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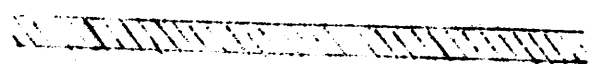
# INTERNAL

# BULLETIN

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## THE SHACHTMAN SCHOOL OF QUOTATIONS

by

John G. Wright and Joe Hansen

In covering up a weak or utterly false political position, one of the moth-eaten tricks of a sophist is to display pretentious scholarship, and attempt to smother his opponents under a deluge of quotations. Kautsky quoted Marx--against Marx. The Stalinists quoted Lenin--against Lenin. The Lovestoneites especially have distinguished themselves in the art of tearing quotations out of their historical context, of building a case on isolated phrases; and last but not least, of deliberate distortion.

Here, again, the opposition has invented nothing new. They follow slavishly in the footsteps of their predecessors, even to such details as quoting Trotsky--against Trotsky. The leader of this latest school of quotations is the facile Shachtman, who has unloaded so many "quotations" on the party that literally a volume would be required to follow his performances in this field. We shall confine ourselves only to few, representative instances.

### Shachtman's Bloc With Burnham in the Light of Lenin's Bloc with Bogdanov

In an attempt to justify his unprincipled bloc with Burnham, Comrade Shachtman utilizes as one of his longest quotations excerpts from a personal letter written by Lenin to Gorky at the time Lenin was on the verge of a split with Bogdanov; and then demands:

"Wherein does what you call my 'bloc' with Burnham in the sphere of philosophy differ from Lenin's bloc with Bogdanov? Why was the latter principled and ours unprincipled? I should be very much interested to know the answer to this question." (Open Letter to Trotsky, P. 6)

This question indeed deserves an answer. In point of fact, Lenin's course in relation to Bogdanov is a striking illustration of his irreconcilability in the sphere of ideas. It would have been difficult for Shachtman to have selected a more annihilating condemnation of his own course in relation to Burnham than the example of Lenin in relation to Bogdanov.

Lenin was a great master in the field of practical compromises, whenever these compromises were made necessary by considerations of revolutionary expediency. But while ready to accept an alliance in action even with the "Devil and his grandmother," Lenin always remained the bitterest foe of any "compromises" whatever in the sphere of ideas. He never condoned the slightest conciliation in the sphere of Marxist theory, in the sphere of scientific Socialism. Let Shachtman or any one else cite a single instance to refute the foregoing statement of fact. Therein precisely lies the difference between the two blocs.

Lenin conceded nothing to Bogdanov either in the sphere of philosophy or sociology or organization. Shachtman has conciliated with Burnham not only in the sphere of Marxist philosophy ("truce" on dialectical materialism), and in the sphere of sociology ("truce" on the class nature of the State), but also on the organizational question (joint aggression against Democratic Centralism).

Lenin concluded his bloc with Bogdanov late in the summer of 1904, on the eve of the 1905 revolution. At that time Bogdanov was only in the first stage of his philosophic revisionism. In his letter to Gorky -- cited by Shachtman -- Lenin writes (Feb. 25, 1908), "At that time Plekhanov considered Bogdanov as an ally in the struggle against revisionism but an ally who was wrong insofar as he

followed Ostwald and subsequently Mach." Bogdanov's original "amplification" of Marxist theory, Lenin points out, later served as a "bridge to opposing philosophical views." What gave this bloc its basis in the first instance was Bogdanov's complete acceptance of Lenin's program for the impending revolution, despite his philosophical differences with Marxism. This and this alone, made possible the constitution of a "tacit bloc, a bloc," as Lenin explained, "which tacitly excluded philosophy as a neutral field, and which lasted throughout the whole period of the revolution."

But did this tacit "exclusion of philosophy as a neutral field" imply Lenin's covering up Bogdanov's mistakes in the sphere of philosophy? or refusing to criticize these mistakes? or arguing, even as Shachtman does, that such questions are an extraneous issue? Just the contrary.

Lenin never desisted from defending dialectical materialism. In the case of Bogdanov in particular he combatted his revisionist views even before they came into sharp conflict with Marxism.

In his letter to Gorky, Lenin dwells precisely on this point in recounting the history of his relationship with Bogdanov.

Lenin first met Bogdanov personally in 1904; Bogdanov presented him with a copy of his latest book on philosophy, the first edition of "Empirio-Monism." Touching on this episode, Lenin writes: "And I wrote him immediately (in the spring or early summer of 1904) from Geneva to Paris that his writings make me twice as doubtful about the correctness of his views and twice as certain about the correctness of Plekhanov's views." In the years before the 1905 revolution, Lenin also wrote to Plekhanov and to L. Axelrod (Orthodox), concerning the necessity of criticizing Bogdanov's false views. Later, when the Mensheviks tried to impute to the Bolsheviks conciliation with Machism, Lenin refuted them not only by referring to what he himself had written but also to these incidents.

During the years of the first revolution questions of philosophy receded to the background. After the defeat of the revolution, with the onset of reaction the situation changed drastically. In his letter to Gorky, Lenin comments on this period as follows: "In the furnace of the revolution there was little occasion for philosophy. Early in 1906, in prison, Bogdanov wrote another book -- I believe, the Third Revised Edition of 'Empirio-Monism.' In the summer of 1906 he gave me a copy, and I went over it carefully. Having read it, I became angry to the point of fury. It became even clearer to me that he was moving in an absolutely wrong and non-Marxist direction. I then wrote him a 'love-letter' on philosophy, in the shape of three note books. In them I explained to him that I was, of course, a rank-and-file Marxist in philosophy, but that it was precisely his clear, popular and excellently written works that convinced me completely of his basic error and the correctness of Plekhanov. These notebooks I showed to several friends (among them Lunacharsky) and entertained the idea of publishing them under the title: 'Notes of a Rank-and-File Marxist on Philosophy', but I didn't get around to it. Now I am sorry that I did not publish them immediately. A few days ago, I wrote to Petersburg asking them to locate and send me these notebooks,"

"And now," continues Lenin, "we have the publication of 'Sketches in the Philosophy of Marxism.' I read all the articles except Suvorova's (I am now reading it), and each article simply made me burn with indignation. No, this is not Marxism! Our empirio-critics, empirio-monists and empirio-symbolists are crawling into the swamp. To assure the reader that 'belief' in the reality of the external

world is 'mysticism' (Bazarov); to mix up in the most shameless way materialism and Kantianism (Bazarov and Bogdanov); to propagate a variety of agnosticism (empirio-criticism) and idealism (empirio-monism); -- to teach workers 'religious atheism' and the 'worship' of highest human potentialities (Lunacharsky); to proclaim as mysticism Engels' teachings on the dialectic (Berman); to borrow from the stinking source of some French 'positivists' -- agnostics or metaphysicians, the Devil take them with their 'symbolic theory of knowledge' (Yushkevich)! No, this is too much. Of course we are rank-and-file Marxists, people not well read in philosophy, -- but why insult us by palming off such stuff as 'Marxist philosophy'? I would rather be drawn and quartered than agree to participate in an organ or an editorial board propagating such things." (Our emphasis.)

Why does Shachtman, in quoting from this letter, omit Lenin's references to the history of his bloc with Bogdanov? Above all why does Shachtman omit the key sentence underlined above which expresses the very essence of Lenin's attitude toward Bogdanov? Shachtman apparently selects only "those wise, responsible, and humane words of the real Lenin" as he puts it, which fit his needs of the moment. It is well worth repeating this sentence omitted by Shachtman:

"I would rather be drawn and quartered than agree to participate in an organ or an editorial board propagating such things."

Is it perhaps that these words are not "wise" enough, not "responsible" enough, not "humane" enough for Shachtman? Or is Shachtman just being "wise," "responsible," and "humane" toward Burnham by suppressing Lenin's real views on Bogdanov?

Lenin did not write Gorky to defend, as Shachtman would imply, the expediency or permissibility of a bloc with Bogdanov -- or Burnham -- on the basis of "neutrality" in the field of philosophy. He wrote to Gorky to explain why it was impermissible for the Bolsheviks to countenance Bogdanov's philosophical revisionism; and why a fight on this issue was unavoidable; and in particular, why he (Lenin) refused to permit the publication in the Bolshevik organ, "Proletarii," of an article submitted by Gorky because a section of it reflected Bogdanov's philosophical views.

Shachtman either deliberately pretends to misunderstand, or actually does not understand the tactic pursued by Lenin in the development of the struggle with Bogdanov. A fight over dialectic materialism was unavoidable. Lenin refused to conciliate on this question -- even with his factional co-workers Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, Gorky, etc.

But precisely because the philosophical issues involved cut across the then existing factional lines, (Mensheviks vs. Bolsheviks) Lenin wanted the struggle to occur outside the framework of the Bolshevik faction. It was in this sense that Lenin favored the "neutrality" of the Bolshevik faction -- and not neutrality on Marxist theory as Shachtman pretends. Furthermore, Lenin wanted to moderate the struggle and avoid a premature split within the Bolshevik faction itself, because the political differences between the two wings in Bolshevism at that time had not yet crystallized. That is why he wanted the dispute conducted in special organs, and not in the official organ "Proletarii." That is why official statements were made in the latter that: "Any attempt to represent these differences of opinion as factional is thoroughly erroneous." Lenin never proposed to remain neutral, as Shachtman does. Just the contrary. Even the closing section of his above-mentioned letter to Gorky makes this absolutely clear:

"In my opinion it would be unpardonable stupidity to hinder the work in the party of carrying through the tactic of the revolutionary social democrats for the sake of disputes over Materialism or Machism. We must have a fight over philosophy in such a way as not to involve the 'Proletarii' and the Bolsheviks, as a faction of the party. And this is entirely feasible.

"And you, yourself," continues Lenin, "should, in my opinion, help this. You can help by working in the 'Proletarii' on neutral (i.e., in-no-way-connected-with-philosophy) questions of literary criticism, journalism, creative art, etc. As for your article -- if you desire to prevent a split and to help localize the new fight -- you should recast it. You could transfer elsewhere everything even indirectly related to Bogdanov's philosophy. Thank Heaven, you have other places than the 'Proletarii' where you can write. Everything not connected with Bogdanov's philosophy -- and for the most part, your article does not deal with it -- can be presented by you in a series of articles for the 'Proletarii.' If you conduct yourself otherwise, i.e., refuse to rewrite the article, or refuse to collaborate with 'Proletarii,' it will, as I see it, inevitably lead to the sharpening of the conflict among the Bolsheviks, make it more difficult to localize the new fight, and weaken the burning, practical and politically indispensable work of the revolutionary democrats in Russia."

It was Gorky and not Lenin who insisted as Shachtman does that a fight over philosophy is not at all necessary; that the concrete political tasks of the struggle against the Mensheviks were paramount in importance; and that only the Mensheviks would gain from such a fight.

In his letter of March 24, 1908, Lenin writes to Gorky:

"You write that the Mensheviks will gain from the fight. You are mistaken, profoundly mistaken, A.M.! They will gain only if the Bolshevik faction fails to differentiate itself from the philosophy of the three Bolsheviks. In that case, they would gain decisively. But if the fight on philosophy occurs outside the framework of the faction, then the Mensheviks will be completely restricted to politics, and here only death awaits them."

In this same letter, Lenin explains in the following way to Gorky the necessity for the fight:

"You must and will of course understand that once a party man has become convinced that a certain doctrine is doubly wrong and harmful, then he is duty bound to come out against it. I would not have raised a clamor, if I had not become absolutely convinced (and I become daily more and more adamant, as I acquaint myself with the primary sources of the wisdom of Bazarov, Bogdanov and Co.), that their book is absurd, harmful, philistine and priestly, all of it, from beginning to end, from its branches to its roots, down to Mach and Avenarius. Flokhanov is wholly correct against them in the essence of the case but he either is not able, does not want to or is too lazy to say this concretely, in detail, simply and without excessively scaring the public with philosophic niceties. But I will say it, whatever the cost, in my own way.

