

# Socialism in one country or permanent revolution

**Bill Van Auken**  
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## Twenty years since the split in the International Committee

In considering the question of socialism in one country vs. permanent revolution we are dealing with theoretical foundations of the Trotskyist movement. The essential theoretical issues that arose in the struggle over these two opposed perspectives were not only fought out by Trotsky against the Stalinist bureaucracy in the latter half of the 1920s, but have reemerged as the subject of repeated struggles within the Fourth International itself.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the split in the International Committee of the Fourth International with the leadership of the British Workers Revolutionary Party.

To grasp the significance of this split, it is necessary to understand the struggle that gave rise to the International Committee. The ICFI was founded in 1953 in a struggle against Pabloite revisionism.

It opposed the thesis advanced by the Pabloites that Stalinism was capable of self-reform and even of playing a revolutionary role, as well as their related conception that bourgeois nationalism in the colonial countries was capable of leading the struggle against imperialism. Combined, these theories constituted a perspective for the liquidation of the cadre historically assembled on the basis of the revolutionary perspective elaborated and fought for by Leon Trotsky in founding the Fourth International.

In 1963, it fell to the leadership of the British section, then the Socialist Labour League, to prosecute the struggle against the American Socialist Workers Party's reunification with the Pabloites. This was to take place on the basis of an agreement that the petty-bourgeois nationalist guerrilla movement of Fidel Castro had established a workers state in Cuba, thereby supposedly proving that non-proletarian forces could lead a socialist revolution.

Against what was at the time the far more fashionable adulation of Che Guevara, guerrillism and Third World revolution, the SLL waged an uncompromising defense of Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution.

To review the essential features of this profound analysis of the revolutionary dynamics of modern global capitalism developed by Trotsky, the permanent revolution took as its starting point not the economic level or internal class relations of a given country, but rather the world class struggle and the international development of capitalist economy of which the national conditions are a particular expression. This was the world-historic significance of this perspective, which provided the foundations for the building of a genuinely international revolutionary

party.

In the backward and former colonial countries, this perspective demonstrated that the bourgeoisie—tied to imperialism and fearful of its own working class—was no longer in a position to make its own “bourgeois” revolution.

Only the working class could carry out this revolution and could consummate it only through the formation of its own dictatorship of the proletariat. The permanent character of this revolution lay in the fact that the working class, having taken power, could not limit itself to democratic tasks, but would be compelled to carry out measures of a socialist character.

The limitations on the construction of socialism imposed by backwardness and isolation could be overcome only through the development of the revolution by the working class in the advanced capitalist countries, culminating in the world socialist transformation, thus lending the revolution a permanent character in a second sense.

The essential political principles that flowed from this perspective—proletarian internationalism and the political independence of the working class—were rejected by the Pabloites in their adaptation to Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism.

In the decade preceding the split, the leadership of the WRP had turned sharply away from the theoretical conquests it had made in its earlier defense of Trotskyism against the Pabloite revisionists.

By the early 1980s, the turn away from this perspective caused growing disquiet within the Workers League, the American section of the International Committee.

Like the Pabloites before them, the WRP leadership increasingly abandoned the scientific appraisal that Stalinism, social democracy and bourgeois nationalism represented, in the final analysis, agencies of imperialism within the workers movement. Instead, it attributed to at least elements of these political tendencies a potential revolutionary role.

In 1982, the Workers League initiated a struggle within the International Committee, developing an extensive critique of the WRP's political degeneration, at the center of which was the issue of permanent revolution.

In November 1982, in the summation of his “Critique of Gerry Healy's ‘Studies in Dialectical Materialism,’” Comrade David North reviewed the political relations established by the WRP leadership in the Middle East over the previous period, writing, “Marxist defense of national liberation movements and the struggle against imperialism has been interpreted in an opportunist fashion of uncritical support of various bourgeois nationalist regimes.”

“For all intents and purposes,” he continued, “the theory of permanent revolution has been treated as inapplicable to present circumstances.”

The response of the WRP leadership, which at the time still enjoyed immense authority within the ICFI by dint of its previous struggles for Trotskyism, was not a political defense of its policies, but a threat of an immediate organizational split.

