

THE BALANCE SHEET COMPLETED

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Part III of Project: Revised Plan
Ten years of American Testimony

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--by T. Forrest

Note:

In 1942 the reactionary laws of the American bourgeoisie made it necessary for Trotskyist tendencies in the U.S. to disaffiliate organizationally from the Fourth International. That cannot prevent, however, our interest in Trotskyist ideas and the way in which these are expressed organizationally and politically. It is in this sense that we write here of the Fourth International.

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THE BALANCE SHEET COMPLETED

From Revolutionary Marxism to Political Gangrene

"Johnson-Forest" has now made its final and complete break with what the Fourth International of today stands for.

We are leaving behind forever the ideas of those who today represent Trotskyism, their unsocialist, anti-proletarian practice and organizational life. For years we loyally stood all this, bearing in mind constantly the interests of the movement as a whole. But by now things have reached a stage where we have to fly not only from their dehumanized politics but from their social immorality and the personal degeneration and ruin to which this movement is now rapidly reducing members of the organization, from the most highly-placed and long-experienced leaders and functionaries to rank and filers, old and new.

We owe it primarily to ourselves and a few here and there in the organization to make clear as far as possible the reasons for this drastic step.

The political degeneration of what now calls itself Trotskyism is widely known. In her recent letter, breaking with the ideas of those who now claim to represent Trotsky's politics, Natalia Trotsky summed up these degenerate politicians in the phrase "dehumanized brutes." We propose as the result of nearly four years in the S.W.P. to make this concrete.

The Fourth International has for nearly two decades symbolized the world revolutionary movement. Such a rupture as we have carried out requires some analysis of the political bankruptcy of Trotskyism. We, being what we are, have made these analyses systematically over the last ten years, and most recently in our document, State Capitalism and World Revolution (S.W.P. Bulletin #4, September 1950). We are also publishing in the present Bulletin (1) our reply to the document of Wards and Wright, and (2) a section of our Resolution on the International Situation. These documents had been handed over to the S.W.P. and were awaiting publication.

We have formally participated in the discussion that took place during the last period. Our political discussion with the Fourth International has now been completed. What we have to do now is to describe how the "dehumanized brutes" who could see in the barbarism of Stalinism the road to socialism have pursued the same degenerate politics in the life of the party and in their own political personalities.

We call this document The Balance Sheet Completed. In 1947 when we left the W.P., we published a Balance Sheet, dealing ostensibly with the W.P. but in reality analysing the ideas and practices of all who represented Trotskyism; at home and abroad, organizationally and ideologically. Now after nearly four years in the S.W.P., we can complete the Balance Sheet.

What we have to say is this: there is nothing to choose between these two parties. One is headed towards Menshevism, the other towards Stalinism. But the basic causes of their degeneration, the processes by which it has developed, and the concrete phenomena by which this is expressed are absolutely the same in both parties.

Firmness and Instability in Leadership

We begin with one of the so-called divisions between the S.W.P. and W.P., which most S.W.P. members firmly believe still to be the truth today. The S.W.P. leadership boasts continuously of its firmness, which it contrasts with the instability of the leadership of the W.P. We shall show exactly the hollow fiction that this so-called firmness is and how instability has become organic to the politics of the S.W.P.

Since 1947 in The Invading Socialist Society we had made clear our unalterable opposition to the politics of the Fourth International and our distrust of its leadership. By 1948 it was becoming evident to us that individuals of the international leadership, and others who were not attached organizationally but shared the same views, were approaching a state of political desperation.

One of the S.W.P. leaders, a particularly striking example of S.W.P. firmness, first made us wonder about this firmness by rushing to the position of state capitalism as far back as November 1946. This was a leap he made entirely on his own. Then during the discussion in preparation for definitive decisions in 1948 he turned up with a thesis which was permeated with defeatism for Eastern Europe. Challenged to explain himself he could not do so. He, however, committed his views to writing.

This same firm one denounced the British in the most unbridled terms when they declared that the new states in Eastern Europe were workers' states. But before long he took very firmly the very opposite view that these states in Eastern Europe were workers' states.

Here obviously was a significant example of a well-known political type -- the man who is desperately determined to get out from where he is and bounces from side to side, seeking a way out. As long as this is confined to an individual, experienced comrades merely note his actions as an indication of probable behavior in any serious critical situation.

But this comrade was not alone. Some British comrades in the period before definitive decisions in 1948 reached to the very verge of state capitalism and defeatism. They then swung right back to the other side and took the position that Stalinism was making the revolution. This for some of them was merely the bridge to the Social-Democracy in England.

But the very highest leadership of the International followed a similar pattern. The British comrades complain bitterly to this day that before definitive decisions in 1948, they had arrived at an understanding with the highest leadership of the International in regard to the substitution of defeatism for defensism. One of our friends in Europe at the time actually wired to us to hold up our documents until further notice because of probable changes which could not be defined precisely because they were not written down but which seemed to indicate a reversal in the position of the International.

Finally, when the first draft of a resolution on the Russian Question appeared in the press in the United States, its defeatist tendencies were such as to create confusion and resentment in the S.W.P. It had to be changed. This same international leadership was soon violently on the road to pro-Stalinism. One of the most long-winded and interminable scribblers in the International was ready to abandon at the drop of a hat the most fundamental basis of Trotskyism that nationalized property is an infallible sign of a workers' state.

Organization Follows Politics

Marxists change and have to change their views continually. But this type of rushing from one side to another in order at all costs to move from where one is, creates distrust in any serious political observer. All did not behave this way. One of them, for example, sees it as his special task to preserve the literal heritage of Trotsky and he follows the line to the bitter end. These others obviously could not be trusted.

We saw this and drew our own conclusions as to the vaunted stability and firmness of this type. We knew them too well in the W.P. not to recognize them. We made the mistake of trusting too much to the one whose whole past seemed to remove him from hysteria. His reaction to the British was harsh enough. This sort of thing, he said, has to be burnt out of our movement with a red-hot iron. We felt a certain confidence.

There were other signs. Not merely Chicago but practically the whole of the Political Committee except ourselves was leaning towards Wallace. Their leader pulled them back sharply. That he had to do this was a bad sign.

The very manner in which the International leader faced the International with his new views on Stalinism indicated frenzy and hysteria. No one had any warning and his sudden publication of his views threw the International into disorder and raised bitter resentment in New York.

It is to be noted that the highest leader of the S.W.P. does not operate in this way. He must have observed these signs. He was powerless to check them.

He sought to temporize on the Eastern Europe question. But those nervous and unstable leaders forced his hand. Here (as elsewhere) it became clear that he cannot control them any longer. And he cannot control them as he did in the Wallace question because he has no line opposite to theirs. For what they did from political instability he found himself compelled to do from political necessity. When the first documents giving the new ideas arrived in New York, they threw the American leadership into fury. The S.W.P. leadership declared: No workers' state without proletarian revolution. But after a few months the leader turned over and joined what he had attacked as being the road to ruin.

Personal psychology here, as always in serious politics, fades into the background. All of them for their various reasons were compelled to follow in the end the same political line. And the greatest political crime of all has been committed as always by the most serious politician among them. For his motivation was undoubtedly to hold his party together. He sacrificed political principle for the sake of the organization. There is a word for this in politics; it is cliquism. Abern was a cliquist in 1940 and repeated this practice in the W.P. This is the reason why the tendency borrowed the name of Johnson, the only international figure who, though outside the political movement, after Trotsky's death symbolized implacable hostility to Stalinism. It is this which made the tendency call itself "Johnson-Forest" but never "Abern"; and it is for this very cliquism that we had to take the initiative and cut him off in 1946. Our experience in the W.P. particularly enabled us to understand these people very well.

These are the leaders who talk about firmness. The vacillations and leaps from side to side of Shachtman and the Shachtmanites have their direct

counterpart in the parallel behavior of the leaders of the S.W.P.

Organization follows politics. We now know that any crimes carried out by the leadership are certain of the protection of the most highly placed. He only lends his greater wisdom and experience to assist them to carry out more capably the degenerate politics and organizational practices to which they are irresistibly driven.

The S.W.P. is the W.P. Over Again

We wrote in the Balance Sheet:

"The W.P. has no policy, neither on the character of the epoch nor on the nature of the Stalinist parties nor on American perspectives nor on the Negro question. There is complete 'democracy' — a perfect example of a democratic jungle. But in politics at a given moment it is necessary to say something decisive. The party learns then from Shachtman what the line is and in its uncertainty and confusion must follow. Behind all the anarchistic freedom of speech the one solid political reality is Shachtman's political response at a given moment to political and organizational pressure by which he decides the political line for today. The result is the leader principle and clique politics carried to an extreme degree." (p.18)

The S.W.P. has now arrived at the same situation. Their attachment to the organization in and for itself irrespective of politics or principled conduct is all that matters. What is Stalinism, what is Titoism, what is a centrist party, nobody knows. At a given moment the leader decides and the rest follow.

We said of the W.P. in the Balance Sheet:

"As the petty-bourgeois democrats of all stripes seek to protect the democracy of elections and votes in a world going to pieces, so the petty-bourgeois revolutionaries seek frantically to preserve democratically their views and their 'ideological life.' This for them is the party."

The S.W.P. has now reached the same stage. The same cliquism, the same endless discussion of ideological differences, the same willingness to agree to disagree — all these climaxed the retrogressionist politics of the W.P. These are now present in full force in the S.W.P. And, as always, this is called democracy.

The objective roots of the degeneration are the same. Basically the world situation today is that there are two great masses of capital competing for world mastery, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. Each of these has its own labor bureaucracy: the one, the Social-Democracy, the other, Stalinism. Revolutionary politics must oppose both from the basis of the revolutionary proletariat or be continually drawn in one direction or another.

We shall show that neither the S.W.P. nor the W.P. sees the proletarian revolution in the U.S. as a realistic possibility. Hence each capitulates to the labor bureaucracy, the one in the form of Reutherism and the other in the form of Stalinism. The W.P. tries to build the politically organized labor movement around Reuther as an arena in which it can work and grow. As long as it is given the chance to make loud declarations of principle, it will work for Reuther or join any opposition strong enough. The S.W.P. in

its own sphere does exactly the same. It seeks in the growing power of Stalinism "elbow room" in which to find a place for itself. It will join with Titoism which seems able to offer some base. The political tendencies we have long ago defined. The concrete symptoms are new and in their way conclusive,

In the Balance Sheet we insisted on page after page that the degeneration of the W.P. was due to its incapacity to pose to itself the revolution in the United States. But we insisted from the first page to the last that this was an experience of international significance. Section VII, page 26, we entitled "Lessons of the American Experience for the International." We wrote: "The French Majority and the British Majority show too many signs of beginning in 1947 where the W.P. began in 1939. It is not suggested that they must inevitably follow the same course. But the Johnson-Forest tendency can speak with assurance of this. If they do not call a halt, but pursue the line to the end, their degeneration and bankruptcy will be more swift and complete than the degeneration and bankruptcy of the W.P."

We repeated over and over again the phrase: "De Te Fabula Narratur," i.e. this story is being told in reality about you. We meant to say: We are talking about the W.P., but you are going the same way.

