

Tracing the Roots and Traditions of - By Leon Trotsky

for the Fourth International

ward Stalinism, coarse, igno-
 rant, lies at the opposite pole.
 more than ten years ago in
 death a whole set of new
 whose only purpose is to jus-
 talinists from the path of the
 solution." Only a few days
 ston M. Oak, who has par-
 revolution, wrote: "The Stalin-
 most revisionists of Marx
 not dare to go half as far as
 This is absolutely true. One
 actually felt certain theo-
 scientiously to establish the
 reformist practices of social
 The Stalinist bureaucracy,
 in common with Marxism
 any doctrine or system what-
 thoroughly permeated with
 practice is the empiricism of
 with its essential interests the
 to any theory: it can give an
 either to itself nor to anyone
 and Lenin not with the theore-
 of the G. P. U.

OF MORALS

ality" of Bolshevism come
 ful nonentities whose cheap
 Bolshevism. In petty-bour-
 e, "socialist", literary, par-

liamentary and other circles, conventional values prevail,
 or a conventional language to cover their lack of values.
 This large and motley society for mutual protection—
 "live and let live"—cannot bear the touch of the Marxist
 lance on its sensitive skin. The theoreticians, writers
 and moralists, hesitating between different camps,
 thought and continue to think that the Bolsheviks mali-
 ciously exaggerate differences, are incapable of "loyal"
 collaboration and by their "intrigues" disrupt the unity
 of the workers' movement. Moreover, the sensitive and
 squeamish centrist has always thought that the Bol-
 sheviks were "calumniating" him—simply because they
 carried through to the end for him his half-developed
 thoughts: he himself was never able to. But the fact
 remains that only that precious quality, an uncompro-
 mising attitude toward all quibbling and evasion, can
 educate a revolutionary party which will not be taken
 unawares by "exceptional circumstances".

The moral qualities of every party flow, in the last
 analysis, from the historical interests that it represents.
 The moral qualities of Bolshevism, self-renunciation,
 disinterestedness, audacity and contempt for every kind
 of tinsel and falsehood—the highest qualities of human
 nature!—flow from revolutionary intransigence in the
 service of the oppressed. The Stalinist bureaucracy
 imitates also in this domain the words and gestures of
 Bolshevism. But when "intransigence" and "inflex-
 ibility" are applied by a police apparatus in the service
 of a privileged minority they become a source of dem-
 oralization and gangsterism. One can feel only con-
 tempt for these gentlemen who identify the revolution-
 ary heroism of the Bolsheviks with the bureaucratic cyn-
 icism of the Thermidorians.

* * *

Even now, in spite of the dramatic events of the
 recent period, the average philistine prefers to believe
 that the struggle between Bolshevism ("Trotskyism")
 and Stalinism concerns a clash of personal ambitions,
 or, at best, a conflict between two "shades" of Bolshev-
 ism. The crudest expression of this opinion is given by
 Norman Thomas, leader of the American Socialist Party:
 "There is little reason to believe," he writes (*Socialist
 Review*, Sept. 1937, pag. 6) "that if Trotsky had won (!)
 instead of Stalin, there would have been an end of in-
 trigues, plots, and the reign of fear in Russia." And this
 man considers himself ... a Marxist. One would have
 the same right to say: "There is little reason to believe
 that if instead of Pius XI, the Holy See were occupied
 by Norman I, the Catholic Church would have been
 transformed into a bulwark of socialism." Thomas fails
 to understand that it is not a question of a match be-
 tween Stalin and Trotsky, but of an antagonism between
 the bureaucracy and the proletariat. To be sure, the
 governing stratum of the U. S. S. R. is forced even now
 to adapt itself to the still not wholly liquidated heritage
 of revolution, while preparing at the same time through
 direct civil war (bloody "purge"—mass annihilation of
 the discontented) a change of the social regime. But in
 Spain the Stalinist clique is already acting openly as a
 bulwark of the bourgeois order against socialism. The
 struggle against the Bonapartist bureaucracy is turning
 before our eyes into class struggle: two worlds, two
 programs, two moralities. If Thomas thinks that the
 victory of the socialist proletariat over the infamous
 caste of oppressors would not politically and morally
 regenerate the Soviet regime, he proves only that for
 all his reservations, shufflings and pious sighs he is far
 nearer to the Stalinist bureaucracy than to the workers.