Nonetheless, in 1984, the Workers League again raised these issues. In a letter to WRP General Secretary Michael Banda, Comrade North voiced the growing concerns of the Workers League, pointing to the WRP's development of alliances with national liberation movements and bourgeois nationalist regimes:

"The content of these alliances has less and less reflected any clear orientation to the development of our own forces as central to the fight to establish the leading role of the proletariat in the anti-imperialist countries. The very conceptions advanced by the SWP in relation to Cuba and Algeria which we attacked so vigorously in the early 1960s appear with increasing frequency within our own press."

And, in February 1984, North presented a political report to the IC beginning with a critique of a speech by SWP leader Jack Barnes, who had explicitly repudiated the theory of permanent revolution, and concluding with a review of the WRP leadership's opportunist relations with the bourgeois nationalists, the Labourites and the trade union bureaucracy that in practice pointed to a similar conclusion.

While the WRP leadership again refused a discussion and threatened a split, within barely more than a year an internal crisis ripped their organization apart, leading all factions of the old leadership to break from the IC and repudiate Trotskyism.

The underlying perspective that guided the WRP leadership was that of anti-internationalism. In the course of the split in 1985, it was Cliff Slaughter who championed the national autonomy of the British section, rejecting the necessity of subordinating the factional struggle within the WRP to the clarification and building of the world party.

Thus, in a letter written by Slaughter in December 1985 rejecting the authority of the International Committee, he declared that "Internationalism consists precisely of laying down ...class lines and fighting them through."

In reply, the Workers League posed question: "But by what process are these 'class lines' determined? Does it require the existence of the Fourth International? Comrade Slaughter's definition suggests—and this is the explicit content of his entire letter—that any national organization can rise to the level of internationalism by establishing, on its own, the 'class lines and fighting them through.'"

These questions go to the heart of the perspective of the Trotskyist movement. The political tendency that was breaking with Trotskyism reproduced the nationalist outlook that characterized Stalinism from its origins, while those defending the historically developed perspective of the Fourth International did so from the standpoint of internationalism.

## Stalinism and social reformism

It is necessary to understand that the perspectives that guided Stalinism were not a uniquely Russian political phenomenon.

The origins of Stalinism itself lay in the contradictory emergence of the first workers state in an isolated and backward country.

The exhaustion of the Russian working class as a consequence of the civil war, combined with the defeats suffered by the European working class and the temporary stabilization of capitalism, contributed to the growth of a nationalist outlook within the Soviet state and its ruling party.

This outlook expressed the definite material interests of a bureaucracy that emerged as the administrator of the social inequality that persisted as a consequence of the economic backwardness and isolation that plagued the first workers state.

Yet, Stalinism and its nationalist outlook were unquestionably related to a wider international political tendency, and its ideology was rooted in previous forms of revisionism. In the final analysis, it represented a

specific form of labor reformism that took on a peculiar and malevolent character as a reaction against the October Revolution within the Soviet workers state.

It shared much in common, however, with the official labor movements of the capitalist countries, viewing the national state and the expansion of its economy and industry—not the international revolutionary movement of the working class—as the source of progress and reform.

The conception of "building socialism in a single country" originated not in Russia, but in Germany, where it was propagated by the right-wing Bavarian social democrat Georg von Vollmar. In 1879, he published an article entitled "The isolated socialist state," laying ideological foundations for the subsequent growth of social patriotism within German Social Democracy. The German SPD ended up backing its own government in the First World War on the grounds that Germany provided the best conditions for the building of socialism. Vollmar foresaw a protracted period of "peaceful coexistence" between the isolated socialist state and the capitalist world, during which socialism would prove its superiority through the development of technology and lowering the cost of production.

## The campaign against permanent revolution

The proposition advanced by Bukharin and Stalin in 1924 that socialism could be achieved in the Soviet Union based upon its own national reserves and regardless of the fate of the socialist revolution internationally represented a fundamental revision of the perspective that had guided the Soviet leadership and the Communist International under Lenin. This divorcing of the prospects for the Soviet Union from the development of the world socialist revolution likewise constituted a frontal assault on the theory of permanent revolution, upon which the October Revolution of 1917 had been based.

