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SUPPLEMENT TO THE IRISH COMMUNIST ON TROTSKYISM

P A R T O N E

This supplement results from a meeting held by the Limerick Labour Youth Group in January of this year at which the ICO, and the Trotskyist "League for a Workers Republic" were invited to state their respective positions on the general political tasks facing the working class. The ICO attempted to focus discussion on the nature of the Labour Party and the correct strategy with regard to it, since the political experience of the Limerick group was gained in the Labour Party.

The LWR, whose position with relation to the Labour Party is of course very dodgy, concentrated on the Stalin-Trotsky controversy, of which the Limerick group had little knowledge. To help the Limerick group to get to grips with this matter the ICO proposed that the LWR and itself should both publish a concise statement of their position on a number of questions. The LWR would not agree to this. Eventually, however, they agreed that, if the ICO published a statement of its position, they would publish a criticism of it within three months. Since 1965 the trotskyists have been acutely aware of the dangers of trying to reply to ICO criticism, knowing that they could only lose influence in the working class by clarifying their position. It is a sign of the influence which the ICO has gained in recent years that the LWR is now compelled to reply to it.

We will deal during the coming months with the following subjects: the trotskyist concept of "the bureaucracy"; Stalin; the dictatorship of the proletariat; socialism in one country; the political economy of trotskyism and Khrushchevism; and the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union.

1. The Bureaucracy

The ICO criticism of the trotskyist conception of "the bureaucracy", which Trotsky maintained ruled the Soviet Union from the mid-1920s, is included in the pamphlet In Defence of Leninism, published in 1966. In essence, Trotsky held that political power had been taken away from the Russian working class by the "Stalinist bureaucracy" in the mid-twenties; this "bureaucracy" oppressed the working class; yet this "bureaucracy" was not a bourgeois ruling class, or a ruling class of any kind; in fact this bureaucracy, which had "expropriated" the working class politically, and which was an instrument of imperialist counter-revolution, also represented the interests of the working class which it was oppressing. The "Stalinist bureaucracy" constituted in fact a "deformed workers state", but definitely a workers state.

When asked why they had never replied to the ICO exposure of this nonsense, the trotskyists (in the person of their current leader P. Healy) stated that the reply was included in Trotsky's The Revolution Betrayed. In other words, the answer to the criticism of "The Revolution betrayed" is "The Revolution betrayed". Mealy's statement is worthy of the "Internationalists" themselves. We will take it that the trotskyists did not reply to the ICO criticism because they could make no reply that would not worsen the situation from their viewpoint.

In what follows we will summarise Trotsky's position from writings other than "The Revolution Betrayed", since that masterpiece was adequately demolished in "In Defence of Leninism". Here is how he described "the bureaucracy";

"...the apparatus of the workers state underwent a complete degeneration... 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 revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat. The fascist, counter-revolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with even greater consistency the interests of world imperialism". He refers to "... fascist countries, from which Stalin's political apparatus does not differ save in more unbridled savagery..." (The Transitional Programme of the 4th International 1938)

"The Soviet oligarchy possesses all the vices of the old ruling classes but lacks their historical mission" ... "Stalin and the Comintern are now indubitably the most valuable agency of

imperialism" (In Defence of Marxism, 1940. P. 8,13).

Thus, according to Trotsky, the "Stalinist bureaucracy", which controlled the Soviet state, had seized political power from the working class and was using it to oppress the workers even more savagely than they were oppressed in fascist countries. It had become imperialism's most valuable counter-revolutionary instrument, and it even lacked the historical justification of the bourgeoisie. It was not only more vicious than fascism: it was also historically unnecessary.

It is obvious that if the state of affairs was as Trotsky describes it, the Soviet state could in no sense be described as a workers' state. It would be a fascist bourgeois state. Some of his followers, who retained an elementary sense of logic, began in the late thirties to disagree with his characterisation of the Soviet Union as a "deformed workers' state". If his description of it was correct, it was not a workers' state at all. Trotsky denounced them as petty-bourgeoisie, trapped in Aristotelian logic, who were incapable of viewing the matter "dialectically". His "dialectical" view was as follows:

"The role of the Soviet bureaucracy remains a dual one. Its own interests constrain it to safeguard the new economic regime created by the October revolution against the enemies at home and abroad. This work remains historically necessary and progressive. In this work the world proletariat supports the Soviet bureaucracy without closing their eyes to its national conservatism, its appropriate interests and its spirit of caste privilege. But this is precisely the traits which are paralysing its progressive work... Thus the singular position of the bureaucracy... leads to an increasingly more profound and irreconcilable contradiction with the fundamental needs of Soviet economy and culture. Under these conditions, the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, although it remains a distorted expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat, translates itself into a permanent political crisis"... "The role of the bureaucracy is a dual one: on the one hand, it protects the workers' state with its own peculiar methods (i.e., by oppressing the workers: ICO); on the other hand, it disorganises and checks the development of economic and cultural life by repressing the creative activity of the masses" (Kirov Assassination p. 12, 18)

"Stalin's function is a double one... Stalin serves the bureaucracy and thereby the world bourgeoisie; but he cannot serve the bureaucracy without maintaining the social foundations that the bureaucracy is exploiting in its own

interest". (The Class Nature of the Soviet Union)

This is indeed a "singular" phenomenon. Some of Trotsky's followers said that his position led to the absurdity of a "counter-revolutionary workers state". Trotsky replied:

"Some voices cry out: 'If we continue to recognise the USSR as a workers' state, we will have to establish a new category: the counter-revolutionary workers' state.' This argument attempts to shock our imagination by opposing a good programmatic norm to a miserable, mean, even repugnant reality, but haven't we observed from day to day since 1923 how the Soviet state has played a more and more counter-revolutionary role on the international arena... There are two completely counter-revolutionary workers' Internationals.... The trade unions of France, Great Britain, the US and other countries support the counter-revolutionary politics of the bourgeoisie. This does not prevent us from labelling them trade-unions, from supporting their progressive steps and from defending them against the bourgeoisie. Why is it impossible to employ the same method with the counter-revolutionary workers' state? In the last analysis a workers' state is a trade union which has conquered power" (In Defence of Marxism p. 30/1).

Here we see Trotsky's charlatanism in full bloom. A trade union is not a political party. Its essential function is to defend the economic position of its workers. Politics of one sort or another may have more or less influence in a trade union: but its essential function is not political, and does not arise from the political struggle between capital and labour. The basis of a trade union is reformist. But the basis of existence of a working class political party, and of working class political power, is the revolutionary struggle of the working class to put an end to the capitalist system and build a socialist system. It is therefore absurd to treat trade unionism and politics as if they had the same function. The one is essentially reformist, the other is essentially revolutionary. A workers' state is not a trade union which has conquered state power but a workers' political party which has conquered state power. A workers' state is revolutionary, else it is not a workers' state. The concept of a counter-revolutionary workers' state (of a "counter-revolutionary revolutionary state") is absurd.

(In 1920/1 Trotsky had a controversy with Lenin on the subject of trade-unionism and politics. Lenin pointed out that "the trade unions are not state organisations", and said that Trotsky had "committed a number of errors that are connected with the very essence of the dictatorship of the proletariat". (The Trade Unions – And the Mistakes of Trotsky December 1920) But it is clear that

Lenin's attempt to teach him elementary politics had no success).

Dual Nature

We will now deal with the "dual nature" theory: the "Stalinist bureaucracy" is revolutionary in economics but counter-revolutionary in politics (though it is increasingly disrupting economic development). The counter-revolutionary bureaucracy is forced its own interest "to safeguard the new economic regime created by the October revolution". But "...the USSR minus the social structure founded by the October revolution would be a fascist regime" (Defence of Marxism p. 69). Thus the fascist political superstructure is forced to serve the working class by the socialist economic base established in 1917, and therefore despite its fascist political methods is a workers' state.

