

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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McCARTHY -- A "BOURGEOIS DEMOCRAT"?

A Reply to Vern and Ryan

By Joseph Hansen

In their "Resolution on 'McCarthyism,'" Dennis Vern and Sam Ryan take the curious position that McCarthy is only a "bourgeois democrat." As a counter-weight to this they take the still more curious position that all bourgeois democrats are "potential fascists." From this they draw the conclusion that a campaign that singles out McCarthyism as the American form of fascism is ill-advised and even helps prop up the bourgeois order. "The net effect of this campaign is not to hurt McCarthy, or the bourgeois state, but to excuse the bourgeois state for the indisputable evidences of its bourgeois character, and thus hinder the proletariat in its understanding that the bourgeois-democratic state is an 'executive committee' of the capitalist class, and that only a workers state can offer an appropriate objective for the class struggle." (Emphasis by Vern-Ryan, as in all cases where I quote them.)

To make a complete analysis of the Vern-Ryan position, to untangle everything they tangle up, and put in proper perspective the things they do have right would keep the mimeograph tied up for quite a while; and the analysis, I am afraid, would tend to become as boring and tough to chew on as its subject matter. I propose therefore only to take up the most glaring faults of the Vern-Ryan resolution, and let it go at that.

The fundamental error in the Vern-Ryan position on McCarthyism, apparent in the first paragraph of their document, is methodological: "...a wide range of American politicians, from Senator Humphrey and Douglas on one hand, to McCarran and Dirksen, on the other, are all potential fascists..." This "fascist potentiality," derives from their "support of the capitalist order." And the capitalist order infuses them with fascist potentiality because "in certain circumstances capitalism can be temporarily maintained only through the intercession of fascism."

This position is carried with dispatch to its logical absurdity in the second paragraph of the document: "Any supporter of the capitalist system is, by virtue of that support, a potential fascist..."

How shall we apply that theory? Shall we say, for instance, that the Social Democrats, having betrayed Marxism, objectively support the capitalist order; and that therefore, all Social Democrats are potential fascists? And since every beast must have its name, shall we call the Social Democrats -- social fascists?

Vern and Ryan, we hope, will note the close resemblance of that position to the one with which the Stalinists helped pave the way for Hitler.

Naturally they will object, and with justice, that they drew precisely the opposite conclusion from their premises -- that none of the capitalist politicians in Washington today are actual fascists, not even McCarthy; they are all "bourgeois democrats." I will readily grant that this conclusion is inescapable from the premises on

which Vern and Ryan stand. I only call attention to the fact that precisely the opposite conclusion is equally inescapable -- they are all fascists.

We are caught in this mire because of the impulsion Vern and Ryan feel to make McCarthy out as anything but a fascist. If he is not a fascist, he must be a bourgeois democrat. If this is true of McCarthy, it must be all the more true of the other current capitalist politicians. Where then will the fascist politicians eventually come from? Either something totally new and unexpected will appear or the bourgeois democrats will become fascists. But if they can turn into fascists, it becomes of crucial importance to determine the point of qualitative change.

Out of this mire, by spontaneous generation as in the days when formal logic ruled supreme, arise the categories Vern and Ryan need -- "potential fascist" now-a-bourgeois-democrat, "actual fascist" was-a-bourgeois-democrat, and the "two inescapable and basically essential features," which we will consider later, that determine when a bourgeois democrat becomes a fascist.

As we have seen already, however, it doesn't require a very powerful lens to discover that a potential fascist is an actual fascist and that therefore all of Vern-Ryan's "bourgeois democrats" are fascists. Something, it would appear, is wrong with premises that permit such latitude in the conclusion to be drawn from them. What is it?

Let us examine the links of the chain of reasoning offered us by Vern and Ryan: (1) At a certain stage the capitalist order can be maintained only through fascism. (2) Anyone who supports the capitalist order must therefore eventually accept fascism. (3) Anyone who eventually accepts fascism is a potential fascist. (4) Since all capitalist politicians support the capitalist order, they are all potential fascists.

The error in logic is a gross one. It is known technically as the Fallacy of Division. What is true of something as a whole is mistakenly held to be equally true of each of its parts. For example: "Common table salt, a compound of chlorine and sodium, is good on french-fried potatoes. Therefore, chlorine and sodium are good on french-fried potatoes." But chlorine is a poisonous gas and sodium a light metal that would react most violently when it touched one's mouth, if it hadn't done so already on the potatoes.

The fact that Vern and Ryan were probably ignorant of the name of their error is no excuse for having committed it. It is possible to think straight without being a trained logician, although I will readily grant that a little training helps. In the case of Vern and Ryan it might have helped them avoid becoming so dazzled by words like "potential" and "actual." Both Vern and Ryan are perfectly aware that the capitalist order as a whole evolves toward a fascist stage and is therefore not only "potentially" fascist but "actually" fascist in tendency. An ounce of thought should have shown that this premise does not permit us to conclude that all capitalist politicians are "potential" fascists or "actual" fascists in tendency even though they all support the capitalist order. Historically the capitalist class as a whole supports fascism, but not all its parts. And the

"whole" can be represented by the economically dominant minority.

