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RECENT TENDENCIES IN OUR PARTY

By S. Joyce

In the period ahead in order to survive as a revolutionary party and to gain the leadership of the masses what is required above all is a sound Marxist program. Such a program was provided by the Declaration of Principles adopted at the founding of the Socialist Workers Party. Since that time, unfortunately, a number of changes have been made in the program of the Party; some of them have been formally adopted, while others have recently appeared in the Party's propaganda and activities without any formal action. It is the contention of this paper that these changes in the main constitute departures from Bolshevism and that taken together they must be considered as a definite revisionist tendency. No new policies will, therefore, be suggested here. All that will be urged is that the coming convention of the Party repudiate in detail the false policies which have been adopted since the founding of our Party and that it reaffirm the program and principles of Marxism as embodied in previously accepted documents.

The revisions to be considered fall under four main heads with several sub-heads, thus:

- I. Revisions introduced by Trotsky
 - A. The labor party question
 - B. The military policy
- II. Revisions on the war question prior to Pearl Harbor
- III. Revisions introduced at the Minneapolis trial
 - A. The question of legality
 - B. The nature of revolutionary defeatism (or of political opposition to war)
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 - A. On the necessity of anti-war agitation
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The questions to be considered are interconnected, so that some repetition is unavoidable. At the end of each section specific suggestions will be made for action to be taken at the Party convention, and, while these may overlap, it would be quite possible to adopt any of them while rejecting the others.

I. REVISIONS INTRODUCED BY TROTSKY

These are the only ones of the revisions to be considered which have been formally adopted by the Party.

A. The Labor Party Question

By the labor party question is meant the question of whether

revolutionaries should work for the formation of a labor party, not the question of what tactics they should adopt in relation to already existing labor parties. The original Declaration of Principles states that revolutionaries cannot take the initiative in forming a labor party. This conclusion is based upon a Marxist analysis of the nature of such a party, an analysis which has been accepted by Marxists at least since the formation of the Third International. This Marxist thesis was clearly stated in the Socialist Appeal of September 1936;

"To sum up, a labor party, then, like any other reformist party, is not merely non-revolutionary, but anti-revolutionary. It is a device for preserving capitalism, not means for its overthrow. It is a mighty obstacle in the path of the revolutionary movement, not a boost forward."

Have events since these lines were written been of such a nature as to call for a change in this analysis? In Great Britain perhaps, where the Labor Party is the tailend of the Conservative government? Or in Australia, where it conducts the imperialist war for the bourgeoisie? It is clear that experience has confirmed every word of this analysis.

Is there any reason to suppose that a labor party in the United States would be any different? Joe Hansen writes in Wall Street's War -- Not Ours!, "An Independent Labor Party. . . could smash Wall Street's (war) plans right now. . . A powerful Independent Labor Party. . . that is the answer to Wall Street's war." If this statement bore the vaguest resemblance to the truth, no revolutionist could have any doubts as to whether to work for the formation of a labor party; the only question would be why there is any need for the Socialist Workers Party at all. True, Hansen insists that the labor party must have an "anti-war program". (a qualification no longer made in our literature, however). But most reformist labor parties have an "anti-war program" before the actual outbreak of war. The effect of such "anti-war" programs is not to "smash the war plans", but on the contrary to pave the way for complete support of the imperialist war. The only real program against war is the program of revolution against capitalism. But the party with this program is the Socialist Workers Party; it would be absurd for us to dissipate our energy in trying to build a second revolutionary party.

What the Socialist Workers Party at present advocates is the formation of a reformist labor party based upon the now-existing reformist trade unions, that is to say a party led by Murray, Green and the rest of the jingoist labor lieutenants of the capitalist class. The prime purpose of such a party would be to support the war, to re-arouse the flagging patriotism of the workers. It would just as truly as its sister parties in Britain, Australia, etc. be "anti-revolutionary. . . a device for preserving capitalism. . . a mighty obstacle in the path of the revolutionary movement." It follows that revolutionaries must do everything in their power to prevent the formation of such a party.

Some writers on this question seem to confuse it with the quite

different one of what the attitude of revolutionaries should be towards existing labor parties. In the case of existing reformist labor parties the revolutionary strategy is always the same: to expose them to the workers as tools of capitalism. To achieve this end, however, flexible tactics are required, and these may include the support of the labor party's electoral candidates -- always explaining to the workers that we are supporting these candidates in the way that a rope supports the man being hanged (Lenin, Left-wing Communism). But purposely to build an obstacle to the revolution so that we may later expose it -- this is knowingly to follow in the footsteps of the ill-starred Dr. Frankenstein.

To date our advocacy of a labor party has fortunately had no practical results. This does not mean, however, that no ill effects have followed from this false policy. The Declaration of Principles speaks of the necessity of combatting the illusion that fundamental change can be obtained by purely legal means. Particularly is this important in America where the ideas of bourgeois legality and parliamentarianism and faith in the ballot box are so deeply rooted in the masses of workers. Our labor party agitation has clearly had the effect of strengthening rather than weakening these ideas in the minds of any workers whom it has influenced. It is tragic that this false policy should be pursued just at the time when the utter betrayal of labor parties abroad gives us an unparalleled opportunity of exposing the labor party for what it is -- a snare and a delusion.

The coming convention of the Socialist Workers Party should therefore put itself on record to the following effect (here and elsewhere where resolutions are presented it is to be understood that only the sense, not the wording is insisted upon):

The Socialist Workers Party reaffirms the stand of its original Declaration of Principles: that a reformist labor party based on the trade unions is a bulwark of capitalism, serving the interests of the capitalists against the workers. It is the duty of revolutionaries everywhere to expose such parties to the working class, and where no labor party exists (e.g. the United States) revolutionaries must do everything in their power to prevent the formation of one.

B. The Military Policy

Revolutionary Marxism has for more than half a century a clear-cut program in regard to military affairs, which has served as the basis for agitation and for action. This program is to oppose conscription and military appropriations. It is summarized in the oft-stated slogan: "Not a man, not a penny for the capitalist state and for capitalist wars!"

It should be noted that this Marxist slogan has two bases: 1) we oppose placing men and arms at the disposal of the capitalist state; 2) we oppose all preparations for an imperialist, i.e. an "unjust" war. Thus it has been suggested that it is possible to support a war and at the same time oppose the war budget in the case of a progressive war waged by a capitalist state. But no one before Trotsky did so in 1940 has supposed it possible to oppose a war and

at the same time support conscription and support military appropriations. It will be shown below that this is in fact impossible, and that the present military policy of our party constitutes objective support of the imperialist war. (Needless to say, no one would accuse either Trotsky or the leaders of our party of subjective support of the war. On the other hand, Trotsky was not infallible).

Our party at present favors compulsory military training. The word "compulsory" here refers to compulsion to be exercised by the capitalist state. Our party favors military appropriations, that is to say the purchase by the capitalist state of guns, planes, tanks, etc. True, we always qualify this position by insisting that these arms be used only for a certain specified purpose, but what possible guarantees have we that they will only be used for this purpose? The capitalists will use these arms just as they see fit, viz. against the imperialist "enemy", to enslave colonial peoples, to suppress the American workers.

In reply it may be pointed out that our support of conscription and of military appropriations is not unconditional, but subject to the condition that they be only for training under trade union control. It will be shown below that this condition is of no importance whatsoever, but first it should be noted that this condition -- so all-important according to the present defenders of the military policy -- is not mentioned at all in Trotsky's Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian Revolution. This fact clearly demonstrates that the condition of trade union control is an afterthought, by no means essential to the military policy.

What does military training under trade union control mean? It does not mean the creation of trade union regiments, or trade union militias; hence the inappropriateness of the example of Spain cited by Cannon in the Minneapolis trial. Trade union control here means simply that before being sent into active Army service, workers will receive their preliminary training in camps directed by trade union officials instead of regular Army officers. Workers remaining at home will receive training under the direction of trade union officials before being placed in official Home Guard or Civilian Defense organizations. In short, the labor fakirs will do one bit more of 'the capitalists' dirty work. This may serve to make the imperialist war more palatable to some workers, but it will not change its character in any way; it will not make it permissible to support conscription, military appropriations, or any other war preparations, if it has been previously impermissible to do so.

Stripped of unessential and irrelevant issues, the question of conscription is seen to be purely and simply a question of preparing for participation in the war. This was clearly understood by the whole country at the time of the conscription debate in 1940: the pre-war elements all supported conscription; the anti-war and "isolationist" groups opposed it. Thus the majority of the workers supporting or at least accepting the war, also accepted conscription; the Stalinists, who at that time correctly opposed the imperialist war, opposed conscription. Many workers at that time were bamboozled

into thinking that the Stalinists, not because of the Pact, etc., but solely because they opposed conscription, together with all anti-war elements, were nothing but agents of Hitler. And our party declared that these patriotic workers, misled by the most vicious redbaiting, flag-waving propaganda, were "far in advance of the Communist Party" (Morrow, Labor's Answer to Conscription)!

Compulsory military training under capitalism, military appropriations for the capitalist government -- regardless of whether the former be under trade union control and the latter allegedly to be used only in union-controlled training camps -- constitute preparations for waging an imperialist war. To support them is to support the war. This seems so obvious as to call for no further discussion; but as the military policy has been accepted by a number of persons whose judgment on most matters is to be respected, it will be worthwhile to examine the arguments which they have offered in its defense.

"In this epoch," most accounts of the military policy begin. This is correct; any defense of the policy should explain what peculiarity of the present period makes it possible to support the very thing against which in the past revolutionaries have fought and died. In this epoch -- "all the great questions will be decided arms in hand." As if in previous times the great questions were decided by the passing of resolutions!

The arguments in favor of the military policy boil down to this: workers need military training. That is perfectly true, and it is also true that the capitalists are giving it to them. The very necessity which compels capitalism to wage war compels it to train millions of workers in the arts of war. There is no need for us to "demand" compulsory military training, any more than we need demand that capitalism go to war in order to create a revolutionary situation.

But, it is argued, the fact that workers need military training makes it incorrect to take a "purely negative" attitude towards conscription. This argument supposes that by categorically opposing conscription, we might prevent it from going into effect. But if we were in a position to stop conscription -- and that means stopping the war, for modern warfare without conscription is unthinkable -- we should dispense with transitional demands altogether and proceed at once to the seizure of power.

Another argument sometimes offered in defense of the military policy is that the training offered by the capitalist state is inadequate: too little and too few. Before evaluating this criticism, it should be asked, what do we want a program of military training for (and our reason for wanting it must be the same as the reason we give to the workers -- we do not lie to the workers or conceal our policies from them): for the imperialist war or for the proletarian revolution? If we criticize the government's military training program as being inadequate to fight the imperialist war effectively, then we are out-and-out social patriots. But the other alternative is nonsensical. Consider the supposed situation: The capitalist government is giving the workers the military training necessary to

fight the imperialist war, but (it is claimed) more training and to more workers is necessary in order for them to be able to make a successful revolution. This assertion cannot be shown to have any basis, but supposing it to be true, what follows? That we raise the question of further training necessary for the revolution in the form of a purely legislative proposal (see Cannon's testimony in the Minneapolis trial)? It would be simpler and just as practical to "demand" that the capitalist government vote itself out of existence. If the workers really do need additional training, then let us hear a practical program designed to secure them that training. But it is too idiotic to suppose that the capitalist government will adopt a program designed to prepare the workers for revolution against it.