Trotsky wrote in his *Results and Prospects*: "The theory of socialism in one country, which rose on the yeast of the reaction against October, is the only theory that consistently and to the very end opposes the theory of the permanent revolution."

What did he mean by this? Permanent revolution was a theory that began from an international revolutionary perspective; socialism in one country was a utopian and reformist prescription for a national-socialist state.

Permanent revolution took socialism's point of departure as the world economy and world revolution. Socialism in one country began from the standpoint of socialism as a means of national development.

These questions were at the center of Trotsky's 1928 critique of the draft program of the Communist International contained in the volume *The Third International after Lenin*. I would like to quote at some length passages from this critique, which spell out the foundations of a Marxist approach to the elaboration of perspective. The imperishable brilliance of this analysis is even clearer today—given the ever-closer global integration of capitalism, to which we have paid such close attention in the development of the IC's perspective.

"In our epoch," he wrote, "which is the epoch of imperialism, i.e., of world economy and world politics under the hegemony of finance capital, not a single communist party can establish its program by proceeding solely or mainly from conditions and tendencies of developments in its own country. This also holds entirely for the party that wields the state power within the boundaries of the USSR. On August 4, 1914, the death knell sounded for national programs for all time. The revolutionary party of the proletariat can base itself only upon an international program corresponding to the character of the present epoch, the epoch of the

highest development and collapse of capitalism. An international communist program is in no case the sum total of national programs or an amalgam of their common features. The international program must proceed directly from an analysis of the conditions and tendencies of world economy and of the world political system taken as a whole in all its connections and contradictions, that is, with the mutually antagonistic interdependence of its separate parts. In the present epoch, to a much larger extent than in the past, the national orientation of the proletariat must and can flow only from a world orientation and not vice versa. Herein lies the basic and primary difference between communist internationalism and all varieties of national socialism....”

He continued: “Linking up countries and continents that stand on different levels of development into a system of mutual dependence and antagonism, leveling out the various stages of their development and at the same time immediately enhancing the differences between them, and ruthlessly counterposing one country to another, world economy has become a mighty reality which holds sway over the economic life of individual countries and continents. This basic fact alone invests the idea of a world communist party with a supreme reality.”

Before Lenin’s death in 1924, no one in the leadership of the Communist Party, either in the Soviet Union or internationally, had ever suggested the idea that a self-sufficient socialist society could be built on Soviet soil or anywhere else.

Indeed, in his “Foundations of Leninism,” written in February of that year, Stalin summed up Lenin’s views on the building of socialism with the following passage:

“The overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a proletarian government in one country does not yet guarantee the complete victory of socialism. The main task of socialism—the organization of socialist production—remains ahead. Can this task be accomplished, can the final victory of socialism in one country be attained, without the joint efforts of the proletariat of several advanced countries? No, this is impossible. To overthrow the bourgeoisie the efforts of one country are sufficient—the history of our revolution bears this out. For the final victory of Socialism, for the organization of socialist production, the efforts of one country, particularly of such a peasant country as Russia, are insufficient. For this the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are necessary.

“Such, on the whole, are the characteristic features of the Leninist theory of the proletarian revolution.”

Before the end of that year, however, Stalin’s “Foundations of Leninism” would be reissued in a revised edition. The passage I just quoted was replaced with its opposite, affirming that the “proletariat can and must build the socialist society in one country,” followed by the very same assurance that *this* constituted the “Leninist theory of proletarian revolution.”

This abrupt and gross revision of perspective reflected the growing social weight of the bureaucracy and its awakening consciousness in regards to its own specific social interests, which it saw as bound up with the steady development of the national economy.

Moreover, the call for building “socialism in one country” struck a broader chord among an exhausted Soviet working class that had seen its most advanced elements either sacrificed in the civil war or drawn into the state apparatus. The debacle suffered in Germany as a result of the German Communist Party’s capitulation during the revolutionary crisis of 1923 had further dashed hopes for early relief from the world revolution and left Soviet workers susceptible to the promise of a national solution.

As Trotsky spelled out in his critique of the draft program for the Sixth Congress of the Communist International and other writings, the theory of socialism in one country represented a direct attack on the program of world socialist revolution.