Had Vern and Ryan used the dialectic method, they would have been less likely to commit such a blunder. They saw what was common in fascists and liberals -- both species of politicians support the capitalist order. It was an achievement to see this and a good illustration of the fact that formal logic, even unconscious formal logic, has a certain power. The dialectician, however, begins with that. Having discovered the "one" -- what unites the fascist and liberal politicians -- he turns his attention to "division of the one"; that is, the difference between them. It doesn't require much analysis to indicate that the difference can develop into contradiction. Historical experience shows us that heads can roll, particularly the heads of liberals -- even though they faithfully support the capitalist order. In fact, it is precisely because they faithfully support the capitalist order that their heads roll.

This paradox would remain inexplicable if we stayed at the level that sees only the unity between fascists and liberals. To the logic of contradiction, however, the paradox is easily resolvable. First of all, capitalist politicians are interested primarily in the welfare of a particular section of the class they represent. Differences in particular interests can lead to sharp clashes between capitalist politicians, as we see every day, not only between the major machines but within the machines. A capitalist politician tends to become identified with the interests of a particular group and the changes in the relative weight and importance of the group are projected on the national political scene as changes in his personal standing. Since the development of capitalism itself pushes to the forefront successive economic groupings, these are reflected in a succession of different types of politicians. In this framework, personal characteristics play a considerable role in the choice of individuals to play these leading roles. We may be sure, for instance, that Taft's innermost convictions were a faithful reflection of the outlook of the Cleveland real-estate barons and that he acted in full sincerity out of those convictions. That was an essential personal requirement to achieve leadership of the grouping. At that stage of capitalist development where the general interests of the system are best expressed in democratic forms of rule, the particular grouping whose interests most closely coincide with those forms will be found dominant and its individual politicians take the center of the stage. When the general interests of the system come into contradiction with democratic forms, this signifies that a different grouping has come to the forefront, and along with it, with more or less delay, a different set of political leaders.

I have stated this in the most condensed and abstract way with the understanding that in actual life these generalities are subject to considerable modification. However, we must begin with such abstractions to find the points of departure for our own policies in the national arena.

For instance, if a regime that rules in principle through democratic forms is threatened by the rise of a fascist movement (which is committed in principle to the destruction of democratic forms), it would be a fatal error to consider the liberal regime as potentially fascist. And it would be just as fatal not to recognize the real

character of the fascist movement and to consider it only "bourgeois democratic." In fact the two errors are simply two sides of a single fault -- incapacity to differentiate. The truth is, that as the capitalist representatives of democratic forms, the liberals are threatened with annihilation at the hands of the fascists. But democratic forms include freedom of speech, of assembly, of the press and the right to organize in unions and political parties. In a struggle involving those rights, the working class cannot stand aside. To do so would mean its own atomization at the hands of the fascists.

Let us look once again at the opening paragraph of the Vern-Ryan document: "...a wide range of American politicians, from Senator Humphrey and Douglas on one hand, to McCarran and Dirksen, on the other, are all potential fascists..." Giving the authors of that concept the benefit of the doubt, perhaps we should assume that, confused over the complex inter-relationship between liberals like Humphrey and Douglas and fascists like McCarthy, they impatiently decided to dispose of the problem by considering them all one reactionary mass and labelling them inappropriately enough -- "bourgeois democrats." The proposed solution, it must be admitted, has the attraction of simplicity if nothing else.

Liberals like Humphrey and Douglas feel threatened by fascists like McCarthy. They also feel insecure, quailing at what must seem to them virtually impossible tasks -- maintaining prosperity and carrying forward the war program to its conclusion. They have lost confidence in the efficacy of democratic forms, which means that as politicians they have lost confidence in themselves and their own future. Nevertheless, they cling desperately to their positions and attempt to shore them up. Thus in face of the pressure from McCarthy, they even try to go him one better. They try to outflank the fascist. Hence their prominence in espousing such legislation as outlawing the Communist Party. Superficially they thus appear even worse than McCarthy. From their viewpoint, however, it is only protective coloration. They still remain liberals. And they are right; they are only liberals. All their witch hunting will not save them should McCarthyism come to power.

Fascists like McCarthy, on the other hand, feel in tune with the times. Despite the blows and setbacks they take as well as give, they display confidence in themselves and their future as if they knew that so far as the capitalist system is concerned, their turn is next, even though it may take a few years. Hence their arrogance and their contempt for the liberals of both parties. They can afford to let the liberals run interference on witch-hunt legislation; it helps them, just as the witch hunt itself prepared the way for their entry as major figures on the political arena although the witch hunt was not started by them but by the Democrats under Truman. Ironically, the very measures the liberals sponsor in their own search for protective coloration provide protective coloration for the McCarthyites in extending the witch hunt and building their own forces. It's all been legalized with the blessings of the liberals.

In this contest between the liberals and the fascists should the working class abstain with a curse on both their houses? Should we follow the method of Vern and Ryan and refuse to separate McCarthy "in any way from all the other supporters of capitalism" and call him,

as they do, nothing but another "bourgeois democrat"? To do so would be to follow the politics of abstention and actually facilitate McCarthy's work.

The correct course is based on the major differentiation between the liberals and fascists. We defend the democratic forms against the fascist threat. We do so by attacking the liberals for capitulating to the fascists, for performing their own historic function of paving the way for the fascists, for betraying the people to McCarthyism. From the concessions the liberals make to the fascists -- concessions of deep injury to the labor movement -- we demonstrate the necessity of removing the liberals from power. We fight to replace them with working-class politicians at the head of an independent labor political movement capable of defending labor's rights and gains and of stopping McCarthyism. And to accomplish that task we level our fire in the labor movement at the bureaucrats who support the liberals and thereby stand in the way of truly representing labor's interests and of smashing the fascist threat. Is that so difficult to understand?