In fact the "new economic regime" was not created in October. Political power was won by the working class in October. The socialist economy was not built for many years after. Socialist political power inevitably precedes socialist economic construction. In view of the exceptionally active role which socialist political power plays in socialist economic construction, it would be impossible for socialist economic construction to be carried out under a state which was not a revolutionary working class state. There can be no question of socialist economy developing under alien political power, as capitalist economy developed under feudal political power-

When the "Stalinist bureaucracy" came to power in 1923 there was a flourishing capitalist sector in the economy, a weak socialist sector, and an immense section of petty-bourgeois production. The "new economic regime" was built in the subsequent decade by this "bureaucracy". Thus the "Stalinist bureaucracy" preceded, and guided the construction of, the socialist economic basis. How then could its behaviour have been determined by this basis?

When his followers deduced from his description of the Soviet state that it had ceased to be a workers' state he denounced them as undialectical. We will explain exactly what he meant.

"... the nationalised and planned economy of the USSR is the greatest school for all humanity aspiring to a better future"
(Class Nature of the Soviet Union)

"Socialism, as a system, for the first time demonstrated its title to historic victory not on the pages of "Das Kapital" but by the praxis of hydroelectric plants and blast furnaces..." in the Soviet Union (Soviet Economy in Danger, p. 7)

The economic developments in the Soviet Union in the 1930s made

such an effect that to deny them, or to describe them as capitalist, would have been to invite immediate ridicule. To allow that the economic development was socialist but maintain that the state was bourgeois would obviously have been absurd. In order to have any hope of gaining working class support for his counter-revolutionary schemes, Trotsky had to devise a position which would allow that the economy was socialist, and that the state functioned as a workers' state, and yet make it appear to be in the working class interest to overthrow that state. Hence the theory of "the bureaucracy" which functioned as a "degenerated workers state".

Of course there is a logical chasm running through this position (as we have shown here and "In Defense of Leninism"). This dream had to be bridged "dialectically". In trotskyism "dialectics" means the ability to hold a self-contradictory position. The self-contradiction is shrouded in a dialectical" haze. (In his dispute with Trotsky in 1921 Lenin had drawn attention, not for the first time, to the fact that Trotsky mistook eclecticism for dialectics. (Dialectics analyses the contradictions of objective reality. Eclectics is a "theory" made up of bits and pieces.)

The following remarkable passage occurs in Trotsky's dispute with his followers who were unable to keep up this "dialectical" self-deception!

"The Fourth International long ago recognised the necessity for overthrowing the bureaucracy.... Nothing else is proposed or can be proposed by those who proclaim the bureaucracy to be an exploiting "class"... Our critics refuse to call the degenerated workers' state - a workers' state. They demand that the totalitarian bureaucracy be called a ruling class. The revolution against this bureaucracy they propose to consider not political but social, Were we to make these terminological concessions, we would place our critics in a very difficult position, in as much as they themselves would not know what to do with their purely verbal victory. It would therefore be a piece of monstrous nonsense to split with comrades who on the question of the sociological nature of the USSR have an opinion different from ours, insofar as they solidarise with us in regard to the political tasks..." (Defence of Marxism p. 5)

That is to say: The question of whether the working class or the bourgeoisie is the ruling class in the Soviet Union is a secondary, and merely "terminological" question, A difference of opinion on such an unimportant matter doesn't warrant a split. So long as we agree that the Soviet state, whatever its class nature may be, should be overthrown, that is the important thing.

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The L.W.R. maintains this position in full. At the meeting in Limerick they referred to "the counter-revolutionary nature of the Stalin leadership"; declared that "the basis of the bureaucracy rested on the new social relations that had been built in October"; and announced that "the Russian working class need to regain political power; at the present moment they have economic power." Trotskyists never relish stating in all its naked absurdity the line that the working class is a ruling class which rules through a state which oppresses it. P. Healy stated it as follows under pressure in Limerick:

"The working class does not have direct political power... but in the last analysis the dictatorship of the proletariat exists".
"Only in the last analysis does it (the counter-revolutionary workers' state: Ed.) serve the interests of the ruling class" (i.e. the working class: Ed.)

However, the heat of trotskyism is never in these efforts to explain these irrational parts of its programme. Its heat is in its emotional anti-Stalinism, in which it exploits bourgeois anti-Stalin conditioning to disrupt the communist movement. We will next deal with the Stalin question.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE IRISH COMMUNIST ON TROTSKYISM

2. SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY

By 1923 it was clear that the bourgeoisie had staved off the immediate post war prospect of socialist revolution in Europe, and that for a number of years relative political stability would prevail in Europe. For the Russian working class this meant that the revolution in Russia would have to proceed for a time without the support of socialist revolutions in the industrialised countries, or else it could not proceed at all. To make matters worse Lenin had been incapacitated by a stroke shortly after he had begun to work out a strategy for this situation.

Trotsky, who in the period of upsurge of the revolution had given eloquent rhetorical expression to the prevailing mood of determination and optimism, now began to give expression to the indecisiveness and pessimism of the intelligentsia. He had always been a weathercock revolutionary. In 1922, when Lenin began to work out the strategy for developing the revolution in the circumstances of imperialist encirclement, Trotsky began to resurrect his "permanent revolution" theory according to which it was impossible for the socialist revolution to proceed in Russia in a situation of imperialist encirclement.

BACKGROUND This was not the first time that the question of "socialism in one country" had arisen. In 1915 Lenin had written, in opposition to Trotsky's "United States of Europe Slogan" that "the victory over capitalism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country taken separately. The victorious proletariat of that country, having expropriated the capitalists and having organised socialist production, would stand up against the rest of the world, the capitalist world, attracting to its cause the oppressed classes in other countries, raising revolts in these countries..., and in the event of necessity coming out even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their states..."

Trotsky, who was then a "Centrist", trying to blur the contradiction between Communism and opportunism, and to "reconcile" revolutionary Marxism with Menshevism and Kautskyism, wrote an article opposing Lenin's view that "it would be hopeless to think..."

that, for example, revolutionary Russia could hold out in the face of conservative Europe... To accept the perspective of a social revolution within national bounds is to fall prey to that very national narrow-mindedness which constitutes the essence of social-patriotism”.

The issue came up again at the Sixth Congress of the Bolshevik Party in August 1917. There was a motion that the Russian workers should “bend every effort to take state power... and, in alliance with the revolutionary proletariat of the advanced countries, direct it towards peace and the socialist reconstruction of society”.

Preobrazhensky, later to be a member of the trotskyist Opposition, opposed this and proposed that it be amended as follows: “direct it towards peace and, in the event of a proletarian revolution in the West, towards socialism”. Stalin, representing Lenin who had to stay in hiding, said: “I am against such an amendment. The possibility is not excluded that Russia will be the country that will lay the road to socialism. No country hitherto has enjoyed such freedom in the of war as Russia does, or has attempted to introduce workers' control of production. Moreover, the base of our revolution is incomparably broader than in Western Europe, where the proletariat stands utterly alone face to face with the bourgeoisie- In our country the workers are supported by the poorer strata of the peasantry. Lastly, in Germany the state apparatus is incomparably more efficient than the imperfect apparatus of our bourgeoisie.. We must discard the antiquated idea that only Europe can show us the way”.

The amendment was rejected. Therefore in August 1917 the Bolshevik Party committed itself, in the event of its being in state power in Russia and socialist revolution in Europe failing to materialise, to going ahead with the construction of socialism in Russia.

In 1922 Trotsky began to restate his 1905 “permanent revolution” theory which asserted that the Russian working class could overcome neither the internal nor the external obstacles to the building of socialism. The Russian workers could capture state power but could not build a socialist economy. “Without the direct state support of the European proletariat the working class in Russia cannot remain in power and convert its temporary domination into a lasting socialistic dictatorship. Of this there cannot for one moment be any doubt” (Permanent Revolution p. 237). The attempt to build socialism would bring the workers into hostile collision with the peasant majority.

In a “Posrsript” to a 1922 reprint of his 1915 article “The Peace Programme” he wrote: “The assertion reiterated several times in the

Peace Programme that a proletarian revolution cannot culminate victoriously within national bounds may perhaps seem... to have been refuted by nearly five years' experience of our Soviet Republic. But such a conclusion would be unwarranted... While we have held our ground as a state politically and militarily, we have not arrived, or even begun to arrive, at the creation of a socialist society. The struggle for survival as a revolutionary state has resulted in this period in an extreme decline of productive forces; yet socialism is conceivable only on the basis of their growth and development. The trade negotiations with bourgeois countries... constitute all too graphic evidence of the impossibility of isolated building of socialism within the framework of national states... Real progress of a socialist economy in Russia will become possible only after the victory of the proletariat in the major European countries".

