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FOR A STABLE UNITY ON THE BASIS OF MARXIST PRINCIPLES!

(An Open Letter to the NC Plenum from
S. Ryan, Esther Patrick and Bernie Freedman)

To the Plenum of the SWP National Committee,

Dear Comrades,

This letter to your plenum is immediately motivated by the information, currently circulating in the SWP, that the Cannon-Weiss caucus will propose, and the NC accept, a position critical of the IEC's new resolution on Stalinism.

As you may know, the undersigned comrades have been, from the beginning outspokenly and unambiguously critical of the IEC and the Third World Congress; and it is not our purpose here to defend the IEC's resolution against your criticism.

The new resolution of the IEC is a logical extension of its buffer zone resolution (adopted by the Third World Congress), of its Chinese resolution, of the non-Marxist conceptions and methods which the World Congress unleashed and nourished. As such the new resolution of the IEC continues this non-Marxian line and logically produces a resolution which constitutes another clear and unmistakable capitulation to Stalinism.

You intend, apparently, to oppose at last, this Stalinist conciliationism. (It would have been better, of course, if you had acted long ago: the long silence of the Cannon-Weiss leadership has allowed the Stalinist conciliationism of the IEC to find considerable support in the Fourth International.)

Stalinist conciliationism, comrades of the NC, can be opposed in the SWP from two main points of view. As you oppose the resolution of the IEC it would be well for you to be aware of this: Stalinist conciliationism can be opposed either from the social democratic point of view (that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary) or from the Leninist-Trotskyist point of view (that Stalinism plays a dual role, both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary).

Both positions oppose conciliation with the Soviet Bureaucracy or with its instruments, the various communist parties. Both positions hold that Stalinism cannot be reformed into a Marxist movement.

The social democratic opposition to Stalinism, however, has never been either consistent or ultimately effective. The Social Democrats internationally have always supplied a considerable body of recruits for Stalinism; and the official leaders of Social Democracy, in Czechoslovakia, Spain, France, Russia or Poland have always discovered, once Stalinism was in power or powerful, that the Social Democrats and the Stalinists were in actuality brothers under the skin.

In accord with this general law, we have seen that the loudest proponents in the SWP of the social-democratic doctrine that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary were also, illogically it might appear, the loudest proponents of support to the party and government of Mao-Tse-Tung -- (as opposed to the Leninist conception of supporting only certain actions and measures) -- supported the IEC against the in most ways superior faction of Eleibreu, and yelled

and loud against the "sectarianism" of those of us who would not consider that the Chinese CP was about to lead a "demonstration" of proletarian power in China or had placed itself upon the "plane of Marxism-Leninism."

The Stalinist conciliationism of these Cannon-Weiss comrades, which might appear illogical to many, stems from the social-democratic conception that they hold: that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary.

In its turn, the Stalinist conciliationism of the IEC and its closest co-thinkers in this country stems, at an earlier date, from the same identical source.

What actually separates these two factions? Both are conciliatory to Mao-Tse-Tung just as both were previously conciliatory to Tito. Both support the liquidation of the Trotskyist parties in China and France into the movements of Chinese and French Stalinism. Both oppose the traditional unrevised Trotskyist conceptions.

What actually separates these two factions? Only this: the faction of Stalinism-is-completely-counter-revolutionary insists that Chinese and Yugoslav Stalinism "changed" just as they think French Stalinism will "change" tomorrow; they consider it impossible, however, for Soviet or American Stalinism to change.

The proponents of Stalinism-is-or-may-become-completely-revolutionary support -- in fact they inaugurated -- the concepts that all these Stalinist parties "changed"; however logically and consistently they now hold, apparently, that Soviet Stalinism can likewise "change." (They have not yet revealed such a conception for America.)

In this not so very important difference is found the only difference in the political line of the two positions. If the basic premises of both factions -- better said, if the absence of any basic premises characteristic of both factions -- is ever accepted, then all logic is upon the side of Pablo-Clarke-Cochran. If Yugoslav, Chinese and French Stalinism can "change," why not Russian?

Nor is it any more fantastic to posit today that American Stalinism can likewise in the future "change" and lead the American revolution than it would have been in 1937 to make the same prediction for China. When either or both factions get around to making this prediction for America it will be impossible to refute it on the basis of the present common position of the FI and the two factions.

The social democratic doctrine that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary not only produced the original conciliationism of the IEC and the World Congress, not only impelled leaders of the Cannon-Weiss caucus into pro-Stalinist positions themselves, but is today entirely inadequate for arresting or correcting the sizable trend of elements within the Fourth International in the direction of Stalinism.

Both the doctrine that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary and the doctrine that Stalinism is or may become completely revolutionary have a common methodological basis: they are both empirical, that is, both positions are taken without reference to

basic Marxian theory, both concepts are flatly and crassly in contradiction to the basic materialist dialectic and to the Leninist conceptions of the state. Both positions are founded simply upon what appears to be true at a given time and place. (Both Max Goldman of the firm of Cannon-Weiss and Harry Frankel of the competing combine brush aside the Marxian laws with a common proverb, the inevitable hand maiden of empiricism: theory is grey but life is green).

The new decision of the Cannon-Weiss caucus must inevitably pose the possibility of a split. The two tendencies, empirical to the core, have no possibility, along these present lines, of convincing one another. The fact that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary is as indubitable and as evident in the "green life" of our time, as is the equally obvious and indisputable fact that Stalinism is also revolutionary. Only the assertion, by a united leadership, not of various aspects of reality (definitions by description), but of basic Marxian concepts can hope to ideologically convince the members of both caucuses and thus avoid what could only be a disastrous split.

* * *

The present Stalinist conciliationism in the SWP and the Fourth International must be clearly recognized for exactly what it is. It must be recognized for what it is and for nothing more than that. Comrades Frankel, Clarke, Bartell and Pablo are certainly not long time Stalinist borers-from-within at last revealing themselves. They have not been purchased with a ship load of Russian rubles. They have not consciously decided that Trotsky was simply a romantic dabbler in politics whereas Stalin was its realistic master. Neither, apparently, have these comrades become insane.

Whence then, the present conciliation with Stalinism?

The present Stalinist conciliationism of these comrades is a by no means entirely reprehensible reaction to the history of the past decade. The Soviet Bureaucracy of, say, 1940 -- (it was a Stalinist bureaucracy, wasn't it) -- fumbled its way into the Nazi-Soviet war bur organized the defense of the USSR against Hitler. Sucked into Eastern Europe -- (but still Stalinist) -- it destroyed the buffer zone bourgeoisie. The Yugoslav Communist Party of, say, 1940 -- (that was a Stalinist party, wasn't it?) -- created at a later day the Partisan Army and conquered power in Yugoslavia. The Chinese Communist Party of 1944 -- (surely a Stalinist party) -- conducted the civil war against Chiang Kai-shek, conquered power in China, and is closing the country to imperialist exploitation.

Anyone who seriously desired the defense and victory of the USSR, anyone dedicated to the destruction of private property in Eastern Europe or to the proletarian revolution in China cannot help but view with some sympathy and with some feeling of support these achievements of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its instruments.

Precisely here arises the Stalinist conciliation of the IEC and its supporters, precisely here does their revolutionary devotion, uncontrolled by Marxian science, lead them into illusions about the Stalinist bureaucracy and its parties.

