

Letters to the Editor**Stalinism — A Protest**

YOUR editorial of March 7 on "Stalinism" may pass as a piece of impressionistic journalism, but is unworthy of the high standard of well-informed and objective writing we have come to expect from your journal.

The Trotskyists have never made the accusation that "Stalinism has not succeeded in bringing about the revolution of the world proletariat." If this was all the Trotskyists had to say, then their clear duty was, not so much to "accuse" the Stalinists, but to help them to discharge their tasks with greater success. Trotsky's criticism of Stalin was that he had *subordinated* the inescapable international character of Socialist tasks to the national needs of the governmental apparatus in the Soviet Union. "Socialism in one country," he said, not only meant "Socialism in no other country but the USSR." It ultimately meant "no Socialism even in the USSR", because no Socialism at all is possible without breaking down the national barriers that, even under capitalism, constrict the development of the productive forces.

The question of whether Stalinism has been vindicated, therefore, is not the debatable question of the degree of mental satisfaction with which Stalin was able to die. It is the far more material question of whether Stalin was able to accomplish that which Trotsky emphatically declared he could never accomplish, *viz.* complete the building of Socialism in the one, isolated country of the USSR.

I do not know whether you seriously contend that Stalin has successfully completed the construction of a Socialist society in Russia. I am of course aware that Stalin claimed to have done this as early as the end of the second Five-Year Plan! But if what exists today (several years after having built Socialism!) in Russia is Socialism (lower standard of living than European capitalism, greater inequality among salaried population than anywhere else in the world, growing concentration of power and wealth in the ruling bureaucracy, the most perfected, ramified and ruthless state tyranny in history, oppression of national minorities, institution of slave labour and

subjugation of other nations, perversion of science, falsification of history, decay of art and culture, etc), then clearly Socialism is in every way inferior to the capitalist system and Marx and Engels were only propounding another Utopian dream.

It may be contended that, even if Stalin was guilty of considerable exaggeration in claiming the completion of Socialist construction in Russia in the thirties, today Russian society is very near the point of Socialism. Even this is false, however. There is no necessity to conjure abstract visions of the Socialist society of the future in order to determine how near to it, or how far away from it, Russian society is today. What is necessary is to determine the law of movement of this society. For instance, is it moving towards greater equality within society? It is possible to show that Russian society today, far from moving in the direction of greater equality, is actually moving in the reverse direction. This, obviously, is not a movement towards Socialism, but a movement away from it.

Moreover, it by Stalinism is meant that trend in the Socialist movement which considers that it is possible for Socialism to be constructed within national confines as they exist today, what has happened to Stalinism as a Jesuit of the last war and the Chinese revolution? The march of the Red Army across Eastern Europe and the setting up of puppet Communist governments in these countries has dealt a death-blow to the whole of Stalin's ingenious "theory". Not only has Socialism not been built in one country, but now there is no possibility at all of building "Socialism in one country". For, as you put it, the USSR is no longer "an island". In other words, has not practice shown up the utter irrelevance of Stalinist thought?

You may perhaps say that, whatever its theoretical implications, the extension of Russian power into Eastern Europe has rendered the USSR more impregnable. But even this is wrong. If it is a mere question of one war machine against another, the military might of Russia can never compare with what the USA is building. It is

well-known, for instance, that last year the USA was turning out more than twice as much steel as Russia hopes to produce by 1955 under the current Five-Year Plan, and four times as much oil as Russia, three times as much electric power and one and a half times as much coal. This is, ultimately, what is decisive. This is why, if only one reason why, the Russian rulers so desperately attempt to find a *modus vivendi* with America and Britain.

Any successful defence of the USSR is very intimately bound up with what you correctly call the "spiritual" factor. This is nothing less than the will of the people to fight and win. The Russian people displayed they had this will in the fight against Nazi Germany. It is important, however, not to lose sight of the ease with which the Nazi armies at first marched into the Ukraine. It was only when they started breaking up the collective farms and smashing their equipment, that the Ukrainian peasantry came actively into the fight against the invaders. Moreover, the Nazis, by the experience which the masses of Europe had of their brutality, succeeded in uniting people everywhere against them. This time, however, the boot is on the other foot. It is the brutality of the Stalinist regime that has revolted the masses of Europe. In half of Europe, the people have already enough experience of its real meaning. Hence the terror with which Russia rules in Eastern Europe. The mounting purges, liquidations, shuffles and reshuffles within the regime, and the growing streams of refugees from Eastern Germany, particularly, are enough evidence of the deep "spiritual" hatred with which the regime is regarded by the peoples of Eastern Europe, at least.

Finally, Trotsky never said that the Russian bureaucracy "will disintegrate in the absence of the dominating influence of Stalin". Trotsky never gave Stalin even that importance. On the other hand, he stated repeatedly that if there had not been a Koba to grow into a Stalin, there would have been some one else. Trotsky never resolved big events in terms of individuals, as your editorial does, but in terms of the social forces they represented. If Trotsky's view is what you ascribe to him, his task was not to struggle politically against the whole Russian bureaucracy, but to engineer the assassination of Stalin. This is the line