Trotsky explained that, if it was indeed the case that socialism could be

achieved in Russia regardless of what happened to the socialist revolution elsewhere in the world, the Soviet Union would turn from a revolutionary internationalist policy to a purely defensist one.

The inevitable logic of this shift was the transformation of the sections of the Communist International into border guards—instruments of a Soviet foreign policy aimed at securing the USSR by diplomatic means that would avoid imperialist attack while preserving the global status quo. In the end, the policy represented a subordination of the interests of the international working class to the Stalinist bureaucracy’s own interests and privileges.

As Trotsky warned prophetically in 1928, the thesis that socialism could be built in Russia alone given the absence of foreign aggression led inevitably to “a collaborationist policy toward the foreign bourgeoisie with the object of averting intervention.”

This fundamental shift in the strategic axis of the party’s program was accompanied by a wholesale replacement of the old leaderships within both the Comintern and the national sections. Through a series of purges, expulsions and political coups, the Moscow bureaucracy obtained a staff that was trained to see the defense of the Soviet state, rather than the world socialist revolution, as its strategic axis.

## The USSR and the world economy

The differences over the relation between the Russian and the world revolutions were inseparable from the conflict that had developed earlier within the party over economic policies within the Soviet Union itself.

The Stalin leadership, pragmatically adapting itself to the immediate growth produced by the New Economic Policy, supported the preservation of the status quo within the Soviet borders as well, continuing and expanding concessions to the peasantry and private traders.

Trotsky and the Left Opposition had put forward a detailed proposal for developing heavy industry, warning that without a growth of the industrial sector, there was a serious danger that the growth of capitalist relations in the countryside would undermine the foundations of socialism.

Above all, Trotsky rejected the argument advanced in conjunction with “socialism in one country” that the economic development of the Soviet Union somehow could take place separately from the world economy and the worldwide struggle between capitalism and socialism.

Bukharin had declared, “We will construct socialism if it be only at a snail’s pace,” while Stalin insisted that there was “no need to inject the international factor into our socialist development.”

The false Stalinist conception that the only threat to socialist construction in the USSR was that of military intervention ignored the immense pressure placed upon it by the world capitalist market.

To counter this pressure, the Soviet state established a monopoly of foreign trade. While an indispensable instrument of defense, the monopoly itself expressed Soviet dependence on the world market and its relative weakness in terms of productivity of labor in relation to the major capitalist powers. While it regulated the pressure of cheaper goods from the capitalist West, this monopoly by no means eliminated it.

Trotsky fought for a faster tempo of industrial growth in order to counter this pressure, while at the same time he rejected the conception of an economic autarky. The development of purely national planning that failed to take into account the relationship between the Soviet economy and the world market was doomed to failure. He insisted that the USSR take advantage of the world division of labor, gaining access to the technology and economic resources of the advanced capitalist countries in order to develop its economy.

The attempt to develop a self-sufficient “socialist” economy based on

the resources of backward Russia was doomed, not merely by Russia's backwardness, but because it represented a retrogression from the world economy already created by capitalism. In his 1930 introduction to the German edition of *The Permanent Revolution*, Trotsky wrote as follows:

"Marxism takes its point of departure from world economy, not as a sum of national parts but as a mighty and independent reality which has been created by the international division of labor and the world market, and which in our epoch imperiously dominates the national markets. The productive forces of capitalist society have long ago outgrown the national boundaries. The imperialist war (of 1914-1918) was one of the expressions of this fact. In respect of the technique of production, socialist society must represent a stage higher than capitalism. To aim at building a nationally isolated socialist society means, in spite of all passing successes, to pull the productive forces backward even as compared with capitalism. To attempt, regardless of the geographical, cultural and historical conditions of the country's development, which constitutes a part of the world unity, to realize a shut-off proportionality of all branches of economy within a national framework, means to pursue a reactionary utopia."

The Stalinist leadership's struggle to impose the ideology of "socialism in one country" inevitably took the form of a vicious struggle against "Trotskyism" and in particular the theory of permanent revolution.

