for all.

Neither monetary inflation nor stabilisation can serve as slogans for the proletariat because these are but two ends of the same stick. Against a bounding rise in prices, which with the approach of war will assume an ever more unbridled character, one can fight only under the slogan of a *sliding scale of wages*. This means that collective agreements should assure an automatic rise in wages in relation to the increase in price of consumer goods.

Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the slops of a crumbling society. *The right to employment* is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is being shorn from him at every step. Against unemployment "structural" as well as "conjunctural," the time is ripe to advance, along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of a *sliding scale of working hours*. Trade unions and other mass organisations should bind the workers and the unemployed together in the solidarity of mutual responsibility. On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was under the old working week. Wages, under a strictly guaranteed *minimum*, would follow the movement of prices. It is impossible to accept any other program for the present catastrophic period.

Property owners and their lawyers will prove the "unrealisability" of these demands. Smaller, especially ruined capitalists, in addition will refer to their account ledgers. The workers categorically denounce such conclusions and references. The question is not one of a "normal" collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralisation, and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. "Realisability" or

“unrealisability” is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.

### **Trade unions in the transitional epoch**

In the struggle for partial and transitional demands, the workers now more than ever before need mass organisations, principally trade unions. The powerful growth of trade unionism in France and the United States is the best refutation to the preachments of those ultraleft doctrinaires who have been teaching that trade unions have “outlived their usefulness.”

The Bolshevik-Leninist stands in the front-line trenches of all kinds of struggles, even when they involve only the most modest material interests or democratic rights of the working class. He takes active part in mass trade unions for the purpose of strengthening them and raising their spirit of militancy. He fights uncompromisingly against any attempt to subordinate the unions to the bourgeois state and bind the proletariat to “compulsory arbitration” and every other form of police guardianship — not only fascist but also “democratic.” Only on the basis of such work within the trade unions is successful struggle possible against the reformists, including those of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Sectarian attempts to build or preserve small “revolutionary” unions, as a second edition of the party, signify in actuality the renouncing of the struggle for leadership of the working class. It is necessary to establish this firm rule: self-isolation of the capitulationist variety from mass trade unions, which is tantamount to a betrayal of the revolution, is incompatible with membership in the Fourth International.

At the same time, the Fourth International resolutely rejects and condemns trade union fetishism, equally characteristic of trade unionists and syndicalists.

(a) Trade unions do not offer, and in line with their task, composition, and manner of recruiting membership, cannot offer a finished revolutionary program; in consequence, they cannot replace the *party*. The building of national revolutionary parties as sections of the Fourth International is the central task of the transitional epoch.

(b) Trade unions, even the most powerful, embrace no more than 20 to 25 per cent of the working class, and at that, predominantly the more skilled and better paid layers. The more oppressed majority of the working class is drawn only episodically into the struggle, during a period of exceptional upsurges in the labour movement. During such moments it is necessary to create organisations ad hoc, embracing the

whole fighting mass: strike committees, factory committees, and finally, soviets.

(c) As organisations expressive of the top layers of the proletariat, trade unions, as witnessed by all past historical experience, including the fresh experience of the anarcho-syndicalist unions in Spain, developed powerful tendencies toward compromise with the bourgeois-democratic regime.<sup>9</sup> In periods of acute class struggle, the leading bodies of the trade unions aim to become masters of the mass movement in order to render it harmless. This is already occurring during the period of simple strikes, especially in the case of the mass sit-down strikes which shake the principle of bourgeois property. In time of war or revolution, when the bourgeoisie is plunged into exceptional difficulties, trade union leaders usually become bourgeois ministers.

Therefore, the sections of the Fourth International should always strive not only to renew the top leadership of the trade unions, boldly and resolutely in critical moments advancing new militant leaders in place of routine functionaries and careerists, but also to create in all possible instances independent militant organisations corresponding more closely to the tasks of mass struggle against bourgeois society; and if necessary, not flinching even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions. If it be criminal to turn one's back on mass organisations for the sake of fostering sectarian fictions, it is no less so to passively tolerate subordination of the revolutionary mass movement to the control of openly reactionary or disguised conservative ("progressive") bureaucratic cliques. Trade unions are not ends in themselves; they are but means along the road to proletarian revolution.

### Factory committees

During a transitional epoch, the workers' movement does not have a systematic and well balanced, but a feverish and explosive character. Slogans as well as organisational forms should be subordinated to the indices of the movement. On guard against routine handling of a situation as against a plague, the leadership should respond sensitively to the initiative of the masses.

*Sit-down strikes*, the latest expression of this kind of initiative, go beyond the limits of "normal" capitalist procedure. Independently of the demands of the strikers, the temporary seizure of factories deals a blow to the idol, capitalist property. Every sit-down strike poses in a practical manner the question of who is boss of the factory: the capitalist or the workers?

If the sit-down strike raises this question episodically, the *factory committee* gives it organised expression. Elected by all the factory employees, the factory committee immediately creates a counterweight to the will of the administration.

To the reformist criticism of bosses of the so-called "economic royalist" type like

Ford in contradistinction to “good,” “democratic” exploiters, we counterpose the slogan of factory committees as centres of struggle against both the first and the second.

Trade union bureaucrats will as a general rule resist the creation of factory committees, just as they resist every bold step taken along the road of mobilising the masses.

However, the wider the sweep of the movement, the easier will it be to break this resistance. Where the closed shop has already been instituted in “peaceful” times, the committee will formally coincide with the usual organ of the trade union, but will renew its personnel and widen its functions. The prime significance of the committee, however, lies in the fact that it becomes the militant staff for such working-class layers as the trade union is usually incapable of moving to action. It is precisely from these more oppressed layers that the most self-sacrificing battalions of the revolution will come.

From the moment that the committee makes its appearance, a factual dual power is established in the factory. By its very essence it represents the transitional state, because it includes in itself two irreconcilable regimes: the capitalist and the proletarian. The fundamental significance of factory committees is precisely contained in the fact that they open the doors if not to a direct revolutionary, then to a prerevolutionary period — between the bourgeois and the proletarian regimes. That the propagation of the factory committee idea is neither premature nor artificial is amply attested to by the waves of sit-down strikes spreading through several countries. New waves of this type will be inevitable in the immediate future. It is necessary to begin a campaign in favor of factory committees in time in order not to be caught unawares.

### **‘Business secrets’ & workers’ control of industry**

Liberal capitalism, based upon competition and free trade, has completely receded into the past. Its successor, monopolistic capitalism, not only does not mitigate the anarchy of the market but on the contrary imparts to it a particularly convulsive character. The necessity of “controlling” economy, of placing state “guidance” over industry and of “planning” is today recognised — at least in words — by almost all current bourgeois and petty-bourgeois tendencies, from fascist to Social-Democratic. With the fascists, it is mainly a question of “planned” plundering of the people for military purposes. The Social Democrats prepare to drain the ocean of anarchy with spoonfuls of bureaucratic “planning.” Engineers and professors write articles about “technocracy.”<sup>10</sup> In their cowardly experiments in “regulation,” democratic governments run head into the invincible sabotage of big capital.

The actual relationship existing between the exploiters and the democratic

“controllers” is best characterised by the fact that the gentlemen “reformers” stop short in pious trepidation before the threshold of the trusts and their business “secrets.” Here the principle of “noninterference” with business dominates. The accounts kept between the individual capitalist and society remain the secret of the capitalist: they are not the concern of society. The motivation offered for the principle of business “secrets” is ostensibly, as in the epoch of liberal capitalism, that of free “competition.” In reality, the trusts keep no secrets from one another. The business secrets of the present epoch are part of a persistent plot of monopoly capitalism against the interests of society. Projects for limiting the autocracy of “economic royalists” will continue to be pathetic farces as long as private owners of the social means of production can hide from producers and consumers the machinations of exploitation, robbery, and fraud. The abolition of “business secrets” is the first step toward actual control of industry.

Workers no less than capitalists have the right to know the “secrets” of the factory, of the trust, of the whole branch of industry, of the national economy as a whole. First and foremost banks, heavy industry, and centralised transport should be placed under an observation glass.

The immediate tasks of workers’ control should be to explain the debits and credits of society, beginning with individual business undertakings; to determine the actual share of the national income appropriated by individual capitalists and by the exploiters as a whole; to expose the behind-the-scenes deals and swindles of banks and trusts; finally, to reveal to all members of society that unconscionable squandering of human labour which is the result of capitalist anarchy and the naked pursuit of profits.

No office-holder of the bourgeois state is in a position to carry out this work, no matter with how great authority one would wish to endow him. All the world was witness to the impotence of President Roosevelt and Premier Blum against the plottings of the “60” or “200 Families” of their respective nations.<sup>11</sup> To break the resistance of the exploiters, the mass pressure of the proletariat is necessary. Only factory committees can bring about real control of production, calling in — as consultants but not as “technocrats” — specialists sincerely devoted to the people, accountants, statisticians, engineers, scientists, etc.

The struggle against unemployment is not to be considered without the calling for a broad and bold organisation of *public works*. But public works can have a continuous and progressive significance for society, as for the unemployed themselves, only when they are made part of a general plan, worked out to cover a considerable number of years. Within the framework of this plan, the workers would demand resumption, as public utilities, of work in private businesses closed as a result of the crisis. Workers’

control in such cases would be replaced by direct workers' management.

The working out of even the most elementary economic plan — from the point of view of the exploited, not the exploiters — is impossible without workers' control, that is, without the penetration of the workers' eye into all open and concealed springs of capitalist economy. Committees representing individual business enterprises should meet at conferences to choose corresponding committees of trusts, whole branches of industry, economic regions and finally, of national industry as a whole. Thus, workers' control becomes a *school for planned economy*. On the basis of the experience of control, the proletariat will prepare itself for direct management of nationalised industry when the hour for the eventuality strikes.

To those capitalists, mainly of the lower and middle strata, who of their own accord sometimes offer to throw open their books to the workers — usually to demonstrate the necessity of lowering wages — the workers answer that they are not interested in the bookkeeping of individual bankrupts or semi-bankrupts but in the account ledgers of all exploiters as a whole. The workers cannot and do not wish to accommodate the level of their living conditions to the exigencies of individual capitalists, themselves victims of their own regime. The task is one of reorganising the whole system of production and distribution on a more dignified and workable basis. If the abolition of business secrets be a necessary condition to workers' control, then control is the first step along the road to the socialist guidance of economy.

### **Expropriation of separate groups of capitalists**

The socialist program of expropriation, i.e., of political overthrow of the bourgeoisie and liquidation of its economic domination, should in no case during the present transitional period hinder us from advancing, when the occasion warrants, the demand for the expropriation of several key branches of industry vital for national existence or of the most parasitic group of the bourgeoisie.

Thus, in answer to the pathetic jeremiads of the gentlemen-democrats against the dictatorship of the "60 Families" of the United States or the "200 Families" of France, we counterpose the demand for the expropriation of these 60 or 200 feudalistic capitalist overlords.

In precisely the same way we demand the expropriation of the corporations holding monopolies on war industries, railroads, the most important sources of raw materials, etc.

The difference between these demands and the muddleheaded reformist slogan of "nationalisation" lies in the following: (1) we reject indemnification; (2) we warn the masses against demagogues of the People's Front who, giving lip service to

nationalisation, remain in reality agents of capital; (3) we call upon the masses to rely only upon their own revolutionary strength; (4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of seizure of power by the workers and farmers.

The necessity of advancing the slogan of expropriation in the course of daily *agitation* in partial form, and not only in our propaganda in its more comprehensive aspects, is dictated by the fact that different branches of industry are on different levels of development, occupy a different place in the life of society, and pass through different stages of the class struggle. Only a general revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat can place the complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie on the order of the day. The task of transitional demands is to prepare the proletariat to solve this problem.

### **Expropriation of the private banks & state-isation of the credit system**

Imperialism means the domination of *finance capital*. Side by side with the trusts and syndicates, and very frequently rising above them, the *banks* concentrate in their hands the actual command over the economy. In their structure the banks express in a concentrated form the entire structure of modern capital: they combine tendencies of *monopoly* with tendencies of *anarchy*. They organise the miracles of technology, giant enterprises, mighty trusts; and they also organise high prices, crises and unemployment. It is impossible to take a single serious step in the struggle against monopolistic despotism and capitalistic anarchy — which supplement one another in their work of destruction — if the commanding posts of banks are left in the hands of predatory capitalists. In order to create a unified system of investments and credits, along a rational plan corresponding to the interests of the entire people, it is necessary to merge all the banks into a single national institution. Only the expropriation of the private banks and the concentration of the entire credit system in the hands of the state will provide the latter with the necessary actual, i.e., material resources — and not merely paper and bureaucratic resources — for economic planning.

The expropriation of the banks in no case implies the expropriation of bank deposits. On the contrary, the single state bank will be able to create much more favorable conditions for the small depositors than could the private banks. In the same way, only the state bank can establish for farmers, tradesmen and small merchants conditions of favorable, that is, cheap credit. Even more important, however, is the circumstance that the entire economy — first and foremost large-scale industry and transport — directed by a single financial staff, will serve the vital interests of the workers and all other toilers.

However, *the state-isation of the banks* will produce these favorable results only if

the state power itself passes completely from the hands of the exploiters into the hands of the toilers.