The reaction of Pablo, Clarke and Cochran is in no way inferior to the reaction of the Cannon-Weiss caucus which simply ignore the decisive events of our time, which denied for as long as was humanly possible (and for even longer than that) the revolutionary nature of these events, which voted as late as 1950, with a majority of the NC, that all the Eastern European states were bourgeois, including Yugoslavia (that was certainly a big asset in building an independent party in Yugoslavia, wasn't it) which condemned and slandered the revolution-war thesis of Comrade Marcy, and has within its caucus people who even today consider the Chinese state bourgeois.

The Stalinist conciliation of Pablo, Clarke, Cochran, etc., is by no means inferior to the line of Cannon-Weiss.

Cannon-Weiss can produce, and the NC accept, a hundred resolutions branding Stalinism as completely counter-revolutionary and we firmly believe -- (and hope!) -- that a hundred times will revolutionary workers, in and out of the party, disbelieve and reject that decision.

Cannon-Weiss can produce a resolution branding Stalinism as completely counter-revolutionary. The NC can accept that resolution: the Cannon-Weiss caucus apparently has sufficient "no matter what" votes to achieve this. That will not however make Stalinism in fact "completely" counter-revolutionary. Still existent will be the revolution in the property relations of Eastern Europe; still existent will be the property relations established in Russia by October; still existent will be the necessity of defending these against the looming assault of imperialism; still existent will be the workers state in Russia, the buffers, Yugoslavia and China.

The NC can vote that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary; the real world, however, has more frequently than not failed to evolve in accord with the decisions of the NC. Stalinism, today and tomorrow, will continue to play a dual role, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary both: against the imperialist bourgeoisie the Bureaucracy and its instruments will continue to perform actions and take positions which are, in their way, progressive and revolutionary; along with this and intermixed with it will be the Bureaucracy's counter-revolutionary hostility to Marxism and its counter-position to the proletariat.

You can vote that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary but that fact will not make Stalinism behave in a completely counter-revolutionary manner. Your decision will win you the support or the sympathy of the shame-faced Shachtmanites on the NC, of the Shachtmanites of Labor Action -- (and did you know that they very clearly support Cannon-Weiss against the Cochran-Clarke minority?) -- of the Johnsonites in and outside of the party, of the Social Democrats and the McCarthy conscious liberals, none of whom give a tinkers dam about the defense of the USSR or the sovietization of Yugoslavia, the buffers or China.

But revolutionary elements, dedicated to the destruction of capitalism, but without the wisdom and the temper which only Marxian science can supply, will continue to seize upon the revolutionary aspects of Stalinism, be unaware of the inalterable character of its

counter-revolutionary aspects, and in this way lose themselves in the swamp of Stalinist conciliationism.

As a temporary makeshift in the internal faction fight the doctrine that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary may serve the immediate aims of Cannon-Weiss caucus leaders. As the platform for the maintenance of an isolated -- if shrilly independent -- sect it is indispensable.

For the salvation of revolutionary elements, for their harmonious fusion into an independent party of Marxian theory and Leninist action it is worthless.

The doctrine that Stalinism is or may become completely revolutionary is an empirical if well intentioned reaction to the history of the last decade.

The doctrine, on the other hand, that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary is an equally well intentioned and equally empirical reaction to the history of the preceding two decades.

The empiricism of Stalinism-is-completely-counter-revolutionary logically evolved into the empiricism of Stalinism is or may become completely revolutionary. The basic empiricism remains unchanged. What has changed are the external circumstances in which Stalinism exists; what has changed are the particular, partial features of Stalinism to which the empiricism of the two concepts is devoted.

In this sense, the only decisive one, Comrade Cannon is actually Comrade Pablo's legitimate father; Cannon must necessarily regard Pablo as simply "a crazy mixed up kid" (devoting his attention to Stalinist led revolutions) whereas to Pablo Cannon cannot but appear as "an old foggy" (devoting his attention to the destruction of Marxism in the Soviet Union, the Moscow Trials and the murder of Trotsky).

The basic empiricism of the two positions, the basic disregard for any fundamental, principled or scientific approach (which has always been the trademark of both Social Democracy and Stalinism and of the "neo"-movements approaching them) consists, in this case, of a basic revisionism of Leninism on the state and of Trotskyism on the workers state.

For three years now the Vern-Ryan tendency and their supporters have waged a struggle for the "resuscitation" not only of Lenin on the state but of Trotsky on the workers state. To this struggle for the principled foundations of Leninism the leaders of both caucuses have turned an obdurate, an insensate, and a so far impenetrable silence. But Stalinism cannot be understood without a previous understanding of the Soviet Bureaucracy. The Soviet Bureaucracy is incomprehensible without an understanding of the workers state. The workers state, in its turn, is inexplicable without an understanding of the state in general.

We intend in the near future, to devote a more extended article to these matters. In the present circumstances it is temporarily sufficient to simply "resuscitate" Lenin's conceptions of the state, and Trotsky's conception of the workers state. It is necessary to

"resuscitate" these teachings, previously resuscitated by Lenin himself from the disregarded writings of Marx and Engels, not in order to straighten out the meaning of a word, but in order to resuscitate a conception, an analysis, an intention, a drive, and a strategical concept which is the essence of Leninism-Trotskyism.

We quoted once before from "State and Revolution" the Leninist conception of the state -- any state -- as "bodies of armed men with material auxiliaries in the forms of prisons, etc.," "the product of irreconcilable class antagonisms" and "an instrument of the ruling class."

We quoted the generalized definition of Lenin: "Take the theoretical formulation of the question. The state even in the democratic republic is nothing more nor less than a machine for the suppression of one class by another."

The theoretical formulation of the question! Nothing more, nothing more, NOTHING MORE! Nothing more nor less than a machine of suppression of one class by another.

In his writings Comrade Trotsky many times reasserted this basic conception. In Whither France he wrote, "Friedrich Engels once wrote that the State, including the democratic republic, consists of detachments of armed men in defense of property; everything else serves only to embellish or camouflage this fact. Eloquent champions of 'Law' like Herriot or Blum always became incensed at such cynicism. But both Hitler and de la Rocque, each in his own domain have once again demonstrated that Engels is correct." (p. 122)

Detachments of armed men in defense of property! Everything else, everything else, EVERYTHING ELSE serves only as camouflage or embellishment.

Quite a few more or less "eloquent champions" in and out of the NC have frequently become as incensed as Herriot and Blum at this "cynicism."

But the fact that this is actually the Leninist-Trotskyist conception of the state is confirmed, indeed, by none other than Cannon himself who wrote, in one of his most recent political efforts, "The negative attitude toward the state -- the ostrich policy of ignoring the state -- disarmed the (syndicalist) movement when this same state -- 'the executive committee of the capitalist class' and its 'special bodies of armed men' -- was hurled against it." (Introduction by J. P. Cannon to Trotsky's Communism and Syndicalism.)

The application of the Leninist-Trotskyist conception of the state is of particular importance for the Soviet Union.

If you hold to Lenin's definition of the state as a machine of suppression, as bodies of armed men with material auxiliaries, as a repressive apparatus, then the only state that could possibly exist in the SU at the present moment consists of the Red Army and the GPU, the slave labor camps and the concentration camps, Vishinsky's "justice," and the bureaucrats who control and staff these things.