THE REVOLUTION GONE ASTRAY? The revolution had been beaten down in Europe. What were the Russian workers to do? At this point the "left Communist" intellectuals began to quote a famous passage from Engels' Peasant War In Germany. The development of the 16th century peasant war developed in one area, under the leadership of Thomas Muenzer and under the ideology of nonconformist Protestantism, to what Engels considered to be a form of socialist politics. But capitalism was only emerging as a world system and there was no possibility of developing a socialist economy. Engels wrote:

"The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class which he represents and for the realisation of the measures which that domination would imply... Thus he necessarily finds himself in a dilemma. What he can do is in contrast to all his actions as hitherto practised, to all his principles and to the present interests of his party; what he ought to do cannot be achieved. In a word, he is compelled to represent not his party or his class, but the class for whom conditions are ripe for domination. In the interests of the movement itself, he is compelled to defend the interests of an alien class, and feed his own class with phrases and promises, with the assertion that the interests of that alien class are their own interests. Whoever puts himself in this awkward position is irrevocably lost".

This passage was brought to Lenin's attention in 1922 by a young Communist who was influenced by the "left Communist" intelligentsia. The implication was obvious. Lenin was ending up in Muenzer's position, and was pragmatically stringing the Russian

workers along with illusions. (It has been stated specifically that Lenin was in this position by the trotskyist "International Socialism" group, a stablemate of the Peoples Democracy leadership.) But Lenin himself merely remarked that no doubt this passage had been dug up by some spineless intellectual.

L E N I N Lenin's view was that the working class need not necessarily come into hostile collision with the peasantry. A close alliance could be formed with the mass of the poor peasantry which would suppress the bourgeois strivings of the middle peasantry and isolate the capitalist peasantry. The poor and middle peasants could be guided by the workers in forming co-operative organisations whose development could be determined by the workers' state. In this way it would be possible "to build socialism in such a way that every small peasant may take part in this building. That is the stage we have reached now" – "the power of the state over all large-scale means of production, political power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured proletarian leadership of the peasantry, etc... Is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society?" (On Cooperation 1923).

K A U T S K Y The revolution had been isolated. It could not be predicted with any certainty how long the isolation would continue. Trotsky reasserted that there was no possibility of building socialism in Russia alone. What, then, was his programme, what was his perspective? For all practical purposes he had none. The German social-democratic leader Kautsky had opposed the October Revolution from the very start on the grounds that socialism could not be built in Russia, where economic conditions required capitalist developments, and that the attempt to build socialism in Russian conditions would lead only to the bureaucratic regimentation of the workers. Here is how he stated his criticism of the Bolsheviks in 1918 (in the Dictatorship of the Proletariat);

“The Bolshevik Revolution was based on: the supposition that it would be the starting point of a general European Revolution... According to this theory, the European Revolution... which would bring about Socialism in Europe would also be the means of removing the obstacles to the carrying through of Socialism in Russia which were created by the economic backwardness of that country, This was all very logically thought out, and quite well founded) provided that the supposition was granted, that the Russian Revolution must inevitably unchain the European Revolution. But what if this does not happen? ... Our Bolshevik comrades have staked

all on the card of general European Revolution. As this card has not turned up they were forced into a course which brought them up against insoluble problems".

Kautsky did not think that the European revolution would occur quickly (indeed his opportunist line was an important counter-revolutionary factor in Germany). In his pamphlet on Georgia (1921) he asserted definitely that "a world revolution in the Bolshevik sense is, of course, not to be reckoned with".

In 1921 (Terrorism & Communism) Kautsky wrote: "they have anchored all their hopes on one thing. For if Russia ceases to be the chosen people of the revolution then the World Revolution must be the Messiah that shall redeem the Russian people". And he maintained that this Messiah was no more likely to come to the aid of the Russian Revolution in the short-run than the other Messiah. His view was the Russian socialist revolution had run into a cul-de-sac. The internal situation required a bourgeois democratic revolution, the world socialist revolution was not imminent, and the real requirements of Russian society would assert themselves against all the illusions and all the heroic efforts of the Bolsheviks. The only question was whether the Bolsheviks would come to their senses, restore bourgeois democracy, and allow bourgeois democratic freedom to the Mensheviks and other parties, or whether they would continue the futile attempt to build socialism in impossible conditions, in which case they would only suppress bourgeois democracy, not in favour of socialism but of counter-revolutionary bureaucratic dictatorship. As Trotsky later held that Stalin's government was of a kind with Hitler's, Kautsky in 1921 said that Lenin's (which included Trotsky) was of a kind with Mussolini's. The real choice in Russia, he held, was between bourgeois democracy and bourgeois fascism, and the attempt to build socialism could only lead to the latter.

S T A L I N Stalin stated the real alternatives with his customary frankness and absence of evasive rhetoric. In his Report to the Comintern "Once more on the Social Democratic Deviation" (December 1926):

"One thing or the other: either we can engage in building socialism and, in the final analysis, build it completely, overcoming our "national" bourgeoisie – in which case it is the duty of the Party to remain in power and direct the building of socialism in our country for the sake of the victory of socialism throughout the world; or we are not in a position to overcome our bourgeoisie by our own efforts – in which case, in view of the absence of immediate support from abroad, from a victorious revolution in the other countries, we must

honestly and frankly retire from power and steer a course for organising another revolution in the USSR in the future. Has a party the right to deceive its class, in this case the working class? No, it has not. Such a party would deserve to be hanged, drawn and quartered" (C.W. Volume 9, p. 22/3).

"...the question of building socialism has become a most urgent one for our Party and our proletariat, as well as for the Comintern. The opposition considers that the question of building socialism in the USSR is only of theoretical interest... Such an attitude... can only be attributed to the fact that the opposition is completely divorced from our practical Party work, our work on economic construction and our co-operative affairs. Now that we... have entered a period of reconstruction of our entire national economy on a new technical basis, the question of building socialism has assumed immense practical importance. What should we aim at in our work of economic construction, in which direction should be the perspective of our constructive work?... Are we building in order to manure the soil for bourgeois democracy, or in order to build a socialist society? – this is now the root question of our constructive work" (ibid p. 39).

Stalin reviewed the internal and external obstacles to the building of socialism. The former were mainly contradictions with the peasantry, the latter contradictions with the surrounding imperialist states. Following Lenin he showed how the contradiction with the mass of the poor peasantry was not an antagonism and how the working class could guide them into co-operative forms of organisation which would serve as transitional forms for changing the peasants to workers. With regard to external contradictions he showed the strengths and the weaknesses of imperialism. On the one hand there was the undoubted military and economic strength of the imperialist states. On the other there was their dependence on the active support of the working class in the waging of war. Although the working class movements had not been able to capture power, they were developed enough to make it difficult for the imperialists to invade the Soviet Union. It was resistance of the workers in the imperialist countries, active on the part of some, passive on the part of many, that had made it impossible for the imperialist powers to wage effective war against the weak Soviet state in 1918-20. There were, in addition, inter-imperialist contradictions that could be exploited by the Soviet state.

Stalin summed up the position as follows:

"While the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country means the possibility of resolving internal

contradictions, which can be completely overcome by one country (meaning by that, of course, our country), the possibility of the final victory of socialism implies the possibility of resolving the external contradictions between the country of socialism and the capitalist countries, contradictions which can be overcome only as a result of a proletarian revolution in several countries. Anyone who confuses these two categories of contradictions is either a hopeless muddle-head or an incorrigible opportunist." (CW Volume 8 p. 278)

The internal contradictions could be overcome by the internal revolutionary forces. Externally the support of the workers in the capitalist countries and the exploitation of inter-imperialist contradictions would make it possible to hold off the imperialists while the Soviet state strengthened itself to deal with them. At the beginning of the industrialisation drive in the late twenties Stalin reckoned that Russia had ten years to build up its industrial strength to meet an imperialist invasion.

