

# Stalin Grants Two Interviews

By MAX SHACHTMAN

Taking advantage of the unusual interest aroused by the rumor of his assassination, Stalin has availed himself of the columns of the capitalist press of the world to expound his viewpoint on a number of questions of the hour. More than a year ago, comrade Trotsky, placed in a somewhat similar situation by the sensation aroused by his deportation to Turkey, also made use of the capitalist press to publish the standpoint of the Communist Opposition, so as to acquaint the workers of the world with what it really stood for.

In both cases, the utilization of the enemy press was quite justified, for the dramatic interest centering around the individuals in question made it possible for them not only to give expression to the cause they defend, but virtually to compel the bourgeois press to print whatever they said. The Stalinists, at the time of Trotsky's articles in the capitalist press, pretended a virtuous indignation of which they are really incapable. We saw nothing reprehensible in the action at that time, and just as little in Stalin's today. What the revolutionist is concerned about is, WHAT is said and for what purpose, for the bourgeois press of the world is still read in preference to the strictly working class press.

## What Trotsky Did

Trotsky seized the opportunity to present the revolutionary point of view to the worker-readers of the bourgeois press, to make an ardent defense of the October revolution against the onslaughts of the world bourgeoisie and the sapping work of the Thermidorians in the Soviet Union. His articles constituted a Bolshevik banner, a rallying point, a cry to awaken the world working class to the dangers menacing the proletarian dictatorship.

How do matters stand, however, with Stalin's interviews (New York Telegram, November 24, and New York Times, December 1)? Their principal virtue—perhaps their only virtue—is the fact that they are an accurate picture of Stalin, his dull empiricism, his vulgar "practicality", his ignorance and contempt of Bolshevik theory and principle. So striking are all these traits, that even the *Daily Worker* does not dare as much as to mention the outstanding point in his interview, while the *Freiheit* editors consider it either so scandalous or so insignificant, that they do not even report it by a single line! A few quotations will make clear the reason.

The International Stalinist strategy in the Communist movement centers around the slogan, theory, and agitation for the "Defense of the Soviet Union against the War Danger." The prevailing theory is that if the Soviet Union can merely prevent military intervention, then a self-sufficient socialist society can be constructed within national boundaries. The abstract cry "Defend the Soviet Union" is daily dinned into the ears of the official Communist Party press readers. Stalin—assuming that he intended to direct his remarks to the workers, and not to Messrs. Hoover, Adolph Ochs and Roy Howard—should have emphasized this danger and called upon the workers to ward it off. Instead, he said everything he could to minimize this danger, and even to eliminate it. We quote from the Duranty dispatch to the *Times*. (Duranty is one of the staunchest supporters of the Stalin regime and his reports may be relied upon for accuracy—insofar as he quotes Stalin, at least.)

## "Too Late"

"Both of them (i. e., the so-called hot-headed bourgeois and the cautious bourgeois) would readily crush a weak enemy if it could be done with little or no risk, but for the moment no such easy and profitable adventure offers itself. They might have tried it against the U. S. S. R. five or six years ago, but they waited too long. It is now too late."

"Stalin hurled out the last words without raising his voice but with a sudden access of restrained power that had an impact like a blow."

On the same day, the printers in the *Daily Worker* were setting up headlines, some of which read: "Canadian Boss, Detering and Standard Oil for War on U. S. S. R.," "Latest Steps in Anti-Soviet War Plot" (eight are listed), with a leading editorial to the same effect. But if it "is now too late," if the bourgeoisie has "waited too long" (we believe neither of these "so-lacing" oplates), why all the excitement about the war danger against the U.S.S.R.?

Not content with this smug assertion,

Stalin continues his remarks, and goes from bad to worse.

"Can capitalist and Communist systems co-exist peacefully," asked Lyons of the United Press.

"It is possible," Stalin replied, "and the best proof is that they have lived peacefully side by side since the conclusion of our civil war and the intervention period." (*Telegram*, November 24.)

To make sure of this incredible declaration, Duranty asked a few days later: "You see, then, no reason why capitalist and Communist systems should not exist side by side without fighting?"

"They have not fought for ten years," said Stalin dryly, "which means they can co-exist." (*Times*, December 1.)

Lenin, who lived neither in the "third period" nor in the period of Stalin's wisdom, was of a fundamentally different opinion, that is, he defended a Marxist position while Stalin defends the standpoint of blind liberalism. One can quote from his writings and speeches a thousand sentences which are a crushing refutation of Stalin's astounding remarks. We take a few at random.

"World imperialism side by side with a victorious onslaught of the social revolution cannot get along together." (Vol. 15, page 175.)

"We do not live merely in a state but in a system of states and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with imperialist states for any length of time is inconceivable. In the end, one or the other must triumph." (Vol. 17, page 197.)