In our resolution of 1948 we wrote:

"The World Congress will fail to achieve its elementary tasks if it does not recognize that two dangerous tendencies have penetrated deep into the International. One tendency represented by the I.K.D. and the Shachtmanites wavers continuously between the proletarian revolution and an implicit Menshevism. The other, represented by the present French Minority (Geoffroy Tendency) wavers continuously between the proletarian revolution and Stalinism. The organizational strength of these tendencies is of minor significance. In the United States the revolutionary movement over the years has suffered repeated blows from the constant penetration into its ranks of the theory of American exceptionalism. The complete disappearance from the scene of the W.P. would not decrease, it could increase, the danger of this tendency in disguised form. These tendencies represent a great potential danger because they are the reflection within the revolutionary movement of the basic forces of the counter-revolution: The one tendency reflects the power of American imperialism, the other the power of Stalinist Russia. The one tendency is refracted directly into the labor movement through the Social-Democracy, the other through the Stalinist parties. But in the revolutionary movement, both these forces are united in a common fundamental premise -- their scepticism and pessimism of the capacity of the proletariat to achieve the international socialist order, sole solution to the universal crisis and the most immediate needs of the masses. It is the struggle against these tendencies around which the World Congress must revolve."

We accepted the guidance of the Movement with our eyes open. We tried not to be offensive in tone but we were absolutely clear.

From this inevitable degeneration we excluded the S.W.P. We praised Cannon's The Coming American Revolution. We quoted from it. We wrote: "That is the key to the past, the present and the future of the American movement." (p. 23)

But that turned out to be a flash in the pan. The degeneration is now complete, the W.P. to Menshevism and the S.W.P. to Stalinism. The concrete phenomena of degeneration are the same in both parties. This we shall

trace to the end.

Just as the W.P. plays with the Social-Democracy, while denouncing American imperialism and the labor bureaucracy, the S.W.P. plays with the Stalinist parties, while denouncing the Russian bureaucracy and the Communist parties. But as we look closely at both these unprincipled maneuverers, it becomes clear that the S.W.P. is infinitely worse. Their so-called defense of Russia is the most shameful and unmitigated dishonesty we have ever seen or heard of in the revolutionary movement. Defense of a workers' state or a colonial country carries with it certain clear-cut and very serious obligations. These hypocritical scoundrels have led a whole movement to disaster, ruined themselves and thousands of revolutionaries, besmirched the principles for which Trotsky fought all his life, all in the name of the defense of Russia and now that the chips are down, they squirm out of the concrete steps in which they ought to educate the party to carry out its tasks. In the W.P. at any rate there are some who come boldly out for their counter-revolutionary pro-imperialist position. But in the S.W.P. and the whole Fourth International, despite discreet but repeated proddings on our part, there is a common understanding to ignore and repudiate and forget about the practical consequences of their Russian position. This is the way to ruin not only yourselves but all the young people who come eager to learn principled politics and ready to sacrifice themselves. We are leaving this school of deceit, of falsification and of calculated dishonesty in this most serious of political policies.

The Pot and the Kettle

We are finished for good and all with that which now calls itself Trotskyism. We are not forming a third Trotskyist tendency in the United States. The two existing wings typified by Cannon and Shachtman are in their very essence one. It is the world struggle of the two great masses of capital in America and Russia which keeps these two wings of Trotskyism apart from each other today. Neither bases itself on the opposition of the proletariat to capitalist barbarism which we have analyzed and detailed so carefully. Both want some intermediate stage, some helping hand from a section of the labor bureaucracy, until they can arrive at the head of the masses. The W.P. chose the more recently expanded labor bureaucracy developed in the C.I.O. and in the British labor officialdom. The S.W.P., guarding old traditions, chose the conquests of the Stalinist bureaucracy. They are unable to give up bankrupt political positions because this involves not ideas, but a conception of themselves, of their own role, of the gaps in the social crisis which they expect to fill. Note how the W.P. jumped at the opportunity to do some propagandistic and organizational work for Reuther; note the S.W.P.'s panting eagerness to do the same for Tito. Howe and Widick justify this by saying that Reuther is an unfinished personality. The S.W.P. bases its politics on the view that Tito's personality is also unfinished and it looks eagerly at Mao for a crisis in his. The accusing fingers pointed at each other are that of a man looking at his own image in a mirror. That the S.W.P. and W.P. cannot live with each other is less significant than their compatibility with sections of the labor bureaucracy. The crying shame of the whole business is that neither bureaucracy has the slightest use for these unprincipled fragments who have just enough principle and past to prevent them making the full steps. Both are doomed.

The abandonment of the proletariat implicit in the above positions is now absolutely explicit. The S.W.P. refused to hear the warning signals, not of "Johnson-Forest" but of the American proletariat, which refused to become the least bit interested or enthused about the misadventures of Tito in the world

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divided by Truman and Stalin. The "Reutherites", the Nation, the New Republic, the British Foreign Ministry — all these who were denounced week after week in the Militant — became quite naturally better Titoists than the S.W.P. The Fourth proclaimed that the Yugoslavian events would do for it what the Russian Revolution did for the Third. Instead it served to tear the heart out of the confidence and loyalty of these revolutionists toward their own leadership and organization.

Only a summer ago the best cadres of the S.W.P. were to be prepared to embark for Yugoslavia. They never went. But the S.W.P. lost its class moorings in the process. Flirtations with the counter-revolutionary labor bureaucracy are paid for heavily in the present stage of the world crisis. Nobody bothers to ask why the great Yugoslav revolution has so abruptly and completely disappeared from the pages of the Militant because it is manifest that no answer is possible. The demoralization of both ranks and leaders thus becomes united as one complete process. If it is necessary to know negatively what the Tito experience has meant to the American proletariat it is necessary only to look at the S.W.P. This will constitute a very brief chapter in "The Struggle for the Proletarian Party" that is yet to be written.

The only international left to Shachtman is that of the labor advisers of the American State Department. That the W.P. cannot join them is through no fault of its own. The only international left to the S.W.P. is that of Mao and Tito. That the S.W.P. is not included among these is not from lack of trying. When Tito himself is not available, it will embrace the smaller version — O. John Rogge, former U.S. District Attorney, Stalinist Attorney, and now Titoist attorney. For years the W.P. wept bitter tears denying responsibility for Burnham. The S.W.P. can now disclaim responsibility for Rogge. But the organic nature of class politics is revealed precisely in such situations.

We wrote in our political resolution for the Fourth that the Stalinist tyranny and the tyranny of the labor bureaucracy in England and America are an identical stage of development. The W.P. and S.W.P. are today identical as the loyal critics of the competing sections of the world labor bureaucracy. It is the workers who feel this instinctively and therefore do not respond. The W.P., therefore, finds the proletariat hurled back to the tasks of feudalism, leaving the W.P. as the sacred guardians of democracy. The S.W.P., five years later, discovers the proletariat doomed to Stalinism for at least two hundred years, leaving for itself the task of guarding nationalized property from Stalin, who, it appears, has a weakness for private property. The proletariat is eliminated from theoretical, practical and organizational considerations. The W.P. could not make its way to Reuther, nor the S.W.P. to Tito, without first conducting the most vicious assault against "Johnson-Forest". The ranks are not consolidated by such struggle, but demoralized by the gossip, intrigue and brutality. They suspect that there is some unidentifiable something in what is denounced as Johnsonism; the last barrier to weariness, stagnation and demoralization. The fate of the W.P. after 1945 and of the S.W.P. after 1950 constitute the climax of one continuous movement.

On every essential political issue each party in its own sphere behaves in the same way. The W.P. dodged responsibility for the Carterite belief that bureaucratic collectivism is the next stage of humanity. Sometimes they denied it. But when this position pressed heavily upon them, they said that the masses would decide. We said that if the party does not decide the question for itself, then there is no party.

The S.W.P. leadership fought pro-Stalinism. The pressure of objective developments and the more powerful pressures of his own frantic cadre enveloped the leader. He personally could not accept the centuries of degenerated workers' states. He could not decide whether the Stalinist parties could lead the socialist revolution or not. He fell back on the characteristic Shachtzanite evasion -- the workers will decide. The whole International and those who follow its ideas are now agreed that the masses will decide whether Stalinism is to lead the proletarian revolution or not.

The S.W.P. and W.P. may have different allegiances. But their method is the same.

We are not describing the future of the S.W.P. This is where it is today. A serious individual can continue to make his heroic exertions individually, resist demoralization individually, but in the end he cannot escape the effect of the party. The logic of politics is beyond any individual intentions.

The S.W.P. is obsessed with speculation as to Mao's and Tito's future intentions. That is the path of ruination, not for Mao or Tito, who do not have to bother with such foolishness, but for the S.W.P. Mao and Tito can switch from Russian imperialism to Western imperialism without batting an eyelash. They are rulers of states and administrators of the proletariat. But for the unfortunate S.W.P. there is the burden and crucifixion of Lenin's State and Revolution. Pablo must war incessantly against it. There are the archives of Trotsky filled with incessant anti-Stalinist exposition. These must remain as archives. There are the "rivers of blood" separating the two class political tendencies. These must be crossed over. No membership, no matter how hardened the cadres, can survive such manipulations with that which is most viable in its past. The greater the hardening, loyalty and devotion in its past, the more sudden and profound its collapse, or the more complete the internal corrosion.

Stalinism and the Proletariat

Only a few brief words are necessary here to contrast our own position. The W.P. and the S.W.P. like to believe that the "Johnson-Forest" theory of state capitalism is a literary theory. Nothing can be further from the truth, and the final proof is the bankruptcy and degeneracy of those who think so. Will they explain why theoreticians of the Ukrainian resistance to Stalinism are also state-capitalist? Why most of the news we get from behind the Iron Curtain shows that state capitalism now dominates political thought? Why the whole Stalinist machine denounces precisely this theory? The theory of state capitalism is the only theory for building the revolutionary party on an international scale in this epoch.

There are many kinds of supporters of the theory of state capitalism. We have made it perfectly clear that ours is not a theory dealing primarily with Russia. It is a theory vital to all aspects of politics at the present time. In her reply to Warde and Wright, Forest has pointed out that at a given stage of capitalism it is the business of revolutionary Marxism to elucidate and define the specific stage of the revolt of the proletariat. The Commune was one type of revolt. The Soviet was another. The particular type of revolt of the proletariat is always in strict correspondence to the specific stage of development of capitalism. In the early stages of the industrial revolution the proletariat formed unions. At a later stage it built mass Social-Democratic parties. Lenin defined his period as the period of the struggle of the mass against the labor aristocracy and its domination of proletarian politics. State capitalism for us

is that stage of capitalism in which not the labor aristocracy but the labor bureaucracy as such becomes the main enemy. The specific type of proletarian revolt is the political form corresponding to the socialization of production. The aim is to destroy bureaucracy as a category. This is our analysis of state capitalism, explaining Stalinism and the new development of the Social-Democracy. It explains also the difference between the individualistic petty-bourgeois intelligentsia of the period of 1914 and the administrative bureaucratic type of petty-bourgeois intellectual which in combination with the labor leadership seeks to administer nationalized property today.

From this theory alone can a party be built to prepare itself for the proletarian revolution. All political tendencies attune themselves to listen to the impulses of classes and sections of classes. Upon our entry into the S.W.P. we wrote some articles for the Militant describing how Lenin listened to the Russian worker of 1917. The S.W.P. listens only for the secret conversations between Mao and Stalin, Tito and Stalin. This at a time when the whole secret of revolutionary politics lies in the daily open conversations which the masses of workers engage in with each other. Shachtman too was at his pitiable best in describing what Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin said to each other at Yalta and Teheran.

