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**TRENDS IN THE WORLD REVOLUTION**

( Speech summarizing debate on " The World Today "   
at the Seventeenth National Convention )

by  
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## TRENDS IN THE WORLD REVOLUTION

By Farrell Dobbs

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Our discussion today has turned on the central axis of an assessment of the present world conjuncture to determine its basic nature. Two distinct views in opposition to the position of the majority of the National Committee have been presented to the convention, one by Comrade Marcy, the other by Comrade A.P.

Comrade Marcy's position strikes me as a conservative world view. He assumes a rigid alignment of two global class camps. He thinks the prolonged capitalist boom is binding the workers to imperialism in the capitalist sector of the world, attracting the East European workers toward capitalism and threatening capitalist restoration in the workers states. He assigns to the Soviet bureaucracy the principal role in defending the Soviet property forms, subordinating to this concept the deadly conflict between the workers and the bureaucracy, and thereby blinding himself to the living reality of the developing political revolution.

Where the world crisis of capitalism has actually opened the way to a revolutionary advance in the Soviet sphere, Comrade Marcy appears to see instead the death agony of the workers states. Without intending that result, his policy leads inevitably toward identification with the bureaucracy as against the revolutionary workers.

In contrast to the Marcy view, the majority sees the death agony of capitalism entering a period of deeper convulsions. This trend finds expression in the mounting intensity of the colonial revolution and in the expansion of the Soviet sector, particularly with the establishment of a workers state in China. The deepening crisis of capitalism is in turn precipitating a crisis of Stalinism and opening the way to a political revolution throughout the Soviet zone. These great events on the international arena imply a qualitative advance for the world revolutionary forces.

In disagreement with both the majority and Comrade Marcy, Comrade A.P. advances the state-capitalist theory. He charges the majority with making a fetish out of nationalized property, holding we are thus unable to perceive the development of state capitalism in a country like China. He contends that we destroy the role of the revolutionary party, subordinating it to Stalinism; and that we vitiate the role of the working class, subordinating the workers to the peasantry.

At the root of Comrade A.P.'s position is the notion that state capitalism has developed as an all-pervading world phenomenon. He perceives a sequence in the capitalist countries passing from the individual ownership of the means of production to corporate ownership, and from there through the monopoly control of finance capital to the development of state capitalism. In the Soviet Union he sees the degeneration of the workers state into a form of state capitalism and the extension of this peculiar form throughout the Soviet sphere. Comrade A.P. rejects the concept of a political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy and appears instead to see the social revolution as a universal world task.

It is well known that the official party position rejects the theory that state capitalism prevails in the Soviet Union. Although there has been a political degeneration under the Stalinist bureaucracy with many social ramifications, the progressive property forms have been preserved and the Soviet Union therefore remains a workers state. In Eastern Europe the bureaucratic-military overturn of the old capitalist property relations led to the establishment of new workers states, although politically deformed. China, too, has become a deformed workers state through a revolutionary process we shall examine later in more detail. With regard to all these countries -- and in the case of Yugoslavia which had its own peculiar development as a deformed workers state -- it is the revolutionary duty of the working class to defend the progressive property forms against imperialism. At the same time it is the revolutionary task of the working class to support a political revolution to establish workers democracy in the workers states.

Concerning the increased state intervention in the internal affairs of the capitalist countries, the majority views this tendency as a by-product of capitalist decay. Total war requires attempts at state regulation of the capitalist economy, along with extensive intervention in the class struggle to discipline the working class. These needs sharpen the tendency of finance capital to fuse more closely with the state but do not loosen the grip of monopoly capital over the state. The resort to statism in these forms does not overcome the crisis of capitalism. Instead it intensifies all the old contradictions and creates new ones, thus preparing greater revolutionary explosions.

Statism in the colonial areas represents a makeshift resorted to by the native bourgeoisie because of the lack of native capital. The bourgeois class seeks controlled reforms within the capitalist framework, at the same time protecting itself against the revolutionary masses through alliances with the feudal exploiters within the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Antagonisms between the native capitalists and the imperialist powers cause them to seek "neutralist" advantage from the Soviet-imperialist stalemate on the world arena, but they are always ready to make deals with imperialism at the expense of the masses.