### **The picket line / defence guards/workers' militia / the arming of the proletariat**

Sit-down strikes are a serious warning from the masses addressed not only to the bourgeoisie but also to the organisations of the workers, including the Fourth International. In 1919-20, the Italian workers seized factories on their own initiative, thus signalling the news to their "leaders" of the coming of the social revolution. The "leaders" paid no heed to the signal. The victory of fascism was the result.<sup>12</sup>

Sit-down strikes do not yet mean the seizure of factories in the Italian manner; but they are a decisive step toward such seizures. The present crisis can sharpen the class struggle to an extreme point and bring nearer the moment of denouement. But that does not mean that a revolutionary situation comes on at one stroke. Actually, its approach is signalled by a continuous series of convulsions. One of these is the wave of sit-down strikes. The problem of the sections of the Fourth International is to help the proletarian vanguard understand the general character and tempo of our epoch and to fructify in time the struggle of the masses with ever more resolute and militant organisational measures.

The sharpening of the proletariat's struggle means the sharpening of the methods of counterattack on the part of capital. New waves of sit-down strikes can call forth and undoubtedly will call forth resolute countermeasures on the part of the bourgeoisie. Preparatory work is already being done by the confidential staffs of big trusts. Woe to the revolutionary organisations, woe to the proletariat if it is again caught unawares!

The bourgeoisie is nowhere satisfied with official police and army. In the United States, even during "peaceful" times, the bourgeoisie maintains militarised battalions of scabs and privately armed thugs in factories. To this must now be added the various groups of American Nazis. The French bourgeoisie at the first approach of danger mobilised semilegal and illegal fascist detachments, including such as are in the army. No sooner does the pressure of the English workers once again become stronger than immediately the fascist bands are doubled, trebled, increased tenfold to come out in bloody march against the workers. The bourgeoisie keeps itself most accurately informed about the fact that in the present epoch the mass struggle irresistibly tends to transform itself into civil war. The examples of Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain, and other countries taught considerably more to the magnates and lackeys of capital than to the official leaders of the proletariat.

The politicians of the Second and Third Internationals, as well as the bureaucrats



of the trade unions, consciously close their eyes to the bourgeoisie's private army; otherwise, they could not preserve their alliance with it for even 24 hours. The reformists systematically implant in the minds of the workers the notion that the sacredness of democracy is best guaranteed when the bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth and the workers are unarmed.

The duty of the Fourth International is to put an end to such slavish politics once and for all. The petty-bourgeois democrats — including Social Democrats, Stalinists, and Anarchists — yell louder about the struggle against fascism the more cravenly they capitulate to it in actuality. Only armed workers' detachments, who feel the support of tens of millions of toilers behind them, can successfully prevail against the fascist bands. The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory — and ends in the street. Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. *Strike pickets* are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike, and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating *workers' groups for self-defence*. It is necessary to write this slogan into the program of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions. It is imperative wherever possible, beginning with the youth groups, to organise groups for self-defence, to drill and acquaint them with the use of arms.

A new upsurge of the mass movement should serve not only to increase the number of these units but also to unite them according to neighborhoods, cities, regions. It is necessary to give organised expression to the valid hatred of the workers toward scabs and bands of gangsters and fascists. It is necessary to advance the slogan of a *workers' militia* as the one serious guarantee for the inviolability of workers' organisations, meetings, and press.

Only with the help of such systematic, persistent, indefatigable, courageous agitational and organisational work, always on the basis of the experience of the masses themselves, is it possible to root out from their consciousness the traditions of submissiveness and passivity; to train detachments of heroic fighters capable of setting an example to all toilers; to inflict a series of tactical defeats upon the armed thugs of counterrevolution; to raise the self-confidence of the exploited and oppressed; to compromise fascism in the eyes of the petty bourgeoisie and pave the road for the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Engels defined the state as bodies of "armed men." *The arming of the proletariat* is an imperative concomitant element to its struggle for liberation. When the proletariat wills it, it will find the road and the means to arming. In this field, also, the leadership falls naturally to the sections of the Fourth International.

### The alliance of the workers & farmers

The brother-in-arms and counterpart of the worker in the country is the agricultural labourer. They are two parts of one and the same class. Their interests are inseparable. The industrial workers' program of transitional demands, with changes here and there, is likewise the program of the agricultural proletariat.

The peasants (farmers) represent another class: they are the petty bourgeoisie of the village. The petty bourgeoisie is made up of various layers, from the semi-proletarian to the exploiter elements. In accordance with this, the political task of the industrial proletariat is to carry the class struggle into the country. Only thus will he be able to draw a dividing line between his allies and his enemies.

The peculiarities of national development of each country find their queerest expression in the status of farmers and, to some extent, of the urban petty bourgeoisie (artisans and shopkeepers). These classes, no matter how numerically strong they may be, essentially are representative survivals of pre-capitalist forms of production. The sections of the Fourth International should work out with all possible concreteness a program of transitional demands concerning the peasants (farmers) and urban petty bourgeoisie and conformable to the conditions of each country. The advanced workers should learn to give clear and concrete answers to the questions put by their future allies.

While the farmer remains an "independent" petty producer, he is in need of cheap credit for agricultural machines and fertiliser at prices he can afford to pay, favorable conditions of transport and conscientious organisation of the market for his agricultural products. But the banks, the trusts, the merchants rob the farmer from every side. Only the farmers themselves, with the help of the workers, can curb this robbery. *Committees elected by small farmers* should make their appearance on the national scene and jointly with workers' committees and committees of bank employees take into their hands control of transport, credit and mercantile operations affecting agriculture.

By falsely citing the "excessive" demands of the workers, the big bourgeoisie skilfully transform the question of *commodity prices* into a wedge to be driven between the workers and farmers and between the workers and the petty bourgeoisie of the cities. The peasant, artisan, small merchant unlike the industrial worker, office and civil service employee, cannot demand a wage increase corresponding to the increase in prices. The official struggle of the government with high prices is only a deception of the masses. But the farmers, artisans, merchants, in their capacity of consumers, can step into the politics of price-fixing shoulder to shoulder with the workers. To the capitalist's lamentations about costs of production, of transport and trade, the

consumers answer: "Show us your books; we demand control over the fixing of prices." The organs of this control should be the *committees on prices*, made up of delegates from the factories, trade unions, cooperatives, farmers' organisations, the "little man" of the city, housewives, etc. By this means the workers will be able to prove to the farmers that the real reason for high prices is not high wages but the exorbitant profits of the capitalists and the overhead expenses of capitalist anarchy.

The program for the *nationalisation of the land and collectivisation of agriculture* should be so drawn that from its very basis it should exclude the possibility of expropriation of small farmers and their compulsory collectivisation. The farmer will remain owner of his plot of land as long as he himself believes it possible or necessary. In order to rehabilitate the program of socialism in the eyes of the farmer, it is necessary to expose mercilessly the Stalinist methods of collectivisation, which are dictated not by the interests of the farmers or workers but by the interests of the bureaucracy.<sup>13</sup>

The expropriation of the expropriators likewise does not signify forcible confiscation of the property of artisans and shopkeepers. On the contrary, workers' control of banks and trusts — even more, the nationalisation of these concerns, can create for the urban petty bourgeoisie incomparably more favorable conditions of credit, purchase, and sale than is possible under the unchecked domination of the monopolies. Dependence upon private capital will be replaced by dependence upon the state, which will be the more attentive to the needs of its small co-workers and agents the more firmly the toilers themselves keep the state in their own hands.

The practical participation of the exploited farmers in the control of different fields of economy will allow them to decide for themselves whether or not it would be profitable for them to go over to collective working of the land — at what date and on what scale. Industrial workers should consider themselves duty-bound to show farmers every cooperation in travelling this road: through the trade unions, factory committees, and, most importantly, through a workers' and farmers' government.

The alliance proposed by the proletariat — not to the "middle classes" in general but to the exploited layers of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, against all exploiters, including those of the "middle classes" — can be based not on compulsion but only on free consent which should be consolidated in a special "contract." This "contract" is the program of transitional demands voluntarily accepted by both sides.

## **The struggle against imperialism & war**

The whole world outlook, and consequently also the inner political life of individual countries, is overcast by the threat of world war. Already the imminent catastrophe sends violent ripples of apprehension through the very broadest masses of mankind.

The Second International repeats its infamous politics of 1914 with all the greater assurance since today it is the Comintern which plays first fiddle in chauvinism.<sup>14</sup> As quickly as the danger of war assumed concrete outline, the Stalinists, outstripping the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois pacifists by far, became blatant haranguers for so-called “national defence.” The revolutionary struggle against war thus rests fully on the shoulders of the Fourth International.

The Bolshevik-Leninist policy regarding this question, formulated in the thesis of the International Secretariat (*War and the Fourth International*, 1934), preserves all of its force today. In the next period a revolutionary party will depend for success primarily on its policy on the question of war. A correct policy is composed of two elements: an uncompromising attitude on imperialism and its wars and the ability to base one’s program on the experience of the masses themselves.

The bourgeoisie and its agents use the war question, more than any other, to deceive the people by means of abstractions, general formulas, lame phraseology: “neutrality,” “collective security,” “arming for the defence of peace,” “national defence,” “struggle against fascism,” and so on. All such formulas reduce themselves in the end to the fact that the war question, i.e., the fate of the people, is left in the hands of the imperialists, their governing staffs, their diplomacy, their generals, with all their intrigues and plots against the people.

The Fourth International rejects with abhorrence all such abstractions which play the same role in the democratic camp as in the fascist: “honor,” “blood,” “race.” But abhorrence is not enough. It is imperative to help the masses discriminate, by means of verifying criteria, slogans and demands, the concrete essence of these fraudulent abstractions.

“*Disarmament?*” — But the entire question revolves around who will disarm whom. The only disarmament which can avert or end war is the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the workers. But to disarm the bourgeoisie the workers must arm themselves.

“*Neutrality?*” — But the proletariat is nothing like neutral in the war between Japan and China, or a war between Germany and the USSR. “Then what is meant is the defence of China and the USSR?” Of course! But not by the imperialists who will strangle both China and the USSR.

“*Defense of the Fatherland?*” — But by this abstraction, the bourgeoisie understands the defense of its profits and plunder. We stand ready to defend the fatherland from foreign capitalists, if we first bind our own (capitalists) hand and foot and hinder them from attacking foreign fatherlands; if the workers and the farmers of our country become its real masters; if the wealth of the country be transferred from the hands of

a tiny minority to the hands of the people; if the army becomes a weapon of the exploited instead of the exploiters.

It is necessary to interpret these fundamental ideas by breaking them up into more concrete and partial ones, dependent upon the course of events and the orientation of thought of the masses. In addition, it is necessary to differentiate strictly between the pacifism of the diplomat, professor, journalist, and the pacifism of the carpenter, agricultural worker, and charwoman. In one case, pacifism is a screen for imperialism; in the other, it is the confused expression of distrust in imperialism. When the small farmer or worker speaks about the defense of the fatherland, he means defense of his home, his families and other similar families from invasion, bombs and poisonous gas. The capitalist and his journalist understand by the defense of the fatherland the seizure of colonies and markets, the predatory increase of the "national" share of world income. Bourgeois pacifism and patriotism are shot through with deceit. In the pacifism and even patriotism of the oppressed, there are elements which reflect on the one hand a hatred of destructive war, and on the other a clinging to what they believe to be their own good — elements which we must know how to seize upon in order to draw the requisite conclusions.

Using these considerations as its point of departure, the Fourth International supports every, even if insufficient demand, if it can draw the masses to a certain extent into active politics, awaken their criticism and strengthen their control over the machinations of the bourgeoisie.

From this point of view, our American section, for example, critically supports the proposal for establishing a referendum on the question of declaring war.<sup>15</sup> No democratic reform, it is understood, can by itself prevent the rulers from provoking war when they wish it. It is necessary to give frank warning of this. But notwithstanding the illusions of the masses in regard to the proposed referendum, their support of it reflects the distrust felt by the workers and farmers for bourgeois government and Congress. Without supporting and without sparing illusions, it is necessary to support with all possible strength the progressive distrust of the exploited toward the exploiters. The more widespread the movement for the referendum becomes, the sooner will the bourgeois pacifists move away from it; the more completely will the betrayers of the Comintern be compromised; the more acute will distrust of the imperialists become.

From this viewpoint, it is necessary to advance the demand: electoral rights for men and women beginning with the age of 18. Those who will be called upon to die for the fatherland tomorrow should have the right to vote today. The struggle against war must first of all begin with the *revolutionary mobilisation of the youth*.

Light must be shed upon the problem of war from all angles, hinging upon the side from which it will confront the masses at a given moment.

War is a gigantic commercial enterprise, especially for the war industry. The “60 Families” are therefore first-line patriots and the chief provocateurs of war. *Workers’ control of war industries* is the first step in the struggle against the “manufacturers” of war.

To the slogan of the reformists: a *tax on military profits*, we counterpose the slogans: *confiscation of military profits* and *expropriation of the war industries*. Where military industry is “nationalised,” as in France, the slogan of *workers’ control* preserves its full strength. The proletariat has as little confidence in the government of the bourgeoisie as in an individual capitalist.

Not one man and not one penny for the bourgeois government!

Not an armaments program but a program of useful public works!

Complete independence of workers’ organisations from military-police control!

Once and for all we must tear from the hands of the greedy and merciless imperialist clique, scheming behind the backs of the people, the disposition of the people’s fate.

