

Excerpt from International, Vol. 1, No. 2, September-October 1970,
Mandel: The Mystifications of State Capitalism

Because for us the Yugoslav, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean revolutions are distorted socialist revolutions (i.e. led by bureaucratically distorted working-class parties), we prefer not to call the parties which led these revolutions "Stalinist" parties. For us, Stalinism is essentially a conservative ideology of the ruling bureaucratic layer in the Soviet Union, historically committed to the status quo (the extension of its power and privileges into the Eastern European countries, at the end of World War II, on a world scale historically strengthened and not weakened the status quo, for it was being "paid for" by the attempt to stop the overthrow of capitalism in Western Europe and many other places, inclusive China). Stalinist parties are parties which are subordinating the interests of the working class in their own countries to the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy's diplomacy. They therefore have acted, historically, as props of the capitalist system in their countries. (24)

Of course, the Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Yugoslav, C.P.s are parties of Stalinist origin; many traits of their ideology, internal structure, attitude towards the masses, were inherited from Stalinism. But these traits, important as they are, and important as are their negative consequences for world revolution and for starting the process of building a socialist society in their countries -- and against which traits we conduct an irreconcilable struggle -- are not the decisive factor for determining their social nature. Decisive, on the contrary, is the fact that, when the overthrow of capitalism was put on the agenda, they led this overthrow, be it in a distorted and perverted form, instead of preventing it. In order to do so, they had to break with the rule of subordinating themselves to the Kremlin bureaucracy, they had to disobey Stalin's orders and instructions, and to throw overboard, at least in practice, some of the basic tenets of Stalinist "theory."

To say that the Chinese C.P. is the same kind of party as the Indonesian C.P., the Yugoslavs as the Greek C.P., the Vietnamese as the French C.P. -- to say, in other words, that there is no "basic" difference between destroying capitalism and upholding it! -- is to throw overboard all objective criteria of judgment in favour of partial analogies (25). To say that "Stalinism" has been capable of overthrowing capitalism in the most populated country on earth is decidedly giving too much honour to Stalin!

Because the Yugoslav, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cuban, revolutions were distorted socialist revolutions (the Cuban the least bureaucratized and distorted of them all, for it was led by revolutionary forces not originating from Stalinist ideology or organisations), they are part and parcel of the world revolutionary process started in October 1917 -- be it under unforeseen and specific forms. Their victory has meant heavy defeats for world capitalism and imperialism. It has strengthened and not weakened the international revolutionary vanguard, included that part of it consciously fighting for world revolution and for workers' states under workers' management through freely elected workers' councils (the same can certainly not be said about Stalin's victory in the USSR). It has weakened and not strengthened

Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and its stranglehold on the international working class movement. It has deepened both the crisis of capitalism and the crisis of the Soviet bureaucracy, and created more favourable conditions for an extension of the world revolutionary process to the industrialised countries in Western Europe. This logic -- and therefore everything which is happening with world revolution in the last decade -- is incomprehensible if one falls under the sway of the mystifications of "state capitalism." It is only made comprehensible by Trotsky's theory of Stalinism and of the Soviet bureaucracy.

August 10, 1970

Ernest Mandel

(24) "The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organisations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie," writes Trotsky in the Transitional Programme.

(25) The Shachtmanite adherents to the theory of a "new bureaucratic class" tried at least to be more consistent; they saw in each Communist Party an "instinctive drive" to establish itself into a new "facist-type like" ruling class. The cold war having given its verdict -- and Shachtmanism having disappeared under its waves in a sea of ridicule and renegade behaviour -- one sees how wrong that prediction was. But why are some C.P.s just "neo-reformists" (i.e. subservient to private capitalism) as the British C.P. presumably is the eyes of International Socialism (like the French, Italian, Greek, Spanish, Indonesian, Brazilian, C.P.s, and the list could be extended ad libitum), while just a few others are "trying to transform themselves into a new ruling class"? And if this distinction exists, what's the use of defining both categories of parties by the same label?

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, Number 23, March 9, 1971

Present: Barnes, Boehm, Breitman, Britton, DeBerry, Dobbs,
A. Hansen, J. Hansen, Horowitz, Lovell, Novack,
Sheppard, Stone, Waters

Visitors: Bolduc, Kerry, Seigle

Chairwoman: Waters

AGENDA:

1. Organization Report
2. Women's Liberation Report
3. Chicano Movement Report
4. Northern California Raza Unida Party
5. Organization of Plenum
6. Presidential Slate

1. ORGANIZATION REPORT

Sheppard reported.

Discussion.

Motion: To approve the general line of the report.

Carried.

2. WOMEN'S LIBERATION REPORT

Stone reported.

Discussion.

Motion: To approve the general line of the report.

Carried.

3. CHICANO MOVEMENT REPORT

Britton reported.