"But," our literature repeats endlessly, "we are against sending worker-soldiers into battle untrained." Can this be intended as a class struggle slogan or as a transitional slogan ("directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime")? Surely no one can suppose that it is to the interests of the capitalists, engaged in a life-and-death struggle with their imperialist rivals, to send soldiers untrained into battle. Yet this is just what Trotsky seems to say in the Manifesto: "We do not wish to permit the bourgeoisie to drive untrained or half-trained soldiers at the last hour onto the battlefield." What have the bourgeoisie to gain by such an idiotic procedure? The American bourgeoisie showed that they had sense enough to make the most elementary preparations for war, i.e. putting through conscription, without requiring any coaching from us.

"We are against sending worker-soldiers into battle untrained." But as a revolutionary anti-war party we are -- or should be -- against sending the workers into the battle for imperialism at all. It is, therefore -- or should be -- redundant to declare that we are against sending them into that battle untrained. It is as if a vegetarian society were to declare: "We are against the eating of horsemeat."

Finally it should be asked: Why are we against sending the workers into battle untrained? This is presented as a program for saving the lives of the workers. But, although it is true that their training may save their lives on the battlefield, it is equally true that their lack of training would save the lives of worker-soldiers on the other side. The adherents of the military policy seem to forget that we are internationalists. They forget also that there is only one program that will save the lives of the soldiers, and that program will save the lives of the soldiers on all sides. That program is: Stop the war!

All the arguments presented in favor of the military policy are based upon the following premise: If it is granted that the workers need military training, it follows that revolutionaries must support some program of compulsory military training under capitalism. If this premise is accepted, it will be impossible to explain why trade union control is made a necessary condition for supporting military training. A worker who really accepted this

premise would argue as follows:

"Military training under trade union control would be a very nice thing, but it is unfortunately not likely to be realized in the near future. Meanwhile the state is offering a program of military training under control of the U.S. Army. This program has many faults: it deprives workers of their democratic rights, it subjects them to vicious propaganda, it segregates Negroes, etc. But these, after all, are secondary considerations. The main consideration is the fact that workers need military training. We can criticize the government's program, we can agitate for its replacement by a program of trade-union-controlled military training, but to oppose it altogether would be to place secondary considerations before the main consideration. Workers need military training; therefore we must support (with criticism, of course) the only program with any present chance of success designed to give them that training."

Any one who takes seriously the arguments given in defense of the military policy should support a program of military training whether it is under trade union control or not. And that is exactly what the Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian Revolution does. The Manifesto at any rate is consistent. But to oppose military training when it is directed by the capitalist army lieutenants and to support it when it is directed by the capitalists' labor lieutenants -- such a policy simply does not make sense.

The Question of a Workers' Militia

The conscription program was presented to the country as a plan for military training, but it was really a program of building a capitalist army. Revolutionaries should have answered this program not with an alternative scheme for military training, but with the slogan of replacing the capitalist army by a workers' militia. It is sometimes claimed that our military policy is a step towards the replacement of the capitalist army by a workers' militia, but this is clearly not the case. Our military policy would have trade union direction replace the regular army direction only in the training camps, which are only a small part of the army organization. To claim that this constitutes a step towards replacing the capitalist army by a workers' militia is to confuse the question of training the workers with the question of arming them.

But suppose that the policy of military training under trade union control did constitute a step towards the creation of a workers' militia. Would it then be permissible to support military appropriations for the purpose of putting that policy into effect? The answer to this question may be found in the history of the German Social Democrats. During the seventies and eighties, the Social Democrats consistently opposed military appropriations of any kind whatsoever. Only in 1891, when war between France and Germany appeared imminent and Engels was of the opinion that such a war would be progressive on the side of Germany, did the Social Democrats adopt a policy of supporting military appropriations if those appropriations were of such a sort as to represent a move in

the direction of the realization of the slogan of a workers' militia. When the war estimates of the government turned out to be not of such a nature, however, the Social Democrats opposed the war budget. In other words, Engels was willing to support military appropriations only if both of the following conditions were realized: (1) that the appropriations be of such a nature as to represent a step towards replacing the capitalist army by a workers' militia; and (2) that the appropriations be for use in a progressive war. We, on the other hand, are willing to support military appropriations although neither of these conditions is satisfied.

It should be noted, in addition, that Engels took a somewhat rightist position on these questions and that revolutionists since his time have not posed the question of the workers' militia, that is to say, the question of arming the workers, as a legislative proposal to be made to the capitalist government.

There remains to consider the question of work in the army. Here we must devise a program which will channelize the discontent and grievances of the workers in the army so as to direct them against the very bases of the army regime. It is clear that the military policy is inadequate for this purpose, as it proposes a change in the regime only of the training camps, not of the army organization as a whole. Furthermore the military policy stands in the way of raising demands which correspond more closely to the needs and wishes of the soldiers and at the same time come much closer to the basic slogan of replacing the capitalist army by a workers' militia. Thus the work of a Trotskyist in the army in agitating for the election of officers by the ranks will be hindered rather than helped by the necessity of defending a policy which would place the control of training camps in the hands of Lewis, Tobin, et al.

To summarize:

The military policy of our party constitutes left-handed support of the imperialist war. The arguments presented in its defense are all fallacious. The coming convention of the Socialist Workers Party should repudiate this policy and reaffirm in its stead the truly proletarian military policy outlined in the following slogans:

No conscription! No military appropriations of any kind!
Disarm the bourgeois officers -- arm the workers!
For a democratic workers' militia!

In addition, the following more immediate demands should be raised, especially in the army:

Full civil rights for the soldiers!
For the formation and recognition of soldiers councils!
Election of all officers by the ranks!

II. REVISIONS ON THE WAR QUESTION PRIOR TO PEARL HARBOR

Under this head will be considered the substitution for the Leninist slogan: "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war!" of the slogan: "Turn the imperialist war into a war against fascism!" This slogan first appeared in our publications (I believe) in an

editorial in the Militant for March 15, 1941. Since then it has been repeated in one form or another very frequently. We shall take Goldman's presentation of it in his column "Where We Stand" in the Militant for March 29, 1941, as typical. As this column was one of the chief pieces of evidence submitted by the defense in the Minneapolis trial, it assumes a programmatic significance.

If the slogan "Turn the imperialist war into a war against fascism" is a correct one, the question naturally arises, why was no such slogan raised by revolutionaries during the last war. Liebknecht and Luxemburg did not say, "Turn the imperialist war into a war against Czarism." Debs did not say, "Turn the imperialist war into a war against Prussian militarism." The reason why they did not raise such slogans is quite clear. It is not that these revolutionists did not recognize the differences existing between the various forms of capitalist governments, but rather that they realized these differences to have no bearing whatsoever on the war situation. The capitalists won the support of the workers to the war by telling them that it was a war to defend democracy against the Kaiser (or alternately) to defend the workers' social gains against the Czar); the revolutionists exposed these lying pretexts.

In this war the situation is the same. The distinction between bourgeois democracy and fascism has no bearing on the war situation. It is wrong, therefore, to issue a slogan in regard to the war based on this distinction. If a German revolutionary were to raise the slogan: "Turn the imperialist war into a real war against pluto-democracy! we should accuse him of taking Goebbels at his face value; we should point out that such a slogan did not educate the German workers properly, but left them open to some demagogue who by instituting a few changes in the German government would claim to be conducting a "real" war against pluto-democracy; we should say that such a revolutionary was not exposing the lying pretexts under which the war was being waged as a mere mask for German capitalism's imperialist ambitions, but rather raising the value of these pretexts in the estimate of such workers as he was able to influence. And we should be quite correct in so condemning him. But change the names and every word applies equally well to those who in this country raise the slogan: "Turn the imperialist war into a war against fascism!"

If we insist on making the distinction between bourgeois democracy and fascism in relation to the war situation, the question arises of whether there would be any important difference from the revolutionary point of view between the results of an Axis and an Allied victory. Thus in Goldman's column we read, "Question: When you say that this is an imperialist war both on the side of Britain and Germany do you mean to say that you don't care who wins and that you contemplate a victory of Hitler without being disturbed by it? Answer: It means nothing of the kind."

Before commenting on this passage it should be noted that Goldman has his questioner ask two separate questions in one. If Goldman had really wanted to clarify the revolutionary position on war he would have asked and answered these two questions separately. As his column stands it is not clear whether the answer "Nothing of

the kind," is meant to apply to both questions or to the second question alone. In either case, however, Goldman refuses to accept the revolutionary position that as between the two rival imperialist camps Marxists "don't care who wins." But if this position is rejected why is it "impermissible for us as revolutionaries to support either side?" Either as between the imperialist rivals we don't care who wins, in which case we naturally support neither side; or else we do care who wins, in which case we should do something about it.

It is sometimes stated in our literature that our attitude towards a war is determined solely by the character of the state powers involved (Cannon, A Statement on the War). This is not a Marxist position and would not explain, for example, Marx's support of the Allies in the Crimean War. If the victory of one side in a war was distinctly more advantageous for the proletarian revolution than that of the other, Marx did not hesitate to support that side, despite the reactionary character of the states composing it. In the case of an imperialist war, however, the victory of either side would be equally -- i.e. approximately equally -- disadvantageous. Revolutionaries, therefore, work for the defeat of both sides in such a war.

In the present situation our party should clearly declare and explain to the workers that between the two capitalist alternatives -- an Allied victory and an Axis victory -- there is no appreciable difference as far as the workers are concerned. This is the only possible basis for a program of revolutionary defeatism.

The revolutionary program in the imperialist war is a program of stopping the war. "Turn the imperialist war into a war against fascism" is a program for continuing the war. It is incompatible with the slogan of peace, which the party leaders have rejected, despite the fact that in War and the Fourth International Trotsky writes of the "tremendous revolutionary force" of this slogan. (This point will be developed below in part IV, section C).

Although the revolutionary program for stopping the war is a program for revolution in all the warring nations, it by no means precludes, in the case that the revolution is delayed abroad, a separate peace. Thus on the best interpretation the slogan, "Turn the imperialist war into a war against fascism!" is incorrect. But the potential dangers of this slogan go far deeper than simply denying the possibility of a separate peace. For example, in the same column of Goldman's we read: "The conduct of the war against Hitler is in the hands of Roosevelt and Churchill representing the American and British capitalists. That is unfortunate (!), and we are trying to convince the majority of the working class that they should take the power of government and the conduct of the war into their own hands."

This is not the language of opposition to war. One does not oppose a war simply because its conduct is in the wrong hands. It is clear that the acceptance of such formulations can only pave the way for passing from opposition to the war itself to criticism of the conduct of the war. (See part IV, section B below.)

Goldman writes of "transforming this war into a real war for democracy." But Marxists do not speak of "democracy" abstractly, apart from its class content. Is bourgeois democracy or workers' democracy meant here? In the Militant for March 15 we read, "As horrible as war is, we would not hesitate to urge Roosevelt to enter the war, if it were really to be a war for democracy against fascism," "Democracy" here can refer only to bourgeois democracy. But the only way to fight fascism is to fight bourgeois democracy as well; the struggle to defend workers' rights today and to prepare for the workers' soviet democracy of tomorrow is the struggle against decadent bourgeois democracy as well as against fascism.

What purpose is served by speaking of a war for democracy as if "democracy" had any meaning apart from its class content? What purpose is served by discussing what attitude we should adopt "if" Roosevelt were to conduct a real war against fascism? This sort of propaganda does not expose bourgeois democracy to the workers; it does not educate them for the struggle against bourgeois democracy. Its only effect can be to prepare the workers to support the imperialist war once the open representatives of capitalism are removed from leadership, e.g. under a labor party government. Goldman's column -- and in this respect it resembles a great deal of our propaganda -- speaks of the workers' taking "the power of government and the conduct of the war into their own hands," but it does not mention soviets or socialism; it does not even refer to a "Workers' and Farmers' Government."