How to Tell a Fascist from a Liberal

To concretize our analysis still further, let us make one more observation about the inter-relationship between liberals and fascists. If McCarthyism should succeed in mobilizing the middle class and getting the nod from Wall Street, it can be expected that some liberal politicians would knock at fascist headquarters for entrance and assignment to posts in the movement, no matter how modest -- even posts as window dressing. A few would undoubtedly be accepted. The youngest of them might succeed in living down their "red" past and carving out some kind of career in the fascist machine. The older ones would be nothing but pitiful captives. On the other hand, if the McCarthyites were dealt a major defeat we could expect a share of them to appear hat in hand before the Republican and Democratic machine bosses, and there would be no doubt whatsoever that some of them would be absorbed as part of the effort to liquidate them as an opposition.

At this point, I suppose, we might expect Vern and Ryan to demand a minute to ask a "damaging" question: "First you admit that the so-called liberals try to outdo McCarthy in passing police-state legislation and even succeed in this. Then you admit that liberals can become fascists, which is what we contended all along, and that fascists can also switch over. In view of this, would you mind informing us just how you propose to tell a fascist from a liberal if you reject our position? It seems to us that you have helped confirm what we pointed out in our document; namely, that in determining 'the lowest common denominator' you cannot have less than its promulgation of a 'radical' program and organization of 'special bodies of armed men.' To quote from our document: 'These two features -- a radical program of 'anti-capitalism' and special armed gangs -- furnish the two inescapable and basically essential features of a fascist movement.' Consequently, so far as McCarthyism is concerned, 'Until the movement outlines a 'radical' program and organizes special bodies of armed men around it, it may be a reactionary and a dangerous movement, but it is not fascist, and will very likely degenerate into the well

stocked limbo of previous middle class movements.'" "

The fact that Vern and Ryan are prepared to recognize that McCarthyism can be termed "fascist" if and when it advances a "radical" program and "organizes special bodies of armed men around it" is to be welcomed. At that time we may look forward to finding ourselves in common agreement in our analysis of the movement and what should be done about it. Meanwhile, however, we face a political problem that cannot be evaded: What should be done right now to prepare the working class so that it can properly defend itself if and when McCarthyism advances a "radical" program and "organizes special bodies of armed men around it"? Or can we complacently adopt the Vern-Ryan position and assure the working class that McCarthyism "will very likely degenerate into the well stocked limbo of previous middle class movements"? The posing of the problem shows at once how sharply the Vern-Ryan position diverges from the program of action needed to really cause McCarthyism to "degenerate."

Is our science so limited that we cannot tell a fascist movement until its "two inescapable and basically essential features" have reached full-blown forms? Are we forced to call its leaders "bourgeois democrats" before then? It seems to me that we should be able to do better than that. Let us start with ordinary common sense.

As Vern and Ryan observe, "Senator McCarthy has been branded a fascist over a number of years now by a great many bourgeois politicians such as Tydings, Flanders, Benton, Eisenhower's brother, Mrs. Roosevelt, and Adlai Stevenson." To this evidence, our spetztes respond, "Marxism disagrees." The common opinion of the bourgeois politicians is brushed aside because McCarthyism doesn't fit in with the preconceived ideas of Vern and Ryan. Naturally we must disregard factional exaggerations made by the bourgeois opponents of McCarthy but also we must note the damage that is done them by their admission. What do they have to gain as supporters of capitalism by confessing that American capitalism has spawned -- a fascist movement? In addition, we should note this important fact, which seems to have escaped Vern and Ryan, that these bourgeois politicians represent leading figures in both the Republican and Democratic Parties. They do not consider McCarthy a specifically Republican phenomenon, but something apart and in opposition to both parties. The unanimity of opinion, furthermore, shows that it does not represent individual aberrations, but represents the general view in America's ruling circles. Those circles should know what McCarthy is.

In this respect, one outstanding fact alone must be duly weighed: That is the financial support a section of the ruling class is already providing McCarthy. Do Vern and Ryan actually believe that the Texas oil tycoons consider McCarthy only another -- bourgeois democrat? Or lacking the advantages of Marxist method, have the Texas billionaires made a mistake, feeding oats to the wrong horse?

If it is any consolation to Vern and Ryan, it can be expected that these ruling circles and the bourgeois politicians, who now admit that McCarthy is a fascist, may in the future adopt the Vern-Ryan position -- that McCarthy is only another "bourgeois democrat." That will be about the time they decide to turn to the fascist solution; and McCarthy, advancing his "radical" program and organizing "special

bodies of armed men," needs such propagandistic camouflage. What will Vern and Ryan then say about the earlier admissions of the bourgeois politicians?

In addition to the evidence from bourgeois ruling circles that McCarthy is a fascist, we have the evidence of European opinion. Vern and Ryan leave this completely out of consideration, yet it is based on the most solid grounds -- actual experience in the rise of a number of fascist movements that have displayed considerable differences. Are we to simply dismiss the warning of European public opinion, which is virtually unanimous in considering McCarthy a fascist and which has been shouting to the American people to wake up, heed what happened in Italy, Germany and Spain, and take action while McCarthyism is still weak? To brush aside that opinion, as Vern and Ryan do, is to close our ears to the voice of experience in order to avoid profaning the preconceived forms we demand that McCarthyism meet before we will grudgingly concede that it is indeed a fascist movement. The experience of the European working class, earned at such cost, deserves better from us.

