Leon Trotsky

Their Morals and Ours

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Moral effluvia

During an epoch of triumphant reaction, Messrs. Democrats, Social Democrats, Anarchists, and other representatives of the "left" camp begin to exude double their usual amount of moral effluvia, similar to persons who perspire doubly in fear. Paraphrasing the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount, these moralists address themselves not so much to triumphant reaction as to those revolutionists suffering under its persecution, who with their "excesses" and "amoral" principles "provoke" reaction and give it moral justification. Moreover they prescribe a simple but certain means of avoiding reaction: It is necessary only to strive and morally to regenerate oneself. Free samples of moral perfection for those desirous are furnished by all the interested editorial offices.

The class basis of this false and pompous sermon is the intellectual petty bourgeoisie. The political basis—their impotence and confusion in the face of approaching reaction.

Psychological basis—their effort at overcoming the feeling of their own inferiority through masquerading in the beard of a prophet.

A moralizing philistine's favorite method is the lumping of reaction's conduct with that of revolution. He achieves success in this device through recourse to formal analogies. To him czarism and Bolshevism* are twins. Twins are likewise discovered in fascism and communism. An inventory is compiled of the common features in Catholicism—or more specifically, Jesuitism—and Bolshevism. Hitler and Mussolini, utilizing from their side exactly the same method, disclose that liberalism, democracy, and Bolshevism represent merely different manifestations of one and the same evil. The conception that Stalinism and Trotskyism are "essentially" one and the same now enjoys the joint approval of liberals, democrats, devout Catholics, idealists, pragmatists, anarchists and fascists. If the Stalinists are unable to adhere to this "People's Front," then it is only because they are accidentally occupied with the extermination of Trotskyists.

The fundamental feature of these approximations and similitudes lies in their completely ignoring the material foundation of the various currents, that is, their class nature and by that token their objective historical role. Instead they evaluate and classify different currents according to some external and secondary manifestation, most often according to their relation to one or another abstract principle which for the given classifier has a special professional value. Thus to the Roman pope, Freemasons and Darwinists, Marxists and anarchists are twins because all of them sacrilegiously deny the immaculate conception. To Hitler, liberalism and Marxism are twins because they ignore "blood and honor."

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* See Glossary for names and terms such as Bolshevism.

To a democrat, fascism and Bolshevism are twins because they do not bow before universal suffrage, etc., etc.

Undoubtedly the currents grouped above have certain common features. But the gist of the matter lies in the fact that the evolution of humanity exhausts itself neither by universal suffrage, nor by "blood and honor," nor by the dogma of the immaculate conception. The historical process signifies primarily the class struggle; moreover, different classes in the name of different aims may in certain instances utilize similar means. Essentially it cannot be otherwise. Armies in combat are always more or less symmetrical; were there nothing in common in their methods of struggle they could not inflict blows upon each other.

If an ignorant peasant or shopkeeper, understanding neither the origin nor the sense of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, discovers himself between the two fires, he will consider both belligerent camps with equal hatred. And who are all these democratic moralists? Ideologists of intermediary layers who have fallen, or are in fear of falling between the two fires. The chief traits of the prophets of this type are alienation from great historical movements, a hardened conservative mentality, smug narrowness, and a most primitive political cowardice. More than anything, moralists wish that history should leave them in peace with their little books, little magazines, subscribers, common sense, and moral copybooks. But history does not leave them in peace. It cuffs them now from the left, now from the right. Clearly—revolution and reaction, czarism and Bolshevism, communism and fascism, Stalinism and Trotskyism—are all twins. Whoever doubts this may feel the symmetrical skull bumps upon both the right and left sides of these very moralists.

Marxist amoralism and eternal truths

The most popular and most imposing accusation directed against Bolshevik "amoralism" bases itself on the so-called

Jesuitical maxim of Bolshevism: "The end justifies the means." From this it is not difficult to reach the further conclusion: Since the Trotskyists, like all Bolsheviks (or Marxists), do not recognize the principles of morality, there is, consequently, no "principled" difference between Trotskyism and Stalinism. Q.E.D.

One completely vulgar and cynical American monthly conducted a questionnaire on the moral philosophy of Bolshevism. The questionnaire, as is customary, was to have simultaneously served the ends of ethics and advertisement. The inimitable H.G. Wells, whose high fancy is surpassed only by his Homeric self-satisfaction, was not slow in solidarizing himself with the reactionary snobs of *Common Sense*. Here everything fell into order. But even those participants who considered it necessary to defend Bolshevism did so, in the majority of cases, not without timid evasions (Eastman): The principles of Marxism are, of course, bad, but among the Bolsheviks there are, nevertheless, worthy people. Truly, such "friends" are more dangerous than enemies.

Should we care to take Messrs. Accusers seriously, then first of all we would ask them: What are your own moral principles? Here is a question that will scarcely receive an answer. Let us admit for the moment that neither personal nor social ends can justify the means. Then it is obviously necessary to seek criteria outside of historical society and those ends which arise in its development. But where? If not on earth, then in the heavens. In divine revelation the priests long ago discovered infallible moral criteria. Petty secular priests speak about eternal moral truths without naming their original source. However, we are justified in concluding: Since these truths are eternal, they should have existed not only before the appearance of half-monkey-half-man upon the earth but before the evolution of the solar system. Whence then did they arise? The theory of eternal morals

can in no way survive without God.

Moralists of the Anglo-Saxon type, in so far as they do not confine themselves to rationalist utilitarianism, the ethics of bourgeois bookkeeping, appear conscious or unconscious students of Viscount Shaftesbury, who—at the beginning of the eighteenth century!—deduced moral judgments from a special "moral sense" supposedly once and for all given to humanity. Supraclass morality inevitably leads to the acknowledgment of a special substance, of a "moral sense," "conscience," some kind of absolute, which is nothing more than the cowardly philosophical pseudonym for God. Independent of "ends"—that is, of society—morality, whether we deduce it from eternal truths or from the "nature of man," proves in the end to be a form of "natural theology." Heaven remains the only fortified position for military operations against dialectical materialism.

At the end of the last century in Russia there arose a whole school of "Marxists" (Struve, Berdyaev, Bulgakov, and others) who wished to supplement the teachings of Marx with a self-sufficient, that is, supraclass moral principle. These people began, of course, with Kant and the categorical imperative. But how did they end? Struve is now a retired minister of the Crimean Baron Wrangel, and a faithful son of the church; Bulgakov is an orthodox priest; Berdyaev expounds the Apocalypse in sundry languages. This metamorphosis, which seems so unexpected at first glance, is not at all explained by the "Slavic soul"—Struve has a German soul—but by the sweep of the social struggle in Russia. The fundamental trend of this metamorphosis is essentially international.

Classical philosophical idealism in so far as it aimed in its time to secularize morality, that is, to free it from religious sanction, represented a tremendous step forward (Hegel). But having torn itself from heaven, moral philosophy had to find earthly roots. To discover these roots was one of the

tasks of materialism. After Shaftesbury came Darwin, after Hegel—Marx. To appeal now to "eternal moral truths" signifies attempting to turn the wheels backward. Philosophical idealism is only a stage: from religion to materialism, or, contrariwise, from materialism to religion.

'The end justifies the means'

The Jesuit order, organized in the first half of the sixteenth century for combatting Protestantism, never taught, let it be said, that *any* means, even though it be criminal from the point of view of the Catholic morals, was permissible if only it led to the "end," that is, to the triumph of Catholicism. Such an internally contradictory and psychologically absurd doctrine was maliciously attributed to the Jesuits by their Protestant and partly Catholic opponents, who were not shy in choosing the means for achieving *their own* ends. Jesuit theologians who, like the theologians of other schools, were occupied with the question of personal responsibility, actually taught that the means in itself can be a matter of indifference but that the moral justification or condemnation of the given means flows from the end. Thus shooting in itself is a matter of indifference; shooting a mad dog that threatens a child—a virtue; shooting with the aim of violation or murder—a crime. Outside of these commonplaces the theologians of this order made no promulgations.

