

## Trotskyism in the United States, 1940-47

# BALANCE SHEET

### The Workers Party and the Johnson-Forest Tendency

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#### NOTE

The Johnson-Forest tendency present this balance sheet of Trotskyism in the United States for its co-thinkers at home and abroad who share the program and principles of the Fourth International founded by Trotsky in 1938. In 1942 the Trotskyists in the United States were compelled to disaffiliate themselves from the Fourth International by the reactionary laws of the American government. All references to the Fourth Inter-

national in the United States, therefore, refer to the two parties, the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party, who stand on the principles of the Fourth International. Despite the disaffiliation the mutual influencing and interest in ideas continues and must continue. It is in this spirit that we present our balance sheet.

#### Introduction

In 1940 the present Workers Party split from the Socialist Workers Party. The comrades and organizations abroad who share our political ideas considered this an American phenomenon. Seven years have passed, years that have shaken bourgeois society and everything in it to their foundations. The International too has felt and is feeling the successive shocks. Now that the Extraordinary Party Conference approaches, with the rapidity which characterizes our epoch, all the basic phenomena which characterize the split of 1940 have appeared all over the International. The American experience, however, is coming to the close of one definitive stage. The 1940 split has been clarified in life. This clarification by today, 1947, has shown that the divisions in the United States were not at all isolated or national

phenomena. It is the national peculiarities of the U.S. that disguised for a period the profoundly international significance of the events in the Trotskyist movement in the United States from 1940-1947. Because, among other reasons, the experience has been already clarified in the United States, the Extraordinary Party Conference will be deeply influenced politically and organizationally according to the degree to which it has absorbed the lessons of the American experience between 1940 and 1947. Not the least contribution to this task is that the struggle was participated in and illuminated with the greatest thoroughness by Trotsky and represented the climax of his great contributions to the international movement.

## I. The Unprincipled Split

The split of 1940 was the most unprincipled split in the history of Bolshevism. In the W.P., particularly among the uninitiated youth, there are now circulating statements to the effect that the split was caused by the refusal of "democratic rights" to the Minority, a proof of the bureaucratic degeneration of the S.W.P. These are abominable lies and a slander not of Cannon or "Cannonism" but of our whole movement.

The Fourth International had been founded in 1938. A convention in 1939 had ratified its decisions. One month later came the Hitler-Stalin pact and differences arose about the Russian line of the International. What should have been done is a lesson to be learnt once and for all, and we do not propose to begin a new political chapter in our history by evading the issue or tolerating evasion of it. The Minority had the duty to clarify its differences, at that time above all, in a serious manner. There were international comrades available in the U.S. A discussion under Trotsky's personal guidance could have been arranged. Ultimately a political statement, placing clearly divided issues before the International, would have emphasized our solidarity in face of the barbarism of the bourgeois war. The International as an international organization would have emerged stronger from the crisis and would have had an invaluable lesson in the proper method of conducting itself in a crisis of the type that will continually recur at critical moments in our future history.

Instead the Minority seemed to become enraged. Half-baked positions on Russia were thrown into discussion. Trotsky's invitation to Shachtman at least to discuss the crisis was impudently ignored—one of the meanest, most cowardly and most undemocratic actions in the history of Trotskyism. Let him who can, justify by a single word this refusal even to discuss

with Trotsky, the founder of our movement.

This was the conduct of the Minority at the beginning of the discussion. Its conduct at the end was worse. The S.W.P., backed by the authority of Trotsky, offered to the Minority membership on the Editorial Board of The New International; two members out of five on the Secretariat; a continuation of the discussion; the right to publish an internal bulletin of its own; the publication of a symposium. Trotsky invited the Minority to win members on its own platform and by this means, if it could, transform the minority into a majority. He publicly warned the Majority that if it was defeated at the convention, it should accept the discipline of the Minority. It was useless. The Minority split the party deliberately. The leaders of the present Johnson-Forest Minority took part in all this, and we therefore are qualified to speak. There is no need for the S.W.P. and the Fourth International at this time to insist upon any confession. But we have a political responsibility to our own past, to the faction which we lead, to the party and to all at home and abroad who are concerned with our movement. We have that responsibility and here discharge it, not only for the past but for the future. The split was a betrayal of our movement. We have seen its consequences, both on those who committed it and those who fought against it. All those who, for whatever reasons, at this time, after digesting the American experience, propose to split, or encourage or tolerate the idea of a split, or carry on discussions in a manner leaving loop-holes for a split are expressing nothing else but their political bankruptcy, their initial abandonment of the principles of our movement, their terror before the new tasks and their unbridled hatred of those who continue to pin their faith for the regeneration of society on the proletariat and nothing else but the proletariat.

## II. Trotsky's Role in the 1940 Split

But if 1940-1947 gives us the experience of the American splitters and forewarns us against all who take even the most hesitating steps along that road, 1940 also gives us the method of Bolshevism in foreseeing and meeting such a crisis in the movement. Trotsky had for years foreseen the crisis in the American movement, and increasingly it became apparent that the method of his intervention was designed as an object-lesson for the whole Movement.

As he himself had to point out, from the first day of his arrival in Mexico in 1937, Trotsky tried to build a cadre in the United States which would answer and destroy Hook and Eastman, Burnham and all the anti-dialecticians. The Minority never understood why Trotsky "introduced" dialectic into the dispute of 1940 and to this day spreads the slander that he did so in order to hide his bankruptcy on the Russian question. In Europe, for historical reasons, the class alignments had posed all serious problems in class terms expressed by political parties and philosophical concepts based on different classes. In the United States, however, this was not so and the pragmatic method of thought ruled in all classes of society. It was precisely Leninism which for a generation had fought the most vigilant fight against all the peculiarities of thought which the Russian historical development had created in Russian life. This was an equally urgent task, in fact a more urgent task, for the party in the United States. The fact remains that although Trotsky tried to stimulate all the so-called intellectuals in the party to undertake this task with the necessary seriousness, he failed to get any response.

Pragmatism was merely the theoretical expression of a

more vicious political enemy—the theory of American exceptionalism. It is the theory that the United States can somehow escape the European development, if not indefinitely, then for a lengthy period. In 1921 when the Comintern realised that for the moment the revolution in Europe had receded, it posed boldly the question of the revolution in the United States. Trotsky's writings of 1921-1926 are permeated with this idea.

The early rejection of the Labor Party slogan was based on the expectation of a rapid development of the revolutionary movement in the United States. And in 1937 the Transitional Program, like all serious Marxist programs, was elaborated above all on production and general social relations in the most advanced capitalist country in the world—the United States. In 1939 Trotsky supervised an elaborate program of theoretical and practical activity to prepare the party, the organized labor movement and the Negro masses for the revolutionary struggle of the Negro people. From 1937, therefore, through 1938, to the presentation of the Transitional Program, to the July Conference in 1939, Trotsky was laying a foundation for the comprehensive theoretical and practical rearming, or for that matter, arming of the American party. This was needed to begin the task of making a revolutionary impact upon the political development of the world revolutionary crisis in the U.S. For years this might seem to apply to the American comrades alone. Now the post-war developments in world politics and the International itself show that this problem affects every single section and tendency. Most of the centrifugal forces in the International are based upon the perspectives of an economic stabilization "the democratic illusions" of the masses in Europe and indefinite

postponement of revolutionary crisis. The most politically illiterate of Europeans know that the sole prospect of economic rehabilitation in the world is the American economy. So that behind that basic conflict of perspectives in the International and the tendency to political and organizational adventurism is nothing else but the belief in the stability or the exceptionalism of American capitalism. The American question as Trotsky saw it in 1937 for the American party is now in 1947 the question of the fundamental evaluation of the perspectives of capitalism.

When Shachtman joined with Burnham to say that they could both agree to disagree on dialectic without prejudice to concrete political issues, Trotsky reacted violently. Well before the split he wrote immediately to Shachtman that "The section on the dialectic (is) the greatest blow that you, personally, as the editor of The New International could have delivered to Marxist theory." (In Defense of Marxism, p. 46.) In Trotsky's view, "It was absolutely necessary to explain why the American 'radical' intellectuals accept Marxism without the dialectic (a clock without a spring). The secret is simple. In no other country has there been such a rejection of the class struggle as in the land of unlimited 'opportunity.'"

Trotsky was fighting, it must be understood, for a comprehensive preparation for revolution. He was sharp toward Shachtman who had unmistakably revealed the Menshevik conservative tendencies in his politics. In April 1938 Trotsky presided over discussions preliminary to the Transitional Program. Trotsky was urging proletarianization but not in the sense of merely going into factories.

Right at the beginning he separated the Transitional Program from the reformist. "It is not the reformist minimum program which never includes workers' militia, workers' control of production."

This was to be made even to the farmers.

"And we propose to you that you create farmers' committees to look into the bookkeeping of the banks; every farmer will understand that. We will say: The farmer can trust only himself; let him create committees to control agricultural credits—they will understand that. It presupposes a turbulent mood among the farmers; it cannot be accomplished every day. But to introduce this idea into the masses and into our own comrades, that's absolutely necessary immediately."

#### THE DISPUTE OF 1947

One who was present and who afterwards became a leading figure in the Workers Party was hostile to these ideas, as is obvious from the transcript of the proceedings.\*

"I believe it is not correct as you say to put forth the slogan of workers' control of production nor the other transitional slogan of workers' militia. The slogan for the examination of the books of the capitalist class is more appropriate for the present period and can be made popular. As for the other two slogans, it is true that they are transitional slogans, but for that end of the road which is close to the preparation for the seizure of power. Transition implies a road either long or short. Each stage of the road requires its own slogans. For today we could use that of examination of the books of the capitalist class, for tomorrow we would use those of workers' control of production and workers' militia."

This speaker was and is entitled to his own views. But it is clear to us that he had these ideas long before the split, long before his position on Russia, long before the idea of the "Third Alternative" had assumed definite shape, long before the Stalinist parties had become "totalitarian parties." The split did not cause these. These were the basis of the split. We can, today, understand the violence of Trotsky's immediate rejoinder.

"How can we in such a critical situation as now exists in the whole world, in the U.S. measure the stage of development of the workers' movement? You say it's the beginning and not the end. What's the distance—100, 10, 4—how can

\*See appendix.

you say approximately? In the good old times the Social Democrats would say: Now we have only 10,000 workers, later we'll have 100,000, then a million and then we'll get to the power. World development to them was only an accumulation of quantities: 10,000, 100,000, etc., etc. Now we have an absolutely different situation. We are in a period of declining capitalism, of crises that become more turbulent and terrible and approaching war. During war the workers learn very quickly. If you say we'll wait and see and then propagate, then we'll be not the vanguard, but the rearguard. If you ask me: Is it possible that the American workers will conquer power in 10 years? I will say, yes, absolutely possible. The explosion of the CIO shows that the basis of the capitalist society is undermined. Workers' militia and workers' control of production are only two sides of the same question. The worker is not a bookkeeper. When he asks for the books, he wants to change the situation, by control and then by direction. Naturally our advancing slogans depends upon the reaction of the masses, we know what side of the question to emphasize. We will say Roosevelt will help the unemployed by the war industry. But if we workers run production, we would find another industry, not one for the dead but for the living. This question can become understandable even for an average worker who never participated in a political movement. We underestimate the revolutionary movement in the working masses. We are a small organization, propagandistic and in such situations are more sceptical than the masses who develop very quickly. At the beginning of 1917 Lenin said that the party is 10 times more revolutionary than its CC and the masses 100 times more revolutionary than the ranks of the party. There is not in the U. S. a revolutionary situation now. But comrades with very revolutionary ideas in quiet times can become a real brake upon the movement in revolutionary situations—it happens often. A revolutionary party waits so often and so long for a revolution that it gets used to postpone it."

This is the whole debate of 1947 summarized. Right or wrong on the Russian question (and we hold that Trotsky was wrong on the Russian question), Trotsky was militantly on the offensive against those who could not understand what he afterwards summed up in the phrase—"the death-agony of capitalism."

#### INSTINCTIVE AND ELEMENTAL DRIVE

The sharpness of Trotsky's attack against Shachtman on dialectic came shortly after his sharp attack against petty-bourgeois political conservatism. In 1940 Trotsky combined the two attacks. In his article, "From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene," specially directed against Shachtman, Trotsky gave his definitive summing up of the split of 1940.

"Since when have you become specialists in the question of philosophy? the oppositionists now ironically ask the majority representatives. Irony here is completely out of place. Scientific socialism is the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process; namely, the instinctive and elemental drive of the proletariat to reconstruct society on communist beginnings. These organic tendencies in the psychology of workers spring to life with utmost rapidity today in the epoch of crises and wars. The discussion has revealed beyond all question a clash in the party between a petty-bourgeois tendency and a proletarian tendency. The petty-bourgeois tendency reveals its confusion in its attempt to reduce the program of the party to the small coin of 'concrete' questions. The proletarian tendency on the contrary strives to correlate all the partial questions into theoretical unity. At stake at the present time is not the extent to which individual members of the majority consciously apply the dialectic method. What is important is the fact that the majority as a whole pushes toward the proletarian posing of the question and by very reason of this tends to assimilate the dialectic which is 'the algebra of the revolution.' The oppositionists, I am informed, greet with bursts of laughter the very mention of 'dialectics.' In vain. This unworthy method will not help. The dialectic of the historic process has more than once cruelly punished those who tried to jeer at it." (In Defense of Marxism, p.103-104)

That is the dispute now. That was the dispute then. There is not a line in that quotation about defensism or defeatism, or the Russian question; nothing but dialectic and the modern

proletariat. Today, infinitely more than when he polemicized against Shachtman in 1938, 1939 and 1940, the analysis and perspectives of Trotsky are valid.

We all have to learn from the campaign of 1940, Trotsky strove, as the great Bolsheviks have always done, to defeat opponents and to reconcile the factions as far as that was possible by raising the whole level of the discussion to a higher plane. As he wrote just previous to the section quoted above.

"It is precisely the party's penetration into the trade union, and into the workers' milieu in general that demands heightening the theoretical qualifications of our cadres. I do not mean by cadres the 'apparatus' but the party as a whole. Every party member should and must consider himself an officer in the proletarian army."

In his letter to Cannon of January 9, 1940, (In Defense of Marxism, p.95) he shows his fears that some comrades would not understand what he was doing, nevertheless, "I am sure it is now the only way to begin the theoretical education of the

Party, especially of the youth and to inject a reversal (sic)\* to empiricism and eclectics." On January 16 he wrote to Wards as "one of the comparatively few comrades who are seriously interested in the methodological questions of our movement" and asked him to form a theoretical association for the study of the philosophical doctrines of the movement. He welcomed eagerly the prospect of articles against symbolic logic.

Now today we face the actual crisis for which Trotsky was preparing the Movement. But if the tendencies represented by the splitters of 1940 have now reappeared all over the International, the defenders of Bolshevism have let the initiative slip away from their hands. They have not met the theoretically bankrupt and organizationally disruptive elements with an analysis of today's problems on a level corresponding to the actual disintegration of bourgeois society. This balance sheet could not possibly perform its function if it did not emphasize this dual aspect of the American experience.

### III. Political Evolution of the Workers Party

#### (a) W.P. and the American Question

The Workers Party in 1940 maintained the fiction that it subscribed to the Transitional Program for the United States. Yet the driving force of the split was the conviction that it could build a party with its own methods (then unformulated) against "the bureaucratic conservatism" of Cannon. In its document "War and Bureaucratic Conservatism", it mobilized its followers around "the justified discontentment of the membership with the sluggishness and apathy of the leadership, with its failure to elaborate or carry out a program of action, in particular the failure to make a living reality out of the Transitional Program . . ." (Struggle for a Proletarian Party, p. 277).

That was the perspective of the Minority—to show how to build the party. They gave their analysis of the Transitional Program. Cannon, they claimed, had forced its immediate endorsement by the Political Committee. They wrote:

"Shachtman, Burnham and others, including Goldman at that time, insisted that it meant nothing merely to 'accept' the transition program; that in incorporating it into the life of our own party, distinction would have to be made between those parts of it which were directly applicable to the United States, and those parts which were not, between those slogans which were of a general propagandistic and educational character and those suitable for immediate agitational uses; and they insisted further that the concrete meaning of many of the general concepts of the program had to be sought in terms of living developments in this country." (Struggle for the Proletarian Party, p. 276.)

Not a word about the whole world conception which lay behind the Program.

They continued:

"It took nearly a year to force through the conception that the movement and slogans arising in the labor movement for 'Thirty hours, thirty dollars,' 'Thirty hours work at forty hours' pay,' etc., were concretizations of the general transition slogan for 'A sliding scale of wages and hours.' It took a year before it was possible to treat the slogan for a workers' guard as suitable for anything but the most vague and general educational propaganda."

And then came this passage which the Minority would soon illuminate in practice,

"As a consequence of this thoroughly sterile approach, the transition program has as a whole not to this day become a significant living factor in our movement."

The Minority was going to make the Transitional Program a "living factor" by giving it the interpretation which the opposition to Trotsky had given it in 1938. It should be remembered that it was precisely in 1939 that the growth of Fascism and Fascist bands in the United States had made Trotsky's slogan

of workers' guards an immediate, practical necessity.

Convinced of the rightness of their conceptions of the Transitional Program, the Minority denied "categorically that the Cannon group has the slightest right to be regarded as the representative of Trotsky's views in a genuinely political sense." It proposed to substitute for Cannon's "conservative politics . . . bold, flexible, critical and experimental politics—in a word scientific politics." It proposed to cure "the disease" of "Cannonism" by "a specific program of action."

Thus, long before the war, long before the proletariat had failed to make the post-war revolution, long before retrogression, the W. P. began its existence by a revolt against the revolutionary content of the Transitional Program.

Free of Cannon's "conservatism," the W. P. leadership immediately showed that it was permeated to the marrow with conservatism and American pragmatism. Characteristic of the leadership in general, and of Shachtman in particular, is the fact that it usually acts empirically and formulates policy as it goes along. But by rapid degrees the political level of the weekly press became such that members of the National Committee could say, without being contradicted, that it was the opinion of the workers that Labor Action was not a very radical paper. The organizational practice corresponded. Thousands upon thousands of papers were distributed in front of factories or to workers in general. What became of them, what was to become of them, how it was possible for the small insignificant membership of the W. P. to take any advantage of this enormous expenditure of time, money and energy, no one raised these questions seriously, far less attempted to answer them. In union work the same principles, or lack of principles, prevailed. In Philadelphia and Los Angeles, the party embarked upon ambitious ventures of high union politics. These resulted in the formation and active participation in "progressive groups" and attempts by three or four comrades directly to organize the control of unions of thousands of workers without any serious mass base.

By the fall of 1943 this type of politics, empirically governing the life of the party, was politically embodied in the American resolution for the 1944 convention. The Johnson-Forest tendency, which had accepted the empirical agitational practice, met its theoretical embodiment with restrained but implacable opposition. It threatened the Political Committee to present a resolution of its own unless the resolution was drastically altered. Changes were made and we voted for the resolution under protest. At the convention, however, the party

\*An obvious misprint for aversion or some similar word.

was restless under the strain of mass work, no results and what it expressed as "the need for more socialism in the paper." The unrest continued, and in the fall of 1944, Erber, in bitter opposition to Shachtman, presented a document of one hundred pages to the leadership. This is the genuine political theory of the Workers Party. Erber put down what was implicit and not so implicit in the split of 1940. We print only our summary.

"The greatest danger to the party's growth and development at the present time is represented by the small mass party conception of Comrade Erber. For over three years Comrade Erber has carried on a persistent and sharp struggle in the National Committee over the method of building the party. In a related series of documents he has accused the party leadership of pessimism, dimmed vision . . . lack of sweeping imagination . . . satisfaction with crumbs when leaves are available, routinism . . . conservative traditionalism . . . we are lucky to exist at all spirit." He accuses the leadership of lagging behind the organization. "Nowhere does the lack of boldness and imagination strike one so sharply as in our topmost circles. Routinism and tradition seem to seek their final refuge there." He has for three years denounced the party for having no perspective. Comrade Erber's views are the fruit of a theory built upon his conception of the past of our movement. For Erber, 'Trotskyism has been synonymous with 'sectarianism'. For him the conservatism of Cannon was the typical expression of Trotskyism on the organizational side. 'The sterility of Cannon is the logical result of the 'sectarianism, 'doctrinarianism,' rigid, ideological shell of Trotsky. Trotsky himself was saved from this logical conclusion of his doctrine only by his 'idealism and common sense.' According to Comrade Erber, the first Four Congresses of the Communist International and the history of Bolshevism have not been submitted to critical study but are viewed as 'sacrosanct.' 'The WP is not and should not be a Trotskyist Party in the sense that is usually meant.' It is from this conception of the past of our movement, elaborated in lengthy and comprehensive documents, that Erber has consistently supported the present Labor Action. It is on this basis that he wishes the party to transform itself into a 'small mass party'.

"The theories of Erber on party-building are dangerous because the majority of the leadership in actuality has no other perspective to offer to the party as a guide to party building. Defining propaganda as polemic against rival parties, Comrade Shachtman rejects the conception of the party as a revolutionary propaganda organization. This rejection is the essence of Comrade Erber's conception.

"The party must realize the close connection between the theoretical heresies of Erber, the equivocal position of Shachtman and the confusion on party building which is now rife in the party. The party must unhesitatingly reject these ideas and their manifestations, open or concealed, in all aspects of party life." ("The Task of Building The American Bolshevik Party.")

A few weeks after Erber's document, the Johnson-Forest tendency challenged the whole empirical, agitational conception in a document entitled "Education, Agitation, and Propaganda" and later more concretely in another document "Building the Bolshevik Party," the title of which was not in the slightest degree rhetorical. The party itself was in ferment. At the Workers' Conference in the summer of 1945 the party was split three ways. The leadership could not on all occasions command a majority, half the opposition supporting the timid Erber, the other half supporting Johnson-Forest. Challenged from below and on both sides, Shachtman for the first time in the party's existence presented a rounded analysis and program for party building.

1. "We are handicapped primarily by the fact that we do not operate within a politically-organized working-class. That is point A,B,C., and all other letters down to Z." (Bulletin VI, July 30, 1945, P. 10)

By a stroke of the pen the conservatism of the proletariat was substituted for the conservatism of Cannon.

2. The failure to grow was due to "lack of forces". Thus the whole conflict with the conservatism of "Cann-

onism" over the building of the party was liquidated. It ended less flamboyantly but as ignominiously as it had begun.

What were the political perspectives behind this thinly-disguised confession of total failure? Said Shachtman:

"A brief consideration of the perspectives of the class struggle in this country and the prospects of the party, only emphasize the importance of developing a leading party cadre."