Still confining ourselves to the empiric level, let us take another look at McCarthy himself. Here, I offer in evidence the opinions of Vern and Ryan, stripped however of their theoretical interpretation. We have already seen that the Vern-Ryan use of the "potential-actual" categories constituted a gross error in logic. Through the error they were able to take the actual fascist McCarthy, convert him into a "potential" fascist and therefore through their wrong method into nothing but a "bourgeois democrat." By pointing out the error, we topple the entire Vern-Ryan construction with one kick. But out of the ruin we are able to salvage a few bricks. For instance, they admit that McCarthy "does have personal qualities that equip him for fascism's task." How did they arrive at that conclusion? By what criteria? Obviously in the same way that such people as Flanders, Eisenhower's brother, Mrs. Roosevelt, and Adlai Stevenson did. Through observing McCarthy in action.

They go even further. "McCarthy has openly been -- (possibly as part of a conscious plan to present himself some day as an American fascist leader) -- not even as 'anti-labor' as some of the other bourgeois democrats." How did Vern and Ryan reach the conclusion that McCarthy may be operating today with a "conscious plan" to present himself in the future as "an American fascist leader"? By what criteria? Again, obviously, by observing McCarthy in action. But isn't a politician who follows a conscious plan to present himself as a fascist leader an actual fascist? Most telling of all is the recognition by Vern and Ryan of McCarthy's obvious purpose -- to appear "not even as 'anti-labor' as some of the other bourgeois democrats." Doesn't that very fact give an intimation of McCarthy's potential capacity to use radical-sounding demagogy?

So far we have confined ourselves to only some of the facts that hit you in the eye. Let us extend our range a bit and see what we can turn up. In accordance with the Marxist method, we must examine the origin of McCarthyism, something Vern and Ryan forgot to do. The record is absolutely clear. When McCarthy first won national prominence in 1950, we noted that he had done so through a "super witch hunt." This was an obvious fact, but our conclusion is also interesting from the viewpoint of methodology. As Marxists we noted a quali-

tative difference in the witch hunt. We "differentiated," found "a division of the one." Then we followed the development of that difference until it became so great that the author of the witch hunt, Truman, was himself witch-hunted. We were cautious, even conservative about applying our label. However, when not only Truman, but at the same time, Eisenhower in the White House, was witch-hunted; when it was clear that McCarthy had a large middle-class backing, that he was organizing independently, that every fascist grouping known to us since 1937 was hailing him as leader, no mistake was possible -- a fascist movement had crystallized out of the witch hunt. That was when we put the correct label on McCarthyism as the American form of fascism. The fear, and even panic, of such well-known liberals as Humphrey, Douglas, Lehman, and the rest, in face of McCarthy's rise only confirmed the correctness of the designation.

In contrast to this method of determining the difference between McCarthyism and the bourgeois democracy that spawned it, note the position of Vern and Ryan: "Fascism in America will not arrive as an integral part of the present witch hunt; it is ironic but true that it is not the success but the failure of the witch hunt that will force American capitalism to take the fascist path."

McCarthyism is an "integral part of the present witch hunt." That's absolutely true. And it's just as absolutely not true. Vern and Ryan do not see any differentiation in the witch hunt. They view it statically. The witch hunt is only a witch hunt. "A" = "A." And "A" can't possibly equal anything else. Small wonder they are unable to see a fascist movement proceeding from the witch hunt. But viewing it dynamically and not statically; that is, dialectically and not purely formally, can we say that the witch hunt is still what it was when Truman started it? Did Truman begin by witch-hunting himself? Did McCarthy set the pace in 1947? By what magic did McCarthy come to national prominence if there was no internal differentiation in the witch hunt?

The static, pigeon-hole approach leads Vern and Ryan into a further serious deviation from Marxist method. The witch hunt, if I interpret them correctly, is a single chapter that will fail, leaving us with nothing new as a heritage of its existence. It will drop into the "limbo" as one of a series that have dropped into that chute like empty tomato cans. Something else, perhaps unforeseen will then develop. Maybe even a movement headed by such bourgeois democrats as Douglas, or Humphrey or Lehman! Who knows? This will finally prove to be genuine fascism. The intermediate links are thus left out completely. Vern and Ryan have failed to take into consideration the continuity of American fascism.

Although in obverse form, this is in essence the same methodological error committed by the Cochranites in relation to the continuity of the revolutionary socialist movement in America. The Cochranites crossed off the past of the revolutionary movement and, for the future, think something novel, without any links with the past, will emerge. Vern and Ryan utilize the same method in relation to fascism in the U.S.

They do not grasp the central fact that so far as the development of capitalist politics is concerned, the "success" of the witch

hunt is manifest precisely in the emergence of McCarthyism; that is, the American form of fascism. To conclude that the witch hunt has succeeded only in grouping the "lunatic right wing fringe" behind McCarthy, to use the words of Vern and Ryan, is to repeat the error of those who considered Hitler nothing but a "lunatic" at the head of a "lunatic right wing fringe." What is most lunatic is to repeat such an error with McCarthy after the experience with Hitler. It is an instructive example, however, of how similar methods lead to similar results.