In so far as their practical morality is concerned the Jesuits were not at all worse than other monks or Catholic priests, on the contrary, they were superior to them; in any case, more consistent, bolder, and perspicacious. The Jesuits represented a militant organization, strictly centralized, aggressive, and dangerous not only to enemies but also to allies. In his psychology and method of action the Jesuit of the "heroic" period distinguished himself from an average priest as the warrior of a church from its shopkeeper. We

have no reason to idealize either one or the other. But it is altogether unworthy to look upon a fanatic warrior with the eyes of an obtuse and slothful shopkeeper.

If we are to remain in the field of purely formal or psychological similitudes, then it can, if you like, be said that the Bolsheviks appear in relation to the democrats and Social Democrats of all hues as did the Jesuits—in relation to the peaceful ecclesiastical hierarchy. Compared to revolutionary Marxists, the Social Democrats and centrists seem like mental defectives, or like a witch doctor alongside a physician: they do not think one problem through to the end, but believe in the power of conjuration and cravenly avoid every difficulty, hoping for a miracle. Opportunists are peaceful shopkeepers in the socialist idea while Bolsheviks are its inveterate warriors. From this comes the hatred and slander against Bolsheviks from those who have an abundance of their historically conditioned faults but not one of their merits.

However, the juxtaposition of Bolshevism and Jesuitism still remains completely one-sided and superficial, of a literary rather than of a historical nature. In accordance with the character and interests of those classes upon which they based themselves, the Jesuits represented reaction, the Protestants—progress. The limitedness of this "progress" in its turn found direct expression in the morality of the Protestants. Thus the teachings of Christ "purified" by them did not at all hinder the city bourgeois Luther from calling for the execution of revolting peasants as "mad dogs." Dr. Martin evidently considered that "the end justifies the means" even before that maxim was attributed to the Jesuits. In turn the Jesuits, competing with Protestantism, adapted themselves ever more to the spirit of bourgeois society, and of the three vows—poverty, chastity, and obedience—they preserved only the third, and at that in an extremely attenuated form. From the point of view of the

Christian ideal, the morality of the Jesuits degenerated the more they ceased to be Jesuits. The warriors of the church became its bureaucrats and, like all bureaucrats, adequate enough swindlers.

Jesuitism and utilitarianism

This brief review is sufficient, perhaps, to show what ignorance and narrowness are necessary to consider seriously the contraposition of the "Jesuit" principle "the end justifies the means" to another seemingly higher moral, in which each "means" carries its own moral tag like merchandise with fixed prices in a department store. It is remarkable that the common sense of the Anglo-Saxon philistine has managed to wax indignant at the "Jesuit" principle and simultaneously to find inspiration in the utilitarian morality so characteristic of British philosophy. Yet the criterion of Bentham-John Mill, "the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number," signifies that those means are moral which lead to the common welfare as the highest end. In its general philosophical formulations Anglo-Saxon utilitarianism thus fully coincides with the "Jesuit" principle "the end justifies the means." Empiricism, we see, exists in the world only to free us from the necessity of making both ends meet.

Herbert Spencer, into whose empiricism Darwin inculcated the idea of "evolution" as a special vaccine, taught that in the moral sphere evolution proceeds from "sensations" to "ideas." Sensations impose the criterion of immediate pleasure, whereas ideas permit one to be guided by the criterion of *future, lasting, and higher pleasure.* Thus the moral criterion here too is "pleasure" and "happiness." But the content of this criterion acquires breadth and depth depending upon the level of "evolution." In this way Herbert Spencer too, through the methods of his own "evolutionary" utilitarianism, showed that the principle "the end justifies the

means" does not embrace anything immoral.

It is naive, however, to expect from this abstract "principle" an answer to the practical question: What may we, and what may we not do? Moreover, the principle the end justifies the means naturally raises the question: And what justifies the end? In practical life as in the historical movement the end and the means constantly change places. A machine under construction is an "end" of production only so that upon entering the factory it may become the "means." Democracy in certain periods is the "end" of the class struggle only so that later it may be transformed into its "means." Not embracing anything immoral, the so-called Jesuit principle fails, however, to resolve the moral problem.

The "evolutionary" utilitarianism of Spencer likewise abandons us halfway without an answer, since, following Darwin, it tries to dissolve the concrete historical morality in the biological needs or in the "social instincts" characteristic of gregarious animals and this at a time when the very understanding of morality arises only in an antagonistic milieu, that is, in a society divided into classes.

Bourgeois evolutionism halts impotently at the threshold of historical society because it does not wish to acknowledge the driving force in the evolution of social forms: *the class struggle.* Morality is one of the ideological functions in this struggle. The ruling class forces *its* ends upon society and habituates it to considering all those means which contradict its ends as immoral. That is the chief function of official morality. It pursues the idea of the "greatest possible happiness" not for the majority but for a small and ever diminishing minority. Such a regime could not have endured for even a week through force alone. It needs the cement of morality. The production of this cement constitutes the profession of the petty-bourgeois theoreticians and moralists. They radiate all the colors of the rainbow but in the final analysis remain apostles of slavery and submission.

'Moral precepts obligatory upon all'

Whoever does not care to return to Moses, Christ, or Mohammed; whoever is not satisfied with eclectic *hodgepodges* must acknowledge that morality is a product of social development; that there is nothing immutable about it; that it serves social interests; that these interests are contradictory; that morality more than any other form of ideology has a class character.

But do not elementary moral precepts exist, worked out in the development of humanity as a whole and indispensable for the existence of every collective body? Undoubtedly such precepts exist but the extent of their action is extremely limited and unstable. Norms "obligatory upon all" become the less forceful the sharper the character assumed by the class struggle. The highest form of the class struggle is civil war, which explodes into midair all moral ties between the hostile classes.

Under "normal" conditions a "normal" person observes the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill!" But if one kills under exceptional conditions for self-defense, the jury acquits that person. If one falls victim to a murderer, the court will kill the murderer. The necessity of courts, as well as that of self-defense, flows from antagonistic interests. In so far as the state is concerned, in peaceful times it limits itself to legalized killings of individuals so that in time of war it may transform the "obligatory" commandment, "Thou shalt not kill!" into its opposite. The most "humane" governments, which in peaceful times "detest" war, proclaim during war that the highest duty of their armies is the extermination of the greatest possible number of people.

The so-called "generally recognized" moral precepts in essence preserve an algebraic, that is, an indeterminate character. They merely express the fact that people in their individual conduct are bound by certain common norms that flow from their being members of society. The highest

generalization of these norms is the "categorical imperative" of Kant. But in spite of the fact that it occupies a high position in the philosophic Olympus this imperative does not embody anything categoric because it embodies nothing concrete. It is a shell without content.

This vacuity in the norms obligatory upon all arises from the fact that in all decisive questions people feel their class membership considerably more profoundly and more directly than their membership in "society." The norms of "obligatory" morality are in reality filled with class, that is, antagonistic content. The moral norm becomes the more categoric the less it is "obligatory upon all." The solidarity of workers, especially of strikers or barricade fighters, is incomparably more "categoric" than human solidarity in general.

The bourgeoisie, which far surpasses the proletariat in the completeness and irreconcilability of its class consciousness, is vitally interested in imposing *its* moral philosophy upon the exploited masses. It is exactly for this purpose that the concrete norms of the bourgeois catechism are concealed under moral abstractions patronized by religion, philosophy, or by that hybrid which is called "common sense." The appeal to abstract norms is not a disinterested philosophical mistake but a necessary element in the mechanics of class deception. The exposure of this deceit which retains the tradition of thousands of years is the first duty of a proletarian revolutionist.