In accordance with this we demand:

Complete abolition of secret diplomacy; all treaties and agreements to be made accessible to all workers and farmers;

Military training and arming of workers and farmers under direct control of workers’ and farmers’ committees;

Creation of military schools for the training of commanders among the toilers, chosen by workers’ organisations;

Substitution for the standing army of a *people’s militia*, indissolubly linked up with factories, mines, farms, etc.

Imperialist war is the continuation and sharpening of the predatory politics of the bourgeoisie. The struggle of the proletariat against war is the continuation and sharpening of its class struggle. The beginning of war alters the situation and partially the means of struggle between the classes, but not the aim and basic course.

The imperialist bourgeoisie dominates the world. In its basic character the approaching war will therefore be an imperialist war. The fundamental content of the politics of the international proletariat will consequently be a struggle against imperialism and its war. In this struggle the basic principle is: “the chief enemy is in *your own* country,” or “the defeat of *your own* (imperialist) government is the lesser evil.”

But not all countries of the world are imperialist countries. On the contrary the majority are victims of imperialism. Some of the colonial or semi-colonial countries

will undoubtedly attempt to utilise the war in order to cast off the yoke of slavery. Their war will be not imperialist but liberating. It will be the duty of the international proletariat to aid the oppressed countries in their war against oppressors. The same duty applies in regard to aiding the USSR, or whatever other workers' government might arise before the war or during the war. The defeat of *every* imperialist government in the struggle with the workers' state or with a colonial country is the lesser evil. The workers of imperialist countries, however, cannot help an anti-imperialist country through their own government, no matter what might be the diplomatic and military relations between the two countries at a given moment. If the governments find themselves in a temporary and, by the very essence of the matter, unreliable alliance, then the proletariat of the imperialist country continues to remain in class opposition to its own government and supports the nonimperialist "ally" through *its own* methods, i.e., through the methods of the international class struggle (agitation not only against their perfidious allies but also in favor of a workers' state in a colonial country; boycott, strikes, in one case; rejection of boycott and strikes in another case, etc.).

In supporting the colonial country or the USSR in a war, the proletariat does not in the slightest degree solidarise either with the bourgeois government of the colonial country or with the Thermidorian bureaucracy of the USSR.<sup>16</sup> On the contrary, it maintains full political independence from the one as from the other. Giving aid in a just and progressive war, the revolutionary proletariat wins the sympathy of the workers in the colonies and in the USSR, strengthens there the authority and influence of the Fourth International, and increases its ability to help overthrow the bourgeois government in the colonial country, the reactionary bureaucracy in the USSR.

At the beginning of the war the sections of the Fourth International will inevitably feel themselves isolated: every war takes the national masses unawares and impels them to the side of the government apparatus. The internationalists will have to swim against the stream. However, the devastation and misery brought about by the new war, which in the first months will far outstrip the bloody horrors of 1914-18, will quickly prove sobering. The discontent of the masses and their revolt will grow by leaps and bounds. The sections of the Fourth International will be found at the head of the revolutionary tide. The program of transitional demands will gain burning actuality. The problem of the conquest of power by the proletariat will loom in full stature.

Before exhausting or drowning mankind in blood, capitalism befouls the world atmosphere with the poisonous vapors of national and race hatred. *Anti-Semitism* today is one of the more malignant convulsions of capitalism's death agony.

An uncompromising disclosure of the roots of race prejudice and all forms and

shades of national arrogance and chauvinism, particularly anti-Semitism, should become part of the daily work of all sections of the Fourth International, as the most important part of the struggle against imperialism and war. Our basic slogan remains: Workers of the World Unite!

### **Workers' & farmers' government**

This formula, "workers' and farmers' government" first appeared in the agitation of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and was definitely accepted after the October Revolution.<sup>17</sup> In the final instance it represented nothing more than the popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat. The significance of this designation comes mainly from the fact that it underscored the idea of an *alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry* upon which the Soviet power rests.

When the Comintern of the epigones tried to revive the formula buried by history of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," it gave to the formula of the "workers' and peasants' government" a completely different purely "democratic," i.e., bourgeois content *counterposing* it to the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>18</sup> The Bolshevik-Leninists resolutely rejected the slogan of the "workers' and peasants' government" in the bourgeois-democratic version. They affirmed then and affirm now that when the party of the proletariat refuses to step beyond bourgeois-democratic limits, its alliance with the peasantry is simply turned into a support for capital, as was the case with the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries in 1917, with the Chinese Communist Party in 1925-27, and as is now the case with the People's Front in Spain, France and other countries.<sup>19</sup>

From April to September 1917, the Bolsheviks demanded that the SR's and Mensheviks break with the liberal bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands. Under this provision the Bolshevik Party promised the Mensheviks and the SRs as the petty-bourgeois representatives of the workers and peasants, its revolutionary aid against the bourgeoisie; categorically refusing, however, either to enter into the government of the Mensheviks and SRs or to carry political responsibility for it. If the Mensheviks and the SRs had actually broken with the Cadets (liberals) and with foreign imperialism, then the "workers' and peasants' government" created by them could only have hastened and facilitated the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it was exactly because of this that the leadership of petty-bourgeois democracy resisted with all possible strength the establishment of its own government. The experience of Russia demonstrated, and the experience of Spain and France once again confirms, that even under very favorable conditions the parties of petty-bourgeois democracy (SRs, Social Democrats, Stalinists, Anarchists) are incapable of creating a



government of workers and peasants, that is, a government independent of the bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, the demand of the Bolsheviks, addressed to the Mensheviks and the SRs: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power into your own hands!" had for the masses tremendous educational significance. The obstinate unwillingness of the Mensheviks and SRs to take power, so dramatically exposed during the July Days, definitely doomed them before mass opinion and prepared the victory of the Bolsheviks.<sup>20</sup>

The central task of the Fourth International consists in freeing the proletariat from the old leadership, whose conservatism is in complete contradiction to the catastrophic eruptions of disintegrating capitalism and represents the chief obstacle to historical progress. The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organisations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!" is an extremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character of the parties and organisations of the Second, Third and Amsterdam Internationals.<sup>21</sup> The slogan, "workers' and farmers' government," is thus acceptable to us only in the sense that it had in 1917 with the Bolsheviks, i.e., as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan, but in no case in that "democratic" sense which later the epigones gave it transforming it from a bridge to socialist revolution into the chief barrier upon its path.

Of all parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should in our opinion form the program of the "workers' and farmers' government."

Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers' organisations possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is to say the least highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.), the petty-bourgeois parties including the Stalinists may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality and the "workers' and farmers' government" in the above-mentioned sense is established in fact it would

represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat.

However, there is no need to indulge in guesswork. The agitation around the slogan of a workers' and farmers' government preserves under all conditions a tremendous educational value. And not accidentally. This generalised slogan proceeds entirely along the line of the political development of our epoch (the bankruptcy and decomposition of the old bourgeois parties, the downfall of democracy, the growth of fascism, the accelerated drive of the workers toward more active and aggressive politics). Each of the transitional demands should, therefore, lead to one and the same political conclusion: the workers need to break with all traditional parties of the bourgeoisie in order, jointly with the farmers, to establish their own power.

It is impossible in advance to foresee what will be the concrete stages of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses. The sections of the Fourth International should critically orient themselves at each new stage and advance such slogans as will aid the striving of the workers for independent politics, deepen the class character of these politics, destroy reformist and pacifist illusions, strengthen the connection of the vanguard with the masses, and prepare the revolutionary conquest of power.

## **Soviets**

*Factory committees*, as already stated, are elements of dual power inside the factory. Consequently, their existence is possible only under conditions of increasing pressure by the masses. This is likewise true of special mass groupings for the struggle *against war*, of the *committees on prices*, and all other new centres of the movement, the very appearance of which bears witness to the fact that the class struggle has overflowed the limits of the traditional organisations of the proletariat.

These new organs and centres, however, will soon begin to feel their lack of cohesion and their insufficiency. Not one of the transitional demands can be fully met under the conditions of preserving the bourgeois regime. At the same time, the deepening of the social crisis will increase not only the sufferings of the masses but also their impatience, persistence and pressure. Ever new layers of the oppressed will raise their heads and come forward with their demands. Millions of toilworn "little men," to whom the reformist leaders never gave a thought will begin to pound insistently on the doors of workers' organisations. The unemployed will join the movement. The agricultural workers, the ruined and semi-ruined farmers, the oppressed of the cities, the women workers, housewives, proletarianised layers of the intelligentsia — all of these will seek unity and leadership.

How are the different demands and forms of struggle to be harmonised, even if only within the limits of one city? History has already answered this question: through

soviets. These will unite the representatives of all the fighting groups. For this purpose, no one has yet proposed a different form of organisation; indeed, it would hardly be possible to think up a better one. Soviets are not limited to an a priori party program. They throw open their doors to all the exploited. Through these doors pass representatives of all strata, drawn into the general current of the struggle. The organisation, broadening out together with the movement is renewed again and again in its womb. All political currents of the proletariat can struggle for leadership of the soviets on the basis of the widest democracy. The slogan of *soviets*, therefore, crowns the program of transitional demands.

Soviets can arise only at the time when the mass movement enters into an openly revolutionary stage. From the first moment of their appearance, the soviets, acting as a pivot around which millions of toilers are united in their struggle against the exploiters, become competitors and opponents of local authorities and then of the central government. If the factory committee creates a dual power in the factory, then the soviets initiate a period of dual power in the country.

Dual power in its turn is the culminating point of the transitional period. Two regimes, the bourgeois and the proletarian are irreconcilably opposed to each other. Conflict between them is inevitable. The fate of society depends on the outcome. Should the revolution be defeated, the fascist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie will follow. In case of victory, the power of the soviets, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist reconstruction of society, will arise.

### **Backward countries & the program of transitional demands**

Colonial and semi-colonial countries are backward countries by their very essence. But backward countries are part of a world dominated by imperialism. Their development, therefore, has a *combined* character: the most primitive economic forms are combined with the last word in capitalist technique and culture. In like manner are defined the political strivings of the proletariat of backward countries: the struggle for the most elementary achievements of national independence and bourgeois democracy is combined with the socialist struggle against world imperialism. Democratic slogans, transitional demands, and the problems of the socialist revolution are not divided into separate historical epochs in this struggle, but stem directly from one another. The Chinese proletariat had barely begun to organise trade unions before it had to provide for soviets. In this sense, the present program is completely applicable to colonial and semi-colonial countries, at least to those where the proletariat has become capable of carrying on independent politics.

The central tasks of the colonial and semi-colonial countries are the *agrarian*

*revolution*, i.e., liquidation of feudal heritages, and *national independence*, i.e., the overthrow of the imperialist yoke. Both tasks are closely linked with each other.

It is impossible merely to reject the democratic program; it is imperative that in the struggle the masses outgrow it. The slogan for a National (or Constituent) Assembly preserves its full force for such countries as China or India. This slogan must be indissolubly tied up with the problem of national liberation and agrarian reform. As a primary step, the workers must be armed with this democratic program. Only they will be able to summon and unite the farmers. On the basis of the revolutionary democratic program, it is necessary to oppose the workers to the “national” bourgeoisie. Then, at a certain stage in the mobilisation of the masses under the slogans of revolutionary democracy, soviets can and should arise. Their historical role in each given period, particularly their relation to the National Assembly, will be determined by the political level of the proletariat, the bond between them and the peasantry, and the character of the proletarian party policies. Sooner or later, the soviets should overthrow bourgeois democracy. Only they are capable of bringing the democratic revolution to a conclusion and likewise opening an era of socialist revolution.

The relative weight of the individual democratic and transitional demands in the proletariat’s struggle, their mutual ties and their order of presentation, is determined by the peculiarities and specific conditions of each backward country and to a considerable extent by the *degree* of its backwardness. Nevertheless, the general trend of revolutionary development in all backward countries can be determined by the formula of the *permanent revolution* in the sense definitely imparted to it by the three revolutions in Russia (1905, February 1917, October 1917).<sup>22</sup>

The Comintern has provided backward countries with a classic example of how it is possible to ruin a powerful and promising revolution. During the stormy mass upsurge in China in 1925-27, the Comintern failed to advance the slogan for a National Assembly, and at the same time forbade the creation of soviets. (The bourgeois party, the Kuomintang, was to replace, according to Stalin’s plan, both the National Assembly and soviets.) After the masses had been smashed by the Kuomintang, the Comintern organised a caricature of a soviet in Canton. Following the inevitable collapse of the Canton uprising, the Comintern took the road of guerrilla warfare and peasant soviets with complete passivity on the part of the industrial proletariat. Landing thus in a blind alley, the Comintern took advantage of the Sino-Japanese War to liquidate “Soviet China” with a stroke of the pen, subordinating not only the peasant “Red Army” but also the so-called “Communist” Party to the identical Kuomintang, i.e., the bourgeoisie.

Having betrayed the international proletarian revolution for the sake of friendship with the “democratic” slave-masters, the Comintern could not help betraying

simultaneously also the struggle for liberation of the colonial masses, and, indeed, with even greater cynicism than did the Second International before it. One of the tasks of People's Front and "national defence" politics is to turn hundreds of millions of the colonial population into cannon fodder for "democratic" imperialism. The banner on which is emblazoned the struggle for the liberation of the colonial and semicolonial peoples, i.e., a good half of mankind, has definitely passed into the hands of the Fourth International.