The workers under Stalinism are engaged in a daily deadly war with their new master class. They are objectively in a position where they form a serious conception of the society under which they live and of the new society which they desire. This is the only way that the proletariat in a world ruthlessly divided between Truman and Stalin, lives as an international force. The S.W.P. does not hear them because it cannot. The masses behind the Iron Curtain are insulated from any belief in the progressiveness of Stalinist degeneration. Everything from behind the Iron Curtain will be defeatist and will tolerate no nonsense about workers' statism. The Fourth International began from opposition to Stalinism by a small political grouping. Today it is the mass opposition to Stalinism which baffles the Fourth and marks its doom.

The Letter of Natalia Trotsky

After six years of vain effort to correct this degeneration, Natalia Trotsky finally broke with those who were perpetrating it. Some passages of her letter will bear repetition:

"It should be clear to everyone that the revolution has been completely destroyed by Stalinism. Yet you continue to say that under this unspeakable regime, Russia is still a workers' state. I consider this a blow at socialism. Stalinism and the Stalinist state have nothing whatever in common with the workers' state or with socialism. They are the worst and the most dangerous enemies of socialism and the working class."

She says again of Eastern Europe:

"By considering that the Stalinist bureaucracies established workers' states in these countries, you assign to it a progressive and even revolutionary role. By propagating this monstrous falsehood to the workers' vanguard, you deny to the Fourth International all the basic reason for existence as the world party of the socialist revolution. In the past we always considered Stalinism to be a counter-revolutionary force in every sense of the term. You no longer do so. But I continue to do so.

"In 1932 and 1933, the Stalinists, in order to justify their shameless capitulation to Hitlerism, declared that it would matter little if the Fascists came to power, because socialism would come after and through the rule of Fascism. Only dehumanized brutes without a shred of socialist thought or spirit could have argued this way. Now, notwithstanding the revolutionary aims which animate you, you maintain that the despotic Stalinist reaction which has triumphed in Eastern Europe is one of the roads through which socialism will eventually come. This view marks an irremediable break with the profoundest convictions always held by our movement and which I continue to hold."

"An irremediable break with the profoundest convictions always held by our movement..."

These words we can testify to be true. They have been demonstrated politically in the hailing of Tito's maneuvers as the road to Leninism, in calling Tito's break with Stalin and his few phrases about world revolution, the greatest thing that has happened to the Fourth International in all the years of its existence. This is true in one respect, in that such a statement is the greatest shame and scandal which has ever overtaken the movement. We did our best. We wrote:

"The past record of the CPY is a record of unwavering support of Stalinist Russia and the Communist International. It has supported Stalinism in its persecution of the Russian workers, its slave labor camps, its Moscow Trials, its monumental lies, its betrayal of proletarian revolution, its sacrificing of the proletariat of whole nations, its assassinations, its incalculable contributions to the barbarism which is now eating away at human society.

"The conception that "Johnson-Forest" have of the Fourth International does not include collaboration with these elements but has always seen them as the worst enemies of the proletariat and the organic foes of everything for which the Fourth International must stand." (State-Capitalism and World Revolution, p. 61)

"The idea that Tito's declaration in favor of Leninism -- and these are nothing to the declarations of Stalin in favor of Leninism -- to declare that this is the greatest event in the history of Trotskyism so far, and the hope of our movement for the future, is to strike a terrible blow at all that we have stood for in the past. The future of the Fourth International rests, as it has always rested, upon the progress we have made with the revolutionary proletariat in irreconcilable struggle with bureaucracies of all and every kind." (Ibid, p. 62).

We could not say what Natalia said but within the limits of our situation in the S.W.P., we said what we could.

But now a task remains to be done which only we can do. We shall show that we bore all this political degeneration with exemplary patience and forbearance. Never in the history of the whole Trotskyist movement has a minority tendency conducted itself with the devotion, the loyalty, the restraint and the readiness to perform all tasks which have distinguished our nearly four years' stay in the S.W.P. Even after the letter of Natalia we maintained our disciplined attitude. We were already in correspondence with Natalia, but we consulted with the S.W.P. leadership as to what would be its attitude to our continuation of that correspondence and how we could help them to maintain at least personal relations with her. But since then the totality of our experiences both organizationally and politically has become too much for us. We shall show how the international political degeneration expresses itself concretely in the life of the two Trotskyist parties where most of us have spent the last ten years.

Part II

The Trotskyists and the American Question

Let us briefly review our analysis of the W.P. which we made in 1947. It was an analysis of the W.P.; but the S.W.P. leaders did not know (so insensitive are they), that in section after section it was intended as a warning not only to the International, but to them. They thought that they were being friendly and considerate to us. In reality they were on trial. We had made the experience in the W.P. and we understood from early that the W.P. was a section of Trotskyism in the United States.

This is the course of development of the W.P.:

1. The W.P. left the S.W.P. in 1940. Its main purpose was to build a mass party in the United States.
2. It attempted to do this by typical Menshevik methods, denunciation of capitalist profits and crimes, immediate demands, and Plenty for All in the future, all based upon the conception of the American proletariat as essentially backward and not ready for the revolution.
3. Its main expectation of revolution was from the European masses.
4. By 1944 it faced, according to its lights, total failure. It recognized that its mass distributions of the paper had led nowhere, and that its attempts to build trade union caucuses had back-fired. The European revolution had not come.

The W.P. therefore turned to:

- a) inter-party polemics with the S.W.P.
- b) on the question of world revolution it turned to the theory of retrogression. By this theory it could look for salvation to the Social-Democracy.
- c) a sustained attempt to hound "Johnson-Forest" out of the party.

The unity negotiations were only an interlude. Since then it has continued unchecked its course toward Menshevism.

All this we documented fully and completely, and shall refer to only as necessary. In 1946, in detailing the union policies of the W.P. we gave a specific warning to the S.W.P.

"The S.W.P. and the 'small mass party': The 'small mass party' conception is no personal aberration of Comrade Erber. The party must recognize it as in essence the result of the political inexperience of the American proletariat and long years of struggle against the usurpation of 'rev-

olutionary' leadership by Stalinism. The party must especially recognize that in rejecting Erber's ideas and particularly their manifestations in the building of the party, it will be doing far more than putting itself on the right road towards building the Bolshevik Party. It will also help to correct the false course of the S.W.P., and lay the basis for an effective unified organization.

"The S.W.P. practices the 'small mass party' conception in a form concealed (and to some extent corrected) by its strenuous attempts to adhere to the strategic conceptions of Trotsky. Parallel to its genuine revolutionary temper in propaganda in concrete trade union activity it builds illusions among its membership about its influence in the unions and leading the workers in mass struggles. Only a powerful mass party can attempt to exercise the organizational function of leading workers in day-to-day struggles without

- i. succumbing to opportunism, and
- ii. having the work of its members swept away by obvious inability to withstand the pressure of the trade union bureaucracy whenever these wish to destroy the influence of the propaganda group.

"The past history of the party (Los Angeles and Philadelphia) show, and the inevitable puncturing of the illusions of the S.W.P. will show, that only a correct conception of its function can save the Fourth International from diverting its precious energies into fruitless and demoralizing channels." (Building the Bolshevik Party, p.18-19).

That was clear enough. We knew then what these wise men are only just beginning to glimpse:

1. The whole attempt to build caucuses and manipulate in the unions would confuse and disorient the membership, sow distrust in those workers looking on, and eventually have to be abandoned, however unobtrusively.
2. Nothing would save the American party unless it based itself on the proletarian revolution in the United States as a concrete universal, viewed all daily politics as a manifestation of this, and educated itself from top to bottom on this.
3. Politically, in the United States, revolutionary politics in our epoch must be based upon the conflict between the masses and the bureaucracy.

The Promise of the American Revolution

Cannon's Coming American Revolution was the high point of the S.W.P. It came after the tremendous strikes of 1945-46. We hailed it, but whoever reads the Balance Sheet can see that we had reservations. We distrusted the theoretical premise of the document. In fact it had none.

We saw the American proletariat as part of this specific stage of the development of capitalism.

We saw that the line of class demarcation was between the American proletariat and the labor bureaucracy, the bodyguards of capital. For us the bureaucracy did not in any sense represent the proletariat. The proletariat was not backward, but revolutionary. The whole aim and purpose of the bureaucracy was to demoralize the revolutionary character of the proletariat.

We are Marxists and therefore sober. We promised the revolution to no one at any time. For us the American Revolution was a strategic

perspective, to be constantly deepened theoretically as the proletariat itself developed. We said over and over again and in every conceivable way in the Balance Sheet: "A revolutionary party in any country lacks sound foundations unless the perspectives of the revolution in that country are the granite foundation of the program and explicit in every branch and shade of its activity."

We called for the Americanization of Bolshevism. We reminded the International of Trotsky's insistence that the American movement particularly must deepen its understanding of and apply the dialectic in the United States. This was not theory for the sake of theory or culture or for the broadening of the mind, but concrete education for the class struggle. In the United States, above all, to build the party it is necessary for the vanguard to be armed with the theory of sudden violent eruptions of creative mass activity. In the Balance Sheet we quoted extensively from our 1944 document on Education, Propaganda and Agitation. We mapped out the tasks with regard to Americanization and Internationalization, Americanization and the Problems of Modern Culture, Americanization and Historical Materialism, Americanization and Labor, Americanization and Marxian Economics, Americanization and Dialectical Materialism.

We knew that either the S.W.P. would see this clearly, do this work and take these steps, or it would be totally lost. It is now lost. If it had this in the U.S., it would never have run after Tito. The party would have risen up against any Titoization of American Bolshevism. But at that time, though our ideas were clear enough, they were abstract. We came in determined to make the experience thoroughly and completely.

All this was and is Greek to the S.W.P. We soon found out that The Coming American Revolution had been taken by the membership and some leaders literally as a promise and as a reward for the "sacrifices" of which they are so painfully conscious. For then the revolution was on the order of the day. And when it did not come, disillusionment set in. By the fall of 1947 a long mournful wail of a speech by the leader showed clearly in what a superficial sphere of ideas the party, from top to bottom, moved. They had the mental attitude of children who had been promised candy and had been disappointed. They were told to be patient and be good children and the candy would come some day.

This was the situation in the S.W.P. when the beacons of hope flared from the colors of Tito's break with Stalin. To us the S.W.P. leadership seemed to go stark staring mad. The public statement that Tito and his Leninism were the greatest things that had ever happened to Trotskyism, the public statement that the dark night of Trotskyism was over and the dawn -- Tito -- had now appeared, those revealed the morass of helplessness and despair that permeated the cadres of the majority. Here maybe was a way out and with a growing momentum they clutched at it.

Exactly like the W.P. with a new policy the S.W.P. leaders manufactured grandiose visions of the vast gains to be made in the Yugoslav communities in the United States. They reported their daily interviews with big shots in the Yugoslav communities who confessed that only now did they understand Trotskyism. The Yugoslav leaders and ranks understood Trotskyism so well that we doubt if to this day one single Yugoslav in the United States has been won over to the S.W.P.