The crisis in democratic morality

In order to guarantee the triumph of their interests in big questions, the ruling classes are constrained to make concessions on secondary questions, naturally only so long as these concessions are reconciled in the bookkeeping. During the epoch of capitalist upsurge especially in the last few decades before the World War, these concessions, at least in relation to the top layers of the proletariat, were of a

completely genuine nature. Industry at that time expanded almost uninterruptedly. The prosperity of the civilized nations increased—partially, too, that of the toiling masses. Democracy appeared solid. Workers' organizations grew. At the same time reformist tendencies deepened. The relations between the classes softened, at least outwardly. Thus certain elementary moral precepts in social relations were established along with the norms of democracy and the habits of class collaboration. The impression was created of an ever more free, more just, and more humane society. The rising line of progress seemed infinite to "common sense."

Instead, however, war broke out with a train of convulsions, crises, catastrophes, epidemics, and bestiality. The economic life of humankind landed in an impasse. The class antagonisms became sharp and naked. The safety valves of democracy began to explode one after the other. The elementary moral precepts turned out to be even more fragile than the democratic institutions and reformist illusions. Lying, slander, bribery, venality, coercion, murder, grew to unprecedented dimensions. To a stunned simpleton all these vexations seem a temporary result of war. Actually they were and remain manifestations of imperialist decline. The decay of capitalism denotes the decay of contemporary society with its laws and morals.

The "synthesis" of imperialist turpitude is fascism, directly begotten of the bankruptcy of bourgeois democracy confronted with the problems of the imperialist epoch. Remnants of democracy continue still to exist only in the rich capitalist aristocracies: For each "democrat" in England, France, Holland, Belgium, there is a certain number of colonial slaves; "Sixty Families" dominate the democracy of the United States, and so forth. Moreover, shoots of fascism grow rapidly in all democracies. Stalinism in its turn is the product of imperialist pressure upon a backward and isolated workers' state, a symmetrical complement in its

own genre to fascism.

While idealistic philistines—among whom anarchists of course occupy first place—tirelessly unmask Marxist "amoralism" in their press, the American trusts, according to John L. Lewis (CIO), are spending not less than $80,000,000 a year on the practical struggle against revolutionary "demoralization," that is, espionage, bribery of workers, frame-ups, and dark-alley murders. The categorical imperative sometimes chooses circuitous ways for its triumph!

Let us note in justice that the most sincere and at the same time the most limited petty-bourgeois moralists still live even today in the idealized memories of yesterday and hope for its return. They do not understand that morality is a function of the class struggle; that democratic morality corresponds to the epoch of liberal and progressive capitalism; that the sharpening of the class struggle in passing through its latest phase definitively and irrevocably destroyed this morality; that in its place came the morality of fascism on one side, on the other the morality of proletarian revolution.

'Common sense'

Democracy and "generally recognized" morality are not the only victims of imperialism. The third suffering martyr is "universal" common sense. This lowest form of the intellect is not only necessary under all conditions but under certain conditions is also adequate. Common sense's basic capital consists of the elementary conclusions of universal experience: not to put one's fingers in fire, whenever possible to proceed along a straight line, not to tease vicious dogs . . . and so forth and so on. Under a stable social milieu common sense is adequate for bargaining, healing, writing articles, leading trade unions, voting in parliament, marrying, and reproducing the race. But when that same common sense attempts to go beyond its valid limits into the arena of more complex generalizations, it is exposed as just

a clot of prejudices of a definite class and a definite epoch. A simple capitalist crisis is enough to bring common sense to an impasse; and before such catastrophes as revolution, counterrevolution, and war, common sense proves a perfect fool. In order to understand the catastrophic violations of the "normal" course of events higher qualities of intellect are necessary, and these are philosophically expressed as yet only by dialectical materialism.

Max Eastman, who successfully attempts to endow "common sense" with a most attractive literary style, has fashioned out of the struggle against dialectics nothing less than a profession for himself. Eastman sériously takes the conservative banalities of common sense wedded to good style as "the science of revolution." Supporting the reactionary snobs of *Common Sense,* he expounds to humanity with inimitable assurance that if Trotsky had been guided not by Marxist doctrine but by common sense then he would not . . . have lost power. That inner dialectic which until now has appeared in a succession of determined stages in all revolutions does not exist for Eastman. Reaction's displacing revolution, to him, is determined through insufficient respect for common sense. Eastman does not understand that it is Stalin who in a historical sense fell *victim* to common sense, that is, its inadequacy, since that power which he possesses serves ends hostile to Bolshevism. Marxist doctrine, on the other hand, permitted us to tear away in time from the Thermidorean bureaucracy and continue to serve the ends of international socialism.

Every science, including the "science of revolution," is verified by experience. Since Eastman well knows how to maintain revolutionary power under the condition of world counterrevolution, then he also knows, we may hope, how to conquer power. It would be very desirable that he finally disclose his secrets. Best of all that it be done in the form of a *draft program for a revolutionary party* under the title:

How to Conquer and Hold Power. We fear, however, that it is precisely common sense that will urge Eastman to refrain from such a risky undertaking. And this time common sense will be right.

Marxist doctrine, which Eastman, alas, never understood, permitted us to foresee the inevitability under certain historic conditions of the Soviet Thermidor with all its coils of crimes. That same doctrine long ago predicted the inevitability of the downfall of bourgeois democracy and its morality. Meanwhile, the doctrinaires of "common sense" were caught unaware by fascism and Stalinism. Common sense operates with invariable magnitudes in a world where only change is invariable. Dialectics, on the contrary, takes all phenomena, institutions, and norms in their rise, development, and decay. The dialectical consideration of morals as a subservient, and transient product of the class struggle seems to common sense an "amoralism." But there is nothing more stale, narrow, self-satisfied, and cynical than the morals of common sense!

Moralists and the GPU

The Moscow trials provided the occasion for a crusade against Bolshevik "amoralism." However, the crusade was not opened at once. The truth is that in the majority the moralists, directly or indirectly, were friends of the Kremlin. As such they long attempted to hide their amazement and even feigned that nothing unusual had occurred.

But the Moscow trials were not at all an accident. Servile obedience, hypocrisy, the official cult of lying, bribery, and other forms of corruption had already begun to blossom luxuriantly in Moscow by 1924–1925. The future judicial frame-ups were being prepared openly before the eyes of the whole world. There was no lack of warning. The "friends," however, did not wish to notice anything. No wonder: the majority of these gentlemen, in their time irreconcilably

hostile to the October Revolution, became friends of the Soviet Union merely according to the degree of its Thermidorean degeneration—the petty-bourgeois democrats of the West recognized in the petty-bourgeois bureaucracy of the East a kindred soul.

Did these people really believe the Moscow accusations? Only the most obtuse. The others did not wish to alarm themselves by verification. Is it reasonable to infringe upon the flattering, comfortable, and often well-paying friendship with the Soviet embassies? Moreover—oh, they did not forget this!—indiscreet truth can injure the prestige of the USSR. These people screened the crimes by utilitarian considerations, that is, openly applied the principle, "the end justifies the means."

The king's counselor Pritt, who succeeded with timeliness in peering under the tunic of the Stalinist Themis and there discovered everything in order, took upon himself the shameless initiative. Romain Rolland, whose moral authority is highly rated by the Soviet publishing house bookkeepers, hastened to issue one of his manifestoes where melancholy lyricism unites with senile cynicism. The French League for the Rights of Man, which thundered about the "amoralism of Lenin and Trotsky" in 1917 when they broke the military alliance with France, hastened to screen Stalin's crimes in 1936 in the interests of the Franco-Soviet pact. A patriotic end justifies, as is known, any means. *The Nation* and *The New Republic* closed their eyes to Yagoda's exploits since their "friendship" with the USSR guaranteed their own authority. Yet only a year ago these gentlemen did not at all declare Stalinism and Trotskyism to be one and the same. They openly stood for Stalin, for his realism, for his justice, and for his Yagoda. They clung to this position as long as they could.

