TO THE S. L. P. OF GREAT BRITAIN

Over the years The Western Socialist has dealt, from time to time, with the subject of the Socialist Labor Party of America and its attitudes to certain questions of the times, attitudes which we have exposed as non-socialist. But there has been little notice of our articles from official S.L.P. sources. In fact, other than two letters from their New York headquarters in 1940, letters which we published and answered, there has been no attempt to even acknowledge our existence.

The silence from the SLP of America to our charges, however, has been quite recently made up by their comrades of the SLP of Great Britain in a blast at our own Companion Party in Britain (SPGB) because of our article on the SLP of America in The Western Socialist (No. 6-1962) and our answer to critics of the same in No. 1-1963. In their official organ "The Socialist" for August, Sept.-Oct. 1963 the British DeLeonists attempt to answer our charges but fall short because of a puzzling lack of information on much of what we raised. We can only, therefore, wag an admonishing finger at the DeLeonists of Britain at their apparent failure to read The Weekly People over the years.

Let us list, then, for their edification some issues of The Western Socialist in which we have dealt with the pro-Soviet sentiments of the SLP of America and with their continued and continuing non-socialist attitude toward the system in Russia, even since they became disenchanted at the time of the Russian-Finnish War of 1939. The issues referred to cite evidence from The Weekly People and from various SLP of America pamphlets that indicate quite clearly that the American DeLeonists long regarded the Soviet Union as a "proletarian nation," a "putative workers' state," a "workers' republic." They denounced Stalin in 1939 for "the Stalinist criminal betrayal of Marxism" by his attack on Finland; they announced in the Weekly People of July 26, 1941, that a defeat of Russia by Hitler would mean "the restoration of private property, wage slavery and capitalist exploitation." Furthermore they urged the Russian workers to resist the Hitler invasion in order that they might be enabled to "resume the positive and direct process of a real Socialist Reconstruction in the vast Russian land." (Socialism, Hope of Humanity.) Even to this date they steadfastly continue to label Soviet Russia, despite their denunciations, as something other than what it is.

Having dealt rather extensively with the Socialist Labor Party of America in issues of The Western Socialist (e.g., May, 1940; Sept-Oct. 1940; July-Aug. 1941; July-Aug. 1948; No. 4, 1960; No. 6, 1962; and No. 1, 1963; to list six or seven) we will now be content to make the SLP of Britain an offer and a challenge. We will be happy to provide them with copies of the above-mentioned issues of The Western Socialist (and the same goes for anyone else who requests them). This is our offer. In addition, we challenge them to prevail upon their American comrades the importance of washing their own soiled linen. Let them debate us on their own attitudes and history, either in their own columns or in ours, on the question of Russia, the road to socialism, and "Industrial Union Society" itself.

ED. COMM.

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RUSSIAN CAPITALISM

(Letter in "Peace News", London, Nov. 1, 1963)

Alasdair MacIntyre, in his article last week on "bureaucratic state capitalism" in Russia and Eastern Europe, complains that Ossowski fails to give any references for the state capitalist theory. However, MacIntyre's own references are themselves scanty, and, if I may say so, one-sided — just *Stalinist Russia, New International* and *International Socialism.*

The theory that Russia is capitalist — at least among those who regard themselves as socialist — has two origins.

First, what can be called the "traditional Marxists" (i.e., those who rejected the Bolshevik innovation). From the start they maintained that the revolution in Russia could not have been anything else but bourgeois. This trend was represented by the Russian Marxist, Julius Martov; the Socialist Party of Great Britain; Anton Yugov in *Economic Trends in Soviet Russia* (in the late twenties); Rudolf Sprenger in *Bolshevism* (1939); and various theoreticians in the social democratic parties of Europe.

Second, there is the "dissident Bolshevik" trend. In 1920 Lenin himself had characterised the Russian economy as state capitalist (albeit of a progressive type). This provided the basis for many later state capitalist theories — many were not "pure" theories, since they regarded Russia as more progressive than the West. In the 1930s various left Communists produced some "Theses on Bolshevism" in which Russia was said to be state capitalist. Among the prominent dissidents holding this view were Arthur Rosenburg, Anton Pannekoek and Bordiga and his followers.

Trotsky never held this view, but soon after his death these ideas were aired in the Trotskyist movement. In 1941 the "Johnson-Forrest" tendency declared that the whole world was totalitarian state capitalist (what's left of this tendency, now split, still maintains this view in *Correspondence* and *News and Letters*) — this was an American group. The end of the war saw the spread of this movement. *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in France came out against the orthodox Trotskyist view of Russia as a workers' state. This led to a reappraisal of the Trotskyist theory throughout the whole of Europe. At about the same time T. Cliù's *Stalinist Russia* appeared in draft form as an internal document of the now defunct Revolutionary Communist Party. The "state capitalist" tendency was expelled from the orthodox Trotskyists in 1950-51 and ran its own paper, *Socialist Review,* and later *International Socialism* and *Labour Worker* (and also *Young Guard*), all of which put forward a state capitalist view.

So, in fact, *International Socialism* appeared rather late in the day to be given as *the* reference. The same goes for *New International. The Western Socialist,* organ of the Socialist Party of Canada and WSP of the US, consistently put forward a state capitalist view before the appearance (and disappearance) of *New International.* The *International Review,* which appeared for a short time before the war, also put forward this view. In Britain the only publication to maintain from 1918 onward that Russia was capitalist was the *Socialist Standard* of the SPGB.

This is intended to clear up the origins of the theory and to put them in proper perspective. As I am doing some research into these origins I would be grateful if anyone having any information of other groups which hold, or have held, a state capitalist theory could let me know at the address given below.

A. L. BUICK,
Queen's College, Oxford.

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