This further paved the way for the leap towards Stalinism. Faced with a similar crisis and not seeing the revolution anywhere, the W.P. fastened on to retrogression and sought a place for itself in the international Social-

Democracy. The S.W.P. grabbed on to Stalinism instead. Different as they may appear to be, the root in each case is hopelessness about the proletarian revolution in the United States and hopelessness about the proletarian revolution in Europe.

Ideological Offensive Without an Ideology

Like the S.W.P. today, the W.P. carried out its retreat to retrogressionism and Social-Democracy with characteristic dishonesty. What exactly was their perspective, we asked them mercilessly. They frothed at the mouth, and until the unity negotiations they continuously invited us to leave the party. The S.W.P. is equally dishonest. What is Stalinism, we have asked them. Will the masses convert the Stalinist parties into revolutionary parties? They cannot answer. And like the W.P. the more rabid ones begin to wish us out of the party.

We have seen that the full recognition of its own bankruptcy drove the W.P. into an ideological offensive against the S.W.P. The S.W.P. in similar circumstances outlined its own ideological offensive. It was to rout the Social-Democratic scribblers, professors of economics and professors of biology. But the first requirement of an ideological offensive is an ideology and the S.W.P. had none. The whole attempt collapsed ignominiously. By 1951 the ideological offensive had become an unending speculation as to whether the rival radical parties, Socialist, Progressive, Socialist Labor, would run election candidates in the elections, leaving the name of Socialist to the S.W.P. Finally, just as the W.P. in 1946 became obsessed with the "bureaucratic jungle" in the S.W.P., there was renewed in the S.W.P. a concern with the goings-on within the W.P.

The ideological heart of the S.W.P. is the Militant. In its approach toward the masses it is speaking to and attempting to speak for; it has reached now where Labor Action was in 1947. Trotsky's remarks in 1939 is the acid test for all papers of this type:

"As it is, the paper is divided among various writers, each of whom is very good, but collectively they do not permit the workers to the pages of the Appeal. Each of them speaks for the workers (and speaks very well) but nobody will hear the workers. In spite of the literary brilliance, to a certain degree the paper becomes a victim of journalistic routine. You do not hear at all how the workers live, fight, clash with the police or drink whiskey. It is very dangerous for the paper as a revolutionary instrument for the party. The task is not to make a paper through the joint forces of a skilled editorial board but to encourage the workers to speak for themselves." (In Defense of Marxism, p. 112, quoted in the Balance Sheet, p. 12)

We wrote of our experiences then as we can write now. "After five years in the factories the Labor Action has had to turn back to a paper written from the center in which the proletariat as proletariat does not appear."

The Militant today is a radical rewrite of the N. Y. Times. Add to any important article of world news the "class angle" that it is a lie, a plot, a conspiracy, a crime of the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists, and you have the ideology of the Militant.

For years we warned the Trotskyists that what we called this "frenzied denunciation of the evils of capitalism" would lead first of all to the demoralization and degeneration of the party. Today the Militant Sales Campaign

seems to the S.W.P. to be a great original stroke of organization. It is not new. The W.P. hit on exactly the same type of political "activity." The motivation was the same: finding something for the membership to do.

After all the excitement of mass distributions of Labor Action, the revolutionary perspective for America was reduced by Labor Action in 1947 to an impotent sigh of despair.

"Now we are only marking time or doing a side-straddle hop. There are workers who think that labor has become tired of strikes. Maybe so. But we can wear ourselves out jumping up and down in one place also. The capitalist bosses think they have labor licked. We know that is not true, but we've got to show them that it is not true. We've got to do something about this anti-labor bill. Labor can defeat this bill. That is a little something; not enough, but it is something." (Balance Sheet, p. 12)

Four years later the Militant joins in with its groan rising from the very depths of long-experienced self-sacrifice. The Editor addresses its new readers in this fashion:

"Worst of all, you aren't sure what the facts are. Nearly all the papers lie. The big politicians lie. The radio lies. You feel alone, and unable to do much about things. Sometimes you aren't even sure if maybe the trouble isn't with you instead of the world..."

"You can't be talked out of the simple fact that it's getting harder and harder to get along; more and more difficult to find peace of mind.

"You're not alone in feeling that way. There are millions of Americans right now who feel just like you do.

"If all these people could get together somehow..."

This is a brutal self-portrait of a party and a paper going nowhere at all as far as the proletariat is concerned.

The Rewards of Self-Sacrifice

For "Johnson-Forest" the party is the vanguard. The first necessity is to educate the party. The S.W.P. leadership with its abstract program and its union preoccupations cannot educate the party because it is itself completely uneducated in Marxism. Search the publications of twenty years and you will not find a dozen articles on the proletariat in the United States worth reprinting. On what must be the life of an American revolutionary party they have nothing to say. When an article is written on the "new bureaucracy," it contains not a single word about the relationship of the bureaucracy to the worker in production. Shachtman wrote a whole pamphlet on Socialism, the Hope of Humanity, which does not analyze the revolutionary proletariat in a single paragraph. Read Art Preis' pamphlet Socialism and the Welfare State. The proletariat as a revolutionary force does not appear. It is Shachtman's pamphlet all over again.

The final parallelism is pathetic. The W.P. excursion into arts and letters seemed to us a crying shame. In this world of the mid-twentieth century, when the class struggle is tearing all society apart, the W.P. took refuge in belles-lettres. James T. Farrell, Greenberg of Partisan Review, and

others of this type held forth while the workers stayed away in droves. We view without excitement the present spurt of literary reviews and culture which now attempt to give some life to the dull soul-sick pages of the Militant. This is nothing new to us. We have seen it all before. The preoccupation with good books, good art, good music, is nothing more than the bourgeois conception that what the proletariat needs is more "culture."

Like the W.P. in its final stages of degeneration, the S.W.P.'s education today consists exclusively of interminable repetitions of its ideological differences with "Johnson-Forest" and elaborate projects for classes in Capital. The W.P. called upon its newest recruits from the bourgeois academic world to lead these theoretical forays against "Johnson-Forest". In the S.W.P. today a smattering of bourgeois erudition is sufficient qualification for intellectual leadership in these futile engagements. They neither impress nor stimulate us to participation. In the W.P. as in the S.W.P., we had amassed proof of the theoretical revisions with which the I.E.D. and the Stalinists were corrupting Marxist theory. Even the bourgeois theoreticians had to take cognizance of them. But the S.W.P. like the W.P. pursues remorselessly its own destruction by insisting that the main enemy is not retrogressionism and Stalinism but "Johnson-Forest."

The Stalinists are systematically, with set purpose and with the whole weight of the counter-revolutionary state apparatus behind them, emasculating Capital of the workers' revolt and of the new form of social cooperative labor. It is their weapon against the revolutionary proletariat behind the Iron Curtain. The S.W.P. like the W.P. pursues its dreary seminars in Capital, for what purpose in the preparation of the vanguard it is impossible to see. It has become a family joke in both parties that these perennial setting-up exercises rarely if ever go beyond Chapter I. Where as in a few instances, Volumes II and III are also completed, the accomplishment appears to be a demonstration of fortitude and capacity for sacrifice.

The constant pleading for "new, young blood" is the best confirmation that such re-enforcements are not arriving. The particular tiredness which dominates the S.W.P. cadres is not from experiencing a revolution which failed. It arises from the total isolation of the S.W.P. from any vital current in the revolutionary class and the absence of its corresponding counterpart inside the party.

The Attitude of "Johnson-Forest"

Through all this our tendency maintained an iron discipline and reserve. We used infinite patience, forbearance and finesse to make relations easy. We watched our behavior and our language, were prolific in smiles and sparing in frowns.

We did our best to help them. On the Negro question, for example, to have expected the S.W.P. to adopt a complete revolutionary position was impossible. A fully Marxist position on the Negro question presupposes a fully Marxist position on the American proletariat. But from the start we accepted our limitations cheerfully. At an immense expenditure of labor, tact and diplomacy, and using Trotsky as a smoke-screen, we maneuvered them as far as we dared along the Marxist road. We tried to help them without offending them, looking always for ways and means to add a Workers and Farmers Government here, or a revolutionary position there, to push the party along.

But these simpletons, like their fellows in the W.P., could not understand us.

1) Any serious Marxist would have observed that the tendency had no particular horse it was flogging, but had worked out a total position, philosophy, political economy and a comprehensive analysis of capitalist production with a political line to correspond. To people who take such things seriously, it should have been obvious that we were absolutely sure of ourselves, i.e., of our own politics and had nothing of Shachtman or Goldman in us.

2) We did not come into the S.W.P. to convert them to anything. They seemed firmly to believe that we expected one day at a Convention some S.W.P. leaders to say: "At last I have seen the light. Forest is correct."

We did not expect it. In fact, if it happened, we would have been thrown into a serious position. Historical experience in general, our knowledge of the S.W.P. leadership from its politics and its writings, and close observation of them from the time we entered, had warned us early enough that twenty years of their false line had taken from most of them all that they had to give and in any serious regroupment, they could come in only as followers or more probably drop away altogether.

Our concrete perspectives were those of any serious revolutionary group. We were sure that the Fourth International would itself begin to split open irrespective of us. It would lose numbers, cease to grow, leaders would begin to drop away, internal quarrels would begin; there would be the impact not only of great events but the emergence of new organizations holding a revolutionary state capitalist position with a mass base. As all this developed, we with our clearly marked position would play an increasingly important role. As long as we were a minority, numbers were of no importance to us. Never at any time did the men who led the Fourth International dream that we were anything more than some well-meaning, naive intellectuals who somehow wanted to cling on to them, to save our own souls. We certainly gave them that impression. And we could do it because we were genuinely anxious to stay. But that they took this at face-value, that they were unable to see how well-armed we were in every theoretical sphere, that they could not even see that we could be as calm as we were only because we knew that we were armed for all eventualities, this blindness on their part is conclusive sign of the thick conceit and insensitivity which overcomes a leadership when it sits in its own little balliwick, out of all contact with the dynamics of the revolutionary process and certain that 700 can defeat 70.

We did not actively aim at winning over the ranks of the S.W.P. Those who came to us came in spite of protests. In Detroit in recent times some of our comrades had to wage a real battle to keep the native Detroit proletarians at arms' length. Long ago we had written that the practice of raiding rival parties so prevalent among radical splinter groups and Trotskyites was playing at politics and a potent cause of degeneration.

Bolshevik Discipline and Petty-bourgeois Rage

Our comrades, wherever they were, acted continuously to support the Party leadership and solidify its ranks. In New York we voted often with the official leadership against a majority of the leading committee. In Los Angeles, when there was a revolt against the leadership at a city convention, the leadership received "Johnson-Forest" support. In San Francisco, where there

was a cliquist struggle of long standing, the "Johnson-Forest" comrades attempted at the start to close up the rift behind the existing leadership.

The "Johnson-Forest" comrades contributed more than their share of the daily grind of party work. At mobilizations they attended out of all proportion to their numbers. Some hangers-on of the tendency who grumbled at this as "useless devotion" were driven away from the tendency. All separatist tendency spirit was denounced and broken up by the leadership wherever it showed itself. Bolshevism consists not of a series of ideas but of habits of revolutionary work and preparation. This flowed from an objectively concentrated class line. The S.W.P. will be hard put to it to accuse "Johnson-Forest" of anything. Never in the whole history of the Trotskyist movement has there been a minority like ours.