"What 'reconciliation' can there be, my dear A.M.? Pardon me, but it is ludicrous even to mention it. The fight is absolutely inescapable. And party people should exert all their efforts not to smear over or postpone or evade but to see to it that the practical and urgent party work should not suffer thereby. This is what you should concern yourself with, and 90% of the Russian Bolsheviks will help you in this, and thank you very much for it.

"How do this? By 'neutrality'? No. There cannot and will not be neutrality on such a question. If it is at all possible to talk about it, it is only in a specific sense, namely, it is necessary to separate this fight from the faction." (Emphasis in the original).

How did Lenin proceed? Even before Bogdanov developed serious political differences with the Bolsheviks, Lenin refused to postpone, smear over, or evade the fundamental differences in theory. How does Shachtman proceed? Even after Burnham has sharply posed sociological and political differences, Shachtman smears over, postpones and evades the fundamental differences in theory.

Lenin was ready to incur the risk of breaking his bloc with Bogdanov for the sake of defending Marxist theory, despite the fact that the Bolsheviks were then engaged in bitter struggle with the Mensheviks. Lenin was ready to face this danger and also the threat of isolation in a period of blackest reaction. Shachtman, on the contrary, defends and maintains his bloc with the anti-Marxist Burnham for the sake of "practical," "concrete," and "temporary" considerations.

As the struggle between Lenin and Bogdanov unfolded, side by side with the philosophical differences there arose differences of a political character. Bogdanov and his friends became partisans of "boycottism," "otzovism," and "ultimatism." And the pages of "Proletarii," hitherto closed to polemics on philosophical questions were now thrown open by Lenin -- not to Bogdanov or his attacks on Marxist theory -- but to its defense. The Bogdanov group split, and formed its own faction, the Vperyed group.

#### Shachtman's Bloc with Burnham in the Light of Trotsky's Bloc with Sapronov

But what then can be said of the far more obscure precedent cited by Shachtman, namely, Trotsky's bloc with Sapronov? Why doesn't Shachtman cite precedents that are more widely known in the history of the Left Opposition; for example, the original bloc with Burnham in the Workers Party against the Ochlerites and the Muste-Abern group? He doesn't cite from the experience of the Fourth International and our own party because these would mercilessly condemn his present position. No, he prefers historical references which cannot be checked easily by the average comrade. He refers to struggles conducted under the most difficult and extraordinary conditions in which the actual facts have been ruthlessly distorted or suppressed by Stalin; or to struggles in which the very documents are available to very few, not even Shachtman himself.

Even the Stalinists themselves were not so brazen as to charge that Sapronov was in a bloc with Trotsky during the period referred to by Shachtman. Thus, Yaroslavsky only charged that the Sapronov group and the Trotskyites were "internally merged both ideologically and organizationally by innumerable gradations." Why? Because it was well known in the Russian party that Sapronov headed his own group in the period of 1925-1927, known as the "Group of 15." They presented their own resolution to the XV Party Congress, and were expelled as a separate group, at the same time that the Left Opposition was expelled.

What then is the iota of fact, on which Shachtman tries to base his case? It consists in this, that Sapronov and his followers supported for a time the platform of the Left Opposition. The group of Democratic Centralists, with whom Sapronov's name is associated, antedates in its origin the formation of the Left Opposition. The original group of Democratic Centralists was formed in Lenin's life-time and was an ultra-left grouping. Together with Lenin, Trotsky fought them,

and made no blocs with them in the factional struggles in Lenin's party. After Lenin's death, Stalin unleashed his crusade against "Trotskyism." Sapronov was one of the original signatories to the first declaration of the Left Opposition. There is no connection whatever between the platform of the former Democratic Centralist Group and the original platform of the Left Opposition supported by Sapronov in 1923-24. Furthermore, the views held by Sapronov and his followers at that time were not the ones they later adopted. In the course of the subsequent struggle against Stalinism different trends, as was inevitable, began to crystallize within the Left Opposition itself. Among them was the resurgence of ultra-leftism. Sapronov and his friends evolved a new program to which Sapronov gave the old label of Democratic Centralism.

Every manifestation of ultra-leftism met with irreconcilable opposition on Trotsky's part. When the differences became deep-going, a split resulted. It is a fact, perhaps not unknown to Shachtman, that one of the reasons for the split was not only the two-party position of Sapronov and his friends but their position on the question of the defense of the U.S.S.R. They were defeatists. Shachtman's reference to the "bloc with Sapronov" is in reality an annihilating historical precedent against his bloc with Burnham and other defeatists and not a justification of it. Far from seeking a bloc with Sapronov, Trotsky conducted, inside the Left Opposition, a bitter struggle against people like Radek who fought for the fusion of the two groups. He wrote document after document against them. None of them are available except in the original manuscript form; we know of none in this country. But there is available a letter published in the first issue of the Bulletin of the Russian Opposition. In July, 1929, Trotsky wrote the following about Radek:

"Throughout the year 1927 he (Radek) waged a persistent struggle against me within the ranks of the opposition on the question of our attitude towards the ultra-lefts (Sapronov, V. M. Smirnov and others) who hold, so to speak, an a priori position on the question of two parties. At that time Radek argued that there were no differences between us and the Democratic Centralists and that we must not only refrain from attacking them but on the contrary FUSE WITH THEM INTO ONE ORGANIZATION. Generally speaking, no one ever accused Radek of perseverance and consistency. But it was precisely on this question of fusing with the Democratic Centralists that he evinced unquestionable perseverance which lasted from October 1926 to February 1928." (Emphasis in the original).

Were Shachtman really to follow the example of Trotsky in the case of Sapronov, he would fight vigorously against being fused into "one organization" with Burnham. It is obvious, however, that Shachtman puts historic precedents to different use than following them out in practice.

#### Shachtman's Bloc with Burnham in the Light of Trotsky's Bloc with Zinoviev

Even more unscrupulous is the way in which Shachtman today represents Trotsky's bloc with Zinoviev. He writes: "The Zinovievists were for the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' in China; you were for the proletarian revolution supported by the peasantry. The United Opposition, by the way, adopted the essential Zinovievist formula." (P. 19, An Open Letter to Trotsky.) Unfortunately for Shachtman this is not the first time that he has had occasion to show his acquaintance with this particular bloc, or to call attention to the apparent but no real conflict in this bloc. In 1931 in his introduction to Trotsky's Problems of the Chinese Revolution Shachtman commented on this "conflict" and very convincingly proved just the opposite of what he tries to prove today. In 1931 he proved that no theoretical concessions were made by Trotsky in this bloc; now he insists that such concessions were "mistakenly" made.

Dealing with the question of the "democratic dictatorship" contained in the 1927 Platform of the Opposition, Shachtman in 1931 refuted the accusation that there was a real conflict. He wrote:

"The conflict is more apparent than real and is derived from two sources. The first is that in the bloc established in 1926 between the 'Trotsky' and the 'Zinoviev' Oppositions (the Moscow opposition of 1923 and the Leningrad Opposition of 1925), formal concessions of this kind were made by the former to the Left Centralists of Leningrad in the interests of maintaining the bloc against the Menshevik policy of Stalin and Bukharin. The second is that in 1925-1927, the slogan of the 'democratic dictatorship' borrowed literally and purely formally from Lenin's pre-1917 writings, had not yet so clearly been filled with the reactionary content which the epigones poured into it. The Opposition, as proceeds plainly even from the early articles of Comrade Trotsky, construed the slogan in the same sense that Lenin construed it in and after 1917, that is, that the 'democratic dictatorship' was realized in the 'democratic period' (the first six months) of the October revolution, but realized under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Long before the revolution, Lenin had written that the slogan had a past and a future. For China, the epigones, looking backward only to the past -- and even there with a distorted vision -- filled the slogan with a reactionary content, which they still seek to apply not only to 'backward China,' but to about four-fifths of the whole world... including modern Spain." (Problems of the Chinese Revolution, pp. 17-18)

Shachtman thus brings out very clearly that at the time the bloc was formed, the epigones had not yet filled the old Leninist slogan with a "reactionary content." And that therefore the concession to the Zinovievists was "borrowed literally and purely formally from Lenin's pre-1917 writings." But today Shachtman insists that the "old Leninist slogan" at the time of the bloc was invested with -- a Stalinist content! With an air of injured innocence he writes, "Suppose one were to say: on the fundamental principled question of the class nature of the Chinese revolution, Zinoviev had the Stalinist (i.e., petty bourgeois) position (democratic dictatorship), while Trotsky said 'it does not matter.' Where would such a reproach differ from the one you direct at us today?" (Loc. cit. p. 19)

Was Shachtman falsifying in 1931 when he denied the Stalinist content of "Zinoviev's slogan" or is he falsifying now?

In the formation of the bloc with Zinoviev certain concessions were indeed made to the Zinovievists. But the one referred to by Shachtman was precisely the one most vigorously opposed by Comrade Trotsky and accepted by the majority of the Left Opposition against his will and approval. The most serious concessions made was on the question of the integration of the Communist Party of China into the Kuo Min Tang. Trotsky opposed this concession. But in 1931 Shachtman referred to it as only "another apparent contradiction in the standpoint of the Opposition." Shachtman continues: "Any misunderstanding that may arise will be eliminated by reproducing part of a letter written by Comrade Trotsky to the present writer on December 10, 1930, which I take the liberty of quoting." In 1940, Shachtman quotes only two sentences from this letter and furthermore ends the quotation precisely at the point where Trotsky explains the reasons why the majority of the Left Opposition made a mistake in making this concession. We shall take the liberty of quoting more fully from Comrade Trotsky's letter:

"You are quite right when you point out that the Russian Opposition, as late as the first half of 1927, did not demand openly the withdrawal from the Kuo Min Tang. I believe, however, that I have already commented on this fact publicly somewhere. I personally was from the very beginning, that is, from 1923, resolutely



opposed to the Communist Party joining the Kuo Min Tang, as well as against the acceptance of the Kuo Min Tang into the 'Kuomintorn.' Radek was always with Zinoviev against me. The younger members of the Opposition of 1923 were with me almost to a man. Rakovsky was in Paris and not sufficiently informed. Up to 1926, I always voted independently in the Political Bureau on this question, against all the others. In 1925, simultaneously with the theses on the Eastern Chinese Railway which I have quoted in the Opposition press, I once more presented the formal proposal that the Communist party leave the Kuo Min Tang instantly. This was unanimously rejected and contributed a great deal to the baiting later on. In 1926 and 1927, I had uninterrupted conflicts with the Zinovievists on this question. Two or three times, the matter stood at the breaking point. Our center consisted of approximately equal numbers from both of the allied tendencies, for it was after all only a bloc. At the voting, the position of the 1923 Opposition was betrayed by Radek, out of principle, and by Piatakov, out of unprincipledness. Our faction (1923) was furious about it, demanded that Radek and Piatakov be recalled from the center. But since it was a question of splitting with the Zinovievists, it was the general decision that I must submit publicly in this question and acquaint the Opposition in writing with my standpoint. And that is how it happened that the demand was put up by us so late, in spite of the fact that the Political Bureau and the Plenum of the Central Committee always contrasted my view with the official view of the Opposition. Now I can say with certainty that I made a mistake by submitting formally in this question. In any case, this mistake became quite clear only by the further evolution of the Zinovievists. At that time, the split with them appeared to the overwhelming majority of our faction as absolutely fatal. Thus, the manifesto (of the International Left Opposition on the Chinese question, issued late in 1930) in no way contradicts the facts when it contends that the Russian Opposition, the real one, was against the Communist party joining the Kuo Min Tang."

to

In trying to represent Trotsky's bloc with Zinoviev as a parallel and justification for his bloc with Burnham, Shachtman deliberately distorts the lessons of the past for the party and the youth. What could have been an invaluable lesson to the party, to say nothing of Shachtman, on the question of concessions in forming a bloc itself permissible in principle is turned into its very opposite; namely, to justify a bloc impermissible in principle. If Shachtman is compelled to manufacture precedents it is only because none are available in the history of Bolshevism with which he can defend his bloc with Burnham.