"The reappearance of mass unemployment, no matter how long or short its duration will bring with it a certain weakening of the trade union movement, especially of the CIO. More important is the fact that it will bring with it a weakening of pure-and-simple trade unionism. . . ."

"Two: in all likelihood, we shall see the reappearance of an unemployed movement. In all likelihood, this movement, or a large section of it will be connected with the existing trade unions, especially in the case of the CIO . . . We must from the very outset be in the new unemployed movement working in it, seeking to influence and lead it, and seeking to recruit the best militants from its ranks."

This was Shachtman's perspective of the class struggle in 1945. The tremendous social crisis of the post-war, the fate of humanity posed in every civilized country, the signs of the coming social upheaval in the United States, which the Johnson-Forest tendency had been hammering at for the past two years, all this was as remote from the leadership of the W. P. as the stratosphere.

From this complete bankruptcy sprang a new orientation. Johnson had proposed that the party recognize its function as a group making propaganda for revolutionary action to the masses. Erber's grievance against Shachtman was that the paper did not take seriously its mass agitational function. Shachtman declared the party to be "still in a propagandist stage, that is, in the 'intermediate' stage between it and that of an agitational group." Agitational because Shachtman, though more careful than Erber in safeguarding himself with formulae, in reality shared Erber's views for all practical purposes. But the party was propagandist too.

" . . . intensive propagandist activity, that is . . . the systematic presentation and defense of the theoretical and political position of our party as against those of the rival party, by polemic and criticism. In other words . . . an emphasis on the particular position of our own party, on those points where it differs with (and is, in our view, superior to or correct as against) the S.W.P. This is demanded for two connected reasons. First, to justify the independent existence of our party in the eyes of the radical workers and thereby to facilitate their recruitment by us instead of by our rival. Second, to educate and train our party members, especially new recruits, not only in what we have in common with other radical organizations, but in what we counterpose to the others."

**CONSERVATISM LOST IN THE JUNGLE**

What was unique here was this sectarian conception of propaganda. It served a definite practical purpose. It oriented the party towards factional conflict with the S.W.P. Since 1941 the membership, men and women in industry, had worked and contributed as no membership in the United States has ever worked and contributed. As Shachtman himself confessed, it was apathetic to all the "unique contributions" of Shachtman on international politics and on the defensive before the small Johnson-Forest Minority. From 1941 to 1945 the party, engrossed in work and hopes among the proletariat, had had singularly little interest in "Cannonism". It was only with the frank admission of no perspectives (until the Labor Party or the unemployed movement) that the struggle for "the unique contributions" and against "Cannonism" became the main concern of the party leadership. From this source came the genuinely "unique" theory of the cadre. "Bureaucratic Conservatism" could no longer endure. The democratic dynamists had signally failed. The "bureaucratic jungle" was substituted.

As the factional campaign increased, so the political level declined. By the Convention of 1946, the political resolution on America, or finally decided upon after weeks of discussion in the Political Committee and during and after a plenum, was the most conservative and poverty-stricken resolution on the United States ever advanced in the Trotskyist movement. This more than anything else enabled us to understand the full significance of Shachtman's "unique contributions" on the international scene. This enabled us to grasp concretely and clearly the distinction between the W.P. and the S.W.P. By this time factional lines had been drawn. But it was here that the membership as a whole was able to comprehend all the divergences which had previously appeared on other questions. It was here that we began to be able to see what was impelling the clarification of the unity negotiations. And, as we shall show, it is precisely here that we have been able immediately to understand what is now taking place in the International. It is precisely our concrete experiences on the national scene, illuminated by the international theories of Bolshevism, that have enabled us to understand the concrete developments in international Trotskyism. Only political idiots can fail to see that Shachtman is now seeking to cover up the national bankruptcy of his party by looking for allies to right and to left on the international scene.

**(b) W.P. and the International Question**

What is politically and organizationally characteristic of the international politics of the W.P. is not so much what it has said but what it has not said and has preferred to allow others to say for it. It is characteristic that for two years beginning with October, 1944, nearly 100,000 words on all aspects of international politics written by the authors of the theory of historical retrogression, appeared in The New International. They expounded their doctrine with the utmost freedom. Not a line by Shachtman or any of his colleagues has ever appeared in opposition. An article of 12,000 words by J. R. Johnson discussing the theory appeared in The New International for December, 1946 and January 1947. The retrogressionists themselves do not answer. Not a word comes from Shachtman.

The Fourth International has merely passed a resolution condemning the theory of historical retrogression, and one or two comrades have written polemical articles dealing mainly with the democratic-revolution nonsense. Only the Johnson-Forest tendency has attempted to answer the theory in the manner it needed to be answered. It is clear by now, we hope, that retrogressionism is the real dividing line in the International. Those who say that the theory of retrogression is false but that the proletariat, today, 1947, is full of "democratic illusions," etc. are practising a shamefaced ill-concealed retrogressionism. Any discussion of the international politics of the W.P. that does not deal with the theory in fundamental terms is a waste of time. It will be ultimately necessary to do the same in the International. In 1940 as soon as the opposition seriously entered upon the struggle, Trotsky posed all questions in the most fundamental terms. Today the roles are almost reversed. The most fundamental presentation of a political view now before the International is the thesis of the IKD. We alone have met them on their own ground and have gone far beyond. It is an astonishing failure on the part of the International. It will have to be corrected. Because it is here that all the retrogressionists and semi-retrogressionists can be dragged into the open and beaten to pieces.

The theory of retrogression can be summed up in a sentence: the decline of capitalist society has been such that it has unfitted the proletariat for the socialist revolution. In any

and all of its forms this theory is the greatest enemy of our movement today—the Menshevism of our time.

The contemporary development of the theory will teach us much. It appeared first in the writings of Bruno R., an Italian Marxist who had seen the complete defeat of the Italian proletariat. After the defeat of June 1940 and the domination of German Fascism, certain French Trotskyist leaders capitulated to the idea of some sort of Fascism as the next stage of modern society. The German comrades began to develop their theory a year or two after the destruction of the German labor movement. In the United States, where the proletariat has for so many generations failed to express itself decisively as an independent social and political force, the theory of retrogression has taken a special form. Its most vigorous exponent is also an ex-Trotskyist—Burnham. He has advocated his brand of "managerial society."

Small as is the number of our cadres in every country, yet a valuable conclusion emerges from this. The most vigorous, the most active proponents of the theory of retrogression are those who have seen the proletarian movement in their own country destroyed, or as in the United States, have never known an active political movement of the proletariat.

In the case of the United States, the key figure for the understanding of the W.P. is Burnham. Let us trace his political evolution so that certain American and European comrades may grasp the inner evolution of the American experience.

- 1) Burnham, before 1940, had agitated inside the S.W.P. for what he called "the campaign party," i.e., the "small mass party," essentially what the W.P. became as soon as it split.
- 2) Burnham in 1937 opposed the conception of Russia as a workers' state but agreed to defend it as still "progressive."
- 3) With the Hitler-Stalin pact he blames Cannon's "bureaucratic conservatism" for the failure in the United States.
- 4) He at the same time declares Russia "a managerial society," not to be defended.
- 5) He develops the thesis that the whole world is headed for "managerial society."

Shachtman is a revolutionary and Burnham is not. Shachtman has mercilessly condemned Burnham since Burnham left the party in 1940 and genuinely despises him. But Shachtman's evolution has followed Burnham's stage by stage, from the campaign party to the days when he called Russia bureaucratic state-socialism, still progressive, to the period when he declared (New International, November, 1948) that from the time of the appearance of the "Three Theses," (the first statement of the theory and practice of retrogression) he had agreed with them. If Shachtman is "following" any consistent pattern it is the pattern of Carter, the real theorist of the W.P. Burnham is the adventurous American petty-bourgeois, unable to embrace Bolshevism but, until a few months ago, unable to reconcile himself to American capitalism. Burnham, Carter and Shachtman follow the same line of evolution, Shachtman and Carter, however, always stopping short to try to reconcile these ideas with struggle against the bourgeoisie.

**THE RETROGRESSION OF SHACHTMAN**

The development of Burnham shows concretely that although the theory of retrogressionism was given a finished consistent form by the Germans, it found fertile soil in the revolutionary movement in the United States. But the W.P. has never been able to take position on it. Its European followers, with living political proletarian movements around them, condemn the theory out of hand and then adapt themselves to its ideas. The W.P. for three years has been unable to condemn the theory. Shachtman, in 1944, actually proposed to the Political Committee of the W.P. a motion endorsing

the thesis (except for its views on Russia as state-capitalist). The Political Committee balked. Shachtman declared that in his writings in The New International, he had been merely developing these same ideas. He could understand the opposition of the S.W.P. and of Johnson but not that of the W.P. Majority. The Political Committee objected to this. Shachtman pressed the point. Erber silenced him by the statement that it was impossible for Shachtman to convince them that they had thought what they denied thinking. The doubts of the Political Committee, aided most certainly by the already expressed determination of the Johnson-Forest tendency to oppose the theory without reserve, helped to defeat Shachtman's motion. He then called a special meeting of the New York membership to announce his individual adherence to the theory (with the exception only of Russia). For two years, under constant attack by the Johnson-Forest tendency, the leadership could say nothing to the party either in public or internally. Only when the German comrades announced formally to the W.P. that they would, if necessary, form a new organization outside of the Fourth International, then and only then, Shachtman wrote in the Internal Bulletin some cautious notes disassociating the party and himself from them. But as the recent struggle in the International has developed and the W.P. begins to feel that it has allies against "Caunonism", it becomes bolder. The latest issue of The New International contains the following by Erber:

"Trotsky's views on the eve of the war were of this general character. Trotsky not only recognized the retrogressive process and the key role of Stalinism within it, but made this recognition an important consideration in his calculations. As a result, he was acutely aware of the growing contradiction between his views on the working class nature of the Russian state and the implications of his analysis of retrogression. He resolved this dilemma by postponing any further theoretical conclusions until the second world war would be concluded and its political repercussions were known. His brilliant article, 'U.S.S.R. and the War,' written a few weeks after the war began, was his final rounded presentation on the subject of retrogression and the nature of the Russian state. In this article he poses the entire question from the point of view that either the war will conclude with a revolution, in which case both the problem of the class character of the Stalinist state and the problem of retrogression will be automatically resolved, or the proletariat will fail to take power and require a complete re-analysis of Marxist fundamentals, including the possibility of a world of bureaucratic slave states. The actual results of World War II are somewhere between the two alternatives which Trotsky posed. The failure of the proletariat to make a revolution in post-war Europe does not demonstrate its historic incapacity to play the role which Marx assigned to it. Yet the continued and accelerated retrogressive process places a question mark over the ability of the proletariat to reassemble a revolutionary leadership and take power before it is overtaken and destroyed by the disintegrative tendency of capitalist civilization, of which the threatening atomic war is the most potent force." (The Class Nature of the Polish State—II, August 1947, p. 172a)

That Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky were all believers in the theory of retrogression has long been a theme of Shachtman seeking to cover up his badly broken fences. That Trotsky, "the brilliant" Trotsky, was a proponent of it in 1940, we can for the moment ignore. What is important here, is the most outspoken, the most brazen statement so far of the "great question mark over the ability of the proletariat to reassemble a revolutionary leadership." The proletariat faces "destruction." The coming war is a factor in that "destruction" of the proletariat. Only those who know the long history of the theory of retrogression in the W.P. can understand what such a declaration by the W.P. means at this time. They now feel at last strong enough. It is because they have discovered or think they have discovered allies. Let these allies, actual or pro-

ceptive, recognize in all its nakedness what they are encouraging.

#### DE TE FABULA NARRATUR

The W.P. leaders are not following Burnham, they are impelled in the same direction by the same social forces. But they are opposed to bourgeois society, they cannot go all the way, so that they halt half-way and raise their big question mark. They propose that the revolutionaries of the world prepare to build the revolutionary party by informing the world proletariat that events are more and more demonstrating that the proletariat is incapable of building the party.

De te fabula narratur. It is not inevitable that all or the majority of "the centrifugal elements" in the International follow this course. We would not for one moment say that. But this much is now history, the course that has been followed by the W.P. Its most vocal and representative spokesmen from 1938 to the present day, with remarkable consistency, have gravitated toward the most conservative, the most reactionary, the most defeatist currents in our movement. The signs that similar currents are now at various stages of development in Europe are clear. Those who do not know where they are headed now have the opportunity to learn. And those who have the responsibility of resisting these currents must recognize that their method so far has been totally inadequate.

The Johnson-Forest tendency has used other methods, and has repeatedly silenced the W.P. speakers, set them eating their own words, contradicting each other and maintaining an embittered silence over reiterated challenges, written and spoken.

As a result, today in 1947, after nearly three years, it is utterly impossible to get a spoken, far less a written, answer from any leading representative of the W.P. on the statement by which Trotsky drew the dividing line in 1940. Does the proletariat have an instinctive elemental drive to reconstruct society on Communist beginnings? No answer. Is this an organic part of the psychology of workers? No answer. Is this an epoch of crises and wars? Was Trotsky correct when he said that in this epoch the instinct of the workers to reconstruct society can explode with great violence and rapidity? They twist and squirm and before their own membership they cannot answer. The agile Shachtman has developed a technique whereby he says whatever is most suitable at the moment. But when pushed to the wall he has one last resort—all this may be true but there is no party! We shall demonstrate to the hilt that it is only by carrying the attack, on the one hand, to the most fundamental principles of Marxism as manifested today, and on the other, by the most ruthless exposure of the national roots and national bankruptcy of the disrupters that they will be corrected, disciplined, or utterly disgraced. It is important to bear that combination in mind. The international tendencies express themselves in a strictly national form. What are the international perspectives of the W.P.? The latest stage in the evolution of Burnham supplies us with an invaluable guide.

#### THE BURNHAM TRAIL

Stalinist Russia and the Stalinist parties threaten to dominate Europe. American capitalism during the war still further astonished the world by its economic power. Burnham, a typical example of American individualism, and absolutely incapable of seeing the proletarian solution, is frantic with terror at the prospect of a Stalinist Europe today which might extend Goli knows where tomorrow. He therefore turns back to the now amply demonstrated economic power of American capital and calls upon it to mobilize the world against the Stalinist danger. Shachtman and the W.P., so far as their class alignments

allow them to, turn to the same source for solution. Their international policy absolutely refuses to foresee and to recognize that the European economy is shattered beyond repair, and that in countries like France and Italy the class antagonisms are such that ultimate solutions have been concretely posed for years. They do not propose American economic intervention. But they base themselves on "a recovery" financed by American capitalism. The "recovery" is to be the foundation for a strengthening of the labor movement. The misery of the masses thus alleviated, the Stalinist domination will decline. The workers will flow back to the Social-Democracy and the Social-Democracy will give some stability to the bourgeois-democratic regime. The Stalinists are to be supported to the power only in case the Social-Democracy is included in the government, for the Social-Democracy will have the backing of the all-powerful United States. The European comrades must enter the Social-Democracy and use the precious time gained by the American-financed "recovery" to educate the workers. Furthermore this export of capital will enable the American bourgeoisie to stave off the economic crisis.

The backwardness of the American proletariat is an integral part of the whole conception. Unless it were backward, it might precipitate a struggle in which without a revolutionary party it would certainly be defeated. This would bring the whole structure tumbling to the ground. So that the correct step

for the American proletariat, according to this schematism is to build a Labor Party. Then here too, presumably, there can be entry and a long, (perhaps twenty years?) perspective of patient building. Burnham has turned to American economic power to smash Stalinism. The W.P. expects that this same economic power will maintain democracy all over the world and give the revolutionary movement a chance to build the cadres. No wonder that over this structure of monstrous nonsense the empirical authors themselves place the big question mark. This is the basis of the international politics of the W.P., and in various forms will turn out to be the basis of the politics of most of its allies. Discussions about boom and stabilization, about entry or non-entry in Britain, even about Poland, the national question, these are important and sometimes vital. But these by themselves, like the futile discussions on democratic demands, merely obscure the fundamental issues and play into the hands of the disrupters. The mortal crisis of bourgeois society has posed all questions in fundamental terms. Today the most abstract theory and the most concrete practice are so closely allied that they cannot be separated. The Johnson-Forest tendency has learnt this because of the method by which it has approached politics from the very beginning, its close study of Trotsky's method in 1940, and from its own hard experiences with the W.P. For our movement at this stage there can be no other way.

#### IV. The Johnson-Forest Tendency

The Johnson-Forest tendency became conscious of itself early in 1941 in the discussion on the Russian question. It found itself opposed to Shachtman who believed at that time that Russia was a progressive social order, bureaucratic collectivism, and to Carter who analyzed Russia as bureaucratic collectivism equally reactionary with capitalism. It saw clearly that Carter represented a more or less rounded political tendency which was heading for a theory of managerial or bureaucratic collectivist society as a third alternative to capitalism or socialism. Though defeatist, as was Carter, it refused any sort of bloc with Carter and sought openly to place a barrier between him and the future development of Shachtman.

Johnson and Forest, from the very beginning, considered a break with Trotsky on a fundamental question to be the most serious step imaginable for any Marxist. The position of state-capitalism was therefore arrived at only after a thorough re-examination of Marxism, including its economic theories, a thorough study of the Russian question, the writings of Lenin, and a comprehensive study of the tendencies in world economy and the Russian economy itself. In the first article of our tendency in The New Internationalist, we posed what has remained our theoretical foundation for this epoch—the statification of production. We drew the trend to its logical end and we drew the class line through statification (April, 1941). The statification in Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia found us well-armed and prepared from 1941.

Shachtman has given his analysis of the origin of the Johnson-Forest tendency. It is on a par with his usual light-mindedness where serious matters are concerned. The superficiality of the 1941 Convention startled Johnson and Forest. At the end of the Convention, therefore, Johnson, Forest and Tobin held a meeting and decided to work together on our ideas. Forest was given the task of working on the Russian question, Tobin was given the task of following the party developments, Johnson was to complete the theoretical study of political economy as applied to the contemporary world and to take up the question of dialectical materialism. The work was systematically carried through. Forest was able to complete such a study of the Russian economy and its social and

historical development as has never been done in our movement. It is still largely unpublished. Ria Stone, with an academic training in philosophy, eased the road to the fundamental grasp of the principles of the Hegelian dialectic and their application to Marxian economics, sociology and politics. Harry Allen, an old Bolshevik, joined the tendency in its early stages and contributed substantially to its political and organizational development until after the 1940 convention when differences, for a long time implicit, caused a separation.

Our specific political positions can be found elsewhere. The tendency, however, has always had the firmest theoretical foundations under its feet, and from these it has elaborated certain guiding principles which govern all its politics.

1. The Russian question is central for the theoretical and political development of the Fourth International. But as we have repeatedly written from the very beginning, the world crisis is not part of the Russian question. The Russian question is only a part of the world crisis. The decisive stage of economic development is statification of production. Statification of production is not a phrase or a description. It marks the capitulation of anarchic capitalist society to the planning of the invading socialist society. The planning, however, torn by class contradictions, repeats the fundamental features of capitalist antagonisms in their most barbarous form. Statification carries in itself the most profound social awareness of the proletariat, and its social structure repeatedly propels the proletariat on the road to the complete transformation of society. From the very beginning, therefore, there was nothing in common between us and the defeatists who had preceded us. Trotsky had fought them without mercy because for them, defeatism in Russia had always been the preliminary to defeatism and pessimism on a world scale. Our analysis of statification enabled us to see the preparation by capitalism for world revolution, and the Russian totalitarian state as the chief and most developed example of this phase of the world development. Our defeatism therefore, was part of a highly intensified world revolutionary concept.

2. We found in Russia the key to the most profound philosophical and abstract economic theories of Marx's analysis of



capitalism. We became convinced that such questions (hotly disputed through the past half century) as to whether the decline of capitalism lay basically in the falling rate of profit or the narrowing of the market, and the fundamental nature of crises, could at last be solved because of the concrete example of Stalinist Russia. In our view, the development of Russia drove the last nail into the coffin of any variety of under-consumptionism. We were convinced on a re-examination of Marx's Capital that the solution to the economic ills of capitalism was the human solution, not any reorganization of property but the emergence of the proletariat ready to use the vast potentialities created in it by capitalism itself. This is the only solution to the burning question of all economies today—the raising of the productivity of labor.

3. This, however, was only one part of our development. The barbarism of capitalism was concretely demonstrated in Russia. But it was the American proletariat which concretized for us the necessarily abstract conception of the creative power of the proletariat in industry as a force for the social regeneration of society. The work of American industrial psychologists and the observations of proletarian comrades whom we had developed opened this door to us.\*

Thus armed we fought the W.P. on the Russian question, then on the Negro question, then on the European question. Johnson and Forest had polemicized with Carter on the Russian question as part of world economy and as an exemplification of Marx's theory of capitalist production. Carter (and his collaborators) had been put to flight. Up to 1943 we had accepted the American line of the party, the new Labor Action, the mass agitational appeal, the mass distributions, etc. We bear our full share of responsibility for all this. Here, where, if we had had the necessary experience, and if we had been acquainted with all of Trotsky's writings, we might have been most alert, was where we were most defective. By December 1943, we had progressed sufficiently to give notice to the party of the three issues we intended to bring before it. They were: (1) Statification of Production; (2) The Americanization of Bolshevism and (3) Internationalism. It was in harmony with all our theoretical ideas that we concentrated first on the Americanization of Bolshevism.

For three years we had watched the complete depoliticalization of the party on the American question, and the compilation of the most ignorant nonsense about the European situation, the fifteen years' war, the "hurling back" of the European workers, etc. We came to the conclusion that the root of the evil was in the United States itself. Pragmatism ruled in American society and pragmatism ruled in the party doctored up with Marxist phrases. It must be noted that as late as October 1944 when we began to outline our program we had never re-read the Trotsky documents of 1940.

"Education, Propaganda and Agitation" (Oct. 1944) is one of the basic documents of our tendency and in it is contained what is our central conception not only for the American party but for all parties. The American comrades were pre-occupied with the Russian question and an abstract internationalism from which nobody learnt or could learn anything. The miserable original draft of the Majority American Resolution for 1944 had demonstrated this beyond a doubt. In guarded language, but clear enough for all to see we wrote of the necessity for the Americanization of Bolshevism:

"The party members from the highest to the lowest need it also. No one has any serious grasp of Marxism, can handle the doctrine or teach it unless he is, in accordance with his capabilities and opportunities, an exponent of it in relation to the social life and development around

\* The Johnson-Forest tendency will soon publish a pamphlet by Phil Romano and Rita Stone which will deal fully with this question from both a practical and a theoretical point of view.

him. The dialectical progression, the various stages of development, the relation between the economic basis and the superstructure, history, economics and philosophy, all the principles and doctrines of Marxism were evolved from a profound and gigantic study by its founders of European history, of European politics, of European literature, of European philosophy. The principles have universal application. But to the extent that the conditions from which they were drawn are not familiar to the Marxists, they remain to a greater or less degree abstract, with infinite potentialities for confusion and mischief. Either the would-be Marxist must have some serious knowledge of European history in its broadest sense, constantly renewed, amplified and developed, or the principles of the doctrine must have been incorporated, worked over, and made to live again in a study of the economic structure, social development, history, literature and life of the country with which he has been many years familiar. Only then is he on the road to becoming a serious exponent and contributor to the doctrine. In fact and in truth only until one has dug the principles of Marxism for himself out of his own familiar surroundings and their historical past that the Marxism of Marx and Engels, Lenin or Trotsky and the famous European Marxists truly stand out in their universal application. Not only is this so. It would be a miracle if it were not so."