These contradictions forecast a deepening conflict between the exploited masses and the native bourgeoisie. The struggle for liberation from imperialist domination can therefore be only a first sequence in the processes of the permanent revolution, only a prelude to social revolution throughout the colonial sphere. Strong confirmation of the laws of the permanent revolution and evidence of a quickened tempo in their unfoldment has appeared in the case of the Chinese revolution. China passed swiftly, historically speaking, from a liberation struggle, through the democratic revolution, to the establishment of a deformed workers state. It now faces the unresolved task of the political revolution which remains to be fulfilled.

Comrade Grey, who shares the general conceptions advanced by Comrade Marcy, attacks the majority's analysis of the successive stages in the Chinese revolution. Comrade Grey contends it was the masses who took the power in China in 1949 and thereby automatically created a workers state. In determining the nature of the state, he calls it an error for us to stress the false policy of Stalinism. He terms the false program merely a deformation. The masses, he insists, put their party in power in 1949. How else, he challenges, can you justify support of the struggle against Chiang Kai-shek after the Japanese defeat?

Our answer is plain and direct. The struggle of 1947-49 represented a progressive stage of the democratic revolution. Its chief tasks were to solve the land problem and unify the country, to sweep away the old feudal relations and to crush the Kuomintang which functioned as an agency of imperialism. We affirmed these revolutionary implications of the 1947-49 struggle and supported the revolution despite its Stalinist leadership. But we remain constantly alert to the dangers of Stalinist treachery.

I do not mean to infer that Comrade Grey does not consider Stalinism treacherous. He simply made an abstraction from this basic characteristic of Stalinism, and its political and economic implications, when he equated the Stalinist seizure of power in 1949 with the establishment of a deformed workers state in China. Yet it is precisely at this point that we come into sharp disagreement with him. As I will undertake to demonstrate, Stalinist treachery prevented China from becoming a workers state until an imperialist intervention, subsequent to the 1949 seizure of power, compelled the Stalinists to initiate a fundamental social change.

Predominant in the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party are declassed petty bourgeois elements schooled in Stalinism. This leadership exploited the linking of the CCP in the popular mind with the prestige of the October 1917 revolution and the Soviet power. They used this prestige in an effort to derail the Chinese revolution into "co-existence" channels, trying repeatedly to make a deal with Chiang Kai-shek for a coalition government.

When they were compelled in 1949 to take the power, after one last overture to Chiang, the CCP leaders tried to remain within the framework of a coalition regime including native capitalist elements. They delayed completion of the agrarian reform and failed to expropriate the imperialist holdings within China.

Only when faced with the mortal threat of the imperialist intervention in Korea did the CCP make a basic shift in policy. Under new objective pressures the Stalinists were compelled to resort to class struggle measures, taken bureaucratically. They nationalized key branches of the economy and instituted planning. They finally carried through the agrarian reform and also imposed a monopoly over foreign trade. They at last expropriated the imperialist holdings, marking a definitive shift in policy.

With the changed property forms, the Chinese economy has become closely linked with the Soviet economic system and China has been drawn completely toward the Soviet bloc as a deformed workers state. At the same time it remains subject to all the bureaucratic contradictions that are preparing a political revolution throughout the Soviet zone, and the Chinese revolution itself has given a major impulse to the processes of the political revolution.

It will be profitable for us to recall Comrade Trotsky's analysis of the basic features of the political revolution which he set down quite extensively in The Revolution Betrayed and in The Transitional Program. Soviet democracy is not an abstract policy, he pointed out, it is a life and death question. While the bureaucracy is able to introduce important elements of capitalist technique, a qualitative advance for the Soviet Union is not possible without a free conflict of ideas. The existing improvements do not reconcile the workers with the authorities. A vast gap remains between the mass living standards and the bureaucratic privileges. This gap stands as a constant provocation to the working class.

As a consequence Comrade Trotsky forecast a rebellious polarization of the masses around the culturally developed forces, above all around the industrial workers, together with the youth and sections of the intellectuals. He predicted the program of the political revolution would depend generally on the moment when the struggle breaks out, the level which the country has then attained and the given international situation.

Comrade Marcy denies, however, that the Soviet workers have reacted politically to the developing crisis of Stalinism. He considers them to be in a state of apathy which he attributes to war-weariness and to modest increases in Soviet living standards. Actually the origin of the East European events traces back to the Soviet Union, with the Soviet workers the primary force behind it all. They are seizing the chance Comrade Trotsky predicted they would watch for, "another revolutionary dawn . . . in the West or the East." Let me emphasize that Comrade Trotsky also included the East as a direction from which impulses to the political revolution might come, a direction from which Comrade Marcy seems to exclude impulses of such decisive weight, demanding instead revolution in the West as the precondition for a genuine political revolution in the Soviet zone.