"The Inter-relationship Between the Economic Base  
And the Super-Structure." -- Lenin against Lenin

In an attempt to justify his contention that even if he grants the Soviet Union to be a workers' state, still the class basis of that state does not provide a criterion by which to judge whether a given war is "reactionary or progressive," Shachtman attempts to "reinterpret -- dialectically" the inter-relationship between the economic basis of the U.S.S.R. and its superstructure.

Unable to use the dialectic for two reasons (1) because it would bring him into conflict with Burnham both in the sphere of philosophy and sociology, (2) because he is incapable of using it; Shachtman resorts not to theoretical analysis in the Marxist tradition but to another barrage of quotations and appeals to authority.

On page 9 of his Open Letter to Trotsky is another long quotation from Lenin. To believe him, this quotation represents: "A most instructive (and timely) exposition of the inter-relationship between the economic base and the political

superstructure." Two years ago, in January 1938 (New International) Shachtman used this very same quotation -- with a few significant alterations -- to prove: "...the profoundly dialectical concept of the inter-relationship between the economic organizations of the workers and the real -- not idealistically perfect -- workers' state, a concept beyond the grasp of superficial minds accustomed to abstract and absolute categories."

To be sure when Shachtman propounded the profoundly dialectical concept of the inter-relationship between the trade unions and the workers' state, he was writing in a polemic against none other than Burnham and against the latter's attempt at that time to revise our analysis of the class nature of the Soviet Union. Today Shachtman writes in an alliance with Burnham. But does that really alter matters to such an extent that the inter-relationship between trade unions and the workers' state becomes identical with the inter-relationship between the economic foundation and the superstructure? Lenin himself was of the opinion that in a workers' state the trade unions formed part of the super-structure. Thus, precisely in the speech delivered by Lenin during the Trade Union Discussion from which Shachtman culled his quotation both in 1938 and in 1940, Lenin said: "The trade unions, as regards their place in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat, stand, if it is permissible to use such an expression, between the party and the state power." Does Shachtman deny this estimate of Lenin's? While waiting for an answer from Comrade Shachtman as to just how the economic foundation got into an unprincipled bloc with the superstructure, let us examine his quotation a little more closely.

LENIN AS QUOTED BY SHACHTMAN AGAINST LENIN

January 1938

January 1940

"Comrade Trotsky speaks of the workers' state. Permit me, that is an abstraction. When we wrote about the workers' state in 1917 that was understandable; but when it is said today: Why defend, defend the working class against whom, there's no longer a bourgeoisie, don't we have a workers' state--then an obvious error is being committed. The whole joke is that it is not quite a workers' state. That's where the basic mistake of Comrade Trotsky lies: We have passed over from general principles to objective discussion and to decrees, but that's where we are being held back from practical objective work. That will not do!

Our state is in reality no workers' state but a workers' and peasants' state. A whole lot follows from that... But still more. From our party program it follows that our state is a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations. We had to paste this - how shall we call it? - sorry label on it. That is the reality of the transition! . . . . .

"Comrade Trotsky speaks of the 'workers' state.' Permit me, that is an abstraction. When we wrote on the workers' state in 1917 that was understandable; but when one says today: "Why defend the working class, defend it against whom, there is no longer a bourgeoisie, we have a workers' state,' one commits an obvious mistake. The joke of it is precisely this, that it is not quite a workers' state. Therein lies one of the basic mistakes of Comrade Trotsky! . . . . .

Our state is in reality not a workers' state, but a workers' and peasants' state. From that follows a great deal... But still more. From our party program the following comes out--a document which is quite familiar to the author of the AEC of Communism--from this program it comes out that our state is a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations. We had to paste this--how shall we put it?--



costs of the working class is not the role of the trade unions in a workers' state. This is a mistake." It is only then that the rest follows: "Comrade Trotsky speaks of the workers' state. Permit me. . . etc."

No such questions as the inter-relationship between the economic foundation and the political super-structure were in dispute during the Trade Union Discussion. Shachtman did not lie in 1938 when he stated that Lenin was discussing something else; namely, the inter-relationship between the trade unions and the real workers' state. Thus the whole structure of Shachtman's argument that the political super-structure in the Soviet Union can be divorced from the economic base falls to the ground. This is the usual fate of arguments which rest upon distorted quotations rather than upon Marxist theoretical analysis. He cannot and will not escape -- no matter how many quotations -- from making a sociological analysis of the Soviet Union, if he wishes to determine its role in the war and the question of its defense.

But this does not quite exhaust Shachtman's method of operating with quotations. He has apparently at his disposal only expurgated editions of Lenin's works. Now, the original text of Lenin's speech, covering the reference to the workers' state reads as follows:

"Our state," said Lenin on December 30, 1920, "is in reality not a workers' state but a workers' and peasants' state. From that a great deal follows. (Bukharin: What kind? Workers' and peasants?). Although I hear Comrade Bukharin yelling in the rear, 'What kind? Workers' and peasants?'" continued Lenin, "I shan't answer him. Whoever desires can refer back to the recently concluded Congress of the Soviets; he will find an answer there. But still more..."

In place of this passage, we find "dots" in both of Shachtman's quotations. Thus the reader is left with a false impression about Lenin's exact formulation on the question of the workers' state. When Lenin delivered this speech he was ill. He was in fact granted the floor out of turn so as to permit him to leave. This may be the reason for the misstatement contained in the above passage. Bukharin was right. Lenin was wrong. On January 19, 1921, Lenin corrected himself as follows:

"In reference to the discussion of December 30th, I must correct another mistake of mine. I stated: 'Our state is in reality not a workers' state but a workers' and peasants'. Comrade Bukharin immediately interjected 'What kind?' And in reply to him I referred to the recently concluded Eighth Congress of the Soviets. On reading the report of the discussion, I now see that I was wrong and Comrade Bukharin right. I should have said: 'The workers' state is an abstraction. In reality we have a workers' state with the following peculiar features, 1) it is the peasants and not the workers who predominate in the population; and 2) it is a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations. A reader who will refer to my entire speech will see that this correction does not alter either the line of my arguments or my conclusions."

Does not "alter" either the line of Lenin's arguments or Lenin's conclusions? Lenin failed to anticipate Shachtman.

Not is this all. Immediately after quoting the above lengthy quotation, without any comments, Shachtman produces still another quotation relating to this very same Trade Union Discussion of 1921. Shachtman produces a quotation of eight lines, as he puts it, "on the same subject" (!) This quotation is constructed from twenty-eight lines of the original. He begins in the middle of a paragraph, quotes

six lines. He then skips two whole paragraphs to a third one, and there begins in the middle of a sentence to round out his quotation.

Only by reproducing the whole section verbatim is it possible to reconstruct just what Shachtman has perpetrated in this instance.

Lenin was arguing against Bukharin's attempt to pose the question as if he (Lenin) was trying to "shift" the question in dispute concerning the Trade Unions, or trying to approach it only from the political standpoint, whereas he, Bukharin, was trying to approach it both from the political and the administrative view.

"The theoretical mistake is a glaring one," said Lenin, "Politics is the concentrated expression of economics -- I repeated this in my speech (of December 30th), for I had already heard earlier this absurd reproach, inadmissible on the lips of a Marxist, concerning my 'political' approach. Politics cannot but take primacy over economics. To argue otherwise means to forget the ABC of Marxism.

"But perhaps my political appraisal is wrong? Then say so, and prove it. But to say (or even indirectly to entertain the idea) that a political approach is equivalent to the 'administrative'; that it is possible to take 'the one and the other'--this means to forget the ABC of Marxism.

"In other words. The political approach means: If we approach the trade unions erroneously, then we shall ruin the Soviet power, the dictatorship of the proletariat. (The split between the party and the trade unions, if the party is wrong, would surely overthrow the Soviet power in such a peasant country as Russia. It is possible (and obligatory) to verify this appraisal in its essence, that is, to analyze, to probe and to decide whether the given approach is right or wrong. But to say: I 'value' your political approach, 'but' it is only a political one, but what we need is 'also an administrative' approach is like saying: I 'value' your appraisal that if you take a particular step you will break your neck, but you should also weigh in the scales that it is better to be well-fed and clothed than starving and naked.

"Bukharin has slipped into eclecticism in theory, by propagating the merger of the political and the administrative approach.

"Trotsky and Bukharin depict the matter as if they, if you please, are concerned with the growth of production, while we are worried only about formal democracy. This presentation is wrong, for the question stands only thus (and Marxistically, cannot stand otherwise); without a correct political approach to this issue the class in question cannot maintain its rule and consequently cannot fulfill its productive tasks either." (Lenin's Collected Works, Vol. XXVI, p. 126. Third Russian Edition)

The italicized sections in the foregoing quotation are the ones Shachtman used for constructing his "quotation." Here it is as presented by Shachtman.

"Politics is the concentrated expression of economics--I repeated in my speech, for I had already heard earlier the absurd reproach, inadmissible on the lips of a Marxist, that I treat the thing 'politically'. The primacy of politics over economics must serve as the unconditional rule. To argue otherwise means to forget the ABC of Marxism.... The question stands only thus (and, Marxistically, cannot stand otherwise); without the correct political attitude towards the thing (!!!), the class in question cannot maintain its rule and consequently cannot fulfill its productive tasks either." (Shachtman's Open Letter to Trotsky, P. 9)

Is comment necessary?

"The Inter-Relationship Between the Economic Base  
And the Super-Structure." -- Cruz against Cruz

As a matter of fact Shachtman is not at all concerned with establishing an "inter-relationship" between the economic base and the super-structure of the Soviet Union. His very bloc with Burnham is based on splitting the super-structure from the base. The ripe fruit of this performance is the theory of "Stalin-imperialism." Since theoretical analysis is taboo, at least one quotation is required to justify the application of this term, "imperialism," to the Soviet Union. But whom to quote? In this grave crisis somebody -- still nameless -- produced out of the archives a stenographic report of a conversation between a Chinese comrade and Comrade Cruz:

"Li: Do you then think that the Soviet Union could be capable of conducting an imperialistic policy?

"Cruz: If it is capable of organizing frame-ups, killing the revolutionaries, it is capable of all possible crimes." (P. 29, opposition document on the Russian question).

Armed with this quotation, Shachtman together with his colleagues boldly concludes: "The Stalinist bureaucracy is capable of conducting an imperialistic policy! This concept and expression was first used in the Fourth International not by the Minority which is 'imitating the petty bourgeois democracy,' but by Comrade Cruz." (idem)

But even according to the stenographic report it was not Comrade Cruz who used this phrase but Comrade Li. The opposition cannot find anywhere in the records of the Fourth International any place where Comrade Cruz himself uses such a formulation in relation to the Soviet Union. They do not write Comrade Cruz to ask him if he ever did apply this formulation of "imperialism" to the Soviet Union. They know in advance the answer they would receive.