### **The program of transitional demands in fascist countries**

It is a far cry today from the time when the strategists of the Comintern announced the victory of Hitler as being merely a step toward the victory of Thälmann. Thälmann has been in Hitler's prisons now for more than five years. Mussolini has held Italy enchained by fascism for more than 16 years.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout this time, the parties of the Second and Third Internationals have been impotent not only to conduct a mass movement but even to create a serious illegal organisation, even to some extent comparable to the Russian revolutionary parties during the epoch of tsarism.

Not the least reason exists for explaining these failures by reference to the power of fascist ideology. (Essentially, Mussolini never advanced any sort of ideology.) Hitler's "ideology" never seriously gripped the workers. Those layers of the population which at one time were intoxicated with fascism, i.e., chiefly the middle classes, have had enough time in which to sober up. The fact that a somewhat perceptible opposition is limited to Protestant and Catholic church circles is not explained by the might of the semi-delirious and semi-charlatan theories of "race" and "blood," but by the terrific collapse of the ideologies of democracy, Social Democracy, and the Comintern.

After the massacre of the Paris Commune black reaction reigned for nearly eight years. After the defeat of the 1905 Russian revolution, the toiling masses remained in a stupor for almost as long a period.<sup>24</sup> But in both instances the phenomenon was only one of physical defeat, conditioned by the relationship of forces. In Russia, in addition, it concerned an almost virgin proletariat. The Bolshevik faction had at that time not celebrated even its third birthday. It is completely otherwise in Germany where the leadership came from powerful parties, one of which had existed for 70 years, the other almost 15. Both these parties, with millions of voters behind them, were morally paralysed before the battle and capitulated without a battle. History has recorded no parallel catastrophe. The German proletariat was not smashed by the enemy in battle. It was crushed by the cowardice, baseness, perfidy of its own parties. Small wonder then that it has lost faith in everything in which it had been accustomed to believe for

almost three generations. Hitler's victory in turn strengthened Mussolini.

The protracted failure of revolutionary work in Spain or Germany is but the reward for the criminal politics of the Social Democracy and the Comintern. Illegal work needs not only the sympathy of the masses but the conscious enthusiasm of its advanced strata. But can enthusiasm possibly be expected for historically bankrupt organisations? The majority of those who come forth as émigré leaders are either demoralised to the very marrow of their bones, agents of the Kremlin and the GPU, or Social Democratic ex-ministers, who dream that the workers by some sort of miracle will return them to their lost posts. Is it possible to imagine even for a minute these gentlemen in the role of future leaders of the "anti-fascist" revolution?<sup>25</sup>

And events on the world arena — the smashing of the Austrian workers, the defeat of the Spanish revolution, the degeneration of the Soviet state — could not give aid to a revolutionary upsurge in Italy and Germany. Since for political information the German and Italian workers depend in great measure upon the radio, it is possible to say with assurance that the Moscow radio station, combining Thermidorian lies with stupidity and insolence, has become the most powerful factor in the demoralisation of the workers in the totalitarian states. In this respect as in others, Stalin acts merely as Goebbels' assistant.<sup>26</sup>

At the same time the class antagonisms which brought about the victory of fascism, continuing their work under fascism too, are gradually undermining it. The masses are more dissatisfied than ever. Hundreds and thousands of self-sacrificing workers, in spite of everything, continue to carry on revolutionary mole-work. A new generation, which has not directly experienced the shattering of old traditions and high hopes, has come to the fore. Irresistibly, the molecular preparation of the proletarian revolution proceeds beneath the heavy totalitarian tombstone. But for concealed energy to flare into open revolt, it is necessary that the vanguard of the proletariat find new perspectives, a new program and a new unblemished banner.

Herein lies the chief handicap. It is extremely difficult for workers in fascist countries to make a choice of a new program. A program is verified by experience. And it is precisely experience in mass movements which is lacking in countries of totalitarian despotism. It is very likely that a genuine proletarian success in one of the "democratic" countries will be necessary to give impetus to the revolutionary movement on fascist territory. A similar effect is possible by means of a financial or military catastrophe. At present, it is imperative that primarily propagandistic, preparatory work be carried on which will yield large-scale results only in the future. One thing can be stated with conviction even at this point: once it breaks through, the revolutionary wave in fascist countries will immediately be a grandiose sweep and under no circumstances will stop

short at the experiment of resuscitating some sort of Weimar corpse.<sup>27</sup>

It is from this point onward that an uncompromising divergence begins between the Fourth International and the old parties, which outlive their bankruptcy. The émigré People's Front is the most malignant and perfidious variety of all possible People's Fronts. Essentially, it signifies the impotent longing for coalition with a nonexistent liberal bourgeoisie. Had it met with success, it would simply have prepared a series of new defeats of the Spanish type for the proletariat. A merciless exposure of the theory and practice of the People's Front is therefore the first condition for a revolutionary struggle against fascism.

Of course, this does not mean that the Fourth International rejects democratic slogans as a means of mobilising the masses against fascism. On the contrary, such slogans at certain moments can play a serious role. But the formulas of democracy (freedom of press, the right to unionise, etc.) mean for us only incidental or episodic slogans in the independent movement of the proletariat and not a democratic noose fastened to the neck of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie's agents (Spain!). As soon as the movement assumes something of a mass character, the democratic slogans will be intertwined with the transitional ones; factory committees, it may be supposed, will appear before the old routinists rush from their chancelleries to organise trade unions; soviets will cover Germany before a new Constituent Assembly will gather in Weimar. The same applies to Italy and the rest of the totalitarian and semi-totalitarian countries.

Fascism plunged these countries into political barbarism. But it did not change their social structure. Fascism is a tool in the hands of finance capital and not of feudal landowners. A revolutionary program should base itself on the dialectics of the class struggle, obligatory also to fascist countries, and not on the psychology of terrified bankrupts. The Fourth International rejects with disgust the ways of political masquerade which impelled the Stalinists, the former heroes of the "third period," to appear in turn behind the masks of Catholics, Protestants, Jews, German nationalists, liberals — only in order to hide their own unattractive face.<sup>28</sup> The Fourth International always and everywhere appears under its own banner. It proposes its own program openly to the proletariat in fascist countries. The advanced workers of all the world are already firmly convinced that the overthrow of Mussolini, Hitler, and their agents and imitators will occur only under the leadership of the Fourth International.

### **The USSR & problems of the transitional epoch**

The Soviet Union emerged from the October Revolution as a workers' state. State ownership of the means of production, a necessary prerequisite to socialist development, opened up the possibility of rapid growth of the productive forces. But

the apparatus of the workers' state underwent a complete degeneration at the same time: it was transformed from a weapon of the working class into a weapon of bureaucratic violence against the working class and more and more a weapon for the sabotage of the country's economy. The bureaucratisation of a backward and isolated workers' state and the transformation of the bureaucracy into an all-powerful privileged caste constitute the most convincing refutation — not only theoretically but this time practically — of the theory of socialism in one country.<sup>29</sup>

The USSR thus embodies terrific contradictions. But it still remains a *degenerated workers' state*. Such is the social diagnosis. The political prognosis has an alternative character: either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back to capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism.

To the sections of the Fourth International, the Moscow Trials came not as a surprise and not as a result of the personal madness of the Kremlin dictator, but as the legitimate offspring of the Thermidor.<sup>30</sup> They grew out of the unbearable conflicts within the Soviet bureaucracy itself, which in turn mirror the contradictions between the bureaucracy and the people, as well as the deepening antagonisms among the "people" themselves. The bloody "fantastic" nature of the trials gives the measure of the intensity of the contradictions and by the same token predicts the approach of the denouement.

The public utterances of former foreign representatives of the Kremlin, who refused to return to Moscow, irrefutably confirm in their own way that all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko).<sup>31</sup> The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat. The fascist, counterrevolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with ever greater consistency the interests of world imperialism. These candidates for the role of compradors consider, not without reason, that the new ruling layer can insure their positions of privilege only through rejection of nationalisation, collectivisation and monopoly of foreign trade in the name of the assimilation of "Western civilisation," i.e., capitalism. Between these two poles, there are intermediate, diffused Menshevik-SR-liberal tendencies which gravitate toward bourgeois democracy.

Within the very ranks of that so-called "classless" society, there unquestionably exist groupings exactly similar to those in the bureaucracy, only less sharply expressed and in inverse proportions: conscious capitalist tendencies distinguish mainly the



prosperous part of the collective farms (*kolkhozi*) and are characteristic of only a small minority of the population. But this layer provides itself with a wide base for petty-bourgeois tendencies of accumulating personal wealth at the expense of general poverty, and are consciously encouraged by the bureaucracy.

Atop this system of mounting antagonisms, trespassing ever more on the social equilibrium, the Thermidorian oligarchy, today reduced mainly to Stalin's Bonapartist clique, hangs on by terroristic methods. The latest judicial frame-ups were aimed as a blow *against the left*. This is true also of the mopping up of the leaders of the Right Opposition, because the Right group of the old Bolshevik Party, seen from the viewpoint of the bureaucracy's interests and tendencies, represented a *left* danger. The fact that the Bonapartist clique, likewise in fear of its own right allies of the type of Butenko, is forced in the interests of self-preservation to execute the generation of Old Bolsheviks almost to a man, offers indisputable testimony of the vitality of revolutionary traditions among the masses as well as of their growing discontent.<sup>32</sup>

Petty-bourgeois democrats of the West, having but yesterday assayed the Moscow Trials as unalloyed gold, today repeat insistently that there is "neither Trotskyism nor Trotskyists within the USSR." They fail to explain, however, why all the purges are conducted under the banner of a struggle with precisely this danger. If we are to examine "Trotskyism" as a finished program, and, even more to the point, as an organisation, then unquestionably "Trotskyism" is extremely weak in the USSR. However, its indestructible force stems from the fact that it expresses not only revolutionary tradition but also today's actual opposition of the Russian working class. The social hatred stored up by the workers against the bureaucracy — this is precisely what from the viewpoint of the Kremlin clique constitutes "Trotskyism." It fears with a deathly and thoroughly well-grounded fear the bond between the deep but inarticulate indignation of the workers and the organisation of the Fourth International.

The extermination of the generation of Old Bolsheviks and of the revolutionary representatives of the middle and young generations has acted to disrupt the political equilibrium still more in favor of the right bourgeois wing of the bureaucracy, and of its allies throughout the land. From them, i.e., from the right we can expect ever more determined attempts in the next period to revise the socialist character of the USSR and bring it closer in pattern to "Western civilisation" in its fascist form.

From this perspective, impelling concreteness is imparted to the question of the "defence of the USSR." If tomorrow the bourgeois-fascist grouping, the "faction of Butenko," so to speak, should attempt the conquest of power, the "faction of Reiss" inevitably would align itself on the opposite side of the barricades. Although it would find itself temporarily the ally of Stalin, it would nevertheless defend not the Bonapartist

clique but the social base of the USSR, i.e., the property wrenched away from the capitalists and transformed into state property. Should the “faction of Butenko” prove to be in alliance with Hitler, then the “faction of Reiss” would defend the USSR from military intervention, inside the country as well as on the world arena. Any other course would be a betrayal.

Although it is thus impermissible to deny in advance the possibility, in strictly defined instances, of a “united front” with the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counterrevolution, the chief political task in the USSR still remains the *overthrow of this same Thermidorian bureaucracy*. Each day added to its domination helps rot the foundations of the socialist elements of economy and increases the chances for capitalist restoration. It is in precisely this direction that the Comintern moves as the agent and accomplice of the Stalinist clique in strangling the Spanish revolution and demoralising the international proletariat.

As in fascist countries, the chief strength of the bureaucracy lies not in itself but in the disillusionment of the masses, in their lack of a new perspective. As in fascist countries, from which Stalin’s *political* apparatus does not differ save in more unbridled savagery, only preparatory propagandistic work is possible today in the USSR. As in fascist countries, the impetus to the Soviet workers’ revolutionary upsurge will probably be given by events outside the country. The struggle against the Comintern on the world arena is the most important part today of the struggle against the Stalinist dictatorship. There are many signs that the Comintern’s downfall, because it does not have a *direct* base in the GPU, will precede the downfall of the Bonapartist clique and the Thermidorian bureaucracy as a whole.

A fresh upsurge of the revolution in the USSR will undoubtedly begin under the banner of the struggle against *social inequality* and *political oppression*. Down with the privileges of the bureaucracy! Down with Stakhanovism! Down with the Soviet aristocracy and its ranks and orders! Greater equality of wages for all forms of labour!<sup>33</sup>

The struggle for the freedom of the trade unions and the factory committees, for the right of assembly and freedom of the press, will unfold in the struggle for the regeneration and development of *Soviet democracy*.

The bureaucracy replaced the soviets as class organs with the fiction of universal electoral rights — in the style of Hitler-Goebbels. It is necessary to return to the soviets not only their free democratic form but also their class content. As once the bourgeoisie and kulaks were not permitted to enter the soviets, so now *it is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets*. In the soviets there is room only for representatives of the workers, rank-and-file collective farmers, peasants, and Red Army men.

Democratisation of the soviets is impossible without *legalisation of soviet parties*. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognise as soviet parties.

A revision of *planned economy* from top to bottom in the interests of producers and consumers! Factory committees should be returned the right to control production. A democratically organised consumers' cooperative should control the quality and price of products.

Reorganisation of the collective farms in accordance with the will and in the interests of the workers there engaged!