Either there is no state in Russia, or else these Stalinized repressive instruments constitute a state. This is an inevitable conclusion flowing from the Leninist conception of the state.

Refusing to face these conclusions the comrades have, instead rejected the Leninist theory on the state. Where Lenin said nothing more nor less than a machine of suppression, the comrades are constrained to add a little something, and sometime not so little, to the Leninist conception. In accord with that basic revision one of the leaders of the Cannon-Weiss caucus in Los Angeles declared: "If you hold to the classic Leninist theory of the state you wind up with the Vern position." (This comrade's opposition is clearly worth ten times as much as his support.) Another member of this caucus branded Lenin's conception as "a squeezed out theory of the state." He himself makes it more juicy with a few social democratic additions. Still another leading member of the Cannon-Weiss caucus declared at a general meeting: "If Lenin were alive today he would change much of what he wrote about the state."

If Cannon-Weiss were alive today they would repudiate such support.

The revised theory of the state has received a more or less explicit formulation in at least two quarters. There is the Pablo definition which we have discussed before: "the orthodox Trotskyist tendency uses the term workers state in a very precise sense: to indicate a society whose formation was not possible without the revolutionary action of the masses (and occasionally comes about by the military-bureaucratic action of the Soviet Bureaucracy) and whose property relations are characterized by a general stratification of the means of production." (Our emphasis.)

Pablo, with that conception of the workers state, is today a supporter of the doctrine that Stalinism may become completely revolutionary.

The same definition of the state was previously produced in the SWP during the 1940 fight between Trotsky and the petty-bourgeois opposition. On page 4 of Internal Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 9, Jan. 1940, we find the following: "If by a workers state we mean that form of society transitional from capitalism to socialism, then Russia today can be considered a workers state only on the basis of its nationalized economy."

The author of these revisionist lines is Prof. James Burnham. With that conception of the workers state Burnham considers, then and now, that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary.

With the same anti-Leninist theory of the state Pablo logically arrives at one opinion and Burnham just as logically arrived at its apparently diametrical opposite.

The revised theory of the state denies the Stalinist apparatus the "honor" of being regarded as a workers state. The state in the Soviet Union -- (a workers state, of course; see in all those places Trotsky said so!) -- is considered to exist not in the machine of suppression, but somewhere else, and that "somewhere else" is just

about anywhere and, like all their opinions, subject to change without notice. The state in the SU has been claimed to exist in property relations, in nationalized property, in the Red Army (but not in the Bureaucracy controlling it), and even -- fantastic as it sounds -- in the consciousness of the masses.

Finding the state anywhere and everywhere except where Lenin found it, the comrades, in actuality, ignore the real state. Here is the social democratic essence of the doctrine that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary. In order not to call the Stalinist repressive apparatus a state, and thus, as Trotsky declared, a workers state, the comrades taught themselves to simply ignore the state.

The comrades ignored, and still ignore, the state. The state does not for that reason either disappear in a flash, wither away, or cease to have its crucial, decisive importance. They ignore the state, but the state exists and plays its decisive role. It plays its decisive role in the Soviet Union, in the buffer countries, in China and Yugoslavia. The state exists -- in this country and in all countries -- and, as Lenin wrote: "The decisive question in any revolution is power in the state. (Our emphasis.) Without an understanding of this question there can be no talk even of intelligent participation in a revolution much less conscious leadership of it." (On Dual Power.)

The World Congress resolution on the buffer countries, supported by both factions, ignored the role of the state in effecting the change in property relations in Eastern Europe; the resolution considers that as the property relations changed the state also changed its class character from bourgeois to proletarian (certainly a social democratic consideration).

The World Congress refused to declare the present Chinese state either bourgeois or proletarian. Ignoring the state the World Congress resolution, nevertheless declared that China was on the road to a completely planned and collectivized economy. How the state can be ignored but planning by the state and ownership by the state said to be on the way is something that nobody on this or the other side of the Atlantic could ever explain.

The IEC's resolution on China, becoming slightly more specific, still ignored the state -- ignored it, this is to say, by simply calling it "dual" that is, of both or neither class, and by concentrating attention upon "the workers and peasants government" a thing which can be considered as actually existing only if the state itself is ignored. (Certainly one of the Stalinist considerations. Remember what they did with the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry?)

The leadership of both factions ignored "the machine of suppression" and concentrated, in their fashion, upon the economy, society, property relations, mass consciousness, etc.

We would consider that we were also epigones if we did not in this connection refer again to Bolivia. We have taken up this matter in more detail elsewhere (see the two articles of S. Ryan of June 1952

and Aug. 1953, Internal Bulletins Vol. 14, No. 1 and Vol. 15, No. 17.) The social-democratic policy -- (in Cannon's words "the ostrich policy of ignoring the state") -- has produced strange and terrible consequences in Bolivia.

Facts are very often harsh and cruel. The task of a revolutionist nevertheless, is to say what is. If, toward the buffer countries, Yugoslavia and China, the Fourth International simply elaborated after the events, and apart from them, an analysis of the events which betrayed Marxian theory, in Bolivia the Fourth International is betraying a living revolution of the proletariat.

In Bolivia also, the Fourth International has ignored the state. Where Lenin saw the decisive question as the question of power in the state, the leaders of the POR -- (are they of the Cannon-Weiss, or the Cochran-Clarke tendency? And what difference does it make?) -- saw the decisive question as the nationalization of the tin mines. In pursuit of this hardly political objective they gave political support to the Paz Estensora state -- the executive committee of the capitalist class, aided in the restabilization of the shaken bourgeois power, and are setups now awaiting the inevitable blows of the counter-revolution.

The somewhat less than heroic support given the Bolivian proletariat by the SWP consisted in the paper's demand that the Paz Estensora government, (the directing summits of the executive committee of the Bolivian capitalist class) be "recognized" by Wall Street's State department as the legitimate ruler of Bolivia. And we won another of our "victories," we suppose, when Wall Street did just that. Who's kidding whom? Apart from this "support" -- (to the Bolivian proletariat or to the executive committee of Bolivian capitalism?) -- the line of both caucuses has been to shield the Bolivian POR from criticism, to lull the party with the assurance that "all is well" and, in general to do as much as they can do, considering who they are and where they are, to prevent a Leninist line in Bolivia.

All of this is a consequence -- a logical and inevitable if tragic and unintentional consequence -- of the social-democratic doctrine that the Stalinist apparatus, a workers state, is completely counter-revolutionary.

Unrevised Trotskyism (in Los Angeles called "Vernism") opposes the Bolivian line and in conformity with Lenin and Trotsky declare: "Socialism can advance the most scientific program" -- (for the nationalization of the tin mines?) -- "but its value will be equal to zero if the vanguard of the proletariat does not unfold a bold struggle to capture the state." (Read: capture the repressive apparatus.) "The social crisis in its political expression is the crisis of power. The old master of society is bankrupt. A new master is needed." (Whither France, p. 46.)

The original doctrine, empirical and subjective, that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary, has raised to dangerous, to disastrous proportions, a deep-going departure from Leninism in both wings of the Fourth International. The comrades have been either too lazy or too cautious to publicly and openly revise Leninism-Trotskyism:

instead they have eviscerated it. The trademark of this evisceration is the feature, common to both tendencies, of simply ignoring the state.