Today the Soviet workers have become emboldened by the new revolutionary dawn about which Comrade Trotsky spoke. They gained confidence from the Soviet defeat of the imperialist invasion during World War II. They have witnessed a post-war expansion of the Soviet sphere helping to overcome their past isolation in a hostile capitalist world. They feel themselves aided by the colonial revolution, above all by the Chinese revolution. They see world imperialism temporarily stalemated by the revolutionary forces. To their minds these favorable developments are beginning to open the way for them to settle accounts with the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The concessions made by the Stalinist bureaucrats at the Twentieth Congress of the Russian Communist Party stemmed primarily from internal Soviet pressures and were calculated to appease the masses. But as Comrade Trotsky pointed out, reforms create a semi-legal cover for mass intervention, rifts in the bureaucracy open the way toward broader political struggle. The first major outbreaks, touched off by the Twentieth Congress, came in Poland and Hungary, and they are causing profound repercussions in the Soviet Union.

The insurrections in Eastern Europe would undoubtedly have been more chemically pure if the first explosion came within the Soviet Union or if the political revolution was given a basic impulse by a social revolution in Western Europe. But our job is to draw a balance sheet of the objective evidence in the light of the living struggle as it is actually unfolding within a contradictory world situation.

Upon close examination we find that the revolt in Eastern Europe assumed a dual character. It took the general form of a national uprising against Kremlin domination. Within that complex there appeared a workers struggle for democracy on the basis of the Soviet property forms, and the workers showed the ability to lead toward a socialist solution of the national struggle.

Comrade Marcy contends, however, that a restorationist and bourgeois-democratic trend prevails in Eastern Europe. He attributes sweeping attractive powers to the capitalist boom, including the power to draw the East European masses toward a capitalist revival. This view assumes the exact opposite of the growing world

antagonism toward American imperialism. It overlooks the revolutionizing effects of U.S. foreign policy which stands as a constant source of irritation, envy and hate among the discontented masses everywhere.

Comrades Marcy and Grey contend the Hungarian workers made common cause with the capitalist restorationists and were helping to smash a deformed workers state. As a result, they assert, defense of the progressive property forms was left to the Soviet bureaucracy and therefore the Kremlin intervention was necessary and progressive.

We must recognize the danger of restorationist elements appearing within the national uprising. In fact a prolonged floundering by the workers leadership could permit the accumulation of counter-revolutionary forces, threatening the workers grip on the factories and leading toward capitalist restoration. This danger, moreover, is much greater in Eastern Europe than in the Soviet Union. The retardation of the Polish revolution provides an example. The Catholic church is gaining unwarranted strength. Gomulka is duplicating Stalin in creating a state church as a source of support against the working class. In the process he is helping to provide a rallying center for reactionary elements.

Protection against restorationist dangers lies in the workers orienting toward a full revolutionary policy. That is why we insist on the need for creation of a revolutionary socialist party as an integral part of the developing political revolution. But we disagree with Comrade Marcy when he contends that, in the absence of such a fully-developed party, the Hungarian workers became the captives of a capitalist coalition government under Nagy and that the workers councils came under the leadership of Social Democrats and the bourgeois Small-holders party.

The Nagy government represented a continuation of the bureaucratic regime of a deformed workers state. It was a Stalinist-type coalition government which served as the point of infiltration for restorationist elements. With political action centered around the parliamentary system, a capitalist relic deliberately preserved by the Stalinists as a barrier to workers democracy, the workers manifested confusion under the Nagy regime on the question of free elections as a class question. But the developing struggle for legalization of the workers councils had already marked a shift in political emphasis toward Soviet forms. The workers demanded that their councils have sole authority over industry, thus implying the ultimate slogan: All power to the workers councils. With the councils emerging as a rival power in opposition to the parliamentary authority, the suffrage issue was shifting objectively toward the concept of free elections for Soviet parties.

Comrade Grey admits that class war was implied in the national uprisings, that is, a dual power situation. But he denies the dual power could lead to a progressive outcome. He contends the workers had to follow bourgeois leadership for lack of their own independent program and therefore they subordinated their general strike to the national struggle. Where the majority sees motion toward a political revolution, Comrades Grey and Marcy contend the workers are backing a capitalist counter-revolution. Comrade A.P., on the other hand, from the premises of his state-capitalist theory, looks to the possibilities of a social revolution, not a political revolution to correct deformations in a workers state.