The reactionary *international policy* of the bureaucracy should be replaced by the policy of proletarian internationalism. The complete diplomatic correspondence of the Kremlin to be published. *Down with secret diplomacy!*

All political trials, staged by the Thermidorian bureaucracy to be reviewed in the light of complete publicity and controversial openness and integrity. Only the victorious revolutionary uprising of the oppressed masses can revive the Soviet regime and guarantee its further development toward socialism. There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection — the party of the Fourth International!

Down with the bureaucratic gang of Cain-Stalin!

Long live Soviet democracy!

Long live the international socialist revolution!

### **Against opportunism & unprincipled revisionism**

The politics of Léon Blum's party in France demonstrate anew that reformists are incapable of learning anything from even the most tragic lessons of history. French Social Democracy slavishly copies the politics of German Social Democracy and goes to meet the same end. Within a few decades the Second International intertwined itself with the bourgeois-democratic regime, became in fact a part of it and is rotting away together with it.

The Third International has taken to the road of reformism at a time when the crisis of capitalism definitely placed the proletarian revolution on the order of the day. The Comintern's policy in Spain and China today — the policy of cringing before the "democratic" and "national" bourgeoisie — demonstrates that the Comintern is likewise incapable of learning anything further or of changing. The bureaucracy which became a reactionary force in the USSR cannot play a revolutionary role on the world arena.

Anarcho-syndicalism in general has passed through the same kind of evolution. In France, the syndicalist bureaucracy of Léon Jouhaux has long since become a bourgeois agency in the working class.<sup>34</sup>

Intermediate centrist organisations centered about the London Bureau represent merely “left” appendages of Social Democracy or of the Comintern.<sup>35</sup> They have displayed a complete inability to make head or tail of the political situation and draw revolutionary conclusions from it. Their highest point was the Spanish POUM, which under revolutionary conditions proved completely incapable of following a revolutionary line.

The tragic defeats suffered by the world proletariat over a long period of years doomed the official organisations to yet greater conservatism and simultaneously sent disillusioned petty-bourgeois “revolutionists” in pursuit of “new ways.” As always during epochs of reaction and decay, quacks and charlatans appear on all sides, desirous of revising the whole course of revolutionary thought. Instead of learning from the past, they “reject” it. Some discover the inconsistency of Marxism, others announce the downfall of Bolshevism. There are those who put responsibility upon revolutionary doctrine for the mistakes and crimes of those who betrayed it; others who curse the medicine because it does not guarantee an instantaneous and miraculous cure. The more daring promise to discover a panacea and, in anticipation, recommend the halting of the class struggle. A good many prophets of “new morals” are preparing to regenerate the labour movement with the help of ethical homeopathy. The majority of these apostles have succeeded in becoming themselves moral invalids before arriving on the field of battle. Thus, under the aspect of “new ways,” old recipes, long since buried in the archives of pre-Marxian socialism, are offered to the proletariat.

The Fourth International declares uncompromising war on the bureaucracies of the Second, Third, Amsterdam and Anarcho-syndicalist Internationals, as on their centrist satellites; on reformism without reforms; democracy in alliance with the GPU; pacifism without peace; anarchism in the service of the bourgeoisie; on “revolutionists” who live in deathly fear of revolution. All of these organisations are not pledges for the future but decayed survivals of the past. The epoch of wars and revolutions will raze them to the ground.

The Fourth International does not search after and does not invent panaceas. It takes its stand completely on Marxism as the only revolutionary doctrine that enables one to understand reality, unearth the cause behind the defeats and consciously prepare for victory. The Fourth International continues the tradition of Bolshevism which first showed the proletariat how to conquer power. The Fourth International sweeps away the quacks, charlatans, and unsolicited teachers of morals. In a society based upon exploitation, the highest moral is that of the social revolution. All methods are good which raise the class-consciousness of the workers, their trust in their own forces, their readiness for self-sacrifice in the struggle. The impermissible methods are those which

implant fear and submissiveness in the oppressed before their oppressors, which crush the spirit of protest and indignation or substitute for the will of the masses — the will of the leaders; for conviction — compulsion; for an analysis of reality — demagoguery and frame-up. That is why Social Democracy, prostituting Marxism, and Stalinism — the antithesis of Bolshevism — are both mortal enemies of the proletarian revolution and its morals.

To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives — these are the rules of the Fourth International. It has shown that it could swim against the stream. The approaching historical wave will raise it on its crest.

### **Against sectarianism**

Under the influence of the betrayal by the historic organisations of the proletariat certain sectarian moods and groupings of various kinds arise or are regenerated at the periphery of the Fourth International. At their base lies a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands, i.e., for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses, as they are today. Preparing for the revolution means to the sectarians, convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism. They propose turning their backs on the “old” trade unions, i.e., to tens of millions of organised workers — as if the masses could somehow live outside of the conditions of the actual class struggle! They remain indifferent to the inner struggle within reformist organisations — as if one could win the masses without intervening in their daily strife! They refuse to draw a distinction between bourgeois democracy and fascism — as if the masses could help but feel the difference on every hand!

Sectarians are capable of differentiating between but two colors: red and black. So as not to tempt themselves, they simplify reality. They refuse to draw a distinction between the fighting camps in Spain for the reason that both camps have a bourgeois character. For the same reason they consider it necessary to preserve “neutrality” in the war between Japan and China. They deny the principled difference between the USSR and the imperialist countries, and because of the reactionary policies of the Soviet bureaucracy they reject defence of the new forms of property, created by the October Revolution, against the onslaughts of imperialism. Incapable of finding access to the masses, they therefore zealously accuse the masses of inability to raise themselves to revolutionary ideas.

These sterile politicians generally have no need of a bridge in the form of transitional

demands because they do not intend to cross over to the other shore. They simply dawdle in one place, satisfying themselves with a repetition of the self-same meager abstractions. Political events are for them an occasion for comment but not for action. Since sectarians, as in general every kind of blunderer and miracle-man, are toppled by reality at each step, they live in a state of perpetual exasperation, complaining about the “regime” and “the methods” and ceaselessly wallowing in small intrigues. In their own circles they customarily carry on a regime of despotism. The political prostration of sectarianism serves to complement, shadowlike, the prostration of opportunism, revealing no revolutionary vistas. In practical politics, sectarians unite with opportunists, particularly with centrists, every time in the struggle against Marxism.

Most of the sectarian groups and cliques, nourished on accidental crumbs from the table of the Fourth International, lead an “independent” organisational existence, with great pretensions but without the least chance for success. Bolshevik-Leninists, without waste of time, calmly leave these groups to their own fate: However, sectarian tendencies are to be found also in our own ranks and display a ruinous influence on the work of the individual sections. It is impossible to make any further compromise with them even for a single day. A correct policy regarding trade unions is a basic condition for adherence to the Fourth International. He who does not seek and does not find the road to the masses is not a fighter but a dead weight to the party. A program is formulated not for the editorial board or for the leaders of discussion clubs but for the revolutionary action of millions. The cleansing of the ranks of the Fourth International of sectarianism and incurable sectarians is a primary condition for revolutionary success.

### **Open the road to the woman worker! Open the road to the youth!**

The defeat of the Spanish revolution engineered by its “leaders,” the shameful bankruptcy of the People’s Front in France, and the exposure of the Moscow juridical swindles — these three facts in their aggregate deal an irreparable blow to the Comintern and, incidentally, grave wounds to its allies: the Social Democrats and Anarcho-syndicalists. This does not mean, of course, that the members of these organisations will immediately turn to the Fourth International. The older generation, having suffered terrible defeats, will leave the movement in significant numbers. In addition, the Fourth International is certainly not striving to become an asylum for revolutionary invalids, disillusioned bureaucrats and careerists. On the contrary, against a possible influx into our party of petty-bourgeois elements, now reigning in the apparatus of the old organisations, strict preventive measures are necessary: a prolonged probationary

period for those candidates who are not workers, especially former party bureaucrats; prevention from holding any responsible post for the first three years, etc. There is not and there will not be any place for careerism, the ulcer of the old Internationals, in the Fourth International. Only those who wish to live for the movement, and not at the expense of the movement, will find access to us. The revolutionary workers should feel themselves to be the masters. The doors of our organisation are wide open to them.

Of course, even among the workers who had at one time risen to the first ranks, there are not a few tired and disillusioned ones. They will remain, at least for the next period, as bystanders. When a program or an organisation wears out the generation which carried it on its shoulders wears out with it. The movement is revitalised by the youth who are free of responsibility for the past. The Fourth International pays particular attention to the young generation of the proletariat. All of its policies strive to inspire the youth with belief in its own strength and in the future. Only the fresh enthusiasm and aggressive spirit of the youth can guarantee the preliminary successes in the struggle; only these successes can return the best elements of the older generation to the road of revolution. Thus it was, thus it will be.

Opportunist organisations by their very nature concentrate their chief attention on the top layers of the working class and therefore ignore both the youth and the woman worker. The decay of capitalism, however, deals its heaviest blows to the woman as a wage earner and as a housewife. The sections of the Fourth International should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class, consequently among the women workers. Here they will find inexhaustible stores of devotion, selflessness, and readiness to sacrifice.

*Down with the bureaucracy and careerism! Open the road to the youth! Turn to the woman worker!* These slogans are emblazoned on the banner of the Fourth International.

### **Under the banner of the Fourth International!**

Sceptics ask: But has the moment for the creation of the Fourth International yet arrived? It is impossible, they say, to create an International “artificially”; it can arise only out of great events, etc., etc. All of these objections merely show that sceptics are no good for the building of a new International. They are good for scarcely anything at all.

The Fourth International has already arisen out of great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history. The cause for these defeats is to be found in the degeneration and perfidy of the old leadership. The class struggle does not tolerate an interruption.

The Third International, following the Second, is dead for purposes of revolution. Long live the Fourth International!

But has the time yet arrived to proclaim its creation?. . . the sceptics are not quieted down. The Fourth International, we answer, has no need of being “proclaimed.” It exists and it fights. Is it weak? Yes, its ranks are not numerous because it is still young. They are as yet chiefly cadres. But these cadres are pledges for the future. Outside of these cadres there does not exist a single revolutionary current on this planet really meriting the name. If our International be still weak in numbers, it is strong in doctrine, program, tradition, in the incomparable tempering of its cadres. Who does not perceive this today, let him in the meantime stand aside. Tomorrow it will become more evident.

The Fourth International, already today, is deservedly hated by the Stalinists, Social Democrats, bourgeois liberals, and fascists. There is not and there cannot be a place for it in any of the People’s Fronts. It uncompromisingly gives battle to all political groupings tied to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie. Its task — the abolition of capitalism’s domination. Its aim — socialism. Its method — the proletarian revolution.

Without inner democracy — no revolutionary education. Without discipline — no revolutionary action. The inner structure of the Fourth International is based on the principles of *democratic centralism*: full freedom in discussion, complete unity in action.

The present crisis in human culture is the crisis in the proletarian leadership. The advanced workers, united in the Fourth International, show their class the way out of the crisis. They offer a program based on international experience in the struggle of the proletariat and of all the oppressed of the world for liberation. They offer a spotless banner.

Workers — men and women — of all countries, place yourselves under the banner of the Fourth International. It is the banner of your approaching victory! ■



## Appendix

# A Discussion with Trotsky on the Transitional Program

**Trotsky:** The significance of the program is the significance of the party. The party is the vanguard of the class. The party is formed by selection from the most conscious, most advanced, most devoted elements, and the party can play an important historical political role, disproportionate to its numerical strength. It can be a small party and play a great part. For example, in the Russian revolution of 1905, the Bolshevik faction had not more than ten thousand members, the Mensheviks ten thousand to twelve thousand; that is the maximum. At that time they belonged to the same party, so that the party as a whole had not more than twenty thousand to twenty-two thousand workers. The party guided the soviets throughout the whole country, thanks to correct policy and to cohesion. It can be objected that the difference between the Russians and the Americans, or any other old capitalist country, was that the Russian proletariat was a totally fresh, virgin proletariat, without any tradition of trade unions, conservative reformism. It was a young, fresh, virgin working class which needed direction and looked for this direction; and in spite of the fact that the party as a whole had not more than twenty thousand workers, this party guided twenty-three million workers in the fight.

Now, what is the party? In what does the cohesion consist? This cohesion is a common understanding of the events, of the tasks; and this common understanding — that is the program of the party. Just as modern workers cannot work without tools any more than the barbarians could, so in the party the program is the instrument. Without the program every worker must improvise his tool, find improvised tools, and one contradicts another. Only when we have the vanguard organised upon the

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This discussion, on June 7, 1938, was one of a number between Trotsky and leaders of the US Socialist Workers Party in the leadup to the founding conference of the Fourth International in September of that year. It was first published in the February 1946 issue of *Fourth International*.

basis of common conceptions can we act.

One can say that we didn't have a program until this day. Yet we acted. But this program was formulated under different articles, different motions, etc. In this sense the draft program doesn't represent a new invention; it is not the writing of one man. It is the summation of collective work up until today. But such a summation is absolutely necessary in order to give to the comrades an idea of the situation, a common understanding. Petty-bourgeois anarchists and intellectuals are afraid to subscribe to giving a party common ideas, a common attitude. In opposition they wish moral programs. But for us this program is the result of common experience. It is not imposed upon anybody, for whoever joins the party does so voluntarily.