Restoring the state to our consciousness in its unrevised, unadulterated Leninist outlines is not only a first, unavoidable requirement for salvaging the Bolivian revolution but also for the prevention of additional confusing and debilitating splits in the Fourth International.

Ignoring the state, unwilling and unable to conceive the Stalinist apparatus not only as a bureaucracy endowed to an extent with its own interests and appetites and thus, to an extent, with its own movement, but also as a state endowed with the general and basic evolution of a workers state in the particular circumstances of revolutionary Russia, the comrades of both tendencies thereby cut themselves away from a Marxist approach to the Soviet Bureaucracy and to Stalinism.

In the absence of any coherent or concise conception, the Soviet Bureaucracy, and its ideology, are referred to variously as a "parasite," as "cancer" or as "syphillis." As analogies these are sometimes not incorrect and are even helpful. The state -- any state -- in an historical sense is a parasite which the classless societies of communism will dispense with. As a state the Soviet Bureaucracy is certainly a parasite. As a privileged bureaucracy it has unquestionably grown far beyond what was historically necessary for the bureaucracy as a state, and thus it is unquestionably analogous to cancer; masking its privileges with the claim of socialism and prostituting Marxism to the defense of its interests as a bureaucracy, the bureaucracy is analogous to syphillis.

But these are simply analogies: in actual fact the Soviet Bureaucracy is not simply a parasite, nor a disease; it does not fully correspond to these concepts and it does not obey the general laws that control these categories.

Analogies, helpful and appropriate in explaining many of our ideas to more or less backward workers, are simply foolish when used as substitutes for basic conceptions.

If Stalinism is syphillis pure and simple, then syphillis is equally Stalinism: we fervently hope that the NC members lead clean and careful lives; otherwise, contracting this disease, they would have to treat it...with the construction of a Leninist party and political revolution. Paresis could very well come first.

The matter is at one and the same time exquisitely simple and excruciatingly difficult. If the Bureaucracy was, instead, the planet Venus the astronomers could plot its future development with almost mathematical precision. If the Bureaucracy was simply a certain day in April the meteorologists could tell us, with a high degree of accuracy, whether it would blow hot or cold. If the Bureaucracy was simply a small sardine in the mighty Pacific its future activity and condition could be foretold with general accuracy.

Until it is known, however, just exactly what the Bureaucracy is, it is impossible to understand either its present activity or its future evolution.

The two documents on Stalinism by Comrades Hansen and Frankel fully illustrate this difficulty. The empiricism of Hansen produces the rather vague conception: "a petty-bourgeois formation." This not only does not link Hansen with the Marxian doctrine but definitively cuts him away from it. Marxism knows petty-bourgeois formations, and if Hansen was simply referring to the ideas, interests or intentions of the Soviet Bureaucracy we would not object (though bourgeois would, in this respect, be superior to petty bourgeois). But a "petty-bourgeois formation" which, in Hansen's own words, "operated civil war like a flame thrower" in Eastern Europe, a petty-bourgeois formation that exists, not on the basis of private property, but on the basis of collectivized economy, which not only exists on this basis but achieved the same basis in Eastern Europe -- that, Comrade Hansen, is a "petty bourgeois" formation in full and flat contradiction to Marxism.

The empiricism of Comrade Frankel -- (an empiricism, we must say, of a very high order, in no sense ignorant, intellectually quite honest, and apparently unaffected by the McCarthy conscious atmosphere) -- produced, in its turn, the conception: "a labor bureaucracy." We are in no sense opposing this (although if Frankel has gone on to say "our bureaucracy," as has been reported, meaning by "our" something more than simply "labor," we will certainly oppose that). But the definition "a labor bureaucracy" clearly lacks sufficient preciseness: there are "labor" bureaucracies in all the trade unions, in the anarchist and Social-Democratic Parties, and even if you please, in the SWP. A class can no more exist without a bureaucracy or bureaucracies than it can exist without leadership. To call the Soviet Bureaucracy a labor bureaucracy is not incorrect, but it in no way distinguishes this particular bureaucracy from hundreds of others quite different.

Comrade Frankel knows that this "labor bureaucracy" is the only existing repressive apparatus in Russia, that this bureaucracy consists simply of a certain number of "bodies of armed men" in the Red Army and GPU with "material auxiliaries" in the form of concentration camps and prisons, that the planners and the directors can plan and direct only because they also plan for and direct these "detachments of armed men."

What twisted devotion to empiricism is it which prevents the recognition that this labor bureaucracy is a state, a state moreover which by its relation to the forms of property in the means of production is revealed as a workers state? Even a brief acquaintance with the fundamental methodology of Marxism would "yield this as its first and main result."

The Soviet repressive apparatus is a workers state, of course, degenerated. It will evolve, not in accord with the laws of petty-bourgeois formations, and not in accord with the laws of just any "labor bureaucracy" but in accord with the basic Marxian laws describing the evolution of workers states. As Engels once wrote, we can consider a shoe brush as a mammal without the shoe brush for that reason developing lacteal glands. You can consider the Soviet Bureaucracy as anything in the world that the NC majority will vote for --

as a venereal disease or a Russian version of the Capone mob -- but it will nevertheless continue to evolve as a workers state.

The general laws of motion of the workers state have been set down in concise form only by Trotsky and, to a lesser extent, by Lenin. The almost perfect record of Comrade Trotsky in respect to the evolution of the Soviet Bureaucracy, in which Trotsky charted the development of the Bureaucracy with almost the same exactitude with which astronomers have charted planetary motion, is an incontrovertible testimony to the correctness of his method; just as the almost entirely incorrect prognosis of both wings of the NC, over the last ten years, is an equally incontrovertible testimony to the worthlessness of their methodology.

In the article "The USSR in War" Trotsky wrote: "In the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state it is not the general laws of modern society from capitalism to socialism which find expression but a special, exceptional and temporary refraction of those laws under the conditions of a backward revolutionary country in a capitalist environment." (Defense of Marxism, p. 7.)

Debating Vern in Los Angeles Murry Weiss -- ("I'm in the arms of Pablo already; lets get started from there") -- read this paragraph from Trotsky to prove...that the degeneration of the Soviet state was, as Weiss emphasized, "exceptional!" But Comrade Trotsky does not say that. Trotsky very clearly says that the degeneration of the Soviet state is an expression of a "special, temporary and exceptional refraction" of the general laws from capitalism to socialism. Where Comrade Trotsky makes the general laws the starting point for his analysis, Weiss nonchalantly lays them aside; where Trotsky formulàted "refractions of the general laws" which govern the Stalinist degeneration, Weiss says "Exceptional!" (and assigns the whole thing to the realm of demonology).

The break of Weiss and Co. from the methodology and doctrine of Trotskyism, evident in almost everything they say, is crystal clear in this respect.

"The general laws" of evolution from capitalism to socialism was formulated by Trotsky (and Lenin and Engels). In The Revolution Betrayed Trotsky writes: "The proletarian dictatorship is a bridge between the bourgeois and the socialist society. In its very essence, therefore, it bears a temporary character. An incidental but very essential task of the state which realizes the dictatorship of the proletariat consists in preparing for its own dissolution." (Page 52. All following quotations here are on pages 52, 53 and 54.)