The burden of the argument was that the foundation of Leninism was the international doctrines of Marxism applied to Russia. American Marxism would grow strong and acquire a genuine international significance only if nourished in American society. The document must be read especially by "the Russian question" fanatics. We quote only a few of the key sections on The New International:

**ON AMERICANIZATION AND INTERNATIONALISM:**

"The central direction of the paper must be Marxism and the United States, as the central directive of the old N.I. was the First Four Congresses and the International situation . . . Not only is this necessary from a national point of view but from an international. America occupies a peculiar place in international affairs today . . . The theoretical interpretation of the United States, its past, present and future, becomes therefore a truly international task."

**ON AMERICANIZATION AND THE PROBLEMS OF MODERN CULTURE**

As always in periods of crisis and never so much as in this one, the whole problem of the destiny of humanity is raised. The individual, the state, education, culture, religion, the elite, the necessity of rulers and ruled, race, all these fundamental questions are once more in the melting pot, nationally and internationally. Our contribution in this most capitalistic of all countries is to analyze these fundamental questions in our terms."

**ON AMERICANIZATION AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM:**

"We haven't to do research as Lenin had to do. . . In this highly organized country masses of material exist on all topics. The first American Revolution, the Second and the Third, these are our themes . . . But we must use them as a means to an end. Our revolution is after all the American Revolution. . . ."

"A tremendous field is here waiting to be opened, a field which will not only bring practical results but is of the highest theoretical importance. The present writer has found that precisely because of the absence of feudal remnants in modern America, many of the most abstract analyses of Marx find their most perfect exemplification in the United States. Today this is the model capitalist country."

**ON AMERICANIZATION AND LABOR**

"Lenin insisted that from the very beginning of the Socialist movement in Russia two trends appeared, opportunism and Marxism. His greatest work after 1914 was the theoretical analysis of the economic causes of this. Day after day he analyzed it economically, politically, socially. For him this education the workers needed above all. What have we done to make this a living part of the

knowledge and experience of the United States workers and radicals? Absolutely nothing. Sure we say that the labor leaders are reactionary, pro-Roosevelt, pro-war. We say they are scoundrels. These are just agitational statements. The general impression that our agitation gives is of reactionary labor leaders who deceive the workers. This is theoretically false. The labor leaders do not function in a vacuum. Not an issue of the N.I. should come out in which from one angle or another we did not treat from the roots the basis of opportunism in the United States."

This was the only way to mobilize the membership to raise the level of the party for its daily tasks. "And in this way we perform an international service. It will not be long before its influence will appear in L.A., propagandist and agitational pamphlets and the daily work of the members."

#### ON AMERICANIZATION AND MARXIAN ECONOMICS

"The debate in Lenin's day raged around the question of the realization of surplus value. The same question arose in Germany just before the last war. Rosa Luxemburg's study of accumulation also took the form of a study of realization. These were not 'theoretical essays,' as only a lamentable ignorance can believe. They were aspects of the class struggle expressing themselves theoretically both within and without the labor movement. The debate, as was historically inevitable, has now gone a stage further. It has moved from Vol. II of Capital to Vol. III. This is above all an American question. Stuart Chase, Hansen, all the government economists, all the 'experts' who gave evidence before the TNEC, the whole economic basis of the New Deal, all these pose this fundamental question in terms of raising the standard of living of the workers as a means for the continued development of capitalism. The Stalinists have now taken this up and are preparing a highly theoretical assault upon our previous conception of Marx's Capital. These conceptions represent the instinctive political economy of every labor leader in the country. . . . Yet so limited is our conception of our tasks that except for agitational shoutings about the profits of capitalism and the unemployed to come, we leave these ideas to go their own unchecked way. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Bukharin carried their opposition to these things to the point of pedantry. They were great activists all. But the classics of Marxism which we read today did a wonderful work in their day, still live and will always live, because they tackled the false ideas of their time from the root and taught the workers by precept and example to seek bourgeois conceptions out at their source and destroy them there."

#### ON AMERICANIZATION AND DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM:

"Dialectical Materialism is not something to be defended against Hook, Eastman and Burnham. It is the Philosophy and the theory of knowledge of Marxism. To use a phrase Marx used in his early writings, it is the theoretical basis of scientific humanism. Today, when all thinkers are groping like drunken men, with all their points of support and reference gone, we have here a weapon whose power and value was never so great as in the prevailing confusion. In every field the method of logical development and historical manifestation brings results in clarification and illumination which will be felt in every sphere of our work. Lenin was always a dialectician but it was only in 1914 that he studied seriously its origin in the Hegelian dialectic. And after that he became one of the strongest advocates of its study in Russia, demanded that extracts from Hegel and interpretations be printed in the theoretical journal. He knew and said that mistakes would be made but added that whoever was afraid of mistakes would not do anything. It cannot be said with sufficient emphasis that 'defence' of the dialectic against Hook and Eastman is today the least of our problems. It is not a precious jewel in a box to be defended against them. It is a weapon to be used. In the study and practice of Historical Materialism, Marxian Economics and Bolshevism, it will be a guiding thread making points clear and helping us to make clear to others. Contradiction, opposites, negation, negation of negation, quantity into quality, transcendence, condition, possibility, these are not jokes or a kind of in-

tellectual family heirloom that you 'defend' fiercely against attack without ever knowing what they mean. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky did not concern themselves with nonsense or some outworn intellectual ritual."

#### AMERICAN BOLSHEVISM

This was our conception in the fall of 1944. The W.P. paid no attention whatever to it, ignored it, denounced it, or damned it with faint praise. But there at any rate was an orientation, a line. The comrades can therefore appreciate at its true worth the conscienceless factionalism or ignorance which even after this document, could not or would not understand that for us, the Johnson-Forest tendency, the building of the American party, and not the Russian question, was central to any question of unity. The Russian question was central to us in our development. We began there but we very rapidly placed it as a part of the world reaction against the world revolution. Then with the knowledge gained from these studies and our experience with the W.P., we arrived at a program and a method for building the party in the United States. And that is and will remain our main business until historical circumstances compel us to do otherwise.

It was only when the unity question was posed that the Johnson-Forest tendency began to read the documents of 1940. Then for the first time we began to understand the method and the program of Trotsky in 1940, the emphasis on dialectic, the theoretical preparation of the cadres precisely for the penetration into the workers' milieu. Then, too, we saw fully the utter theoretical bankruptcy of the 1940 Minority, the utter emptiness of the W.P. leadership, its conservatism, its organic empiricism. Then, there came into our hands one of the great documents of the Fourth International, the conversations which preceded the final drafting of the Transitional Program. Concurrently, the degeneration of the W.P. continued.

By February 1946, we had our American resolution ready and from that time to this the American question has been central in our irreconcilable opposition to the politics of the W.P. We have fought them here. A small minority, we routed them in pre-convention discussion until, on the very day of the Convention, they came before the membership withdrew their resolution and promised to substitute another one. We challenged them repeatedly with the sharpest possible formulations. Goaded beyond measure, they leapt at these, tried to hold them up to ridicule. We knew what we were doing. We followed them up step by step, from position to position. By the time the Convention came they had torn to pieces or undermined every theoretical foundation on which a revolutionary party must live. Trotsky appeared as the originator of nothing else but mistakes on every conceivable question. At the end of the discussion we could see, and events have already borne us out, that the Majority, in its opposition to us on the American scene, had destroyed the theoretical foundations under its feet, and sown confusion and pessimism in the membership. This exposure could have taken place on the American question and the American question only.

#### TWO ROADS FOR THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

What is at issue between the W.P. and the Johnson-Forest tendency is the different roads for the American Revolution. We have said that the great need of the American party is conscious study and the application of dialectic in all its aspects to the American scene. We have tried to show the influence of American capitalism on the international positions of the W.P. Let us now analyse ourselves and them. For method we shall have to begin with another more famous dispute—the dispute between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. No less a person

than Trotsky received the severest castigation from Lenin for not understanding the origin of the factional conflict between Bolshevism and Menshevism. This particular phase of the dispute took place in 1910, five years after Trotsky had been the outstanding leader in 1905. According to Lenin, Trotsky writes: "It is an 'illusion' to imagine that Menshevism and Bolshevism have struck deep roots in the depths of the proletariat." In this, Lenin claims, Trotsky was following Martov.

Lenin's reply is a model of the manner in which to approach disputes that continue over the years. They have nothing to do with "Cannonism" and "leader-cult" and such crude vulgarities. Lenin writes:

"The roots of the divergence between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks lie, not in the 'depths of the proletariat,' but in the economic content of the Russian revolution. By ignoring this content, Martov and Trotsky deprived themselves of the possibility of understanding the historical meaning of the internal Party struggle in Russia. The crux of the matter is, not whether the theoretical formulation of differences have penetrated 'deep' into this or that stratum of the proletariat, but the fact that the economic conditions of the Revolution of 1905 brought the proletariat into hostile relations with the liberal bourgeoisie—not only over the question of improving the conditions of life of the workers, but also over the agrarian question, over all the political questions of the revolution, etc. To speak of the struggle of trends in the Russian revolution and to distribute labels, such as 'sectarianism,' 'lack of culture,' etc., and not to utter a word about the fundamental, economic interests of the proletariat, of the liberal bourgeoisie and of the democratic peasantry—is tantamount to stooping to the level of vulgar journalists." (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. III, p. 500)

Schachtman lives and feeds the party on the "lack of culture," i.e. the backwardness of the American proletariat and the "sectarianism" of Johnson. Trotsky in 1938, it seemed, suffered from the same "sectarianism" and did not understand the backwardness, i.e. the lack of political culture of the American proletariat. History repeats itself, this time as farce.

Lenin said that the proletariat had to lead the peasantry. Martov believed that the peasantry was not sufficiently "educated" and had to be led by the liberal bourgeoisie. The battle was over two roads for the Russian revolution and Lenin refused to be diverted by subjective appraisals of "sectarianism," "lack of culture," size of parties, influence on the proletariat, etc. We have not the practical experiences of an abortive revolution behind us as Lenin had but we have instead that whole completed experience to guide us and we have Trotsky's writings. When two groups of serious people develop a continuous and expanding series of differences, it is because they are compelled by the clash of basic conceptions to follow out a predetermined course. History has shown and logic can demonstrate that these hostile paths theoretically traced are the anticipation of the roads that will be taken sooner or later by the American revolution. Precisely because of its empiricism, there is a terrible logic to the evolution of the W.P., which constantly defeats the eclecticism of Schachtman. The conflict here is the theoretical forecast of the conflict that will rage in the American proletariat and never more so than during the actual revolutionary crisis. It is the lack of serious theoretical education in the W.P. which prevents its understanding what a serious factional conflict means.

When in 1946 the Johnson-Forrest tendency confronted the leaders of the W.P. with Trotsky's analysis of 1938, they claimed that he was merely mistaken, as pitiable an evasion on a great political issue as it is possible to conceive. Trotsky's position was as clear as day. There are some in the W.P. who ought to remember. Trotsky didn't say it once. He said it many times. Over and over again he repeated.

Your main danger is conservatism. The whole tradition of the country is against the proper functioning of a revolutionary party. Advance slogans that are out of the vocabulary of the American proletariat. Advance them with passion. People may laugh. You must learn how to take that. If you advance the slogans properly, they can be understood, if not necessarily acted upon at once, and remembered, by the most backward workers, even workers who have never taken part in a political party. The explosion of the C.I.O. and the adventurous policies of the bourgeoisie show that the structure of American capitalism is undermined. The crisis is not conjunctural but permanent. The proletariat is organically ready for the communist revolution. In this epoch of crises and wars its revolutionary violence may explode with terrific rapidity. You may have ten years to wait for victory. Begin now. The objective situation demands it.

**SHACHTMAN CANNOT ANSWER**

From this we draw certain conclusions, both rooted in the national characteristics of the United States.

(1.) The decisive political question in the United States is the attitude towards the labor bureaucracy. We have repeatedly faced Shachtman with this question which he is unable to answer. Does the backwardness of the labor bureaucracy express the backwardness of the American proletariat? Or is the proletariat what Trotsky claimed it was, its revolutionary instincts suppressed, perverted and corrupted by the labor bureaucracy? National Bolshevism? Shachtman cannot answer for Europe because he cannot answer for the United States. Busy covering up the bankruptcy of his "dynamism," he insists that the Russian question with the attitude toward the Stalinist parties, is the central question of all politics. The question goes deeper than that. It is a question of the attitude to the proletariat as a whole. The pseudo-internationalism by which Shachtman attempts to hide his bankruptcy in the United States is ruinously false, and nowhere more than in the United States. It is not Stalinism which stifles the revolutionary instincts of the American proletariat. It is the labor bureaucracy. The attack on them should be comprehensive and all-embracing, theoretical and practical, merciless without any compromise whatever. They and their supporters are the main social support of the bourgeois order in the United States. They are the enemies of the proletarian revolution. Not a line in the popular press but should illustrate and exemplify and historically and concretely teach this. The W.P. cannot understand this at all. It believes that to bring to the American proletariat the ideas and method of social revolution is "sectarianism." If it spent one-fifth of the energy and space and analysis on the revolutionary exposure of the union leadership that it spends on Stalinism, it would begin to find the right road.

As we pointed out in our American resolution, the attitude of the W.P. to the labor bureaucracy is no more than a repetition of the attitude of the Mensheviks to the Russian liberal bourgeoisie.

We have pointed out to them in all ways that the American proletariat for historical reasons has little interest in politics as such but this does not mean large layers are not ready for revolutionary politics. Its greatest social experiences lie in production. Backward as it is in politics in general, the class-struggle in production in the United States reaches a pitch unknown in other countries. The American proletariat is literally revolting against the very conditions of capitalist production itself. We emphasized in our American resolution that the basic presentation of the revolutionary doctrine to the American workers will have to begin here.

### HOW THE WORKERS DRINK WHISKEY

The W.P. is as blind to this as only a Marxist gone astray can be. Blinded at its mass agitational appeal, it has now begun another approach. As may be expected in the country which produced John Dewey, the W.P. "educates" the workers by long theoretical exposition of home and foreign politics. These articles are written by intellectuals for intellectuals. But the American worker is not an intellectual and he obstinately refuses to be educated in this manner. Which is only further proof in the minds of the W.P. of his "backwardness."

Of the weekly press in 1939 Trotsky wrote:

"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 penetrate 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 its 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 of 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)

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 concept of the revolution as a living, developing process into which the party enters, leading theoretically, is beyond the W.P. At the May 1946 Convention we restated Trotsky's position of 1938 developed in accordance with the world crisis and the class struggle of the U.S. in 1946. It is not with any pride that we say we had worked it out ourselves in general before, by a lucky accident, the conversation came into our hands. It was during the period of the great strikes and we were able not only to take the analysis further but to place before the party the next stage of the revolutionary development of the American proletariat—the general strike. Today the general strike is being proposed, canvassed and discussed from one end of the world to the other. The idea of it is being discussed and proposed all through the American labor movement and the American capitalist class. Precisely because it is politically unarmed, the American proletariat is now seeking a road through the nation-wide industrial strike. The 24-hour general strike organized from above is poles removed from the general strike, the tumultuous upheaval out of the very depths of the proletariat, what Engels and Rosa Luxemburg understood to be almost a natural cataclysm. This can within a few hours alter for good and all the whole social and political structure of the country. That a revolutionary in the United States can lean back in his chair, blowing sectarian smoke-rings and be absolutely certain that this is out of the question for the United States in the period now ahead of us, is proof of backwardness indeed but the backwardness of the revolutionary, not of the proletariat. It is the very political impotence of the American proletariat, like the political impotence of the Russian proletariat in 1903 which is driving it in that direction. But the 24-hour general protest strike, organized from above, while in general of a qualitatively different nature from the other type, assumes an extraordinary significance in the United States today. If one of these is

successfully carried out, then this becomes the surest way of knitting the proletariat together in its own consciousness and thus forcing the road to political action. All this too is Greek to our practicalists of the W.P. They cannot embark upon a comprehensive program of proletarian education. They shrink with terror at the prospect of the proletariat doing anything without them. They sneer at the Minority's clear and firm attitude on the general strike. When driven to the slogan they put it forward as a naked man dips his toe in ice-cold water, and end with the following:

"Now we are only marking time, or doing a side-straddle hop. There are workers who think that labor has become tired out by strikes. Perhaps 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." (Labor Action, May 12, 1947)

A little something; not enough, but something.

On every question it is the same. One of Trotsky's greatest contributions to the American party was his insistence for over ten years on the need to adapt the Leninist policy on the national question to the Negro problem in the United States. The American comrades resisted or gave an acquiescence which was worse than resistance. Finally, in 1939 under Trotsky's careful supervision a policy was adopted. As if by reflex action, no sooner did the Minority split than Coolidge attacked the position adopted, almost unanimously in the S.W.P. Stage by stage the position was abandoned, accompanied by the most ignorant and unscrupulous attacks upon the whole past of the discussions in our movement and our political tradition. The Minority fought in vain to stem this tide. The result is that the party today is in a mass of unbelievable confusion on a question which in the United States stands second only to the basic conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat itself, besides being of world-wide importance. That the Negro question is part of the national question in the Marxist sense of the term, that Lenin and Trotsky and the early Communist International made invaluable contributions to this question that are indispensable for the arming of the party, this is a matter for sneers and jeers and laughter in the W.P.

The W.P. has gone to the proletariat, has worked hard, has gained nothing but disappointment and disillusionment and cannot understand why. Trotsky saw the necessity of the petty-bourgeois boys and girls turning to the workers. He was absolutely mistaken in his belief that the W.P. did not want to do that. They wanted to. They did it. But they have failed hopelessly because they neglected and grossly maligned his insistence on the highest theoretical preparation of the cadres. When this balance-sheet was originally envisaged, it was intended primarily for the cadres of the tendency and the members of the W.P. and the education of the comrades on the American experience. But Marx said of the national struggle of the proletariat, it is national in form only. The believers in "the democratic illusions" of the masses, the practical, realistic ones who oppose the "sectarianism" and "abstract revolutionism" of the international leadership can see in the decline of the W.P. their own inexorable fate unless they change their course.

## V. The Organizational Question

### (a) Opportunism in General

It is not Trotsky who introduced the idea of class into serious organizational questions. Our movement is built on

these ideas. It is the founder of Bolshevism himself who pointed out that the concept of the party was drawn from capitalist production.

"It is precisely Marxism, as the ideology of the prole-

ariat trained by capitalism, that has been teaching unstable intellectuals to distinguish between the factory as an instrument of exploitation (discipline based on the fear of starvation) and as a factor in organization (discipline based on collective work, united under conditions of technically highly developed production). The discipline and organization, which it is so difficult for the bourgeois intellectual to acquire, are easily acquired by the proletarian precisely because of the factory 'school' he goes through. Mortal fear of this school and complete inability to understand its importance as an organizing force are characteristic of ways of thinking which reflect a petty-bourgeois mode of life." (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 442)

In 1903, according to Lenin, hostility to a firm centralized discipline existed in every Social-Democratic Party in Europe and was characteristic of its opportunist wing. But opportunism has not only a social base, a political orientation, and an organizational theory. It has a logical method of its own. You cannot pin opportunists down to anything.

"When speaking of fighting opportunism, there is a characteristic feature of present-day opportunism in every sphere that must never be overlooked: this is its vagueness, its diffuseness, its elusiveness. The very nature of the opportunist is such that he will always try to avoid formulating the issue clearly and irrevocably; he will always try to find the resultant force, will always wriggle like a snake between two mutually excluding points of view, he will try to 'agree' with both and reduce his difference of opinion to slight amendments, doubts, innocently good intentions, etc., etc. (Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 455.)

Who does not recognize Shachtman to the life? A perpetual obeisance before abstract principles, serving the same purpose as a priest's cassock, establishing orthodoxy. But immediately afterwards a reservation for the particular case at hand which happens always to be absolutely unique.

And finally there are the psychological traits of opportunism.

"In close psychological connection with their hatred of discipline there is an incessant, whining note of disgruntledness, which can be detected in all the writings of all contemporary opportunists in general, and of our minority in particular. They are always being persecuted, restricted, kicked out, besieged and bullied." (Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 457)

The W.P. Majority was always being persecuted, and bullied by the Johnson-Forest Minority. We mortally offended them by our method of showing them the real significance of their Menshevik ideas. They complained bitterly. If, they said, the policy you ascribe to us is really ours, then you should move to expel us. We mortally offended them by "repeating elementary truths which everyone has known for one hundred years." Alas! Lenin notes that the Bundists were "offended," Martov and Axelrod were "offended" because "they" were falsely accused of opportunism.

And the end? Says Lenin of all these offended ones:

"Quantity was transformed into Quality. The negation was negated. All the offended forgot their mutual squabbles, fell weeping into each other's arms and raised the banner of revolt against Leninism."

Look at those in the United States offended today! Bureaucratic Collectivists and State-Capitalists, Workers' Staters and the can't-deciders, those for whom the objective revolutionary situation is decisive and those for whom it is not, all have in common, that they have been "mortally offended" by Cannon, and are banded together under the banner of "anti-Cannonism."

They want, above all, "freedom of criticism." Long before 1903, Lenin, attacking the Economists, observed:

"The case of the Russian Social Democrats strikingly illustrates the fact observed in the whole of Europe . . . that the notorious freedom of criticism implies not the substitution of one theory for another, but freedom from any complete and thought-out theory; it implies eclecticism and absence of principle."

There is no need to draw the string.

When Trotsky denounced the Minority in 1940 as petty-

bourgeois he was not inventing anything. He was observing the symptoms of a class alien to the proletariat—the radical petty-bourgeoisie. All this is A.B.C. of our movement. The W.P. will never be able to explain, it has never asked why so many of its basic characteristics, its very phraseology, fit without the slightest need for adjustment into the petty-bourgeois pattern of 40 years ago.