Vern and Ryan Set Trotsky Straight

The reference in the draft resolution to Mayor Hague of Jersey City is picked up by Vern and Ryan for a dissertation on what they consider to be an error by Trotsky. The pertinent quotations are taken from a transcript of a discussion with Trotsky published in the Feb. 1946 Fourth International. The entire discussion deserves careful study, but here we will confine ourselves to the alleged error.

"In the United States it might be different but the fundamental tasks are the same," Trotsky said. "I read about the tactics of Hague. It is a rehearsal of a Fascist overthrow. He represents small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened. He has his gang which is absolutely unconstitutional. This is very, very contagious. With the deepening of the crisis it will spread all over the country and Roosevelt who is a very good democrat will say, 'Perhaps it is the only solution.'

"It was the same in Italy. They had a minister who invited the Socialists. The Socialists refused. He admitted the Fascists. He thought he could balance them against the Socialists, but they smashed the minister too. Now I think the example of New Jersey is very important. We should utilize everything, but this especially." (p. 57.)

Further on, Trotsky continues: "In Newark the Mayor begins to imitate Hague and they are all inspired by Hague and by the big bosses. It is absolutely certain that Roosevelt will observe that now in the crisis he can do nothing with democratic means. He is not a fascist as the Stalinists claimed in 1932. (Or a "potential" fascist. -- J.H.) But his initiative will be paralyzed. What can he do? The workers are dissatisfied. The big bosses are dissatisfied. He can only maneuver until the end of his term and then say goodbye. A third term for Roosevelt is absolutely excluded.

"The imitation of the Newark mayor has tremendous importance. In two or three years you can have a powerful fascist movement of American character. What is Hague? He has nothing to do with Mussolini or Hitler, but he is an American fascist. Why is he aroused? Because the society can no longer be run by democratic means.

"It would of course be impermissible to fall into hysteria. The danger of the working class being out-run by events is indisputable, but we can combat this danger only by energetic, systematic development of our own activity and under adequate revolutionary slogans and not by fantastic efforts to spring over our own heads." (p. 58.)

Now let's hear from Vern and Ryan. "It would be futile, and the

evidence of a conception of Trotsky as some kind of infallible 'Pope,' were one to deny that this analysis is primarily incorrect. A third, and a fourth, term for Roosevelt was clearly not 'absolutely excluded'; Roosevelt did not 'observe that in the crisis he can do nothing with democratic means'; nor was his initiative 'paralyzed'; he did not maneuver until the end of his term 'and then say goodbye' (except in Sinclair Lewis' book). With his accustomed bourgeois democratic methods Roosevelt maintained the democratic state as an adequate instrument of the American capitalist class, was elected to not only a third term but to a fourth term as well.

"Trotsky's analysis was incorrect as any Monday morning quarterback can plainly see."

Hold on there, Monday morning quarterbacks. That's an illegal play and you've got to bring the ball back and take a penalty. When Trotsky made that prediction about Roosevelt, what was he doing, trying to read tea leaves? Or cast a horoscope for Roosevelt? Isn't it proper for us as disciples of Trotsky to ask ourselves what theoretical considerations led to these conclusions?

Roosevelt came into power as the representative primarily of light industry, that section of the capitalist class interested first of all in the New Deal. By 1938, when the discussion in question was held, the New Deal had pretty well run its course. This was indicated by the economic downturn of 1937 and by the development of a fascist movement in America as a reflex to the formation of the CIO and its objective tendency toward independent political action. But it is a general law of politics, as I indicated at the beginning of this article, that the personal fate of politicians is bound up with the grouping and even current in a grouping they represent. To say that "A third term for Roosevelt is absolutely excluded" is simply to personalize an abstract theoretical conclusion -- the New Deal is finished.

Was Trotsky right in drawing that conclusion? In 1938 it was quite clear that a fascist movement was on the rise and it was therefore legitimate to also conclude that "It is absolutely certain that Roosevelt will observe that now in the crisis he can do nothing with democratic means."

What happened? A little item that Vern and Ryan leave out -- the outbreak of the Second World War. This sliced right through all the trends and along with it the Marxist projections of those trends. Roosevelt won his third and fourth terms on that basis. But he confirmed Trotsky nevertheless by announcing himself that the New Deal was dead. And as for continuing to rule by the "accustomed bourgeois democratic methods," as Vern and Ryan declare, Roosevelt violated them in principle not only by breaking his campaign promise to keep out of war but by turning to decree rule, slapping on a wage freeze, persecuting the miners union; and, we may add, by imprisoning the Trotskyists for exercising their democratic right to oppose imperialist war and advocate socialism. The Bonapartist element in the Roosevelt regime grew considerably. As for the fascist movement, it was cut off short, not to resume until the world conflict came to an end.

Studying Trotsky's error, then, we see that it was one of form

and not of substance. Trotsky was aware, we may be sure that a certain amount of political risk was involved in choosing the form he did for making his prediction. On the other hand the chances for political gain were considerable. And since only something as major as world war could affect it, that kind of error could be handled without too great disadvantage. It took the new world war Trotsky had predicted to cancel out his prediction Roosevelt would not serve a third term!

But let us continue with the correction offered by our Monday morning quarterbacks. They see Trotsky's error as "two-fold." First it was an error "in tempo." Trotsky's forecast about "the inability of the American bourgeoisie to rule indefinitely with democratic means" came true much later than he expected. The worth of that "correction" can be judged in the light of the failure of Vern and Ryan to consider the intervention of World War II. They just don't know what they are talking about.