The trick perpetrated by the opposition in using this stenographic report of a conversation with Cruz as a programmatic formulation could not be apparent to those comrades who are not familiar with these stenographic reports of conversations with Cruz and their status in our movement. This is why the opposition utilized it as if they considered explanation superfluous. We will give the explanation they omitted.

(1) Comrade Cruz assumes no responsibility for any of the formulations in these stenographic reports. (a) He is using the English language with which he is not very familiar and it is very difficult for him to follow the finer shades of meaning. Sometimes he misses whole sentences if the interlocutor speaks rapidly. Cruz considers himself fortunate if he catches the general meaning. If the interlocutor does not speak with great precision, clarity, and with standard English rather than the customary slang and colloquialisms with which conversation abounds, Cruz cannot follow him at all. It is interesting in this respect to note that Lenin did not take responsibility for the formulations he made in his native tongue in conversations or debates that were taken down stenographically. (b) In rapid conversations, especially if there is a conflict of views, Comrade Cruz's ideas race far ahead of his English, and his control of the language very often becomes inadequate. (c) The stenographers are not the most expert and do not at all get down everything that is said, especially the words of the interlocutors who often become excited and speak at a great rate without any regard for the Comrade Stenographer. They miss whole phrases, sentences, and even entire passages. For example, in the above report, Li may have added more, or clarified his term without

the stenographer recording it, or even in this particular case have changed his entire formulation of the question after the conversation. It is often the case that those who talk with Crux change and revise their words when the first draft of the stenographic report is ready and before it is mimeographed. Li may have written in the words "imperialistic policy" weeks after the conversation. As a matter of fact, it is doubtful that Crux has read the alleged stenographic report of his conversation with Li to this day. (d) Crux does not care to correct his part of such conversations inasmuch as he considers them so roughly approximated, so generalized, entire phrases and formulations of his English so inexact, that it would require the labor of writing an article to make them precise enough for him to take responsibility. If his words are to be taken with programmatic precision on any question he writes an article and discards the stenographic report.

(2) For these reasons it is well known among the leading comrades in our party that the conversations with Crux as sent to us in stenographic form are to be taken only in their general sense, only as they follow the general political line of the Fourth International for whatever value they may have within the party, and under no circumstances as programmatic formulations.

This is the kind of "proof" upon which the opposition erects its case!

"The Inter-relationship Between the Economic Base  
And the Super-Structure." -- Trotsky against Trotsky

Our article has almost reached the fantastic lengths of an opposition document, nevertheless we must take up in conclusion one more "quotation" -- this time a quotation available in English which can be checked by anyone in the party.

In their document on the Russian question, under the heading, "Unconditional Defense of the Soviet Union," the opposition tries to prove that the program of the Fourth International should be revised to make the defense of the Soviet Union conditional upon Stalin's actions. This flows from the same logic by means of which the economic base of the Soviet Union is split from the super-structure. Whom to quote? This time it is none other than Trotsky -- Comrade Trotsky on the "difference between capitalist society and the Soviet Union." The document does not give the source for this key quotation. Why? We shall see presently why the source of this quotation -- Trotsky against Trotsky -- is so "cleverly" omitted. Here it is with their emphasis:

"...in general the productive forces, upon a basis of private property and competition, have been working out their own destiny. In contrast to this, the property relations which issued from the socialist revolution are indivisibly bound up with the new state as their repository. The predominance of socialist over petty bourgeois tendencies is guaranteed not by the automatism of economy -- we are still far from that -- but by political measures taken by the dictatorship. The character of the economy as a whole thus depends upon the character of the state power." (P. 7 op.cit.)

Having quoted, the opposition document triumphantly concludes: "This entirely correct view applies with equal validity to the question of the war." (P. 8 op.cit.)

We subscribe to this statement with both hands. This quotation from Trotsky does indeed present an entirely correct view and it does apply with equal validity to the question of war. But we agree only to disagree, since we proceed from the very opposite standpoint from that of the opposition. Trotsky was endeavor-

ing to prove exactly the contrary of what the opposition tries to prove with this same quotation. For when Trotsky wrote the above words, he was proving that the Stalinist bureaucracy is not a class, that the Soviet Union is a workers' state, and therefore that we must defend it unconditionally against imperialist attack. Every comrade can verify this by simply turning to page 250 of The Revolution Betrayed.

For the benefit of those who may not have the book at hand, we shall turn to Trotsky's "entirely correct view." Trotsky begins on page 248, under the heading "Is the Bureaucracy a Ruling Class?" as follows:

"Classes are characterized by their position in the social system of economy, and primarily by their relation to the means of production. In civilized societies, property relations are validated by laws. The nationalization of the land, the means of industrial production, transport and exchange, together with the monopoly of foreign trade, constitute the basis of the Soviet social structure. Through these relations, established by the proletarian revolution, the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined."

Does the opposition agree with this entirely correct view or not? If not, how can they agree with the conclusion flowing from this?

In the very next paragraph, Trotsky insists that the degree of independence in the relationship between the bureaucracy and its class base is due precisely to the bureaucracy's basing itself on the proletariat and not on the bourgeoisie.

Does the opposition agree with this entirely correct view or not? If not, how can they agree with the conclusion flowing from this?

Trotsky continues on page 249: "The Soviet bureaucracy has expropriated the proletariat politically in order by methods of its own to defend the social conquests. But the very fact of its appropriation of political power in a country where the principal means of production are in the hands of the state, creates a new and hitherto unknown relation between the bureaucracy and the riches of the nation. The means of production belong to the state. But the state, so to speak, 'belongs' to the bureaucracy. If these as yet wholly new relations should solidify, become the norm and be legalized, whether with or without resistance from the workers, they would, in the long run, lead to a complete liquidation of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution. But to speak of that now is at least premature. The proletariat has not yet said its last word. The bureaucracy has not yet created social supports for its dominion in the form of special types of property. It is compelled to defend state property as the source of its power and its income. In this aspect of its activity it still remains a weapon of proletarian dictatorship." (Our emphasis)

It is precisely here that the opposition departs from Trotsky's "entirely correct view." They rip out Trotsky's conclusion and try to use it to prove that the Soviet Union is an imperialist state and that the bureaucracy has no connection whatsoever with its social base: "one of the main driving forces behind the bureaucracy is the 'tendency to extend its power, its prestige, its revenues.' We call this policy Stalinist imperialism." (P. 31, opposition document on the Russian question).

Is that what Trotsky said? They end his quotation precisely at the point where he proceeds to confound the entire thesis of the opposition. His words read as if they were written in advance to answer their present revisionism. Every comrade should read this section in full and compare it with the opposition's use of



the passage. We cite here only the concluding section of Comrade Trotsky's "entirely correct view" upon the Soviet Union. It is direct refutation of the opposition's thesis on Russia, and their stand on the question of defense!

"The fall of the present bureaucratic dictatorship, if it were not replaced by a new socialist power, would thus mean a return to capitalist relations with a catastrophic decline of industry and culture. But if a socialist government is still absolutely necessary for the preservation and development of the planned economy, the question is all the more important upon whom the present Soviet government relies, and in what measure the socialist character of its policy is guaranteed. At the 11th Party Congress in March 1922, Lenin, in practically bidding farewell to the party, addressed these words to the commanding group: 'History knows transformations of all sorts. To rely upon conviction, devotion and other excellent spiritual qualities -- that is not to be taken seriously in politics.' Being determined consciousness. During the last fifteen years, the government has changed its social composition even more deeply than its ideas. Since of all the strata of Soviet society the bureaucracy has best solved its own social problem, and is fully content with the existing situation, it has ceased to offer any subjective guarantee whatever of the socialist direction of its policy. It continues to preserve state property only to the extent that it fears the proletariat. This saving fear is nourished and supported by the illegal party of Bolshevik-Leninists, which is the most conscious expression of the socialist tendencies opposing that bourgeois reaction with which the Thermidorian bureaucracy is completely saturated. As a conscious political force the bureaucracy has betrayed the revolution. But a victorious revolution is fortunately not only a program and a banner, not only political institutions, but also a system of social relations. (The exact opposite of what the opposition try to put in Trotsky's mouth!) To betray it is not enough. You have to overthrow it. The October revolution has been betrayed by the ruling stratum, but not yet overthrown. It has a great power of resistance, coinciding with the established property relations, with the living force of the proletariat, the consciousness of its best elements, the impasse of world capitalism, and the inevitability of world revolution." (P. 251, The Revolution Betrayed) (Our emphasis)

And this entirely correct view applies with equal validity in the case of war! The very quotations used by the opposition thus turn out to be the sharpest axe in cutting down the basis of their entire super-structure of argumentation. They stand confounded between the economic basis and the political super-structure of the Soviet Union. Far from being free and independent thinkers they are a bewildered petty bourgeois opposition lost without the guiding thread of the dialectic among the battered ruins of their quotations.

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Argument by analogy alone is the most untrustworthy form of argumentation. It is the last resort of sophists. The distortions of the opposition are a dangerous precedent in our movement. The party will never be educated in this way. That the opposition has been reduced to sophistry is the most damning condemnation of their departure from Marxist methods and Marxist theory.

In his open letter to Trotsky, Shachtman wrote:

"Comrade Trotsky, I have always been as close a student of the history of the revolutionary movement as possible. . . My interest in this history is not

so much for its own sake, but above all in order to learn how to avoid mistakes of the past and to emulate that which was worthy."

These are commendable sentiments. We too wish to avoid the mistakes of the past and to emulate that which was worthy. Above all, let us emulate Lenin;

"I would rather be drawn and quartered than agree to participate in an organ or an editorial board propagating such things."

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January 25, 1940.

## THE DEFENSE OF THE U.S.S.R. IN THE PRESENT WAR

(Document for discussion in the International)

(NOTE: This article was written before the Stalinist invasion of Finland. Owing to technical difficulties, it has unfortunately been delayed.)

The sudden change in the international situation (Hitler-Stalin pact, Anglo-French-German war, new reshufflings of imperialist line-ups, etc.) forces us to re-examine our positions on the question of the character of the U.S.S.R. and especially of its role in this war.

The most urgent task of the Fourth International at this time is to clarify the consciousness of the world working class, overwhelmed by the fact that Stalin has all of a sudden (as it seems to them) fallen into the arms of Hitler, symbol of counter-revolution. This shock to the consciousness of the masses, naturally, is reflected in our own ranks. It was only natural that, under pressure from below, certain responsible comrades should have asked for a new examination of the role of the Soviet Union in the present phase of the second imperialist world war.

To try to suppress this discussion under pretext that there is nothing new, that we must not allow ourselves to be carried away by events, that we would be giving in to the pressure of bourgeois public opinion, that we must remain firmly deaf to the upheavals now going on in the consciousness of the masses, that we must not look with critical or inquiring eye on certain points in our program, those very points even now being put to the test of events -- this is not Bolshevik firmness, but either sectarian blindness or bureaucratic stubbornness.

The discussion which has opened in our American party was, therefore, not only necessary but also inevitable. Following the example of the American party, the International Executive Committee has decided to open the discussion in the International. This decision is in harmony with the wishes of our national sections and groups. The regime of the International -- and, I hope, of the American party as well -- is healthy enough to allow this discussion. Such a discussion can have only a good effect on our own ranks: it will bring clarity to legitimate doubts on this most controversial question and thus tighten up our ranks, reaffirming our international solidarity and preparing the way for effective, homogeneous and disciplined action by our party on a world scale. Thus will be preserved the unity of our ranks, the unity on the basis of democratic centralism and of our transitional program, and the unity of the Bolshevik-Leninists in revolutionary action.

... ..