Like other exposers of Bolshevik "immorality",
 Thomas has simply not grown up to revolutionary
 morals.

THE TRADITIONS OF BOLSHEVISM AND THE FOURTH
 INTERNATIONAL

The "lefts" who tried to skip Bolshevism in their
 "return" to Marxism generally confined themselves to
 isolated panaceas: boycott of the old trade unions, boy-
 cott of parliament, creation of "genuine" soviets. All
 this could still seem extremely profound in the first heat

of the post-war days. But now, in the light of most
 recent experience, such "infantile diseases" have no
 longer even the interest of a curiosity. The Dutchmen
 Gorter and Pannekoik, the German "Spartakists", the
 Italian Bordigists, showed their independence from Bol-
 shevism only by artificially inflating one of its features
 and opposing it to the rest. But nothing has remained
 either in practice or in theory of these "left" tendencies:
 an indirect but important proof that Bolshevism is the
 only possible form of Marxism for this epoch.

The Bolshevik party has shown in action a combina-
 tion of the highest revolutionary audacity and political
 realism. It has established for the first time the only
 relation between vanguard and class that can assure vic-
 tory. It has proved by experience that the alliance be-
 tween the proletariat and the oppressed masses of the
 rural and urban petty-bourgeoisie is possible only through
 the political overthrow of the traditional petty-bour-
 geois parties. The Bolshevik party has shown the en-
 tire world how to carry out armed insurrection
 and the seizure of power. Those who propose the
 abstraction of soviets to the party dictatorship should
 understand that only thanks to the Bolshevik lead-
 ership were the soviets able to lift themselves out
 of the mud of reformism and attain the state form of
 the proletariat. The Bolshevik party achieved in the
 civil war the correct combination of military art and
 Marxist politics. Even if the Stalinist bureaucracy should
 succeed in destroying the economic foundations of the
 new society, the experience of planned economy under
 the leadership of the Bolshevik party will have entered
 history for all time as one of the greatest teachings of
 mankind. This can be ignored only by bruised and of-
 fended sectarians who have turned their backs on the
 process of history.

But this is not all. The Bolshevik party was able to
 carry on its magnificent "practical" work only because
 it illuminated all its steps with theory. Bolshevism did
 not create this theory: it was furnished by Marxism.
 But Marxism is the theory of movement, not of stagna-
 tion. Only events on a tremendous historical scale could
 enrich the theory itself. Bolshevism brought an inval-
 uable contribution to Marxism in its analysis of the im-
 perialist epoch as an epoch of wars and revolutions; of
 bourgeois democracy in the era of decaying capitalism;
 of the correlation between the general strike and the
 insurrection; of the role of party, soviets and trade
 unions in the period of proletarian revolution; in its
 theory of the soviet state, of the economy of transition,
 of fascism and Bonapartism in the epoch of capitalist
 decline; finally in its analysis of the degeneration of the
 Bolshevik party itself and of the soviet state. Let any
 other tendency be named that has added anything es-
 sential to the conclusions and generalizations of Bol-
 shevism. Theoretically and politically Vandervelde, De
 Brouckère, Hilferding, Otto Bauer, Léon Blum, Zyrom-
 ski, not to mention Major Attlee and Norman Thomas,
 live on the dilapidated left-overs of the past. The de-
 generation of the Comintern is most crudely expressed
 by the fact that it has dropped to the theoretical level
 of the Second International. All the varieties of inter-
 mediary groups (Independent Labour Party of Great
 Britain, P.O.U.M. and their like) adapt every week new
 haphazard fragments of Marx and Lenin to their cur-
 rent needs. They can teach the workers nothing.

Only the founders of the Fourth International, who
 have made their own the whole tradition of Marx and
 Lenin, take a serious attitude toward theory. Philistines
 may jeer that twenty years after the October victory the
 revolutionaries are again thrown back to modest propa-
 gandist preparation. The big capitalists are, in this
 question as in many others, far more penetrating than
 the petty-bourgeois who imagine themselves "socialists"
 or "communists". It is no accident that the subject of
 the Fourth International does not leave the columns of
 the world press. The burning historical need for rev-
 olutionary leadership promises to the Fourth Interna-
 tional an exceptionally rapid tempo of growth. The
 greatest guarantee of its further success lies in the fact
 that it has not arisen away from the large historic road,
 but is an organic outgrowth of Bolshevism.

August 29, 1937.

A PAMPHLET
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