Comrade Trotsky's formulation of these general laws cannot but be incomprehensible to anyone with the Pablo-Burnham theory of the state: the dictatorship of the proletariat is a "bridge between" capitalism and socialism and consequently a form of society. This form of society, however, is realized, that is created and developed, by a state, a workers state, which, in developing the dictatorship of the proletariat into socialist society, "incidentally" makes itself, a repressive apparatus, unnecessary; the workers state thus prepares for its own dissolution.

The Pablo-Burnham theory of the state simply regards the state as a certain form of society; it ignores the actual state, the repressive apparatus. The Pablo-Burnham conception thus cuts its followers away from the general laws of evolution of society from capitalism to socialism. Here again we find the common empiricism of the two factions as the chief stumbling block on the road to an understanding of the Soviet Bureaucracy and Stalinism.

Trotsky quotes Engels: "When together with class domination and the struggle for individual existence created by the present anarchy in production, those conflicts and excesses which result from this struggle disappear, from that time on there will be nothing to suppress, and there will be no need for a special instrument of suppression, the state." (Our emphasis.) Comment is superfluous.

To the empirical glance of Comrade Weiss it certainly appears that these general laws of society from capitalism to socialism are not manifested in the Soviet Union. The state not only has not withered away, has not begun to wither away, but has grown, in fact, to a previously unheard of instrument of suppression. Clearly, then the general laws are no good! This state, or disease, or bandit gang, is exceptional!

Instead of science Weiss has recourse to demonology.

Trotsky didn't. Trotsky didn't abandon the Marxian laws; he elaborated instead the special refraction of these laws, and the other laws responsible for the "refraction."

"The philistine considers the gendarme (the state) an eternal institution." (Like society?) "In reality the gendarme will bridle mankind only until man shall thoroughly bridle nature. In order that the state should disappear 'class domination' and the struggle for individual existence must disappear. Engels joins these two conditions together for in the perspective of changing social regimes a few decades amount to nothing.

"But the thing looks different to those generations that bear the weight of a revolution. It is true that capitalist anarchy creates the struggle of each against all, but the trouble is that a socialization of the means of production does not yet automatically remove 'the struggle for individual existence.' That is the nub of the question."

In order that the workers state should wither away it is necessary that class domination and the individual struggle for existence should disappear. (What formal logic! Shouldn't Comrade Myra Weiss "correct" Trotsky in accord with her "dialectics"? Or has she already?) These two conceptions are joined in the general law of the transition to socialism which in Trotsky's conception require decades. The two conceptions must, however, be separated in the conceptions of those generations that bear the weight of a revolution. The socialization of the means of production, ending class domination, is unable automatically and at once to end the individual struggle for existence. And that is even "the nub of the question."

It is clear here, as it is clear elsewhere, that those comrades, presently in the Cannon-Weiss caucus, who claim that Trotsky made a

"fetish" of nationalized property simply do not know what they are talking about. They should not be "quarantined" but re-educated: it is true, says Trotsky, that capitalist anarchy creates the struggle of each against all, but the trouble is that a socialization of the means of production does not yet automatically remove the struggle for individual existence; that is the nub of the question.

Where is the fetish? Comrade A.P. of Detroit, apparently a supporter of Cannon-Weiss, should read Trotsky before accusing him of economism. We respect A.P. for his correct, and even for his incorrect, political conceptions, so welcome a contrast to the usual economic determinism. However, in regard to nationalized economy, which A.P. simply calls "state capitalism" and which Cannon-Weiss call "a workers state," it is A.P. himself and the Cannon-Weiss caucus who make a fetish of the nationalized or state capitalist economy and either ignore or oppose the political conceptions and implications of the workers state. If A.P. thinks about the matter, he will see his error; with Cannon-Weiss it may be more difficult.

A socialization of the means of production does not yet remove the struggle for individual existence and that is the nub of the question. It is here that the general laws of the dissolution of the workers state are refracted, that is, made operable, but in a somewhat distorted fashion.

"A socialist state even in America," says Trotsky, "on the basis of the most advanced capitalism could not immediately provide everyone with as much as he needs and would, therefore, be compelled to spur everyone to produce as much as possible. The duty of stimulator in these circumstances naturally falls to the state, which in its turn cannot but resort with various changes and mitigations to the method of labor payment worked out by capitalism. It was in this sense that Marx wrote in 1875: 'Bourgeois law is inevitable in the first phase of the communist society, in that form in which it issues after long labor pains from capitalist society. Law can never be higher than the economic structure and the cultural development of society conditioned by that structure.'

"In explaining these remarkable lines, Lenin adds: 'Bourgeois law in relation to the distribution of the objects of consumption assumes, of course, inevitably a bourgeois state (Lenin's emphasis), for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of compelling observance of its norms. It follows that under communism not only will bourgeois law survive for a time but also even a bourgeois state -- without a bourgeoisie!'"

(More formal logic: bourgeois law requires a bourgeois state -- without a bourgeoisie. Quick! Myra, the "dialectic!")

The absolute genius of Lenin is nowhere better illustrated than here. Today we can easily see this bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie -- in "the machines of suppression" in Russia, the buffers, Yugoslavia and China. But Lenin wrote those lines in 1922 when the most democratic state the world has ever seen existed in Russia. From purely theoretical considerations Lenin saw it as "a bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie" -- and left Trotsky and the future Leninists a precious clue for an understanding of later and less democratic manifestations of this same state.

"This highly significant conclusion," says Trotsky, "completely ignored by the present official theoreticians" -- (and just as completely ignored by the "theoreticians" of both the NC factions) -- "has a decisive significance for the understanding of the nature of the Soviet state -- or, more accurately, for a first approach to such understanding. Insofar as the state which assumes the task of socialist transformation is compelled to defend inequality -- that is, the material privileges of a minority -- by methods of compulsion, insofar does it also remain a 'bourgeois state' even though without a bourgeoisie."

We thus find ourselves, with "this highly significant conclusion," taking "the first approach" to an understanding of the Soviet state, not in the realm of "free will," or demonology, but in the realm of law: insofar as the workers state is compelled to defend with its force the material privileges of a minority that far does it also remain a bourgeois state -- without a bourgeoisie. This says Trotsky is the first approach to the understanding of the Soviet state.

"The bourgeois norms of distribution by hastening the growth of material power ought to serve socialist aims -- but only in the last analysis." (Our emphasis.) Trotskyists of the type of John Wright consider, as Comrade Wright considered in his articles in the paper, that socialist aims must be served not only in the last analysis, which generally concerned Wright very little, but in all the intermediate steps.

"The state," writes Trotsky and he means the workers state, "assumes directly and from the very beginning a dual character: socialistic insofar as it defends social property in the means of production; bourgeois, insofar as the distribution of life's goods is carried out with a capitalistic measure of value and all the consequences ensuing therefrom." (That phrase "and all the consequences ensuing therefrom" should be measured carefully by the IEC and the Chinese Trotskyists as they approach the Mao state and the party controlled by it.) "Such a contradictory characterization may horrify the dogmatists and scholastics: we can only offer them our condolences."