1. For all of us, the defense of the U.S.S.R. means the defense of the nationalized means of production and of the planned economy. That means that we continue to defend the U.S.S.R. to the extent that these institutions are maintained under the disrupting and quickening effects of the war and under the new policy of the bureaucracy, which has only just been set up. The problem of defense thus reduces itself to this: To what extent can these institutions resist the pressure of the war? To what extent can the defense of these institutions be entrusted to the bureaucracy in this war situation? It is not easy to answer these questions. To answer them in time, we must follow all the more attentively, from day to day, the development, sometimes difficult to grasp, of the contradic-

tory processes that are going on at the economic base of soviet society. It is dangerous for us to remain hypnotized, waiting for some spectacular event that will suddenly throw a blinding light on the situation, cutting the Gordian knot of the old dispute and freeing us from the need of analyzing, weighing, and deciding by ourselves. It is possible, even probable, that such a symbolic event will finally appear on the scene only as the superficial and belated crowning of a reality already long in existence. In any case, experience has already shown us that the advance of the counter-revolution in Russia is neither as rich in symbols nor as accelerated as it was in the French Revolution. It is enough for us to compare the Russian Thermidor with the French Thermidor, the advent of Bonapartism in France, and in Russia, the Russian counter-revolution unrolls itself slowly, on a much larger time scale. In any case it is already an accepted fact in our ranks that there is a possibility, with the war, of the reintroduction of the economic counter-revolution, of capitalism, by the "dry" route. The bureaucracy is consciously preparing this road.

That is why I do not think it is vigorous realism, in the style of Lenin, to want to cut through so complex a question -- already on the road to a solution quite apart from any influence of ours -- by applying the logical syllogism: Russia is still "a degenerated workers' state," and hence we must defend it unconditionally, no matter where, when or how.

There are comrades who want to frighten us by the ultimattistic tone of their question: is the U.S.S.R. a degenerated workers' state or is it not? To the ultimattists we could answer, Yes, but it is precisely its profound degeneration that makes its defense conditional. We must place it in a certain frame of reference, making it depend on the political situation, upon certain decisive considerations of the moment. Why? Because this growing degeneration can throw us into a difficult dilemma: Whether to defend the U.S.S.R. or to sacrifice the revolution in another country.

Our theses on the war and the U.S.S.R., our official documents, the writings of Trotsky, have taught us to consider war as the most dangerous condition for the future of the U.S.S.R., not only from the point of view of a military invasion, but above all, of an internal breakdown of the collectivized structure of the economy. It is precisely in this situation that we now find ourselves. Russia is already in a virtual state of war. Its armies are not fighting, or are no longer fighting for the moment,\* but on the Western Front the belligerent armies are not fighting either. In any case, what is important right now is that the delays are counted by months and days, and no longer by years and months.

That is why it is difficult for us to be satisfied with the repetition of the old formula of the unconditional defense of the U.S.S.R., even with the addition of the words -- "against imperialist attack" (formula of the majority of the leadership of the American party). Interpreted "in due form," this caters to every taste. We must know what we mean by "imperialist attack": an attack on the Soviet frontiers by one or more capitalist armies? Or rather, as we have always understood it, any war, isolated or mixed, in which the U.S.S.R. is engaged? Its pretense of clarity makes the formula even more equivocal.

\*. In any case, events have shown its insufficiency. At the time of the invasion of Poland by the Red Army in alliance with the Nazi troops, the revolutionary vanguard of the entire world, and principally our Polish comrades, found themselves in a new situation, not foreseen by the defensist formula: what atti-

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\*Written before the Russo-Finnish war. -- Translator's note.

tude should be taken towards the invading Red Army? Defend it, fight at its side against the bourgeois Polish army, be the best soldiers of Soviet Russia, or take a defeatist position and call upon the soldiers of both camps to rise up against their masters, fraternizing with the people for a Soviet revolution in defeated bourgeois Poland?

The proof has been given: under the pressure of an unforeseen event, such as the invasion by the Red Army which the formula of defense did not cover, the leadership of the American section has been unable to give an answer either clear or immediate, unanimous or by a majority, false or correct, to the burning question put to us so brutally.

Why? Because the great majority of the party leadership found itself confronted with this unhappy alternative: either condemn the invasion, abandoning the slogan of unconditional defense, or keep the slogan and approve the invasion. On this very question the great majority of the leading comrades could only display their vacillations between the two opposing positions: defensist or defeatist. The Burnham resolution, condemning the invasion of Poland by the Red Army as a participation in a war of imperialist conquest, got only three votes; on the other hand, the really courageous resolution of Goldman, asking the party to approve the invasion by Stalin, received only his own vote, if we do not count one abstention as timid approval. The resolution receiving the majority of the votes prudently avoided answering the question; it was edited so cautiously that it did not even dare to speak of an "invasion," preferring a long paraphrase such as "the participation of Russia in the war in Poland."

That is a fact, and we must draw a lesson from the experience, so that we do not again run afoul of other disagreeable surprises that life and the war may hold in reserve.

3. These regrettable facts indicate that we must again consider the problem of the defense of the U.S.S.R., in the light of the new international situation created by the war and the Stalin-Hitler alliance, in fact or in effect.

Until now we have always considered the task of defense as independent of the international political situation. Although denouncing Stalin's reactionary policies, we have always distinguished between Soviet foreign policy and the policies of the imperialist powers. We have always recognized the Soviet government's right to maneuver between the imperialist blocs, for this need for maneuvering was dictated not by the goal of conquest but by the necessity of the defense of an isolated workers' state surrounded by hostile powers. The Litvinov policy of a bloc with the "democratic" imperialists, and the defense of the Versailles status quo, however reactionary and limited it may have been, justified itself, in the eyes of the masses deceived by the Comintern, as necessary in order to avoid the combined attack of Germany and Japan. To ennoble the Anglo-Franco-Russian bloc, the C. I. raised the standard of anti-Fascism. To maintain the "anti-Fascist" bloc, Stalin committed every imaginable crime against the world proletariat. But in the face of the immediate designs of German and Japanese imperialism, this foreign policy of alliance with France and her Allies was dictated by a terrible necessity (the question of who pushed Russia into this necessity would not change the necessity). On the part of the U.S.S.R., its participation in the diplomatic game was divested of any aim of conquest, of rapine, of a quarrel over spoils, of national oppression. Its war role was partially progressive, for what was in question, basically, was the defense of statified property. (It is possible that in the case of a successful war the appetite for conquest would have made its appearance anyway, but that is another question.) Dragged into the inter-imperialist conflict by irresistible forces, having at its disposal no stratosphere into which it could climb, the U.S.S.R. would truly be fighting for its existence. The ac-

tual, defensive character of the U.S.S.R.'s own role in the war under those conditions, whether it would only have been answering a first blow struck by Hitler, or whether it itself had struck first, could not have been questioned. Unable to conduct an imperialist war itself, unable also to conduct a revolutionary war, that is, an aggressive war of liberation, the war of the U.S.S.R. would only be a war of an oppressed country against the imperialist oppressor.

The entire policy of the Fourth International with respect to the defense of the Stalinized U.S.S.R. was based on the progressive role and the necessarily defensive character of the war of the Soviet state. Since all possibility of Stalin conducting a revolutionary war of liberation was excluded, two perspectives for the participation of the U.S.S.R. in a war remained: an isolated war against one or several capitalist countries, or a mixed war, into which the U.S.S.R. would be dragged, from the first day, as one of the most disputed stakes of the rival imperialist bandits. Both possibilities would bear the same stamp of legitimate defense. It would be a matter of defending its social system of property, menaced by the imperialism powers. But today the decisive contradiction, at least at the present stage of international politics, is not between the nature of the U.S.S.R. and the capitalist world, but rather the result of the imperialist rivalries themselves.

The objection that we are making a principled distinction between the "democratic" and fascist imperialism is not valid. No one casts doubt upon the right, as legitimate in one case as in the other, of the U.S.S.R. to make a military bloc with any of the imperialist bandits, whether it is called England or Germany, the United States or Japan, France or Italy. It is not a matter of putting a condition to Stalin: if you make a military bloc with a Fascist country we will no longer defend Russia.

It is quite another question; it is a question of a little practical distinction not without importance: what is the character of the war which Stalin conducted in Poland -- and is even now preparing to resume -- arm in arm with Hitler? Who urges Stalin to make war? What role will Stalin play in it?

By now, one thing can be definitely stated: the little war lately waged by Stalin in Poland and the Baltic countries is of an entirely new character. The role of the U.S.S.R. in it is completely reversed. This war was not foreseen by our old formula. And that is the decisive point.

4. Unless the change in the policies put into force by the upper spheres of the bureaucracy is taken into account, the new character of the war that is being or will be conducted by Stalin cannot be understood. If we isolate this war from the whole context of the new policies of the ruling clique, we will see in it only simple measures of military defense, suddenly put into effect to take advantage of exceptionally favorable circumstances which unexpectedly presented themselves. That is the very position of Browder & Co.; that was the irreproachably logical attitude of Comrade Goldman. Even as they insist that it is all a matter of defense measures, some majority comrades add, so as not to be confused with Stalinism, that it is only a maneuver of the bureaucracy to keep itself in power. Maneuver or not, it is undeniable that as a result the bureaucracy has considerably bettered its military defenses on the West. The bureaucrats in power are in charge of the defense of the U.S.S.R. It is up to them to decide, for the moment at least (we hope), which are the best positions for the defense of the country, which measures should be taken towards that end; we have only to scrutinize them, to support them in practical action, keeping our complete critical independence and reserving for ourselves the right of independent action tomorrow, if we gain the confidence of the masses.

Feeling the point of Hitler's sword coming closer and closer to the heart of Russia, Stalin finished by capitulating and turning the sword point in another direction. The two irreconcilable adversaries, instead of finding themselves engaged in a struggle to the death as all the world expected, have come out of it arm in arm. How did it happen? What was the price of such a sudden change? Who will have to pay the price of the understanding? If this alliance is to last, it must be directed against the British Empire. Not being sufficiently strong to carry out this gigantic task alone, Hitler assured himself of the complicity of Stalin. The alliance with Stalin could only be made against a third party. In the given circumstances this third party could only be the one who, among all the rivals, would appear to be at the same time both the principal enemy and the most vulnerable one.

What has up until now prevented a clearer development of this anti-British pact, has been Britain's counter-maneuver. When he forced Stalin to act jointly with him, Hitler expected England to consider Russia's action against Poland and the Baltic countries in its true color, as acts of war against the Allies. According to Hitler's calculations, the result would be either immediate peace or war with Russia also. But, contrary to Hitler's hopes, Chamberlain didn't allow himself to be caught. Chamberlain acted as though he were saying to himself: "No use, I won't let myself be provoked." And he at once abandoned Poland, sent all his promises to the Devil, and accepted the conquest by Stalin as an accomplished fact. For the moment at least, he wants peace, not war, with Soviet Russia. (Just the same, he intrigues and nurses the hope of one day seeing the generals of the Reich throw Hitler out and break the pact with Stalin.)

5. The destruction of the British Empire is one of the most progressive tasks of humanity. Its fall will be the grand overture of the national revolution of hundreds of millions of colonial slaves. It is precisely their heritage which is at stake in the present war. Faced with the failure of his old plan of having his hands free in the East, in Europe, as the natural field for the expansion of his empire, Hitler has no other choice than to revive the old imperialist plan of the Germany of the Kaiser. But by other means: namely, a return to the Bismarckian policy of alliance with Russia, reinforced by ultra modern "anti-imperialist" propoganda and demagogy. To this end the language of Moscow more and more harmonizes with that of Berlin. Already, Malotov replaces "antifascism" by "anti-imperialism."