But it is characteristic of these perpetual bleaters about principled politics that they do not understand principled politics when they see it. These babblers about discipline do not understand a disciplined political tendency.

We are not too much interested in that discussion which for many years has passed in the Trotskyist movement for "internal life." Had it not been for the opening of a discussion on a world scale, we would have been satisfied with our two pages on Yugoslavia which said all that needed to be said. We were confident that the party was headed for early disaster. What purpose would be served by talking? We submitted State Capitalism and World Revolution, but having said our piece we showed that we did not want to talk too much. The switch from anti-Stalinism to pro-Stalinism was a shock. Still, we kept our tempers and our heads. We merely said at the Convention: Get a position and then we shall discuss with you. The result was a new insight into the process of degeneration.

The party turned on us with bared fangs. "Irreconcilable tendencies" was hurled at us all from all sides. In Detroit, in Philadelphia particularly, and in New York and Los Angeles, the provocations were unbridled.

The tendency met this assault in exemplary fashion. We could not but note that the hysteria, the red eyes and the shaking fists, the petty-bourgeois rage were on their side while it was we who remained calm, conciliatory but politically firm and unyielding. We satisfied ourselves that the central leadership was not at the back of this. We let the matter slide. But the political flip-flop and the organizational hooliganism deeply affected the tendency. For the first time since entry in 1947 the leadership found it necessary to address a letter to leading comrades in the tendency asking them to read it to the ranks.

The whole episode marked, it seemed to us, a turning point in our relations with the S.W.P. It seemed that our years of devoted activity and restraint had convinced many

- a) that our politics did not really matter to us. Our uncompromising stand was a violent shock.
- b) our attitude seemed to show that we were determined to hold on and would take anything.
- c) some obviously thought that it would be best to get rid of us.

The tendency by this time felt a certain maturity. We had voluntarily and successfully endured these hard years in the S.W.P. The S.W.P. was in political chaos. There we had nothing to fear. Politically our own morals was high.

But an irreconcilable conflict of political lines always expresses an organic conflict in a whole multitude of inter-relations, the sharpest and most comprehensive embodiment of which is to be found in the day-to-day life of the party.

After the 1951 Convention and its exhibition of political bankruptcy, and the snarl of rage which followed it, we began to look more closely and to evaluate more systematically the life of the party. There more than anywhere else the S.W.P. is no more than another edition of the W.P..

Part III

The Life of the Party

The Shachtmanites lived entirely in the spheres of the Russian question, party democracy, collective leadership and such like. The S.W.P. claimed a correct position on the Russian question, that the party did practice party democracy, and collective leadership and so on and so forth. They are merely different sides of the same coin. "Johnson-Forest" has never bothered itself about these mutual accusations except to dissociate itself from the W.P. What we have been concerned with for years is expressed in the following paragraph in the Balance Sheet. We said of the W.P.:

"The party, apart from the leadership, consists of three layers, a layer of party stalwarts — people who have been in the party for years, cannot think of existence outside of the party, and have the attitude, my party, right or wrong. They are Shachtman's cadre — for the most part, Carterites. They maintain the party. It is their party in more senses than they think. Despite their devotion the best negative thing that could happen to the party is that these elements should leave in a body. The second layer consists of a younger grouping with similar political ideas as the above but anxious to build the party. They are the ones who have been hardest hit by the degeneration which began in 1945. Some of them, misguided as they were, did striking work in the unions in New York, in Buffalo, in Los Angeles. They do not know what to do next. Finally, there are the men who had some leadership in the labor movement and were looking for help, as they saw it — help in the union struggle; genuine proletarian rank and file types; Negroes; the youth, eager for knowledge and enthusiastic for the revolution. A party is a whole, a totality, but the leadership must reflect the vanguard of the party. Now the social vanguard of the party is the third element, the least vocal, the least educated in Marxism, the most diffident in expressing themselves among the fast-talking layers above, but revolutionary, sensitive to the movement of the proletariat and potentially great recruiters, once they clarify themselves. These represent the mass outside."

We wrote this of the W.P. in relation to bureaucracy. The S.W.P. will be astonished to learn that we had it very clearly in mind when we wrote that section. The decisive issue for us was not the Russian question; that would settle itself. As we repeatedly told Shachtman: Nothing on earth can prevent the S.W.P. itself raising all issues. We were going into a party to live the life of the party.

We shall sum up our experience at once. We have learnt that the conflict between the S.W.P. cadre and this all-important third layer is the permanent continuous feature of party life. These elements solve their difficulties in a very simple way — they leave.

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The S.W.P. cadre was able to establish itself as a propaganda group on the basis of the general ideas of Trotsky and the solid, in fact, genuinely Bolshevik character of the cadres it took over from the split, particularly those from Minneapolis. But once this was established, the organization came to a halt.

The leading cadre sees itself very literally as leaders. The revolution will put the cadre, vastly extended, of course, but still the cadre, into power. The masses will make the revolution under their guidance. Then they will plan and organize, above all they will plan. They are honest, devoted, sincere; and the proof is their readiness to sacrifice. Their tasks therefore are two: 1) to maintain principled politics, i.e., politics which do not capitulate to the bourgeoisie; 2) to prepare themselves and the party to get hold of unions and other organizations in preparation for the revolution.

The whole conception is not merely bureaucratic in a theoretical sense. It is a profoundly bourgeois conception. They propose to substitute their honest (and sacrificing) selves for the corrupt bourgeoisie, they propose to substitute plan for the anarchy of bourgeois production.

This conception governs every aspect of party life, strategy, education, propaganda, agitation, and social life. It appears most sharply and clearly in the attitude to organized labor and the very definition of what is a revolutionary worker.

For this leadership; this cadre and this party, an advanced, a revolutionary worker is one who is prepared to devote himself completely to assisting the party leadership to gain control of a union. That is the road to the revolution. Any labor bureaucrat who appears to be sympathetic to these aims is the greatest of all prizes, and infinite, devious, and (as in Detroit recently) very illuminating are the means employed to incorporate him. Ten years of this policy has now proved its complete practical bankruptcy. The party has not only gained nothing by it. The result is that the party seems to be justified in its conception of the backwardness of the proletariat and preaches a recession of the working class struggle.

The S.W.P. and the Rank and File Worker

Totally opposed to all this is the political attitude of the genuine rank and filer who comes into the party, of whom there are about a dozen in Detroit, native proletarians, white and Negro, men and women. We met this type repeatedly in the W.P.—These are the ones who lead the wild-cat strikes, symptomatic of the revolt against the bureaucracy. They are not seeking to build caucuses to win posts in unions. They have not joined the party to substitute a good union apparatus for a bad one. They are seeking primarily a revolutionary socialist organization in which they will gain the knowledge, the understanding, the discipline and the associations which will fortify and develop them in their instinctive hostility to bourgeois society. They want the revolutionary education which will enable them to win over the dozens of workers and others among whom they live and whom they know want only what they themselves are seeking in order to build the party. They want this primarily for their own education. They want it in party meetings, they want it in the party press, they want it in party literature and they want it in party life. They are serious about building the party as a basis for a new way of life. The S.W.P. is geared to demoralize them and in the end drive them away.

These workers are ready to defend their union to the last against the bourgeoisie but what they know is that the union apparatus as such must be destroyed and an entire new system substituted before the union can become an instrument of the needs of the workers. In this they are correct against all the wisdom and experience of the S.W.P. cadre. But they cannot express it theoretically. They keep away from the union meetings and after some time in the party they keep away from the party also.

If during the last ten years one-tenth of the time spent on the absolutely hopeless task of building caucuses, hoping to capture one union after another, had been spent on the systematic education of these rank and file workers, the party today would have an actual basis and periphery in the unions and outside it, ten times as great as it has today.

These wise men of the S.W.P. do not know that this is the most practical of political activity. One of the most disastrous failures of the S.W.P. is the fifteen years of effort and sacrifice spent in maneuvering in a particular union. Today nothing remains. Yet not chattering intellectuals but one of the most experienced and effective S.W.P.'ers of those who worked for years in this union has assured us that if the S.W.P.'ers had had a rank and file base of two or three dozen men in the union, the union bureaucrats would not have dared to attack them.

"Johnson-Forest" and the Rank and File Worker

We know this not only by proxy. Two lone, inexperienced "Johnson-Forest" comrades were able to take the initiative in leading the rank and file against the most powerful union bureaucracy in the country; they set off a movement which ultimately involved 100,000 workers, and won a resounding victory over both employers and government when the union leadership had conceded defeat and was counselling retreat as the only way out of disaster. The comrades, unaided, extended the struggle to wider spheres in the labor movement, scoring another dazzling success. Their greatest problem was not the bourgeoisie, the government or the union bureaucracy, but the S.W.P. leadership, which was dominated by its slavish attitude to the union leadership. This whole episode we kept fully documented. Some of the people won to the party by this action have been driven away horror-stricken by listening to the majority line on Yugoslavia.

The rank and file worker comes to the party to find out about himself and the potentialities of his class. He finds nothing. And limited, handicapped, circumscribed as we have been, we have been able to demonstrate that new inexperienced comrades and friends without long experience of Marxism, trained and educated by us, have been able to participate in various spheres of the class struggle as effectively as any others in the party -- in similar circumstances.

In Detroit when the pension scheme came up, the S.W.P. busied itself as usual with the politics of a few pennies more. One worker who is very sympathetic with our ideas took the floor against Reuther. He told him: "You got \$100. Maybe you should have got \$110. Maybe others would have only got \$90. That is your affair. We are not interested in that. What we are interested in is that you have consistently given away to the company the privileges that this union had won in its early days of struggle, privileges of controlling our own production. That is what we want back. We shall never be satisfied until we get it." Reuther was driven to the defensive. The pension discussion became a debate between Reuther and this worker and went on from meeting to meeting. So many Reutherites were supporting the worker that Reuther had to say that although these ideas were correct, the time was not yet ripe.

Elsewhere two young inexperienced "Johnson-Forest" comrades were able to build such contacts among the mass that when the time came for an election campaign, non-party people took over the campaign and made it an astonishing success. Here again the real barrier was the S.W.P., its abstractions about planned economy and its preoccupation with seeing that no "Johnsonism" was preached from the platform.

The S.W.P. leaders preach the backwardness of the workers, the corrupting wealth of American imperialism, the sacrifices which only they are prepared to make, a whole series of falsehoods, follies and slanders of the working class as the reasons why the average worker does not join, or when he joins, leaves. The workers leave because the revolution is not concretized for them, and it is not concretized because the S.W.P. does not concretely practice revolutionary politics.

All these proletarians ever got was that the American imperialists were plotting war and made high profits, which they knew before they entered. In return they were to make sacrifices, ring door-bells, and sell the Militant which in any case few party members read except by an effort.

Six years ago, basing ourselves on theory and on intensive experience, we wrote:

"In the special circumstances of American development, it is precisely the rank and file workers above all others to whom the party must give, both as contacts and far more as members, a comprehensive training in revolutionary thought and the revolutionary way of life as the concrete developing alternative to collapsing bourgeois society. Not only does the worker need this for himself, but it is only by this means that at the present state of the party's development, he can make the most effective appeal to his fellow workers to join our party...