Thus we arrive at "the refraction" of the general laws of society from capitalism to socialism which govern the development of the Soviet state. In general, the workers state organizes the dictatorship of the proletariat, guides the evolution of the dictatorship into a socialist society at which point the workers state has withered away. This conception, no matter how accurate, is nonetheless too abstract for "those generations who bear the weight of a revolution." For them -- for us -- the withering away of the state and the achievement of socialism is possible only through the increase of "material power"; this, in its turn, requires the maintenance and defense of the bourgeois norms of distribution. But bourgeois law in consumption requires "a bourgeois state -- without a bourgeoisie." The workers state thus has a dual character: socialist, in the defense and extension of socialized property; bourgeois, in the defense of bourgeois norms of distribution.

We thus approach our objective by a series of concretizations: the general law of evolution from capitalism to socialism is more concretely manifested in the dual character of the workers state and

the contradictory role that this repressive apparatus plays in the transition to socialism. The dual character of the workers state, in its turn, and the attendant dual role of this repressive apparatus, has found a still more concrete manifestation in the evolution of the USSR.

"A bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie" proved inconsistent with genuine Soviet democracy. The dual function of the state could not but affect its structure. Experience revealed what theory was unable clearly to foresee. If for the defense of socialized property against bourgeois counter-revolution a "state of armed workers" was fully adequate, it was a very different matter to regulate inequalities in the sphere of consumption. Those deprived of property are not inclined to create and defend it. The majority cannot concern itself with the privileges of the minority. For the defense of bourgeois law the workers state was compelled to create a bourgeois type of instrument -- that is, the same old gendarme, although in a new uniform.

"We have thus taken the first step toward understanding the fundamental contradiction between Bolshevik program and Soviet reality. If the state does not die away, but grows more and more despotic, if the plenipotentiaries of the working class become bureaucratized, and the bureaucracy rises above the new society, this is not for some secondary reasons like psychological relics of the past, etc., but is a result of the iron necessity to give birth to and support a privileged minority so long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality."

Without recourse to "exceptions," "free will" or demonology Comrade Trotsky was thus able to explain, on the basis of general laws and their concrete "refractions," (by other general laws) the nature and the evolution of the Soviet Bureaucracy. Where Radek and the capitulators foresaw the "reform" of this bureaucracy, Trotsky foresaw the Moscow Trials...and the destruction of Radek. Where Shachtman proclaimed the complete absence of any revolutionary content in the Bureaucracy's activity, Trotsky was able to forecast the overturn of property relations in Poland. The empiricism of both Radek and Shachtman led them to disastrous and dangerous conclusions; the principled and scientific approach of Trotsky enabled him to maintain himself as a revolutionary Marxist.

* * *

The problem, as we said above, is thus exquisitely simple and at the same time excruciatingly difficult. Comrade Trotsky once wrote that the principal weakness of the American workers consisted in our inability to generalize. Not only, we should add, in the inability to generalize but in the inability to embrace the generalizations of others. Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism and the Soviet Bureaucracy, so inexcusably absent from the conceptions of the party and international leadership, supplies absolutely everything we need for the liquidation of the present prolonged political crisis.

The dual role of the Stalinist apparatus is the central point for the clarification of our difficulties. Where the doctrine that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary overlooks the fact that

this apparatus is a state, a workers state, and that one of its functions is the socialistic function of defending socialized property in the means of production, the apparently opposite doctrine that Stalinism may become completely progressive also ignores the fact that this apparatus is a state, a workers state, but that one of its functions is the bourgeois function of defending bourgeois law in relation to objects of consumption.

The two positions, apparently opposites, are unified in their common revisionism of Leninism on the state, are further unified in the fact that both positions ignore the state, and consider that a correct analysis of the Soviet Bureaucracy and Stalinism can be made without this "first approach."

The two positions reached substantially the same conclusions about the Yugoslav and Chinese parties. The Yugoslav and Chinese communist parties, in both conceptions, were once revolutionary parties, even if incorrectly led. Then in Stalinist degeneration these parties "changed," became typically Stalinist parties incapable of leading a revolution. However, during the war, the parties "changed" again, ceased to be Stalinist, became centrist and led proletarian revolutions. Now, apparently, the Yugoslav CP has "changed" once more (just as they will both assert, on some mumbling tomorrow, that Mao's party has also again "changed"). Unless Leninism-Trotskyism is the doctrine of a spinning top, this is simply the miserable capitulation of empiricism in the face of a contradictory phenomenon. There has never been and there never will be, a party capable of so many "changes": when both Cannon and Pablo foresee the transformation of the French Communist party tomorrow, and make common cause against the "independent sector" work of Bleibtreu, they simply illustrate the fact that the empiricism of one is the legitimate father of the other.

The question of the Communist parties cannot be examined in independence from the Trotskyist analysis of the Soviet Bureaucracy. A party can be considered from the viewpoint of its leadership, its masses, and the content of the ideas which it presents. The first and third of these are clearly of more importance than the second: the masses when they act or generalize do not act or generalize as a mass but only through a leadership; the masses in their mass, simply material for capitalist exploitation, become a factor in the history of politics only through their action and the growth of their consciousness; these in turn are formulated by a leadership and become the program of a party or a faction.

In the case of the Stalinist parties the program is clearly without Marxian content. It is likewise of no significance in judging the parties: the leadership, at will, violates, nullifies and changes the stated program.

The question of the Stalinist parties as a whole thus reduces itself to the question of its leadership. But this leadership has no independent position; it has not won leadership over the parties either through adherence to a program or through any revolutionary action. The leaderships of the Communist parties are merely extensions into foreign territory of the state bureaucracy of the SU.

The question of the Communist parties thus reduces itself in the final analysis to the question of the Soviet Bureaucracy.

The so-called "revolutionary orientation" of the Yugoslav and Chinese CPs is thus seen as a part of the equally "revolutionary" orientation of the Soviet Bureaucracy. Facing the Gestapo and Chiang the Yugoslav and Chinese CP leaderships faced a bourgeoisie with whom it was impossible to collaborate just as the Soviet Bureaucracy faced in Hitler a bourgeoisie bent upon its complete destruction. The "revolutionary orientation" is thus seen as simple self-defense: it is the defense, however, not of a "completely" counter-revolutionary bureaucracy but of a degenerated workers state and extensions of it.

The French CP will be the same. In the circumstances of war (for the destruction of the Soviet Bureaucracy and, at the same time, for the destruction of its foreign extensions) the French CP, or any other, may have to fight the bourgeoisie. When it fights a bourgeoisie whose situation is militarily, politically and economically hopeless it may win. In thus "seizing power" the French CP, as with the Yugoslav and Chinese, does not betray its Stalinist nature but gives it the most incontrovertible confirmation.

Whether we call this seizure of power a counter-revolutionary revolution or a revolutionary counter-revolution is not the point.

The point is concealed here, however: the socialistic role of the Stalinist state, extended to the plane of power is a revolutionary role; the bourgeois role of this state, "and all the consequences ensuing therefrom," extended to the plane of mass action and consciousness, is a counter-revolutionary role.

Seizing power in this fashion the Yugoslav and Chinese CPs did not "change": the nature of the revolutions in Yugoslavia and China, the subsequent acts and measures of the CP governments, testifies, in fact, to the absence of any "change." The break of Tito from the Soviet Bureaucracy might have been the indication of a change; however rejecting and ending its subordination to the degenerated workers state in Russia, the Yugoslav CP had become subordinated to the deformed workers state in Yugoslavia. To an empiricist this was indeed a "change"; to a Marxist none at all.