Until the moment of the execution of Tukhachevsky, Yakir, and the others, the big bourgeoisie of the democratic countries

watched the execution of the revolutionists in the USSR, not without pleasure, though feigning abhorrence. In this sense *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, not to speak of Duranty, Louis Fischer, and their kindred prostitutes of the pen, fully responded to the interests of "democratic" imperialism. The execution of the generals alarmed the bourgeoisie, compelling them to understand that the advanced disintegration of the Stalinist apparatus lightened the tasks of Hitler, Mussolini, and the Mikado. The *New York Times* cautiously but insistently began to correct its own Duranty. The Paris *Le Temps* opened its columns slightly to shed light upon the actual situation in the USSR. As for the petty-bourgeois moralists and sycophants, they were never anything but servile echoes of the capitalist class. Moreover, after the International Commission of Inquiry, headed by John Dewey, brought out its verdict, it became clear to every person who thought even a trifle that further open defense of the GPU signified peril of political and moral death. Only at this moment did the "friends" decide to bring the eternal moral truths into God's world, that is, to fall back to the second-line trench.

Frightened Stalinists and semi-Stalinists occupy not the last place among moralists. Eugene Lyons during several years cohabited nicely with the Thermidorean clique, considering himself almost-a-Bolshevik. Withdrawing from the Kremlin—for a reason that is to us a matter of indifference—he rose, of course, immediately into the clouds of idealism. Liston Oak until recently enjoyed such confidence from the Comintern that it entrusted him with conducting its English propaganda for Republican Spain. This did not, naturally, hinder him, once he had relinquished his post, from likewise relinquishing the Marxist alphabet. Expatriate Walter Krivitsky, having broken with the GPU, immediately joined the bourgeois democracy. Evidently this too is the metamorphosis of the very aged Charles Rappoport. Having tossed Stalinism overboard, people of such ilk—

they are many—cannot help seeking indemnification in the postulates of abstract morality for the disillusionment and abasement of ideals they have experienced. Ask them: "Why have you switched from the Comintern or GPU ranks to the camp of the bourgeoisie?" They have a ready answer: "Trotskyism is no better than Stalinism."

The disposition of political chessmen

"Trotskyism is revolutionary romanticism; Stalinism—practical politics." Of this banal contraposition with which the average philistine until yesterday justified his friendship with Thermidor against the revolution, there remains not a trace today. Trotskyism and Stalinism are in general no longer counterposed but identified. They are identified, however, only in form not in essence. Having recoiled to the meridian of the "categorical imperative," the democrats actually continue to defend the GPU except with greater camouflage and perfidy. He who slanders the victim aids the executioner. In this case, as in others, morality serves politics.

The democratic philistine and Stalinist bureaucrat are, if not twins, brothers in spirit. In any case they belong politically to the same camp. The present governmental system of France and—if we add the anarchists—of Republican Spain is based on the collaboration of Stalinists, Social Democrats, and liberals. If the British Independent Labour Party appears roughed up it is because for a number of years it has not withdrawn from the embrace of the Comintern. The French Socialist Party expelled the Trotskyists from their ranks exactly when it prepared to fuse with the Stalinists. If the fusion did not materialize, it was not because of principled divergences—what remains of them?—but only because of the fear of the Social Democratic careerists over their posts. Having returned from Spain, Norman Thomas declared that "objectively" the Trotskyists help Franco, and with this subjective absurdity he gave "objective" service to the GPU

executioners. This righteous man expelled the American "Trotskyists" from his party precisely as the GPU shot down their cothinkers in the USSR and in Spain. In many democratic countries, the Stalinists in spite of their "amoralism" have penetrated into the government apparatus not without success. In the trade unions they cohabit nicely with bureaucrats of other hues. True, the Stalinists have an extremely light-minded attitude toward the criminal code and in that way frighten away their "democratic" friends in peaceful times; but in exceptional circumstances, as indicated by the example of Spain, they more surely become the leaders of the petty bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

The Second and Amsterdam Internationals naturally did not take upon themselves the responsibility for the frame-ups; this work they left to the Comintern. They themselves kept quiet. Privately they explained that from a "moral" point of view they were against Stalin, but from a political point of view—for him. Only when the People's Front in France cracked irreparably and forced the Socialists to think about tomorrow did Leon Blum find at the bottom of his inkwell the necessary formulas for moral indignation.

If Otto Bauer mildly condemned Vyshinsky's justice, it was only in order to support Stalin's politics with greater "impartiality." The fate of socialism, according to Bauer's recent declaration, is tied with the fate of the Soviet Union. "And the fate of the Soviet Union," he continues, "is the fate of Stalinism as long as [!] the inner development of the Soviet Union itself does not overcome the Stalinist phase of development." All of Bauer, all of Austro-Marxism, and the full mendacity and rot of Social Democracy are summed up in this remarkable sentence: "As long as" the Stalinist bureaucracy is strong enough to murder the progressive representatives of the "inner development," Bauer sticks with Stalin. When in spite of Bauer the revolutionary forces overthrow Stalin, then Bauer will generously recognize the "inner

development"—with not more than ten years' delay.

Behind the old Internationals, the London Bureau of the centrists trails along, happily combining in itself the characteristics of a kindergarten, a school for mentally arrested adolescents, and a home for invalids. The secretary of the Bureau, Fenner Brockway, began with the declaration that an inquiry into the Moscow trials could "harm the USSR" and proposed instead an investigation into . . . the political activity of Trotsky through an "impartial" commission of five irreconcilable enemies of Trotsky. Brandler and Lovestone publicly solidarized with Yagoda; they retreated only from Yezhov. Jacob Walcher, upon an obviously false pretext, refused to give testimony which was unfavorable to Stalin before the International Commission headed by John Dewey. The putrid morals of these people is only a product of their putrid politics.

But perhaps the most lamentable role is that played by the anarchists. If Stalinism and Trotskyism are one and the same, as they affirm in every sentence, then why do the Spanish anarchists assist the Stalinists in revenging themselves upon the Trotskyists and at the same time upon the revolutionary anarchists? The more frank anarchist theoreticians respond: this is payment for armaments. In other words: the end justifies the means. But what is their *end*? Anarchism? Socialism? No, merely the salvaging of this very same bourgeois democracy which prepared fascism's success. To base ends correspond base means.

That is the real disposition of the figures on the world political board!

Stalinism—a product of the old society

Russia took the greatest leap in history, a leap in which the most progressive forces of the country found their expression. Now in the current reaction, the sweep of which is proportionate to the sweep of the revolution, backward-

ness is taking its revenge. Stalinism embodies this reaction. The barbarism of old Russian history upon new social bases seems yet more disgusting since it is constrained to conceal itself in hypocrisy unprecedented in history.

The liberals and the Social Democrats of the West, who were constrained by the Russian Revolution into doubt about their rotted ideas, now experienced a fresh influx of courage. The moral gangrene of the Soviet bureaucracy seemed to them the rehabilitation of liberalism. Stereotyped copybooks are drawn out into the light: "Every dictatorship contains the seeds of its own degeneration"; "only democracy guarantees the development of personality"; and so forth. The contrasting of democracy and dictatorship, including in the given case a condemnation of socialism in favor of the bourgeois regime, stuns one from the point of view of theory by its illiterateness and unscrupulousness. The Stalinist pollution, a historical reality, is counterposed to democracy—a suprahistorical abstraction. But democracy also possesses a history in which there is no lack of pollution. In order to characterize Soviet bureaucracy we have borrowed the terms of "Thermidor" and "Bonapartism" from the history of bourgeois democracy because—let this be known to the retarded liberal doctrinaires—*democracy came into the world not at all through the democratic road.* Only a vulgar mentality can satisfy itself by chewing on the theme that Bonapartism was the "natural offspring" of Jacobinism, the historical punishment for infringing upon democracy, and so on. Without the Jacobin retribution upon feudalism, bourgeois democracy would have been absolutely unthinkable. Contrasting the concrete historical stages of Jacobinism, Thermidor, Bonapartism, to the idealized abstraction of "democracy" is as vicious as contrasting the pains of childbirth to a living infant.