"A Bolshevik party at this stage, can be developed on no other foundation, least of all in the United States. The necessary education in the specific contributions to Marxism in the last five years, concentration on 'immediate demands', the conception of 'plenty for all' -- none of these can be the means of attracting or holding rank and file workers in any numbers in the party." (The Task of Building the American Bolshevik Party, p.15-16).

We know this, because it is on this principle that we have built and educated our own membership under the most difficult conditions--any tendency has ever been subjected to. In the Balance Sheet we wrote about these elements in the W.P.:

"It is precisely here that the W.P. shows the most bureaucratic tendencies. It has never understood the third layer, never listened to them, never learnt anything from them. It has never been able to see that if these were always attracted by what it called "Johnsonism" and had to be beaten off from becoming "Johnsonites," it was because "Johnsonism" represented what they and those outside whom they represented are looking for. Instead of diving deeper and deeper into Marxist theory, the only way of learning to understand this layer and to appreciate and translate into concrete politics their abiding and concrete hostility to bourgeois society, the W.P., with typical petty-bourgeois arrogance, is dominated by the idea that for them everything had to be simplified and popularized. Its conception of the relationship of the leadership to the party is only a purer distillation of what it thinks is the relationship between the party and the masses. Its Bible has been Lenin's mistaken conception in What is to Be Done that the party alone, the intellectuals, can bring socialist

consciousness to the masses. Trotsky took care in his last book to expose Lenin's error, and showed that Lenin himself admitted it. The book shows with hitherto unrevealed insight and perspective the dialectical relation between leadership and rank and file from the beginning of Russian Bolshevism to its end." (Balance Sheet, p.18).

In the S.W.P. and the W.P. rank and file proletarians have always known that "Johnson-Forest" had what they were seeking. That is why our very presence in the branch, as workers in the plant, and as members of "Johnson-Forest" was the cause of such a bitterness on the part of the leadership in Detroit. When at last during the discussion we wrote in State Capitalism and World Revolution and spoke up about the proletariat in the United States and in Russia, it was a revelation to the Detroit rank and file. Brief though it was, they recognized at once that here was something for which they had joined the party and which they had never heard before. They are absolutely correct. Once they are made into revolutionary Marxists, the problem of recruitment is solved. For they and they alone can recruit and keep the recruits in the party.

As it is, these types stay for a while, waiting for they know not what exactly, the local leadership is driven to constant sneering and sniping and sometimes violent attacks on "Johnson-Forest." But as in the W.P. this brings its own reward. To attack "Johnson-Forest" means inevitably an attack on the proletariat. Everywhere our comrades felt that the more the S.W.P. preached the backwardness of the proletariat, the more it was driven to attack "Johnson-Forest" as the main enemy.

Constantly in the party the "Johnson-Forest" comrades in some of the simplest of day-to-day conversations have had to walk on eggs in order to avoid this question of the backwardness of the American proletariat. It becomes an issue simmering under the surface of all relations in the party.

When at the Convention of 1950 an authoritative speech is made upon the bourgeois nature of the American proletariat and its unreadiness for the revolution, every single party member knows that this is an authoritative statement which is directed against the "Johnson-Forest" comrades and not only in their documents but in the attitude they have to the proletariat in the day-to-day life of the party.

The Negroes

What is true of the rank and file proletarian in general, is, as always, doubly true of the Negro. The S.W.P. finds all sorts of fantastic reasons for the fact that so many Negroes joined the party and left it. The W.P. has anticipated them in their total experience.

What the white worker wants, the Negro wants only to a far more intensive degree owing to his doubly oppressed situation.

After twenty years of existence in the United States, the S.W.P. up to 1948 had nothing to tell the Negroes except that they were oppressed. What a conception of the masses and of the vanguard elements to believe that this would hold them. The Negro above all wanted a new way of life, a new way of thought and if even only in idea, a new mode of action. In 1946, again on the basis of theory and an intensive examination of experience we wrote:

"The Negro worker, far more than the white worker, requires

ideological understanding not only of the development of the American proletariat in American society but of the development of Negro struggles. An important part of his integration in the Workers Party is a Leninist education in the objective role which the Negroes have played in the past and will play in the coming proletarian revolution. The education not only of Negroes but of the party as a whole in the significance of this objective role:

- i. binds the Negro to the party
- ii. enables them to answer not only to themselves but to their contacts the justified doubts as to the fate of Negroes after they have participated in the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.
- iii. is the basis for harmonious relations between whites and Negroes under the pressure of bourgeois race prejudice which will increasingly be felt in the party as it draws into its ranks not intellectuals, but rank and file workers, both white and Negro.

"Experience has also indicated that Negroes, properly integrated into the party, cannot only bring substantial numbers of Negroes into the party; but are also a means of attracting white workers." (The Task of Building the American Bolshevik Party, pp. 14-15)

These words seem simple. In reality they contain the essence of Bolshevism and we, despite the most heartbreaking limitations, have been able to do much to demonstrate their truth in practice. Here, more sharply than anywhere else, can be seen the limitations of these party-builders.

All politics in the United States are expressed most sharply in the Negro question.

The Negroes who come to the party know that the party does not give them what they want. Revolutionary in form, the content of the S.W.P. ideas on the Negro question is thoroughly bourgeois, radical bourgeois but bourgeois nevertheless. The party is not politically educated on the Negro question. The task of the party leaders was to do for the Negroes in the United States what Marx had done in general for the proletariat -- establish its role in the transformation of society. It is on this we live. The party did not get it, the Negroes did not get it. The consequence is many painful and some very shameful conflicts.

The struggle in the party takes the form of a struggle over white chauvinism, and Negro after Negro drops out of the party convinced that the party is chauvinistic. The party as a whole is conscious of the fact that it does its best to behave to Negroes as comrades should irrespective of race. It cannot understand the hostile attitude of the Negroes. Thus because of political weakness, an issue which can be kept in its place only politically, is blown up to false proportions and exacerbates antagonisms on both sides.

If the "Johnson-Forest" comrades were in constant danger of conflict over the proletariat, they were still more so over the Negro question. In Detroit, the conflict was continuous. The "Johnson-Forest" comrades made a few mistakes. But it would have needed inhuman patience and control to avoid reacting, and reacting badly: sometimes, to the jealousy, suspicion, hostility and sense of inferiority of the S.W.P. leaders on the Negro question. They could not hold the Negroes, and they knew and we knew that the "Johnson-Forest" comrades could. The exasperating nature of the struggle can be demonstrated by a recent episode. The leader of the Detroit party, speaking to a Negro proletarian native of Detroit, accused the "Johnson-Forest" white girls of dancing only with Negroes. The white

girls of the majority, he complained, were too busy to do so, and the result was that the majority seemed to be chauvinistic. If this is the mess into which a member of the National Committee can get himself on the Negro question inside the party, it is easy to understand the confusion, suspicion and bitterness of inexperienced but revolutionary Negroes who come to the party, hoping first and foremost to leave bourgeois ideas behind them.

The Women

There is a historical affinity in the United States between the struggles for freedom of Negroes and of women. The history of the S. W. P. shows this in its sharpest and yet most confused form.

The women in the party, and here there is little difference between cadre and rank and file, are tormented by a sense of the same masculine domination which they had in bourgeois society. Just as the Negroes fall back on white chauvinism, so the women fall back on charges of male chauvinism. In reality the S. W. P. is a complete blank for any theory or even statement of the situation of women in bourgeois society and the revolutionary role of women in the struggle for the revolution. The party has no material, no analysis, no line, no means of educating itself on this profoundly important question.

When the "Johnson-Forest" women comrades went to Detroit they found that the S. W. P. women were for the most part housewives or did office work. The women comrades were told that it was their revolutionary duty to work in offices or to stay at home in order to sustain their men either in the unions or as party functionaries. Our women startled them by refusing to be mere appendages to men and going into the plant themselves. The S. W. P. women followed suit. This at least was one good example which the S. W. P. in Detroit followed.

Small as it is, "Johnson-Forest" is already distinguished by the fact that its leading women cadres, not only in theoretical work but in all round capacities in all such spheres as they have been called upon to handle, not excluding the class struggle at its sharpest (the most important episode described earlier) -- in every sphere they can hold their own with any woman in any radical party in the country. Our younger women comrades, despite the strangulating atmosphere of the S. W. P. are making rapid strides, from the seniors to the youngest recruits. They hold their own with the men in our tendency. The leadership sees to it that they do, and spends more care on their education and opening up opportunities for them, precisely because of the resistance to bourgeois oppression that they represent.

It might be thought that here presumably there would be no cause of conflict. Not so. In Los Angeles, one of our younger comrades without experience, got interested in the women question. Trained by "Johnson-Forest", she, without any guidance, went straight to the heart of the question, the proletarian woman. With help from friends inside and outside the party, she sketched out the elements of a theory, in essence relating the role of the proletarian woman as supplementary to and governed by the needs of capitalist production.

Immediately there is a crisis. The S. W. P. does not know anything else about women in the modern world than to tell them that they will gain personal freedom in the party, that imperialism means war, and that their men will be taken away -- as characteristic a piece of male chauvinism as you can find. This emptiness is at once shown up by

a thesis which shows the proletarian woman, in peace or war, bound to a routine which ruins her relations with her husband and her children. The conclusion is inescapable. Nothing but the proletarian revolution and the most drastic sweeping away of bourgeois society offers any way out.

Forthwith there begins for a young comrade at the beginning of her development, the perpetual "Johnson-Forest" crisis in the S. W. P. All this about women proletarians and social revolution is of course "Johnsonism." How much can she say? How to phrase it? The party leaders have no line of their own, but "Johnsonism" is an enemy to be striped at wherever it raises its head.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that one of the party leaders in Los Angeles, a woman, has for years been notorious in the branch and in the party for her championship of women's rights, above all, in the party. For her it is a question of male chauvinism, pure and simple. Women, individual party women, have to struggle for their rights. The attitude is in no way different from that of the Negro worker who blames all his troubles in the party on white chauvinism.

Thus an attempt to work out a Marxist approach on a serious question, however tentatively and modestly, places the "Johnson-Forest" comrades in general and in particular in conflict with the cadres of the S. W. P.

The S. W. P. leadership, confronted with a concrete problem in building the revolutionary party and the concrete dangers in the party itself of accusations and heated conflicts over male chauvinism, has no guidance to offer. For years it has tried to keep the peace by calling periodically for a study of "theory" on the question. Engels, Bebel, Kautsky. Never was there the slightest inkling of a concrete problem of revolutionary proletarian women in the United States. This evasion has finally culminated in a comprehensive historical treatment of matriarchical societies from the apes to men by a leading woman comrade in New York. Just as the S. W. P. leadership runs back to debates on Christianity because it is incapable of grappling with the question of Stalinism today, so it runs back to remote discussions on matriarchal vs. patriarchal societies because it is incapable of grappling with the concrete problems of educating not only the proletarian woman but the revolutionary party in America on women and the revolution.

Youth

On the youth question as on the Negro question, the S. W. P. is blinded by its fear and impotence before the aspirations of those layers of the revolutionary masses who are seeking in the revolutionary party to fortify their instinctive hostility to bourgeois society, their conceptions of a new society and their readiness to work for it.