Lenin said, "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war." We say, "Turn the imperialist war into a war against fascism." These slogans are not compatible. A civil war is a war against our own government. But our own government is not fascist. The slogan "Turn the imperialist war into a war against fascism!" might be acceptable in Germany; in the United States the corresponding slogan would be: "Turn the imperialist war into a war against bourgeois democracy!"

Lenin's slogan means that the main enemy is at home. Our slogan means that the main enemy of the American working class is Hitler. (The equation of fascism and Hitler may be objected to. Do we not sometimes speak of fighting fascism "both foreign and domestic?" But the domestic fascists are at present very weak, not an important political factor. It is true that Roosevelt is paving the way for fascism; civil war -- war against bourgeois democracy -- includes, therefore, war against fascism. But the converse is not true. Our slogan does not imply civil war).

That Cannon, Goldman, etc. consider Hitler to be the main enemy can be shown from an examination of recent party literature on the war, most of which is devoted to the question of "how to defeat Hitler" (see Cannon's A Statement on the War, for example). Goldman in the column quoted above and Cannon in his testimony in the Minneapolis trial state in so many words that Hitler is "the greatest enemy of the working class." Devoid as this statement is of scientific meaning -- what scientific basis can there be for determining whether German or American capitalism is a "greater" enemy of the working

class? -- it would be acceptable as an agitational slogan in Germany, where it would be taken to mean that the main enemy of the German workers is their own capitalist class. For exactly the same reason the statement is altogether unacceptable when put forward by an American revolutionary, for it implies that the main enemy of the American workers is not their own exploiters, but the imperialist "enemy."

From the thesis that the main enemy is at home follows the program of revolutionary defeatism; from the thesis that the main enemy is the imperialist rival, i.e. Hitler, follows only one form or another of social-patriotism. These two theses are absolutely irreconcilable, and our party must choose between them.

To summarize: The coming convention of the party should resolve: The distinction between bourgeois democracy and fascism has no bearing on the war situation. The Socialist Workers Party, therefore, rejects the formula: "Turn the imperialist war into a war against fascism!" and reaffirms the Leninist formula: "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war!" All the future propaganda and actions of the party must be guided by the thesis: The Main Enemy is at Home.

III. REVISIONS INTRODUCED AT THE MINNEAPOLIS TRIAL

The coming convention of our Party will necessarily adopt an official stand towards the defense presented at the Minneapolis trial. It is the position of this paper that to take a stand of unqualified support would mean to approve of serious revisions of Marxist theory. No one, naturally, would suggest that the party condemn the defense in whole or even in main. The defendants quite correctly attempted to use the courtroom as a forum for the presentation of their ideas. Most of what they said was sound and some of it very well put. Had Oehler, Shachtman, or the leader of any other party calling itself revolutionary testified as well we should have nothing but praise for him. But we are not any other party. We are the party of the socialist revolution. The standards we must set for ourselves are quite different from those by which we judge others.

The case for the defense in the Minneapolis trial -- Cannon's testimony and Goldman's closing speech in particular are referred to -- must be considered as programmatic in nature when the party votes in convention on the question of what stand to take towards that defense. There are three reasons for this: (1) these documents are in many respects typical of our past and present propaganda material, and, if unreservedly accepted, will naturally become a model for future publicity; (2) the exposition of political theories given in the course of a political trial is programmatic per se; (3) Cannon's testimony and Goldman's speech have been advertised by the party press as "masterly expositions of Marxism," "textbooks to train new generations of revolutionaries," and so on ad nauseam.

Some comrades have argued (unofficially) that the testimony and arguments for the defense in the trial should not be considered as programmatic, because they include certain statements which,

while not exactly correct statements of the party policy, are expeditious for the purpose of avoiding being sent to jail. If this is true, then it follows at the very least that the documents of the defense should not be publicized in the manner in which they have been. But the leadership of our party has quite principledly refused to admit that this is true. In a political trial of the sort of the Minneapolis trial it is better to go to jail for 100 years than to water down your position on any basic point of political theory. Whoever denies this is not only not a Marxist, but is not a revolutionary of any sort whatsoever. He has no place in our movement.

It is possible to have in addition, but not in contradiction to the legal program of the party, an illegal program. Such a policy, however, cannot be adopted on the spur of the moment on the eve of a political trial. If you have already published numerous public documents expounding your full program, there is nothing for it but to defend that full program in court, whatever your private opinion of its "legality."

If this policy -- of a legal and an illegal program -- had been adopted in the Minneapolis trial Goldman would have refrained from asking Cannon those questions the answer to which was part of the illegal program. This was not the procedure of the defense. Goldman did ask just those questions and Cannon replied denying the Marxist teachings on these points. The defense is criticized not for failing to present a complete Marxist program, but for presenting an anti-Marxist program.

It will be well to make a note in advance of some of the methods to be employed in the criticism which will follow:

1) The defense will be criticized only from a programmatic point of view. Questions of effectiveness of presentation, legal competence and good taste (e.g. Goldman's painful references to Jesus) will not be considered.

2) A false statement of Marxist theory will be criticized even if elsewhere in the defense (especially if under cross-examination) the theory is correctly stated. The reason for this is that all centrists and even many out-and-out reformists will approve an abstract statement of revolutionary theory at the same time that they deny the concrete application of the theory. Thus even a Stalinist writing in their theoretical organ on the need for national unity may begin his article with a correct abstract statement of the Marxist theory of the state. Furthermore if a false statement of Marxist theory is given in direct examination and a correct one in cross-examination, it is clear that the intention of the defense was to make only the first statement. (For example: under direct examination Cannon testified that political opposition to war meant purely verbal opposition. Under cross-examination he was forced to endorse a section from the Manifesto of the Fourth International calling for fraternization of the soldiers. In this case one is obviously justified in criticizing the defense on the basis of the first statement alone).

If the convention agrees with the criticisms to be made below

it should adopt a resolution on the question of the defense at the Minneapolis trial along the following lines:

The Socialist Workers Party endorses in the main the defense put up by the defendants in the Minneapolis trial, although it does not agree in full with everything said there. In particular the Party cannot accept as a correct presentation of its program the testimony and argument on the following points: -- here will follow a summary of the criticism to be expounded below.

A. The Question of Legality

The question of legality is identical with the question of "violence" as the latter is discussed in the Minneapolis trial. "Violence" in the sense in which the defendants were accused of advocating it is not synonymous with bloodshed, but means the use of violent means. A "peaceful and legal" change is being contrasted with a "violent and illegal" one. Thus although the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia involved less bloodshed than the average presidential election in Mexico, the latter is a "peaceful" change of government, the former a "violent" change. Hitler may have taken Austria without firing a shot, but he took it by force of arms -- that is by violence-- all the same.

The revision of Marxism on the question of legality -- or of violence -- is summarized in the following bit of dialogue between Goldman and Cannon:

"Goldman: What role does the rise and existence of fascism play with reference to the possibility of violence?"

"Cannon: Well, that is really the nub of the whole question."

Violence against the workers is identified primarily with fascism, but also with the abrogation of elections, the outlawing of political parties, etc. The defense makes clear that it identifies violence of the capitalists against the workers with the suppression of democratic institutions. If there is fascism, says Cannon, the workers will not "have a chance of any kind of a fair vote on whether they want Socialism or not." Under bourgeois democracy Cannon apparently considers such a vote possible. Goldman makes much of the fact that we want to win a numerical majority of the population to our side, and he gives this as proof in itself that we could not "advocate violence." This argument taken by itself is valid only if bourgeois democracy allows the peaceful registration of the will of the majority.

It should be noted that there are two points of truth in Cannon's and Goldman's exposition: (1) At the present time it is true that all capitalist states are tending away from bourgeois democracy towards some form of more open dictatorship; (2) It is true that bourgeois democracy is the form of capitalist dictatorship most favorable to revolutionary work.

Nevertheless on the basic question Cannon and Goldman are in

direct contradiction to Marxist teaching. Bourgeois democracy is not an arena for the free play of the class struggle. Bourgeois democratic institutions, just as much as fascist institutions are instruments of capitalist domination; they are instruments for the suppression -- that means violent suppression -- of the working class. The proletariat must, therefore, "destroy the machinery of the capitalist state" -- which means in a bourgeois democracy smashing democratic institutions. Smashing the machinery of the capitalist state does not mean as Cannon suggests "setting up a government profoundly different. . . a new apparatus from top to bottom" etc.; it means what it says. Lenin writes in State and Revolution, "The replacement of the bourgeois by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution." He makes no exception of the bourgeois democratic state.*

There is no need to develop this point at any greater length. The whole subject is fully treated in State and Revolution. It only remains for Cannon, Goldman and the rest of the defendants to state whether they agree with the opinions expressed in that work or not. If they do, they cannot agree with what they themselves said at the Minneapolis trial.

Marx and Engels wrote in the Communist Manifesto, "The Communists. . . openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions." Under cross-examination on this quotation, Cannon says that the Communist

* Cannon suggests in Defense Policy in the Minneapolis Trial that we should play down this aspect of Marxism for propaganda purposes. Lenin is explicit on this point:

"In the same work of Engels, from which every one remembers his argument on the "withering away" of the state, there is also a disquisition on the significance of a violent revolution. The historical analysis of its role becomes, with Engels, a veritable panegyric on violent revolution. This, of course, 'no one remembers'; to talk or even to think of the importance of this idea is not considered good form by contemporary Socialist parties, and in the daily propaganda and agitation among the masses it plays no part whatever. Yet. . . the bourgeois state. . . cannot be replaced by the proletarian state. . . through 'withering away', but, as a general rule, only through a violent revolution. The panegyric sung in its honour by Engels and fully corresponding to the repeated declarations of Marx (remember . . . the Communist Manifesto, with its proud and open declaration of the inevitability of a violent revolution. . .) -- this praise is by no means a mere 'impulse', a mere declamation, or a polemical sally. The necessity of systematically fostering among the masses this and just this point of view about violent revolution lies at the root of the whole of Marx's and Engel's teaching. The neglect of such propaganda and agitation by both the present predominant social-chauvinist and the Kautskyist currents brings their betrayal of Marx's and Engels' teaching into prominent relief." (State and Revolution, pp. 18-20).

Manifesto has the status in our party of "a historical document, 93 years old," and that the particular sentence quoted should be taken in connection with Engels' statement in his preface to the first English translation of Capital -- a statement which Cannon misinterprets, by the bye: Cannon has Engels single England out because of the existence of democratic institutions there, although at the time of Engels' writing, France had been a democratic republic for fifteen years -- that in England "the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means." Surely Cannon must know that the reverse of what he implies is true: that it is the Communist Manifesto which is timely, while the statement in Engels' preface to Capital has the status only of an "historic document". Surely Cannon must know that all reputable Marxists since before the first World War have considered Engels' statement about England obsolete. Lenin writes in State and Revolution: "Today, in 1917, in the epoch of the first great imperialist war, this exception made by Marx is no longer valid. . . Today both in England and in America the 'precondition of any real people's revolution' is the break-up, the shattering of the 'ready-made state machinery.'"

In 1917 Engels' exception was no longer valid. Yet twenty-five years later we have Cannon accepting Engels' statement at its face value as if it had been made only yesterday and "developing" it in relation to the United States thus:

"If the democratic processes are maintained here, if they are not disrupted by the introduction of fascist methods by the government, and the majority of the people supporting the ideas of Socialism can secure a victory by the democratic processes, I don't see any reason why they cannot proceed, by the democratic method of amending the Constitution to fit the new regime."