We are hardly at the beginning of the war, but already the British empire is cracking everywhere. Little by little, slowly but irrevocably, the peoples of India are entering upon the path of revolt. Under the pressure of the masses and of exceptional historical circumstances, even their most corrupt and cowardly leaders are forced to take rash steps. Stalinist demagogy, scrambled up with that of Hitler, enters the fight. Soon the contradictions, like powerful explosives, will blow everything up; events will swirl over the heads of the hesitant leaders. The hour of payment of the ancient note will have come. But...the most inspiring historical perspectives can change into the darkest historical consequences. The sinister advances being made by Hitler and Stalin to the colonial peoples, oppressed by the British and French, -- advances designed to win their confidence -- sound a gloomy note for the future of the colonial revolution. The Hitler-Stalin alliance is the greatest danger to the tremendous revolutionary perspectives that are beginning to open up in Asia. The reactionary role of Stalin in Spain will be child's play compared to his role in India in cooperation with Nazism.

Every Stalinist war at the side of Hitler, under the flag of struggle against Anglo-French imperialism, will be nothing but a sinister enterprise destined to sidetrack the revolt of the masses and to crush the revolution in the egg. For

the Hitler-Stalin gang, it will simply be a matter of replacing the old masters by new ones, even more greedy and brutal.

To support Russia in this enterprise, under the pretext that the Soviet economy must be defended against the British and French cannon, would be to sacrifice the interests of the colonial revolution to the interests of the upper layers of the bureaucracy, allied to the magnates of the Third Reich. Faced with the necessity of choosing between the defense of the U.S.S.R. or the support and the deepening of the revolution of the colonial peoples, we choose the latter without any hesitation, for the victory of the colonial revolution will nullify the effects of an eventual military defeat of the Red Army on any front whatsoever, even on the frontiers or on the territory of the U.S.S.R. The reverse, however, is not true. To permit Stalin-Hitler to appropriate for themselves, with our aid, the rising revolution of the colonial peoples -- and our policy of support of the Russian armies in such a war, no matter who the enemies are, will be helping Stalin-Hitler in practice -- would put an end to any revolutionary perspectives for decades. We must be ready from now on for such an eventuality.

6. This is no longer merely speculation. Already, in this first phase of the war, the Red Army has been seen in action, serving the autocrat of the Kremlin.

However, this little war that Russia is conducting, under the benevolent eye of Hitler, is no more than jockeying for position in other, more serious engagements. In leaving the Baltic to Stalin, Hitler wants to give a proof of his brigand's loyalty. In letting Stalin go ahead, Hitler hopes to see him drawn further and further in his own footsteps and to compromise him in the eyes of the masses within as well as without the U.S.S.R. Hitler waits for his colleague to put his house in order in the north of Europe only in order to push him into the Balkans, the door to Asia.

Today the most immediate task of Stalin is to finish with Finland. Here, it is not a simple matter of assuring military and naval bases on the most vulnerable points of his European frontiers, as one could argue was the case in the Baltic countries. Here the Stalinists' eager lust is scarcely veiled by a military strategic aim. This involves much more substantial things for the greedy bureaucracy....

If the Finnish government doesn't believe it possible to submit to the persuasions of the stronger party, it is possible that the Soviet army under the orders of the Red dictator will invade the soil of Finland. We will have here the same situation as in Poland. The 4th International will again be faced with this dilemma: either to condemn or to support the Red Army in its expedition against Finland. What name will be given to that war? No one, I hope, will dare to say that Stalin is engaged in liberating Finland, or is going there in order to help the rising proletarian revolution. No one will be able to say, either, given the present circumstances, that Russia is defending itself against an imperialist attack. It will therefore be nothing but a war of brigandage of a great power against a little country. It will therefore be a war of an extremely reactionary character.

We have already seen the effect of the Red Army's entry into Poland. The most brilliant result of this expedition was not at all a dubious economic reform (or revolution?) introduced from above in the interest of the complete power of a bureaucracy, and which we still do not know exactly how to characterize. From all appearances, this reform was limited to a division of the large landed properties, unaccompanied by the nationalization of the land, and to the nationalization of the banks and some basic industries in a backward and miserable agricultural country. Light and small scale industry remained based on capitalist private property. For this was sacrificed nothing less than the enormous revolutionary possibilities



that the military defeat and political bankruptcy of the Polish ruling class opened up before the nation. Stalin crushed in the egg a classical revolutionary situation whose probabilities of triumph were not at all negligible. The oppressed country was rid of the government hated by the people. Warsaw resisted the German army with its own resources. The siege of Warsaw created the conditions for a new Commune. The revolutionary storm would have decisively won the campaign, above all in the East, on the borders of the U.S.S.R. The peasants took seriously the announcement of the entry of the Red Army. In the belief that the Red Army was really "red" they began forthwith to expropriate with their own hands the hereditary class enemy — the big landed proprietors. The Red Army came only to direct the expropriation, the revolution, into bureaucratic channels, taking them out of the hands of the people, pushing the people aside, shooting the boldest and most independent representatives of the people. Those who in Poland had up until then put their faith in the Russia of Stalin had to pay a heavy price. The Soviets in embryo formed spontaneously at Vilna were destroyed by the steel of the Red Army for the benefit of the Lithuanian bourgeoisie. We can compare the state of mind created among the masses by the news of the coming of the Red Army to that of the workers of France at the moment when the first government of the Popular Front came to power. The French proletariat, drawing the only possible conclusion from the event, said to itself: here it is, this is our own government, let us facilitate its task by making ourselves the masters of the factories. However, the deepening of the revolution in Poland would have inevitably led to war between Germany and Russia, the land of the Soviets. It would have been the beginning of the first revolutionary wave raised by the war. It would also have offered the only possibility of cutting the war short, preventing its development, by the only real peace, peace by revolution. The role of the Red Army in Poland was therefore from beginning to end reactionary, counter-revolutionary.

A similar situation may again present itself tomorrow, in Finland. It is therefore impossible to call upon the Russian workers to support the brigandage of the bureaucratic autocracy. It would be just as criminal to call upon the Finnish workers to support their reactionary bourgeois government as to invite them to become the "best soldiers" of the Red Army, by military sabotage, by blowing up bridges, by disorganizing the defense of the Finnish army, with the sole aim of throwing the entire country into the hands of the satisfied satrap of the Kremlin. The defeatist policy in both camps is the only policy capable of aiding and accelerating the revolutionary process in case of a defeat in either camp.

7. The definition of the U.S.S.R. as a "degenerated workers' state" doesn't free us of the necessity of examining in each concrete case the role that it must play in this war. From its definition as a "workers' state" cannot be deduced the absolute necessity for its defense, no matter under what conditions the war is made. History knows cases where the bourgeoisie or other ruling classes were defeatists in their own country (in Russia in the Russo-Japanese war, in the United States the northern bourgeoisie in the war against Mexico that was led by the slave-holding South, etc.).

In the case of Soviet Russia a defeatist attitude on the part of its own proletariat would be even more justifiable. For, although theoretically the ruling class, it does not exercise any control nor take any responsibility for the policy of its state. According to Trotsky, the dominant trait of this state is its dual character; he even insists on the fact that this duality instead of tending to disappear is growing from day to day. Bourgeois social law, which at first only dominated the field of distribution, tends to invade further and further the decisive field of production.

The social "fruits" of statified property themselves demand, in order to be

grabbed, both the violence and the coercion of the bourgeois law of distribution, against...the toiling masses. But it is already no longer against -- properly speaking -- bourgeois tendencies that statified property is defended. It is above all defended against the petit bourgeois tendencies of misery, or the miserable tendencies of the individual left to himself -- that is to say, the petit bourgeois, for Soviet society of the Stalinist epoch is, like every totalitarian society, an atomized society. The suppression of classes is not the same thing as the disappearance of classes. As by a sort of retreat into the far-distant past, before the organized class struggle had come into existence, the U.S.S.R. is the field of a general, and blind, struggle of individuals against individuals, and of all against the state,

A society cannot live long under such conditions. Individuals, citizens, divided and separated, tend to re-group themselves again, on the basis of their common interests. The victorious proletariat organized its State in order to beat down the hereditary enemy, the bourgeoisie. Having exterminated it, the proletariat however did not enjoy the fruits of its victory. Its State was turned against it, expropriating the proletariat in its turn from the benefits of its victory over the bourgeoisie. It has lost its immediate means of defense (the union), it has lost its means of political representation (the Soviet), it has lost its means of conscious expression (the Party). It has seen itself atomized like the other classes, the peasants and the bourgeoisie. In the State that it itself created, all its own means of defense, of representation and of expression are as scattered, as indirect and oblique, as improvised or spontaneous, as underground or illegal as those of the other social groupings. In the general misery the only thing which can distinguish the proletariat by any sign whatsoever of superiority, from all the other social groupings, and this includes the totalitarian bureaucracy, is that it alone can find in the still existing social relationship of property, in the statified property, a road towards progress and the future.

But in the given economic and political situation, national as well as international, that is rather a theoretical advantage. For in the totalitarian impasse of Soviet society under Stalin, development tends to follow the line of least resistance. And in the present conditions in Russia no one can hold that the easiest way out is that of the integral maintenance of collectivized property and centralized economy. The road of the proletariat, being the only progressive one, is perhaps here too the most difficult and the most radical. (We must never forget that unlike capitalism, the process of building socialism is a conscious one, that is to say, a voluntary, political task.) In any case, the road of the political restoration of the proletariat is not a "dry" road but a revolutionary one. On the other hand, the road of counter-revolution, which has been followed for a long time, marked from time to time by violent explosions, by a sort of spasmodic civil war, can, with the war, be finished the "dry" way. The war, without a victorious revolution, will be fatal to the Russian proletariat, even though it ends in the military victory of the ruling Bonapartist clique. The most important channel of the counter-revolution is the bureaucracy itself.

Why then cannot the proletariat of Russia, even if it be considered the ruling class, be defeatist in "its" State? After all, a defeatist attitude is the natural consequence of the lack of national cohesion of a given social or political regime. Can you conceive of a solid national cohesion in an atomized, totalitarian society?

8. But here we have to do not with a theoretical question but rather with a practical policy that must be determined according to immediate perspectives. Which is the best tactic in the

Under the tension and in the atmosphere of war, the rhythm of historical processes becomes increasingly accelerated. In the U.S.S.R., the danger comes from the fact that counter-revolution may advance faster than revolution. The policy of unconditional defense can slow up even more a process that is already lagging behind. Lacking conscious or semi-conscious organs of expression, the social groupings in the atomized society manifest themselves through whatever channels or accidental means they happen to find along their road. Or by improvising. In a totalitarian society, all roads lead to the State. Once war comes, all those groups or individuals who see security for themselves in the partial or complete enlarging of private property and individualistic accumulation will find themselves together, in a broad united front. The proletariat, already in retreat all along the line, may find itself isolated into the bargain. The revolutionary vanguard must not tie its hands in advance, a priori, by a defensist tactic, that is to say, a legitimist, loyalist attitude towards the bureaucracy. This policy, in a certain sense a passive one, will not help us prepare in time those subjective factors necessary for action when the chance comes.

We must not lose sight of the inner nature of the struggle of the Russian proletariat: it wants to defend the stratified property against all its enemies, both external and internal. But it is precisely the war that is the shortest and surest means for the destruction of this property. We do not mean that the most immediate and most dangerous threat comes from an invasion by a foreign army, but at least in the present phase of the war, that the main danger is from within.