Stalinism in turn is not an abstraction of "dictatorship," but an immense bureaucratic reaction against the proletarian

dictatorship in a backward and isolated country. The October Revolution abolished privileges, waged war against social inequality, replaced the bureaucracy with self-government of the toilers, abolished secret diplomacy, strove to render all social relationships completely transparent. Stalinism reestablished the most offensive forms of privilege, imbued inequality with a provocative character, strangled mass self-activity under police absolutism, transformed administration into a monopoly of the Kremlin oligarchy, and regenerated the fetishism of power in forms that absolute monarchy dared not dream of.

Social reaction in all forms is constrained to mask its real aims. The sharper the transition from revolution to reaction, the more the reaction is dependent upon the traditions of revolution, that is, the greater its fear of the masses—the more is it forced to resort to mendacity and frame-up in the struggle against the representatives of the revolution. Stalinist frame-ups are not a fruit of Bolshevik "amoralism"; no, like all important events in history, they are a product of the concrete social struggle, and the most perfidious and severest of all at that: the struggle of a new aristocracy against the masses that raised it to power.

Indeed, boundless intellectual and moral obtuseness is required to identify the reactionary police morality of Stalinism with the revolutionary morality of the Bolsheviks. Lenin's party has long ceased to exist—it was shattered between inner difficulties and world imperialism. In its place rose the Stalinist bureaucracy, transmission mechanism of imperialism. The bureaucracy has, on a world scale, replaced class struggle with class collaboration and internationalism with social patriotism. In order to adapt the ruling party to the tasks of reaction, the bureaucracy "renewed" its composition through executing revolutionists and recruiting careerists.

Every reaction regenerates, nourishes, and strengthens those elements of the historic past which the revolution

struck but which it could not vanquish. The methods of Stalinism bring to the highest tension, to a culmination and at the same time to an absurdity, all those methods of untruth, brutality, and baseness that constitute the mechanics of control in every class society, including also that of democracy. Stalinism is a single clot of all monstrosities of the historical state, its most malicious caricature and disgusting grimace. When the representatives of old society puritanically counterpose a sterilized democratic abstraction to the gangrene of Stalinism, we can with full justice recommend to them, as to all of old society, that they take a good look at themselves in the warped mirror of Soviet Thermidor. True, the GPU far surpasses all other regimes in the nakedness of its crimes. But this flows from the immense amplitude of events shaking Russia under the influence of world imperialist demoralization.

Morality and revolution

Among the liberals and radicals there are not a few individuals who have assimilated the methods of the materialist interpretation of events and who consider themselves Marxists. This does not hinder them, however, from remaining bourgeois journalists, professors, or politicians. A Bolshevik is inconceivable, of course, without the materialist method, in the sphere of morality as well. But this method serves him not solely for the interpretation of events but rather for the creation of a revolutionary party of the proletariat. It is impossible to accomplish this task without complete independence from the bourgeoisie and their morality. Yet bourgeois public opinion now actually reigns in full sway over the official workers' movement from William Green in the United States, Leon Blum and Maurice Thorez in France, to Garcia Oliver in Spain. In this fact the reactionary character of the present period reaches its sharpest expression.

A revolutionary Marxist cannot begin to approach his

historical mission without having broken morally from bourgeois public opinion and its agencies in the proletariat. For this, moral courage of a different calibre is required from that of opening wide one's mouth at meetings and yelling, "Down with Hitler!" "Down with Franco!" It is precisely this resolute, completely thought-out, inflexible rupture of the Bolsheviks from conservative moral philosophy not only of the big but of the petty bourgeoisie that mortally terrorizes democratic phrasemongers, drawing-room prophets, and lobbying heroes. From this derive their complaints about the "amoralism" of the Bolsheviks.

Their identification of bourgeois morals with morals "in general" can best of all, perhaps, be verified at the extreme left wing of the petty bourgeoisie, precisely in the centrist parties of the so-called London Bureau. Since this organization "recognizes" the program of proletarian revolution, our disagreements with it seem, at first glance, secondary. Actually their "recognition" is valueless because it does not bind them to anything. They "recognize" the proletarian revolution as the Kantians recognized the categorical imperative, that is, as a holy principle but not applicable to daily life. In the sphere of practical politics they unite with the worst enemies of the revolution (reformists and Stalinists) for the struggle against us. All their thinking is permeated with duplicity and falsehood. If the centrists, according to a general rule, do not raise themselves to imposing crimes it is only because they forever remain in the byways of politics: they are, so to speak, petty pickpockets of history. For this reason they consider themselves called upon to regenerate the workers' movement with a new morality.

At the extreme left wing of this "left" fraternity stands a small and politically completely insignificant grouping of German emigres who publish the paper *Neuer Weg* (The New Road). Let us bend down lower and listen to these "revolutionary" indicters of Bolshevik amoralism. In a tone

of ambiguous pseudopraise the *Neuer Weg* proclaims that the Bolsheviks are distinguished advantageously from other parties by their absence of hypocrisy—they openly declare what others quietly apply in fact, that is, the principle "the end justifies the means." But according to the convictions of *Neuer Weg* such a "bourgeois" precept is incompatible with a "healthy socialist movement." "Lying and worse are not permissible means of struggle, as Lenin still considered them." The word "still" evidently signifies that Lenin did not succeed in overcoming his delusions only because he failed to live until the discovery of *The New Road.*

In the formula, "lying and worse," "worse" evidently signifies violence, murder, and so on, since under equal conditions violence is worse than lying, and murder—the most extreme form of violence. We thus come to the conclusion that lying, violence, murder, are incompatible with a "healthy socialist movement." What, however, is our relation to revolution? Civil war is the most severe of all forms of war. It is unthinkable not only without violence against tertiary figures but, under contemporary technique, without killing old men, old women, and children. Must one be reminded of Spain? The only possible answer of the "friends" of Republican Spain sounds like this: Civil war is better than fascist slavery. But this completely correct answer merely signifies that the *end* (democracy or socialism) justifies, under certain conditions, such *means* as violence and murder. Not to speak about lies! Without lies war would be as unimaginable as a machine without oil. In order to safeguard even the session of the Cortes (February 1, 1938) from fascist bombs, the Barcelona government several times deliberately deceived journalists and their own population. Could it have acted in any other way? Whoever accepts the end: victory over Franco, must accept the means: civil war with its wake of horrors and crimes.

Nevertheless, lying and violence "in themselves" war-

rant condemnation? Of course, even as does the class society which generates them. A society without social contradictions will naturally be a society without lies and violence. However there is no way of building a bridge to that society save by revolutionary, that is, violent means. The revolution itself is a product of class society and of necessity bears its traits. From the point of view of "eternal truths" revolution is of course "antimoral." But this merely means that idealist morality is counterrevolutionary, that is, in the service of the exploiters.

"Civil war," the philosopher caught unawares will perhaps respond, "is however a sad exception. But in peaceful times a healthy socialist movement should manage without violence and lying." Such an answer however represents nothing less than a pathetic evasion. There is no impervious demarcation between "peaceful" class struggle and revolution. Every strike embodies in an unexpanded form all the elements of civil war. Each side strives to impress the opponent with an exaggerated picture of its resoluteness to struggle and its material resources. Through their press, agents, and spies the capitalists labor to frighten and demoralize the strikers. From their side, the workers' pickets, where persuasion does not avail, are compelled to resort to force. Thus "lying and worse" are an inseparable part of the class struggle even in its most elementary form. It remains to be added that the very conception of *truth* and *lie* was born of social contradictions.

Revolution and the institution of hostages

Stalin arrests and shoots the children of his opponents after these opponents have been themselves executed under false accusations. With the help of the institution of family hostages Stalin compels those Soviet diplomats to return from abroad who permitted themselves an expression of doubt about the infallibility of Yagoda or Yezhov. The

moralists of *Neuer Weg* consider it necessary and timely to remind us on this occasion of the fact that Trotsky in 1919 "also" introduced a law upon hostages. But here it becomes necessary to quote literally: "The detention of innocent relatives by Stalin is disgusting barbarism. But it remains a barbarism as well when it was dictated by Trotsky (1919)." Here is the idealistic moralist in all his beauty! His criteria are as false as the norms of bourgeois democracy—in both cases parity is supposed where in actuality there is not even a trace of it.