In his autobiography, *My Life*, Trotsky explained the political psychology of what he described as "the out-and-out philistine, ignorant, and simply stupid baiting of the theory of permanent revolution":

"Gossiping over a bottle of wine or returning from the ballet," he wrote, "one smug official would say to another: 'He can think of nothing but permanent revolution.' The accusations of unsociability, of individualism, of aristocracy, were closely connected with this particular mood. The sentiment of 'Not all and always for the revolution, but some thing for oneself as well,' was translated as 'Down with permanent revolution.' The revolt against the exacting theoretical demands of Marxism and the exacting political demands of the revolution gradually assumed, in the eyes of these people, the form of a struggle against 'Trotskyism.' Under this banner, the liberation of the philistine in the Bolshevik was proceeding."

### **The reaction against October 1917**

The campaign against permanent revolution was a necessary expression of the growth of nationalism within the Bolshevik Party and the beginning of the reaction against the October Revolution, which had been carried out based upon this theory.

Those like Stalin who denounced Trotsky in 1924 for failing to believe that Russia could build "socialism in one country" had between 1905 and 1917 condemned him as a utopian for asserting that the Russian proletariat could come to power before the workers of Western Europe. Russia, they insisted at the time, was too backward.

Trotsky had grasped that the nature of the Russian Revolution would be determined in the final analysis not by the level of its own national economic development, but by the domination of Russia by world capitalism and its international crisis. In countries like Russia with a belated capitalist development, integration into the world capitalist economy and the growth of the working class made it impossible for the bourgeoisie to carry through the tasks associated with the bourgeois revolution.

As Trotsky summed up his theory in the 1939 article "Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution": "The complete victory of the democratic revolution in Russia is inconceivable otherwise than in the

form of the dictatorship of the proletariat basing itself on the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which will inescapably place on the order of the day not only democratic but also socialist tasks, will at the same time provide a mighty impulse to the international socialist revolution. Only the victory of the proletariat in the West will shield Russia from bourgeois restoration and secure for her the possibility of bringing the socialist construction to its conclusion."

Rejecting the internationalist foundations of this theory—verified in the experience of the October Revolution—the Stalin leadership based itself on a formal nationalist approach, dividing the world into different types of countries based upon whether or not they possessed the supposed necessary prerequisites for socialist construction.

Trotsky denounced this approach as doubly wrong. He pointed out that the development of a world capitalist economy not only posed the conquest of power by the working class in the backward countries, it also made the construction of socialism within national boundaries unrealizable in the advanced capitalist countries.

He wrote: "The draft program forgets the fundamental thesis of the incompatibility between the present productive forces and the national boundaries, from which it follows that highly developed productive forces are by no means a lesser obstacle to the construction of socialism in one country than low productive forces, although for the reverse reason, namely, that while the latter are insufficient to serve as the basis, it is the basis which will prove inadequate for the former."

That is, the colonial countries lack the economic/industrial base, while in the advanced capitalist country, the capitalist economy has already grown beyond the confines of the national boundaries. Britain, as Trotsky pointed out, because of the development of its productive forces required the entire world to supply it with raw materials and markets. An attempt to build socialism on one island would inevitably spell an irrational economic retrogression.

### **Socialism in one country and China**

While time does not allow a detailed examination of the implications of the policy of "socialism in one country" for the sections of the Communist International, I think it is necessary to refer, even if only in a summary fashion, to the betrayal of the Chinese revolution of 1925-1927. This betrayal unfolded in the midst of Trotsky's struggle against Stalin's retrograde theory and provided a grim confirmation of his warning that it could only lead to catastrophic defeats for the international working class.

Writing in 1930, Trotsky described this "second" Chinese revolution as the "greatest event of modern history after the 1917 revolution in Russia." The rising tide of revolutionary struggle by the Chinese working class and peasantry and the rapid growth and political authority of the Chinese Communist Party after its founding in 1920 provided the Soviet Union with the most favorable opportunity for breaking its isolation and encirclement.

Having repudiated the permanent revolution and resurrected the Menshevik theory of the "two-stage" revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the Stalin leadership insisted that the Chinese working class had to subordinate its struggle to the bourgeois nationalist Guomindang led by Chiang Kai-shek.