There is an item in the trotskyist litany which says that in the first edition of Foundations of Leninism (1924) Stalin denied the possibility of building socialism in Russia, but that afterwards when he had thought up his socialism in one country theory as part of his counter-revolutionary programme he recalled all the earlier editions, reissued them with the new line, and pretended that he had held that line all along. This old chestnut was brought up by Mr. Healy in Limerick. It must be assumed that trotskyist "theorists" absolutely never read even the basic "Stalinist" works. The formulation in the first edition confused the internal and external conditions for building socialism. This was corrected in subsequent editions, and the correction and an explanation of the incident is included in all the editions of Leninism that we have seen.

Trotsky tried to make capital out of the incident in the Party in 1926, but the attempt did him no good. The good humoured contempt, which seems to have been Stalin's personal attitude to Trotsky, is very obvious in his reply: "Trotsky... said that I had replaced the inexact and incorrect formulation given in 1924... by another, more exact and correct formulation. Trotsky, apparently, is displeased with that – but why... he did not say. What can be wrong with my correcting an inexact formulation...? I by no means regard myself as infallible... What is Trotsky really after in stressing this point? Perhaps he is anxious to follow a good example and to set about, at long last, correcting his own numerous errors? Very well, I am prepared to help him in that...; I am prepared to

spur him on and assist him" (Vol 8 p. 365).

TROTSKY In later times, when trying to account for his behaviour in this period to the trotskyist sects, Trotsky maintained that the issue of "permanent revolution" was raised artificially by the "Stalinists" in 1924, at a time when it had no practical relevance for the working class. The object was to discredit Trotsky by dragging up his "old" differences (some of the major ones being as old as 1921) with Lenin, and to lead the revolution astray by whipping up nationalism under the slogan of "socialism in one country". But any worker who reads the Stalin-Trotsky controversy of 1924/28 will be in no doubt that Stalin won the support of the overwhelming majority of the advanced workers because his line dealt clearly and frankly with the practical realities of the situation, and that Trotsky, who at the start had much greater personal popularity than Stalin, lost the support of the overwhelming majority of the working class because it became clear that he was funking the main issue, that his "theoretical" position consisted in rhetorical evasions, and that his political activity was reduced to the narrowest kind of "tactical" oppositionist manoeuvring.

The question of "socialism in one country" was not raised by Stalin in 1922. As far as Stalin was concerned the question had been decided by the Party long before, and Lenin had drafted the main outlines of the programme for building socialism in Russia. The matter was raised by Trotsky himself in 1923 when he began to restate his old view that socialism could not be built in Russia. And he never developed his position beyond this negative assertion. We will look at his last statement of position before he was expelled from the Communist movement, his criticism of the Draft Programme of the Comintern:

"...nations will enter the revolutionary flood one after another; ...the organic interdependence of the several countries, developing toward an international division of labour, excludes the possibility of building socialism in one country. This means that the Marxian doctrine... posits that the socialist revolution can only begin on a national basis, while the building of socialism in one country is impossible" (p. 23). "The productive forces are incompatible with national boundaries. The productive forces of capitalist countries have long since broken through the national boundaries. Socialist society... can only be built on the most advanced productive forces... Socialism ...must not only take over from capitalism the most highly developed productive forces but immediately carry them onward... The question arises: how then can socialism drive the productive forces back into the

boundaries of a national state" (p. 44)? "Harsh truth... is needed to fortify the worker, the agricultural labourer, and the poor peasant, who see that in the eleventh year of the revolution, poverty, misery, unemployment, bread lines, illiteracy, homeless children, drunkenness, and prostitution have not abated... we must say to them that our economic level, our social and cultural conditions, approximate today much closer to capitalism, and a backward uncultured capitalism at that, than to socialism. We must tell them that we will enter the path of real socialist construction only when the proletariat of the most advanced countries will have captured power..." (p. 53).

WORLD ECONOMY Trotsky's conception of "world economy" and "the international division of labour" are dealt with in "In Defence of Leninism". Briefly, his view was that imperialism evened up the economic conditions of various countries (imperialist exploitation evened up the economic conditions of the exploited country with those of the exploiter country. He speaks, in 1928, of "the diminishing gap between India and Gt. Britain"!) Imperialism had negated national economy, and was a single integrated world economy. As there can be no question of socialist revolution with a fragment of an integrated national economy, so there could be no question of socialist revolution within a national fragment of Trotsky's world economy. The building of socialism in a single country of the world economy was as impossible and absurd as the building of socialism in a single country of a national economy.

But if Trotsky's conception had accorded with reality, the building of socialism in Russia could not have arisen as a practical question any more than the building of socialism in Kerry. The revolution would occur throughout the entire economy or would not occur at all. Nations would enter the revolutionary flood in rapid succession, just as counties would in a national economy. The mere fact that the building of socialism in one country arose in reality as an urgent practical question is sufficient to demonstrate that Trotsky's conception of world economy did not accord with reality. Lenin's and Stalin's view was that imperialist exploitation widened the economic gulf between imperialist and colonial countries, and that imperialist world economy did not negate national economies. Imperialism remained a system of national economies, increasingly interlinked, some of which exploited others. The world market connected the national economies: it did not abolish them- In Lenin's view the abolition of national economy within capitalism (a conception which Trotsky shared with Kautsky, who coined the term "ultra-Imperialism" for it) was no more than a theoretical possibility of the distant future.

Instead of changing his conception to accord with reality, Trotsky kept on trying to distort reality in order to patch up his conception (and claimed that "Marxism posits" objective reality). His comment on Lenin's last articles, in which the strategy for building socialism in Russia is outlined: "one would have to surmise that either Lenin slipped in his dictation or that the stenographers made a mistake in transcribing her notes" (p. 29).

His position never went beyond a repetition of the statement that the starting point of socialism is the most developed productive forces, after they have exhausted all the possibilities of capitalism; in Russia the productive forces are less developed than in the capitalist countries; therefore socialism cannot be built. (He did not, of course, add that in isolating the revolution in Russia for eleven years, history had defied his conception of how it ought to develop.) What was to be done? The workers had to be told to wait in hunger, homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy, drunkenness and prostitution for the world revolution. Though inapplicable to the Bolsheviks, Kautsky's remark was very descriptive of the trotskyists. They had reached a dead-end, and, as impotence always breeds fantasy, an abstract World-Revolution had become their Messiah.

The Bolsheviks, the "Stalinists", saw the Russian working class as an active force in the real progress of the world revolution, which, for the time being, was developing through the building of socialism in Russia. Ten years later the hunger, homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy etc. had been wiped out. Those ten years were undoubtedly tragic for the trotskyist and other counter-revolutionary cliques who opposed the development of the socialist revolution in Russia. But for the working class and the poor peasants it was very much otherwise.

(Trotsky predicted with his customary scientific accuracy that in the event of an attempt being made to develop the Russian economy outside the capitalist world market, "then in many branches of industry we should stop making progress right now and decline to a level even lower than our present pitiful technical level" (p. 44). A decade later the Soviet Union, as a result of two Five Year Plans, as a result of ten years of the impossible "socialism in one country", Soviet Russia had a technological basis that enabled it to stop and rout the most powerful and industrialised capitalist army ever seen. Without a comprehensive technological development this would have been utterly impossible. In Trotsky's view of the world it ought not have been able to happen.)

Trotsky, then, had no programme except waiting for the world revolution. Even the notion of waiting was absurd. A socialist state

that was powerless to develop a socialist economy could not wait very long. A socialist state that could offer the working class the prospect of nothing but hunger, homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy etc, would not be tolerated for very long. And while it was tolerated such a state would not be an instrument of international revolution; it would be a mockery of Communism in the international working class movement.