According to Marx, the proletariat cannot lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, but must smash it. According to Cannon, the proletariat can lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, "if the democratic processes are maintained."

In Cannon's view no violence will necessarily be required to smash the machinery of the capitalist state, but violence will be confined to a "pro-slavery rebellion" after the workers have taken state power. It is true that in the Russian Revolution most -- not all -- of the violence was of this character, but it does not follow that one can generalize from this experience. On the contrary, Lenin and Trotsky were at some pains to point out the subsequent revolutions will almost certainly not resemble the Russian Revolution in this respect.

What part do soviets play in Cannon's scheme? According to Cannon they will be legislated into existence after the workers have taken power. No other possible origin of soviets in the United States is suggested by the defense in the trial. But this is the exact opposite of Lenin's and Trotsky's teachings and of what has been proven by the experience of the working class since the Russian Revolution. The soviets as organs of workers' power are forged in the struggle against the capitalist state -- be it democratic or dictatorial.

In the situation of political crisis the soviets arise spontaneously side by side with the capitalist state (the original Declaration of Principles suggests the possibility that in America they might arise from general strike committees; this is correct in principle). For a time the two rivals for power -- the embryonic workers' state and the "legal", possibly "democratic" capitalist state -- exist side by side. This is the regime of dual power, an essential stage in every real revolution. But there is no account of the dual power given by the defendants in the Minneapolis trial -- either in their account of the Russian or of the coming American revolution. Perhaps it is thought that the subject of dual power is too "difficult" a one to explain before a capitalist court. Trotsky was not of that opinion; he gave a detailed account of the subject in his speech before the Czarist court reprinted in a recent Fourth International.

Under the conditions of dual power the soviets gradually appropriate authority to themselves. Insofar as this appropriation of authority is not resisted by the capitalist government, the revolution is accomplished peacefully. Thus Trotsky speaks of the revolution's being "nine-tenths" accomplished before the October insurrection. If the capitalist government were not to resist at all -- a very unlikely supposition, of course -- there would in fact be a peaceful transition from the bourgeois to the workers' state. But in what sense could one call such a transition "legal?" Clearly not in the sense that it would be accomplished by constitutional means. All that can be meant by "legality" here is that under the conditions of dual power the soviets obtain a status which even the bourgeois government is forced to recognize. The "legality" of the old regime ceases to have authority; side by side with the old regime the soviets are creating a new legality.

It is obvious from the above that the relationship of the October insurrection to Soviet "legality" can be understood only in terms of the basic concepts of dual power. To attempt to explain the one without explaining the other, as Cannon did at the Minneapolis trial, can only mean to confuse revolutionary principles with ideas of bourgeois legality. Cannon's testimony on this point will be considered in detail below.

The Lessons of Spain

From the experience of the Spanish revolution revolutionaries can learn some important lessons. The defendants at the Minneapolis trial cited the example of Spain in relation to the question of legality and of violence, but they conspicuously refrained from drawing from it the conclusions which actually have a bearing on that question.

Spain is cited by Cannon as an example "where a reactionary minority revolted against a majority in office" and by Goldman as an "example of a peaceful accession to power and the use of violence by a minority to overthrow the majority." Goldman expands: "The Loyalist government had the support of the vast majority of the people and came to power because of the support of the people. The fascists thereupon organized their minority, and began a violent counter-revolution and succeeded in defeating the majority."

In the first place, the Popular Front government was not a government of the majority, it was not an example of "a majority in office." The Popular Front government was a capitalist government, that is to say a government of a small minority. In citing Spain in his argument Goldman changes the subject of discussion, for what he had been discussing was the question of the "accession to power" of a new ruling class. The election of the Popular Front government in Spain was the same sort of change of government that occurred in the United States when Harding was elected in 1920 or when Roosevelt was elected in 1932. Naturally no one has ever doubted the possibility of this sort of "peaceful accession to power."

In the second place, it was not the fascists alone who defeated the workers. It was not the fascists who disarmed the workers, violently smashed their organizations, and shot them down in the streets of Barcelona. This was done by the "legal" "peaceful" "democratic" "majority" Popular Front government.

The experience of the Spanish revolution completely confirms the Marxist theory of the state. It demonstrates that even in the most Left of bourgeois democracies the state is an instrument for the violent suppression of the working class; that even in the most Left of bourgeois democracies the working class cannot take power by the peaceful and legal process of laying hold of the ready-made state machinery, but that on the contrary they must smash that machinery -- or it will smash them.

Cannon distorts the history of the Russian Revolution

In the course of his testimony Cannon gave a brief account of the history of the Russian Revolution. Naturally much of what he said on this subject was correct; even more instructive from our present standpoint were his omissions and errors.

In describing the propaganda of the Bolsheviks, Cannon develops at some length the significance of the slogan: "Down with the Capitalist Ministers!" but he does not so much as mention the slogan which Lenin raised upon first returning to Russia and which played an infinitely more important part in the Revolution: "All power to the Soviets!" The reason for this omission is that any one reading Cannon's account and not familiar with the subject would suppose that the Soviets already had "all power" before the October Revolution. Discussion of this basic slogan would require an explanation of the regime of dual power, and it is exactly this which Cannon is at pains to avoid.

That the October insurrection played a decisive role in the Revolution is a widely held opinion, and one shared by Lenin and Trotsky. Thus in The Case of Leon Trotsky the following dialogue occurs:

"Stolberg: Mr. Trotsky, the first mistake which Zinoviev there speaks of, you characterize as his opposition to the October Revolution. Wasn't it rather an opposition to the October insurrection?"

"Trotsky: To the October Revolution, because without the

October insurrection, it could not become the October Revolution."

But Cannon achieves the seemingly impossible; he gives an account of the October Revolution without describing, without so much as mentioning the insurrection. To be exact his account contains one indirect reference to it:

"Goldman: And was there any violence connected with the gaining of the majority (i -- gaining of state power must be meant, S.J.) by the Bolsheviks?

"Cannon: Very little -- just a scuffling, that's all."

Naturally Schweinhaut cross-examined Cannon on the subject of the insurrection, basing his cross-examination on Trotsky's Lessons of October. Morrow, writing in the Militant, discusses Schweinhaut's unfair use of quotations from "forgotten pamphlets." Judging from Cannon's testimony, Lessons of October belongs in that category. Goldman, who had introduced into direct examination over the objection of the prosecution the subject of the Stalin-Trotsky debates of 1924-27, objected violently when the prosecution proposed to cross-examine the witness on the pamphlet which actually set off that controversy. The reason for this objection is clear to any one who takes the trouble to compare Lessons of October with Cannon's testimony; the one is in direct contradiction to the other.

(By the bye, an interesting contradiction exists between Morrow's and Goldman's criticisms of Schweinhaut. The former objects to his questioning Cannon on "sentences and half-sentences"; the latter objects to his questioning him on more than "one or two or perhaps three sentences." Some people are hard to please.)

Schweinhaut asks Cannon whether it is not true that the insurrection was planned and started before the meeting of the Congress of Soviets, in other words whether it is not false to state that the Bolsheviks "waited for the Congress of Soviets." The question is one of facts, and facts are stubborn things. The facts are as follows: The insurrection was begun on the 24th. The Congress was scheduled to meet on the 25th, but the greater part of the day was taken up in caucus meeting. The Bolsheviks hoped to delay the opening of the Congress until the conclusion of the insurrection, but this proved impossible due to the delay in capturing the Winter Palace. Shortly after the opening of the Congress, Trotsky addressed it, stating (a few hours prematurely) that the insurrection had already been accomplished. The Congress did not take any formal action until after the storming of the Winter Palace and the arrest of the Provisional Government.

It may be objected that this amounted to the same thing as waiting for the Congress of Soviets. After all, it was only a difference of twenty-four hours. But as Trotsky writes in Lessons of October, "Is it really true that such a historic event can hinge upon an interval of twenty-four hours? Yes, it can." A delay of twenty-four hours in the October insurrection would probably not have prevented its success, but it would certainly have made it more difficult.

Twenty-four hours made no difference in the "synchronizing

the seizure of power with the opening of the Second Soviet Congress" in Trotsky's sense; it made all the difference in the world in regard to "the legal sanction of the action by the Soviets" so all-important to Cannon, so absurdly formalistic to Lenin and Trotsky. (Of course, if an ex post facto sanction is considered equally "legal," then the question of the date of the insurrection does not arise in this connection at all. In this sense, Lenin's plan of insurrection was equally as "legal" as that actually adopted.)

As everyone knows, there was a difference between Lenin and the Bolshevik Central Committee on the question of the date of insurrection, and Lenin was overruled on this point. Cannon testifies correctly on this point, but he fails to say what sort of difference was involved, leaving the impression that it was a principled one. In Trotsky's words, "This question pertains not to principle but rather to a technical issue." In other words: between Lenin and Zinoviev and Kamenev there was a difference of principle on the question of legality; between Lenin and (say) Trotsky there was no difference on the question of legality, but only a technical difference, although one of "great practical importance."

Why does Cannon suppose Trotsky devotes so much space to discussing Lenin's opinion on the date of insurrection? In order to show how wrong Lenin could be? On the contrary, it is because Lenin was right on the principled question involved: that insurrection is an act, that it cannot stoop to formal constitutional considerations of legality.

On the question of the date of insurrection: "Cannon: . . . Lenin was overruled.

"Schweinhaut: And who won?

"Cannon: Trotsky won."

Is "Trotsky" used here as a pseudonym for the Central Committee? or, following in the footsteps of the Stalinist slanderers, does Cannon impute a special opinion on this subject to Trotsky?

"Trotsky," says Cannon, "commented on the legal sanction of the action by the Soviets." Where and when did Trotsky make any such comment? Not in Lessons of October and not in The History of the Russian Revolution. "That was why it was delayed to November 7th," according to Cannon. Trotsky replies, "That the uprising must not occur except upon the decision of the Congress of Soviets -- there could be no talk of such childish formalism." Did Trotsky insist upon the date October 25th? "It was a question of the outside date, of the impossibility of deferring it (the insurrection) to an indefinite time after the congress." That it was an outside date is made clear by the fact that the insurrection began the day before the meeting of the congress. Cannon asserts, "The question was submitted to the All-Russian Congress of the Soviets." Just how this was possible, seeing that the insurrection had been planned days in advance and was already under way before the Congress met, is not explained.

The above quotations are taken from a chapter of Trotsky's History entitled "Some Legends of the Bureaucracy." The legend he is

refuting is that Trotsky insisted that the insurrection be accommodated to the meeting of the Congress of Soviets. Trotsky's statement on this question admits of no misinterpretation: "We should search in vain among the minutes, or among any memoirs whatever, for any indication of a proposal of Trotsky to accommodate the insurrection necessarily to the Second Congress of Soviets." The ground of this assertion. . . is a slightly conventionalized misunderstanding long ago explained away by none other than Lenin himself. It remained for Cannon to disinter this legend.

Cannon indignantly denies Schweinhaut's assertion that Trotsky "lulled Kerensky into inaction by pretending to wait until the Congress met, so that it could be decided legally who was to take power." How does Cannon explain Trotsky's public address on the 24th of October in which he said, "An armed conflict today or tomorrow is not included in our plan -- on the threshold of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. We think that the Congress will carry out our slogan with greater power and authority." Trotsky characterizes this statement as a "ruse" having for its "purpose to lull at the last moment before the blow the none too lively vigilance of the enemy." How does Cannon explain Trotsky's frequent statements that the insurrection was prepared "under the cover" of Soviet "legality?" The statement "We succeeded in luring our enemies into the trap of Soviet legality?" and again "The Conciliationists (i.e. Kerensky and Co.) were completely hooked with the bait of Soviet legality?"