Discussion.

Motion: To approve the general line of the report.

Carried.

4. NORTHERN CALIFORNIA RAZA UNIDA PARTY

Britton reported recommendation of the Oakland-Berkeley branch to give critical support to Raza Unida Party candidates in 1971 local elections.

Motion: To concur with the Oakland-Berkeley branch recommendation.

Carried.

5. ORGANIZATION OF PLENUM

Barnes reported.

Motion: To propose the following Convention Call:

To schedule a national party convention for the five-day period of Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, August 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, 1971; to hold the convention in Ohio; to provide a three-month pre-convention discussion period beginning May 1; to refer to the Political Committee the issuance of the Convention Call and the setting of the convention agenda to be incorporated in the Convention Call.

Carried.

Motion: To propose the following recommendations on procedure.

- 1) That in cases of procedural disputes, discussion be limited to two speakers, one for and one against, and that each speaker be limited to two minutes.
- 2) That general discussion be limited to ten minutes per speaker and that no one speak twice until all who wish to do so have spoken.
- 3) That the Presiding Committee consist of the Administrative Committee (Dobbs, Barnes, Horowitz, Britton and Bolduc) plus Sheppard and Stone.
- 4) To designate as Plenum secretaries Christie and Feigenberg.
- 5) To invite as observers: Control Commission members; co-thinkers; heads of national departments (press, literature, finances); members of the youth NEC; branch organizers and special guests.

Carried.

Motion: To propose the following agenda.

1. Organization of Plenum
2. World Movement Reports
3. Israel and the Arab Revolution
4. Political Report
5. Women's Liberation Report
6. Chicano Movement Report
7. Youth Report
8. Antiwar Report
9. Organization Report
10. Presidential Slate
11. Convention Call

Carried.

Motion: To propose the following schedule.

(see attached)

Carried.

6. PRESIDENTIAL SLATE

Barnes reported.

Motion: To propose to the Plenum that the SWP 1972 presidential ticket be composed of Linda Jenness for President and Andrew Pulley for Vice-President.

Discussion.

Carried.

7. WORLD MOVEMENT

Breitman reported.

Discussion

Meeting Adjourned.

PLENUM SCHEDULE

Saturday, March 13

10:00 A.M. Organization of Plenum
10:15 World Movement Reports (2 hours and 15 minutes)
 A. Peter Camejo (1 hour and 30 minutes)
 B. Joe Hansen (45 minutes)
12:30 P.M. Lunch
1:30 Discussion (2 hours)
3:30 Summary (30 minutes)
4:00 Israel and Arab Revolution (1 hour)
5:00 Discussion (1 hour and 45 minutes)
6:45 Summary (30 minutes)
7:15 ADJOURN

Sunday, March 14

10:00 A.M. Political Report (1 hour and 15 minutes)
11:15 Discussion (2 hours and 30 minutes)
1:00 P.M. Lunch
2:00 Discussion (continued)
2:45 Summary (30 minutes)
3:15 Women's Liberation Report (1 hour)
4:15 Discussion (1 hour and 30 minutes)
5:45 Summary (30 minutes)
6:15 Dinner
7:15 Chicano Movement Report (1 hour)
8:15 Discussion (1 hour and 30 minutes)
9:45 Summary (30 minutes)
10:15 ADJOURN

Monday, March 15

10:00 A.M. Antiwar Report (1 hour)
11:00 Discussion (1 hour and 30 minutes)
12:30 P.M. Lunch
1:30 Summary (30 minutes)
2:00 Youth Report (1 hour)
3:00 Discussion (1 hour)
4:00 Summary (30 minutes)
4:30 ADJOURN

TOURS OF PRINT SHOP AND NEW HEADQUARTERS

Tuesday, March 16

10:00 A.M. Organization Report (1 hour and 15 minutes)
11:15 Financial Report (45 minutes)
12:00 Noon Lunch
1:00 Discussion (2 hours)
3:00 Summary (30 minutes)
3:30 Presidential Slate (30 minutes)
4:00 Discussion (1 hour)
5:00 Summary (15 minutes)
5:15 Convention Call
5:30 ADJOURN

RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROCEDURE FROM THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

1. That in cases of procedural disputes, discussion be limited to two speakers, one for and one against, and that each speaker be limited to two minutes.
2. That general discussion be limited to ten minutes per speaker and that no one speak twice until all who wish to do so have spoken.
3. That the Presiding Committee consist of the Administrative Committee (Dobbs, Barnes, Horowitz, Britton and Bolduc) plus Sheppard and Stone.
4. To designate as Plenum secretaries Christie and Feigenberg.
5. To invite as observers: Control Commission members; co-thinkers; heads of national departments (press, literature, finances); members of the youth NEC; branch organizers and special guests.