NON-ECONOMIC "INDUSTRIALISATION" The nearest approach to a programme is a hodge-podge called "The Platform of the Left Opposition", which includes a very interesting passage on industrialisation: "A definite renunciation of the theory of an isolated socialist economy will mean, in the course of a few years, an incomparably more rational use of our resources, a swifter industrialisation, a more planful and powerful growth of our machine construction. It will mean a swifter increase in the number of employed workers and a real lowering of prices – in a word, a genuine strengthening of the Soviet Union in the capitalist environment" (p. 41),

The only possible meaning of this is that while socialism cannot be built capitalism can. And the "Platform" is in fact nothing but an opportunistically disguised programme for building capitalism.

Trotskyists usually maintain that while Trotsky was totally opposed to the attempt to build socialism, he had a programme for the industrialisation of the economy which could have been implemented if the "perspective" of socialism in one country was defeated. This industrialisation programme they describe as "transitional". But "transitional" industrialisation is meaningless. "Pure" industrialisation can never occur in reality. It must be done under a definite form of economic organisation, within definite production relations. In Russia "industrialisation" had to be either capitalist or socialist. If an attempt at industrialisation through building a socialist economy was ruled out. industrialisation could only mean the development of capitalist economy (Trotsky, as we will show, was a pioneer of "market socialist" economic theory).

(A sample of the miserable tactical manoeuvres of the trotskyist clique is found in the "Platform". It states that Trotsky has agreed that his theory of permanent revolution was wrong (p. 102). This was when Trotsky was still hoping to retain some working class support in the Party. Three years later, when pursuing a new opportunist tactic, he tried to explain this away by saying: "Not having re-read my old works for a long time, I was ready in advance to admit to defects in them more serious and important than really were there" (Permanent Revolution p. 6). A likely story!)

On the question of building a socialist economy in Russia, when this presented itself as the fundamental practical issue facing the revolution, Trotsky was a conscientious objector to the actual course of history, and he became by his opposition to the way that the world socialist revolution was actually developing, an agent (ideologically and organisationally) of the imperialist counterrevolution. The tricky, evasive, opportunist phrases and attitudes with which he tried to disrupt the socialist movement from within were the same as those used today in Ireland by the League for a Workers Republic and the trotskyist faction in the Peoples Democracy leadership. The latter no longer proclaim trotskyism openly as they used to a couple of years ago. Trotskyism cannot maintain itself openly in a situation in which there is a clearly defined Communist movement in the working class movement.

If it is becoming the trend that dare not speak its name, if it is trying to exercise its influence discreetly and indirectly, that too is trotskyist. Did not Trotsky himself deny trotskyism before the Russian working class in the mid-twenties in the hope of making tactical disruptive gains against, the Communist movement which he dared not challenge openly for fear of total exposure?

SUPPLEMENT TO THE IRISH COMMUNIST

ON TROTSKYISM

3. POLITICAL ECONOMY The League for a Workers' Republic was asked in Limerick to explain the difference between Stalinist and Trotskyist political economy. The gist of a confused answer by Basil Miller was that there was no difference. We fear that Mr. Miller does Trotsky an injustice by attributing Stalinist political economy to him. In fact Trotsky brilliantly anticipated the major development in modern anti-Stalinist political economy. And we cannot permit Mr. Miller to rob Trotsky of that honour. We refer to the notions contained in Trotsky's 'Soviet Economy in Danger' (1933). This pamphlet deals with the first Five Year Plan which was then transforming the Soviet economy.

In the mid-twenties Trotsky had declared the building of socialism in Russia to be impossible. In 1933 he wrote: Socialism, as a system, for the first time demonstrated its title to victory not on the pages of "Das Kapital" but by the praxis of hydroelectric plants and blast furnaces." If socialism is demonstrating its "title to historic victory" in the industrialisation of the Five Year Plan, that industrialisation must be socialist, you might reason. But not at all: "...light-minded assertions to the effect that the USSR has already entered into socialism are criminal." (p. 7). So socialism's "title to victory" is demonstrated in industrialisation which it would be criminal to call socialist. Figure that out if you can.

Furthermore: "The difference between the socialist and capitalist tempos of industrial development... astonishes one by its sweep. But it would be a mistake to consider as final the Soviet tempos of the past few years." (p. 37). So, even though it would be "criminal" to describe Soviet industrialisation as socialist, it has, nevertheless, a socialist "tempo". That's what the man says. God knows what it means.

Here is a further clue: "The laws that govern the transitional society are quite different from those that govern capitalism. But no less do they differ from the future laws of socialism, that is, of harmonious economy." (p. 37). The Soviet economy, then, was not capitalist and was not socialist, but was transitional. What does "transitional"

mean? It is certain that production relations of a definite nature existed in soviet industry. "Transitional" does not describe class relations in production.

Production relations must be capitalist, socialist, feudal, slave or some other kind hitherto unknown. Slave and feudal relations can be ruled out. Even in their wildest rantings about slave labour camps, imperialist propagandists have not attributed the immense achievements of the Soviet economy to slave labour. Trotsky says it was transitional, which is meaningless, Definite production relations existed.

Trotsky maintained that the non-socialist, non-capitalist Soviet economy, with its transitional economy and socialist tempo, was riddled with major contradictions which were building up to a major crisis.

Basil Miller declared that "the law of value was not restricted under Stalin". Naturally, he gave no evidence of this. And in fact the disciple is very much out of key with the master. Trotsky condemned Stalin because he had restricted the law of value. He held the restriction of market relations to be at the basis of the crisis in the Soviet economy.

"By eliminating the market and by installing instead Asiatic bazaars, the bureaucracy has created, to consummate all else, the conditions for the most barbaric gyrations of prices, and consequently has placed a mine under commercial calculation. As a result the economic chaos has been redoubled." (p. 34)

"The regulation of the market itself must depend upon the tendencies that are brought out through its medium. The blueprints produced by the offices must demonstrate their economic expediency through commercial calculation. The system of transitional economy is unthinkable without the control of the ruble. This pre-supposes, in its turn, that the ruble is at par. Without a firm monetary unit, commercial accounting can only increase the chaos". (p. 30/31).

The market must not be eliminated, because outside the market there is chaos. Plans must justify themselves commercially, i.e. in terms of sound market relations. The market must be regulated by means of the market: by financial control. This indicates that Trotsky's "transitional economy" is nothing but a modern capitalist economy, with its plans based on market relations, and its "regulation of the market" by means of "tendencies that are brought out through its medium".

AGRICULTURE As well as demanding market relations in industry, Trotsky demanded the restoration of "Kulak" capitalism In

agriculture. (Kulaks are peasant bourgeoisie, equivalent to the big farmers who emerged from the Irish peasantry after the Land Acts.) The greater part of the land had been collectivised and the main power of the kulaks had been smashed by 1933. Trotsky declared: "100% collectivisation has resulted in 100% overgrowth of weeds on the fields" (p. 23). Which is another absurd Trotskyist phrase. If collectivisation had resulted in a decline in agricultural production the immense expansion of industrial production that went on all through the thirties would have been Impossible. Without a substantial increase in agricultural production it would have been impossible. That is an elementary economic fact. An expanding industrial sector cannot be based on a declining or stagnant agricultural sector (unless it is based on agricultural imports, which was not the case In the USSR).

Agricultural production did not grow in the remarkable way that industrial production did. This was due in part to natural causes. Marx explained at length in Capital why the organisation of agricultural production is more difficult than the organization of industrial production. For one thing, nature plays a role in agriculture which it does not play in industry. Secondly, it was due to social causes. The collectives were made up mostly of small and middle peasants, not workers. As Lenin explained, they could contribute to the building of socialism if there was determined working class leadership. In the long run they could be changed from peasants into workers. But for a considerable time they would remain peasants, a vacillating class whose contribution to the building of socialism could proceed only under the pressure of the working class. Leaving aside natural causes, this fact would make the development of socialist agriculture proceed more slowly than the development of socialist industry.

But to develop more slowly is not to decline. If there had been "100% overgrowth of weeds" as a result of collectivisation, the industrialisation that took place could not have taken place.

"The policy of mechanically "liquidating the kulak" is now factually discarded(?). A cross should be placed over it officially. And simultaneously it is necessary to establish the policy of severely restricting the exploiting tendencies of the kulak." (p. 47).