The construction of socialism is above all a conscious process. This means that the economic relationships by themselves do not decide: there is no automatic organic evolution from stratified property towards socialism. For this is required in the political domination of the proletariat, which must exercise active control through its specific organs, parties, unions, soviets, etc. It is therefore necessary that the proletariat be in a position to direct, to use effectively and in actuality, the economic process based upon collectivized property. This collectivized economy in itself, above all in an isolated and backward country, given the general retreat of the world proletariat, given the fact that a usurping bureaucracy has robbed the national proletariat of the fruits of its victory over the bourgeoisie -- given all this, and the collectivized economy is only a secondary factor with relation to the subjective, conscious factor of political power. If, in order to give to the stratified property all the possibilities of a socialist development, the proletariat ought to defend it against the bureaucracy, ought to snatch it out of the hands of the bureaucracy, then we cannot exclude by any affirmation of a principle (i.e., "Russia is a degenerated workers' state") the necessity in certain concrete cases, according to the character or historic role of the war into which the bureaucracy wants to drag the entire country, of a defeatist tactic on the part of the working class.

9. The Soviet State, like its economy, is torn apart by the same irreducible antagonisms. The inherent tendency of every State, if left to itself, to elevate itself above classes, above society, has been able in Russia, thanks to exceptional historical circumstances, and perhaps for the first time in history, to work itself out to the end. This development of the process has been possible because the proletariat, the dominant class, has been too weak to exercise its control over the bureaucracy, the incarnation of the State. The bureaucracy has identified itself with the State. In so identifying itself, it has attained an absolute development, as far as it can go as a bureaucracy. This means that the bureaucracy, too, has come to the end of its process of development and now cannot but cease to be itself -- that is, it must transform itself or die. Now that the State is its private property, the end of the process of introversion is reached: from being a servant of the State, the bureaucracy has become its master.

By the same process of evolution, of realization of its absolute nature, the State, completely bureaucratized, places itself above society, becoming, in the process asocial or anti-social. In order not to recognize its master, the ruling class (the proletariat) it proclaims the classless society, it becomes the whole society, the totalitarian providence, socialism. At this stage of hypertrophy, it puts itself in opposition to all of society, suffocates and crushes all the class groupings in society -- classes whose very existence it disowns, by proclaiming their disappearance. The life of society is menaced by this excrescence, by this unceasing and evergrowing invasion by a State which has reached a kind of social elephantiasis.

In order to restore the equilibrium that society has lost, war breaks out between the Frankenstein State and society as a whole. But the organized class struggle (violence which is not arbitrary and unilateral, but rather, organized and counter-balanced by other forces) -- the motive power of history -- is not present to re-establish the vital equilibrium of society and its dynamism -- a process which must go on until classes die a natural death as the true socialist society is achieved. And so the bureaucratized State continues to rot and dry out the vital lifespings of the social organism. The bureaucratized State must therefore be overthrown so that the normal process of class struggle may resume its march forward, its dynamic functions preserved, restoring the State to its natural place, its organic limits, its true functions as servant of the ruling class, the instrument par excellence of history. Then the State will be constrained within these limits, and its innate asocial tendencies will be repressed, by the play of the class struggle, by the defensive action of other, non-ruling classes. This will be the task of the restored workingclass democracy, that is to say, of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Basing itself on the stratification and planification of the economy, extending its discretionary power over the entire economic life of society, the State has secured complete freedom. It has become what Engels, in a letter to Bebel criticizing the draft of the Gotha Program, defined as the "Free State": "a State which is free in relation to its citizens, hence a State with a despotic government." The U.S.S.R. today might give us a rough idea of this bureaucratized "Free State." But such a State has no future and no possibility of surviving.

At any rate, it would seem we are not going outside of Marxist tradition if we call into question the theoretical correctness of the formula of the "degenerated workers' state" in order to admit the hypothesis, under exceptional and transitory conditions, as a temporary phenomenon, of a certain monstrous deformation of the Marxist concept of the State, such as that of a Bureaucratized Free State.

In any case no theoretical analysis can exhaust the question of the nature of the Soviet State. Yesterday's analysis no longer suffices for today's situation. Engels spoke of a "Free State in relation to its citizens." Marx, speaking of the bureaucracy of Louis Bonaparte, called it an "artificial class." Lenin, speaking of the Soviet State itself, criticized the expression "workers' state" as inexact, because, according to him, the Russian State was "worker...and peasant," or rather, as he defined it, a bureaucratic State dominated by the proletariat. And finally, Trotsky, in characterizing the Stalinist bureaucracy, recognized that it is "something more than a simple bureaucracy." And more recently, he affirmed: "The Soviet bureaucracy at present has united within itself in a sense the characteristics of all the old classes, but without either their social roots, or their traditions" ("The Totalitarian Defeatists," La Quatrieme Internationale, Nov.-Dec., 1938.). A new and unique phenomenon in history, the degenerated Soviet State, or Free State, is an extremely transitory process. Enclosing it in a formula which lacks any great scientific precision -- "degenerated workers' state" -- does not resolve our practical problem.

But, on the other hand, to know whether we should refuse to defend it in a concrete case in the present war, we do not have to proclaim that a new ruling class has taken the place of the proletariat in the U.S.S.R. Historical perspectives and the development of events alone can decide the question. ~~That~~ ~~we~~ can and must do is to weigh the perspectives in an effort to analyze and foresee the meaning and tendencies of the development. It is these tendencies that can give us the best answer to the question of the social nature of the bureaucracy. For our part, we believe that the bureaucracy has no future; that its immediate future does not point in the same direction as the historical current, but quite the contrary, in the reverse direction, towards certain decline. (Our basis for this belief, we shall try to explain below.)

Now of all the instruments of production, said the young Marx, the most important is a new social class. At least from this angle, it is difficult to reconcile Marx's concept with the reality of the Stalinist bureaucracy. According to the vital and dialectical standards of the young Marx, the Soviet bureaucracy as a class does not pass the test of history. This class that exhausts itself in less than a generation, guiding the society that it leads straight towards a blind alley and ruin, is rather an abortion of a class.

19. Let us now leave aside, for the moment, the purely theoretical dispute over the nature of the Soviet State. Let us limit ourselves to an analysis of practical perspectives. There lies the answer. This is all the truer because the foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. does not necessarily flow from what remains for us to defend in Russia; the statified property and planned economy. In fact, it is quite the contrary.

Just as the foreign policy takes on a character more and more consciously hostile to the interests of the world revolution, so the internal policy of the bureaucratic party in power takes on a character more and more antagonistic towards the collectivized economic structure.

For years the bureaucracy has been conducting a systematic offensive against the Soviet proletariat. A consideration of the past few years from the angle of the present Stalinist policy (in the light of the pact with Hitler) clarifies the meaning of the struggle to exterminate the old generation of Bolsheviks and the revolutionary or independent representatives of the Youth. As our transitional program puts it, this general extermination "has destroyed even more the political equilibrium, in favor of the bourgeois right wing of the bureaucracy and of its allies in the country." It was in this sense, moreover, that Comrade Trotsky interpreted the hypothesis of an alliance between Russia and Germany. In fact, trying to weigh the possibilities of such an alliance before the "Commission of Inquiry," he believed that if it should take place it would be against the will of Stalin himself. He thought that it would be rather the work of a section of the bureaucracy seeking "to assure its position at any price, even at the price of an alliance or friendship with Hitler." Trotsky supposed that Stalin was not at all inclined to travel in this direction. His interpretation seemed to be that such an alliance would be the result of a victorious struggle of one section of the bureaucracy against the wish of the "father of the peoples." This faction would be composed "of a large layer of the upper and middle bureaucracy." The removal of Litvinov, we can clearly see now, is in line with that view. Finally, this whole struggle within the bureaucracy has resulted in the current triumph of the policy of the Fascist "right wing," the Boutenko wing; the alliance with Hitler is the expression of this triumph. Stalin has gone over to the program of the right wing.

Why? Because Stalin seeks a new basis of support for his tottering regime. The country of socialism is floundering in a general crisis of under-production. The crisis of under-production is chronic in light industry and consumers' goods.

The terrible exhaustion of basic capital has become acute since 1937. The impossibility of its renewal by national resources alone is aggravated by the increased necessities of the military machine, on a war footing. Stalin is tempted to seek in the industrial power and high technical level of Germany the means of renewing this basic capital, or, above all, of reducing the ever more alarming unbalances in the fundamental branches of Soviet economy. In compensation, he promises to re-vitalize Germany with raw materials, with food products, even perhaps at the risk of re-introducing famine in the U.S.S.R., unless he prefers to start out with Hitler on a policy of brigandage and the conquest of colonies. (Let no one raise loud cries of pious indignation because we dare to suppose that the "degenerated workers' state" is capable of imperialist brigandage. Let it be remembered that it was Comrade Crux himself who was the first to believe the bureaucracy capable of "every imaginable crime," including the capacity of "carrying out an imperialist policy," that is, by taking a piece of China for its services to Chiang Kai-shek. -- See "Discussion on the Chinese Question," August 11, 1937.)

Stalinism is obliged to get more and more involved in policies which seek a way out of the blind alley, no longer within the country, but outside its borders. Within the country, the national resources no longer suffice or are no longer as available as they were in 1928-29. This time he can no longer skin the peasantry as he did then; he can no longer set afoot the same campaign of primitive accumulation at the expense of the peasantry as he did in the years of the first Five Year Plan. He can no longer count on the support of the workers, whose enthusiasm, devotion and confidence have since fallen catastrophically. Rakovsky foresaw this general crisis of under-production in a masterful fashion in his study of the problems of Soviet economy, in 1930. ("Problemes de l'Economie de l'U.R.S.S." in Le Lutte de Classe, May 15, 1932.)

The Russo-German agreement is the most convincing expression of the necessity in which Stalin finds himself of seeking a way out of the general crisis by going outside of Russia. Under the pressure of necessity, a "liaison" is being formed between the peasant economy (the Kolhoz aristocracy) and German industry, that is to say, in the old, more precise language, between "the kulak and world capitalism." As Trotsky said, "It was not worth while to make the October revolution for that." (The Revolution Betrayed.)

The intensive exploitation of the national resources and of the Soviet masses' capacity for work -- the corner-stones of the first industrialization -- saved, for a time, the economic basis of the October revolution by assuring the development of the productive forces of Soviet economy. But we are now faced with a new cycle of reproduction. The premissory notes of the first industrialization have fallen due. Thus, all the accumulated capital must be renewed. At bottom, it is a question of finding the bases for a new accumulation. On the basis of the first two Five Year Plans, the bureaucracy has exhausted its progressive role, that is, its role as a working class bureaucracy. It has thus succeeded in "saving" the economic foundations of the workers' state, but by definitively dethroning the proletariat. By means of the planned economy it has made the means of production and the national income its exclusive monopoly. It therefore is in the same relation to the entire economic process as the great imperialist magnates are to the monopolized branches of capitalism; they also need not be the nominal proprietors of the majority of the stocks and bonds of the large corporations in order to dispose of them at their wish and according to their convenience. By controlling production and credit they dispose of the property of others, the little stockholders, the little coupon-clippers, the little savings of the little people, as if they were their own.

The bureaucracy begins to understand that it cannot repeat the history of the first industrialization. It now has much more to lose. It wants to get the

country out of the crisis, but to its own exclusive profit, and no longer as a simple working class bureaucracy such as it was essentially in 1928 and '29. It is here that the difference of historical perspective between the two periods is most clearly marked.