"As long as we still have capitalism and socialism we cannot live peacefully—either one or the other will be the victor in the end. The obituary will have to be sung either over the death of world capitalism or the death of the Soviet republic. Now we have only a respite in the war." (Vol. 17, page 398.) And so on, ad infinitum.

## "The Ten Years of Peace"

Stalin's ten years of "socialist-capitalist peace" cover the period of the Arcos and Peking raids, the attack on the Chinese Eastern Railway, the breaking of relations with Russia by England and France, the murder of Volkov in Poland, the permanent conspiracies of all capitalist countries against the U. S. S. R. (culminating in the very trial now going on in Moscow!), and other facts far too numerous to mention. Obviously, if this is the "peaceful co-existence," what will "war" resemble?

That is why the *Daily Worker*, which quoted much from Stalin's interview (November 5), did not even mention the quotation we made above. Why not? Either it is a mis-quotation, in which case it should obviously be exposed. Or else it is correctly reported, in which case it is of such tremendous importance that it should be blazoned in the headlines. Of course, the simple truth is that neither the *Daily Worker* nor the *Freiheit* dared to reprint these thoroughly reactionary words of Stalin—they were too strong for the stomach. (The *Daily Worker* made up for its whipped-dog silence on Stalin by publishing a hysterical column of pernicious anaemia by Browder, denouncing the Opposition as . . . counter-revolutionists and stool pigeons. And there is nothing surprising in this, for even medical science teaches us that a poisoned organism, like an attack of rabies, always brings foam to the mouth and prevents coherent speech. Browder, we therefore assume, is a subject for treatment by a science other than political, and we do not feel ourselves competent to effect any cures or give any advice in that sphere.)

We learn further from Stalin the exact reason for the disgraceful conduct of the Soviet delegation to the Geneva arms, and even for its participation.

"Stalin has no hope that anything constructive will come out of the Geneva Disarmament Conference. Nevertheless he said he felt the Soviet government could not abstain from any effort (so!), however weak, toward peace. He said Litvinov might succeed in injecting a few healthy clauses (now then!) here and there. 'Anyway,' he said, 'it can't do any harm to participate in the conference.'"

But these very same "reasons" can be advanced to justify joining the League of Nations, that is, the Black International which fathers the Disarmament Conferences. And, further, if one finally decides to participate in the "disarmament" conferences, it should not be done in the "diplomatic" manner of Litvinov and Stalin (to which we refer elsewhere in this issue) but

"It can't do any harm." No, none except to create the illusion in the minds of the workers that the League of Nations and its subsidiaries can be reformed step by step by means of "injecting a few healthy clauses here and there," which means, in reality, giving the imperialist war mongers and their machinations a convenient shield from the distrust of the world proletariat.

## The Daily Worker Silent Again

Here again, the *Daily Worker* maintains a tight-lipped silence. Not a word of quotation or comment on Stalin's remarks about the Geneva Conference and Litvinov's participation. Isn't it pertinent to inquire about the reason for the omission? Has Stalin one theory of the revolution or working class readers who buy the capitalist press, and another theory for the readers who buy the *Daily Worker*? Which theory does he believe? Which shall we believe? And above all, which theory is believed or should be believed by the workers, who still read a thousand *Telegrams* and *Timeses* to one *Daily Worker*?

There is one more point in Stalin's interviews, the one the bourgeois press underlined: trade with the United States. "If it cannot establish political ties with the United States, the Soviet Union at least desires to strengthen its economic ties with America. And America being a great, wealthy, technically progressive and developed country, must appreciate the advantages of such economic intercourse as much as we do." (*Telegram*, November 24.)

## Stalin Catches Up with the Opposition

As it stands, no serious person can have objection to it. But there is nevertheless a contradiction here. A number of months ago, dealing with the state of world unemployment on the one hand, and the difficulties being encountered by the Five-Year Plan on the other, comrade Trotsky advanced the idea that the Communists in the Soviet Union and the capitalist countries should elaborate an international campaign aiming at the extension of large, long-term credits to Russia for the purchase of machinery to assist the Five Year Plan, and to ameliorate to an extent the sufferings of the unemployed by the fact that certain industries would be set going through Soviet orders for machinery. Our readers are sufficiently acquainted with the proposal to obviate any elaboration of it here.

## Weisbord's Proposals on Unemployment

A number of inquiries concerning our position on the articles by comrade Albert Weisbord in which he advanced "A Concrete Program on the Unemployed" have been received. The article was printed as a contribution to the discussion. It does not coincide with our point of view.