The policy of eliminating the class of capitalist farmers was certainly not discarded. The 'New Economic Policy' (1921) had freed market relations and capitalist production. This was made necessary by the total disruption of production during the wars of intervention. During the twenties, a powerful class of capitalist farmers developed. It was mainly in capitalist farming, and not in

small farming, that the agricultural commodities for the towns were produced. In the late twenties the capitalist farmers began to assert themselves as a class. In a bid to extend their power they began to hold the towns to ransom, and a virtual state of war existed. The choice was to allow the kulaks to extend their power, and give them a stranglehold on socialism, or to wage a class war against them. Millions of small peasants and agricultural labourers took up the struggle against the kulaks under working class leadership, and began the collective organisation of agriculture. 40,000 industrial workers went into the country to direct collectivisation.

Trotsky's notion of "restricting the exploiting tendencies of the kulak" is a bureaucratic fantasy. The kulaks were making a bid to free themselves of the restrictions imposed upon them. It was a matter of conceding to them or smashing them as a class. Since kulak production was the main source of agricultural goods for the towns, and since they were using this position as a lever against the working class, it was a question of allowing them to free themselves from socialist restrictions as a condition for continuing to supply the towns, or of carrying out an extensive social reorganisation of agricultural production from which the kulak class was eliminated. "Restriction" was a thing of the past.

When the struggle against the kulaks was taken up in 1929 it was not let up until they were eliminated as a class. Like any real struggle it had its periods of intensification and relaxation, its adventurist offensives and its tactical retreats. The Trotskyist method of "criticism" was to take one of these incidents of the struggle and represent it as the main thing. Any real struggle has a certain zig-zag character, as Lenin often explained. Trotsky drew attention to zig-zags in the Stalin period and maintained that, they were proof of Stalin's "empiricism". But only a bureaucrat (and Lenin frequently drew attention to Trotsky's bureaucratic outlook) could imagine that a real struggle could proceed in accordance with some preconceived blueprint. All that can be established beforehand are the main lines of struggle and the main outlines of strategy.

"...correct, and economically sound, collectivisation, at the given stage, should not lead to elimination of the N.E.P., but to the gradual reorganisation of its methods." (p. 32)

The capitalist farmers declare war on socialism. When the working class resists they engage in sabotage. When collectivisation begins they carry out a massive destruction of crops and slaughter of cattle. A state of actual civil war exists. How do you proceed gradually in that situation? How are the kulaks to be converted to Fabian socialism? How do you go about a gradual reorganisation of

the NEP when the NEP has been disrupted by the war of the capitalist farmers against working class control? There is no answer from Trotsky to these little questions.

In 1933 Trotsky demands the restoration of market relations in industry, with "plans" derived from the market, and "control" being exercised through financial manoeuvring. The market must only be "regulated" by market methods. In agriculture he demands the restoration of capitalist kulak production.

MARKET SOCIALISM On the general question of market relations and socialism, Trotsky wrote:

"If there existed the universal mind that projected itself into the scientific fantasy of Laplace..., such a mind could, of course, draw up a priori a faultless and exhaustive economic plan... In truth, the bureaucracy often conceives that just such a mind is at its disposal; that is why it so easily frees itself from the control of the market and of Soviet democracy. But in reality the bureaucracy errs frightfully in this appraisal of its spiritual resources... The innumerable living participants of economy, State as well as private, collective as well as individual, must give notice of their needs and of their relative strength not only through the statistical determination of plan commissions but by the direct pressure of supply and demand. The plan is checked and to a considerable extent realised through the market."

"Economic accounting is unthinkable without market relations." (p. 33).

When building socialist industry "Stalinism" did not base it on market relations. Socialist production is non-market production consciously organised by the working class to meet social needs. Trotsky declared it to be impossible at the very time when it was being built in practice.

The economic achievement of the Soviet Union between the 1930's and the 1950's could not possibly have occurred if Trotsky's market socialist notions had been the guiding theory.

To show the impossibility of Marxist socialism (or Stalinism) Trotsky cited examples of disproportions resulting from planning faults which were published in the Soviet press. He saw these as signs of the impending crisis. In fact they were the natural teething troubles of a new system. They were remedied through improvements in planning, not through financial manoeuvres. Planning methods had to be developed through trial and error, but the errors did not lead to commercial crises. There is no evidence of commercial crises during the period of Stalinism. "Socialist"

commercial crises only began to appear after Tito and Khrushchev began to put into practice the market socialism recommended by Trotsky (following Proudhon and Duhring).

(In the modern revisionist manner, Trotsky observes: "...the ultimate cost of economically irrational "successes" surpasses as a rule many times the value of the successes."(p. 14) If this means anything, it means that there was waste in the Soviet economy many more times the amount of what was actually produced, and that with "rational" economics the growth rate would be multiplied. But it is now a matter of history that no market socialist economy has every remotely approached the high and sustained rates of development that characterised the Stalin period.)

In conclusion: the difference between Stalinist and Trotskyist political economy, which Mr. Miller was so coy about, is that Stalin was a Marxist political economist and Trotsky was a market socialist. Trotsky did not merely deny the possibility of building a socialist economy in Russia: he denied the possibility of socialist economy in general.

MODERN REVISIONISM The L.W.R. in some recent publications has been doing what it can to maintain some semblance of a credible position on the revisionist economies. On the political economy of those economies they have published nothing of substance. They have a dogmatic commitment to the notion of "deformed workers' states resting on nationalised property relations". The nonsensical nature of their general theoretical position makes it unsafe for them to engage in any concrete analysis of these economies. All they can do is to try to exploit inadequacies in the published material of the ICO: and they can't even do that with much intelligence. We will give a few samples:

"...the Maoites have discovered that Khrushchev "restored capitalism" in Russia. According to them the working class had direct political power in Russia." (Mr Paddy Healy maintains that they had "indirect" political power, which they exercised through their bureaucratic oppressors), "which was a full-blown "socialist" country up to Stalin's death. By a short year or two later capitalism had been "restored" due to a struggle within the C.P., when Khrushchev came to power and introduced a new economic policy. All this happened, presumably, while the ruling class, the workers, were having their lunch."

('Workers' Republic' (magazine) no. 25)

"At least in Eastern Europe the industries are run in the interests of the workers. There is guaranteed employment and

education for all. This is possible because industry is nationalised and the economy is planned. Yet those countries are ruled and the workers oppressed by wasteful and inefficient bureaucrats, which itself just goes to show the superiority of a nationalised planned economy."

('Workers' Republic' (bulletin) January 10th 1970.)

"Russia was Socialist, these gents claim, until the "20th Congress", shortly after Stalin's death, when a number of economic reforms were made. This, according to our Gaelic "Communists", changed the whole nature of the Soviet State and reintroduced capitalism. Thus there was a qualitative change in the economic structure of Russian society, But as these people must surely know, such changes take place only through violent revolution accompanied by rapid transformation of the superstructure. When and where did the revolution take place? No answer! Perhaps the "Red Bourgeois" tricked the Russian workers? – how Irish can some of these "Communists" get!

("Young Socialist' (published by Trotskyists in the Labour Party) no. 12)

What the ICO has established is that Marxist political economy was dominant in Russia in the Stalin period, but that bourgeois political economy became dominant subsequently: that economic policy was socialist in the Stalin period and became bourgeois subsequently; that economic construction was socialist in the Stalin period and was designed to reconstruct the market subsequently; the LWR has nothing to say about these things. On the most elementary level it is blinkered by dogma and incapable of accurate description. Where is there in Eastern Europe now "guaranteed employment"? In "Stalinist" Albania. Elsewhere, the new economic policy rules out guaranteed employment. In Yugoslavia, where the new policies have been longest in operation, there is massive unemployment. Guaranteed employment is in conflict with the principles of the new economic policy and the system which it is forming. If the LWR is unaware of this awkward little fact it is living in a complete fantasy world.

If the Soviet government implemented a socialist economic policy in the Stalin period, and is now implementing a non-socialist economic policy, there has in fact been a qualitative change in economic policy. An investigation of the new economic policy shows it to be bourgeois. But the LWR finds this approach very "amusing". Their approach, you see, is to start by stating that such a qualitative change could only have occurred through a violent

counter-revolution. Since they can find no trace of the latter, it follows that the qualitative economic change has not occurred. If, nevertheless, a qualitative economic change has occurred, it has not occurred in the approved manner and must be ruled out of order. It is a piece of reality that does not come within the terms of reference of Trotskyism.