I believe it is important in this connection to underline what we mean by freedom in contradiction to necessity. It is very often a petty-bourgeois conception that we should have a free individuality. It is only a fiction, an error. We are not free. We have no free will in the sense of metaphysical philosophy. When I wish to drink a glass of beer, I act as a free man, but I don't invent the need for beer. That comes from my body. I am only the executor. But insofar as I understand the needs of my body and can satisfy them consciously then I have the sensation of freedom, freedom through understanding the necessity. Here the correct understanding of the necessity of my body is the only real freedom given to animals in any question, and man is an animal. The same holds true for the class. The program for the class cannot fall from heaven. We can arrive only at an understanding of the necessity. In one case it was my body, in the other it is the necessity of society. The program is the articulation of the necessity, which we have learned to understand; and since the necessity is the same for all members of the class, we can reach a common understanding of the tasks. The understanding of this necessity is the program.

We can go further and say that the discipline of our party must be very severe because we are a revolutionary party against a tremendous bloc of enemies conscious of their interests. And now we are attacked not only by the bourgeoisie but by the Stalinists, the most venomous of the bourgeois agents. Absolute discipline is necessary, but it must come from common understanding. If it is imposed from without, it is a yoke. If it comes from understanding, it is an expression of personality, but otherwise it is a yoke. Then discipline is an expression of my free individuality. It is not opposition between personal will and the party, because I entered of my free will. The program too is on this basis, and this program can be upon a sure political and moral basis only if we understand it very well.

The draft program is not a complete program. We can say that in this draft program there are things which are lacking and there are things which by their nature don't

belong to the program. Things which don't belong to the program are the comments. This program contains not only slogans but also comments and polemics against the adversaries. But it is not a complete program. A complete program should have a theoretical expression of the modern capitalist society in its imperialist stage — the reasons for the crisis, the growth of unemployment, and so on. In this draft this analysis is only briefly summarised in the first chapter, because we have written about these things in articles, books, and so on. We will write more and better. But for practical purposes what is said here is enough, because we are all of the same opinion. The beginning of the program is not complete. The first chapter is only a hint and not a complete expression. Also the end of the program is not complete, because we don't speak here about the social revolution, about the seizure of power by insurrection, the transformation of capitalist society into the dictatorship, the dictatorship into the socialist society. This brings the reader only to the doorstep. It is a program for action from today until the beginning of the socialist revolution. And from the practical point of view what is now most important is how can we guide the different strata of the proletariat in the direction of the social revolution. I have heard that now the New York comrades are beginning to organise circles with the purpose of not only studying and criticizing the draft program but also elaborating ways and means in order to present the program to the masses; and I believe that is the best method which our party can utilise.

The program is only the first approximation. It is too general in the sense in which it is presented to the international conference in the next period. It expresses the general tendency of development in the whole world. We have here a short chapter devoted to the semicolonial and colonial countries. We have here a chapter devoted to the fascist countries, a chapter on the Soviet Union, and so on. It is clear that the general characteristics of the world situation are common because they are all under the pressure of the imperialist economy, but every country has its peculiar conditions, and real live politics must begin with these peculiar conditions in each country and even in each part of the country. That is why a very serious approach to the program is the first duty of every comrade in the United States.

There are two dangers in the elaboration of the program. The first is to remain on general abstract lines and to repeat the general slogan without real connection with the trade unions in the locality. That is the direction of sectarian abstraction. The other danger is the contrary, to adapt too much to the local conditions, to the specific conditions, to lose the general revolutionary line. I believe that in the United States the second danger is the more immediate. I remember it most especially in the matter of militarisation, armed pickets, etc. Some comrades were afraid that it is not real for the

workers, etc.

In the last few days I read a French book written by an Italian worker about the rise of fascism in Italy. The writer is opportunistic. He was a Socialist, but it is not his conclusions which are interesting but the facts which he presents. He gives the picture of the Italian proletariat in 1920-21 especially. It was a powerful organisation. They had 160 Socialist parliamentary deputies. They had more than one-third of the communities in their hands — the most important sections of Italy were in the hands of the Socialists, the center of the power of the workers. No capitalist could hire or fire without union consent, and this applied to agricultural workers as well as industrial. It seemed to be 49 per cent of the dictatorship of the proletariat; but the reaction of the small bourgeoisie, the demobilised officers, was terrible against this situation. Then the author tells how they organised small bands under the guidance of officers and sent them in buses in every direction. In cities of ten thousand in the hands of the Socialists, thirty organised men came into the town, burned up the municipal buildings, burned the houses, shot the leaders, imposed on them the conditions of working for capitalists; then they went elsewhere and repeated the same in hundreds and hundreds of towns, one after the other. With these systematic acts of terror they totally destroyed the trade unions and thus became bosses of Italy. They were a tiny minority.

The workers declared a general strike. The fascists sent their buses and destroyed every local strike, and with a small organised minority, wiped out the workers' organisations. After this came elections, and the workers, under the terror, elected the same number of deputies. They protested in parliament until it was dissolved. That is the difference between formal and actual power. All the deputies were sure that they would have power, yet this tremendous movement with its spirit of sacrifice was smashed, crushed, abolished, by some ten thousand fascists, well organised, with a spirit of sacrifice, and good military leaders.

In the United States it might be different, but the fundamental tasks are the same. I read about the tactics of Hague.<sup>1</sup> It is a rehearsal of a fascist overthrow. He represents small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened. He has his gang, which is absolutely unconstitutional. This is very, very contagious. With the deepening of the crisis it will spread all over the country, and Roosevelt, who is a very good democrat, will say, "Perhaps it is the only solution."

It was the same in Italy. They had a minister who invited the Socialists. The Socialists refused. He admitted the fascists. He thought he could balance them against the Socialists, but they smashed the minister too. Now I think the example of New Jersey is very important. We should utilise everything, but this especially. I will propose a special series of articles on how the fascists became victorious. We can become victorious

the same way, but we must have a small armed body with the support of the big body of workers. We must have the best disciplined, organised workers, defense committees, otherwise we will be crushed; and I believe that our comrades in the United States don't realise the importance of this question. A fascist wave can spread in two or three years, and the best workers' leaders will be lynched in the worst possible way, like the Negroes in the South. I believe that the terror in the United States will be the most terrible of all. That is why we must begin very modestly, that is, with defense groups, but it should be launched immediately.

**Question:** How do we go about launching the defense groups practically?

**Trotsky:** It is very simple. Do you have a picket line in a strike? When the strike is over we say we must defend our union by making this picket line permanent.

**Question:** Does the party itself create the defense group with its own members?

**Trotsky:** The slogans of the party must be placed in quarters where we have sympathisers and workers who will defend us. But a party cannot create an independent defense organisation. The task is to create such a body in the trade unions. We must have these groups of comrades with very good discipline, with good, cautious leaders, not easily provoked, because such groups can be provoked easily. The main task for the next year would be to avoid conflicts and bloody clashes. We must reduce them to a minimum with a minority organisation during strikes, during peaceful times. In order to prevent fascist meetings it is a question of the relationship of forces. We alone are not strong, but we propose a united front.

Hitler explains his success in his book. The Social Democracy was extremely powerful. To a meeting of the Social Democracy he sent a band with Rudolf Hess.<sup>2</sup> He says that at the end of the meeting his thirty boys evicted all the workers and they were incapable of opposing them. Then he knew he would be victorious. The workers were organised only to pay dues. No preparation at all for other tasks. Now we must do what Hitler did except in reverse. Send forty to fifty men to dissolve the meeting. This has tremendous importance. The workers become steeled, fighting elements. They become trumpets. The petty bourgeoisie think these are serious people. Such a success! This has tremendous importance — as so much of the populace is blind, backward, oppressed, they can be aroused only by success. We can arouse only the vanguard, but this vanguard must then arouse the others. That is why, I repeat, it is a very important question. In Minneapolis, where we have very skilled, powerful comrades, we can

begin and show the entire country.

I believe that it would be useful to discuss a little this part of the draft, which is not sufficiently developed in our text. It is the general theoretical part. In the last discussion I remarked that the theoretical part of the program, as a general analysis of society, is not given completely in this draft but is replaced by some short hints. On the other side, it does not contain the parts dealing with the revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the construction of society after the revolution. Only the transition period is covered. We have repeated many times that the scientific character of our activity consists in the fact that we adapt our program not to political conjunctures or the thought or mood of the masses as this mood is today, but we adapt our program to the objective situation as it is represented by the economic class structure of society. The mentality can be backward; then the political task of the party is to bring the mentality into harmony with the objective facts, to make the workers understand the objective task. But we cannot adapt the program to the backward mentality of the workers; the mentality, the mood is a secondary factor — the prime factor is the objective situation. That is why we have heard these criticisms or these appreciations that some parts of the program do not conform to the situation.

Everywhere I ask what should we do? Make our program fit the objective situation or the mentality of the workers? And I believe that this question must be put before every comrade who says that this program is not fit for the American situation. This program is a scientific program. It is based on an objective analysis of the objective situation. It cannot be understood by the workers as a whole. It would be very good if the vanguard would understand it in the next period and that they would then turn and say to the workers, “You must save yourselves from fascism.”

What do we understand by objective situation? Here we must analyse the objective conditions for a social revolution. These conditions are given in the works of Marx and Engels and remain in their essence unchanged today. First, Marx one time said that no one society leaves its place until it totally exhausts its possibilities. What does this signify? That we cannot eliminate a society by subjective will, that we cannot organise an insurrection like the Blanquists.<sup>3</sup> What do “possibilities” signify? That a “society cannot leave”? So long as a society is capable of developing the productive forces and making the nation richer, it remains strong, stable. That was the condition with slave society, with feudal, and with capitalist society.

Here we come to a very interesting point, which I analysed previously in my introduction to the “Communist Manifesto”.<sup>4</sup> Marx and Engels waited for a revolution during their lifetimes. Especially in the years 1848-50 they expected a social revolution. Why? They said that the capitalist system, based on private profit, had become a brake

upon the development of the productive forces. Was this correct? Yes and no. It was correct in the sense that if the workers had been capable of meeting the needs of the nineteenth century and seizing power, the development of the productive forces would have been more rapid and the nation richer. But given that the workers were not capable, the capitalist system remained, with its crisis, etc. Yet the general line ascended. The last war (1914-18) was a result of the fact that the world market became too narrow for the development of the productive forces, and each nation tried to repulse all the others and to seize the world market for its own purposes. They could not succeed, and now we see that capitalist society enters into a new stage.

Many say it was a result of the war, but the war was a result of the fact that the society exhausted its possibilities. The war was only an expression of its inability to further expand. After the war the historic crisis became deeper and deeper. Capitalist development everywhere was prosperity and crisis, but the summation of the crises and prosperity had been an ascendancy. Beginning with the war we see the cycles of crisis and prosperity forming a declining line. It signifies now that this society has exhausted totally its inner possibilities and must be replaced by a new society, or the old society will go into barbarism just as the civilisation of Greece and Rome — because they had exhausted their possibilities and no class could replace them.

That is the question now and especially in the United States. The first requisite now for a new society is that the productive forces must be sufficiently developed in order to give birth to a higher one. Are the productive forces sufficiently developed for this? Yes, they were developed sufficiently in the nineteenth century — not as well as now, but sufficiently. Now especially in the United States it would be very easy for a good statistician to prove that if the American productive forces were unleashed now, today, they could be doubled or tripled. I believe that our comrades should make such a statistical survey.

The second condition — there must be a new progressive class which is sufficiently numerous and economically influential to be able to impose its will upon society. This class is the proletariat. It must be the majority of the nation or must have the possibility to lead the majority. In England the working class is the absolute majority. In Russia it was a minority, but it had the possibility to lead the poor peasants. In the United States it is at least half of the population, but it has the possibility to lead the farmers.

The third condition is the subjective factor. This class must understand its position in society and have its own organisations. That is the condition which is now lacking from the historic point of view. Socially it is not only possible but an absolute necessity, in the sense that it is either socialism or barbarism. That is the historical alternative.

We mentioned in the discussion that Mr. Hague is not some stupid old man who

imagines some medieval system exists in his town. He is an advance scout of the American capitalist class.

Jack London wrote a book, *The Iron Heel*.<sup>5</sup> I recommend it now. It was written in 1907. At that time it seemed a terrible dream, but now it is absolute reality. He gives the development of the class struggle in the United States, with the capitalist class retaining power through terrible repressions. It is a picture of fascism. The ideology he gives even corresponds with Hitler. It is very interesting.

In Newark the mayor begins to imitate Hague, and they are all inspired by Hague and by the big bosses. It is absolutely certain that Roosevelt will observe that now in the crisis he can do nothing with democratic means. He is not a fascist, as the Stalinists claimed in 1932. But his initiative will be paralysed. What can he do? The workers are dissatisfied. The big bosses are dissatisfied. He can only maneuver until the end of his term and then say goodbye. A third term for Roosevelt is absolutely excluded.

The imitation of [Hague by] the Newark mayor has tremendous importance. In two or three years you can have a powerful fascist movement of American character. What is Hague? He has nothing to do with Mussolini or Hitler, but he is an American fascist. Why is he aroused? Because the society can no longer be run by democratic means.

It would of course be impermissible to fall into hysteria. The danger of the working class being outrun by events is indisputable, but we can combat this danger only by energetic, systematic development of our own activity, under adequate revolutionary slogans and not by fantastic efforts to spring over our own heads.

Democracy is only the rule of big bosses. We must understand well what Lundberg showed in his book, that sixty families govern the United States. But how? By democratic means up until today. They are a small minority surrounded by middle classes, the petty bourgeoisie, workers. They must have the possibility of interesting the middle classes in this society. They must not be desperate. The same holds true for the workers. At least for the higher strata. If they are opposed they can break the revolutionary possibilities of the lower strata, and this is the only way of [making democracy work].