This problem has decisive significance for the future. Stalin is dead. The theory "of socialism in one country" is equally dead: the Soviet Bureaucracy is forced to concern itself not only with "socialism" in Russia but with "socialism" in the buffers and China. If Stalinism meant simply the "theories" and practices of Stalin, then Stalinism is dead. If Stalinism meant simply the theory of socialism in one country then Stalinism is dead (except possibly in Yugoslavia).

The word "Stalinism" may very well disappear from political usage.

And it is precisely here that the empiricism of both tendencies represents the greatest danger for the future. Stalin is dead and the theory of socialism in one country is dead also. However there remains, in Russia, the buffers, Yugoslavia and China, machines of suppression whose relation to the means of production is one of defending and achieving state owned property. There remain, if you please, "detachments of armed men in defense of property" (Trotsky).

There remain "bodies of armed men" acting as "the executive committee of a ruling class," (Engels and Lenin).

There remain, that is to say, deformed and degenerated workers states.

These states "realize" the dictatorship of the proletariat, the bridge between capitalist and socialist societies. These states thus prepare for their own dissolution. To our generation, however, these states prepare their future dissolution by becoming not only the defenders of state owned property, but the defenders of bourgeois norms of distribution: they are not simply workers states but also bourgeois states -- without the bourgeoisie. They play -- (forgive us the repetition) -- a dual role: socialistic and bourgeois.

The bourgeois role of these states is responsible for their anti-soviet structures: for the simple defense of the state owned property "a state of armed workers" would be adequate and superior; for the defense of inequalities in the sphere of consumption they require "a bourgeois type of instrument, the same old gendarme, although in a new uniform."

Stalinism -- call it Malenkovism, Titoism, or Maoism -- still exists. It still exists, in Trotsky's phrase, as "all the consequences ensuing from" the bourgeois role of the workers state. Stalinism still exists -- as the subordination of the historical interests of the proletariat to the defense of a privileged minority in consumption.

Stalinism still exists -- and if we realize that in the long run "the overthrow of Stalinism would result from its extension" for our generation the overthrow of Stalinism, in Russia, the buffers, Yugoslavia or China, can be achieved only by political revolution.

* * *

The Communist Parties have not changed, and the states created by them are no better and no worse than the degenerated workers states in the Soviet Union.

This is not to say that a Stalinist party cannot change. Of course it can. But that change is impossible (1) as long as the party is controlled by the degenerated or deformed workers state, and (2) as long as it formulates its program and policies apart from or in hostility to the basic premises of Leninism-Trotskyism. There is not and there cannot be two or more doctrines equally revolutionary or Marxist. Trotsky's struggle was not unnecessary or of no importance.

A Stalinist party can change only when it makes it impossible for the degenerated or deformed workers state to subordinate it to the interests of a privileged minority. Breaking with the Kremlin the party can immediately become an instrument of the bourgeoisie, (such as the British Labor Party, the POUM or the Social Democracy) unless it re-educates itself in the spirit and doctrine of Marxism-Leninism.

For that to occur Marxism-Leninism must exist. To win Stalinists, either as a party or as individuals, to a banner and a program is impossible unless somebody, a party or a faction, holds the banner and defends the program. We would favor the transformation of the Trotskyist parties into adjuncts of the various bureaucracies only if we were in favor of or satisfied with a party both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary; we would accept the doctrine that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary only if we were satisfied with the maintenance of an isolated, no matter how determinedly independent, social democratic sect.

Confirmation for our ideas has not been lacking nor particularly slow in materializing. In conformity with its conception of the state, the proletarian revolution and Stalinism, the IEC's Chinese resolution and the speech of the IEC's reporter gave us the picture and the prognosis of a Chinese CP "based upon Marxism-Leninism," about to lead a "demonstration of proletarian power" in China, evolving into left centrism and Marxism.

Comrade Vern immediately wrote (Biography of Liquidation, Feb. 1953): "I will wager my copy of State and Revolution that the IEC is going to be proved completely and undeniably wrong in this prognosis." (Vern has two copies of "State and Revolution").

In the same article Comrade Vern stated, "The Chinese CP isn't going to be reformed into a Marxist party. Marxism is going to develop in China not hand in hand with the Chinese CP, or in critical support of Mao's government, but in struggle against the CP and the government. The Chinese CP is a government party; the state that it heads plays a dual role; and one of its functions can only be performed bureaucratically. How can this state be Marxist? If the state controls the party, how can the party be Marxist?"

In the Los Angeles discussions Comrade Murry Weiss (whose position "in the arms" of both Pablo and Cannon is curable only by means of "State and Revolution") attacked this attitude of Vern's as an example of Vern's "secretarianism" and pictured the evolution of the Chinese CP into Marxism.

Vern replied (and the entire Los Angeles local should remember this): "I would be willing to base the entire validity of the Vern-Ryan position upon the outcome in China. Wait and see! As soon as the pressure is off in Korea, Mao and the Chinese CP will move toward the further totalitarianization of the country and not toward any 'demonstration of proletarian power.' Our comrades will either be slaughtered by Mao or will fall victim to him by themselves becoming Stalinists. Wait and see! But you with your pipe dreams of a reform of the Chinese CP are helping to disarm and disorient our comrades in the face of Mao while I am trying to orient and arm them against him. Wait and see!"

So we have waited, not so long, but already we can see. The paper carries the report from China describing the murder and imprisonment of the Chinese Trotskyists. The daily press reports that Mao has cancelled the scheduled elections, and that a new round-up of political dissenters is under way by the secret police.

What has to happen before the leadership admits an error? Who was correct here: Weiss with his empirical doctrine that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary and his social-democratic conception of the state (both of which made him conciliatory toward Mao just as he was previously conciliatory toward Tito), or Vern, asserting the dual role of the Bureaucracy and the Leninist conception of the state (both of which enabled him to foresee the present counter-revolutionary role of Chinese Stalinism)?

At an earlier date the paper printed the speech of the Ceylonese Trotskyist delegate to the Peking Peace Conference. Comrade Ryan, asserting that the Fourth International was "conciliationist" toward Stalinism cited this speech as an example of this conciliation. He was immediately attacked, vigorously and even hysterically, by Comrade Geldman and the Cannon-Weiss caucus.

Things evolve, however, in accord with their own laws and not in accord with the conceptions of either Geldman or Johnny Ray. We have waited again, not so long, and now we see: The press reports the split, in a Stalinist direction, of about one third of the Ceylon party.

What has to happen before the comrades admit an error and correct it? Who was correct here: Comrade Geldman who covered the pro-Stalinist splitters, supported their basic conceptions, and thus did all he could to prevent either their re-education or their exposure, or Comrade Ryan who was able, on the basis of the Leninist-Trotskyist conceptions, to recognize Stalinist conciliation when he saw it and thus prepare a section of the party for the subsequent development?

(If you consider that the above accounts are testimonials to the Vern-Ryan position written by Vern and Ryan, you're right; but the accounts are true nevertheless.)

There can be no doubt but that Bolivia in its turn, is going to supply the most complete, if tragic and unwelcome, confirmation for the Trotskyist conceptions. On their present course and with their present conceptions, the greatest disaster awaits the POR, and the South American prestige of Trotskyism. The blame for this will not rest entirely with the leaders of the POR: sharing the responsibility will be those leaders and supporters of both caucuses who supported and elaborated the revisionist fundamentals for the POR's revisionist course, who lulled the party with the assurance that "all is well," and who shielded the POR's policy from the criticism of Marxists.