But whereas in relation to the Negroes the party stands helplessly by while they leave, in relation to the youth the S. W. P. from 1940 is haunted by an underlying fear that there may be a repetition of the split of 1940. It therefore seeks actively and systematically not to develop youth work but to prevent the youth from splitting. There could be no greater indication of the remoteness of S. W. P. politics from the revolutionary forces in the United States today.

This defensive attitude is not organizational but political. As in 1940, the S. W. P. acts as it does because it is unable to pose the one program, the concretization of the perspective of the American revolution, which can prevent the constant necessity to intervene organizationally.

The S. W. P. thinks that the danger of split in the United States is the Russian question. It is as wrong on this as it can possibly be, and all our writings since 1946 to the present have been warnings to the American Trotskyist Movement of precisely this. We told them in the Balance Sheet that because of the absence of a Social Democratic party in the United States, all kinds of revolutionary petty-bourgeois elements would be constantly attracted to the revolutionary party. We wrote:

"Shachtman and the W. P. are symbolical of the American petty-bourgeoisie and many radical workers. Ready to fight American capitalism, but not knowing how, indulging in all sorts of empiricism and then looking back at the revolutionary movement because they do not know what to do with themselves. The assimilation and integration of these and similar elements, the preservation of the revolutionary cadres of the American proletariat, however finely tempered, from petty-bourgeois ideology, the subjective aspect of this task is the education of the party in the past, present and future of the American socialist revolution and all that this implies. That is the great lesson to be learnt from this. Goldman and Morrow collapsed because they saw the victories of the Red Army but had no serious perspective of the victory of the American proletariat. And Morrow's theoretical hostility to the thesis of the I. K. D. succumbed to their fantasies precisely because what should have been the source of his strength, the American proletariat, was the source of his weakness. As the party grows, these tendencies will reappear in one form or another. Mere discipline is not enough." (Balance Sheet, p. 25)

The Youth and the Abandoned Revolution

The S. W. P. has been able to teach the youth nothing about the American Revolution because the party itself knows nothing about this revolution. It has no idea of preparing the theoretical premises of the revolution and building the party theoretically and practically on these. Therefore, in a sphere where it is completely baffled politically, it falls back on pure discipline. But, far more than with the women and the Negroes in their particular spheres, it is precisely the specific aspect of bourgeois society, arbitrary discipline, that the youth came to the party to escape. The desire for knowledge, the eagerness for free self-expression, the aspirations for freedom from being pushed around by authority for reasons alien to the youth, all these consciously present in the youth, are in the highest sense revolutionary. They are a tremendous source of vitality and strength to the revolutionary party if they are integrated by a concrete revolutionary line based on Marxism and the proletariat.

But political bankruptcy has its own logic. The S. W. P. turned its attention to the youth precisely at that moment when it abandoned the perspective of the American revolution. It did not even bother to hide this. In New York it told the youth: the party must fall back on youth work because it no longer has an arena for trade union activity in this period of the recession of the class struggle.

It proposed the reorganization of the youth as a party branch. When the youth instinctively recoiled, it stated even more emphatically its abandonment of the perspective. It told them that it still adhered to the "classical conception of an independent youth group," but in the concrete circumstances of working class decline, the only arena for the party was the youth. Its lip service to the concept of an independent youth group was precisely the same as its lip service to the concept of the independent Negro struggle. In theory, yes; in practice,

fear and cowardice before it. If the party had had a revolutionary perspective on the American proletariat, it could have stimulated and encouraged the building of an independent youth group. It had precisely the opposite orientation. Hence it took precisely the opposite road.

This reorganization of the youth into a party branch in New York had nothing to do with the revolution or the development of the youth. It was the attempt to keep the youth subordinate by party discipline. The unworkable result was to throw the youth into a blind conflict with the party, a conflict in which, as with the Negroes and the women, it was impossible to disentangle the political issues without raising the most fundamental questions of the life of the party.

The "Johnson-Forest" leaders in New York constantly retreated in order not to imperil the general position of the tendency in the S. W. P. The youth, hostile to these actions of the party, felt that the existence of "Johnson-Forest" afforded them, if not protection, at least a perspective. Only the fact that "Johnson-Forest" was in existence prevented the development in 1949-50 of a struggle over the youth question recapitulating on a higher plane certain aspects of the split of 1940. It would have begun with questions of bureaucracy but would soon have developed into an all-sided split. The training of "Johnson-Forest" on the 1940 split, the constant education of the youth not to be diverted by organizational considerations, kept this in check. In essential contrast to 1940, the youth which was under the influence of "Johnson-Forest" ideas did not want a debate on the Russian question; it did not want a repetition of the old sectarian ideological disputes. It was seeking a revolutionary line to go to the deepest layers of the revolutionary youth.

The youth was sensitive to the revolutionary sentiments and ideas that were simmering in the masses of youth outside. The experiences and education of some of them in "Johnson-Forest" ideas and practices had taught them to look for and to see these things. The same education had taught them not to look in 1951 for student anti-war movements of the type of the '30's. They knew in the youth as elsewhere that the movement had gone deeper, encompassing the attitudes of the youth to society as a whole. They did not actually expect the great student demonstrations but they understood what they signified. They did a thorough study of this movement and outlined political conclusions which could be developed and concretized only in practice. But as usual they had to keep it secret. We mention this as an example of the terrible burden all "Johnson-Forest" comrades carried. But it pressed most harshly on the youth. That sort of thing is now over. This material on American youth will be one of our earliest publications.

The party sent into its pseudo-youth branch the politically most Pabloite elements. The leader of these was one of the most offensive of the S. W. P. ers, politically unstable in regard to the war, permeated to the marrow with a ferocious firmness when backed by a large majority against some inexperienced but revolutionary youth. Everybody knew that these had been sent in to keep the youth from going "Johnson-Forest." A substantial number of capable comrades supported "Johnson-Forest." But the question was not one of different positions on the Russian question. It was the most vital political life of the youth which was at stake. The "Johnson-Forest" youth was ready to let the S. W. P. be as Pabloite as it wanted, if only it could get to work on the American revolution. The youth who had neither Pabloite nor "Johnson-Forest" politics were confused, disoriented, bewildered.

This fundamental conflict of political ideas expressed itself most clearly in the attitude to the Y. P. A. as a mass movement. The "Johnson-Forest" youth saw it as a movement of youth, confused, disoriented, non-political

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but seeking a means to express their hostility to capitalism and the war. The S.W.P. does not understand this in its own theory and practice. How could it give direction to the youth? All that it saw was a struggle for control, a repetition of its hopeless attempt to win people in the United States by means of Titoism, and an exposure of Stalinism over civil rights. The whole thing turned out to be a total failure. On the heels of this came a repetition of the Y.P.A. conflict in Brooklyn and the savage attack on "Johnson-Forest" and particularly in the youth after the 1950 convention.

In this brief sketch of political life in the youth can be seen, as in a laboratory experiment, the essential conflict between the politics of the S.W.P. and the politics of "Johnson-Forest" which characterizes all spheres of party life. We have spoken since 1947 about learning from the third layer. We can sum up our views by saying that, as with our comrades in greater class struggles, the youth, inexperienced as it was, understood infinitely more about what was required of a youth group than did the most experienced leaders of the S.W.P. Moreover the S.W.P. leadership was nothing but an obstacle in the way of building the youth group, a constant source of demoralization, and actually drove youth out of the party.

"Johnson-Forest" and the Dialectic

We have said enough to show our experiences in this party, in every sphere, for nearly four years. In leaving it, we know not only what not to do, we know what we wanted to do and what the party fought to prevent us from doing. We shall have no difficulty in working out a concrete program. This, in addition to our strenuous attempt over ten years to build a total theory, taking up all questions of Marxism, is enough. We have a cadre that has shown its capacity to be disciplined and restrained in a demoralizing environment for nearly four years. We have demonstrated to ourselves and to all who have eyes to see what is Bolshevism, not only in politics but in organization.

We tried to live in this party. We cannot any longer. We did not excite ourselves on party democracy, bureaucracy, etc. It is clear now that we understood the S.W.P. political positions better than they understood them themselves. That did not trouble us. What we knew from the start was that if we could not live in this party, that was the end of all possibility of the party developing as a revolutionary organization. We left the W.P. and never looked back. We are leaving the S.W.P. and in doing so, finishing forever with the wreck these two parties have made of revolutionary politics in the United States.

Let us finally sum up what we stand for. Our own independent program and our own independent organization are matters for the future. But let us set down what we wrote in 1947 and what has sustained and developed us in the W.P. and in the S.W.P. and what now we shall proceed to apply both in theory and practice:

"If the Johnson-Forest tendency has been able to make any contributions to Bolshevism, it has been because for it the study of the Hegelian dialectic in its Marxist form, of Marxian economics, and of the method of the great Marxist revolutionaries is nothing more than intellectual preparation and the purging of bourgeois ideas in order to be able to understand and interpret and organize the instinctive drive and revolutionary instincts of the rank and file proletariat and the petty -

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bourgeois but idealistic and eager youth. It is our tendency which rescued some of the finest elements in the W. P. from leaving the movement altogether. On the other hand, without them and what they brought into our ranks from the proletariat outside, the leaders of the tendency would have had merely some sound but abstract ideas and would have been unable to make our most precious discovery, to see in the movement of the masses today the concrete expression of Marx's most abstract conceptions." (Balance Sheet, p. 18)

Part IV

Bolshevism and Personality

1940 and 1951

The S. W. P. has on every conceivable occasion wearied its own membership with ceaseless repetition of a few platitudes about its own politics and organization, and the politics and organization of its opponents. It is as certain as anything can be that it will make strained and foolish parallels between Shachtmanism and "Johnsonism," the split of 1940 and 1951. The membership of the S. W. P. knows us better.

Those who read this document and think over it and their own difficulties will understand us still more. That is sufficient. We have never been interested in the whole mass of interpretations of Trotsky, recrimination, pomposity and self-congratulation which for the W. P. and S. W. P. constitute their politics.

But for us and for those who are seriously trying to find a new road, it would be useful and historically valuable to make a few observations on the document issued by the W. P. when the split of 1940 took place. It is preserved in S. W. P. literature. (The difference between that document and this will be understood from this fact. The S. W. P. will not dare to publish ours.)

1. The Shachtmanites had no political position on anything. They looked for a new headquarters and a program simultaneously. "Johnson-Forest" has, in Lenin's phrase, fully developed positions on every major question of the revolution and the counter-revolution, all printed before we came in. We took care to do that.

2. The W. P. broke with the S. W. P. but continued to swear allegiance to the principles of the Fourth International and sought to re-enter its ranks for years. That sort of shilly-shallying is totally foreign to us. We are breaking with the whole organization, fully and completely, and henceforth we shall seek to destroy it by revolutionary methods however and wherever we can.

These two are sufficient in themselves to distinguish us in 1951 from the W. P. in 1940. The Burnham-Shachtman document itself, however, is in a negative way quite instructive today.

It made no class analysis of the conflicts. We, on the other hand, for eleven years have made it clear that Stalinism represents capitalism, the class enemy of the proletariat. As long as the Fourth International operated under the nonsensical theory that Stalinism outside of Russia would never seek power, we did not emphasize this. But in State Capitalism and World Revolution, without fanfare but without circumlocution, we made it clear that the struggle of classes was involved. In the second part of our Resolution on

the International Question (the part which we shall publish in Part II of this bulletin) we made it still clearer. This document shows that in the last analysis the politics and practice of the Fourth International are petty-bourgeois, the petty-bourgeois of the administrative type, product of the epoch of state capitalism. Stalinism is its most characteristic representative.