### (b) Opportunism in the American Movement

But if opportunism has certain general organizational characteristics, a concrete analysis always shows them in a specifically national form. It was, in fact, the very national concreteness of Lenin, in response to the national circumstances of Russia that projected him into the leadership of world Bolshevism.

"Of course, the national peculiarities of the individual parties and the different political conditions in the different countries will leave their impress and make German opportunism unlike French opportunism, French opportunism unlike Italian opportunism and Italian opportunism unlike Russian opportunism." (Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 454)

In Russia, Bolshevism had to attack Narodism, Economism, Menshevism, Machism, currents in the anti-Tsarist movement. In the United States the proletariat is approaching the struggle for the conquest of power without having created or stimulated in the petty-bourgeoisie or the intellectuals any sort of ideology of its own. The dominant ideology is bourgeois ideology. This is not wholly a disadvantage, not at all, but it poses specific tasks for the American Party. Just as the American proletariat approaches the proletarian revolution directly, so dialectical materialism in the U.S. has nothing between it and the petty-bourgeois adaptation of pragmatism. Conversely in the United States an easy slip in the party from a revolutionary ideology to unadulterated pragmatism is a constant menace. Hence Trotsky's pressure for as broad and as comprehensive a program as possible of education in the dialectic and all its manifold phases.

Let us now examine the W.P. as it is today. In the W.P. you can jump from political position to political position on all fundamental questions, basing yourself on Trotsky's program in general and yet proving that Trotsky was wrong or "predicted" falsely on all the fundamental issues of the day. In the press, public or internal, the most diverse opinions are expressed under the general umbrella of "anti-Cannonism" and "anti-Johnsonism." Nobody cares particularly. But take care to be "honest" and "sincere." You can evade a political issue like the theory of retrogression for three years, allowing it to run riot in the press and averring that it is, it is not, it is the party position interminably. You can abuse the Fourth International like a fishwife, then say it is the only hope and then abuse it again. So long as you are "honest."

Shachtman who has learned this sincerity cult as he learns everything else, now has made his very own what we may call "dishonesty exposed by stolen letters." He discovers or has received a letter from Europe which "exposes" the S.W.P. He discovers or has received a letter from Europe which "exposes" what Johnson really said to Stalin. At the next meeting of the P.C., he announces that he has got hold of a letter "written to five people only" by Cannon which will fully "expose" why Johnson went on tour. He will "expose" the secret caucus documents of the Johnson-Forest Minority. Every exposure of the use of the snails for dishonest purposes implies of course the honesty and vigilance in the public weal of the detective. The comrades lap up this information, take it seriously, nod their heads, and believe that they are building a real honest Bolshevik Party. It is nothing but the gossipping method of a clique elevated to a political method. Shachtman, when it suits him, will drop this new Bolshevism as easily as he

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has embraced it. But the membership is helpless before it. In "The Wrong Road" Shachtman calls for a "high maximum of frankness and mutual understanding." Impeccable sentiment! Presumably it is in pursuit of this high maximum of understanding that he so frankly seeks all sources of information. But it is not only the W.P. leadership which is guilty of this. The real high priest of this new politics is not Shachtman but Goldman, who brought it fully developed from the S.W.P. Not only that. It is now being recommended to the political world. This is Shachtman concluding his "Two Lines on Unity":

"Right and duty coincide here. But this duty cannot be discharged as it should be if there is double-dealing, duplicity, concealment, super-diplomacy, self-suppression or suppression by others. It can only be done by the method we have scrupulously followed—open, honest and full development of political positions, presentation of political positions, confrontation of political positions."

The whole international proletariat is asked to follow this example.

"It is a method to be recommended not only to Johnson but to the movement all over the world."

Trotsky has pointed out that what the American proletariat needs is social thinking. The W.P. no doubt will agree with this as it does with whoever points out what the proletariat lacks. But where the proletariat does not think socially, few do, and the revolutionary party can continue to do so only by the most rigid vigilance and concentration. The W.P. has made a cult of the analysis of individual political figures and not infrequently in psycho-analytic terms. Rise in the party is the individual interpretation of why this or that leader or supporter of a political tendency has the political ideas that he has. So far has this gone that its social roots alone can explain it.

#### THE AMERICAN SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Nowhere in the world is the doctrine of social equality so much a matter of both theory and practice as among the people of the United States. Yet the basic characteristics of American bourgeois political life have been the emphasis on individual leadership and the organizational inertia and passivity of the masses. The first has been the product of the second and they have set the pattern of political thought and social and political action.

A recent publication puts in summary form what can be read in the writings of all experienced observers. Liberty, equality, individualism are the basic tenets of the American creed. Yet the American people associate changes with individuals. Social movements are rarely looked upon as the outcome of broad trends and deep forces. Trotsky expressed the same when he defined the great need of the American proletariat as the need to learn social thinking. But if you do not think socially, you think in terms of "isms," of religion, or of dynamic individuals. This conception of leadership\* is looked upon as so natural that the Americans do not realize that it is a specifically American characteristic. It is assumed in the United States that in every group there are leaders who control the attitudes of the group. (Are our anti-Cannonites beginning to feel uncomfortable?)

The cause of this is the historic inertia and inarticulateness of the masses. "Self-generating, self-disciplined, organized people's movements" are, comparatively speaking, absent from the American historical record. The masses have fought fiercely when the situation needed it, and mass movements have sometimes arisen with speed but have generally always died down.

\*Needless to say, this conception of leadership has nothing in common with the Fascist conception of leadership which is a rejection of bourgeois democracy. The American conception is an expression of it.

Even in the labor movement today, there is a prevalence of highly paid salaried organizers with the relative unimportance of the workers themselves. The workers rarely elect representatives from their ranks to Congress, state legislatures or city councils.

#### THE AMERICAN LEADER CULT

These patterns are exemplified in American politics and throughout the whole social structure. In Northern Europe and Britain in particular, policy-making is spread among committees, citizens' boards, etc. which widen mass participation, making politics more anonymous and less dependent on outstanding leadership. In the United States it is centralized in the offices of salaried functionaries. Rulers of other states have had in past times the enormous powers of the President of the United States. He, however has kept them, whereas in other democratic states they have been steadily whittled down. But while on the one hand this is an expression and reinforcement of the tendency to individual leadership, the equally powerful American sentiment for democracy and equality expresses itself in the ultimate controls being in the hands of the masses—they elect the President themselves and by means of referendums and direct voting on important offices, seek to keep a check on their leaders.

American political parties do not reflect the interests and ideals of the large masses of the electorate and therefore the tendency is for elections to be fought more over personalities than over programs.

Flowing from this general structure there are derivative characteristics. There is a wide public interest in personalities and in short-run developments in government and in business. The political leaders are exposed to a ruthless glare of publicity and the criticism of opponents. There is a constant effort on the part of one set of leaders to discredit other leaders. The perspective in politics and business centers, predominantly around actual happenings, yesterday, today and tomorrow. "What effect will this minor event have? What one person is behind what other person? What idea has caught whom?" Another important observation is the following. If an ordinary American faces a difficult situation he resorts to two general recommendations, "education" and "leadership." "Leadership is less of a conscious ideological principle than of a pragmatic approach to those activities which require the co-operation of many individuals."

The above, almost in his own words, is the analytical summary of a learned and experienced European observer\* of the American social and political scene, an analysis which he found indispensable as a preliminary to the first serious analysis ever made in the United States of the Negro question.

It is to the credit of Myrdal that he understands, to a degree remarkable for a bourgeois, that this pattern is strictly historical and will be broken. He notes (p. 1944) the hardening of the class lines and the growing cultural homogeneity of the mass. In this matter he is not too far behind some of the most penetrating and significant observations of Engels and of Trotsky. He expects the masses to become active and articulate. "If and when it comes, it is destined to remake the entire public and social life of America." This is true, more true than he knows or can dream of. But, for him, in 1944, there are little signs of this yet. The American proletariat for him is still backward. Which is one reason why, in spite of many extraordinary valuable pages on the Negro question, he comes to such absurd political conclusions. Nevertheless he gives an accurate if summary report of the specific national ideology of the American nation. Precisely because American is what it is, with no Social-Democratic party, the petty-bourgeoisie is ridden with these prejudices.

\*Gunnar Myrdal: An American Dilemma.

To fight these prejudices Bolshevism must know them, must know their theoretical roots, must consciously oppose them. But it cannot do this unless it opposes to them, consciously, the revolutionary proletariat and its weapon, the dialectic. The revolutionary proletariat in a particular country, German, French, Russian, develops general proletarian characteristics. But it inherits and takes over, along with many of the vices, the best qualities of the nation to which it belongs, e.g., in Germany, the theoretical heritage. It cannot help this. These qualities are part of the nation, their presence (and the absence of others) are the result of profound historical causes. They pass into all aspects of the life, action and thought of the nation. As the political crisis approaches they are usually manipulated by the exhausted bourgeoisie for what can only be reactionary purposes. The revolutionary proletariat from its very position in society makes a highly progressive use of the positive qualities and tends to discard the negative. The revolutionary theorist consciously does the same.

Nor does this happen all on the day of the revolution. The proletariat in ceaseless conflict with the bourgeoisie tends, especially at critical periods, to become increasingly conscious of itself and its own methods, thinking workers first, and increasing layers afterwards. Trotsky's reiterated statement in 1940 that the proletariat tends instinctively to understand the dialectic is sneered at, and yet unless the vanguard understands and believes this, it not only cannot teach the proletariat but cannot learn. Contrary to what Myrdal thinks, the proletariat has already "made the initial step of breaking with the bourgeois past." That step was the organization of the C.I.O.

**THE PROLETARIAT BREAKS THE TRADITION**

The proletariat here broke the tradition of mass passivity and inertia with terrific power. It combined the tradition of individual leadership with its own creative mass activity in one of the most astonishing proletarian movements of modern times. For Trotsky this was no mere organization of an industrial union. For him it was the basis of the Transitional Program on a world scale. In the Founding Theses of 1938 he wrote, "The unprecedented wave of sit-down strikes and the amazingly rapid growth of industrial unionism in the United States (the CIO) is most indisputable expression of the instinctive striving of the American workers to raise themselves to the level of the tasks imposed on them by history." (Founding Conference p. 17.) These were not mechanical, rhetorical, or passing words. Today the UAW, the vanguard of the CIO is a democratic union, the vanguard of democracy in the United States, product of the automobile industry and the proletarian adaptation of the American democratic tradition. It is a social force of immense significance and power. John L. Lewis is a representative of American labor within the old American tradition. The significant American labor leader is Walter Reuther and the range and depth of his activities and pronouncements are a tiny mirror of the forces unleashed in 1936 which are steadily gestating another tremendous outburst. Reuther leads nothing, he is a puppet pushed from behind. The incredible ferocities of the factional struggles in the UAW are no mere struggle for power among ambitious leaders and greedy political groupings but are a reflection of the social tensions in the country. They are corrupted and distorted by traditional reformism at this stage of its development and by Stalinism. But here during the last ten years, the proletarian drive against American capitalism and all its petty bourgeois pragmatic prejudices are struggling for expression. It is a large and difficult theme, but only a Marxist of the most pitiable character can fail to see that the battle is already joined between the traditional United States and the new.

Now which side in this gigantic conflict does the W.P. as

an organization represent? To ask the question is to answer it. It represents the worst prejudices of the American petty-bourgeois ideology which the proletariat, moving to the revolution, is trying to shake off. Particularly since 1945 the W.P. represents an adaptation of Bolshevism to the ideas of the American petty-bourgeoisie. As always the trend can be seen best in its most extreme representatives, in this case, Burnham and Macdonald. They broke most sharply with American bourgeois society. They identified themselves most closely with the Trotskyist, not the Stalinist movement. They have shown the greatest resistance to the re-acceptance of traditional bourgeois society. They do not live in a vacuum. They are signposts. And very important signposts.

**BURNHAM AND MACDONALD—TWIN POLES**

Burnham is the more important. The American reaction against the American preoccupation with the dynamic individual (Founding Fathers etc.) has taken a specifically American form of economic determinism. It has had enormous pedagogical influence in the United States through the work of Charles and Mary Beard. The young school of sociologists also practice it. This economic determinism talks about "class struggle and economic forces" but it is blind to the creative forces of a social class and above all the creative force of the proletariat. Burnham may or may not have clung to a soft bourgeois environment. But all this is neither very profitable nor, to tell the truth, very interesting. What is important is that he is a very typical representative of this new sociological school. He carries the determinist analysis to its logical conclusion (managerial society). It is an impossible position for an American radical to stay in. Faced with the threat of Stalinism, this representative of American individualism and the American democratic tradition (which is not the same thing as the British parliamentary democratic tradition) abandons all his ideas and runs back to American Imperialism. We have already dealt with that, but it is by the analysis of Burnham as a specifically American phenomenon that the W.P. can see the social roots of its anti-Stalinism. This will enable it to understand the apparent insensitiveness of all other contemporary Bolshevik tendencies, e.g., the French Majority, to its horrifying warnings.

Burnham is one result of the social forces playing upon the W.P. Macdonald is another significant symbol. Macdonald, also ex-Trotskyist, also unable to reconcile himself with American capitalism, has finally found religion—"The Root is Man," the moral worth of the individual. Macdonald's absurdities are not a matter for laughter. He has turned back to the past of the nation and a very important aspect of its present. Those political figures who have captured the imagination of the American people during the post-1929 years have all presented themselves to the nation in moral terms. Franklin Roosevelt will be known as the architect of the "New Deal" and the "Four Freedoms" and the "Good Neighbor Policy" and the "Quarantine of the Aggressor." Let the political psycho-analysts stop analyzing people's souls and begin to analyze political phenomena instead. They will find that not another European country can show a recent political leader who presented himself to the nation in these terms. Henry Wallace is second only to Roosevelt in mass popular appeal and his popular impact is that of a morality which frankly approaches mysticism. Eleanor Roosevelt is the social worker carried to the Hegelian absolute. The most dangerous Fascist leader was a priest—Coughlin—with his slogan of "Social Justice." The outstanding labor leader in popular sentiment is John L. Lewis, a Biblical prophetic figure couching the class struggle in terms of the harshness of the Old Testament against the adaptation of the New Testament by which American bourgeois leaders presented themselves to the masses, Right through American history you will find it—

In Woodrow Wilson whom Trotsky laughed at for his "Parish Sermons" addressed to the world; before him in fundamentalist Bryan of the "Cross of Gold" and the "Crown of Thorns;" in the carefully-preserved fiction of Honest Abraham Lincoln "with malice toward none, with charity toward all, with firmness in the right," even in such an apparently insignificant national legend as Washington and the cherry tree.

It can be seen in the speeches of Debs. This moralism stamps the work of so serious a thinker as Veblen. It expressed itself politically in the deeply revolutionary Abolitionist movement which for thirty years abstained from politics because politics was "corrupt." It is very close to the surface of any disoriented American intellectual. Caught between the crimes of American capitalism and the to them incurable passivity of the masses, these intellectuals express their preoccupation with the moral character of the individual by their passionate study of psycho-analysis. This is not an exclusively American phenomenon. The whole of the modern petty-bourgeois world is caught in this crisis and Existentialism in France, the sudden popularity of Kierkegaard (philosophically dead for near a century) and the emergence of religious parties in Europe as the sole organizational camouflage of bourgeois society, show the international tendency. But it has a special appeal in the United States and a special national background. It is into this pit that Macdonald has fallen.

The economic determinism masquerading as Marxism, the preoccupation with "honest leadership," the belief in the passivity of the masses under the control of leadership, even the "immorality" of the leaders by "publicity," the constant appeal to rank and file prejudices, the need for maximum "frankness" and "understanding" and "duty" and all this nauseating, demoralizing, corrupting, petty-bourgeois nonsense masquerading as Bolshevism, what causes all this in the W.P. but weakness before the same forces which created Burnham and Macdonald?

Does the W.P. now recognize itself? Will it explain what the American proletarian vanguard has to learn from the new politics of Goldman and Shachtman? What will the UAW militants do but turn in disgust from the articles on unity by Goldman with his perpetual probing into Cannon's "hunches"? What conception can workers have of our movement? In what way are they taught "social thinking"? Does the W.P. in its organizational conceptions, ideas, by the very facts of its existence represent or reflect the incipient proletarian democracy of the UAW as analysed by us or the worst features of bourgeois ideology, which the proletariat is striving to get rid of? The whole political degeneration of the W.P. becomes fused in its organizational politics. It is a phenomenon unique and explicable only in terms of the national environment, without a mass proletarian party. As we have written:

"Today the W.P. lives according to the following evaluation of contemporary politics: The Stalinist regime is bureaucratic-collectivist, totalitarian. It is ruled by a clique which practices the leader-cult, holds down the backward masses, miseducates them: by force and deception, and bureaucratically manipulates them. The Stalinist parties are totalitarian parties. They, too, are cliques which practice the leader-cult, deceive the backward masses and bureaucratically manipulate them. The Fourth International is led by a clique which is in the pocket of X, the leader, who deceives his followers and bureaucratically manipulates them. The S.W.P. is led by a clique which practices the leader-cult, and bureaucratically manipulates the membership. The Johnson-Forest Minority is led by a clique which practices the leader-cult, miseducates its backward followers and bureaucratically manipulates them. Implicit, and not always only implicit, in this world-wide analysis is the idea that it is only because they lack power that the Fourth

International, the S.W.P. and the Johnson-Forest Minority have not completed the degeneration which imposes its bureaucratic manipulations on the backward mass by force.

"To counteract these 'bureaucracies' and 'cliques,' Shachtman has his 'cadre.' All types of revolutionaries are welcome. Their rallying cry is not revolutionary activity for which the backward masses are not suitable. It is not the mobilization of the parties for the task of transforming themselves into mass parties. For this the small, insignificant parties are not ready, whatever may be the objective situation. Their rallying cry is 'democracy.' Their main business is anti-Stalinism, anti-Cannonism and anti-Johnsonism. Their specific political method is exposure of the dishonesty, duplicity and bureaucratic methods of political opponents; by this means to effect the enlightenment of the duped, deluded and backward followers as to the unreliability of their leaders. The organizational force of this political activity is the 'cadre,' the sole, original contribution of Shachtman to the political ideas of the Fourth International. This, stripped of all decoration, is the special political atmosphere of the W.P." (Bulletin, May 27, 1947, p. 2, 3)

There is no answer. There can be no answer. The pattern is too complete. The existence of Social-Democratic parties, the proletarian tradition of those parties in Europe, the different class relations, gave to opportunism in Europe a less concentrated completely worked-out character. But precisely for that reason the American experience becomes a logical culmination and a quintessential warning against all who are deluded enough to find some regeneration of Bolshevism in the struggle of the W.P. against "Cannonism."

(c) "All-Inclusive Party"

The W.P. has for years slandered the principles and practice of the Fourth International all over the world under the guise of exposure of "Cannonism." It has sedulously sown the conception that it is possible for minorities in a party subscribing to the program and principles of the Fourth International to be brutally suppressed without being able to express their views or to be persecuted for having them. We shall oppose these lies and slanders wherever and whenever they appear. Such practices do not exist, have never existed, and cannot exist in the Fourth International. They may be tried. They always fail. We repeat this. Such practices have never existed, do not exist and cannot exist in the Fourth International! Made as the W.P. makes them, these changes represent only terror before proletarian discipline, that terror which is being assiduously propagated among the petty-bourgeoisie and the proletariat to confuse the socialist society with totalitarianism. Let those who deny what we have repeated bring forward proof or by their silence be exposed as petty-bourgeois liars and slanderers.

We have steadfastly refused to "defend Cannonism" or the Cannonite regime against the attacks of the W.P. for anything that took place between 1940 and 1947. We were not there. The S.W.P. is perfectly able to defend itself if and when it feels that it needs defense. But it is our duty to bring to the attention of the comrades this fact, that the existing documents of both the Majority and the Minority in 1940 prove that there was not the slightest basis for the charge being made today that the Minority of 1940 had been bureaucratically mishandled by the Cannon-led Majority. This is not only of historical importance. We are not interested in history for history's sake. It is imperative to stop the mouth of the slanderers. It is necessary to understand why they are as they are today and what they represent.

In his Struggle for the Proletarian Party (1940), Cannon states that many of the best friends of the party, hearing this oft-repeated charge, concluded that where there was so much smoke there was certainly fire and a little self-criticism would be in order. Cannon replied that the leadership of the S.W.P.



had many faults to which it would have to plead guilty, but bureaucratic mishandling of the branches or the proletarian elements—none whatever. And the truth is that in all the voluminous writings of the 1940 Minority, not one single such charge was ever made.

This is the question which the slanderers never face. Bureaucracy in the labor movement consists essentially of leadership terrorizing and mishandling the proletarian and less articulate elements in the party, imposing upon them organizational decisions from above, riding rough-shod over their wishes and their decisions. In organizations like those of the Fourth International today, such conduct would bring its own reward—it would destroy the party. The idea that the W.P. stood guard or for that matter stands guard against the terrorizing of the rank and file elements in the party by the bureaucratic terror of Cannon is as ridiculous in theory as it is baseless in fact.

What then was the charge in 1940? It was not even the charge that the Minority leaders were excluded from posts because they were or gave signs of being an opposition. They themselves admitted this. They filled numerous posts. The charge against Cannon was that he manipulated a clique which worshipped him as "the leader" and did not give sufficient consideration and democracy to the other leaders. Let the splitters speak for themselves:

"All the formal democracy enjoyed by the party today—and it is abundant—is worse than meaningless, it is a mockery, if the real policies and the leadership and the regime of the party are continuously determined only by a clique . . . (without) a distinctive political foundation. Removal of the party control from . . . this clique is a pre-condition to . . . a genuine party democracy and progressive policy. In place of a leader-cult, not another leader (we propose none and want none) but a collective leadership, genuinely collective, coordinating and integrating by a real exchange of opinion and an efficient division of labor the best talents of the party. If there is one in the party who is outstanding from all others in his abilities and devotion and political insight, he will be known and recognized; but let him be primus intra pares—first among equals. In place of 'reaffirming old positions,' let us like free and intelligent men use our mighty programmatic concept to meet the living problems of history, to foresee and to guide in action. A maximum of branch and local initiative! Comradely education, not brutal and disloyal attacks, for those in error. A warm, if critical, welcome for every new idea, even a doubtful idea, not a denunciation for 'irresponsibility.' Comradely criticism, encouragement, help, praise for the youth—even when the youth errs on the side of exaggeration or over-zealousness. And let us be less terrified of mistakes. Only the dead make no mistakes." (Struggle for the Proletarian Party, p. 293)

**ATROCITY PROPAGANDA**

We split also? Very well. We declare that it was an unpardonable error. The argument remains. The bureaucracy complained of was an oppression of leaders. According to its own confession, the W.P., when it split, was still ready to defend Russia if it was attacked. (Shachtman in The New International, April 1940; after the split). The split, as the W.P. insisted, was on the organizational question. Here are some of the charges: (Quoted from "War and Bureaucratic Conservatism", reprinted in The Struggle for the Proletarian Party)

"Comrade Goldman is a prominent supporter of Cannon. He himself has often declared that he supports the Cannon leadership and regime, independently of agreement or disagreement on policies. During the course of the present dispute, when the question of the invasion of Poland by the Red Army was before the P.C., Goldman . . . supported Cannon in general, and acted as a chief spokesman for the Cannon political and the organizational motions, in spite of the fact that the political motions conflicted flatly with his own expressed opinion." (p. 267-268)

Follows another atrocity-story of some 300 words.  
"Consider the way (already described) in which the

majority at the plenum 'endorsed' the long article on the 'Russian question.' Some of them had not even read it in its entirety; none of them could possibly have studied and assimilated it, and the complete document was not even on hand." (p. 275)

"The New York organization has been slipping away from the Cannon influence? Luckily, just before a local convention, Cochran turns up in New York. . . ." (p. 278)  
Follows another atrocity-story.

