

Two letters on the national question (I)

David North
5 January 1991

This is the first of two letters on the national question written by David North in January and April 1991. The second letter is available here.

Dear Comrade Kudash,

In order to familiarize you with both the history of the Fourth International and its present-day program, I will send to you a Russian-language edition of the international perspectives resolution of the International Committee of the Fourth International as well as back issues of the Russian-language *Bulletin of the Fourth International*. Unfortunately, because of the great costs of sending literature by airmail, I must make use of surface mail which takes a good deal longer.

It is not possible to answer the questions you raise within the confines of this letter. However, in a future issue of the *Bulletin*, we will publish Trotsky's remarkable article, "Their Morals and Ours," in which he addressed the problem of the relation between "class" and "all-human" questions. You will find that he treats this issue far more seriously than Mr. Gorbachev, who preaches a supra-class and supra-historical morality only in order to justify the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. The value of his hypocritical morality, and, incidentally, of those who awarded him the Nobel Peace Prize, can be judged by his accumulation of dictatorial powers and ever-more reckless threats against the Soviet workers and rebellious national minorities.

As for the relation between class and national questions, the most recent issue of our *Bulletin* (which is being sent as stipulated above) includes several articles by Trotsky besides the one you have already seen. Pending your study of those articles, let me state here that the Fourth International approaches the national question from a distinctly class standpoint. We do not reject the legitimate strivings for national self-determination. Indeed, this is a basic democratic aspiration which we vehemently defend. But in fighting

for this right, we urge workers not to forget their independent class interests. As in the fight for all democratic rights, the workers must not surrender the leadership of the struggle for self-determination to the petty-bourgeois nationalists, whose attitude toward the problem of self-determination is generally compromised by reactionary chauvinism and pro-capitalist aims. Remember, a capitalist Ukraine would be an economic colony of imperialism, enjoying no greater independence and self-determination than capitalist India! Thus, we see the fight for self-determination as yielding positive results only when it is directed, under the leadership of the proletariat, along socialist and internationalist lines.

The other questions of history which you raised are addressed in the *Bulletin*. We are also publishing a new Russian edition of Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*, which I will send to you as soon as it is out.

For the time being, I am enclosing a copy of Trotsky's final letter to the workers of the Soviet Union, which he wrote in April 1940, only a few months before his assassination by an agent of the GPU-NKVD. Please make it known to your comrades and friends: despite the passage of so many years, it remains a document of great political significance.

The fate of workers in the USSR as well as in the capitalist countries depends, above all, upon the forging of the unity of the international proletariat. The answer to the crimes of Stalinism is not to be found in the restoration of capitalism within the USSR, but in the program of world socialist revolution.

Fraternally,

David North, on behalf of the editorial board of the *Bulletin of the Fourth International*



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