Against Trotsky's opposition, the Chinese Communist Party was instructed to enter the Guomindang and submit to its organizational discipline, while Chiang Kai-shek was elected as an honorary member of the Comintern's executive committee, with Trotsky casting the sole opposing vote.

The Stalin leadership defined the Guomindang as a "bloc of four

classes” consisting of the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie.

It was Stalin’s position that China was not yet ripe for a socialist revolution, that it lacked the “sufficient minimum” of development for socialist construction. Therefore, the working class could not fight for political power.

As the February 1927 resolution of the Comintern stated: “The current period of the Chinese revolution is a period of a bourgeois-democratic revolution which has not been completed either from the economic standpoint (the agrarian revolution and the abolition of feudal relations), or from the standpoint of the national struggle against imperialism (the unification of China and the establishment of national independence), or from the standpoint of the class nature of the state (the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry)....”

Trotsky pointed out that everything in this resolution on China echoed the positions held by the Mensheviks and much of the leadership of the Bolshevik Party—Stalin included—in the aftermath of the February 1917 revolution in Russia. They insisted then that the revolution could not leap over the bourgeois democratic stage of its development and called for conditional support to the bourgeois Provisional Government. They opposed as “Trotskyism” Lenin’s thesis enunciated in April 1917 that the essential tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution could only be completed by the working class seizing power and establishing its own dictatorship.

The Stalin leadership insisted that the imperialist oppression of China—and indeed in all the colonial and semi-colonial countries—welded together all classes, from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie in a common struggle against imperialism, justifying their unification in a common party.

Against this conception, Trotsky established that the struggle against imperialism, which enjoyed myriad ties to the native bourgeoisie, only intensified the class struggle. “The struggle against imperialism, precisely because of its economic and military power, demands a powerful exertion of forces from the very depth of the Chinese people,” he wrote. “But everything that brings the oppressed and exploited masses of toilers to their feet, inevitably pushes the national bourgeoisie into an open bloc with the imperialists. The class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the masses of workers and peasants is not weakened but, on the contrary, it is sharpened by imperialist oppression, to the point of bloody civil war at every serious conflict.”

Stalin was able to impose the Menshevik policy on China—against the will of the Chinese Communist Party, which was instructed to restrain both the workers in the city as well as the agrarian revolution in the countryside. In the end, it was ordered to surrender its weapons to Chiang’s army. The result was the massacre of some 20,000 communists and workers by this army in Shanghai on April 12, 1927.

The Stalin leadership then insisted that the massacre had only confirmed its line and that Chiang only represented the bourgeoisie, not the “ninetenths” of the Guomintang made up of workers and peasants, whose legitimate leader was proclaimed Wang Ching-wei, who headed the “left” Guomintang government in Wuhan, to which the CP was again ordered to subordinate itself. In July 1927, after Wang reached an accommodation with Chiang, he repeated the massacre of workers and Communists seen in Shanghai.

It is worth noting that this leader of the “left” Guomintang—proclaimed by Stalin the head of a “revolutionary democratic dictatorship”—went on to become chief of the Japanese occupation’s puppet regime in Nanking.

In a bald attempt to cover up the catastrophic consequences of the opportunism of the Comintern in Shanghai and Wuhan, Stalin insisted that the Chinese revolution was still in its ascendancy and sanctioned an adventurist uprising in Canton that ended in yet another massacre.

The result was the physical annihilation of the Chinese Communist

Party and the loss of what had been the most promising revolutionary opportunity since 1917.

The opportunism of the Stalin leadership in China was based upon the conception that the success of the Guomintang could serve as a counterweight to imperialism and thereby give the Soviet Union breathing space for the project of building “socialism in one country.”

But the anti-Marxist and opportunist policy in China grew out of the nationalist underpinnings of the theory of socialism in one country. Applied to China, this method analyzed the national revolution in isolation from the world revolution. It thus, on the one hand, saw China as insufficiently mature for socialism while, on the other, endowed the national bourgeoisie and the nation-state form itself with a historically progressive role.