The democratic regime is the most aristocratic way of ruling. It is possible only for a rich nation. Every British democrat has nine or ten slaves working in the colonies. The antique Greek society was a slave democracy. The same in a certain sense can be said of British democracy, Holland, France, Belgium. The United States has no direct colonies, but they have Latin America, and the whole world is a sort of colony for the United States — not to speak about appropriating the richest continent and developing without a feudal tradition. It is a historically privileged nation, but the privileged capitalist



nations differ from the most “Pariah” capitalist nations only from the point of view of delay. Italy, the poorest of the great capitalist nations, became fascist first. Germany was second because Germany has no colonies or rich subsidiary countries, and on this poor base exhausted all the possibilities; and the workers could not replace the bourgeoisie. Now it is the turn of the United States — even before Great Britain or France.

The duty of our party is to seize every American worker and shake him ten times so he will understand what the situation is in the United States. That is not a conjunctural crisis but a social crisis. Our party can play a very great role. What is difficult for a young party in a very thick atmosphere of previous traditions, hypocrisy, is to launch a revolutionary slogan. “It is fantastic,” “not adequate in America” — but it is possible that this will change by the time you launch the revolutionary slogans of our program. Somebody will laugh. But revolutionary courage is not only to be shot but to endure the laughter of stupid people who are in the majority. But when one of them is beaten by Hague’s gang, he will think it is good to have a defense committee, and his ironic attitude will change.

**Question:** Isn’t the ideology of the workers a part of the objective factors?

**Trotsky:** For us as a small minority this whole thing is objective, including the mood of the workers. But we must analyse and classify those elements of the objective situation which can be changed by our paper and those which cannot be changed. That is why we say that the program is adapted to the fundamental, stable elements of the objective situation, and the task is to adapt the mentality of the masses to those objective factors. To adapt the mentality is a pedagogical task. We must be patient, etc. The crisis of society is given as the base of our activity. The mentality is the political arena of our activity. We must change it. We must give a scientific explanation of society, and clearly explain it to the masses. That is the difference between Marxism and reformism.

The reformists have a good smell for what the audience wants — as Norman Thomas<sup>6</sup> — he gives them that. But that is not serious revolutionary activity. We must have the courage to be unpopular, to say “you are fools,” “you are stupid,” “they betray you,” and every once in a while with a scandal launch our ideas with passion. It is necessary to shake the worker from time to time, to explain, and then shake him again — that all belongs to the art of propaganda. But it must be scientific, not bent to the moods of the masses. We are the most realistic people because we reckon with facts, which cannot be changed by the eloquence of Norman Thomas. If we win immediate success we swim with the current of the masses, and that current is the

revolution.

**Question:** Sometimes I think that our own leaders don't feel these problems.

**Trotsky:** Possibly it is two things. One is to understand, the other to feel it with muscles, fibers. It is necessary now to be penetrated by this understanding that we must change our politics. It is a question not only for the masses, but for the party. It is a question not only for the party, but also for the leaders. We had some discussions, some differences. It is impossible to come to the position at the same time. There are always frictions. They are inevitable and even necessary. That was the reason for this program — to provoke this discussion.

**Question:** How much time should we allow for this discussion among the leaders?

**Trotsky:** It is very difficult to say. It will depend on many factors. We cannot allow too great a deal of time. We must now accomplish this new orientation. It is new and old. It is based on all past activity, but now it opens a new chapter. In spite of errors, frictions, and fights, now a new chapter opens and we must mobilise all our forces upon it with a more energetic attitude. What is important, when the program is definitely established, is to know the slogans very well and to maneuver them skilfully, so that in every part of the country everyone uses the same slogans at the same time. Three thousand can make the impression of fifteen thousand or fifty thousand.

**Question:** Comrades may agree abstractly to this program, but do we have experienced comrades to carry out slogans in the masses? They agree abstractly, but what can I do with the backward workers in my union?

**Trotsky:** Our party is a party of the American working class. You must remember that a powerful proletarian movement, not to speak of a powerful proletarian revolution, has not occurred in the United States. In 1917 we wouldn't have had the possibility to win without 1905. My generation was very young. During twelve years we had a very good chance to understand our defeats and correct them and to win. But even then we lost again to the new bureaucrats. That is why we cannot see whether our party will directly lead the American working class to victory. It is possible that the American workers, who are patriotic, whose standard of living is high, will have rebellions, strikes. On one side Hague, the other Lewis.<sup>7</sup> That can last for a long period, years and years, and during this time our people will steel themselves, become more sure of themselves,

and the workers will say, “They are the only people capable of seeing the path.” Only war produces war heroes. For the beginning we have excellent elements, very good men, seriously educated, a good staff, and not a small staff. In this more general sense I am totally optimistic. Then I believe that the change in the mentality of the American workers will come at a very speedy rhythm. What to do? Everybody is disquieted, looking for something new. It is very favorable for revolutionary propaganda.

We must remember not only the aristocratic elements but the poorest elements. The cultivated American workers have a plus and a minus, such as English sports — it is very good but also a device to demoralise the workers. All the revolutionary energy was expended in sports. It was cultivated by the British, the most intelligent of the capitalist nations. Sports should be in the hands of the trade unions, as a part of the revolutionary education. But you have a good part of the youth and women who are not rich enough for these things. We must have tentacles to penetrate everywhere into the deepest strata.

**Question:** I think the party has made a great advance since the last convention.

**Trotsky:** A very important turn has been accomplished. Now it is necessary to give this weapon a concentrated action. General, dispersed agitation doesn’t penetrate into the minds of the uneducated. But if you repeat the same slogans, adapting them to the situation, then repetition, which is the mother of teaching, will act likewise in politics. Very often it happens not only with the intellectual but with a worker that he believes that everybody understands what he has learned. It is necessary to repeat with insistence, to repeat every day and everywhere. That is the task of the draft program — to issue a homogeneous impression. ■

# Glossary & Notes

## Introduction

- 1 See below, pp. 69-70
- 2 *ibid.*, p. 70
- 3 See below, p. 25-26
- 4 K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto and Its Relevance for Today* (Resistance Books: Sydney, 1998), pp. 62-63
- 5 *ibid.*, pp. 73, 72-73
- 6 D. Fernbach (ed.), *Karl Marx: The Revolutions of 1848* (Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 109-111
- 7 K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto and Its Relevance for Today*, pp. 50-51, 55
- 8 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1977), pp. 191-192
- 9 *ibid.*, pp. 189, 190, 199-200
- 10 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 144-145
- 11 V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1977), pp. 238-239
- 12 V.I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1976), pp. 50-51
- 13 *ibid.*, pp. 187, 188
- 14 *Georgy Plekhanov* (1856-1918) was the first propagandist of Marxism in Russia. After the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, he took a conciliatory stand in the struggle between the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, and afterward joined the opportunist Mensheviks. During the First World War he adopted a national-chauvinist position. After the February 1917 revolution he headed the extreme right-wing of the Mensheviks and opposed the Bolshevik-led proletarian revolution of October 1917.
- 15 V.I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 211
- 16 Alan Adler (ed.), *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International* (Ink Links: London, 1980), pp. 285-87
- 17 V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1976), p. 428
- 18 L. Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-35)* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1971), pp. 21-

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- 19 J. Hansen, "Trotsky's Transitional Program: Its Origins and Significance for Today" in L. Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (Pathfinder Press: New York, third edition, 1977), pp. 25-26

## The Transitional Program

- 1 The "**New Deal**" was the plan of the administration of US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1892-1945) for dealing with the economic problems posed by the Great Depression of 1929-33 and the political problems posed by a working-class radicalisation. Roosevelt's administration, which took office in 1932, proposed various relief projects and legislative reforms like the National Recovery Act (NRA).
- 2 The **Popular Front** or Anti-Fascist People's Front was proclaimed by the Stalinist leadership of the Communist International in 1935. The objective of this policy was to defeat the rise of fascism in Europe by forming coalition governments of Communists and liberal capitalist parties that would enter into diplomatic-military alliances with the Soviet Union.
- 3 Under the impact of severe economic crisis and widespread popular unrest, the Spanish monarchy fell in 1931 and a republic was proclaimed. The Spanish working class defended the republic in numerous clashes with monarchists and other rightist elements. The succession of republican governments however continued their anti-labour measures, such as the crushing of the general strike in Seville in 1931, and the use of the army to subdue the uprising of Asturian miners in 1934. In 1936, after the army generals, led by Francisco Franco and backed by the bourgeoisie, launched a military-fascist uprising, the Spanish workers responded by launching a revolutionary movement, seizing factories, setting up workers' militias, etc. However, all of the organisations of the Spanish left participated in the Popular Front government which set out to contain the revolutionary workers' movement and to rebuild a bourgeois state machine, a course of action which led to its defeat by the fascists in the 1936-39 civil war. Among the largest of these organisations were the (Social-Democratic) Socialist Party, the Anarchists, the (Stalinist) Communist Party, and the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification, a centrist organisation led by ex-Trotskyists).
- 4 The "**sit-down strikes**" involved workers stopping work and occupying their factories or mines.
- 5 The **CIO** (Congress of Industrial Organisations) was originally a committee of the craft-based American Federation of Labor (AFL). The conservative AFL leaders refused to respond to the demand to unionise the radicalising unskilled workers in basic industry, expelling the CIO unions in 1938. After the conservatisation of the CIO unions due to the prolonged post-World War II "boom" and the anti-communist witch-hunt of the late 1940s and early

'50s, the AFL and CIO merged in 1955.

- 6 The **Comintern** (Communist or Third International) was organised by the Russian Bolsheviks in 1919 in opposition to the class-collaborationist Second or Socialist International. Following the coming to power of the Nazis in Germany without any serious opposition from the Communist Party, and the Comintern's endorsement of the ruinous policy of the German CP, Trotsky concluded that the Comintern was bankrupt as a revolutionary organisation. In 1935 the Comintern adopted the class-collaborationist Popular Front policy, supporting bourgeois coalition governments in Spain and France and the Roosevelt administration in the US.
- 7 A **Phrygian cap** is a loosely fitting conical cap identified with bourgeois-democratic republicanism during the French Revolution of 1789-93. The **swastika** was used as a religious symbol by Indo-European peoples for thousands of years before it was appropriated by the German fascists to represent their anti-Semitic "victory of the Aryan race."
- 8 **Léon Blum** (1872-1950) joined the French Socialist Party in 1902. He backed the chauvinist right-wing of the party in 1914 and became premier in the Popular Front government of 1936-37. **Joseph Stalin** (1879-1953) joined the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1896 and sided with the Bolsheviks in the 1903 split. He became general secretary of the Russian Communist Party in 1922. He was the central leader and spokesperson for the privileged party-state bureaucracy that came to power in the Soviet Union in the 1920s.
- 9 **Anarcho-syndicalism** is the manifestation of anarchism in the trade union field, which adds to opposition to parliamentary action and political parties the conception that the trade unions are sufficient to carry through the emancipation of the working class from capitalism. Anarcho-syndicalists envision a new social order managed by labour unions. At the outset of the civil war in Spain in the 1930s the anarcho-syndicalists were the strongest left tendency. However they were unable to offer leadership in the struggle against the fascists and ended up supporting the bourgeois Popular Front government.
- 10 **Technocracy** was a reformist program and movement that achieved a great vogue, particularly among US middle-class professionals, in the early years of the Great Depression. It proposed to overcome the capitalist economic slump and bring about full employment by placing the US economy under the control of engineers, scientists and technical experts (the "technocrats"). The movement later split into a left and a right wing, with the latter developing fascist tendencies.
- 11 **America's Sixty Families**, by Ferdinand Lundberg (1937), documented the existence of an economic oligarchy in the US, headed by 60 families of immense wealth. The author brought the work up to date in 1968 under the title, *The Rich and the Super-Rich*. The "200 families" describes the economic oligarchy in France.
- 12 One of Trotsky's most important contributions to Marxist theory was his analysis of the

**victory of fascism.** He pointed out that fascism was the most repressive form of capitalist rule, which was turned to by the capitalists as a last resort. The essence of fascism is the mobilisation — during a period of extreme and prolonged social crisis — of the urban middle classes and the lumpen-proletariat. The aim of this mobilisation is the replacement of bourgeois democracy with a political regime that would not only smash all forms of independent working-class organisation but place the working class under the totalitarian control of an apparatus of physical and psychological terror reaching down into the workplaces and neighborhoods. The fascists' ability to build such a mass petty-bourgeois movement resulted from the failure of the leadership of the organised workers' movement to convince the radicalised middle-classes that it could offer a way forward out of the crisis. The despair and frenzy of the petty-bourgeoisie was then harnessed by the fascist demagogues to completely crush, demoralise and atomise the working class.