"The Organization Committee, discussing the severe financial crisis . . . After the defeat of the Cannon faction at the New York City convention. . . the phenomenal crisis disappears overnight." (p. 279)

"Two other points were of interest in connection with this revealing incident. Cannon did not go to the back of the hall—nor does he usually on such occasions. Why not?" (p. 282)

Here is a question which will live in history. Why didn't Cannon go to the back of the hall?

The S.W.P. Majority leaders were accused of Cannon-worship.

"On organizational questions he (Weiss) declared he had found Cannon right 999 times out of 1000 . . ." (p. 283)

"A more revolting occurrence took place at one of the N.C. meetings . . ." (p. 283)

"Or more recently and still more revealing . . ." (p. 284)

"It is because . . . Cannon towers above his fellow committee members as Lenin towered above his." (p.283)  
The cultist here impugned is Morrow.

" . . . Clarke ended up a speech in favor of Cannon by demanding in a loud and belligerent voice: 'Does anyone here dare to deny that Cannon is the one outstanding leader of this party?'" (p. 284)

For some more atrocity-stories:

"We will illustrate . . . with three decisive examples. On New Year's Eve of last year comrades Dunne and 'Smith' of Minneapolis suddenly appeared in New York. . ." (p. 286)

The above is what remains of the "organizational question" of 1940. But it is precisely this type of politics that has been refurbished since 1945 and peddled around the International for the past two years by the W.P. as the authority on Cannonite "bureaucratism."

**THE BOLSHEVIK ALL-INCLUSIVE PARTY**

It takes political expression as the "all-inclusive party." Yet the whole concept of the all-inclusive party, as propagated by the W.P., is an all-inclusive fraud. In 1940, the Minority was offered every conceivable minority right that could be desired. Burnham at that time had declared that Russia was not a workers' state. He stood for unconditional defeatism. He stated "I find about 75 per cent of what Engels wrote in these latter fields (philosophy, logic, natural science, and scientific method) to be confused or outmoded by subsequent scientific investigation—in either case of little value." (In Defense of Marxism, p. 190.) He also said at that time: "Why Marx, Engels and Lenin believed in dialectics is a problem for psychological and historical examination and stands on its own feet." (Ibid., p. 193.) In Trotsky's opinion, the leaders of the opposition "in their attempts to divorce sociology from dialectical materialism and politics from sociology . . . have broken from Marxism and become the transmitting mechanism for petty-bourgeois empiricism." (In Defense of Marxism, p. 93.) It was "a question of nothing more or less than an attempt to reject, disqualify and overthrow the theoretical foundations, the political principles and organizational methods of our movement." (Ibid.) Johnson and others had declared themselves unconditional defeatists. Yet Trotsky had proposed that all minority tendencies were to be included in the party with full rights, participation in party work, publication of all their views and literary continuation of the discussion in public. The S.W.P. offered it officially. Trotsky backed it with all his authority. That would have been an "all-inclusive party."

But the all-inclusive party of the W.P., seen in its context, is nothing more than a continuation on a higher plane of their original position in 1940, deprived of the hope that democratic dynamism would show "bureaucratic conservatism" how to build the party. Convinced of the backwardness of the American proletariat, terrified by the typically American petty-bourgeois fear of Stalinism, the W.P. leadership has developed a theory which is nothing but the purest expression of petty-bourgeois radicalism unable to reconcile itself with the bourgeois, lacking a Social-Democratic party which it can "enter" and therefore seeking a niche for itself in Bolshevism where it can nourish all its petty-bourgeois deviations undisturbed.

It is imperative to explain the W.P. to the W.P. The W.P. leaders, for example, believe that their party is a genuinely democratic party. Everybody can express his views, nobody is "suppressed." In reality, as a revolutionary organization, it is politically the most bureaucratic conceivable. 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 1946. 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.

#### INTELLECTUALS AND THE PROLETARIAT

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.

The W.P. leadership had hundreds and hundreds of this type of worker come in and go. It taught them nothing. It learnt nothing from them. Its conception was that the unionist had to be given unionism and the rank and file worker wanted the politics of "Plenty for All." Everything, every new idea, came from above down. The W.P. had to do this because it did not know how to do otherwise. This is the practice that corresponds to what it calls "the role of the party." The W.P., cutting itself up about what Cannon "and his clique" did bureaucratically to Goldman or to Morrow, does not know that its whole conception is bureaucratic to the last degree. Argument will do no good here. Only a party full of "raw workers" can cure this tendency. With its false political premises, the more strenuously it proletarianized itself, the more it fortified its petty-bourgeois bureaucratic (i.e. from above) prejudices.

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-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.

#### DEMOCRATIC JUNGLE

Equally self-deceiving is the W.P.'s interminable accusation against the S.W.P. that it practices the "leader-cult." In reality, the "leader-cult" in the W.P. is of the most pervasive and comprehensive type. The Johnson-Forest tendency, the S.W.P., the Fourth International, have a clear political line on most issues. Those who, according to the W.P. are "friends" or mere "hand-raisers" at the very least express their "friendship" for, or raise their hands to, a political line. The W.P. has no policy, neither on the character of the epoch nor the nature of the Stalinist parties nor on American perspectives nor on the Negro question. There is most 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 the political and organizational pressures by which he decides the political line for today. The result is the leader principle and clique politics carried to an extreme degree. The W.P. leadership, the W.P. membership have not the faintest conception of these things.

Given the perspectives of the W.P. leaders, the "all-inclusive party", concerned only with sects, groupings, and shades of opinion, is exactly the kind of party they want. They are concerned with the party not as an instrument of struggle for the proletariat but for the protection, as they say officially and unofficially, "of the ideological life" of minorities. In this the W.P. reflects faithfully the petty-bourgeois terror before the mighty conflicts and needs of the day. 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.

They and those they win over are the only ones who have the correct ideas and without them humanity is lost. In this ridiculous preoccupation, so insisted on, they betray the whole bankruptcy of their perspectives, national and international, and the developed stage of their degeneration. For nothing but a totalitarian regime, and that not indefinitely, can suppress the historical vindication of political views. Not even the totalitarian regime can prevent the living of "an ideological life." And nowhere in the world is there so rich an opportunity of living "an ideological life" as in the struggle for Bolshevism against American imperialism and the social and intellectual prejudices it has fostered.

These words are sharp. We stand by them. Let all tendencies note this. A genuine Bolshevism is vigilant against tendencies to bureaucratic practices or conservatism which constantly appear in all organizations, not excluding the W.P. Such critical vigilance is not only welcomed but encouraged by any confident and far-seeing leadership especially when this critical vigilance comes from the ranks. But the political use of accusations of bureaucracy by the W.P., a practice rooted in its false politics, has attained a pitch of frenzy and fetishism in the last two years which has poisoned party life in the United States and will continue to do so for a long time to come unless there is a concerted effort at rooting it out. Of this perversion of the term "bureaucratism" the Johnson-Forest tendency is a moral term. We know its roots and we have seen its consequences. And we have subordinated and will subordinate any legitimate complaints or doubts that we may have about this or that procedure in our Movement until this canker is destroyed.

The more experienced leaders of the Johnson-Forest tendency know this canker for what it is. When we say that it has poisoned the movement in the United States we know what we are talking about. Our own ranks have stood up against this barrage with remarkable loyalty to the principles and methods that the leadership put forward as a guide. But it would be idle to believe that they have not been affected by what has affected the whole American movement from one end to the other. Anyone abroad, group or tendency, who does not lend his aid to clearing away this miasma is only piling up obstacles between the American revolutionary movement and the proletariat. For some of those newly-come into the movement, the term Cannon is as synonymous with the term "Cannonite bureaucracy" as the name Stalin is synonymous with the term "Stalinist bureaucracy." Of the Stalinist bureaucracy it is said at least that it prevents the progress of the permanent revolution at home and abroad. For two years, the W.P. has never said, not once, that the existence of the "Cannonite bureaucracy" impedes the building of the party in the United States. It is a purely psychological characterization, devoid of political content and for that reason, a shameful crime.

The Johnson-Forest tendency has declared itself in regard to the perpetual charges of bureaucracy made by the W.P. against the S.W.P. We have taken a rigid attitude to it. We reprint here for the sake of the record what our attitude has been.

"The W.P. does not unduly concern itself with problems such as Hansen's article on Cannon and controversy in the S.W.P. about the rights of intellectuals to criticize the party and the publication or non-publication of letters, etc. It does not give the slightest credence to the conception that a party cannot be built with Cannon. It is confident that if Cannon or Cannonism or any other individual or tendency stands in the way of building the Fourth International in the United States, then the revolutionary cadres in both the W.P. and the S.W.P. will either defeat such individuals or tendencies or thereby prove their inability to defeat the bourgeoisie. The W.P. makes its main attack on Cannon's regime its refusal to enter honestly into fusion

negotiations. This refusal betrays its stultifying monolithic conceptions. The W.P. recognizes that the mere acceptance of fusion between the two parties would strike a death blow at the monolithic conception. All other preoccupations are subordinate, disorient the membership of both parties and strengthen the Cannonite miseducation in the rank and file of the S.W.P. on unity." ("The Task of Building the Bolshevik Party," Convention Bulletin No. 3, March 28, 1946, p. 23)

Our attitude on this matter has been one of firm abstention. It is possible and necessary now, however, to concretize this. Our concretization however, deals not with the S.W.P. but with the W.P.

#### CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

1. The W.P. for three years kept the political analysis of the Russian state by the Johnson-Forest tendency out of the pages of *The New International* and the internal bulletin. Even the offer, after a long period of continuous excuses and evasions, to print in the internal bulletin, was confined to eight typewritten pages. After six months had passed and over these eight pages were not printed, the tendency then withdrew its document. We kept this piece of "bureaucracy" fully documented.

2. In 1945, the Majority officially made it clear to Johnson that if he insisted on the publication in the *New International* of his article against the I.K.D. without moderating "the tone," Shachtman would reply in a manner that would make it impossible for Johnson to remain in the party. The original article is available for whoever wants to see. Nothing in it faintly approaches the abuse heaped upon the Fourth International month after month in *The New International* by the I.K.D. In fact, Johnson's article had no abuse and merely characterized the I.K.D. as petty-bourgeois revisionists of the worst type that the movement has yet seen. Because political positions between the Majority and Minority had not been made clear, Johnson decided not to fight the issue at that time and changed the article.

3. Before 1945, Shachtman, in private and in public, repeatedly made it clear to the Minority that he would prefer them out of the party. In 1945, however, the W.P. leadership, recognizing the failure of "democratic dynamism", turned from politics to organization and began to smooth the way for the S.W.P. Minority. Then suddenly the presence of the Johnson Minority "with all its differences" became one of the brightest jewels in the crown of the W.P.

Only a few members of the tendency itself knew all this. Many members of the Johnson-Forest tendency have known of these incidents only recently. The leaders of the tendency did not spread them around in the party. In our organizational resolution of 1946 we wrote baldly in a dozen words that no Minority be invited to leave the party. The Majority pretended not to notice this. We had included it merely to safeguard ourselves, for despite the new honeymoon period initiated by the unity negotiations, we did not know what the future would bring. To Shachtman's perpetual attempts to involve Johnson in an attack upon "the bureaucracy" of his regime, we invariably replied; "The term bureaucracy as you use it has no application either to the S.W.P. or the W.P. We do not believe the 'regime' of the S.W.P. is very bad and we do not believe your 'regime' is very good."

Our attitude to the question of regime is therefore one of long standing. It was not invented in order to be "obsequious" to the S.W.P. We have said just enough to show that we lived up to it in the W.P. itself despite severe provocation.

We ask those who are following this controversy to declare openly where they stand and why. We have been reticent on the matter. We shall be so no longer. We are not "defending" the S.W.P. We have seen the effect of all this on our own member-

ship. We have tried to educate them along the following lines. We say to them:

"Your political positions are safe and will be tested by history and by an organized exchange of opinion. The present situation in the United States demands that you cease to concern yourselves with the perpetual inner-party politics and attempts to win people from one group of Trotskyites to another. That is the ingrown, sectarian approach which is the heritage of the propagandist past and a sign of bankruptcy before the needs and tasks of the proletariat and the party today. Turn your minds outward. The S.W.P. has a proletarian base which has accumulated years of experience and knowledge. Make it your main business to get to know them, learn all you can from them, contact the proletariat with them, learn and evaluate their past experiences with them, test your own experiences and ideas with them. Disabuse yourself of the idea that your task is to find out how far they differ with you on our theoretical estimate of the American situation, perspectives and tasks. Avoid theoretical conflicts. They are ahead, a multitude of them. A party of a few hundreds can become a party of thousands and then a mass party only by perpetual conflict, groupings and regroupings. The real concrete conflicts in the American movement will begin when there are some thousands of workers in the party. Nobody knows who will be on which side and what will be the sides. These conflicts will come. What is required now is to get rid of the heritage of the type of conflict represented by the 1940 split and by Goldman and Morrow.

"Against the perpetual playing about with fundamentals which characterized the W.P. Majority we had one task, a constant battle over principles, a perpetual suspiciousness and hostility to their Menshevik tendencies. In the unified party the task is entirely different and demands a new orientation on your part. The S.W.P. is a proletarian tendency. It will be your party, its leaders your leaders. The greatest danger for you is to be nervous and sensitive for the signs of this bureaucracy which has played so great a part in the perverted political life and conceptions of the W.P. But some of you have secret doubts about bureaucracy. Remember this. The constant accusations of an uncontrolled bureaucratism levelled against the S.W.P. by the W.P. is an attack not against Cannon as they think but on the membership, the revolutionary vanguard in the United States, who are considered so blind, so dumb, so bureaucratized that they cannot see what has to be taught them by the W.P. Any complaints about bureaucracy must come from the S.W.P. membership, its rank and file. When they talk about bureaucracy, it will mean something. All other fury about bureaucracy is a sign of political stupidity, political insensitivity, political bankruptcy and the sure road to political suicide. The members of the Johnson-Forest tendency must shun it for the Menshevism that it is."

This, in every possible way, we have taught the members of our tendency. We believe that they have grasped it. Henceforth the major responsibility for their integration into the S.W.P. rests not with us, but with the S.W.P. majority:

## VI. Perspectives in the United States

### (a) S.W.P. and W.P.

Shachtman is beside himself with rage that we as a tendency are careful what we say in regard to the S.W.P. and how we say it. Our bold Bolshevik considers all this "capitulation" and "obsequiousness" and raises his cohorts to admire his firm intransigent Bolshevik mien, the fearless manner in which he gets hold of private correspondence, the Leninist audacity with which he publishes it, the loving mutual trust and confidence and understanding with which he and his colleagues mutually and frankly agree to disagree on every important political question before the movement today.

For our part we have been away from the S.W.P. for seven years. We have had our own experiences. We are clarifying them by ourselves, among other reasons because we do not wish the impact of our views on the International to be weakened by accusations of dark maneuvers, conspiracy and collusion, charges which constitute the main political stock-in-trade of the W.P. This is our balance sheet with the W.P., our experiences, our analyses, our views. We are writing no balance with the S.W.P. We propose to deal here with the S.W.P. only insofar as its political and organizational activities affected the development of the W.P. and our struggle in it. Shortly after this appears, we hope to be members of the S.W.P. Under these circumstances we have the responsibility of being guided in anything we say, or in saying anything at all, by the needs, interests, and discipline of the party to which we shall belong. Let the W.P. yelp and howl about "capitulation."

During the struggle of 1940 the SWP supplemented the comprehensive analysis and method of Trotsky in adequate and sometimes permanently valuable fashion. In particular, Cannon's document, *The Struggle For a Proletarian Party* is an outstanding contribution to American Bolshevism and from its very concreteness, to Bolshevism in general. We recommend it to all the comrades of the movement, at home and abroad.

But the S.W.P. has made some serious mistakes, not errors of fact or exaggeration but political errors. It has made

them from the very beginning, has never abjured them, and these have vitally affected the American experience.

The S.W.P. in 1940 believed that the Minority represented a group of petty-bourgeois who were afraid of the struggle against American imperialism in war time. The S.W.P. leaders not only said so in the unbridled verbal polemic which accompanies a sharp faction fight, but wrote this over and over again. Thus Cannon in his speech on the Russian Question at the very beginning of the dispute October 15, 1939 declared: "Defensists at home were defeatists on Russia. Defensists on Russia were defeatists at home." (*Struggle for a Proletarian Party* p. 212.) This was on October 15, 1939. Summarizing the perspectives in the Fourth International of May 1940 the S.W.P. wrote:

"The internal fight was imposed upon the party by the war. Disoriented by the war, or rather by the approach of war, a section of the leadership turned their backs on the program, which had been elaborated in years of struggle in preparation for the war. Overnight they forgot the principles which they had defended jointly with us up to the very day of the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact. These soldiers of peace had evidently assimilated the ideas of Bolshevism only as a set of literary formulas. They wrote endlessly, and sometimes cleverly, in favor of them. But the moment the formulas were put to the test of life—or rather the threat of such a test, for America has not yet entered the war—the literary exponents crumpled miserably and shamefully. And with amazing speed." (*The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, p. 243.)

The S.W.P. made direct organic connection between the Russian question and the war question. Yet when official opinion began to shout for a war in alliance with Russia, the W.P. opposed both the war and Russia. On the role of Russia in the war, and after, the W.P. has become more than ever convinced that events have justified its position in 1940. This, no doubt, the S.W.P. and the International understand. But it is impossible to believe that the International understands all that is involved when in his article on Poland (Fourth International, February 1947) a leading writer of the Movement

could make the inexcusable blunder of repeating 1940 all over again and prophesying that Shachtman's position on Poland would lead to the support of the American democracy in the coming war.

The W.P., having shaken off Burnham without a tremor, contrary to the expectations of the S.W.P., went its way full of confidence because the S.W.P. seemed to be attacking, not the W.P., but a figment of its own imagination. This confidence was enormously increased by certain actions of the S.W.P. on this very war question. The S.W.P. failed to make a formal declaration of opposition at the beginning of the imperialist war. It put forward a theory of telescoping the imperialist war with the anti-Fascist war which shocked the comrades of the W.P. immeasurably. Shachtman at the time handled this with firmness, moderation and good sense. We recommend to him the same qualities in treating this question in the next period.

The second serious error was in regard to proletarianization and the building of the party. The S.W.P., and here Trotsky was equally in error, believed that the W.P. was afraid of the hard task of penetrating into the workers' milieu. The S.W.P. continued to believe this when every shred of evidence pointed to the contrary.

#### THE POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE W.P.

No party of the Fourth International, none ever sought to proletarianize itself more intensively than the W.P. It has worn itself out trying to build a party among the workers. Day in and day out it has maintained a firm class line. It turned its back upon the petty-bourgeois intellectuals. It has maintained a smoothly functioning organization for several years by devotion, sacrifice, tenacity and organizational skill. This is no mean achievement. The leading staff has shown itself the absolute opposite of purely literary tendencies. It has been ready at all times for hard day-to-day work in the proletarian milieu, in the provinces. How to build the party has dominated the organization from first to last, particularly between 1940 and 1945, when it began to doubt itself. It was only impotence which turned it back to literary and international polemics and "the bureaucratic jungle". Its failure therefore has been a political failure, a failure of its political conceptions in the United States. Yet most of the polemics of the S.W.P. seemed to be directed against what it conceived the W.P. to be in 1940 and not as it concretely developed over the years.

Why were the mistakes so serious and why were they made in the first place? The answer is of national and international importance. Today the whole international struggle is on a far higher plane than it was in 1914. Bolsheviks like Kamenev could waver on the policy of defeatism in 1914. In 1939 the various organizations of the International stood firm down almost to the last rank and file. The attractive power of imperialism had declined below zero. To have expected the W.P. to capitulate to the war was a false analysis not so much of the W.P. as of our epoch. From this a conclusion of international importance can be drawn. In our day (tomorrow it may change) but in our day opportunism in the revolutionary ranks does not express itself on the war question as it did with the Social Democracy in 1914. Imperialism and its reformist supporters are too discredited. The firmest opposition to the war can be accompanied or followed by the crassest opportunism on the question of the revolution.

If this is true everywhere, and we believe that it is, it was particularly true in the United States. The objective situation in the United States afforded no intermediate bridge between a revolutionary tendency and the Democratic Party of Roosevelt, Hillbo, and Rankin. Not merely their subjective qualities and the long training of the Fourth International, both of which we would be the last to underestimate, but

objective class and political relations in the United States helped to keep the Workers Party on the correct path. The decisive social and political feature of the United States governing all aspects of its life, including its intellectual life, is the absence of a mass Social-Democratic Party. It is the source of the greatest weakness to Bolshevism but a source also of its greatest strength. In 1941 there was no social or political temptation to social patriotism or reformism. Not only negatively but positively this absence gave advantages. The absence of the mass political party compelled a revolutionary tendency to go to the proletariat in the process of production itself. There was no other way of making contact with the workers. Finally when Shachtman in 1945 realized that "democratic dynamism" had failed, being a revolutionary in the United States, the only road that lay open was the road back to the S.W.P. All this is rooted in the conditions of the United States. These are the conditions under which American Bolshevism functions and which must dictate strategy.