Secondly, "Trotsky's error in the tempo of events may very well have derived from his other error which consists in a misconception as to what Hague was and represented in New Jersey." We are then informed that "Trotsky's error in tempo derived from misinformation as to the nature of Hague's political activity and the forces upon which it was based." Where Vern and Ryan got this information remains a top-drawer secret. I had the rare good fortune and privilege to work with Trotsky and I can assure his correctors that he was very well informed. He not only read the New York Times the same as Ryan (if I recall the discussion correctly, Trotsky's reference, "I read about the tactics of Hague," was to the New York Times) but he was in correspondence with Marxists in the U.S. well able to separate fact from fiction, read the American Trotskyist press closely, and was also visited by any number of Americans, both Marxists and otherwise, who reported what was happening.

The truth is that our Monday morning quarterbacks feel quite correctly that their method, based on their information, would never reveal Hague as a fascist. First of all, Hague, according to them, did not have his own gang. Secondly, Hague did not represent the small bosses, for this "would inevitably have been expressed in the formulation of some sort of 'radical' or 'anti-capitalist' program..." And so -- Trotsky must have been wrong. Hague wasn't a fascist. He must have been just a "bourgeois democrat."

Permit me to set the facts straight by quoting from a letter from a participant in the struggle against Hague, George Breitman:

"I leave aside the question of whether Hague represented 'small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened.' (The key here is the meaning of the word 'represented.' I am inclined to think that Trotsky's estimate on this was fundamentally sound.) All I deal with here is the question of extra-legal gangs.

"Hague, it is true, had an understanding with the racketeer-ridden AFL and therefore felt no need to try to destroy the AFL unions immediately, but that doesn't mean he wasn't out to destroy the union movement as a whole ultimately. His main target was the CIO for the time being since it was the CIO that represented the real threat then.

Vern-Ryan say, 'In this endeavor Hague did not employ 'his own gang which is absolutely unconstitutional' but the Jersey City Police and Democratic Party hangers-on, sworn in as special police and deputies. This use of the police was as unconstitutional as is their usual use in labor disputes; but there is a qualitative difference between using a legal armed body in an unconstitutional fashion and forming an unconstitutional armed body as the nucleus of a 'new' state.'

"What are the facts? Hague did use the police in unconstitutional activities. On occasion he also swore in deputies, etc. But he did more than that. He also organized his own gangs, and these gangs were used to cow and beat up or drive out of town organizers, leaflet distributors, speakers, etc. In 1939 (June 4) one of these gangs even traveled to Newark to break up an open-air meeting Norman Thomas was to address. (See pamphlet, the Fight Against Hagueism.) These weren't deputies or cops, but a gang. Previously the CIO and other groups trying to organize Jersey City decided to organize a free-speech meeting. (See pp. 3-4 of same pamphlet.) Hague had not only his cops and deputies there but thousands of people whipped up by his gang -- including all the veterans, carrying clubs. The result was that two members of the U.S. Congress did not dare to even enter Jersey City to speak there. Another attempt was made. (See pp. 4-5.) Our party participated actively in this one. Through us an incipient workers defense guard movement was started, with the Newark CIO and Workers Alliance agreeing to provide support for the congressman who was to defy Hague. I was there in Pershing Field with one of the Workers Alliance guards. But the whole thing fell through due to political timidity and poor organization. Thousands of people roamed the field, most of them in well organized bands, led by Legionnaires carrying clubs. The minute O'Connell was spotted he was grabbed and slammed into a car, banging his arm brutally on the way, and he was run out of town. An assistant CIO regional director was treated even worse, being beaten so badly he had to be hospitalized. It wasn't the cops or deputies that did this.

"Such are the things Trotsky was talking about, and he was absolutely right when he called them unconstitutional gangs. The trouble with Vern and Ryan is that they don't know what they are talking about on this matter, or if they did know, have forgotten facts that were well known at the time Trotsky made his estimate of Hague as a fascist. These bands were not made permanent because the war came, the Stalinists became pro-war and even pro-Hague, openly supporting his candidates, and Hague, in return for their tolerance and Roosevelt's, decided that he could get along with the CIO. In other words, Hague changed. But before he changed, he definitely followed the fascist pattern in his organization of extra-legal bands to war on the CIO."

Now that the facts are clear, perhaps Vern and Ryan will feel half willing to change their estimate of Hague. Half willing, because the "bourgeois democrat" Hague definitely had one of the "two inescapable and basically essential features" of a fascist, he had "his own gang." It is tempting to leave it to Vern and Ryan to puzzle out whether Trotsky committed a half error or whether Hague didn't somehow or other have the second "inescapable and basically essential" feature they need to tell a fascist from a liberal, but perhaps we should suggest a way out of their dilemma. Doesn't Hague's whole

course of action itself constitute a program with eloquent appeal to the "small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened"?