Here too, apparently, we will have to wait and see. But we will wait and -- mark our words! -- we will again see.

* * *

The situation thus requires, not the reaffirmation of the doctrine that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary, and not the creation of a caucus with "a military discipline" -- (in the absence of action this simply means thought-control and thought-prevention) -- but the realization of the calm, objective and thorough-going discussion which the last plenum decided on.

In such a discussion, "ressuscitating" the fundamentals of Leninism-Trotskyism, the present conceptions of both caucuses -- (and what is the program of the Cannon-Weiss militarily organized majority?) -- will melt like wax. The party and the International can achieve and cement a stable unity only upon a principled Marxist basis.

With Comradely Greetings,

Sam Ryan
Esther Patrick
Bernie Freedman

Los Angeles, November 3, 1953

STATEMENT ON THE RECENT SUSPENSIONS IN THE S.W.P.

(Made At Los Angeles Branch Meeting Nov. 18, 1953)

The undersigned comrades have the intention and the desire of maintaining, as some of us have maintained since 1935, 36, and 37, our membership in the S.W.P.

Our previously stated pledge to abide by majority decision remains unchanged and unviolated. We intend to continue to support the SWP as a whole with such means and measures as are available to us.

We do not have now, and have never had, any general political agreement with the Cochran tendency, at present suspended. Our original opposition to the Cochran-Hansen buffer zone position, our opposition to the political position of the Third World Congress, the IEC, and the Cochran caucus, is a matter of unambiguous record since 1950.

Having no political agreement with the Cochran caucus, we can accordingly give the new party formed from this caucus neither political support, critical or otherwise, nor material assistance.

In addition to our political opposition to the Cochran caucus, we consider, on the organizational plane that this caucus was incorrect in demanding "collaboration" in the leadership of the party. A serious political faction, working in Bolshevik fashion to change the party's position, would not have desired "collaboration" but would have conducted, instead, an intensive but loyal internal political struggle.

The Cochran caucus had no particular right to have speakers at public meetings; the majority of the party has a clear right to arrange such meetings as it sees fit. A serious political faction would have concentrated upon convincing a majority of the SWP before interesting itself unduly in the outside world.

The Cochran minority, accordingly, had no right to absent itself in organized fashion from meetings which it would ordinarily attend, or to withhold financial or other support which it would ordinarily give, in order to punish the majority for its entire or partial refusal to "collaborate" in the leadership of the party, the publication of its organs, or in its public meetings.

In accord with these conceptions, the undersigned comrades, who cannot "disavow" what they have never yet avowed, do "condemn" any acts of the Cochran caucus which were so motivated. In not doing everything in its power to avoid suspension from the party, the Cochran caucus revealed that it is not, in actuality, a Marxist caucus asserting, as Marxism asserts, that the paramount need, in this and every country, is the Marxist party.

Asserting this, we feel it also necessary to state that, in our

opinion, the political line and the organizational measures of the Majority caucus are equally responsible for the suspension and split in the SWP.

In the narrow, immediate sense it seems to us that the majority should not have suspended the minority. We do not say they had no right to do this, and we do not say there was no justification for it; but we do consider that the minority should have been repeatedly and formally warned. We consider that every effort should have been made to prevent this split. Instead, it seems to us, the majority welcomed the split, engaged in it with alacrity and calculation, and sought at no time to prevent or avoid it.

In a larger view of the conflict it seems to us that what the situation has obviously demanded for at least four years now is a calm, objective and thorough-going political discussion. The SWP - all wings and tendencies within it - and our world movement have made a number of very serious political errors. We failed to properly conceive and consistently apply the heritage of Leon Trotsky. With the best intentions in the world, we betrayed this heritage to a serious extent and created a crisis in our ideological equipment. This crisis can be surmounted only by the restoration of fundamental Trotskyist-Leninist conceptions.

Instead of conducting this necessary work of reevaluation and concretization the majority leadership has been, it seems to us, excessively concerned with its "prestige" and "authority" and much too willing to take refuge in silence, equivocation and an entirely negative attack upon the motives and characters of those who have attempted, correctly or incorrectly, to restore a Leninist-Trotskyist harmony to our doctrine.

The majority caucus and the majority leaders have refused to conduct a political struggle within the party. The majority caucus has no program now and has not had from its formation. The members and the leaders of this caucus do not know what they stand for at a given moment or what their policy will be tomorrow. When the Vern-Ryan comrades gave a measure of support to the Bleibtreu faction in France against the "liquidationism" of the IFC, we were attacked for shielding splitters; today, apparently, the majority itself is undertaking the rehabilitation of the French majority. When we declared that the IFC was "liquidationist" - when we sketched in fact the "biography" of this "liquidation" - the majority caucus called us "disloyal slanderers" and defended the IFC: today, apparently, the majority caucus has become aware of the IFC's actual conceptions. And so on.

The majority has stood for nothing concrete beyond the conception that Stalinism is completely counter-revolutionary (except in China and Yugoslavia) and the idea that there should be "an independent party" (at least in the United States).

This "program" - in actuality this absence of a program - made the majority caucus absolutely incapable of dealing in constructive fashion with the Cochran caucus. The Cochran caucus has a

program, the line of the Third World Congress and the IEC. This program is incorrect even though it is adhered to by well intentioned revolutionists. But the Cochran caucus holding this program in the SWP was opposed, not by a caucus holding a correct program, or any program at all, but by an exclusively organizational combination. In these circumstances what could have been and should have been a political struggle between loyal political factions became instead an organizational struggle between power caucuses.

In this struggle many valuable members of the SWP concluded that the SWP was worthless, fell easy prey to the pessimism and liquidationism of the World Congress, the IEC, and the Cochran caucus, and were accordingly impelled to leave the party. The deserters, incidentally, are not confined exclusively to Cochranites.

If we now assert that the Cochran caucus deserves condemnation for its disloyal actions, it is with the firm belief that, in every political sense, the majority caucus is equally responsible.

The situation requires now, as in the past, a basic political examination. In this respect the so far unpublished discussion article of Comrade Stein is important and helpful (and we wish to say, parenthetically, that it is a real satisfaction to us to be able for the first time in a long time to give 100% support to a discussion document other than our own). If the political discussion continues we would like to see the formation of loyal political factions. We must all recognize that the SWP, no matter what imperfections we may think we see in its line or leadership, is nevertheless the closest thing to a Bolshevik party that this country has produced. As such it must be supported. But its line must also be correct. This requires discussion and political study.

If the discussion continues we are convinced that the party as a whole will discover -- as Comrade Stein apparently has partially discovered -- that the conceptions of the Vern-Ryan tendency fully answer all the needs of the situation, not only for orienting the movement correctly in relation to the present position of Stalinism but for dealing in a constructive manner with the liquidationism of the Third World Congress, the IEC, and the Cochran caucus.

Dennis Vern
Esther Patrick
Sam Ryan
Sylvia Ryan
Charles Fleming
Bernard Friedman
Evelyn Friedman
Margaret Gallagher
Abe B.
Joseph Ironsmith
Jack Lynch

November 17, 1953
Los Angeles, California