The LWR engages in some weak sarcasm about peaceful counter-revolution. More is known about the counter-revolution in Yugoslavia than elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

It did not happen while the workers were having their lunch. It so happens that they were in jail. Many thousands of the most class-conscious workers were imprisoned by the Titoites. A good many of them were murdered. If a Communist government looks crooked at a bourgeois intellectual the whole imperialist and opportunist press sends up a howl. But they never raised a murmur about the mass imprisonment and execution of Communists in Yugoslavia. That is perfectly natural. In the class struggle one class doesn't agitate against the oppression of representatives of the enemy class. The Trotskyists, as a detachment of bourgeois politics, supported Tito and raised no objection to the execution of Yugoslav "Stalinists". Perfectly natural. That doesn't mean that the counter-revolution was peaceful. It only means that, from the bourgeois viewpoint, the right people were killed. Less detail is known about what happened in Russia. It is known that a number of leading members of the C.P. died shortly after Stalin. Khrushchev boasted of how they shot Beria without even the pretence of a trial. He said that Beria had been an imperialist agent since the 1930's. Strange to say, the imperialists were unanimous in their approval of the murder of this influential agent of theirs. There is strong circumstantial evidence that Stalin was murdered. An earlier issue of 'Workers' Republic' approved of this killing. Trotsky declared in the thirties that Stalin was a servant of world imperialism. And again the whole imperialist world went into rejoicing on the death of a counter-revolutionary imperialist agent.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

SUPPLEMENT TO THE IRISH COMMUNIST ON TROTSKYISM

This supplement results from a meeting held by the Limerick Labour Youth Group in January of this year at which the ICO, and the trotskyist "League for a Workers Republic" were invited to state their respective positions on the general political tasks facing the working class. The ICO attempted to focus discussion on the nature of the Labour Party and the correct strategy with regard to it, since the political experience of the Limerick group was gained in the Labour Party.

The LWR, whose position with relation to the Labour Party is of course very dodgy, concentrated on the Stalin-Trotsky controversy, of which the Limerick group had little knowledge. To help the Limerick group to get to grips with this matter the ICO proposed that the LWR and itself should both publish a concise statement of their position on a number of questions. The LWR would not agree to this. Eventually, however, they agreed that, if the ICO published a statement of its position, they would publish a criticism of it within three months.

The earlier parts of this supplement to The Irish Communist were:

1. The Bureaucracy (April 1970)
2. Socialism In One Country (May 1970)
- S. Political Economy (June 1970).

P A R T F O U R

4. MODERN REVISIONISM (contd.)

In addition to propagating the illusion that the revisionist counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and E. Europe was peaceful, the trotskyists also negate entirely the power of opportunism to disrupt and destroy working class politics. They suggest that because the revisionists do not say they are restoring capitalism, because they do not restore the most superficial forms of capitalism, and because they approach the problem of restoring the essentials of capitalism in an intelligent opportunist fashion – then, in fact, they are not restoring capitalism.

In a previous issue we referred the LWR in our pamphlet "Marxism and Market Socialism" for an answer to their rhetorical questions

about the restoration of capitalism by revisionism. They declare that they can find nothing relevant to the question in that pamphlet. We can well believe that. But the reason is not because the pamphlet does not deal with the question, but because trotskyism has no grasp of Marxist political economy, except on the most superficial level. If they had they would see the absurdity of the notion of a collectively-owned economy based on commodity production. Since trotskyism adopted market socialism forty years ago, it is understandable that it should be incapable of understanding a Marxist refutation of market socialism.

Market socialism is an impossibility. An economy based on market relations cannot be collectively owned and controlled by the working class. Collective ownership cannot give rise to commodity exchange in the means of production, because commodity exchange involves a change of owners. Where commodity production is the general form of production there must be numerous private owners. If there is a single collective owner, i.e. the working class, how can there be a change of ownership? How can there be commodity exchange?

If commodity exchange is general, then, whatever the superficial appearance, there are numerous private owners in reality. Where production is carried on by numerous private owners (whether individuals, companies or co-ops) who buy and sell with one another, collective control of the economy is impossible. Without real collective ownership there can be no collective control by society. And where there is collective ownership commodity production is impossible.

The economic backwardness of the Soviet Union in the 1920s made it impossible to establish comprehensive collective ownership all at once. But in the 1930s the major means of production were brought into the collective ownership of the working class. They then ceased to be commodities, and their production and distribution ceased to be governed by the laws of the market. Their production and distribution was governed by consciously determined social requirements and the availability of resources. But there were certain areas in which commodity production remained. As a concession to the petty bourgeois character of a large proportion of the peasantry, small private plots were allowed to collective farmers in which they produced commodities for sale on the market. This market could be influenced to a great extent by the state, but it was nevertheless a market.

But the main commodity exchange took place between the collective farms proper and the state. The collective farms owned their own produce and sold it to the state (i.e. to the collective working class).

This again was necessary because of the petty bourgeois character of the peasantry. But though the collective farmers owned their own produce co-operatively, they did not own their major means of production. They had the use of the land from the state, and the agricultural machinery was owned by the state. State-owned Machine and Tractor Stations were attached to the collective. These M.T.S.s made it possible for the technology of agriculture to progress more rapidly than would have been the case if the collective farms had to buy their machinery, and it also was a means of exercising working class control over the collective farmers.

In 1952 Stalin showed that the main economic measure needed then for the further development of the socialist economy was the elimination of market relations between the state and the collective farms, which could only be done by making the collective farms state property and thus eliminating the two forms of ownership that gave rise to these market relations. (This could only be done as the peasantry, under working class influences and as a result of the experience of collectivisation, shed their petty bourgeois characteristics and developed into workers.)

No sooner had Stalin outlined the situation, and indicated the general direction of economic change required, than he died (either being killed, or dying naturally at an exceptionally convenient time for the bourgeoisie). His death was followed by the death of other leading communists.

The Soviet revolution was breaking new ground all along the way. There was no historical experience for it to learn from. At every turn an entirely new historical situation had to be analysed and entirely new policies had to be developed for it. It is in a situation like this that opportunism can wreak havoc.

Every revolutionary class develops from out of itself a leadership composed of its most determined, most capable, and most class conscious members. When it is breaking new ground historically a class is very dependent on its leadership. If we take the British bourgeoisie of today, which has three centuries of experience, and whose business is merely to keep in control of a situation which it knows very well, it is clear that the assassination of individual political leaders would do it very little damage. It has vast reserves of politically capable people. If the entire Cabinet, shadow Cabinet, the heads of the Civil Service, and the Army Chiefs of Staff were done away with, they could be replaced overnight. But in the time of the bourgeois revolution in the 1640s, when the old society was being overthrown and a bourgeois society was being made for the first time in history, in desperate struggle against the old society,

the bourgeoisie were then very dependent for leadership on a particular body of leaders thrown up in the course of the revolutionary struggle. If the Cromwell leadership had been lost it could well have been irreplaceable. Realising this, the revolutionary bourgeoisie gave Cromwell very extensive personal authority and freed him from Parliamentary control.

The historical task of the working class is infinitely more far-reaching than that of the bourgeoisie. Its revolutionary leadership must be developed under very difficult circumstances in bourgeois society. The loss of particular groups of leaders can do severe short-term damage to its political struggle. Opportunist leadership can have very far-reaching effects.

The loss of an experienced revolutionary leadership in a complex situation in which the maintenance and further development of the revolution requires the breaking of entirely new ground, and its replacement with a sophisticated variety of opportunism which, under the pretext of developing Marxism, generated confusion on the very questions which are essential to the further development of the revolution: that is what happened in the Soviet Union in the early fifties.

In trotskyism the "rule of the working class" becomes a metaphysical abstraction. The working class is said to rule through a bureaucratic caste which is hostile to it, and which oppresses it. What kind of "rule" is that?