Now let me demonstrate how completely beside the point this whole elaborate attempt to pontificate on Trotsky's "error" really is. "In a fit of impatience to be about the settlement of tasks not yet posed by history," Vern and Ryan declare, "well intentioned comrades run the risk of ignoring or misapplying the science of Marxism. In picking up the error that Trotsky committed in regard to Hague, they unconsciously turn a great revolutionist into a prop for the bourgeois order: if Hague was a fascist, then McCarthy is also; the class struggle is developed, then, not so much against the bourgeois state as against this 'fascism' of one of its parliamentary bodies." Note that phrase, "if Hague was a fascist, then McCarthy is also. . . ." But that was not at all the analogy drawn in the draft resolution. Our analysis of McCarthyism does not rest on such an analogy but on observation of the McCarthyite movement itself and general theoretical considerations. The analogy with Hague concerns the possibility of McCarthy ceasing to be a fascist. "It is not excluded," we said, "that McCarthy and those around him can be absorbed by the Republican machine. . . . This type of withdrawal was seen in the case of Mayor Hague, a potential candidate for the role of American Hitler in the late thirties. But if McCarthy follows this course, the role of fascist leader will fall to someone else who will pick up the strings by denouncing McCarthy's 'treason and betrayal.'"

Isn't it clear that Vern and Ryan were so busy nailing together a jerry-rigged platform of opposition that they couldn't even read straight? They didn't even notice that magic word, "potential," qualifying the candidacy of Mayor Hague, not to speak of the fact that as an example, and there are such, of a "bourgeois democrat" changing into a fascist, Hague meets their criteria rather well, or should we say half well?

By the way, while we are on the point it would undoubtedly prove instructive to hear from Vern and Ryan on how their "two inescapable and basically essential features" for telling a fascist apply to General Franco. The Spanish Generalissimo had the armed gangs without doubt, but how about a "radical" or "anti-capitalist" program? Having "corrected" Trotsky on Hague, it seems in order for them to proceed a bit further and "correct" him also on Franco. Perhaps Trotsky's "error" -- or half-error -- in regard to Franco also "derived from misinformation" as in the case of Hague?

Why We Call McCarthyism "Incipient" Fascism

In contrast to this tangle of errors, confusion and misinformation, let me summarize the approach used in the draft resolution. McCarthy's whole course of action reveals his aim -- the destruction of bourgeois democratic forms. Once this aim was clearly revealed, it was sufficient to demarcate him from the bourgeois democrats. And as soon as it became clear that his principal means to achieve this was the organization of a middle-class following independently of the Republican and Democratic machines, we had sufficient criteria to characterize him as a fascist. But if we are prepared to call McCarthyism "fascism," why do we put the adjective "incipient" in front of it?

The reason is that although McCarthyism is fascism in essence it is far from being fully formed. It has not even built its own party. At present it exists as a faction primarily in the Republican Party but also extending into Democratic ranks. This stage of its existence still remains to be completed. Therefore, in form it is not yet an independent organization. Its propaganda likewise is far from finished form. And the same goes for its extra-legal squads and activities.

If Vern and Ryan can follow the analogy, it is incipient fascism the way a crocodile egg is an incipient crocodile. Although the egg has a form that enables us to recognize what species and genus it belongs to, thereby enabling us to differentiate it from say an egg laid by a liberal goose, it lacks completely the shape and articulation of the adult animal. Naturally, to people accustomed to approaching such phenomena solely with a frying pan or griddle in mind, the distinction is of little value. For them the important thing is to be able to recognize an egg when you see it. In the case of McCarthy, however, I would say the egg has about hatched, giving us sight of a reptile that shows little inclination to passively accept being whipped up into a liberal omelette.

Having determined what McCarthyism is in essence, it is not too difficult to determine the tendencies of its evolution, for these will all be toward the development of fascism in its full-fledged form, with such modifications as the American scene imposes. Thus McCarthy's factional activities indicate the trend toward independent organization. His "treason" and "communist menace" themes indicate the trend toward social demagoguery, as does his use of the big lie technique. (Note to Vern and Ryan: The political need to appear anti-capitalist is not so pressing for McCarthy as it was for Hitler, who faced a Social Democratic and Communist movement having millions of members and influencing tens of millions more.) The links already formed between him and the conscious fascist groupings about the country, the racists, Legionnaires, and so on, project in no direction except the formation of gangs such as formed around Hague and Coughlin. (Here, I must observe that it would be the most criminal irresponsibility to assure the Jews, Negroes and foreign born, as do Vern and Ryan, that American fascism does not have "a pre-determined attitude" toward them -- that it might not even be officially "anti-USSR or anti-Stalinist"! To make such assurances would be nothing less than to assist in disarming the first prospective victims of McCarthyism.)

How impelling these tendencies become will depend finally of course upon far greater forces than the McCarthyite movement in and of itself. The political resolution considers these in the order of their importance. First of all, is America's world position. If you grant that America's relative world position has been seriously weakened by the development of revolutionary movements abroad, then with iron logic it follows that this weakening will have a domestic reflex in greatly heightened economic, social, and political tensions. But after the experience of two world wars and the depression of the thirties, this can only signify a mortal crisis for American capitalism.

The socialist solution is put on the order of the day. But both theory and experience teaches that the American capitalist class can be expected to put up the most desperate resistance, and even choose a suicidal course analogous to that taken by the German bourgeoisie. The growth of McCarthyism, expressing the anguish and despair of the middle class, would begin to press actively on Big Business, seeking a decision from the ruling class to turn to action. Under such conditions it would be foolhardy to say in advance that Big Business would not yield to the pressure and go down to their doom eyes shut, but dragging a great deal along with them.

Fortunately for America and the world, Big Business and McCarthyism will not come to that unchallenged. American labor will be granted its historic opportunity and will surely justify the judgment of every great Marxist that it is the most dynamic in the world. And the American Trotskyists will do their part to assure success by offering a program of action based on a truly scientific analysis of the reality we face. That happens to include a correct analysis of McCarthyism as the American form of fascism.