There is overwhelming testimony from all observers of the Hungarian events in confirmation of several key facts: The workers were the decisive force and

they were on the stage throughout the struggle. They showed a manifest desire for workers democracy on the basis of Soviet property forms. The workers organized from the factory level up to district and regional councils. These councils rejected the idea that they should be confined to trade union tasks. The leading forces in the workers councils came from the Communist Party and the Social Democratic rank and file, that is, from the traditional organizations. At first the old union leaders stood in the forefront of the key Budapest council. When they tried to halt the general strike against Kadar, they were replaced by revolutionary workers about November 11. The Social Democratic workers in Miskolcz proved as revolutionary as the Communist Party ranks in Budapest. From the best of these elements that spearheaded the councils a revolutionary party can and will be built.

In Poland the workers mobilized for armed resistance to the Kremlin during the October events. They created councils in Warsaw that have since spread throughout the country. These organs of the working class have compelled official recognition of the right to strike and are forcing a greater voice for themselves generally in industry. Workers councils are thus assuming the role of an organizational vehicle for the political revolution. The Soviet form is developing alongside parliament and the bureaucratic apparatus.

Making reference to a quotation from Comrade Trotsky, concerning attempts to break down centralized planning, Comrade Marcy -- if I understood him correctly -- counterposes centralized planning to the "syndicalist anarchy" of demands for the workers councils to have sole authority over industry. Actually, Comrade Trotsky was referring to bureaucratic motion toward capitalist restoration in the form of demands for greater concentration of power in the hands of the factory managers. He was not discussing the problems of economic planning as they relate to the processes of political revolution.

In addition it is necessary to observe that Comrade Marcy omits one small point in his thinking: Before the workers can institute centralized planning on a democratic basis, they must first break the grip of the bureaucracy. To do so they must begin where they are the strongest -- in the factories. As the workers councils organize on a centralized basis in opposition to the whole bureaucracy, they will lay firm foundations for centralized economic planning, but on a new and higher plane of genuine workers democracy.

Yet Comrades Marcy and Grey manifest no confidence in the workers councils. They contend the workers are abandoning defense of the workers state as captives of the capitalist restorationists. They remind us that the Stalinist bureaucracy, on the other hand, has material roots in the nationalized property. This line of thought implies that the bureaucracy is a supra-class force standing forward as the most reliable defender of the Soviet property forms. It assumes an identity of the bureaucracy with the fundamental interests of the working class, when the actual struggle in Eastern Europe is proving the exact opposite.

Comrade Trotsky taught us that in a strictly defined case there might be the need for a united front of the workers with the bureaucracy against a counter-revolutionary danger. But the chief political task remains the overthrow of this same bureaucracy. The main danger of capitalist restoration comes from the bureaucracy, he pointed out, both as a hungry privilege seeker and as a provoker of an "explosion of the whole system." Comrade Trotsky always counterposed the working class to the bureaucratic danger and he did not demand that worker action await the appearance of a fully-developed party. On this latter point we have serious differences in the present discussion.

Comrade A.P. contends the social revolution cannot begin without the previous development of the revolutionary party. In the case of China he accuses us of consigning to Stalinism the role of the revolutionary party. Comrades Marcy and Grey, on the other hand, consider the role of leadership in the Chinese revolution as secondary because it was a social revolution, a war between classes. The masses took power, they argue, and made the Stalinist party their party.

In the case of Hungary, Comrades Marcy and Grey reverse this view. There the role of leadership becomes primary for them. Since the political revolution is the war of a class against its own treacherous leadership, they warn, the other classes may intervene. Therefore it is necessary to have a new leadership ready in advance to replace the old one. In short, these comrades contend that a social revolution can be launched without a Marxist party to lead it; but a political revolution cannot begin without a conscious Marxist leadership.

From their rigid concepts of the global class struggle, Comrades Marcy and Grey arrive at this generalization: Stalinist bureaucrats can make progressive adaptations to anti-capitalist struggles and provide a working substitute for the revolutionary party; but the workers can't challenge the rule of the bureaucracy without falling prey to counter-revolutionary forces, unless they already have a revolutionary party to lead them. Without their having such intentions, this concept actually leads to defense of the bureaucracy against the workers. It negates the rich possibilities of creating a revolutionary party in the course of the unfolding political revolution.