To solve the crisis, consolidating its position once for all, the bureaucracy hesitates between two methods: peace and war. Stalin is now half in the war and half out. But he has no choice. He would much prefer peace, a peace dictated by Hitler, for he would hope not only to hold what he has already taken, but also to get a share of the booty without risking a real war. Also, with peace, the Russo-German economic "collaboration" would be able to reach its full development. The latter, however, would really mean the "peaceful" colonization of Russia by Germany. But even this perspective of peace is more and more problematic. Stalin fears war, but he is tempted. He already plays at war, and after all in reality his game can only lead to war. This can prove fatal to the Soviet economic structure, even as it opens up an historical way out for the bureaucracy, or at the very least for the ruling oligarchy. Economically, however, it would not have consequences very different from those of an immediate peace, with the triumph of Hitler. War would put an end to the monopoly of foreign trade as a barrier to foreign, that is to say German, industry. The economic plan, already preached by the sudden needs of mobilization and the annexation of new territories, would be definitively put aside in order that the entire national economy might be adapted to the necessities of the war and cooperation with German economy. The accelerated movement of the centrifugal forces of the economy and of individualistic accumulation in some of the most fundamental sectors of the economic life of the country (agriculture, light industry and consumers' goods, artisan production which is already in the process of legal decentralization, etc.) will break down all the juridical barriers and end up by being sanctioned by the State. Moreover, this will be in the "historical" interests of the bureaucracy itself. It is also the path of least resistance. For the bureaucracy to act otherwise would mean to return to the proletariat, to the revolution, to its own self-destruction.

The bureaucracy, especially the top bureaucracy, hopes to increase the productive forces of the country by more and more thoroughgoing concessions in the way of the denationalization of the land and of light industry and artisan production. (It seems that this is the policy that has been adopted in the newly-annexed territories.) It would then find in this (temporary!) growth of the productive forces a more solid and autonomous base upon which to support itself and survive.

On such a base, it would be easier for the bureaucracy to develop fully every tendency within itself that might lead to its transformation into a new independent social formation. It is as restless as a hen that is looking for a safe place to lay her egg. It wants to get itself a proper, stable, economic and social base on which it can spread itself at ease and assure itself a permanent place in history as a true social class. It is precisely this that it seeks by its policy of foreign adventures.

If it succeeds, that is to say, if its policy of conquest is successful or if it goes through this entire war period without set-back or bankruptcy, then the old question of whether or not it is already a new social class will have been decided in the affirmative. The theses on the U.S.S.R. in the transitional program predicted the political unfolding on the basis of the economic policy that we have just indicated. Here is what they said:

"It is from that direction, that is, from the right, that we can expect in the next period increasingly determined attempts to reconstruct the social regime



of the U.S.S.R. by reconciling it with Western civilization, particularly in its Fascist form."

It is this process of restoration that we have now before our eyes - seen no longer as a perspective but as something already in process.

11. Since the road back to the revolution is definitely blocked to the bureaucracy, we must not let ourselves be deceived by the "left" phrases and twists of the agents of Stalin.

Thanks to a momentarily favorable historical situation, the Stalinist bureaucracy has adopted a tone much more independent of the outside world than it has permitted itself for some time past. This is due to the surprising and unpredictable fact that the inter-imperialist war has broken out without Russia being drawn in at the first shot on the first day. Sheltered behind Germany, the adversary it feared most, the bureaucracy has plucked up a little courage, and Moscow now apes Berlin in its manner of treating small neighbors and hurling thunderbolts. Once more it is able to radicalize its vocabulary and to paint over its hideous visage with a little rouge. None of this is of the slightest real significance. It is simply a matter of frightening others, on one hand, and on the other, of salvaging the remnants of the Comintern in the democracies who are either at war with Germany or hostile to the Russo-German entente, so as to exploit it against Anglo-French and American imperialism. By this maneuver the bureaucracy disembarasses itself of the ambiguous ideology of anti-Fascism, while at the same time, under cover of its leftist phrases, it turns decisively towards an alliance with Nazi imperialism, which has already been whitewashed by Molotov as the camp of peace forced to defend itself. As for the manifesto of the Communist International, that is merely an irresponsible echo of Molotov's voice, a holiday speech delivered on an anniversary.

Internally as well as externally, the progressive role of the Stalin bureaucracy was exhausted a long time ago. Internally, the bureaucracy "from (being) the guardian of Socialist property has become its principal destroyer" (Theses of the First International Conference in 1936). Externally, it has long been the most powerful brake on the world revolution. Stalin's continuing in power, in war or in peace, means either the colonization and dismemberment of the U.S.S.R. or Fascism. His victory in the war means Fascism in Russia as well as in the world. The flag of the swastika is "red" also. The victory of Stalin allied to Hitler would transform the bureaucracy into a new class, after a certain process of rationalization with the bureaucracy itself as object. We have no reason to help directly or indirectly the victory of any imperialist camp. The victory of any bandit whatsoever would mean the triumph of the Fascist counter-revolution, if it were possible to conceive that this war, could end without revolutionary intervention by the masses.

12. In view of all the above, we believe that the formula of "unconditional defense of the U.S.S.R. against an imperialist attack" is insufficient, for it can drag the International into a blind alley (Poland!). In an isolated war between the U.S.S.R. and any imperialist power, we will defend the former just as we defend China against Japan, or Puerto Rico or El Salvadore against the U.S.A. The eventuality of an attack by Hitler against the new frontiers of the U.S.S.R. would also call for defensism, for that would be a war of a different character from that of the present war. The principal stakes of the war would then have changed. But that, at least for the present, is speculation.

In the case of a mixed war, a defensist tactic must depend upon the character of the war, its historical role, the perspectives of revolution which flow from it, and the degree of danger to the economic structure of the U.S.S.R. We



must therefore beware of laying down in advance any tactical line to be followed under all circumstances. Better to work this out in each concrete case. In the present war, the participation of the Red Army in Poland imposes upon us a defeatist attitude toward the Soviet armies. We will not discuss any further at this point the reason for this policy. Other actions of a similar kind, where the role of Stalin is clearly reactionary (the attack on Finland, the invasion of new territories) cannot be supported by the Fourth International either. That would be playing the game of Stalin-Hitler in their imperialist or aggressive designs — aims which are counter-revolutionary even if their intention is to destroy the British empire, because that will be done for their profit and will involve the sacrifice of the national revolution of the colonial peoples. We cannot entrust this great historical mission to the Hitler-Stalin gang. At the end of such a war, terminated by a victory that we would have helped to gain, we would risk finding in the Kremlin a monarch, with or without a crown, surrounded by a court composed of those who have appropriated the denationalized wealth of the country.

However, the war may still change its character together with its principal and immediate objectives: it is therefore not impossible that we might have to change our tactic towards the U.S.S.R. again. That is why we do not believe that you can exclude a defeatist tactic in every mixed or inter-imperialist war in which the U.S.S.R. might become engaged.

The objection that we cannot change our tactics during the course of a war carries no weight, or, at the very least, is not in accord with Marxist traditions. Marx and Engels and the pre-war socialists in general changed their tactics in the past in accordance with the changes in the character or role of one and the same war. The best known example is that of the Franco-Prussian war, where our old masters began by supporting the cause of Germany and ended by rejecting it. The war of the Balkan peoples began as a progressive war against Turkish domination, but by its historical prolongation, a so-to-speak uninterrupted one, it ended as nothing but a simple advance guard skirmish in the general conflict between the great powers. These examples will suffice.

The objective of this war is not the restoration of private capitalist property in the U.S.S.R.; what is at stake is British supremacy in the colonial world. The historical stake is the British empire. The question is: who will profit from its collapse — the colonial masses or imperialism, whether it be Fascist or democratic, Hitler and his allies including Stalin, the Mikado or Wall Street, or even, at the end, once again, the bourgeoisie of the City of London. That is why the entry of the U.S.S.R. into the conflict does not change either the character or the role of the conflict. It would be rather the historical role of the U.S.S.R. that would change.

We want to underline that we are limiting ourselves to the war as it is developing at present. We believe that we must wait for a different conjuncture of events, other circumstances, other developments, changes in relationship of forces, the entry of other great powers — that these things must come about in order to show us the necessity for re-evaluating the situation so as to decide whether or not it is proper to change the defeatist tactic that we must adopt in the present conditions.

It is probable, it is almost certain that the conflict will be broadened by the entry of all the other imperialist powers. The immediate stakes in the war will also be enlarged. It will no longer be, or not primarily at least, the Anglo-French colonial monopoly — disputed by Germany and its accomplices — but a struggle of all the imperialist bandits, one against the other, for the literal domination of the entire world. Our defeatist tactic would then be even more justified than ever.

But it is possible that as it spreads the conflict might come to take on an entirely different turn, becoming a struggle of all the imperialist bandits, or a part of them, against what still remains of the land of the Soviets. In this case, even if the Soviet State, in order to defend itself against an imperialist coalition (for example, the United States, England, France, etc.), remained allied with Hitler, with the latter obliged in his turn by the relationship of forces, or for other reasons, to confine himself to his European territory, hunted to his den like a ferocious beast, our tactic should again change in favor of the U.S.S.R. — on condition, of course, that during all this time its social and economic regime remain the same as they are today. (That is hardly probable it must be admitted, at least without a revolution!) Hitler would then only be a temporary, provisional ally. But we are today far from any such situation. Unfortunately, in all the long years of Stalinist reaction, the fundamental contradiction between the U.S.S.R. and the imperialist world has begun to shade off rather than deepen, contrary to the perspectives of our theses on the war.

But let us not amuse ourselves by trying to divine the future. It is impossible to take up every possible or probable variant of the conflict: life is too rich in surprises to be confined within any hypothesis that is spun by the mind. What is needed is to keep the door open for any possible turn of events. Enough for us to know that the character of the war and its historical role can change from today to tomorrow. Lenin recognized that even an imperialist war can be transformed into a national war. "It is not a matter of declaring such a transformation impossible," said he, and he sketched out a series of conditions that would make such a transformation possible. The march of counter-revolution during the 20 years since Lenin wrote those lines has made appalling and unexpected progress: most of the conditions enumerated by Lenin have since become sad realities. Today, it is clear that national wars can find themselves on the order of the day tomorrow, in Europe, as the immediate result of the present world conflict.

There is therefore nothing extravagant either theoretically or politically if we maintain, by analogy, that in the course of the present war it is permissible also for us to return from a defeatist to a defensist tactic. (Especially since the latter tactic can at present be conceived as in the interests of the U.S.S.R. alone.) Lenin, for example, criticizing certain leftist elements for their "lack of concreteness" on the question of the defense of the fatherland, liked to underline the fact that his defeatist tactic was not a general thesis, but rather a practice for that particular war. He affirmed that "it is theoretically much more correct and incomparably more important, from a practical point of view, to say that the defense of the fatherland is a reactionary bourgeois lie in this war (the underlining was by Lenin himself) than to construct a 'general' thesis of opposition to 'all' defense of the fatherland." ("On the Slogan of Disarmament," *The New International*, August, 1934.)

If Lenin handled even so decisive, so programmatic, so "dogmatic" a question as that of revolutionary defeatism in such a "pragmatic" manner, why can we not adopt an analogous attitude towards a question that is just as controversial, just as little capable of generalization, just as conjunctural, as is that of the defense of the U.S.S.R. in the given historical conditions?

It is therefore not only possible but necessary to remove from the defensist position on the U.S.S.R. its programmatic dignity. We must define the conditions under which we should adopt it or reject it in the present war. If it must be subordinated to the interests of the world revolution, as Trotsky says, we must, before adopting it, examine in each case if it is not in contradiction with these interests. The International must be given the right of rejecting it today and supporting it again tomorrow, according to the development of a situation. What is important is that the International, at each decisive turning point of policy,

be in a position to make the turn in time and with enough clarity to assure the efficacy of our revolutionary action and the firmness of our ranks.

To each day the labor thereof.

LEBRUN

November 9, 1939.