Why was the insurrection deferred nearly until the opening of the Second Congress of Soviets? What relationship was there between the October insurrection and Soviet "legality?" These questions are clearly answered in the section of Lessons of October which Goldman tried to prevent Schweinhaut from reading to the court. It is not possible even to summarize Trotsky's argument here, but one or two salient points must be noted. Trotsky explains that by "legality" is meant "the 'normal' conditions of dual power." The insurrection was prepared under the cover of Soviet "legality" in this way; the Bolsheviks constantly accused the Government of planning to disband the Second Congress of Soviets, which had a "legal" status; they (the Bolsheviks) were preparing to defend the Congress by any means necessary, they "appealed to the Second Congress as the real master of the country." "Waging an offensive all along the line, we kept up the appearance of being on the defensive." This tactic had two great advantages: it won far greater mass support than would have been possible under Lenin's plan "to prepare an armed insurrection under the naked slogan of the seizure of power by the party," and it deceived the enemy. At the same time it is clear that Soviet legality was only a "cover" for the insurrection, since the aim of the insurrection was to terminate, not to perpetuate "the 'normal' conditions of dual power."

"The adaptation of the question of the seizure of power to the Second Soviet Congress did not involve any naive hopes that the Congress itself could settle the question of power." The question of power was settled by the insurrection. When Cannon states, "The power was in the Congress, and the Congress was the real power," he describes the state of affairs which obtained only after the success of the insurrection.

What are the lessons of October? That revolutions in the future will be able to be prepared under the same sort of "legal cover" as was the October insurrection? "On the contrary," writes Trotsky, "we can state with certainty that this experience will never be repeated anywhere in such a form. . . Our basic and, we believe, incontrovertible postulate that the actual process of the conquest of power will encounter in Europe and America a much more serious, obstinate, and prepared resistance from the ruling classes. . . makes it all the more incumbent upon us to view the armed insurrection. . . as an art." This means that in the classic bourgeois democracies the machinery of the state will offer more violent resistance to the proletariat than it did in Russia. On the other hand, in these countries there will be much less chance of a serious "pro-slavery rebellion": "after the seizure of power they (the proletariat) will have a much freer hand."

Cannon states that the party will "exhaust all possibilities for a peaceful change." This is not an accidental phrase, for it is repeated several times by both Cannon and Goldman. In Russia "to exhaust all possibilities for a peaceful change" meant to wait for the Constituent Assembly. Had Lenin not sounded the alarm, had he not persistently fought these and similar "constitutional illusions," it very likely "could not have become the October Revolution." There was no Lenin to combat the constitutional illusions of the POUM. They pursued to the bitter end the policy of "exhausting all peaceful possibilities." Naturally there were other deviations on the part of Zinoviev and Kamenev and the POUM from Bolshevism, but on this question Cannon stands with them against Lenin. On one hand Cannon characterizes the Russian Revolution as "the greatest event in the history of mankind"; on the other hand he pledges our party to a policy which, if followed by the Bolsheviks, would have prevented that event from occurring.

To conclude: The Coming convention of the party should in its resolution commending the defense made at the Minneapolis trial specifically state the following reservation:

"The Socialist Workers Party cannot agree with Cannon's statement that fascism is the nub of the question of violence, and that so long as bourgeois democratic institutions are preserved the possibility for a peaceful transition to workers' power exists. On the contrary, we regard bourgeois democratic institutions as much as fascist ones as instruments for the violent suppression of the working class. We reaffirm the Marxist thesis that the proletariat can come to power not by laying hold of the ready-made state machinery, but only by smashing it. We cannot agree with the defendants' pledge to exhaust all possibilities for a peaceful change before initiating violence. We accept the principle embodied in the third condition of admission into the Comintern that 'Communists. . . must everywhere create a parallel illegal apparatus, which at the decisive moment could assist the Party in performing its duty to the revolution.'"

B. The Nature of Revolutionary Defeatism
(Or of Political Opposition to War)

Cannon correctly testified that we, as revolutionists, oppose

the imperialist war. It is on the question of the nature of this opposition that the defense watered down the Marxist position.

The answers given to the question of what our opposition to war consists of are either irrelevant or inadequate. The statement of what our delegation in Congress should do in time of war is irrelevant, because we have none. The statement that "we do not assume responsibility for the war" is irrelevant, because no one is asking us to assume responsibility for it. In addition, Cannon testifies, "Insofar as we are permitted our rights, we would speak against the war as a false policy that should be changed. . . just as Lloyd George, for example, opposed the Boer War in public addresses and speeches. Ramsey McDonald. . . opposed the war policy of England during the World War. . . So far as we are permitted to exercise our right, we would continue to write and speak for a different foreign policy for America."

Revolutionaries must speak and write against the war. That is absolutely correct, but it is not enough. All political experience shows that talking in a vacuum has little effect; words must be accompanied by deeds. But Cannon specifically denies that we will do anything against the war but talk against it. The reason given is that we must "abide by the decision of the majority." "If the majority of the people decide on war. . . our people. . . will also participate in the war." In what country do the majority decide on questions of war and peace? The phrase "abide by the decision of the majority" conceals the fact that what is involved is capitulating to the decision of the capitalist minority.

A summary of the theory put forward by the defense is given in Cannon's Statement on the War: "The great majority actively or passively supports the war program of the Roosevelt administration. As a minority we must submit to that majority in action. We do not sabotage the war or obstruct the military forces in any way. . . We abide by the decisions of the majority."

In the same sense the majority accepts the program of civil peace, of national unity. Do we, then, "submit to the majority in action?" It is clear that we abide by this decision of the majority in action no more than we do in words.

It will be argued that all that is meant by the phrase "abide by the decision of the majority", is that we reject individual sabotage. But if the United States went to war against the Soviet Union we would sabotage the war and that quite regardless of the "decisions of the majority."

The whole concept of abiding by the decision of the majority is a false one. At the present time the majority of the workers are hoodwinked. Naturally we must adapt our work to that fact, but that does not mean that we "submit" to the illusions of the majority. Revolutionists act in the interests of the majority, even when the majority are deceived as to their own interests. "Against the stream!" is a brave slogan, but it is rendered meaningless by the proviso that we submit to the majority in action.

It is hard to say how seriously this argument is taken by those who put it forward. At the trial Cannon several times rejected obstruction of the war effort or insubordination regardless of whether we should be in a minority or a majority. If the reservation: "so long as we are in a minority" can be stated or omitted at will, it cannot be considered of essential importance.

To return to Cannon's account of political opposition to war: it is a poor sort of definition which places us in the same category as Lloyd George and Ramsey McDonald. Such a confusion results from divorcing the question of opposition to war from the question of revolutionary defeatism. It is quite possible to "speak against the war as a false policy that should be changed" and at the same time reject the program of working for the defeat of one's government. Such was the nature of McDonald's and Kautsky's opposition to the World War, and of our opposition to the Russian war against Finland. In the case of an imperialist war the only Bolshevik program is the program of revolutionary defeatism. But this program was not only not put forward by the defense at the Minneapolis trial -- it was denied outright.

Goldman says in his closing speech, "'Revolutionary defeatism' . . . simply means that we continue to advocate the class struggle during the war." According to this definition we are revolutionary defeatists not only in the United States, where we oppose the war, but also in China, where we support it. Goldman's definition is, therefore, inadequate.

The essence of the revision on the question of defeatism is Cannon's categorical assertion that we oppose obstruction of the war effort. It is quite correct to say that we reject individual sabotage, but that is only one aspect of the question. Our whole program has the aim of total obstruction of the war effort, total sabotage of the war plans, total insubordination, not through the acts of a few individuals, but by the mass action of the workers, and of the soldiers in the first instance. Not only must we "speak against the war as a false policy that should be changed," but we must call upon the workers and soldiers to stop it.

It should be noted that the difference between individual and mass action is not the same as Cannon's distinction between minority and majority. Mass action can still be the action of a minority. In fact it can be stated with certainty that if we refuse to act while we are still in a minority, we shall never be in a majority. The majority cannot be won by talk alone.

Furthermore the entire context of Cannon's testimony makes it clear that when he speaks of "winning a majority" he does not mean that when a majority of the workers have been won to opposition to the war that we shall proceed to stop it by direct action. Lenin, when asked if the Russian soldiers had been allowed to vote on the question of continuing the war, replied, "They voted with their feet;" but Cannon does not approve of this method of voting. He means that when we have won a majority we shall be able to take over the government -- peacefully, if democratic processes are not interfered with -- and the new government will "change the false policy." The

tactic of revolutionary defeatism plays no part whatsoever in this scheme.

Revolutionary defeatism is sometimes taken to mean that we want the capitalist government to be defeated by the proletariat. To pose the question in this manner is to confuse two distinct stages of the class struggle. In the coming civil war all revolutionists naturally want the proletariat to defeat the capitalist government. But we are not yet in that stage. Our present task is to turn the imperialist war into a civil war; and revolutionary defeatism is the basic tactic for accomplishing this first task. Revolutionary defeatism means that we must work now for the military defeat of our government -- that is, for the destruction, disorganization, disintegration of its military machine -- as a prerequisite for the social revolution.

Asked whether revolutionary work in the army would "obstruct the military efforts," Cannon answers; "Not in the sense of opening up the front for the advantage of opposing armies." Revolutionists cannot make such a categorical assertion. "We are offering this solution," Cannon explains, "to the soldiers of all the imperialist armies." That is true, but it does not follow that we can guarantee that there will be simultaneous revolutions on both sides of the front. This is the most desirable, but clearly the least probable alternative.

Revolutionary Marxists are for the intensification of the class struggle, regardless of its effect on the military front; they are for the military defeat of their government, even if this means the temporary victory of the opposing army. As Lenin pointed out, "Such defeats facilitate the struggle of the masses to take power and put an end to the slaughter."

This question is clearly explained in War and the Fourth International; "A military defeat resulting from the growth of the revolutionary movement is infinitely more beneficial to the proletariat and to the whole people than military victory assured by 'civil peace.' Karl Liebknecht gave an unsurpassed formula of proletarian policy in time of war; 'The chief enemy of the people is in its own country.' The victorious proletarian revolution will not only rectify the evils caused by defeat but will also create the final guarantee against future wars and defeats. This dialectic attitude toward war is the most important element of revolutionary training and therefore also of the struggle against war."

Trotsky does not write, "Revolutionary defeatism is a difficult and obscure minor point of Marxist theory, which there is no need to explain to the workers;" he insists that it is "the most important element of revolutionary training." To speak of opposition to the war and at the same time to reject revolutionary defeatism is to emasculate Leninism.

To conclude: The resolution of the coming party convention commending the defense at the Minneapolis trial should include the following specific reservation:

"The Socialist Workers Party cannot accept the account of political opposition to war given by the defense, which would confine our opposition to verbal opposition, but would 'submit to the majority in action.' As revolutionists we do not abide by the decisions of the majority, but we act in the interests of the majority, even when they are in error concerning where their interests lie.

"We cannot accept the defense's unqualified rejection of obstruction of the war effort, insubordination in the armed forces, etc. We reject individual sabotage, but our entire program is directed towards the total sabotage of the war plans by the mass action of the workers, and of the soldiers in the first instance.

"We cannot agree with the defendants' pledge that our program will not open up the front to the advantage of the opposing army, as it is impossible to guarantee that there will be simultaneous revolutions on both sides of the front. We reaffirm the position of War and the Fourth International: "Defeat is the lesser evil". . . A military defeat resulting from the growth of the revolutionary movement is infinitely more beneficial to the proletariat and to the whole people than military victory assured by "civil peace". . . The victorious proletarian revolution will not only rectify the evils caused by defeat but will also create the final guarantee against future wars and defeats."