By 1945, contrary to expectations, the S.W.P., like other tendencies in the Fourth International, had not become a mass party. Contrary to all expectations of the S.W.P., the W.P. had not disintegrated. Far from it, it had shown an exceptional vitality. It was necessary to incorporate these valuable, experienced comrades, or as many as possible, into an organization for their own sake. Secondly in self-defense it was necessary to do so. The wretched events of the last two years show this. In 1945 the situation in the W.P. was ripe for intervention. The comrades were dissatisfied with the result of four years' work and were looking for a lead. Where could they look but to the S.W.P.? They looked to the S.W.P. At that time the S.W.P. was thought to be growing by leaps and bounds. Its progress was the subject of constant discussion and if not discussion, careful observations by the most thoughtful members of the W.P. The Militant began to be read and discussed and compared with Labor Action, a fact which has been registered in party documents. Many comrades of the W.P. in 1945 were relatively unprejudiced. Some of us were very sympathetic to the S.W.P., but the most sober, careful reading of The Militant failed to show any distinctive difference in the treatment of the American question. In fact during the G.M. strikes there was deep dissatisfaction in the W.P. with the way the party had reacted. The W.P. leadership, politically volatile, can sometimes make a quick response to a situation, just as the Mensheviks in Russia used to; only like them to lapse afterwards into pessimism. The W.P. leadership made a serious effort to meet the situation. W.P. members, still searching, looked carefully at The Militant. It was widely noted and commented upon that after its bad beginning on the G.M. crisis, the W.P. press showed distinct advantages. In this period Shachtman declared that The Militant was revolutionary on Siam, Ceylon and all over the world but did not rise above the trade union level on the American Question. We can testify that this was neither a gibe nor a sneer. It was a serious evaluation at a time when serious evaluations were being made. The W.P., half in self-defense and half in general interest, made a careful examination of the numerical strength of the S.W.P. Its union policies were subjected to a serious scrutiny by members of the W.P. who had experience in the unions. They genuinely opposed the S.W.P. policy. But during all this, the S.W.P. continued to denounce the W.P. in terms of 1940.

#### RIPE FOR INTERVENTION

The whole Goldman-Morrow campaign for unity, the Goldman split, the intrigues and maneuvers surrounding it gave terrible blows to the moral and the political development of the W.P. and its attitude to the S.W.P. The refusal of the

S.W.P. to take a clear position gave Shachtman free rein for his campaign on "the bureaucratic jungle" and the "unique contributions" of the W.P. in regard to foreign politics. The S.W.P. fell headlong into the snare. First it refused to countenance the possibility of unity. Then it entered into unity discussions without making any definite pronouncement. Then it broke off the unity discussions and entered into violent polemics with the W.P. about all the disputed questions, all except the one question on which the W.P. was patently bankrupt and on which its leadership least wanted discussion—the building of the party in the United States. As late as the summer of 1946 the S.W.P. issued a violent attack upon the W.P. consisting of many thousands of words. But on the American question the differences pointed out were wild allegations about the Bohemian, anarchistic character of the W.P. in the unions, and the crimes of the W.P. in not supporting the candidates of the A.L.P., Frankenstein in Detroit etc., incidents about which there could be arguments on both sides and which were obviously vastly inflated out of their real proportions.

The S.W.P. promulgated a theory of a politically homogeneous party which does not stand examination either from Marxist theory, the history of Bolshevism or its own attitude in 1940. Suddenly it tore this theory to pieces by its proposals for unity which enabled Shachtman to say that the new party would be even more all-inclusive than the W.P. because it would include the tendencies in the W.P. plus those in the S.W.P. Under the undoubted provocations of the W.P., the S.W.P. repeated the mistakes of 1945, declared once more that it proposed to discuss all over again the political issues which had been discussed ad nauseam. In other words it played once more into the hands of the W.P. leadership. The result is a horrible confusion in all ranks as to what exactly constitutes a Bolshevik party, and the Fourth International in the United States presents a demoralizing spectacle of suspicions, antagonisms, vacillations and confusion which represent a grievous decline from previous standards.

Never did the S.W.P. recognize the concrete positive achievements of the W.P. and its perpetual preoccupation with the problem of building the party. It offered nothing to the positive elements in the W.P. as a whole. It saw only Shachtman's "unique contributions" which as we have pointed out, exercised little attraction for the W.P. membership. It carried on the discussion solely on that plane. Worse still, even when the Johnson-Forest Minority appeared in the W.P., an opposition attacking these very "unique contributions" in the most fundamental manner possible, the S.W.P. ignored it. The S.W.P. read the convention documents of 1946 in which the Johnson-Forest Minority gave an extremely bold indication of its position on the fundamental theoretical issue underlying the 1940 split. Orienting not only towards unification on paper but unification in method, we analyzed all tendencies as parts of the prospective whole, and made comparisons between the two parties which have never been made by any minority which did not contemplate a split. We condemned the Goldman-Morrow faction for its course. Then came the first intervention of the S.W.P. It was purely organizational, an intimation that in its opinion the Johnson-Forest Minority should split from the W.P. We protested against this both for its national and international implications. The protest has been justified by events.

What was needed? What is still needed? An unreserved acceptance of the unity proposals, some comprehensive and more concretised plan such as Trotsky had worked out in 1940, theoretical intransigence and organizational flexibility, coupled with the thesis on the American Revolution, would have put the "organizational question" in its place. No such policy was forthcoming.

As far as the conception of the homogeneous party affects the S.W.P., we are quite unperturbed. As we have always insisted, the mere fact of unity would have deprived the homogeneous combat party conception of all monolithic connotations. Least of all, were we disturbed by all the lamentations and head-shaking of the W.P. at the "docility" of the S.W.P. membership. A party which cut quietly through Shachtman's advocacy of the retrogressionist thesis, watched it flower for years in The New International, calmly accepted his opposition to it, and now in all probability will accept it again, all without a murmur, cannot agitate us about the way the S.W.P. membership accepted "no unity," then accepted "unity," all "at the command" of the leadership. We are concerned here with the reinforcement that the concept has given to Shachtman's false politics and his double-talk campaign for the "all-inclusive party".

**A POLITICAL BASIS FOR UNITY**

The Johnson-Forest tendency from the beginning rested its attitude toward unity on the objective situation in the United States. We append here our resolution on unity which we presented to the 1946 Convention. We placed it, of set purpose, in our American resolution. For us, unity has never been an organizational question but a question rooted in the needs of the American Revolution.

"The nature of the coming struggles and the difficulties and opportunities that face both the American proletariat and the revolutionary party in the United States demand the unity of the two groups which on an international and national scale stand on the principles of the Fourth International.

"The division between the two organizations is a cause of scandal for the Fourth International in the United States, confuses the proletariat, and diverts the energy and attention of the membership.

"Unity is needed so that the Fourth International may take advantage of the possible formation of an Independent Labor Party. Experience in Europe has proved to the Trotskyist movement the difficulty of persuading workers of the organizational conclusions of Bolshevism unless the revolutionary party is of sufficient force to attract them. Experience has also proved the necessity of a strong Bolshevik organization to resist the attractive power of a mass Labor Party.

"In a few months the two organizations will be publishing between them the equivalent of a four page daily paper in the United States. Around the organization of such a tremendous weapon of the class struggle, there is the possibility of rapidly creating a political organization which will stamp itself upon the consciousness of the United States as a serious contender for leadership of the revolutionary proletariat.

"The greatest obstacle in the path of the development of the Fourth International in the United States is Stalinism. The greatest blow the Trotskyist movement in the United States can deal the Stalinists is the formation of a united organization. There is emerging in the United States a general tendency toward revolution which is at the same time hostile to Stalinism. The Fourth International in the United States cannot organize, develop and expand this tendency as long as it is divided into two groups. The new line of the Stalinists and the difficulties which it creates for the Fourth International are doubled and quadrupled by the division between the two organizations.

"Both the leadership of the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party pose the question of unity in organizational terms, whereby they once again demonstrate their imperfect grasp of the radicalization of the American proletariat and the lagging behind of the revolutionary organization. The Socialist Workers Party, in particular, by viewing such successes as it may gain in relation to the Workers Party and not in relation to the needs of the proletariat, betrays criminal and sectarian blindness. The unprincipled maneuvers of the Socialist Workers Party in regard to the question of Unity betrays the sectarian factionalism of the old propagandist circle and its incapacity to understand the needs of the American proletariat today.

"The only serious barrier to unity, the problem of the harmonious functioning of two organizations with different political views, is in the last analysis to be solved by the proletariat. Both organizations recognize in theory and practice that the success of the Fourth International is rooted in the maintenance of closest contact with the proletariat. The safeguard for the maintenance of unity against irresponsible factionalism in both parties is growth of the revolutionary party in correspondence with the opportunities and responsibilities which will be presented to it by the march of the American proletariat toward the social revolution.

"In its readiness to sacrifice its independence and subordinate its political line to the majority in a unified organization, the W.P. shows the genuineness of its claims to leadership of the American proletariat. Under the circumstances, however, its first task is to build itself a mass base in the American proletariat vanguard. But at the same time, it will miss no legitimate opportunity to pose before the Fourth International in the United States and the American proletariat the objective necessity for unity and the reactionary role played by those who stand in its way." (Resolution on the American Question, Feb. 25, 1946 p. 40-41)

In essence that was our position on unity from the first day, and all succeeding events have strengthened it. Shachtman has recently contributed substantially to the failure of the unity negotiations by his peculiar political conceptions which we have sufficiently analyzed. On account of this apolitical method, he has never been able to make any serious analysis of the S.W.P. policy on unity nor go beyond interminable speculations into Cannon's character and motives. It is one of the greatest crimes of the W.P. leaders that for them all political actions of the S.W.P. are to be explained only in terms of some evil machinations or empirical political needs of the arch-conspirator and maneuverer, Cannon. We oppose this devil theory of politics root and branch. The disgusting probing into Cannon's "hunches" which characterizes Goldman's article on unity in the New International (July, 1947) constitutes the very dregs of politics. For us the attitude of the S.W.P. on unity is a question of political examination of political policy within the American environment.

### (b) S.W.P. and the American Revolution

No serious solution to the unity question can be attempted until some serious analysis is established on the role and the attitude of the S.W.P. to unity. It is in our view, a strictly political question and in it is bound up much of the past and future of the movement.

The key document is not the voluminous and for the most part wearisome documents on unity. It is the speech of Cannon at the November Convention of the S.W.P. entitled "The Coming American Revolution." In it occurs the following passage:

"Another question may well be asked: What is new in the 'Theses on the American Revolution' presented by the National Committee?

"In one sense it can be said that nothing is new; for all our work has been inspired by, and all struggles with opportunist tendencies have been derived from, a firm confidence on our part in the coming victory of the American workers.

"In another sense it can be said that everything is new; for in the theses of the National Committee on the American Revolution we are now stating, explicitly and concretely, what has always been implied in our fights with opportunist organizations, groups and tendencies over questions which were derivative from this main outlook of ours.

"That has been the underlying significance of our long struggle to build a homogeneous combat party that has been the meaning of our stubborn and irreconcilable fight for a single program uniting the party as a whole; for a democratic and centralized and disciplined party with

a professional leadership; for principled politics; for the proletarianization of the party composition; for the concentration of the party on trade union work ('trade-unionization of the party'); and, if I may say so without being misunderstood, for its 'Americanization.' All of this derived from our concept of the realism of revolutionary prospects in America, and of the necessity to create a party with that perspective in mind.

Now, we have worked and struggled to build a party fit to lead a revolution in the United States. At the bottom of all our conceptions was the basic conception that the proletarian revolution is a realistic proposition in this country, and not merely a far-off 'ultimate goal,' to be referred to on ceremonial occasions.

"I say that is not new. In fact, it has often been expressed by many of us, including Trotsky in personal articles and speeches. But only now, for the first time, has it been incorporated in a programmatic document of the party. That's what is now in our 'Theses on the American Revolution.' We are now stating explicitly what before was implied.

"For the first time, the party as a party is posing concretely the fundamental question of the perspectives of the American Revolution." (The Coming American Revolution p. 18)

That is the key to the past, the present and the future of the American movement. Hic Rhodus, hic salta. Here 'is Rhodus, leap here. The old quotation which has been so popular among Marxists since Marx used it nearly 100 years ago must ring in the ears of the American movement with all its historical overtones, until all serious elements emerge with a united policy. 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. Precisely this and nothing else but this has been at the root of all the difficulties in the United States. Read the quoted passage again. What should have been the foundation and the banner was only "implicit." It was only of "underlying significance." It was "our concept." It was "at the bottom" of all our conceptions. It was a "perspective in mind." It was "the meaning" of the struggle to build the party. It was expressed in "personal" articles and speeches. Exactly. And it is precisely this that should have been dragged out into the open and made the axis of all party thought and party life, confident, militant, aggressive, and all-pervading. It is because of this weakness in the program that the conflicts in the American movement have taken the miserable form that they have taken. We do not mean to say that splits would not have taken place, that they will not take place in the future, that comrades would not have been lost, etc. But the political struggles, the organizational relations would from the start have been sharper, clearer, concrete, and the present mess over unity, and a very shocking mess it is, would not have taken place. We shall show this to the last comma, for unless this is clarified, nothing will be clarified.

Cannon says that Trotsky too had "often . . . expressed" the idea in articles. This is not our reading of such of Trotsky's articles and conversation as we have seen. Trotsky did not express "an idea," he fought for its incorporation into the very day-to-day activity, practical and theoretical, of the party in 1938. With him it may be said that it was "implicit" and "of underlying significance" up to 1938, though even this is doubtful. But from 1938 on his position was clear. In the conversations he said:

We are for a party, for an independent party of the toiling masses who will take power in the State. We must concretize it—we are for the creation of factory committees, for workers' control of industry through the factory committees. All these questions are now pending in the air. They speak of technocracy, and put forward the slogan of 'production for use.' We oppose this charlatan formula,

and advance the workers' control of production through the factory committees.

"Lundberg writes a book, '60 Families.' The 'Analyst' claims that his figures are false. We say, the factory committees should see the books. This program we must develop parallel with the idea of a labor party in the unions, and armed workers pickets, i.e., workers' militia. Otherwise it is an abstraction and an abstraction is a weapon in the hands of the opposing class. . . . Then we have to introduce 5 or 6 demands, very concrete, adapted to the mind of the workers and farmers and inculcated into the brain of every comrade, workers' factory committees and then workers' and farmers' government. That's the genuine sense of the movement."

This is the most explicit posing of the American Revolution.

Electicism opposed this.

"There is not yet in the United States the danger of fascism which would bring about the sentiment of such an organization as the workers' militia. The organization of a workers' militia presupposes preparation for the seizure of power. This is not yet on the order of the day in the United States."

Trotsky replied with hostility:

"Naturally we can conquer power only when we have the majority of the working class, but even in that case the workers' militia would be a small minority. Even in the October Revolution the militia was a small minority. But the question is how to get this small minority which will be organized and armed with the sympathy of the masses. How can we do it? By preparing the mind of the masses, by propaganda. The crisis, the sharpening of class relations, the creation of a workers' party, a Labor Party signifies immediately, immediately a terrible sharpening of forces. The reaction will be immediately a fascist movement. That is why we must now connect the idea of the Labor Party with the consequences—otherwise we will appear only as pacifists with democratic illusions. Then we also have the possibility of spreading the slogans of our transitional program and see the reaction of the masses. We will see what slogans should be selected, what slogans abandoned but if we give up our slogans before the experience, before seeing the reaction of the masses, then we can never advance."

He was as explicit as possible:

#### REVOLUTION THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

Not a line in the Transitional Program itself is anything else but proof of the fact that the programmatic incorporation of the American revolution was the central conception of Trotsky in 1939.

Now it is right here that, abstractly speaking, the split of 1940 should have taken place. And it is on this that unity must take place, or be rejected definitely and finally, or, in case unity does not work, end in an equally final and definitive split.

Faced with this analysis, as we faced it in 1946 and as the S.W.P. has never faced it in any shape or form, the W.P. twists and squirms like a man who has taken poison. And poison it is for its type of politics. The W.P. falls back on a shame-faced view that Trotsky was "mistaken." Thereby it spits on and tramples in the mud our whole past. Trotsky was not "mistaken" any more than Marx was "mistaken" in his perpetual preoccupation with and expectation of and preparation for revolution everywhere. A Marxist cannot think otherwise. It is the basis of his thinking. And a party cannot be held together and clarified, and deal with its centrist enemies unless this is the open, unconcealed, bristlingly aggressive basis of its daily life. Trotsky was not promising a revolution to anybody. To think that the leader of the Oct. Revolution was pushing the party on to the road of adventurism and anarchism is a testimony only to the ignorance and political bankruptcy of those, who, with the world going to pieces around them in 1947, still are filled to the eyes with democratic illusions which they gratuitously attribute to the masses. Lenin was struggling in Russia from 1887 to 1917, but whether his support was 2, 2000, 200,000 or 20 million, he built always on the

open, unconcealed perspective of the revolution in Russia. Trotsky points out that even in the darkest days of the reaction in Russia, they took always as their point of departure the highest peak of the 1905 Revolution. They took that peak. They had to, whatever the masses were doing. Their principled politics, their consistency, their training of their cadres, their opposition to other parties rested on this.

In our view it is from this weakness that sprang the weaknesses of the S.W.P. itself on the unity question. It has consistently failed to fight the W.P. on this issue, i.e., to Americanize its Bolshevism. A blind man could see the political and organizational differences between the two parties. But, because of tactical similarities, up to August 1946 the S.W.P. failed to differentiate itself strategically from the W.P. on the American question. The consequence of this was that the S.W.P. could see in unity nothing but a repetition of the struggle of 1940—unless the W.P. showed that it was ready to show an utterly different orientation. The W.P. was convinced that nothing was at stake but malice, spite, plot and counter-plot. The S.W.P. was, as we see it, not unwilling to consider unity but it was determined to protect its membership from any drag-out brawl over the "unique contributions" and other rubbish of Shachtman. We who have had the experience in the W.P. know of the damaging effect the S.W.P. attitude had on the party as a whole because we know the effect it had on ourselves, openly and in fact militantly sympathetic to the S.W.P., both politically and organizationally. As always with serious questions, we sought the political essence behind the subjective appearances.

#### THE HISTORIC MOVEMENT

All through the history of American radicalism the problem of reconciling, of fusing the international principles and traditions of the movement with the contradiction of social maturity and political backwardness which characterizes the United States, has been a crucial problem of the American movement. It has been the problem simply because, seen in its growth and development, it is perhaps the central problem of all American revolutionary politics and certainly the central problem of American proletarian politics. The early-1848 Marxist faced it; the problem was present in 1888; in the early Comintern there was an Americanization wing of Cannon and Foster, and another wing which was oriented towards the European struggles and the European center. The Trotskyist split in 1928 placed the Bolshevik-Leninists in the position where the main task was to build a movement on the international principles of the Left Opposition, alien to the whole political experience and traditions of the United States. The members of the A.W.P. came into the S.W.P. and for the most part left it. The party missed the whole C.I.O. movement. The Lovestoneites tried to become an American party and ruined themselves. The Bolshevik Party won a large group from the Socialist Party and failed to assimilate them, to such a degree that as soon as they found leaders of authority, they split the party, organized the W.P. and created the situation that has now reached its present climax. Goldman and Morrow have followed the same course. As we try to penetrate through the fog of personalities and petty accusations to grasp the historic movement, it seems to us that the speech of Cannon with its programmatic reorientation and integration of revolutionary perspectives at home marks the coming of age of American Bolshevism. It is almost a hundred years since the movement has struggled in vain to bridge the gap on a solid basis. It is from this basis that we have learnt to view both the positive and negative elements in the W.P. After six years' experience of that party we wrote in our American resolution (February 28, 1946):



"The most complete, the most overwhelming condemnation of the Party line is the following. Instead of being the central axis of Party thought, life and activity, the concept of the proletarian revolution has almost disappeared from the propaganda and agitation of the Party. The absence of this conception has resulted in a situation in which the effect of the Party's work upon the masses is that of a left-trade union organization with a socialist coloration."

We persistently and militantly differentiated the S.W.P. from the W.P. because the S.W.P. never lost sight of this even though only as "an underlying conception." Cannon's speech puts an end to one period and all in all, coming from the leader of the S.W.P., marks the greatest advance that the American movement has made since 1938. For the program means not a little something but everything. He says:

"One-sided internationalism—preoccupation with far-off questions to the exclusion and neglect of the burning problem on one's own doorstep—is a form of escapism from the realities at home, a caricature of internationalism. . . ."

"This presupposes first of all an attentive study of America and a firm confidence in its revolutionary perspectives. . . ."

"Trotskyism—which is only another name for Bolshevism—is a world doctrine and concerns itself with all questions of world import. But let us not forget—or rather, let some of us begin to recognize for the first time—that America, the United States, is part of the world; in fact, its strongest and most decisive part, whose further development will be the most fateful for the whole." (p. 21)

Our solidarity is complete. Cannon says again:

"This characterization of unrealism applies also to the new revolutionism of those who have exalted the subjective factor—meaning thereby the party and its strength or weakness at the given moment—to first place. . . ."

"They are unrealistic, but not revolutionary-minded, for they employ their new 'theory' exclusively for the explanation of past defeats and anticipation and prediction of new ones. I don't see anything revolutionary about that." (Ibid. p. 22)

And again (on the growth of American unionism):

"These comparative figures show not growth, not simply progress, but a veritable transformation of the class. And what has been seen up to now are only the preliminary movements, the promise and the assurance of far greater movements to come. Next in order—and not far away—comes the political awakening of the American workers. That will be at the same pace and on the same scale, if not greater. The American workers will learn politics as they learned trade unionism—from an abridged dictionary. They will take the road of independent political action, with hurricane speed and power. . . ."

"That will be a great day for the future of humanity, for the American workers will not stop half way. The American workers will not stop at reformism, except perhaps to tip their hats to it. Once fairly started, they will go the whole way." (Ibid. p. 30-31)

This is our view also. In the theses which accompany the speech, it is stated:

"In one leap—in a brief decade—the American workers attained trade union consciousness on a higher plane and with mightier organizations than in any other advanced country. In the study and analysis of this great transformation, rather than in vapid ruminations over the 'backwardness' of the American workers, one can find the key to prospective future developments. Under the impact of great events and pressing necessities the American workers will advance beyond the limits of trade unionism and acquire political class consciousness and organization in a similar sweeping movement." (Ibid. p. 15)

We want to throw it once more in the face of the W.P. and all their chattering about the "Cannonite methods." We are in complete political solidarity with this. Where do you stand?

#### COMPLETE SOLIDARITY WITH CANNON

Our stand and program on unity are based upon such a political program. This in our view concerns not only the W.P. but the whole American revolutionary movement. The evolution of the W.P., which we have followed so closely and

in relation to the past of the movement, is an experience of symbolical significance. The American petty-bourgeoisie is socially closer to the proletariat than any petty-bourgeoisie in the advanced countries. This is a great advantage. It is also a great danger. 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 crazy 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 sufficient. The great Bolshevik Central Committee itself, trained, educated and disciplined as no revolutionary leadership has ever been, collapsed before the always unprecedented circumstances of a proletarian revolution.