Trotsky rejected both conceptions, insisting that the character of the Chinese revolution was determined by the world development of capitalism, which, as in Russia in 1917, posed the taking of power by the working class as the only means of solving the revolution’s national and democratic tasks.

Trotsky’s warnings about the consequences of the policy of “socialism in one country” had been vindicated, but as he warned those in the Left Opposition who saw this as a mortal defeat for Stalin, the objective impact of the defeat in China upon the masses of Soviet workers would only strengthen the hand of the bureaucracy. In the aftermath of the defeat, he himself was expelled from the party in November 1927 and banished to Alma Ata on the Russo-Chinese border several months later.

The political significance of the adoption of the Stalin-Bukharin perspective of “socialism in one country” combined with the campaign against permanent revolution and the suppression of Trotsky and his co-thinkers was well understood by the most class-conscious organs of the world bourgeoisie.

Thus, the *New York Times* published a special report by its ineffable Moscow correspondent Walter Duranty in June 1931, stating, “The essential feature of ‘Stalinism,’ which sharply defines its advance and difference from Leninism...is that it frankly aims at the successful establishment of socialism in one country without waiting for world revolution.

“The importance of this dogma which played a predominant role in the bitter controversy with Leon Trotsky...cannot be exaggerated. It is the Stalinist “slogan” par excellence, and it brands as heretics or “defeatists” all Communists who refuse to accept it in Russia or outside.”

Duranty continued, “[T]he theory of ‘Soviet Socialist sufficiency,’ as it may be called, involves a certain decrease of interest in world revolution—not deliberately, perhaps, but by force of circumstances. The Stalinist socialization of Russia demands three things, imperatively—every ounce of effort, every cent of money, and peace. It does not leave the Kremlin time, cash or energy for ‘Red propaganda’ abroad, which, incidentally, is a likely cause of war, and, being a force of social destruction, must fatally conflict with the five-year plan which is a force of social construction.”

Similarly, the French newspaper *Le Temps* commented two years later, “Since the removal of Trotsky, who with his theory of permanent revolution represented a genuine international danger, the Soviet rulers headed by Stalin have adhered to the policy of building socialism in one country without awaiting the problematic revolution in the rest of the world.”

The paper went on to counsel the French ruling class not to take the Stalinist bureaucracy’s revolutionary rhetoric all too seriously.

Trotsky proposed during this period the creation of a “white book” compiling such endorsements of “socialism in one country” on the part of the bourgeoisie and a “yellow book” including declarations of sympathy and support from the social democrats.

Eight decades later, the implications of the struggle between the theory

of permanent revolution and socialism in one country are plain to see. Trotsky's precise and prescient warnings that the attempt to separate the socialist development of the Soviet Union from international developments and world revolution could only lead to catastrophe have been confirmed in the redrawing of the map of the world and in the vast impoverishment of the working people of the former USSR.

In addition to the split in the IC, this year also marks the twentieth anniversary of Mikhail Gorbachev's initiation of the program of perestroika. This policy marked the completion of Stalinism's betrayal of the October Revolution. Behind the Marxist verbiage, the bureaucracy had long seen socialism not as a program for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, but rather as a means of developing a national economy that was the base of their own privileges.

It was to defend those privileges that it turned to a policy of capitalist restoration that unleashed a disaster of world historic proportions on the Soviet people. The starkest manifestation is a population implosion—in the last 10 years the population of Russia alone has dropped by 9.5 million, despite the many thousands of Russians returning from former Soviet republics. The number of homeless children is greater today than in the worst days of the Civil War or the aftermath of World War II.

The Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the USSR—a response to the growing pressure from globally integrated capitalism upon the nationally isolated Soviet economy—represented the failure not of socialism or Marxism, but rather that of the attempt by the Stalinist bureaucracy to maintain an isolated, self-sufficient national economy—i.e., the perspective of socialism in one country.

The struggle waged by Trotsky against the theory of socialism in one country provided a profound analysis of the causes of the reaction against October and its significance for the international working class, in the process elaborating a comprehensive program for the building of the world party of socialist revolution.

Trotsky's defense of permanent revolution and the fundamental conception that world economy and world politics constitute the only objective foundation for a revolutionary strategy represents the theoretical cornerstone of the internationalist perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International today.



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