In the reality of the class struggle the working class can only rule when the state is controlled by a leadership which is the active representative its interests; a leadership composed of the most class conscious, militant and politically developed members of its class. In the early stages of socialism, as Lenin often pointed out, the working class will necessarily include sections which remain in the grip of the bourgeois world outlook. Between this and the state leadership of the class a great variety of stages of political development will be found. In order to be able to rule the bulk of the class must be developed enough to understand the elements of socialism. There must be an adequate political leadership. And there must be a substantial cadre force.

In Russia in the late 'thirties working class rule was acquiring a substantial flesh and blood reality. The Nazi invasion had a catastrophic effect on this, the communist cadre force suffered particularly heavily. There was a Nazi regulation to the effect that no communist prisoners were to be taken. All communists and all suspected of sympathy to communism were to be shot on the spot where they were captured. And since the communists were in the

forefront of the resistance, casualties among the politically developed workers were exceptionally high. That is the reality behind the cheap sneers of the trotskyists about peaceful counter-revolution.

The political flower of the Soviet working class was slaughtered by the Nazis; there was vast destruction of the economy; bourgeois remnants who were prepared to oppose the Nazis had to be conceded a certain degree of freedom. In 1945 the work of restoring industry, of preparing against a nuclear attack by the USA, of curbing the bourgeois nationalists who had used their war-time freedom to extend their tentacles, and of developing all over again a strong communist cadre force, had to be undertaken.

What was done in the economy in the years after 1945 was every bit as remarkable as the economic development of the 1930s. A campaign against the bourgeois nationalists was launched in 1947/8. But at all levels except the very highest there had been a considerable weakening of communist politics which it was not easy to overcome. Provided that revolutionary leadership was maintained there was no reason why there should not be a consistent development of communist politics. But the mass development of communism in the working class was nowhere near high enough to detect, expose and overcome a sophisticated opportunist leadership.

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It was not through any miracle, but as a result of the combination of circumstances favourable to opportunism, which we have outlined above, that the bourgeois counter-revolution gained control in the Soviet Union in the mid-fifties.

5. STALIN "The motive of personal revenge has always been a considerable factor in the repressive policies of Stalin... His craving for revenge on me is completely unsatisfied... This is the source of gravest apprehensions for Stalin: that savage fears ideas, since he knows their explosive power and knows his weakness in the face of them." (Trotsky: Diary In Exile, p. 66).

There is no doubt that what Stalin felt for Trotsky personally was amused contempt: proletarian contempt for an intellectual attitudiniser. The brooding, the craving for personal revenge was all done by Trotsky. There is no hint of brooding in Stalin's writings. His last work was a high-level scientific work on political economy. Trotsky's last work was yet another long, brooding tirade against Stalin: yet another attempt to justify himself before history. (His writings on Lenin in the years 1903-17, when he felt continuously hurt by Lanin, have the same subjectivist character.)

On a comparatively reasonable level he writes: "The Soviet bureaucracy supports Stalin precisely because he is the bureaucrat who defends their interests better than anybody else". (Defence of Marxism, p. 179). In this view Stalin is merely the leading political representative of the "bureaucracy". It is no more absurd than the notion of the bureaucracy itself. But it leaves Trotsky's "craving for revenge completely unsatisfied". It is not enough that Stalin should be the leader of the bureaucracy that had strangled working class politics. "After the bureaucracy had strangled the internal life of the party, the Stalinist tops strangled the internal life of the bureaucracy itself..." ..."The Stalinist faction raises itself above the party and above the bureaucracy itself" (Kirov Assassination, pp. 25 and 12).

The position then is that the "bureaucracy" has "expropriated" the working class, and that Stalin has expropriated the bureaucracy. There is a bureaucratic dictatorship over the working class, and a Stalinist personal dictatorship over the bureaucracy. And Stalin is even more alien to the working class interest than the bureaucracy is. Stalin reached his position as personal dictator, not through any great strategic political ability, but through a narrow and blind craving for personal power. "Stalin measured every situation... by one criterion – usefulness to himself, to his struggle for domination over others. Everything else was intellectually beyond his depth... Nor did he think through to the social significance of this process in which he was playing the leading role. He acted... like the empiricist he is." (Stalin, p. 386, old edition).

The vast political and economic developments of the 1930s occurred under this absolute personal dictatorship. Stalin was a narrow-minded and politically mediocre bureaucrat with a strong craving for personal power who somehow or other became dictator of the Soviet Union. How did he achieve this position and how did he maintain it for so long in a period of such momentous change? On that point, unfortunately, Trotsky can only give rhetorical expression to his own injured emotions.

Leaving Trotsky's gibberish aside, the fact is that Stalin did personally hold an exceptional position in the political leadership. Trotsky could not explain how he came to hold this position. And he considered it sufficient to show that Stalin held this exceptional, and let us say "dictatorial", position to prove that he was a counter-revolutionary.

But Stalin was not the first man to hold such a "dictatorial" position, though nobody else held it for such a long period. In the "Defence of Leninism" we quoted Lenin to the effect that the mere fact of personal "dictatorship" indicated nothing about its class

nature. There was also a time when Trotsky understood that elementary truth. The following quote is from his pamphlet "Where Is Britain Going?", written in 1925:

"Following at the tails of those living non-lions who write leading articles in the Manchester Guardian and other Liberal organs" (we should mention here that the present-day leader-writers of the Guardian include one of the most eminent Irish trotskysts, Mr. John Palmer. And the presence of trotskysts on the editorial staffs of newspapers is now becoming a commonplace even in Ireland), "the leaders of the Labour Party customarily contrast democracy with any kind of despotic government, in the form of the "dictatorship of Lenin", or the "dictatorship of Mussolini"... The Liberal vulgarians customarily say that they are against a dictatorship from the left just as much as from the right, although in practice they do not let slip any opportunity of supporting a dictatorship of the right. For us, however, the question is decided by the fact that one dictatorship urges society forward, and the other drags it backward. The dictatorship of Mussolini is a dictatorship of a prematurely rotten, impotent, thoroughly corrupted Italian bourgeoisie. It is a dictatorship with a broken nose. The "dictatorship of Lenin" expresses the mighty pressure of a new historic class and its superhuman struggle with all the forces of the old society. If Lenin is to be compared to anyone, it is not with Buonaparte, and still less with Mussolini, but with Cromwell and Robespierre. One can say with a certain amount of truth that Lenin is the proletarian Cromwell of the 20th century." (p. 91/2).

"A fool, an ignoramus, or a Fabian may see in Cromwell only a personal dictator. But in actuality, here, in the conditions of a profound social rupture, the personal dictatorship was the form adopted by a class dictatorship, and that class which alone was capable of freeing the kernel of the nation from the old shells and husks." (p. 97).

The only explanation of the "Stalin dictatorship" that makes sense is the same as the explanation of the "Lenin dictatorship" given above. The view that Stalin manipulated the bureaucracy, which manipulated the Party, which manipulated the working class, and that in this hierarchy Stalin was farther removed from the working class than any of the intermediaries, does not allow of any natural, social explanation for Stalin's authority.

Trotsky describes Stalin as a savage. The savage imagines that he can control natural forces through a kind of mimicry: that he can cause rain by imitating a cloud-burst. But the power exercised by

Stalin was real. It was not the fantasy power of a savage, and we must assume, despite Trotsky, that it was not exercised by the ineffective methods of a savage.

The source of Stalin's power was the working class. His personal power, in fact, was nothing more than his effective leadership of the working class in the building of socialism.

Stalin led the Russian working class for thirty years. These were years of continuous, rapid and fundamental social change in the Soviet Union. In a stagnant society a personal dictatorship based on military power may continue for a relatively long period by force of inertia. But the force of inertia can explain nothing about Stalin's position. At no time would the force of inertia have maintained him in his position for a year.

In a period of revolutionary change the continuance in power of an individual political leader can only be explained by his effective leadership of the class whose interest is the motive power for this change. There was only one class in the Soviet Union whose interest required the abolition of capitalism and the commodity system, the collectivisation of agriculture and the building of socialist industry, and that was the working class. If Stalin's power was not an expression of his effective leadership of the working class, then it was entirely miraculous in character.