#### OUR PROGRAM FOR UNITY

For American Bolshevism, its own development demands that it temper its cadres and move forward in militant struggle from the perspectives of the American Revolution. No one demands of the W.P. that it subscribe to what it does not believe in. All that can be demanded of it is discipline. But the W.P., faced with this, in a national and international discussion, will be put in its place once and for all.

Our program for unity, therefore, is as follows:

(1) A comprehensive systematic and planned program for the raising of the theoretical level of the party in the theory of dialectical materialism in specific relation to American thought and social development—the Americanization of Bolshevism.

(2) The concretization and elaboration of a program based on the general strategic line of the S.W.P., the speech of Cannon entitled "The Coming American Revolution." For us, as we have repeated over and over again, this entails the collection, editing and publication of all the writings, conversations, discussions, etc. of Trotsky on the American situation.

(3) The unification of the organizations on the basis of the propositions marked out during the period when the joint unity document was signed. In our view the S.W.P. as the majority, and having the international prestige that it has, now bears the main responsibility. The yellings and screeches and petty defiance of the W.P. cannot and must not be allowed to deflect a political line on unity. These are the result of terror and a recognition of the inevitable end of a period. The W.P. should have a limit—the Extraordinary Party Conference, and its antics, annoying as they are, should be dealt with firmly and yet with patience. The political issue with which now and henceforth it should be mercilessly faced is its position on the American question. Stage by stage under the international pressure, it should be driven to the wall on its American perspectives. The tiny Johnson-Forest Minority has routed it repeatedly on these questions and driven it into endless contradictions and confusion. Any serious attack by larger forces will pound it to a pulp. Shachtman will shift and dodge. He cannot get away with any unique contribution

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here. His own membership will have an illuminating experience, the first that they have ever had since 1940 that will mean something to them. After unity there may be another split. But it would be the greatest possible political ineptitude not to see that this time with all the conservatism, of its program and political perspective, particularly for the U. S., systematically exposed, a split then would not only be definitive but would inevitably rip the personnel of the W.P. wide open. Once the American question held the center of the stage in a unified party, the forces that would eventually rally round the present W.P. line would be either useless or negligible. (As part of the American question must be included the Negro question). It is here, politically, that the organically useless elements of the W.P. can be pinned down and exposed; and not in disputes about the nature of the Russian state or worse still, of the all-inclusive versus the homogeneous party, the evil intentions of Shachtman or his need to live "an ideological life." It is for this reason that the Johnson-Forest tendency supports unconditionally the refusal of the S.W.P. to discuss inside the S.W.P. the "unique contributions" of Shachtman to European events.

The Johnson-Forest Minority is not moved by any sentimental considerations about the W.P. We do not practice and must ask to be excused from these perpetual unpolitical appreciations.

The W.P. has never been faced politically as it ought to be faced. The existence of two parties, as we have insisted, is a source of demoralization and confusion to both. Who cannot see that after the last months is blind. It is time to call a halt.

The W.P. should be offered the conditions and told to take them or leave them. If it refused them, then it should be treated as an enemy party. It will have proved itself politically such.

The Johnson-Forest tendency at its National Conference on July 4 and 5, 1947, decided to take all possible steps to join the S.W.P. Its reason for so doing are patent from this document and more specifically in its resolution passed at this Conference, which has been widely circulated at home and abroad. The W.P. in a recent publication of its National Committee, gives notice that it intends reviewing the whole question of unity at its next Plenum. This indicates only one thing. The W.P. now feels that there are sufficient forces in the International with which it can bolster its sectarian existence and therefore does not feel the pressing need for unity which had dominated Shachtman since 1945. It will not take seven years this time for these antics to meet their just deserts.

## VII. Lessons of the American Experience for the International

The American parties, we must repeat, are no longer affiliated to the Fourth International. But the reactionary laws of the U.S. government cannot prevent the flow of ideas and mutual influencing of parties and groups which have the same ideas. We influence each other because we are interested in what we have to say, in the endorsement, refutation, development of ideas and the organizational development of tendencies. No bourgeois law can prevent that. And it is because the American experience is so valuable for all who believe in our ideas that we make the most direct connection here.

Let us briefly summarize our analysis so far:

1. The split in 1940 was motivated substantially by the conviction that the party was stagnating and that the Minority would be able to build the party by dynamic instead of conservative methods.
2. The political conceptions of the Minority as exemplified by Shachtman were of an extreme conservatism which did not begin with the split but reflected an undialectical approach to the American environment. Time and lack of success only developed what was already present before 1940. Trotsky's summing up of the differences between the two tendencies as revolving around the revolutionary perspectives for the proletariat has been convincingly demonstrated to be correct.
3. It is upon its false political perspectives and its organizational failures that the W.P. has developed its utterly degrading organizational conceptions and campaigns.
4. The manifestations of degeneration in the W.P. have taken an extreme form because of the special conditions of the United States—the absence of a Social-Democratic Party. These have developed what are world-wide tendencies in a specially concentrated and therefore exceptionally instructive form.
5. Trotsky's method of meeting the crisis in 1940 was to combine the most profound political analysis and theoretical intransigence and practical program with the greatest organizational flexibility.
6. The great need today in the United States is to do the same on the basis of the programmatic perspectives of the American revolution introduced by Cannon in the speech "The Coming American Revolution."

De te fabula narratur. The almost identical pattern is being repeated all over the International today, except for the type of struggle that Trotsky embodied in his articles of 1940.

It might appear that there is a wide gulf between the W.P. defeatists and the defensist French Majority, between the W.P. terror before Stalinism and the French Majority political capitulation to Stalinism. Nothing of the kind. These are twin brothers who have grown up in different milieus.

Not so crassly as the W.P., the French Majority, with less excuse, has been overwhelmed by the delay of the revolution and the growth of Stalinism. It is convinced that the masses are full of "democratic illusions." Why then isn't it as fanatically anti-Stalinist as the W.P.? The answer lies on the whole past and present situation of France.

The history of modern France is the history of revolution and counter-revolution. The French proletariat has been out in 1789, in 1792, in 1793, twice in 1795, in 1830, in 1848, in 1871, and in 1944. Its history is the diametrical opposite of the history of the proletariat in the United States. France has had constitutions innumerable, revolutionary dictatorships, two Bonapartist empires, republican bourgeois-democracy, a bourgeois-democratic monarchy. In the last dozen years France has experienced the fascist-proletarian clash in the streets in 1934, invasion of the factories in 1935, the general strike in 1936, the counter-revolutionary coup d'etat of Petain in 1940, complete occupation in 1942, armed insurrection in 1944. (This is the country of which not only Shachtman, but the French Majority can say that the proletariat is still ridden with "democratic illusions.") But because their historical origin is the revolutionary history of France and the recent violent crisis, the French believers in "democratic illusions" cannot comfort themselves with Shachtman's illusions about "democratic interlude" and the parliamentary democratic machinery. The situation is intolerable. It must change. They therefore capitulate to the strongest force—Stalinism. The paper shows this and the writings of ex-Trotskyists like Naville and the circle around him show the specific pressure to which the French comrades are subjected. In the United States they would be Shachtmanites and in France a Shachtman would

be a member of the French Majority.

The same forces are expressing themselves in Britain in a specifically British way. The British Majority has promulgated a monstrous series of illusions about "recovery" and "stabilization" in Europe. It has elaborated theses about "the democratic illusions" of the British workers, and in 1946 it produced a resolution in which it warned against revolutionary expectations and put as a strategic landmark in the British perspective the elections of 1950. This was just before the fuel crisis opened up the abyss before the eyes of the British workers. This was bad enough. But the Fourth International has never had such an experience within all the years of its existence as has recently been given it by the British Party in 1947. In the same week that it was passing Conference resolutions about the illusions of the British proletariat in regard to the Labor Government and the lulling benefits it had received from this government, the Labor Prime Minister (and the leader of the opposition) were informing the British public of the details of an economic crisis which threatened the existence of the nation and would impose years of privation greater than those of the war. It is Shachtmanism over again, bowing before the British parliamentary - democratic tradition, the strongest tradition in the British society as the French Majority bows before Stalinism and the W.P. Majority before American petty-bourgeois radicalism.

We, with our experience in the United States, are not surprised that exactly among these elements there are the greatest hostility to "methods," "lack of self-criticism" and "bureaucracy" and all the organizational counterparts to loss of revolutionary perspective, and the incapacity of understanding in 1947 what Trotsky was insisting on in 1938. These tendencies, functioning in countries where proletarian parties and traditions exist, have been held in check from the more ridiculous blunders of the W.P. But it is the extreme example that best illuminates the trend. As Trotsky said in his first article on the 1940 crisis, "It is necessary to call things by their right names." 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.

**WEAKNESS OF THE FOURTH**

It remains to outline very briefly what is needed to check these tendencies, precisely because this is needed not only to check these tendencies but to build the leadership of the social revolution.

For the Johnson-Forest Minority the proletariat today is not in any sense of the word "backward" and is devoid of democratic or pacifist illusions. There can be no compromise whatever on this. The proletariat has illusions but they are revolutionary illusions. It is ready for revolution today as never before. This is its response to the stage of development of society. The believers in "democratic illusions" will react violently. Let them. By the time they have found the arguments to meet this direct challenge, they will have nothing under their feet.

In 1921 Trotsky had to deal with another type of those who believed that the masses "were not ready." He met them not with petty arguments but with the full Bolshevik armory.

"For if the masses, who have gone through the long preparatory school of political and trade union struggle and who then passed through the four years' school of slaughter, have not matured for revolution, then when and how will they ever mature? Do Merrheim and the others think

perhaps that victorious Clemenceau will create within the walls of the capitalist state a network of academies for the socialist education of the masses? If capitalism reproduces from one generation to the next the chains of wage slavery, then the proletariat in its deepest layers carries over darkness and ignorance from generation to generation. If the proletarian masses could attain a high mental and spiritual development under capitalism, then capitalism wouldn't be so bad after all and there would be no need of social revolution. The proletariat must have a revolution precisely because capitalism keeps it in mental and spiritual bondage. Under the leadership of the advanced layer the immature masses will reach maturity during the revolution. Without the revolution they will fall into prostration and society as a whole will decay." (The First Five Years of the Communist International, p. 72)

The argument today is not about Bonapartism, or little discussions about the Leninist use of "democratic demands" or the politics of the democratic-political revolution, or about statistics of the boom or partial boom. Today the fundamental movement of the proletariat is social, its reaction to the stage of development of society. Trotsky in 1940 foresaw the full scope of the crisis for which bourgeois society was heading. He said that if the proletariat could not seize power in the crisis, then it was impossible to conceive circumstances in which it could. He said further that if the revolution did not come during or immediately after the war, then we would have to admit that the Stalinist bureaucracy was the precursor of a new ruling class and we would have to admit that the fundamental premises of Marxism were Utopian. By "immediately," Trotsky could not possibly have meant a point in time, one month, six months, two years, as the metaphysical petty-bourgeois idiots believe. He meant a stage in the development of the class struggle, a point at which one could say that some sort of social stability had been restored, some acceptance by the masses of the social order as still viable. No such point has been reached. There is no sign of it. If the "democratic illusionists" believe that Europe and the world are not trembling on the edge of an abyss, let them say so. If they believe that the world is trembling on the edge of an abyss, and the masses still believe in private property, bourgeois parliamentary democracy and the United Nations as a means of stopping war, let them say so. We will draw the conclusions for them. But further evasion on these fundamental issues has now become intolerable.

**SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM**

Trotsky said further that if there were no revolutionary developments after the war, all parties would degenerate. Today two years after the end of the war, all over the International movement, those who had regarded Trotsky's analysis as a promissory note of successful revolution on a given day, are beginning the process of degeneration. They are expressing the same defeatism, historic pessimism, petty-bourgeois impatience and empiricism which the W.P., overwhelmed by the defeats culminating in the Stalin-Hitler pact, expressed in the split of 1940.

Trotsky's prognosis was absolutely correct. We live in the reality of it. And it demands from us the same firmness in revolutionary perspective and the same profound concept of the self-mobilization of the masses with which Trotsky anticipated the reality in 1938-1940. Where has the International faced the sceptics and the doubters and the "democratic illusionists" with the philosophical, economic and social analysis on the same level as the sceptics and the doubters? Boom? No, no boom. Democratic illusions? No, no democratic illusions. If in 1940 Trotsky had met the Minority on that basis, the results would have been catastrophic.

The whole theoretical need has been lifted to a far higher

level than was possible in 1940 because of the objective concreteness of the relations. If, as the bourgeois world says, humanity faces destruction, if man has reached an ultimate stage in his development, if the ultimate truths of Marxism are in course of being tested once and for all, then to fail to relate these ultimate truths to objective reality, to fail to tell the workers about them in the most direct and concrete manner, to fail to face the doubters and the sceptics with fundamental questions posed in the most ruthless manner, is to renounce the only means of calling doubters and sceptics to their senses or of routing them completely. Despite the very serious mistakes of Munis, his concrete program shows that he recognizes this revolutionary mobilization as the need of the hour.

The central question of the British Conference was the question of entry or non-entry into the Labor Party. The central question, prepared for a year in advance, should have been the final blows at the unbelievably false approach of the whole British party to the world crisis and the bankruptcy of the British economy. This is the road to the solution of the entry question. Without this entry or no entry solves nothing.

The most striking features of the present political scene is the tremendous social and political mobilization of the masses in France and Italy in the Stalinist parties. Stalinism has not made these movements. These movements have made Stalinism. To approach them as Stalinist phenomena is absolutely false. They are a product of the crisis. Similar movements can take place in the United States under reformist leaderships other than the Stalinists. They represent the proletariat on its road from the depths and burdens of barbarous capitalism to the mastery of society. Where is the social analysis of this, the outstanding social movement of our time?

Said Trotsky in 1921:

"Millions of new workers are streaming into the trade union. In England the great flood tide has doubled the union membership, which at the present has reached the figure of 5,200,000. In France the number of union members has grown from 400,000 on the eve of the war to 2,000,000. What changes does this numerical growth of the organized workers introduce into the policy of syndicalism?"

"The workers join the trade unions solely for the sake of immediate material gains," reply the conciliators. This theory is false from beginning to end. The great influx of workers into the trade unions is elicited not by petty, day-to-day questions, but by the colossal fact of the World War. The working masses, not only the top layers but the lowest depths as well, are roused and alarmed by the greatest historical upheaval. Each individual proletarian has sensed to a never equaled degree his helplessness in the face of the mighty imperialist machine. The urge to establish ties, the urge to unification and consolidation of forces has manifested itself with unprecedented power. Hence flows the surge of millions of workers into the trade unions or into the Soviets of Deputies, i.e., into such organizations as do not demand political preparation but represent the most general and most direct expression of the proletarian class struggle." (Ibid. P. 73)

There is more to be learnt from this than in the thousands of words Germain uses to refute Shachtman's nonsensical theories about the Stalinist parties being totalitarian parties.

On the question of Germany can be seen all the weaknesses of the International. The retrogressionists have loudly demanded a "self-criticism" of the International for its "mistakes" on the German revolution. The Johnson-Forest tendency has not yielded and will not give way one millimeter to them on this. After the defeat of Stalingrad, the German nation faced the proletarian revolution or complete ruin. In this great crisis of Germany and of Europe we urged and advocated the revolution. But it failed. The only criticism we have to make is the republication today of every document in which we urged it, coupled with the most unmitigated exposure and denunciation of any revolutionary

tendency which showed the slightest hesitation or uncertainty on this question.

This is not only a question of the past. Germany is a touchstone of revolutionary method and perspective. In 1943, in our resolution on the European question, we stated categorically that only the united revolutionary proletariat would be able to rebuild Europe, otherwise Europe would not be rebuilt at all. We are only too ready to discuss with those who wish to argue otherwise. Now, today Europe is a broken continent and the German people are the most broken of the European peoples. Yet, as we pointed out in 1943, whatever its conditions today the German proletariat is the only class in Germany that can lead the nation. And what is its future? That depends upon the European proletariat, at present the proletariat of Italy, France and tomorrow, perhaps Spain. A revolutionary development in any one of these countries would set the whole of Western Europe afire and at a single stroke lift the German proletariat to its feet, and face the occupying powers with a crisis which they could not solve. There is no other force that can do it. That is the only future for Europe. The slogan for the Socialist United States of Europe becomes a concrete slogan, not one for Manifestoes, but one which must be knit into the daily agitational routine. It is not possible to say (except for Munis) that this is understood. The bourgeoisie has taken its "Marshall Plan" more seriously than the International has taken the Socialist United States of Europe.

The opportunists can be recognized by the burning enthusiasm with which they announce that the revolutionary wave has passed. If even this is true, which it most certainly is not, we would like to ask them if the counter-revolutionary wave has also passed. We would ask them also if there is any major country about which they are able to state with confidence that one year from today, an economic strike in a major industry cannot be transformed into a general strike and pose the ultimate solution. Through any weakness or hesitation the opportunists slip like eels. Faced with the revolutionary evaluation, they fly off and pose sarcastically the problems of the insurrection. Brought down to earth, they protest that while, of course, they agree with the strategic perspective, they are fighting only for realism on concrete practical questions. When the concrete questions are related to the strategic question, they blame the backward proletariat. When the proletariat is absolved, they blame the absence of the party. There is not one of their tricks that the Johnson-Forest tendency does not know. It is these which unite them, not the Russian question on which they have every conceivable variety of positions and which they manipulate to defend their reactionary world conceptions.

The Russian position of the Johnson-Forest tendency is part of our world revolutionary conception. We adopted it clearly and firmly in 1941 and have elaborated it as no position on Russia has been elaborated since Trotsky's. We have known and shall know how to advocate it, to wait for historical justification and to govern ourselves always by the political and organizational needs of our movement at a given moment. We will use our world revolutionary conceptions to pursue Menshevism in our movement in its national hideouts. Our tactics differ from Trotsky's in 1940 to this extent, that while we shall make no compromise whatever with Menshevism in our ranks, our main task is the elaboration of a correct analysis, a correct strategy on a world scale for the concrete situation in 1947 which Trotsky of necessity could only anticipate in 1940.

J. R. JOHNSON  
F. FOREST  
MARTIN HARVEY

August 20, 1947

## APPENDIX

### Conversations With Trotsky On Transitional Program

We reprint below all relevant portions of the discussion in 1935 which preceded the adoption of the Labor Party slogan by the S.W.P. and the draft of the Transitional Program. If, in 1938, it was possible to oppose what these conversations signified, in the world of 1947, opposition is no less than betrayal of the proletariat in its hour of crisis. (Stenographer's note on discussions: "these are very rough notes of discussion held; The stenogram has not been checked by any of the participants.")

#### Extract From Labor Party Discussion

L.T.—This question is very important and very complicated. When for the first time the League considered this question, some 7-8 years ago—: whether we should favor a Labor Party or not; whether we should develop initiative on this score, then the prevailing sentiment was not to do it and that was absolutely correct. The perspective for development was not clear. I believed that the majority of us hoped that the development of our own organization will be more speedy. On the other hand I believe no one in our ranks foresaw during that period the appearance of the CIO with this rapidity and this power. In our perspective we overestimated the possibility of the development of our party at the expense of the Stalinists on one hand, and on the other hand we don't (didn't) see this powerful trade-union movement, and the rapid decline of American capitalism. These are two facts which we must reckon with. I can't speak from my own observations but theoretically. The period of 1924 I know only through the experience of our common friend Pepper. He came to me and said that the American proletariat is not a revolutionary class, that the revolutionary class are the farmers and we must turn toward the farmers, not toward the workers. That was the conception of the time. It was a farmers' movement—the farmers who are inclined by their social nature to look for panaceas—populism, FLP'ism—in every crisis. Now we have a movement of tremendous importance—the CIO; some 3,000,000 or more are organized in a new, more militant organization. This organization which began with strikes, big strikes, and also involved the AFL partially in these strikes for a raise in wages, this organization at the first step of its activity runs into the biggest crisis in the U.S. The perspective for economic strikes is for the next period excluded, given the situation of the growing unemployed ranks, etc. We can look for the possibility that it will put all its weight in the political balance.

The whole objective situation imposed it upon the workers as upon the leaders—upon the leaders in a double sense. On one hand they exploit this tendency for their own authority and on the other they try to break it and not permit it to go ahead of its leaders. The NPLL has this double function. I believe that our policy need not be theoretically revised but it needs to be concretized. In what sense? Are we in favor of the creation of a reformist Labor Party? No. Are we in favor of a policy which can give to the trade unions the possibility to put its weight upon the balance of the forces? Yes.

It can become a reformist party—it depends upon the development. Here comes in the question of program. I mentioned yesterday and I will underline it today—we must have a program of transitional demands, the most complete of them is a workers' and farmers' government. We are for a party, for an independent party of the toiling masses who will take power in the State. We must concretize it—we are for the creation of factory committees, for workers' control of industry through the factory committees. All these questions are now pending in the air. They speak of technocracy, and put forward the slogan of "production for use." We oppose this charlatan formula and advance the workers' control of production through the factory committees.

Lundberg writes a book, "60 Families." The "Analyst" claims that his figures are false. We say, the factory committees should see the books. This program we must develop parallel with the idea of a labor party in the unions, and armed workers' pickets, i.e. workers' militia. Otherwise it is an abstraction and an abstraction is a weapon in the hands of the opposing class. The criticism of the Minneapolis comrades is that they have not concretized a program. In this fight we must underline that we

are for the bloc of workers and farmers, but not such farmers as Roosevelt. (I do not know whether you noted that in the official ticket, he gave his profession as farmer.) We are for a bloc only with the exploited farmers, not exploiter farmers, exploited farmers and agricultural workers. We can become the champions of this movement but on the basis of a concrete program of demands. In Minneapolis the first task should be devoted to statistically show that 10,000 workers have no more vote than 10 intellectuals, or 50 people organized by the Stalinists. Then we have to introduce 5 or 6 demands, very concrete, adapted to the mind of the workers and farmers and inculcated into the brain of every comrade, workers', factory committee's and then workers' and farmers' government. That's the genuine sense of the movement.

M.A.J.—Would we propose now that the unions join the NPLL?

L.T.—Yes, I believe so. Naturally we must make our first step in such a way as to accumulate experience for practical work, not to engage in abstract formulas, but develop a concrete program of action and demands, in the sense that this transitional program issues from the conditions of capitalist society today but immediately leads over the limits of capitalism. It is not the reformist minimum program, which never included workers' militia, workers' control of production. These demands are transitory because they lead from the capitalist society to the proletarian revolution, a consequence insofar as they become the demands of the masses as the proletarian government. We can't stop only with the day-to-day demands of the proletariat. We must give to the most backward workers some concrete slogan that corresponds to their needs and that leads dialectically to the conquest of power by violence.