We will not insist here upon the fact that the Decree of 1919 led scarcely to even one execution of relatives of those commanders whose perfidy not only caused the loss of innumerable human lives but threatened the revolution with direct annihilation. The question in the end does not concern that. If the revolution had displayed less superfluous generosity from the very beginning, hundreds of thousands of lives would have been saved. Thus or otherwise I carry full responsibility for the Decree of 1919. It was a necessary measure in the struggle against the oppressors. Only in the historical content of the struggle lies the justification of the decree as in general the justification of the whole civil war which, too, can be called, not without foundation, "disgusting barbarism."

We leave to some Emil Ludwig or his ilk the drawing of Abraham Lincoln's portrait with rosy little wings. Lincoln's significance lies in his not hesitating before the most severe means, once they were found to be necessary, in achieving a great historic aim posed by the development of a young nation. The question lies not even in which of the warring camps caused or itself suffered the greatest number of victims. History has different yardsticks for the cruelty of the Northerners and the cruelty of the Southerners in the Civil War. A slaveholder who through cunning and violence shackles a slave in chains, and a slave who through cunning and

violence breaks the chains—let not the contemptible eunuchs tell us that they are equals before a court of morality!

After the Paris Commune had been drowned in blood and the reactionary knaves of the whole world dragged its banner in the filth of vilification and slander, there were not a few democratic philistines who, adapting themselves to reaction, slandered the Communards for shooting sixty-four hostages headed by the Paris archbishop. Marx did not hesitate a moment in defending this bloody act of the Commune. In a circular issued by the General Council of the First International, which seethes with the fiery eruption of lava, Marx first reminds us of the bourgeoisie adopting the institution of hostages in the struggle against both colonial peoples and their own toiling masses and afterward refers to the systematic execution of the Commune captives by the frenzied reactionaries, continuing: ". . . the Commune, to protect their [the captives'] lives, was obliged to resort to the Prussian practice of securing hostages. The lives of the hostages had been forfeited over and over again by the continued shooting of prisoners on the part of the Versaillese. How could they be spared any longer after the carnage with which MacMahon's praetorians celebrated their entry into Paris? Was even the last check upon the unscrupulous ferocity of bourgeois governments—the taking of hostages—to be made a mere sham of?" Thus Marx defended the execution of hostages although behind his back in the General Council sat not a few Fenner Brockways, Norman Thomases and other Otto Bauers. But so fresh was the indignation of the world proletariat against the ferocity of the Versaillese that the reactionary moralistic bunglers preferred to keep silent in expectation of times more favorable to them which, alas, were not slow in appearing. Only after the definite triumph of reaction did the petty-bourgeois moralists, together with the trade union bureaucrats and the anarchist phrasemongers, destroy the First International.

When the October Revolution was defending itself against the united forces of imperialism on a 5,000-mile front, the workers of the whole world followed the course of the struggle with such ardent sympathy that in their forums it was extremely risky to indict the "disgusting barbarism" of the institution of hostages. Complete degeneration of the Soviet state and the triumph of reaction in a number of countries was necessary before the moralists crawled out of their crevices . . . to aid Stalin. If it is true that the repressions safeguarding the privileges of the new aristocracy have the same moral value as the revolutionary measures of the liberating struggle, then Stalin is completely justified, if . . . If the proletarian revolution is not completely condemned.

Seeking examples of immorality in the events of the Russian civil war, Messrs. Moralists find themselves at the same time constrained to close their eyes to the fact that the Spanish revolution also produced an institution of hostages, at least during that period when it was a genuine revolution of the masses. If the indicters dare not attack the Spanish workers for their "disgusting barbarism," it is only because the ground of the Pyrennean peninsula is still too hot for them. It is considerably more convenient to return to 1919. This is already history, the old men have forgotten and the young ones have not yet learned. For the same reason pharisees of various hues return to Kronstadt and Makhno with such obstinacy—here exists a free outlet for moral effluvia!

'Morality of the Kaffirs'

It is impossible not to agree with the moralists that history chooses cruel pathways. But what type of conclusion for practical activity is to be drawn from this? Leo Tolstoy recommended that we ignore the social conventions and perfect ourselves. Mahatma Gandhi advises that we drink goat's milk. Alas, the "revolutionary" moralists of *Neuer Weg* did not drift far from these recipes. "We should free

ourselves," they preach, "from those morals of the Kaffirs to whom only what the enemy does is wrong." Excellent advice! "We should free ourselves. . . ." Tolstoy recommended in addition that we free ourselves from the sins of the flesh. However, statistics fail to confirm the success of his recommendation. Our centrist homunculi have succeeded in elevating themselves to supraclass morality in a class society. But almost 2,000 years have passed since it was stated: "Love your enemies," "Offer also the other cheek. . . ." However, even the holy Roman father so far has not "freed himself" from hatred against his enemies. Truly, Satan, the enemy of mankind, is powerful!

To apply different criteria to the actions of the exploiters and the exploited signifies, according to these pitiful homunculi, standing on the level of the "morals of the Kaffirs." First of all such a contemptuous reference to the Kaffirs is hardly proper from the pen of "socialists." Are the morals of the Kaffirs really so bad? Here is what the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says upon the subject:

"In their social and political relations they display great tact and intelligence; they are remarkably brave, warlike, and hospitable, and were honest and truthful until through contact with the whites they became suspicious, revengeful, and thievish, besides acquiring most European vices." It is impossible not to arrive at the conclusion that white missionaries, preachers of eternal morals, participated in the corruption of the Kaffirs.

If we should tell the toiler-Kaffir how the workers arose in a part of our planet and caught their exploiters unawares, he would be very pleased. On the other hand, he would be chagrined to discover that the oppressors had succeeded in deceiving the oppressed. A Kaffir who has not been demoralized by missionaries to the marrow of his bones will never apply the same abstract moral norms to the oppressors and the oppressed. Yet he will easily comprehend an explanation

that it is the function of these abstract norms to prevent the oppressed from arising against their oppressors.

What an instructive coincidence! In order to slander the Bolsheviks, the missionaries of *Neuer Weg* were compelled at the same time to slander the Kaffirs; moreover in both cases the slander follows the line of the official bourgeois lie: against revolutionists and against the colored races. No, we prefer the Kaffirs to all missionaries, both spiritual and secular!

It is not necessary in any case, however, to overestimate the conscientiousness of the moralists of *The New Road* and other blind alleys. The intentions of these people are not so bad. But despite these intentions they serve as levers in the mechanics of reaction. In such a period as the present when the petty-bourgeois parties who cling to the liberal bourgeois or its shadow (the politics of the "People's Front") paralyze the proletariat and pave the road for fascism (Spain, France . . .), the Bolsheviks, that is, revolutionary Marxists, become especially odious figures in the eyes of bourgeois public opinion. The fundamental political pressure of our time shifts from right to left. In the final analysis the whole weight of reaction bears down upon the shoulders of a tiny revolutionary minority. This minority is called the Fourth International. *Voila l'ennemi!* There is the enemy!

In the mechanics of reaction Stalinism occupies many leading positions. All groupings of bourgeois society, including the anarchists, utilize its aid in the struggle against the proletarian revolution. At the same time the petty-bourgeois democrats attempt, at least to the extent of fifty percent, to cast the repulsiveness of the crimes of its Moscow ally upon the indomitable revolutionary minority. Herein lies the sense of the now stylish dictum: "Trotskyism and Stalinism are one and the same." The adversaries of the Bolsheviks and the Kaffirs thus aid reaction in slandering the party of revolution.