- 13 **Stalinist methods of collectivisation.** After having opposed Trotsky's program for accelerated industrialisation based on taxing the rich peasants (kulaks), Stalin abruptly changed course after 1928 when confronted with a kulak "grain strike." In order to implement industrialisation at a breakneck pace, the Stalinist bureaucracy carried out an unprepared and forced collectivisation of peasant farming. Peasant resistance to this bureaucratic measure precipitated widespread famine in the countryside and devastated agricultural productivity in the USSR for decades.
- 14 **Chauvinism** is a term derived from the name of Nicolas Chauvin, a soldier of zealous patriotism under Napoleon Bonaparte. Marxists apply the term chauvinism to any explicit support for the idea of the superiority of one nation over others. During the First World War, the pro-war "socialists" in each of the belligerent countries justified their "national defencist" position by adopting the chauvinist argument that conditions for developing socialism were more advanced in their nation than in others.
- 15 In 1937 US House of Representatives member Louis Ludlow introduced a proposed amendment to the US Constitution that would require a direct popular referendum for any declaration of war. On January 10, 1938 the House voted down the Ludlow amendment. Earlier in the same week, a Gallup opinion poll showed that 72% of the American people favored the amendment. The Socialist Workers Party gave critical support to the amendment and, utilising the slogan "Let the people vote on war," carried on an agitation campaign in favor of such a popular referendum.
- 16 **"Thermidor"** was the month, according to the new calendar proclaimed by the French bourgeois revolution, in which the radical Jacobins led by Robespierre were overthrown by a reactionary wing within the republican camp, which while preserving bourgeois property relations established by the revolution reversed the democratic and egalitarian measures of the petty-bourgeois Jacobin regime. The event most closely identified with this change is

the execution of Robespierre on July 27, 1794. Trotsky used the term as a historical analogy to designate the seizure of political power by the reactionary petty-bourgeois Stalinist bureaucracy within the framework of the socialist property forms created by the proletarian revolution.

- 17 **“Workers’ and farmers’ government.”** Prior to 1917 the Bolsheviks called for the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy by a provisional revolutionary government based on an alliance of the workers and peasants committed to carrying through the bourgeois-democratic revolution, as a step toward the abolition of capitalism in Russia. They used the formula “revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry” to describe this alignment of class forces in the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In 1917, the Bolsheviks called on the soviets, which had realised this revolutionary alliance between the workers and peasants, to end their support for the bourgeois-landlord Provisional Government, take power and establish a “workers’ and peasants’ republic.” In September 1917, following the Provisional Government’s proclamation of a bourgeois republic, the Bolsheviks called for the soviets to create a “workers’ and peasants’ *government*.” On November 7, 1917, having won a majority in the popularly elected soviets, the Bolsheviks led a worker-soldier insurrection in Petrograd (St. Petersburg) which seized power from the Provisional Government and transferred it to the “Workers’ and Peasants’ Government” elected by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets. At the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in November 1922, a resolution was adopted endorsing the “slogan of a workers’ government (or a workers’ and peasants’ government)” as the Communists’ “general agitational slogan.” It explained that such a government would “serve as a starting point for winning” the dictatorship of the proletariat.
- 18 **Epigones** are disciples who falsify and corrupt the teachings of their mentor. Trotsky used the term for the Stalinists, who claimed to be disciples of Lenin.
- 19 **Mensheviks**, meaning literally “of the minority,” is a word used to designate the group in the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party that in 1903 was led by Julius Martov in opposition to the Bolsheviks (literally, those “of the majority”) led by Lenin. Afterwards, it was used to designate the pseudo-Marxist petty-bourgeois reformist current within the Russian socialist movement. The Mensheviks claimed allegiance to Marxism, but believed that the working class should combine with the liberal bourgeoisie to overthrow Tsarism and establish a bourgeois “democratic republic.” The **Social Revolutionaries** (SRs), or Socialist Revolutionary Party, was founded in 1900, emerging as the political expression of the earlier Narodnik (populist) currents. They advocated a revolution to overthrow Tsarism and achieve “socialism,” by which they meant not the abolition of capitalist ownership of industry by the proletariat but the “socialisation” (egalitarian distribution) of land by the labouring classes in general (wage workers, the urban petty-bourgeoisie, and the peasantry).



The Bolsheviks described the SRs as petty-bourgeois democrats expressing the outlook and interests of the peasantry. The right-wing of the SRs, which oriented toward an alliance with the liberal bourgeois Constitutional Democrats (Cadets), was led by Aleksandr Kerensky, who became head of the landlord-capitalist Provisional Government in 1917. The Left SRs were in a coalition government with the Bolsheviks from December 1917 until July 1918, i.e., during the bourgeois-democratic phase of the October Revolution. In 1923 the **Chinese Communist Party** (CCP) agreed with the tactic proposed by the Comintern to build up its influence among the worker-peasant masses by having its members work inside the Kuomintang (KMT), the petty-bourgeois nationalist party founded by Sun Yat-sen. In the Second Chinese Revolution (1925-27), the Stalin-Bukharin leadership of the Comintern ordered the **Chinese Communist Party** to continue to work inside the KMT after the leadership of the KMT was seized by pro-capitalist forces led by General Chiang Kai-shek, who demanded that the CCP subordinate its activities to the KMT's control. In April 1927, Chiang turned on his CP "allies," launching a wave of repression in which tens of thousands of revolutionary workers and peasants were killed.

- 20 The **"July Days"** (July 1917) was a period of intense agitation and impatience among the workers and peasant-soldiers in Petrograd. In early July, they staged a semi-insurrectional armed demonstration to demand that the Menshevik-SR leadership of the Petrograd soviet take power from the Cadet-Menshevik-SR Provisional Government. The Menshevik and SR leaders refused this demand and launched a wave of repression against the protest movement, branding it a German-Bolshevik plot to surrender Petrograd to the advancing German armies.
- 21 The **Amsterdam International** (formal name: International Federation of Trade Unions) was founded by Social-Democratic trade union officials in 1913. It collapsed during World War I, but was refounded in Amsterdam in July 1919. It disappeared with the outbreak of World War II.
- 22 **"Permanent revolution"** was the name adopted by Trotsky to designate his theory that the Russian proletariat could overthrow the Tsarist regime and directly establish a socialist regime without passing through an intermediate stage of governmental alliance with the peasant masses to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution. According to Trotsky's theory, which he first expounded in 1906, the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution (winning of political liberties, confiscation of the semi-feudal landed estates), would be carried out simultaneously with the tasks of the socialist revolution (creation of a workers' state and expropriation of the industrial, commercial and agricultural capitalists). Prior to 1917 he counterposed this perspective to the Bolsheviks' strategy of an alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry as a whole to carry out the bourgeois-democratic revolution and thus open the way to a socialist revolution, carried out by an alliance of the proletariat

and the poor, semi-proletarian, majority of the peasantry. Following the defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution (1925-27) Trotsky revived his theory of “permanent revolution,” presenting it as a generalised alternative for the colonial and semi-colonial countries in opposition to the Stalinists’ neo-Menshevik perspective of national-democratic revolutions carried out by a “bloc of four classes” (liberal-national bourgeoisie, proletariat, urban petty-bourgeoisie, and peasantry). Trotsky sought to justify his position by claiming his theory had been confirmed by the October Revolution and, moreover, that in April 1917 the Bolsheviks had abandoned their previous strategy and adopted his “permanent revolution” line.

- 23 **Adolf Hitler** (1889-1945) was the leader of the fascist National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nazis). **Ernest Thälmann** (1866-1945) was the unchallenged leader of the German Communist Party from 1929 to 1933. A faithful Stalinist, he carried out Stalin’s policy of refusing to fight for an anti-fascist united front with the Social-Democrats (whom Stalin had branded as “the moderate wing of fascism”), thus permitting the Nazis to come to power without meeting any organised resistance. Caught by the Nazis as he was about to flee the country in 1933, he died in a concentration camp during World War II. **Benito Mussolini** (1883-1945), the founder of fascism in Italy, began his political career as a member of the Socialist Party but during World War I adopted a chauvinist position. With the blessing and assistance of the Italian bankers and big industrialists he rose to power on October 30, 1922, when a fascist government was appointed by the Italian king. He was killed by Italian resistance fighters while attempting to flee Italy.
- 24 The **Paris Commune** was the first example of a workers’ government. It was in power from March 18, 1871 to May 28, 1871, just 72 days, before it was overthrown in a series of bloody battles. Some 20,000 workers were later executed by the victorious counter-revolutionaries. **1905** was the year of the first Russian revolution, growing out of discontent over the Russo-Japanese war. It lasted from January 5, when workers who marched to the Tsar’s palace gates were fired on by Cossacks, through the general strike in St. Petersburg in October-November and the creation of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies (the city-wide strike committee), until the crushing of the workers’ uprising in Moscow in December.
- 25 The **GPU** was the Soviet political police, also known as the Cheka, NKVD, MVD, and, from 1956, the KGB.
- 26 **Joseph Goebbels** (1897-1945) was the founder and editor of the Nazi journal *Der Angriff* and minister of propaganda for the Nazi regime.
- 27 **Weimar** was the small town where the government of the German Republic was organised in 1919. The bourgeois-democratic Weimar Republic lasted until Hitler assumed full power in 1933.
- 28 The “**third period**,” according to the schema proclaimed by the Stalinists in 1928, was the

period of the final collapse of capitalism, following the “first period” of revolutionary upsurge from 1917 to 1923 and the “second period” of capitalist stabilisation from 1924-1927. Following from this schema, the Comintern’s tactics from 1928 to 1934 were marked by revolutionary phasemongering, sectarian “red” trade unions, and opposition to forming anti-fascist united fronts with the Social-Democrats (who were denounced as “social-fascists”). In 1934 the theory and practice of the “third period” were discarded and replaced by those of the Popular Front (1935-39). “Third period” tactics were revived during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact (1939-41) and then discarded in favor of seeking Popular Front-type governments of “national unity” during and after World War II.

- 29 **“Socialism in one country”** was the petty-bourgeois nationalist doctrine proclaimed by Stalin in 1924 and later incorporated into the program and tactics of the Comintern. It became the ideological cover for converting the Communist parties from revolutionary organisations into docile pawns of the Stalinist bureaucracy’s class-collaborationist foreign policy. According to the theory, socialism could be achieved in one country — the USSR — without revolutionary victories in the more industrially developed capitalist countries, provided that “peaceful coexistence” was maintained between the USSR and the imperialist powers. The chief task of the Communist parties was therefore not to lead socialist revolutions in their own countries, but to persuade or pressure the capitalist rulers to make diplomatic deals with Moscow.
- 30 The **Moscow Trials** were the series of show trials staged in Moscow in between 1936 and 1938 at which the majority of the leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution were framed and executed as “counter-revolutionaries,” “spies,” and “wreckers” in the paid service of the Nazis.
- 31 **Ignace Reiss** was a GPU agent who broke with Stalin in the (northern) summer of 1937 and joined the Fourth Internationalists. He was murdered by GPU agents near Lausanne, Switzerland, on September 4, 1937. **Butenko** was a Stalinist diplomat who defected to Mussolini’s fascist regime, announcing in Rome that he represented a widespread fascist sentiment in the Soviet Union.
- 32 **Bonapartism** is the term used to describe a dictatorial regime that governs in a period of acute crisis, due to an objective equilibrium between the opposing class forces. Such a regime bases itself upon the bureaucracy of a capitalist state (or, in the case of Stalinism, of a workers’ state), elevating one of its members to the position of a supreme, unchallengeable arbiter who seems to stand “above parties” and “above classes.”
- 33 **Stakhanovism** was a special system of speed-up of production introduced in the Soviet Union in 1936, which led to wide wage disparities and fostered the creation of a layer of privileged workers as a base of social support within the Soviet working class for the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

- 34 **Léon Jouhaux** (1879-1954) was a French union leader who began as an anarcho-syndicalist. He was general secretary of the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) from 1909 to 1940. A chauvinist in World War I, he opposed the Russian Revolution and was a French delegate to the imperialist powers' League of Nations. In 1948 he founded the anti-communist union federation Force Ouvriere.
- 35 The **London Bureau** was a loose association of centrist parties not affiliated to either the Second or Third Internationals, but opposed to the formation of a Fourth International. Among its members in 1938 were the Independent Labour Party of Britain and the POUM of Spain.

### A discussion with Trotsky

- 1 **Frank P. Hague** (1876-1956) was the Democrat mayor of Jersey City from 1917-1947 and a one-time Democratic national vice-chairman. He used city cops in cooperation with company goons to prevent the CIO from organising in the area. Picketing was outlawed and union organisers run out of town.
- 2 **Rudolf Hess** (1894-1987) was Hitler's deputy as head of the Nazi party. At the 1946 Nuremberg Trials he was sentenced to life imprisonment and remained in Spandau prison in Berlin until his death.
- 3 **August Blanqui** (1805-81) played a prominent role in 19th century French radical and worker politics. He advocated the seizure of power by small conspiratorial groups irrespective of mass consciousness and support. Almost half his life was spent in prison.
- 4 Trotsky's 1938 introduction, "Ninety Years of the Communist Manifesto," can be found in Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto & Its Relevance For Today* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1998).
- 5 **Jack London** (1876-1916) was a well-known US socialist writer.
- 6 **Norman Thomas** (1884-1968) was the reformist leader of the US Socialist Party.
- 7 **John L. Lewis** (1880-1969) was president of the United Mineworkers from 1920 to 1969. He was the main leader of the CIO from its inception in 1935 to his resignation in 1940. ■

Written in 1938, Trotsky's Transitional Program is an impassioned call to action in the struggle against decaying capitalism. It highlights key themes and demands which retain all their relevance in the contemporary struggle for socialism.

It also provides a method which relatively small revolutionary Marxist cadre parties can use to bridge the gap between their small size and influence and the mass forces required to win power and establish a socialist society.

This transitional method consists in approaching the broad masses of working people at their existing level of consciousness and organisation and drawing them through progressive struggles and political explanations toward a higher level of thought and action.

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