M.I.N.—How would you motivate the slogan for workers' militia?

L.T.—By the fascist movement in Europe—all the situation shows that the blocs of the members of liberals, radicals and the workers' bureaucracy is nothing in comparison with the militarized fascist gang; only workers with military experience can oppose the fascist danger. I believe that in America you have enough scabs, gun-men that you connect the slogan with the local experience; for example by showing the attitude of the police, the state of affairs in Jersey. In this situation immediately say that this gangster-mayor with his gangster policemen should be ousted by the workers' militia. "We wish here the organization of the CIO but against the constitution, we are forbidden this right to organize. If the federal power cannot control the mayor, then we workers must organize for our protection the workers' militia and fight for our rights." Or in clashes between the AFL and the CIO, we can put forward the slogan for a workers' militia as a necessity to protect our workers' meetings. Especially as opposed to the Stalinist idea of a popular front, and we can point to the result of this popular front—the fate of Spain and the situation in France. Then you can point to the movement of Germany, to the Nazi camps. We must say: You workers in this city will be the first victims of this fascist gang. You must organize, you must be armed.

M.A.J.—What name would you call such groups?

L.T.—You can give it a modest name, workers' armed pickets.

M.A.J.—Defense Committees.

L.T.—Yes, it must be discussed with the workers.

M.A.J.—The name is very important. Workers' defense committees can be popularized. Workers' militia is too foreign sounding.

M.I.N.—There is not yet in the U.S. the danger of fascism which would bring about the sentiment of such an organization as the workers' militia. The organization of a workers' militia presupposes preparation for the seizure of power. This is not yet on the order of the day in the U.S.

L.T.—Naturally we can conquer power only when we have the majority of the working class, but even in that case the workers' militia would be a small minority. Even in the October Revolution the militia was a small minority. But the question is how to get this small minority . . . organized and armed with the sympathy of the masses. How can we do it? By preparing the mind of the masses, by propaganda. The

crisis, the sharpening of class relations, the creation of a workers' party, a Labor Party signifies immediately, immediately a terrible sharpening of forces. The reaction will be immediately a fascist movement. That is why we must now connect the idea of the Labor Party with the consequences—otherwise we will appear only as pacifists with democratic illusions. Then we also have the possibility of spreading the slogans of our transitional program and see the reaction of the masses. We will see what slogans should be selected, what slogans abandoned but if we give up our slogans before the experience, before seeing the reaction of the masses, then we can never advance.

M.A.J.(1)—I wanted to ask one question about the slogan of workers' access to the secrets of industry. It seems to me that needs to be well thought out and carefully applied or it may lead to difficulties which we have already experienced. As a matter of fact one of the ways of reducing the militancy of the workers is for employers—we had one such case—to offer to show us the books and prove that they are standing a loss, whether honestly or not is not the question. We have fought against that, saying it is up to you to organize your business; we demand decent working conditions. I wonder what then would be the effect of our slogan of workers' access to the secrets of industry.

L.T.—Yes, the capitalists do in two instances, when the situation of the factory is really bad or if they can deceive the workers. But the question must be put from a more general point of view. In the first place you have millions of unemployed and the government claims it cannot pay more and the capitalists say that they cannot make more contributions—we want to have access to the bookkeeping of this society. The control of income should be organized through factory committees. Workers will say: We want our own statisticians who are devoted to the working class. If a branch of industry shows that it is really ruined, then we answer: We propose to expropriate you. We will direct better than you. Why have you no profit? Because of the chaotic condition of capitalist society. We say: commercial secrets are a conspiracy of the exploiters against the exploited, of the producers against the toilers. In the free era, in the era of competition they claimed they needed secrecy for protection. But now they do not have secrets among themselves but only from society. This transitional demand is also a step for the workers' control of production as the preparatory plan for the direction of industry. Everything must be controlled by the workers who will be the masters of society tomorrow. But to call for conquest of power—that seems to the American workers illegal, fantastic. But if you say: the capitalists refuse to pay for the unemployed and hide their real profits from the State and from the workers by dishonest bookkeeping, the workers will understand that formula. If we say to the farmer: The bank fools you. They have very big profits. And we propose to you that you create farmers' committees to look into the bookkeeping of the bank, every farmer will understand that. We will say: The farmer can trust only himself; let him create committees to control agricultural credits—they will understand that. It presupposes a turbulent mood among the farmers; it cannot be accomplished every day. But to introduce this idea into the masses and into our own comrades, that's absolutely necessary immediately.

M.I.N.—I believe it is not correct as you say to put forth the slogan of workers' control of production nor the other transitional slogan of workers' militia—The slogan for the examination of the books of the capitalist class is more appropriate for the present period and can be made popular. As for the other two slogans, it is true that they are transitional slogans, but for that end of the road which is close to the preparation for the seizure of power. Transition implies a road either long or short. Each stage of the road requires its own slogans. For today we could use that of examination of the books of the capitalist class, for tomorrow we would use those of workers' control of production and workers' militia.

L.T.—How can we in such a critical situation as now exists in the whole world, in the U.S. measure the stage of development of the workers' movement? You say it's the beginning and not the end. What's the distance—100, 10, 4, how can you say approximately? In the good old times the Social Democrats would say: Now we have only 10,000 workers, later we'll have 100,000, then a million and then we'll get to the power. World development to them was only an accumulation of quantities: 10,000, 100,000 etc. etc. Now we have an absolutely different situation. We are in a period of declining capitalism, of crises that become more turbulent and terrible and approaching war. During a war the workers learn very quickly. If you say we'll wait and see and then propagate, then we'll be not the van-

guard, but the rearguard. If you ask me: Is it possible that the American workers will conquer power in 10 years? I will say, yes, absolutely possible. The explosion of the CIO shows that the basis of the capitalist society is undermined. Workers' militia and workers' control of production are only two sides of the same question. The worker is not a bookkeeper. When he asks for the books, he wants to change the situation, by control and then by direction. Naturally our advancing slogans depends upon the reaction we meet in the masses. When we see the reaction of the masses, we know what side of the question to emphasize. We will say Roosevelt will help the unemployed by the war industry. But if we workers ran production, we would find another industry, not one for the dead but for the living. This question can become understandable even for an average worker who never participated in a political movement. We underestimate the revolutionary movement in the working masses. We are a small organization, propagandistic and in such situations are more sceptical than the masses who develop very quickly. At the beginning of 1917 Lenin said that the party is 10 times more revolutionary than its CC and the masses 100 times more revolutionary than the ranks of the party. There is not in the United States a revolutionary situation now. But comrades with very revolutionary ideas in quiet times can become a real brake upon the movement in revolutionary situations. . . . A revolutionary party waits so often and so long for a revolution that it gets used to postpone it.

M.A.J.—You see that phenomenon in strikes—they sweep the country and take the revolutionary party by surprise. Do we put forward this transitional program in the trade unions?

L.T.—Yes, we propagandize this program in the trade unions, propose it as the basic program for the LP. For us it is a transitional program but for them it is the program. Now it's a question of workers' control of production. But you can realize this program only through a workers' and farmers' government. We must make this slogan popular.

M.A.J.—Is this also to be put forward as a transitional program or is this a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat?

L.T.—In our mind it leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat. We say to the workers and farmers: You want Lewis as president—well that depends upon his program. Lewis plus Green plus La Folette as representative of the farmers? That too depends upon the program. We try to concretize, to make more precise the program, then the workers' and farmers' government signifies a government of the proletariat which leads the farmers.

M.I.N.—How do you reconcile this with the original statement that we cannot advocate the organization of a reformist Labor Party? I would like to get clear in my mind what concretely does our comrades do when his trade union is affiliated to the NPLL and he is sent as a delegate to the LP. There the question comes up of what to do in the elections and it is proposed: "Let us support La Guardia." Concretely how does the matter present itself to our comrades?

L.T.—Here we are in a trade union meeting to discuss the affiliation to the NPLL. I will say in the trade union: First, the unification of the unions on a political plan is a progressive step. There is a danger that it will fall into the hands of our enemies. I therefore propose two measures: 1) that we have only workers and farmers as our representatives; that we do not depend on so-called parliamentary friends; 2) That our representatives follow out our program, this program. We then map out concrete plans concerning unemployment, military budget, etc. Then I say, if you propose me as a candidate, you know my program. If you send me as your representative I will fight for this program in the NPLL, in LP. When the NPLL makes a decision to vote for La Guardia, I either resign with protests or protest and remain: "I can't vote for La Guardia. I have my mandate." We get large new possibilities for propaganda.

The dissolution of our organization is absolutely excluded. We make absolutely clear that we have our organization, our press, etc., etc. It is a question of the relationship of forces. Com. D says we cannot yet advocate in the unions support for the SWP. Why? Because we are too weak. And we can't say to the workers: Wait till we become more authoritative, more powerful. We must intervene in the movement as it is.

M.I.N.—If there were no movement for a Labor Party and we would be opposed to the creation of one, how does that affect

the program itself—it would still be our transition program. I don't understand when you say we can't advocate a reformist party but we do advocate and become champions of LP movements for the purpose of imposing the workers' will politically.

L.T.—It would be absurd to say that we advocate a reformist party. We can say to the leaders of the NPLL: "You're making of this movement a purely opportunistic appendage to the Democrats." It's a question of a pedagogical approach. How can we say that we advocate the creation of a reformist party? We say you cannot impose your will through a reformist party but only through a revolutionary party? The Stalinists and liberals wish to make of this movement a reformist party but we have our program, we make of this a revolutionary—

M.A.J.—How can you explain a revolutionary Labor Party? We say: the SWP is the only revolutionary party, has the only revolutionary program. How then can you explain to the workers that also the LP is a revolutionary party?

L.T.—I will not say that the LP is a revolutionary party, but that we will do everything to make it possible. At every meeting I will say: "I am a representative of the SWP. I consider it the only revolutionary party. But I am not a sectarian. You are trying now to create a big workers' party. I will help you but I propose that you consider a program for this party. I make such and such propositions." I begin with this. Under these conditions it would be a big step forward. Why not say openly what is? Without any camouflage, without any diplomacy.

M.A.J.—Up until now the question has always been put abstractly. The question of the program has never been outlined as you have outlined it. The Lovestonites have always been for a LP, but they have no program. It's combinations from the top. It seems to me that if we have a program and always point to it—

L.T.—First there is the program, and then the statutes that assure the domination of the trade unions as against the individual liberals, petty bourgeois, etc. Otherwise it can become a Labor Party by social composition, a capitalist party in policy.

M.A.J.—It seems to me that in Minneapolis it's too much an organizational struggle, a struggle for the control of the organization between the Stalinists and us. We have to develop in Minneapolis a programmatic fight against the Stalinists in F.I.P., as we yesterday utilized the vote about the Ludlow amendment.

M.I.N.—Now with the imminence of the outbreak of war the Labor Party can become a trap. And I still can't understand how the LP can be different from a reformist, purely parliamentary party.

L.T.—You put the question too abstractly, naturally it can crystallize into a reformist party and one that will exclude us. But we must be part of the movement. We must say to the Stalinists, Lovestonites etc. "We are in favor of a revolutionary party. You are doing everything to make it reformist." But we always point to our program. And we propose our program of transitional demands. As to the war question and the Ludlow Amendment, we'll discuss that tomorrow and I will again show the use of our transitional program in that situation.

**Summary On Transitional Demands**

L.T.—In the preceding discussions some comrades had the impression that some of my propositions or demands were opportunistic, and others that they were too revolutionary, not corresponding to the objective situation. And this combination is very compromising and that's why I'll briefly defend this apparent contradiction.

What is the general situation in the U.S. and in the whole world? The economic crisis is without precedent, the financial crisis of the separate States the same and the war danger is approaching. It is a social crisis without precedent. For 7, 8, 9 years we believed that American capitalism will show more resistance but facts show that American capitalism, that is apoplectic capitalism is possibly nearer to collapse than some others. The American crisis is a social crisis, not a conjunctural one. This social crisis—now called recession—received features of extreme acuteness. It is not the end of the recession.

Financial difficulties of the States—naturally the nation is very rich and the State can borrow from the nation, but it signifies that on the basis of the financial crisis we have a crisis of the State. We can say that we have a political crisis of the ruling class. Prosperity is gone; nobody believes it will

return. And this fact is reflected in the political crisis of the Democrats, the Republicans. The ruling classes are disorganized and they look for a new program. Roosevelt's program is experimental, not so adventurist in a capitalistic sense. That signifies a most fundamental premise for a revolutionary situation. It is true for the world and it is true for the U.S. and possibly it's especially true for the U.S.

Now the question of the proletariat. We have a very great change in the situation of the working class. In some articles in the "Socialist Appeal" and in the "New International" I learned with interest and pleasure that now the sentiment of the American worker that he is a worker is growing, that it is not the old pioneer spirit that he is a worker only for a time; now he is a permanent worker, and even a permanent unemployed. That is the basis for all the other developments in the working class. Then we had the sit-down strikes. Those I believe were unprecedented in the labor movement of the U.S. As a result of this movement, the creation and growing of the CIO. Also we have the tendency to build the Labor Party, the NPLL.

I do not know sufficiently well the past nor present of the labor movement of America. But generally in 1924 I can say that the movement was more imposing but the social premises are incomparably more mature now. That is why the significance of the LP is more important now. But I will not say that all the conditions are developed to the same degree or the same level. We can say, if we take the general world situation—the imperialist contradictions—the position of American capitalism, the crisis and unemployment, the position of the American State as an expression of American economy, of the American bourgeoisie, the political state of mind of the ruling class, the disorientation, and the position of the working class, we can say if we take all these into consideration, that the premise is more mature for the revolution.

Insofar as we advance from these fundamental premises to the superstructure, to the policies, we remark that they are not so mature. The inner contradictions of American capitalism—the crisis, and unemployment are incomparably more mature for the revolution than the consciousness of the American workers. These are the two poles of the situation. We can say that the situation is characterized by an over-maturity of all fundamental social premises for the revolution, a fact I personally didn't foresee 8-9 years ago.

On the other hand, thanks to this rapidity and growth of the decomposition of the material conditions of the U.S. the mass consciousness—in spite of the fact that we can here also establish important progress—remains backward in comparison with the objective conditions. We know that the subjective, the consciousness of the masses, the growth of the revolutionary party is not a fundamental factor. It depends upon the objective situation, that in the last instance the subjective element itself depends upon the objective conditions but this dependence is not a simple process.

We observe in France during the last year a very important phenomenon, and very instructive for the comrades in the U.S. We can say the objective situation was almost as mature as in the U.S. The workers' movement had received a tremendous impetus. The trade unions grew from less than a million to 5 million during several months. The sit-down strikes in France were incomparably more powerful than in the U.S. The workers were ready to do everything, to go to the limit. On the other hand we saw the machinery of the Popular Front—for the first time we could demonstrate the historical importance of the betrayal of the Comintern. Insofar as for some years the Comintern had become a machine for the social conservation of capitalism, the disproportion between the objective and subjective factors received a terrible acuteness and the Popular Front became the greatest brake in order to canalize this great revolutionary stream of the masses. And they succeeded to a certain degree—we can't foresee what will be tomorrow—but in France they succeeded in capturing the movement of the masses and we see now the results; the movement to the Right, Blum becomes a leader, the one who forms national governments, the union sacree for the war but it is a secondary phenomenon. The most important is that we have in the whole world as we have in the U.S. this disproportion between the objective and subjective factor but it was never as acute as now.

We have in the U.S. a movement of the masses to overcome this disproportion; the movement from Grant to Lewis; the movement from Walker to La Guardia. This is a move to overcome the fundamental contradiction. The CP plays the role in the U.S. the same as in France but on a more moderate scale. Rooseveltism replaces Popular Frontism of France. Under

these conditions our Party is called upon to accomplish, to help the workers overcome this contradiction.

What are the tasks? The strategic task consists of helping the masses, adapting their mentality, politically, psychologically to the objective situation, of overcoming the prejudicial traditions of the American workers and adapting it to the objective situation of the social crisis of the whole system.

In this situation, taking into consideration the little experience and then viewing the creation of the CIO, the sit-down strikes, etc., we have the full right to be more optimistic, more courageous, more aggressive in our strategy and tactics—not adventurist—but to advance slogans that are not in the vocabulary of the American working class.

What is the sense of the transitional program? We can call it a program of action but for us, for our strategic conception it is a transitional program—it is a help to the masses in overcoming the inherited ideas, methods, forms and adopt them to the exigencies of the objective situation. This transitional program must include the most simple demands. We cannot foresee and prescribe local and trade union demands adapted to the local situation of a factory, the development from this demand to the slogan for the creation of a workers' soviet. These are two extreme points, from the development of our transitional program to find the connecting links and lead the masses to the idea of revolutionary conquest of power. That is why some demands appear very opportunistic because they are adapted to the actual mentality of the workers. That is why other demands appear too revolutionary because they reflect more the objective situation than the actual mentality of the workers. It is our duty to make this gap between objective and subjective factors as short as possible. That is why I cannot over-estimate the importance of the transitional program.

You can raise the objection that we cannot predict the rhythm and tempo of the development and that possibly the bourgeoisie will find a political recess—that is not excluded—but then we will be obliged to realize a strategic retreat. But in the present situation we must be oriented for a strategic offensive, not a retreat. This strategic offensive must be led by the idea of the creation of workers' soviets to the creation of a workers-farmers government. I don't propose that the slogan be launched immediately for soviets for many reasons and especially because the word has not the significance for American workers that it had for the Russian workers—in order to proceed from this to the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is very possible and probable that in the same manner that we observe in the U.S. the sit-down strikes, we will observe in a new form the equivalent of soviets. Probably we will begin by giving them a different name. In a certain period soviets can be replaced by factory committees, then from a local scale to a national scale. We can't foretell but our strategic orientation for the next period is the orientation toward soviets. The whole transitional program must fill up the gaps between conditions today and the soviets tomorrow.

M.I.N.—Would you elaborate the prospects of war internationally and to the relation of the U.S. today?

L.T.—In this strategic perspective the war signifies, as Lenin expressed it, a tremendous accelerator of the movement. If the U.S. were involved in a war it would at first signify isolation of us but not for years as in the last war but only for months. Then a tremendous wave of sympathy for us will transform our party into a national revolutionary center within a short period. In this sense the approaching war is one of the fundamental factors of a pre-revolutionary situation and that the war will change the mentality of the American workers in 6 months more than we could have done in 6 years or more will create for us exceptionally favorable conditions, provided we have a strategic attitude, foreseeing it, preparing our own cadres, and not only absorbed in small questions. Naturally it's a tremendous acquisition that we are rooted in the trade unions but it's very important not to lose our world strategic line. Every local, partial, economic demand must be an approach to a general demand in our transitional program and especially on the war question; as we mentioned yesterday, the control of war industry and the arming of the workers and peasants.

M.I.N.—Two other questions: What is our relationship to the farmers and, secondly, what is the party's relation to the urban middle class?

L.T.—I believe it is a question of explaining to the workers the situation of the farmer and how we can ameliorate the situation. We are too weak to devote our forces directly to the farmers but it is necessary that our workers have a clear comprehension of the situation of the farmer and there too we have a transitional program connected to that of the workers. We

have to explain that we will not impose collectivization; that we hope to convince them. Insofar as they wish to remain independent, we will help them through credit and we begin with the slogan that the state must intervene in favor of the farmers, not the trust. Then we say: When we are in power, it is not a question of violence against you; you will choose your own methods. It is transitory only in the sense that it bridges the present situation of the farmers to the collectivization of agriculture, but we say: If you don't wish to go further, we'll wait.

With the middle class of the cities it is the same. Insofar as it is the commercial elements, the little men of industry: You will remain independent. You are now depending upon the trust. You will be dependent upon the State; it will give you commodities and you will sell them. If you wish to transform your shop into a state shop, we will arrange the matter with you. We will give you a period to choose but it will be a good period as it is not a State in the interests of big capital. You will then be in the service of the people. In America you will at least conserve your social privileges for a time.

Naturally we cannot say to the technicians that they will become technocrats—no, we cannot permit a new aristocracy but they will be an important part of society.

M.E.X.—There is a stratification also among the engineers who get less money than the plaster men. That means right now they are plain workers and that is better for us.

L.T.—The stratification in the professions is very important.

M.A.J.—What would be the effect of the war?

M.I.N.—Supposing it is a European war in which the U.S.

does not yet enter?

L.T.—In that case the U.S. will have a postponement of the economic collapse. What is clear is that the countries involved in the war the collapse will come not in 4-6 years but in 6-12 months because the capitalist countries are not richer but they are poorer than in 1914, materially; technically they are richer they will spend 5, 10 times more for destruction than they did during the world war because the new war will begin where the last war finished. The psychological factor, that the old generation that participated in the last war are living; nobody will believe that it will signify happiness, full rights, destruction of militarism and that production will be for humanity. These lessons exist even in the younger generations. That is why the patience will not last long. And the revolution will come not after 4 years but much earlier, after some months. If we enter into this war tempered, steeled, and we are capable of surmounting the obstacles of the first period with courage, we will become the decisive force in the U.S. as elsewhere.

M.A.J.—Can expropriation be considered as nationalization that used to be spoken of by the reformists?

L.T.—We must emphasize that if the power is in the hands of Roosevelt, it is not in our hands. We must underline the class element every time. We must contrast our formula to that of the reformists; nationalization? Yes, but in whose hands?

M.A.J.—How long can the U.S. stay out of war in your opinion?

L.T.—I believe that it will not intervene in the beginning but it does not depend on the U.S.—it depends on the activity of Japan and the attitude of Great Britain. It is very difficult to say but we must count for much shorter intervals than in the last war when it took them 2 1/2 years to intervene. Now in 2 1/2 years there will be a total collapse. If they wish to influence the war they must intervene in a much shorter period and on an unprecedented scale in Europe and everywhere and concentrate forces ten times more powerful than the forces of Wilson who didn't have 10 or more million unemployed. You can say that all these unemployed will be absorbed in the war industry but that signifies the creation of a terrible pump of absorbing all the riches of the nation.

M.I.N.—Is it your opinion that the Soviet Union will be with one State against another, or the imperialists will allow Hitler to attack on the West and Japan on the East?

L.T.—I don't believe they will have such a reasonable plan. I believe the war will begin with the S.U. in one of the camps and during the war they will smash the S.U.—by allies or by enemies does not matter—unless a revolution occurs.

M.I.N.—Then how explain the change in policy of G.B.?

L.T.—It is an attempt—it is vital for Italy as for G.B. if they can come to an agreement and if they do whether the agreement will last for more than 3 months; whether Italy will remain in expectation as in the last war and join the stronger of those who seem to be stronger. I have taken up the question of possible alliances and line-ups in case of war in an article for the bourgeois press but it was not published...