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DISCUSSION ON DRAFT RESOLUTION ON POLITICAL SITUATION - RE: PAGE
31, PARAGRAPHS 5 and 6.

By D. Lessing, Detroit

I was hoping that this pre-convention discussion would have included a separate resolution on women. The change in the status of women in America during the past 50 years seems worthy of a detailed analysis. But I think we will have the opportunity to have some preliminary discussions on this question in connection with forthcoming internal bulletins on related questions. In this discussion I am concerned with the subject as it is raised in the Draft Resolution on the Political Situation in America. In the section entitled Struggle for Power which analyzes the objective struggle against fascism, the resolution poses the question of women. (pp. 20-21). It discusses the revolutionary potential of this group. In developing this point it makes note of the increased participation of women as a permanent part of the labor force.

The economic necessities of war-time production and post-war inflation combined with the instability of family situations have forced women, either as heads of families or contributors to necessary family income to become permanent workers. In 1953, one-third of the labor force of the country were women. Half of these women were married. 27% of all married women were working. More than 3.6 million women were heads of families. These figures indicate the stage of growth of a trend which started in World War I. There are now approximately three million women in unions. Their ability to respond to the class struggle when given a road was proven by the telephone gals in '46 and the Square D gals in '54. These working women have also been accumulating an experience of struggle and organization on other less dramatic levels. In the shops and through the unions, fights have taken place for equal pay for equal work, against job discrimination, for rest rooms, health conditions and maternity leaves and benefits. An increasing number of women have become stewards, officers of unions. The presence and activity of the women in the shops forced many unions to take up their demands as housewives -- for nurseries and shopping centers near the plants, etc. And the women are prepared to fight against being relegated to the "kitchen" because the economy can now get along without them. The full-time working-class housewives, taking a cue from their union sisters organized neighborhood boycotts on the high cost of food, struggles against high rents, fights for free lunches for school children and similar demands.

This developing consciousness of the need for organized struggle and their increasing independence which grows with the participation of women as part of the working class has been reflected in our party by (1) the weekly columns of the paper which have posed the problems of working women and the need for organized action around concrete slogans which it has raised. (2) The growing participation of our woman unionists in leading the fight in their shops for maternity clauses, committees for women's rights. (3) The increased activities and responsibilities taken on by the women comrades. (4) The widespread interest throughout the party in the important theoretical contributions on the role of women in society published in the magazine.

Though the section in the resolution on this changing status of women is rather sketchy, in the main it poses correctly the contradiction between women's growing independence as workers in a society which must deny them complete equality because it is not consonant with the economic and social basis of its functioning. And correctly states that the working class must win the women to their side. To me, this would indicate that the resolution would somewhere point out the road towards winning the American women workers for the revolution. Would somewhere pose the demands which would raise the political consciousness of the women and fuse their fight with that of the working class. During the past period our women unionists have been raising such demands. The Buffalo housewives committee on surplus food shows another possibility in methods of organizing women workers to class action. There are other media, such as PTA's, tenant organizations and neighborhood centers through which such actions could be organized.

The period we live in with growing unemployment, high cost of living and the threat of war and fascism necessitates increasing struggles of the women for their needs as workers, housewives and mothers. Their experience of the past 14 years in unions has developed their capacity for organized action. Many full-time working-class housewives have shown their willingness to raise demands in an organized manner. The party, taking cognizance of these factors, must intervene, leading and assisting the women workers in their struggles. This point is not made in the resolution. For this reason, I would like to suggest that the two paragraphs in the section on SWP that deal with women be deleted. (Page 31, par. 5 and 6) These paragraphs speak of party women, their role in the past period; and seem to indicate that we will recruit women through the example of the complete equality that exists in the party between the sexes. I think this approach is basically incorrect. These two paragraphs should be replaced by a concrete program aimed at participating in and raising the level of women's struggles; something along the following lines:

"The experience of American working women in the past 14 years has developed their capacity for organized action for their special demands. Our present period with growing unemployment, high prices, lowering of the standard of living and the threat of war and fascism means a fight by women to maintain and extend the gains already made. The SWP and its women must take advantage of every possible means of helping to organize and leading the working women and working-class housewives in their struggle for:

1) The Right to Work: This demand takes on special importance with the instability of employment. Under this demand is included the fight for Equal Pay For Equal Work, against discrimination in hiring and upgrading, for equal opportunities in job training, equal treatment in compensation cases. Our slogans for full employment through "30 for 40" and nationalization of industries under workers' control can appeal particularly to the women as they are among the first to be pushed out of their jobs.

2) Lightening The Burden of The Working Mother: This is really an extension of the demand for the right to work and includes struggles for maternity leaves, compensation for pregnancy

and post-natal joblessness, tax exemptions for working mothers, nursery facilities provided free, adequate free mental and physical health care for all children.

3) Decent Standard of Living: As treasurer of the family budget working women and working-class housewives can be organized to fight against high prices and for adequate and low cost housing.

4) Against the War: As mothers, working women and working-class housewives are naturals for participation in fight against plans of American imperialists to drag us into war as a solution to their economic problems.

With increasing participation in such struggles, women workers and housewives will become increasingly conscious of the limitations placed upon their struggle for equality by the economic system. In the course of these struggles the most advanced of them will be won to the party and its revolutionary struggle for socialism, for only with the successful conclusion of this struggle will the groundwork be laid for the full and complete equality of the sexes.

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