The 'amoralism' of Lenin

The Russian Social Revolutionaries were always the most moral individuals: essentially they were composed of ethics alone. This did not prevent them, however, at the time of revolution from deceiving the Russian peasants. In the Parisian organ of Kerensky, that very ethical socialist who was the forerunner of Stalin in manufacturing spurious accusations against the Bolsheviks, another old Social Revolutionary, Zenzinov, writes: "Lenin, as is known, taught that for the sake of gaining the desired ends communists can, and sometimes must 'resort to all sorts of devices, maneuvers and subterfuge' . . ." (*New Russia*, February 17, 1938, p. 3). From this they draw the ritualistic conclusion: Stalinism is the natural offspring of Leninism.

Unfortunately, the ethical indicter is not even capable of quoting honestly. Lenin said: "It is necessary to be able . . . to resort to all sorts of devices, maneuvers, and illegal methods, to evasion and subterfuge, *in order to penetrate into the trade unions, to remain in them, and to carry on communist work in them at all costs.*" The necessity for evasion and maneuvers, according to Lenin's explanation, is called forth by the fact that the reformist bureaucracy, betraying the workers to capital, baits revolutionists, persecutes them, and even resorts to turning the bourgeois police upon them. "Maneuvers" and "subterfuge" are in this case only methods of valid self-defense against the perfidious reformist bureaucracy.

The party of this very Zenzinov once carried on illegal work against czarism, and later—against the Bolsheviks. In both cases it resorted to craftiness, evasion, false passports, and other forms of "subterfuge." All these *means* were considered not only "ethical" but also heroic because they corresponded to the political *aims* of the petty bourgeoisie. But the situation changes at once when proletarian revolutionists are forced to resort to conspirative measures against

the petty-bourgeois democracy. The key to the morality of these gentlemen has, as we see, a class character!

The "amoralist" Lenin openly, in the press, gives advice concerning military craftiness against perfidious leaders. And the moralist Zenzinov maliciously chops both ends from the quotation in order to deceive the reader—the ethical indicter is proved as usual a petty swindler. Not for nothing was Lenin fond of repeating: It is very difficult to meet a conscientious adversary!

A worker who does not conceal the "truth" about the strikers' plans from the capitalists is simply a betrayer deserving contempt and boycott. The soldier who discloses the "truth" to the enemy is punished as a spy. Kerensky tried to lay at the Bolsheviks' door the accusation of having disclosed the "truth" to Ludendorff's staff. It appears that even the "holy truth" is not an end in itself. More imperious criteria which, as analysis demonstrates, carry a class character, rule over it.

The life-and-death struggle is unthinkable without military craftiness, in other words, without lying and deceit. May the German proletariat then not deceive Hitler's police? Or perhaps Soviet Bolsheviks have an "immoral" attitude when they deceive the GPU? Every pious bourgeois applauds the cleverness of police who succeed through craftiness in seizing a dangerous gangster. Is military craftiness really impermissible when the question concerns the overthrow of the gangsters of imperialism?

Norman Thomas speaks about "that strange communist amorality in which nothing matters but the party and its power" (*Socialist Call*, March 12, 1938, p. 5). Moreover, Thomas throws into one heap the present Comintern, that is, the conspiracy of the Kremlin bureaucracy against the working class, with the Bolshevik Party, which represented a conspiracy of the advanced workers against the bourgeoisie. This thoroughly dishonest juxtaposition has already been

sufficiently exposed above. Stalinism merely screens itself under the cult of the party; actually it destroys and tramples the party in filth. It is true, however, that to a Bolshevik the party is everything. The drawing-room socialist Thomas is surprised by and rejects a similar relationship between a revolutionist and revolution because he himself is only a bourgeois with a socialist "ideal." In the eyes of Thomas and his kind the party is only a secondary instrument for electoral combinations and other similar uses, not more. His personal life, interests, ties, moral criteria exist outside the party. With hostile astonishment he looks down upon the Bolshevik to whom the party is a weapon for the revolutionary reconstruction of society, including also its morality. To a revolutionary Marxist there can be no contradiction between personal morality and the interests of the party, since the party embodies in his consciousness the very highest tasks and aims of humanity. It is naive to imagine that Thomas has a higher understanding of morality than the Marxists. He merely has a base conception of the party.

"All that arises is worthy of perishing," says the dialectician Goethe. The perishing of the Bolshevik Party—an episode in world reaction—does not, however, disparage its worldwide historic significance. In the period of its revolutionary ascendance, that is, when it actually represented the proletarian vanguard, it was the most honest party in history. Wherever it could, of course, it deceived the class enemies; on the other hand it told the toilers the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Only thanks to this did it succeed in winning their trust to a degree never before achieved by any other party in the world.

The clerks of the ruling classes call the organizers of this party "amoralists." In the eyes of conscious workers this accusation carries a complimentary character. It signifies: Lenin refused to recognize moral norms established by slave-owners for their slaves and never observed by the

slave-owners themselves; he called upon the proletariat to extend the class struggle into the moral sphere too. Whoever fawns before precepts established by the enemy will never vanquish that enemy!

The "amoralism" of Lenin, that is, his rejection of supra-class morals, did not hinder him from remaining faithful to one and the same ideal throughout his whole life; from devoting his whole being to the cause of the oppressed; from displaying the highest conscientiousness in the sphere of ideas and the highest fearlessness in the sphere of action; from maintaining an attitude untainted by the least superiority to an "ordinary" worker, to a defenseless woman, to a child. Does it not seem that "amoralism" in the given case is only a pseudonym for higher human morality?

An instructive episode

Here it is proper to relate an episode which, in spite of its modest dimensions, does not badly illustrate the difference between *their* morals and *ours*. In 1935, through a letter to my Belgian friends, I developed the conception that the attempt of a young revolutionary party to organize "its own" trade unions is equivalent to suicide. It is necessary to find the workers where they are. But this means paying dues in order to sustain an opportunist apparatus? "Of course," I replied, "for the right to undermine the reformists it is necessary temporarily to pay them a contribution." But reformists will not permit us to undermine them? "True," I answered, "undermining demands conspirative measures. Reformists are the political police of the bourgeoisie within the working class. We must act without their permission, and against their interdiction. . . ." Through an accidental raid on Comrade D.'s home in connection, if I am not mistaken, with the matter of supplying arms for the Spanish workers, the Belgian police seized my letter. Within several days it was published. The press of Vandervelde, de Man, and Spaak did

not of course spare lightning against my "Machiavellianism" and "Jesuitism." And who are these accusers? Vandervelde, president for many years of the Second International, long ago became a trusted servant of Belgian capital. De Man, who in a series of ponderous tomes ennobled socialism with idealistic morals, making overtures to religion, seized the first suitable occasion in which to betray the workers and become a common bourgeois minister. Even more lovely is Spaak's case. A year and a half previously this gentleman belonged to the left-socialist opposition and came to me in France for advice upon the methods of struggle against Vandervelde's bureaucracy. I set forth the same conceptions which later constituted my letter. But within a year after his visit, Spaak rejected the thorns for the roses. Betraying his comrades of the opposition, he became one of the most cynical ministers of Belgian capital. In the trade unions and in their own party these gentlemen stifle every critical voice, systematically corrupt and bribe the most advanced workers and just as systematically expel the refractory ones. They are distinguished from the GPU only by the fact that they have not yet resorted to spilling blood—as good patriots they husband the workers' blood for the next imperialist war. Obviously—one must be a most hellish abomination, a moral deformation, a "Kaffir," a Bolshevik, in order to advise the revolutionary workers to observe the precepts of conspiracy in the struggle against these gentlemen!

From the point of view of the Belgian laws, my letter did not of course contain anything criminal. The duty of the "democratic" police was to return the letter to the addressee with an apology. The duty of the Socialist Party was to protest against the raid which had been dictated by concern over General Franco's interests. But Messrs. Socialists were not at all shy at utilizing the indecent police service—without this they could not have enjoyed the happy occasion of once more exposing the superiority of their morals over the

amoralism of the Bolsheviks.