Footnote to Section III: This section was completed before the receipt of the pamphlet Defense Policy in the Minneapolis Trial. In the light of that pamphlet it would be possible and desirable to formulate more exactly some of the points made above. The section on "submitting to the majority" and the section on the October insurrection in particular stand in need of elaboration. But then Cannon's essay requires a detailed discussion, and that cannot be attempted here. All in all, it seems best to let the section stand as written.

IV. REVISIONS ON THE WAR QUESTION AFTER PEARL HARBOR

It is not claimed that the revisions to be considered below appeared in our party only after the declaration of war by the United States. If their bases existed before then, after that event they became at the same time more pronounced and of greater importance, war being, as we have so often stated, the true test of a revolutionary group.

A. On the Necessity of Anti-War Agitation

In his testimony at the Minneapolis trial Cannon limited our opposition to the war to anti-war agitation. It has been shown above that such a definition is inadequate, but it is correct as far as it goes; a revolutionary party must carry out anti-war agitation. After Pearl Harbor, however, even this was denied -- not in theory, but in practice. For three months following the attack on Pearl Harbor the Militant contained no agitational anti-war material; the party issued

no statement on the war (nor has it to this day); no agitational anti-war material was published by Pioneer Publishers, by the party, or by any of the leading comrades on their own; no speeches against the war were delivered by any of the leading comrades.

To the best of my knowledge, not a single party member, outside of the national leadership, was prepared for such an about-face. This in itself is an indictment of the national leadership, for the entire work of our party, since its formation, has had as its aim to prepare us for the imperialist war. There are two alternatives: either the tactic adopted by the leadership was correct, in which case criminal negligence was shown in not educating the party as to the correct tactics to be employed upon the outbreak of war which we have so long expected; or -- what will be argued in this paper -- the tactic pursued following the outbreak of war was politically false.

The arguments given in favor of the tactic adopted have on the whole no bearing on the real question: whether it is the duty of revolutionaries to agitate against the war. Thus it is stated that the Militant has been taken out of party control so that it may continue its work regardless of the legality of the party. Then why doesn't the party publish agitational anti-war material in its own name? It is claimed that there is some doubt as to how outspokenly it will be permitted to speak legally against the war, and the party's legality should not be risked. Then why don't some of the already convicted leaders, as revolutionists, publish in their own name agitational anti-war material; to be distributed through channels other than the official party organization?

To raise the question in this way is not correct. First considerations must be considered first, and the first consideration in this case is not the specific conditions of legality to which our work must be adapted, but the nature of the work which must be done. Before considering specific proposals, we must formulate in a general way our tasks in the coming period. Considering the matter from this point of view it cannot be denied that one of our main tasks in the next period is to agitate against the war. This being decided, we can proceed to consider what means can be found to accomplish this task. If it cannot be done by one means, it must be done by another; if it cannot be done legally, it must be done illegally.

The real question of legality is not how to avoid provoking the capitalist government into suppressing us ("appeasement"), but how to make the most of the short span of legality remaining to us. The most important advantage of legality is that it permits us openly to carry out our agitation and propaganda. To sacrifice agitation against the war in order to maintain legality, is to make a fetish of legality. Under conditions where legality can be maintained only at such a cost, serious revolutionary work can be done only by an illegal organization.

Some individuals have denied that anti-war agitation is a basic task at this time, basing their argument not on considerations of legality, but on the "temper of the times" or the "mood of the

masses." Naturally these factors make our work more difficult, but they do not make it impossible. What other meaning can be given to the slogan "Against the stream!" which we have adopted for the present period?

At the present time, we are going through a recession of the working class movement. Under such conditions restrictions of our mass work is necessary. It is clear that revolutionists in trade unions, for example, should take no steps which serve only to isolate and expose them. It is exactly under these conditions that anti-war agitation becomes a basic, if not the basic, form of our work. Those comrades who speak of "the times" do not suggest an alternative form of work to concentrate on, but a total restriction of activity. The Russian Bolsheviks in 1914 were faced with an even greater recession of working class movement than we have in America today, but they, to the best of their ability, agitated against the war; nor were they discouraged by the apparent meagerness of the first results of their work. If we have the courage to emulate them, we shall be more than repaid tomorrow for the work we do today.

Finally, it should be asked, if we do not take any "practical" steps against the war, and if we do not agitate against the war, in what exactly does our opposition to the war consist?

It may seem unnecessary to raise this question now, since the National Committee of the party, under pressure from the rank-and-file, reversed itself on this question a few months after Pearl Harbor. There are two reasons, however, why the discussion is still pertinent.

First, the National Committee, although reversing itself, refused to admit that any principled error had been made. The present party position seems to be: We shall engage in anti-war agitation for a while, but it would be just as consistent with revolutionary principles not to do so.

Second, and more important, the anti-war agitation that the party has carried on since the change of line has not been satisfactory. It has not borne a truly agitational anti-war character (this point will be developed in sections B and C below), and there has not been enough of it. There have been no popular leaflets or pamphlets of the sort which the party used to put out before the war (e.g. Hansen's Wall Street's War -- Not Ours), there has been no literature addressed to special groups whom it is especially important to reach in connection with the war, there have been few -- if any -- outdoor meetings. Our anti-war agitation compares poorly with what we ourselves used to accomplish before the war started. This shows that the leadership of our party does not seriously believe anti-war agitation to be a basic task at the present time.

(A subject pertinent to the above discussion, but which there is not space to discuss here, is the question of the actual "mood of the masses." There is good reason to suppose that the leadership has exaggerated the patriotism and unanimity of the workers. Actual experience, as opposed to a priori reasoning, has shown the existence

of a great deal of discontent and bewilderment as to what the war is about. It is clear, at any rate, that the fascists and "isolationists" do not share our estimate of the situation).

To conclude: The coming convention of the Socialist Workers Party should resolve: Anti-war agitation is a basic task of the party in the present period.

B. Opposition or Criticism

During the period immediately following Pearl Harbor it was claimed that the party propaganda switched over from a direct to an "oblique" attack upon the war. It is the contention of this paper that during this period the party moved instead toward "oblique" support of the war. For the policy of opposition to the war was substituted a policy of criticism, that is to say of critical support. Instead of opposing the war itself, we opposed the way in which it was being conducted. Our main political line as far as our propaganda was concerned was not that the war was reactionary per se, but that it was not being fought well enough.

That opposition to the war and criticism of its conduct are incompatible should be perfectly clear. If we are really against the war, we oppose the ruling class, not for waging it badly, but for waging it at all. Conversely whoever criticizes the conduct of the war from the standpoint of effectiveness, whoever makes suggestions for conducting it better ipso signo indicates his support of the war. If one wants the war fought better, if one criticizes those in charge for not doing well enough, it can only be because one is for the war. If a war is "unjust" to start with, no one surely can suppose that fighting it well will make it just. (Nietzsche does suggest something of the kind: "Ye say it is the good cause which halloweth even war? I say unto you: it is the good war which halloweth every cause.")

That revolutionaries cannot criticize the conduct of the war does not, of course, mean that they can oppose the war only in general, but cannot oppose specific measures taken in connection with the war. We can and must oppose all specific measures taken by the bourgeoisie which hurt the working class. Two cases must be distinguished:

1) Sometimes (e.g. the Smith Act) the "war" measures are not required by military considerations. In such cases we have every right to explain to the workers that the bourgeoisie are using the war as a pretext to put through measures which they want anyway, but which it would be difficult to force down the masses' throats in peace time.

2) More frequently the measures will have a direct bearing on the military effort (e.g. stopping the production of durable consumers' goods). In such cases we do not lie to the workers by telling them that these measures are not needed to win the war; much less do we suggest less painful ways of winning it. On the contrary we explain that these measures are required by war, explain how they hurt

the working class, and use this as the basis for anti-war agitation.

Such "criticism" of the war has nothing in common with criticism of the conduct of the war from the standpoint of effectiveness. It is only the latter which is being considered here.

Criticism of the conduct of the war may take many different forms. It may range from criticism of particular personnel and particular policies to calling for a political or even a social revolution. A classic example of such a policy, cited by Trotsky in explaining the stand the Left Opposition would take in the case of a war against the Soviet Union, is that of Clemenceau during the first World War. Clemenceau opposed the French government for its botching of the war, and, as the result of his constant criticism and the failures of the government, he finally headed the government which won the war. Was Clemenceau a bad French patriot compared to those who complacently allowed the government to blunder? Trotsky asked. Obviously Clemenceau was a better French patriot. And thus the Left Opposition, adopting a "Clemenceau policy" during the coming war, will be better patriots than the blundering Stalin bureaucracy,

The Clemenceau policy outlined by Trotsky is the present policy of our party in Russia. It is not changed in essence by the fact that we now realize that the bureaucracy can be overthrown only by a violent political revolution.

Similarly in Spain our party adopted a policy of criticism of the conduct of the war. We showed how wretchedly the bourgeoisie was conducting the war against Franco and advocated that the working class take power and take the conduct of the war into its own hands as the only way of defeating fascism. Our party in China today takes the same position. In all such cases the political line is the same; For the war, against the government which is conducting it.

In regard to the present imperialist war good examples of the policy of criticism are afforded by the Nation, New Republic and PM. More thoroughgoing critics are the Technocrats (if their propaganda is to be taken at its face value). In England there are the new "Left" groups which are calling for a second front, nationalization of all war industry, a Labour Party government, etc.

Despite the grave political differences between the various groups and individuals mentioned, the attitude towards the war is in each case the same. It is a position of being for the war and for that reason being dissatisfied with the way it is being conducted, wanting it fought better. This position (criticism of the conduct of the war) is the diametrical opposite of the revolutionary position. Revolutionaries are not for the war, they are against it. They are for the defeat of their own government. Only a hopeless muddlehead could attempt to combine these two contradictory principled position on war. Few examples of such confusion are provided by history, but the Vichy blockheads have provided us with one: having arrested Blum, Daladier, etc. obviously because they had the temerity to fight Germany at all, they proceeded to try them for having lost the war.

No one in our party has openly suggested that we abandon our program of opposition of the war for one of criticism, or even that we combine the two. Such a policy, when formulated in a general way, stands in too clear an opposition to our party program. Nevertheless, there are many ambiguous statements in our propaganda which admit of just such an interpretation. Goldman's column in the Militant of March 29, 1941 -- which has been quoted above (part II) -- is a good example:

"If the workers take over power, Hitler is sure to be defeated, while if we let the capitalists stay in power, Hitler's chances of a victory are much greater. Look what happened to France. The capitalists were in control. And they led the war in a miserable manner and capitulated in a miserable manner. . . A workers' government has a thousand times better chance to win the war against Hitler."

The French bourgeoisie led the war in a miserable manner; the German bourgeoisie led it in an exemplary manner. So what? As revolutionists we are against both sides; as between the two we have no preferences. Only a supporter of the war can criticize those in charge for the miserable manner in which they conduct it. Goldman proposes in relation to the imperialist war the political line which revolutionists adopted towards the Spanish civil war: critical support.

Other examples of the same sort can be found in our literature.

More serious, however, than general formulations of this kind are specific criticisms of the conduct of the war from the standpoint of effectiveness. The nature of the criticism we give to individual measures adopted by the bourgeoisie is of the utmost importance, as it determines the nature of our day-to-day work. Unfortunately since Pearl Harbor this criticism has more and more taken the form of criticizing the conduct -- military and economic -- of the war as not being effective enough.

Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor Cannon stated (verbally) that the Militant would criticize the negligence of the admirals in charge at Pearl Harbor. Nothing so patently patriotic has appeared either in the Militant or in party publications, but the fact that such a thing could be suggested is significant.

It might be argued that the admirals' negligence should be criticized because it cost many American soldiers their lives. But it saved as many Japanese lives. Besides each and every war measure could be defended as protecting American lives. It is the duty of revolutionaries to explain that the loss of life is due not to the blunderings and shortcomings in the conduct of the war, but to the policy of the government which has involved the country in war in the first place.

In the Militant of December 27 there appeared a social-patriotic editorial entitled "The Negro Mess Attendant on the 'Arizona.'" A condensation follows:

. . . The New York Times tells how "a Negro mess attendant who never before had fired a gun manned a machine gun on the bridge

... until his ammunition was exhausted."

We cite this story not simply to show that Negroes have heroic fighting qualities. . .

Rather we point to this incident as an example of . . . discrimination. . .

This unnamed Negro sailor gave an example of bravery and resourcefulness under fire that would do credit to any member of the Navy. . .

This picture of the Negro mess attendant -- segregated, discriminated against, denied his elementary right of an equal opportunity for training and position in the nation's fighting forces, yet turning with cool courage to fight in defense even of those who might have discriminated against him. . . must cause the blood to boil in the veins of decent, democratic men and women. . .

The Navy is crying for men, for fighters. Yet it bars the Negro people. . . with . . . fighting capacities second to none.

The Negro people. . . have wondered what kind of war for democracy it is that must be fought by a Jim Crow Navy. . . Perhaps wider sections of the population will begin to wonder after reading about the Negro mess attendant on the Arizona.

The American people must demand an end to the Jim Crow system in the armed forces. . . as well as everywhere else.

The language, the tone of this article are remarkable, appearing in a publication purporting to be revolutionary and anti-war. We are interested here, however, in its political content.

In the first place, despite the statement "we are not citing this as an example of heroism", that is exactly what the article does -- and in hyperbolic language. Surely it is not the task of the anti-war press to "blow up" war heroes, be they black or white. The Militant praises the Negro for defending "even those who might have discriminated against him." The bourgeois philistines also have praised this supposed willingness of the Negro to fight for his oppressors; one expects revolutionaries to find this alleged quality not altogether commendable. Furthermore it is not a case of defending even those who might have discriminated against him; it is a case of defending American capitalism which has oppressed him doubly -- as a worker and as a Negro. If we cannot openly state that it would have been better for the Negro mess attendant to turn his gun in the other direction, at least we do not have to praise his zeal in fighting for Wall Street.

It is perfectly correct to demand an end to Jim Crow. In this as in other cases the objection is to the reasons given for this demand. The Militant wants Jim Crow abolished to strengthen the Navy. Had the mess attendant had an equal chance for training, it would have facilitated the defense of the Arizona. "The Navy is crying for men, for fighters." This cannot be interpreted two ways. It means that the Navy's system of barring the Negroes, who have demonstrated their eagerness to die for American imperialism ("position in the nation's fighting forces"), interferes with the building of the Navy.

The Militant also wants Jim Crow abolished to improve morale. It states that Negroes and others are beginning to "wonder" whether this is a war for democracy; but the Militant does not say that it is not a war for democracy. The implication is -- whether the writer meant this or not -- that Jim Crow should be abolished so that people will stop "wondering".

"The Negro Mess Attendant" might have been taken word for word from PM, which has conducted a campaign along similar lines. To call it "oblique" opposition to the war is to accuse the entire liberal press of opposing the war.

On January 5 another social-patriotic editorial, "AFL Workers and our Military Policy", appeared in the Militant.

. . . Hundreds of . . . building trades workers at Guam, Midway and Wake Islands participated in actual fighting alongside of the regular armed forces . . .

If there ever was a verification of the correctness of (the Trotskyist military) policy, it is the case of the AFL worker who came to erect buildings and found themselves fighting for their lives in the mid-Pacific.

. . . We are opposed to exposing workers . . . to conditions of warfare for which they are totally unprepared.

Our answer is: Train the workers in the military arts . . . under the . . . control of . . . the trade unions.

The workers and soldiers on the Pacific Islands are not defending outposts of American imperialism, they are quite simply "fighting for their lives". Surely the unqualified use of this phrase suggests that they are fighting for their interests. Revolutionary opponents of the war insist that they are fighting against their interests.

The Militant wants the workers trained so that they will be better able to fight "for their lives", i.e. for American imperialism. It is against "exposing workers to conditions of warfare for which they are untrained", but it does not suggest the obvious answer that they should not be sent to Guam in the first place. On the contrary, "our answer is: train the workers, etc." In other words the Militant is not objecting to the defense of these imperialist outposts, it is criticising the bourgeoisie for not defending them well enough.

(See critique of the military policy Part I, Section B. Even those who do not agree, however, must realize the social-patriotic character of the article cited above.)

Frequently in our propaganda we have spoken of the capitulation of the French army officers, and stated that a trade-union controlled army would not have capitulated. No one has claimed that putting trade union officials in charge of the army would change the character of the war. It is clear, therefore, that such propaganda is criticism of the conduct of the war, and proposals for fighting the imperialist war more effectively.

Examples could be multiplied, but those cited are enough to make the point.

More prominent in our propaganda have been criticisms of the economic conduct of the war. Morrow's War and the Monopolies in the February Fourth International is fairly typical. The charges are that American capitalism because of anarchy, monopolies, profiteering, etc., has sabotaged war production. Examples of how the auto industry refused to convert until forced to, of how the steel industry refused to increase productive capacity, etc. are cited. The facts, generally taken from Government reports, are correct enough; it is the political line which is at fault.

Revolutionaries are not for the war effort; they are against it. What is it to us whether war production is done efficiently enough? Whether 60,000 or 600 planes are produced? There is no political difference between criticising the bourgeoisie for not producing enough war goods and criticising them for not sending enough planes over Tokio.

Nationalisation of industry and its operation under workers' control is our basic transitional slogan. It is social-patriotism, however, to raise this slogan as a means of conducting the war better; and that is exactly the connection in which it is now raised in our propaganda. Morrow calls this slogan "the transitional demand around which the great masses can be rallied against monopoly capitalism, even while the masses are still imbued with patriotic illusions." The masses are imbued with patriotic illusions, that is true. Therefore do we attempt to dispel these illusions? Do we explain that it is a capitalist war? On the contrary, we strengthen them by explaining to the workers how the capitalists are "sabotaging" the war effort and by demanding that the capitalist government conduct the war more efficiently by nationalizing industry. Morrow's formula is a formula of supporting the war.

It might be claimed that our literature on the subject of war production is not criticism of the conduct of the war, but a scientific analysis of capitalist war economy. But a scientific analysis would not give such a one-sided picture; it would show the achievements as well as the shortcomings, the planning as well as the "anarchy". There can only be one reason for picking out the failings of the war production drive and emphasizing them -- even though they are not the main aspect of the economic situation -- and that is because one is dissatisfied with war production and wants to see it improved. Revolutionists oppose the dislocation of the economy caused by the war and the resulting social sabotage. They demand production for use under workers' control, not an improved method of conducting the slaughter.

To conclude: The coming convention would resolve:

Revolutionary opposition to war is incompatible with criticism of the conduct of the war from the standpoint of effectiveness. The Socialist Workers Party will reject and expose all

propaganda which poses as Socialist and yet makes such criticism, (as distinguished from a scientific analysis of the weaknesses of capitalism), offers suggestions for conducting the war, or "demands" that it be conducted more effectively.

C. Anti-War Propaganda and the Peace Slogan

The slogan of "Peace!" or of "Stop the war!" is the natural center of propaganda and agitation of an anti-war party. Thus the slogan under which the Bolsheviks took power in 1917 was "Peace, Bread, and Land!" -- and peace was not accidentally first on the list. Our party on the other hand rejects this slogan; it can be found no where in the party literature or agitation -- nor, I believe, in that of other sections of the Fourth International. The result is that our propaganda is robbed of any possible agitational value or effectiveness.

(It has been shown in section B above how the party propaganda has assumed a semi-patriotic character especially since Pearl Harbor. This inevitably results from the rejection of the peace slogan. There are two principled positions governing agitation on the war question: one is for the war, in which case one criticises the conduct of the war and demands that it be conducted more effectively; or one is against the war, in which case one agitates for its being stopped.)

Attempts have been made to justify the party position on the basis of articles written by Zinoviev and Lenin during the first World War (Joachim Brust, "Bolshevism and the Struggle for Peace" in the Fourth International, July 1941). But the writings of Lenin are not dogma for us. We accept his theories and policies as authoritative only insofar as they can be shown to have contributed to the success of the Russian Revolution. If Lenin is in contradiction with himself on this point, then we accept not his writings of 1914-16, but his decisive use of the peace slogan as the lever for turning the imperialist war into a civil war in 1917.

Actually there is no contradiction in Lenin's writings and practice. Lenin was against the peace slogan as employed by Kautsky, against the peace slogan when it fostered pacifist and Utopian illusions, when it was a question of deceiving the workers into thinking that a democratic peace was possible without a social revolution. This criticism was entirely correct, and it applies equally well to any one who raises any transitional slogan in such a way as to suggest that it can be realised within the framework of capitalism. But Lenin was for the peace slogan when it was a question of calling upon the workers and soldiers to stop the war by their own revolutionary action, when it was a question of peace through socialism. (In the same way Lenin can be quoted "for and against" the United States of Europe slogan.)

In his polemic against Kautsky Lenin wrote, "The proletarian slogan must be civil war." In other words, Lenin rejected the peace slogan only insofar as it glossed over the necessity of civil

war. But our leadership have rejected not only the peace slogan, but that of civil war as well. Instead of either of these they have put forward the false slogan: "Turn the imperialist war into a war against fascism!" Lenin's (conditional) rejection of the peace slogan bore a revolutionary character; our rejection of it bears a social-patriotic character. (See the analysis of the new slogan in part II above.)

The Bolshevik position on the peace slogan is summarized in War and the Fourth International:

The experience of the years 1914-18 demonstrates. . . that the slogan of peace is in no wise contradictory to the strategic formula of "defeatism", on the contrary, it develops a tremendous revolutionary force, especially in case of a protracted war. The slogan of peace has a pacifist, that is lying, stupefying, enfeebling character only when democratic and other politicians juggle with it; when priests offer up prayers for the speediest cessation of the slaughter; when "lovers of humanity", among them also social-patriots, tearfully urge the governments to make peace quickly on "the basis of justice." But the slogan of peace has nothing in common with pacifism when it emanates from working class quarters and trenches, intertwining itself with the slogan of fraternization of the soldiers of the hostile armies and uniting the oppressed against the oppressors. The revolutionary struggle for peace which takes on ever wider and bolder forms is the surest means of "turning the imperialist war into a civil war."

To conclude, the coming convention of the party should resolve: The slogan of peace, or of stopping the war must play a central role in the agitation and propaganda of the Party.

D. The Economic Policy

By the economic policy of the party is meant the proposals advanced for maintaining or improving the living standards of the mass of the people, and of the working class in particular.

The question to be discussed here is that of the propaganda line of the Party, not the question of the relation of party members to mass actions of the workers. Such actions arise as the result not primarily of our propaganda, but of economic circumstances beyond our control. Naturally no one would suggest that we isolate ourself from such actions, or that we make as a condition for participating in them the requirement that they be guided by a program which can actually improve the lot of the workers. But how we can utilize such movements, into what channels we attempt to guide them-- that is determined by the propaganda line; that is the economic policy.