In periods of social upheaval, Comrade Trotsky pointed out, the masses are impelled by a sharp feeling they can no longer endure the old regime. They gain confidence from favorable revolutionary trends and make a forcible entry onto the political arena without a preconceived plan. The mass program and revolutionary party are forged in the course of action. These factors apply to political revolution as well as to social revolution.

In Eastern Europe the mass demands have instinctively gone in a Trotskyist direction. They include: abolition of bureaucratic privileges; equality of wages for the workers; freedom for the unions and factory committees; the right of assembly and freedom of the press. These issues in turn imply the demand for legalization of the workers political parties. This trend leads directly toward the revival of Soviets with full working class content and toward a revolutionary international policy.

In contrast to Comrade Grey's charge that the Hungarian workers didn't mention defense of the Soviet Union, Comrade Trotsky always listed international policy at the foot of the workers demands. He did so not because international policy is least important -- in the last analysis it is the most important -- but because the masses begin their struggle with demands corresponding most closely to their vast accumulation of grievances.

There are three major criteria for determining the character of a revolution: the forces waging the revolutionary struggle; the leadership and program; and the results achieved.

In Hungary both the forces and methods of struggle were in the main proletarian -- the general strike and workers councils. The program corresponded to the main aspects of our transitional program. The leadership had not yet been



determined. Nor had the results of the revolution which was crushed by the Kremlin. It was not at all proven that restorationist counter-revolution could have seized the plants from the workers who had taken possession of them during the struggle.

If the elemental, instinctive motion of the workers in a revolution were pro-capitalist, we would have to conclude that Marxism is a Utopia, that the Trotskyist program bases itself not on the objective reality but on wishful thinking.

Rejecting the notion of any such prevailing trend among the workers, we must in all seriousness ask Comrades Marcy and Grey: Can't the revolutionary party possibly be forged in the course of the revolution? Can it be formed on a broad basis in any other way under conditions of Stalinist terror? And do you persist in forbidding the workers to rise against the bureaucracy before they have a full-fledged party to lead them?

In our view the revolutionary party will arise in the course of the struggle, deepening the content of the political revolution as it comes into being. The cadres of the party are already assembling in the workers councils. They are arising among the youth, from sections of the intellectuals, among Communist Party elements who are going over to the workers.

We call for full support to the revolutionary workers of Eastern Europe. We back their fight to establish workers democracy on the basis of Soviet property forms. We welcome their struggles which feed the fires of political revolution throughout the entire Soviet sphere and give a general forward push to the world revolutionary forces as a whole.

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Our differences in this discussion are sharp and they run deep, but they are differences among comrades who are loyal to the party on all sides. Let me illustrate the point. Since the particular example I have in mind happens to involve comrades of the Marcy tendency, I want to stress that the point applies equally to comrades who share the views of Comrade A.P.

At the plenum of the National Committee last December we had an extensive debate over the Hungarian question, with the comrades of the Marcy tendency opposing the majority decision to support the uprising against the Stalinist bureaucracy. The same plenum launched a fund campaign to finance party work, including general publication of the majority position on the Hungarian events.

Although the comrades of the Buffalo branch are generally in agreement with the Marcy position and therefore opposed to the majority view, they took the third largest quota in the campaign. Their quota was exceeded only by those of the New York and Los Angeles locals, both of which are larger than the Buffalo branch. The Buffalo comrades were also among the very first to convert their entire quota from a promise to pay into the hard cash. This demonstration of party loyalty speaks for itself.

We have come to the end of the discussion on this agenda point and the convention is about to take a vote. The majority submits for convention approval the general line of the following series of National Committee and Political Committee

documents: April 1956 resolution on The Crisis of Stalinism; December 1956 statements on Eastern Europe and the Middle East; a series of 1955 documents including: The World Today; The Soviet Union Today; The Third Chinese Revolution; The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie.

Comrade Kirk mentioned that he is contemplating an amendment to the resolution dealing with the colonial bourgeoisie. From an earlier reference I assume he has in mind something on the question of Africa. In any case it should be understood that all comrades who may so desire are free to submit amendments to these documents, either now or subsequent to the convention. The outgoing National Committee proposes that the convention authorize continued discussion of all the fundamental features of the present fluid world situation. At the same time the convention is asked to approve the general line of these documents as a guide to the party in its work during the next period.

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May 31, 1957