Everything is symbolic in this episode. The Belgian Social Democrats dumped the buckets of their indignation upon me exactly while their Norwegian cothinkers held me and my wife under lock and key in order to prevent us from defending ourselves against the accusations of the GPU. The Norwegian government well knew that the Moscow accusations were spurious—the Social Democratic semiofficial newspaper affirmed this openly during the first days. But Moscow touched the Norwegian shipowners and fish merchants on the pocketbook—and Messrs. Social Democrats immediately flopped down on all fours. The leader of the party, Martin Tranmael, is not only an authority in the moral sphere but openly a righteous person: he does not drink, does not smoke, does not indulge in meat, and in winter bathes in an ice-hole. This did not hinder him, after he had arrested us upon the order of the GPU, from especially inviting a Norwegian agent of the GPU, one Jacob Fries—a bourgeois without honor or conscience—to calumniate me. But enough. . . .

The morals of these gentlemen consist of conventional precepts and turns of speech, which are supposed to screen their interests, appetites, and fears. In the majority they are ready for any baseness—rejection of convictions, perfidy, betrayal—in the name of ambition or cupidity. In the holy sphere of personal interests the end to them justifies any means. But it is precisely because of this that they require special codes of morals, durable, and at the same time elastic, like good suspenders. They detest anyone who exposes their professional secrets to the masses. In "peaceful" times their hatred is expressed in slander—in Billingsgate or "philosophical" language. In times of sharp social conflicts, as in Spain, these moralists, hand in hand with the GPU, murder revolutionists. In order to justify themselves, they repeat: "Trotskyism and Stalinism are one and the same."

Dialectical interdependence of end and means

A means can be justified only by its end. But the end in its turn needs to be justified. From the Marxist point of view, which expresses the historical interests of the proletariat, the end is justified if it leads to increasing the power of humanity over nature and to the abolition of the power of one person over another.

"We are to understand then that in achieving this end anything is permissible?" demands the philistine sarcastically, demonstrating that he understood nothing. That is permissible, we answer, which *really* leads to the liberation of humanity. Since this end can be achieved only through revolution, the liberating morality of the proletariat of necessity is endowed with a revolutionary character. It irreconcilably counteracts not only religious dogma but all kinds of idealistic fetishes, these philosophic gendarmes of the ruling class. It deduces a rule for conduct from the laws of the development of society, thus primarily from the class struggle, this law of all laws.

"Just the same," the moralist continues to insist, "does it mean that in the class struggle against capitalists all means are permissible: lying, frame-up, betrayal, murder, and so on?" Permissible and obligatory are those and only those means, we answer, which unite the revolutionary proletariat, fill their hearts with irreconcilable hostility to oppression, teach them contempt for official morality and its democratic echoers, imbue them with consciousness of their own historic mission, raise their courage and spirit of self-sacrifice in the struggle. Precisely from this it flows that *not* all means are permissible. When we say that the end justifies the means, then for us the conclusion follows that the great revolutionary end spurns those base means and ways which set one part of the working class against other parts, or attempt to make the masses happy without their participation; or lower the faith of the masses in themselves and their organization,

replacing it by worship for the "leaders." Primarily and irreconcilably, revolutionary morality rejects servility in relation to the bourgeoisie and haughtiness in relation to the toilers, that is, those characteristics in which petty-bourgeois pedants and moralists are thoroughly steeped.

These criteria do not, of course, give a ready answer to the question as to what is permissible and what is not permissible in each separate case. There can be no such automatic answers. Problems of revolutionary morality are fused with the problems of revolutionary strategy and tactics. The living experience of the movement under the clarification of theory provides the correct answer to these problems.

Dialectical materialism does not know dualism between means and end. The end flows naturally from the historical movement. Organically the means are subordinated to the end. The immediate end becomes the means for a further end. In his play *Franz von Sickingen,* Ferdinand Lassalle puts the following words into the mouth of one of the heroes:

> Do not only show the goal, show the path as well.
> For so closely interwoven with one another are path and goal
> That a change in one means a change in the other,
> And a different path gives rise to a different goal.

Lassalle's lines are not at all perfect. Still worse is the fact that in practical politics Lassalle himself diverged from the above-expressed precept—it is sufficient to recall that he went as far as secret agreements with Bismarck! But the dialectical interdependence between means and end is expressed entirely correctly in the above-quoted sentences. Seeds of wheat must be sown in order to yield an ear of wheat.

Is individual terror, for example, permissible or impermissible from the point of view of "pure morals"? In this abstract form the question does not exist at all for us. Con-

servative Swiss bourgeois even now render official praise to the terrorist William Tell. Our sympathies are fully on the side of Irish, Russian, Polish, or Hindu terrorists in their struggle against national and political oppression. The assassinated Kirov, a rude satrap, does not call forth any sympathy. Our relation to the assassin remains neutral only because we know not what motives guided him. If it became known that Nikolaev acted as a conscious avenger for workers' rights trampled upon by Kirov, our sympathies would be fully on the side of the assassin. However, not the question of subjective motives but that of objective efficacy has for us the decisive significance. Are the given means really capable of leading to the goal? In relation to individual terror, both theory and experience bear witness that such is not the case. To the terrorist we say: It is impossible to replace the masses; only in the mass movement can you find effective expression for your heroism. However, under conditions of civil war, the assassination of individual oppressors ceases to be an act of individual terror. If, we shall say, a revolutionist bombed General Franco and his staff into the air, it would hardly evoke moral indignation even from the democratic eunuchs. Under the conditions of civil war a similar act would be politically completely effective. Thus, even in the sharpest question—murder of man by man—moral absolutes prove futile. Moral evaluations, along with political ones, flow from the inner needs of struggle.

The liberation of the workers can come only through the workers themselves. There is, therefore, no greater crime than deceiving the masses, palming off defeats as victories, friends as enemies, bribing workers' leaders, fabricating legends, staging false trials, in a word, doing what the Stalinists do. These means can serve only one end: lengthening the domination of a clique already condemned by history. But they cannot serve to liberate the masses. That is why

the Fourth International wages a life and death struggle against Stalinism.

The masses, of course, are not at all impeccable. Idealization of the masses is foreign to us. We have seen them under different conditions, at different stages and in addition in the biggest political shocks. We have observed their strong and weak sides. Their strong side—resoluteness, self-sacrifice, heroism—has always found its clearest expression in times of revolutionary upsurge. During this period the Bolsheviks headed the masses. Afterward a different historical chapter loomed when the weak side of the oppressed came to the forefront: heterogeneity, insufficiency of culture, narrowness of world outlook. The masses tired of the tension, became disillusioned, lost faith in themselves—and cleared the road for the new aristocracy. In this epoch the Bolsheviks ("Trotskyists") found themselves isolated from the masses. Practically speaking, we went through two such big historic cycles: 1897–1905, years of flood tide; 1907–1913, years of the ebb; 1917–1923, a period of upsurge unprecedented in history; finally, a new period of reaction, which has not ended even today. In these immense events the "Trotskyists" learned the rhythm of history, that is, the dialectics of the class struggle. They also learned, it seems, and to a certain degree successfully, how to subordinate their subjective plans and programs to this objective rhythm. They learned not to fall into despair over the fact that the laws of history do not depend upon their individual tastes and are not subordinated to their own moral criteria. They learned to subordinate their individual tastes to the laws of history. They learned not to become frightened by the most powerful enemies if their power is in contradiction to the needs of historical development. They know how to swim against the stream in the deep conviction that the new historic flood will carry them to the other shore. Not all will reach that shore, many will drown. But to partici-

pate in this movement with open eyes and with an intense will—only this can give the highest moral satisfaction to a thinking being!

COYOACAN, FEBRUARY 16, 1938

P.S.—I wrote these lines during those days when my son struggled, unknown to me, with death. I dedicate to his memory this small work which, I hope, would have met with his approval—Leon Sedov was a genuine revolutionist and despised the pharisees.