Our propaganda in turn is determined by the facts. We tell the workers the truth. Before deciding upon an economic policy we must have a clear picture of the present economic situation.

At the present time the standards of living of the masses are sinking because of a shortage of consumers' goods. This shortage is not yet general, but it is acute in regard to many sorts of

goods, and there is no doubt that with the protraction of the war it will become much more serious.

The shortage of consumers' goods is caused by the requirements of a war economy. The outstanding characteristic of war economy is the shifting of the factors of production to the production of war goods. It is estimated that the war production of the United States has already reached the mark of \$50-\$60,000,000,000 annually; government officials confidently expect to raise that figure to \$80,000,000,000. The latter figure is larger than the entire annual national income at the height of the prosperity of the 1920's. Making due allowance for unused capacity at that time and increase in productivity since, 80 billion dollars of war production still leaves less for consumers' goods than was consumed at the worst of the depression. When Henderson states that the war will require that living standards drop below those of 1932, he is simply stating a fact.

Besides the shift of productive factors to war production the war has caused a shortage of some of the factors of production themselves. At least seven million men, who could be productive workers, will be drafted into the Army. Our transportation facilities are inadequate to take on the burdens of war in addition to those of peacetime production; a situation aggravated by the blockade of the East coast and Japanese air and sea supremacy in the Pacific. A number of essential raw materials usually imported are unavailable (tin, rubber). Finally, an ever-increasing proportion of the consumers' goods which the United States does produce will have to be exported to its allies if they are to hold out.

In times of peace capitalism produces poverty in the midst of plenty. Under the conditions of total war, however, there is plenty only of war goods. In peacetime it is correct to say that the economic problem is one of distribution rather than production; that is not true today. Maldistribution does exist; the capitalists rake in huge profits. But only a small proportion of these profits goes into the purchase of consumption goods. If the entire consumption of the capitalists was to be divided among the entire population, it would not appreciably raise living standards.

The shortage of consumers' goods and the resulting decline of the standard of living is caused by the war, not by the capitalist system (except, of course, in the sense that the war is caused by capitalism). The same thing that is taking place in America today is taking place in Russia in accentuated form. It would, if an improbable example be allowed, take place in a socialist world faced with an unexpected Martian invasion.

Of course, if we had had a socialist economy in the United States for the last ten or fifteen years, the story might be quite different. Likewise if a socialist economy were to be instated today, the United States might in ten years be ready to fight a war and at the same time maintain its living standards. Both these suppositions are irrelevant. The war requires that war goods be produced immediately. All the major United Nations fronts (Russia, the Near East, India) are in a precarious position; before this paper is read any one of them may have collapsed.

Any one who sincerely maintains that the United States can successfully conduct this war and at the same time maintain or improve the living standards of the masses displays a woeful ignorance of the actual situation. Yet this statement has been made in the Militant, it was made by Grace Carlson in her election campaign in St. Paul, and -- as will be shown below -- it is implied by the present economic policy of the Party. Dozens of competent economists have published analyses showing that this is impossible. No one in our Party has made any efforts to refute these analyses. The statement that living standards can be maintained without interfering with the war is made categorically; no facts or figures are put forward to substantiate this assertion -- for the simple reason that no such facts or figures exist.

The above argument will not be elaborated here; the burden of proof lies with he who denies it.

Inflation

Before proceeding to the consideration of the economic policy of the Party, it is necessary to discuss the question of inflation. Inflation may have many causes, but the present inflation insofar as it affects the prices of consumers' goods is simply a reflection of the shortage of those goods. The masses feel this shortage not as a decline in their money income, but as a decline in the purchasing power of each of the units of which that income is composed. The purchasing power directed towards consumers' goods is greater than the total value of the consumers' goods produced (at uninflated prices, that is). This difference -- an estimated \$17,000,000,000 -- is the "inflationary gap." That is not capitalist propaganda -- as a recent Militant insinuates; it is an exact statement of the cause of the present and future inflation in the prices of consumers' goods. Nor does the "inflationary gap" exert pressure on prices only under capitalism. Inflation and the "black market" are not exactly unknown in the Soviet Union.

So long as the inflationary gap exists, inflation is inevitable. There are only two ways of preventing inflation: either to increase the production of consumers' goods, or to decrease the money income directed towards the purchase of these goods. The former means giving up the war effort; the latter -- by means of taxes and savings (forced or voluntary) -- is what the government is trying to do.

"A Sliding Scale of Wages"

The peacetime transitional slogan: "A sliding scale of wages to meet the cost of living" has become the central point of the Party's wartime economic policy.

In Marx's time a member of the International objected to the struggle for general wage increases on the grounds that these would lead only to a proportional rise in the prices of consumers' goods and hence would not benefit the workers. Marx's answer (Value, Price and Profit) is instructive. The steps of the argument are as follows:

- 1) A general increase in wages would at the same time be a

general decrease in profits.

2) The increase in wages would increase the demand for consumers' goods. The immediate effect of this increase in demand would be a proportionate rise in the prices of consumers' goods.

3) The decrease in profits would decrease the demand for producers' goods. The immediate effect of this decrease in demand would be a proportionate fall in the prices of producers' goods.

4) As a result of these price changes the rate of profit in the consumers' goods industry would be higher than in the producers' goods industry. Capital would then flow from the latter to the former until a uniform rate of profit was established, which would be when prices returned to "normal."

It should be noted that Marx does not think of denying that a rise in wages unaccompanied by an increase in the production of consumers' goods will lead to a proportionate rise in their prices. His point is that it will not be unaccompanied by an increased production of consumers' goods, because of the flow of capital from low-profit to high-profit enterprises. Under the present conditions Marx's argument does not hold good. A general rise in wages will not cause a flow of capital into consumers' goods industry. Capital is flowing from consumers' goods industries and it will continue to do so. Government intervention prevents the effective demand for automobiles, refrigerators, radios, etc. from creating a supply of these commodities. Under these conditions a general rise in wages will lead only to a general rise in the prices of consumers' goods. It will not improve the general living standards.

Our slogan does not meet the real problem at all. It does not provide in any way for an increase -- or even maintenance -- of the production of consumers' goods. It implies that living standards can be maintained if only money income is increased sufficiently. But consumers' goods cannot be created by sleight-of-hand, but only by the material factors of production which are required for the war effort.

Increasing the money income to be directed towards the purchase of consumers' goods in the same proportion as prices rise will not, as the Fourth International states, eliminate "inflation for the great masses of the people." The proposed pouring of new billions into the inflationary gap could result only in inflationary rises in the price of consumers' goods proceeding in a geometrical progression.

It has been assumed above that our proposal is one for increasing the money income not only of the proletariat, but of the masses generally. There is, however, one large section of the consuming public whose income is by no means determined by wages -- the middle class farmers. Several responsible Party members have told the present writer that the Party supports the demands of the farmers for rising farm prices in proportion to the rise in the general price level; and the Fourth International speaks of the

necessity of "erasing the dangerously growing hostility between farmer and worker." If money wages are to rise while farm prices are stabilized the workers will be able to improve their living standards somewhat -- at the expense of the farmers. Of course, there are limitations. Of those goods of which there is enough for (say) only 10% of the population, the workers will not be able to get enough even if the farmers have none. Contrariwise, it will not benefit the workers to deprive the farmers of those goods of which there is enough for everyone. But under conditions of decreasing available consumers' goods, it would be possible to give the workers more by giving the farmers less. If that is what we want we should say so.

Our economic policy is never presented as a way of distributing an ever-decreasing supply of consumers' goods in favor of the workers -- although that is all that it could accomplish. It is presented as if it were a program to prevent the threatened general decline in living standards. On this point, therefore, our propaganda line does not correspond to the facts.

"Make the Rich Pay for the War"

The slogan "Make the rich pay for the war!" is a correct one if it is meant as a proposal for a 100% tax on profits. In our propaganda, however, this slogan is used in a connection which is very misleading. Our propaganda suggests that there are two ways of paying for the war: either the masses pay, which is what the government and the capitalists want; or else the rich pay, which is what we want. Only in the former case, it is implied, will the living standards of the masses be impaired.

The term "pay for the war" has two meanings. The first is a fiscal one; it means "financing the war." The war can be financed by taxation, borrowing, or printing-press money. Insofar as the former method is employed one can speak of the alternatives of the rich paying or the poor paying. There is, however, another and more important sense in which the war must be paid for. The war requires a sharp decrease in the production of consumers' goods, which means a decline in the total consumption of the nation. In this sense one "pays for the war" insofar as one's standard of living is lowered by it. In this most important sense the war can be paid for only by the masses. If the capitalists and upper middle classes were to stop consuming altogether, the resulting decline in demand for consumers' goods would not begin to cover the decline in supply which the war will necessarily bring about. Taxing the rich, an excellent measure in itself, will not increase the supply of consumers' goods and will not, therefore, appreciably raise the living standards of the masses.

As used in our propaganda the slogan "Make the rich pay for the war!" means that we do not consider that the war itself requires that the living standards of the masses be slashed. Used in this sense the slogan is false and misleading.

It is not necessary to discuss here the other economic slogans

of the party -- none of which is objectionable. None of them touches on the main problem -- the shortage of consumers' goods caused by the war.

The deficiencies of the Party's economic policy flow from the same basic error which permitted the Party to abandon anti-war agitation in the months immediately following Pearl Harbor. It is a false concept of adapting the work of the Party to the war. There is a tendency in the Party to "adapt" our work to war conditions by working to improve -- or at least maintain -- the living conditions, to defend the rights of the workers without linking this struggle to the fight against the war. It cannot be done. The war itself requires that the living standards of the masses be slashed. The living standards of the masses can be maintained or improved only by stopping the war. In the face of these facts, we must take one of two positions: either we explain these facts to the workers, we use them as the basis of anti-war agitation, we direct our propoganda line towards channelizing the economic discontent and struggles of the workers into a fight against the war; or else we deny the facts, we assure the workers that the war does not require that their living standards be slashed, we put forward Utopian programs for maintaining the living standards without interfering with the war. The former is the policy of revolutionary struggle against war and against capitalism; the latter is a policy of lies and of deceiving the workers.

The war can be stopped only by the social revolution. This is our full program for solving the economic problems of the workers. Our full program should be supplemented by the transitional demand that the factors of production be transferred from the production of war goods to that of consumers' goods. This demand should be raised both as a general slogan and also in regard to specific instances of the use for war production of productive factors required for consumers' goods production (conversion of plants, priorities, etc.). In this way we will struggle not only against the war itself in general, but against the specific measures required to conduct it.

Unlike our present economic policy, it cannot be claimed for that proposed above that it will not interfere with the conduct of the war. On the other hand, the proposed transitional demand has this unquestionable advantage over those now made by our Party; if it were fulfilled it would actually improve the living conditions of the masses, or at least prevent their decline.

To summarize, the coming convention of the Party should resolve:

The Socialist Workers Party rejects under the present conditions the slogan "For a rising scale of wages to meet the rising cost of living!" and all other slogans which imply that the living conditions of the masses can be maintained in wartime. On the contrary, we must explain to the masses that the war itself requires that their living standards be slashed, that the only way to maintain or improve them is to stop the war.

In addition to our full program we raise the transitional

demand for the transfer of productive factors from war to consumers' goods production.

CONCLUSION

The coming convention of our Party may be its last legal convention for sometime to come. The political program which it adopts may be the guiding line for our Party in the coming revolutionary epoch. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that this program be a Bolshevik one.

It has been shown in this paper that several steps have already been taken on the road which leads to reformism. Fortunately they are short steps. They can still be retraced -- to change the metaphor -- by a relatively minor operation. It will be nearly painless and it will leave no scars. But it must be performed now.

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