The W.P., in discussing the crisis, declared: "The issue, then, is the war." (The War and Bureaucratic Conservatism).

The issue for us is not the war, or peace, or any such specific event. It is the degeneration of a party, in its political principles and in its everyday political life; a party with political conceptions leading it to actual struggle against the attempt to reach the basically revolutionary elements in the country.

The W.P. yelled for collective leadership and party democracy. What was meant is characterized by us very fully in the Balance Sheet. For us the S.W.P. leaders are a genuinely collective leadership. The way they collectively staggered, jumped, fell, slipped into the position on Yugoslavia, and then on Eastern Europe (if they have a position), the unanimity that distinguishes them, the fact that it was the cadre who dragged their leader into the morass with them, all this as we explain it, is the exact opposite of what the W.P. charged. We have learnt to our cost that in organizational and other inter-relations the leaders are a collective body, with the same political attitudes, the same political morals, if not in positive action, in delighted or passive acquiescence.

The W.P. talked loosely about cliquism as a group following a leader for psychological reasons. When we say cliquism, we define it politically and give its political roots.

Nobody today, bourgeois, Stalinists, W.P. and S.W.P. can say that "Johnson-Forest" does not represent revolutionary politics, the mobilization of the proletariat against all forms of bourgeois and bureaucratic domination. All the S.W.P. and the W.P. can accuse us of, as they have done in the past, is revolutionary romanticism or mystical idealistic belief in the proletariat. By that they hurt not us but themselves. The need to attack "Johnson-Forest" re-enforces their need to denigrate the working class.

We leave behind both the W.P. and the S.W.P. Let the S.W.P. preoccupy itself and rejoice at its victories over the S.P., the S.L.P. and the W.P. We leave that behind us too. We firmly believe that if ever we find ourselves drifting into any political contact with these parties or radical elements around them, it will be a sign to us that we are in mortal danger.

Bolshevism and Personality

A political line ultimately expresses itself in the very personalities of those who are shaped by it or adhere to it. This was so in the W.P. The "Johnson-Forest" comrades had a long experience of soul-sickness among the members of the W.P. There Freud, or rather his popularizers (for these people study nothing seriously) took first place before Marx. When we came into the S.W.P. we noted with satisfaction that there was none of this in our new party.

But as "The Coming American Revolution" receded and as we got to know the party better, slowly certain characteristic traits began to emerge.

The first theme was "sacrifice." From top to bottom there can never have been a set of people anywhere so conscious of the sacrifices they are making. The "Johnson-Forest" comrades could not understand this. We in 1951 are not conscious of making any sacrifices. When we see radical types, especially the petty-bourgeois intellectuals outside the movement and the lives they lead, we thank our stars that we have found some way of life by which we can develop our capacities in every direction.

Even on ceremonial occasions this intangible but very real clash would be obvious to the discerning. Along with the recital of the great efforts and suffering and heroic deeds of the past, there was often a peculiar maudlin humanitarian note of sacrifice, and of going to bed at night conscious that one had worked not for self but for humanity. This came straight from the nineteenth century. Among the "Johnson-Forest" comrades, one went to bed at night personally conscious, if of anything, that one was doing what one had to do, not for anyone else, but for one's own self.

In line with this we noticed also the readiness with which the women cadres, and particularly the wives of the leaders, burst into tears at any moment. From the top to bottom of the party they swam in maudlin self-pity.

In a political party every recurrent phenomenon is a political symptom. As we grew to know them better, the genuine political significance of this became clear. Both the W.P. and the S.W.P. have been educated on a theory of the party. They themselves, their party, would somehow, by some means, grow and reach the head of the masses, and seize the power, and thus give them the chance to plan. Both have now awakened to the fact that this dream which sustained them for years is nothing but a dream. As usual their reactions were parallel. The W.P., seeing that there was no party, called off the revolution and sought to attach itself to the Social-Democracy. The S.W.P., seeing that there was no revolutionary party, decided that the Stalinists would somehow become one. Each in its own way abdicated. But the abdication expresses itself in the bitterness against "renegades", the constant reminders of the great sacrifices which the "renegades" could not and cannot endure, and the ready tears.

Normally this would be of only psychological interest. But we lived and worked with them. They too found us strange. The "Johnson-Forest" comrades, vigorous, confident, without a trace of scepticism about the proletariat, found it difficult to establish other than formal relations with many of these people. Optimists, mystics, idealists, romantics (the W.P. had called us stratospherists) -- these epithets they tried to sting us with, being unable to characterize us either as deviating towards Stalinism or towards Menshevism, the only two serious deviations possible among Marxists today. At best they had a tolerant indulgence for "Johnson-Forest" comrades with their unqualified belief in a revolution by the American proletariat. We observed merely the strange ways in which political degeneration expresses itself in personality and left it at that.

But of late the whole question has assumed an aspect which has forced itself on our notice and compelled recognition. Only-discussed crises of personality in the highest leadership of the party have come to our attention.

Despite our reserve and distaste for these matters, its importance forced itself upon us. How is it possible for a revolutionary party, aimed at the overthrow of bourgeois society, to be led by men who openly discuss the past, present and future demoralization of each other and their comrades? The consciousness of the failure of nationalized property equals workers' state, the failure of the union policy, was obviously taking heavy toll of the leadership. It used the same old words, but it knew that the words carried no meaning for themselves. It isolated itself and the membership in rural surroundings where it could drown its sorrows and give some "elbow room" to examination and soothing of the tortured personality.

We held our peace but we could not help being concerned about a Marxist party, led by people whose politics had reduced them to this unfortunate condition.

It was not only a question of political failure. The more sensitive of the leadership knew that the party was attracting elements who could not possibly be called revolutionary. This was particularly so in New York where a certain type of petty-bourgeois was coming into the party, people who knew nothing and cared less about Marxism and the revolutionary proletariat, but were bringing into the party their preoccupation with the expression of their own personality in an absolutely individualistic sense. The old cadre still had enough revolutionary tradition and temper to recognize these elements for what they were and to be hostile to them. They showed that hostility on various occasions. One of the most striking of these types, distinguished by great energy in the ersatz political activity of the party, was at the same time distinguished by a vulgarity and corruption of character which repelled even those who depended on her and those like her for the success of party activities. The "Johnson-Forest" comrades felt not only disgusted but bewildered by the appearance of these political types, the substantial role they were playing in the party, the distaste of the leadership for them, and yet the incapacity of the leadership to handle the situation. But this phenomenon, so clearly obvious in the New York organization, assumed for us a final significance when we were able to see that this type, a new appearance in the ranks, was solidly established in the leading circles of the party.

We must say here that we were not aware of all this in its total significance. Many of the facts we see now as part of a whole we did not know, or rather only few knew; those that we knew we understood and examined only partially, dominated by our desire to stay in the party. Yet there was an increasingly critical attitude to the party in all sections of the tendency. All were asking themselves: what kind of people are these? Finally there was forced upon us a shocking recognition of the callousness, the brutality, the lack of elementary human decency, far less of revolutionary principle and vigilance to which substantial elements of the most highly-placed leadership had sunk.

The "Johnson-Forest" leadership talked to some of the comrades. When they were questioned and invited to say what they knew and thought, they poured out such a torrent of horrible experiences, grievances, provocations, day to day struggle against demoralization and such a devastating analysis of the life and politics of the S.W.P. as overwhelmed us. With splendid loyalty and discipline our younger comrades in particular had endured in silence and said little to us because they felt that to do so would be an indirect questioning of our line of complete integration into the S.W.P. One of the lessons we learned again is how hard it is for leaders to listen to the third layer in their organization. How we struggled to remain in this

party. Every S.W.P.er knows that. But now our comrades were able to establish concretely what the leadership now knew, that integration into this party meant self-destruction.

As we understood ourselves and where we were, the cry became unanimous: "Let us get out of here at once. It is a political gas-chamber. We do not trust this leadership, even to carry out its own political line. None of our comrades who is in any difficulty can trust himself to them. Even those who are not degenerate are ready to support those who are when their crimes are discovered. We do not want to discuss with them. Such a discussion can only besmirch us. Let us get out of here as quickly as we can."

We hesitated for a moment, but the final, the ultimate certainty came with the discovery that the one with the most brains, authority and experience who had come to the rescue of the politically unstable and fortified the turn to Stalinism, was also at the disposal of any degenerate who might need protection.

The temper of the comrades can be judged by the incredible speed and comprehensiveness of the preparations to leave this jungle behind us once and for all.

We come out infinitely stronger, more disciplined, more mature, more confident than when we entered. The S.W.P. has totally demoralized some of our weaker comrades but surprisingly few. The S.W.P. knows that against all elements of degeneration in our own ranks we have been always and are quite merciless politically, though tolerant organizationally, as Bolsheviks have always been. All our principled politics have meant nothing to them. They cannot learn. We have not lost by it. But we want not a single second more of it.

"Johnson-Forest" now sets out as an independent force preparing itself for the revolutionary tasks ahead of us. It will not be easy but the revolution is not easy either. If life in the S.W.P. was difficult, as it was, the task of building our own organization will demand much more of us; but we know where we are going and we will now be able to give all our energies to the tasks for which we joined the movement.

In conclusion we must make clear that all the leaders and all the members of the S.W.P. are not degenerate. It would be ridiculous to say that. There are in the leadership and far more, in the party, good comrades with whom we have worked satisfactorily and whom we would be sorry to leave behind. But they must understand that they belong to an organization, and that they are responsible for the dominant political and organizational practices by which that organization lives. That responsibility they cannot escape. We are not trying to persuade them to join us. But we believe that the revolutionary education of the comrades will begin when they take a decisive stand, in irreconcilable opposition to the degeneration, not only of the past and present, but that which will envelop them even more now that we are gone. Let them listen to the response the leadership will make to this balance sheet, the most serious political analysis ever made of Trotskyism in the United States. And when they compare what we have to say and the stupidities with which the S.W.P. leadership will reply, they should then think of the proletariat and the constant appeals of revolutionaries to it to break with its reactionary leaders. Never, never will they be able to lead the working class in revolution, never will they be able to develop themselves as revolutionaries if they are constantly asking the workers to do what they dare not do themselves.

Finally, to these sincere revolutionaries we give a warning. As in every party, in these days of bourgeois persecution, some comrades are in a difficult position, in danger from the persecution of the union bureaucracy, the government persecution of subversives, etc. We know our own revolutionary duty and we shall take every care to carry it out. But if under any pretence whatsoever, these savage and brutal S.W.P. leaders place any of our threatened comrades in danger, we shall make it our special duty to pillory these traitors the wide world over, from one end of the revolutionary movement to the other, so that everyone shall know them and the working class be warned against the renegades and degenerates who masquerade in the name of Trotskyism.

For the "Johnson-Forest" Comrades:

F. Forest	I. Kurnin
J. Hayden	Si Williams
R. Stone	Inez Bennett
J. Fredericks	F. Dutton
Frank Morgan	C. Gaunt
H. Key	B. Gordon
Norman Warner	W. Gorman

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