We are in agreement with those points in Weisbord's articles which deal with the concrete steps to be taken to organize the unemployed workers and their families, that is, into block committees in the proletarian quarters, into a form of tenants' leagues for the purpose of resisting evictions for non-payment of rents, etc., etc. This task has been neglected by the movement up to now and must be carried out. Our divergences with Weisbord occur chiefly at the point where he sets tasks for this movement, where he estimates—by implication at least—the period of development the movement as a whole finds itself in, and where he repeats his proposals in relation to the Party and to the Lovestone faction.

It is false to state that "the whole immediate objective of the unemployment movement is to seize things necessary to live." The acquisition of living necessities and resistance to evictions is indeed one of the principal tasks not only of the unemployed, but of their fellow-workers still at work, but not the "whole" of it. The principal problem is the mobilization of the employed and unemployed into a united movement for a struggle around three principal demands: the six-hour day and five-day week without wage reductions, social insurance, and immediate relief by the state and the employers. The so-called "food riots" are a by-product, and under certain conditions an aid, in the fight for these demands, and require a previous deep-going organization of the masses, the arousing of their sentiments for struggle, and establishment of safeguards against the degeneration of such a movement into petty-bourgeois-anarchist swamps. But they are far from the "whole immediate objective."

Matters are worse with the perspectives of struggle of this movement, which involves an estimate of its state of development. Instead of a criticism of the Party

immediately met with violent resistance by the whole Stalinist apparatus. Browder and the other Jorges poured sulphur and pitch upon it. It was denounced as little, if any, better than "social-fascism." In the first place, it ran counter to the canonized theory of a self-sufficient socialist society in Russia. Secondly, it was a proposal to "help capitalism solve its unemployment crisis." Thirdly, fourthly, fifthly and tenthly, it was proposed by the Opposition which, as every member of the Political Bureau is taught in the Lenin School, is counter-revolutionary. Now the idea has been taken off the index expurgatorious and the official imprimatur affixed to it by the hand of Stalin himself. Listen to how he laughs out of court yesterday's pitiful arguments of Browder and Co.:

"They provide equipment and technical help don't they? And we pay them, don't we, for everything—pay top prices, too, as you and obey know. You might as well say that we are arming Americans and helping to maintain their capitalist system against ours. No," he continued more softly, "that is nonsense. That isn't the point at all." (*Times*, December 1.) (What a scathing remark to make about so loyal a servitor as Browder!)

There remains, however, a difference between Stalin's appeal for trade relations and the Opposition's. The first is not only not addressed to the workers, but it does not even mention their role in it, the manner in which the interests of unemployed and employed are so directly connected with the welfare of the Soviet Union and its economic advancement. Instead, it is addressed to the bourgeoisie. It is quite true that they must be spoken too as well, but then Stalin should at the same time apologize to the workers for having permitted Molotov and Manuilsky and their lesser lights to denounce the Opposition because we proposed—among other things—an economic collaboration between the U. S. S. R. and the Mueller government in Germany and the MacDonald regime in England. And we are still waiting for the American Party chiefs to accept the logic of Stalin's statements and the proposals of the Opposition to launch a campaign along the lines sketched in our plan. It is overdue.

or its "third period" absurdities and monstrous exaggerations in connection with the slogan for "fighting the police", Weisbord only deepens its error. The class conscious vanguard is exceedingly small today. It is confronted by a working class virtually everywhere on the defensive, and its main problem is the organization of a defensive resistance to the onslaught of the bourgeoisie. The Party mistakes this defensive for an offensive, and half its blunders are rooted in this radically false conception.

Weisbord, however, even goes further, and arrives at the extremely ultra-Leftist conception of an impending revolutionary situation in the country. No other view can explain such terms as these, in consideration of the present relation of forces in the country: "The Party wants to fight the police. Good." And further: "Here (in proletarian neighborhoods) the fight can spread. The police cannot easily surround it . . . Shops and factories can be pulled on strike and swept into battle. In short, here the police are weakest and the workers strongest. Through the fighting squads organized by the block groups, a whole section of the city could be held." Since cities, or sections of them, are not held merely for the holding, but because the question of seizure of power has been raised, Weisbord's views are not only harshly out of harmony with the views of the Opposition but also with the elementary realities of the situation. Less emphasis on "fight the police" (it is clear, the workers must defend themselves ardently against police attacks and brutalities, but certainly not in an offensive sense, with a view to "holding a whole section of the city") and more emphasis on the practical needs and interests of the movement, which correspond to its stage of development—those are urgent requirements of the moment.

Further, we disagree sharply with Weisbord's ridicule of the proposals advanced by the Left Opposition for long-term credits to the Soviet Union as a means of ameliorating the hardships of the unemployed in capitalist countries and of the Five Year Plan in Russia. Such credits will not only permit Russia to purchase

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