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SUPPLEMENT TO INFORMATION BULLETIN NO. 8

of the

WORKERS PARTY (NATIONAL OFFICE)

1. Statement of Resignation of James Burnham from the Workers Party.
2. Statement of the Political Committee on the Resignation of James Burnham from the Workers Party.

LETTER OF RESIGNATION OF JAMES BURNHAM

New York, May 21, 1940.

To the National Committee of the Workers Party:

I am compelled to place before the committee the question of my status in relation to the newly formed Workers Party.

The faction fight in the Socialist Workers Party, its conclusion, and the recent formation of the Workers Party have been, in my own case, the unavoidable occasion for the review of my own theoretical and political beliefs. This review has shown me that by no stretching of terminology can I any longer regard myself, or permit others to regard me, as a Marxist.

Of the most important beliefs which have been associated with the Marxist movement, whether in its reformist, Leninist, Stalinist, or Trotskyist variants, there is virtually none which I accept in its traditional form. I regard these beliefs as either false or obsolete or meaningless; or, in a few cases, as at best true only in a form so restricted and modified as no longer properly to be called Marxist.

This communication is not meant to be an elaborate analysis or a lengthy personal credo. Nevertheless, I wish to illustrate my opinions with a few specific examples:

I reject, as you know, the "philosophy of Marxism", dialectical materialism. I have never, it is true, accepted this philosophy. In the past I excused this discrepancy and compromised this belief with the idea that the philosophy was "unimportant" and "did not matter" so far as practice and politics were concerned. Experience, and further study and reflection, have convinced me that I have been wrong and Trotsky - with so many others - right on this score; that dialectical materialism, though scientifically meaningless, is psychologically and historically an integral part of Marxism, and does have its many and adverse effects upon practice and politics.

The general Marxian theory of "universal history", to the extent that it has any empirical content, seems to me disproved by modern historical and anthropological investigation.

Marxian economics seems to me for the most part either false or obsolete or meaningless in application to contemporary economic phenomena. Those aspects of Marxian economics which retain validity do not seem to me to justify the theoretical structure of the economics.

Not only do I believe it meaningless to say that "socialism is inevitable" and false that socialism is "the only alternative to capitalism"; I consider that on the basis of the evidence now available to us a new form of exploitative society (what I call "managerial society") is not only possible as an alternative to capitalism but is a more probable outcome of the present period than socialism.

As you know, I do not believe that Russia can be considered a "workers state" in any intelligible sense of the term. This opinion, however, is related to far more basic conclusions: for example, that Stalinism must be understood as one manifestation of the same general historical forces of which fascism is another manifestation. There is still doubt in my mind as to whether this conclusion applies also to Leninism and Trotskyism.

I disagree flatly and entirely, as Cannon has understood for a long while, with the Leninist conception of a party - not merely with Stalin's or Cannon's modifications of that conception, but with Lenin's and Trotsky's. I disagree with the theory of the party, but even more, and more important, with the established pattern of behavior which displays the character of the party as a living reality. The Leninist type of party seems to me incompatible with genuine scientific method and genuine democracy.

In the light of such beliefs, and others similar to them, it goes without saying that I must reject a considerable part of the programmatic documents of the Fourth Internationalist movement (accepted by the Workers Party.) The "transition program" document seems to me - as it pretty much did when first presented - more or less arrant nonsense, and a key example of the inability of Marxism, even in the hands of its most brilliant intellectual representative, to handle contemporary history.

These beliefs, especially in their negative aspect - that is, insofar as they involve disagreement with Marxism - are not at all "sudden" or episodic, nor are they products merely of the recent faction struggle. Several I have always held. Many others I have held for some years. Others have, during the past year or two, changed from doubt or uncertainty into conviction. The faction fight has only served to compel me to make them explicit and to consider them more or less in their entirety. I understand, naturally, that many of them are not "new" or "original," and that in holding some of them I find myself in very bad company. However, I have never been able to judge the truth of beliefs by the moral character of those who hold them.

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The newly formed Workers Party is a Marxist party, and more particularly a Bolshevik, a Leninist party. This is not a mere matter of definition. It is guaranteed alike by its programmatic documents (especially the key document on "The Aims, the Tasks, and the Structure of the Workers Party"), by the statements and convictions of the overwhelming majority of its leadership and of a substantial majority of its membership, and by the habits of action of this majority. It is strikingly symbolized by the statement on the masthead of Labor Action that the party is a section of the Fourth International, by the definition of its theoretical magazine as "an organ of revolutionary Marxism," by the reiterated appeal in the key document above mentioned to "the revolutionary traditions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky" and to the "principles of Marxism," and by the convention episode of the cable to Trotsky. Nothing whatever in the faction fight indicated a decisive tendency away from this orientation; on the contrary, every sharp suggestion in such a direction was at once blocked. In reality, the split from the Socialist Workers Party was not based upon anything fundamental, and the Workers Party exists now as a faction of the Trotskyist movement. This was the actual cause of the extreme difficulty which the faction found in drawing up its position on "the nature of the party" and in differentiating that position from Cannon's. This was hard to do, was in fact not done, because the two positions, except in details and emphases, did not really differ.

I do not, of course, wish to mitigate my own share of responsibility for what happened in the immediate and the more distant past. I wish here to record the facts as I see them, among which is that fact that I have not been a full-time political worker and have not accepted a full share of organizational responsibility.

From the facts about my own present beliefs and the character of the Workers Party, the following conclusion inescapably follows: I cannot be a loyal member of the

Workers Party; I cannot accept its program or discipline; I cannot speak or act for it. Naturally I do not disagree with everything for which the Workers Party stands. I believe that socialism would be a good thing if it can be achieved (though "socialism as a moral ideal" is in bad repute among Marxists, we learn). I agree with the Workers Party attitude toward the war, at least insofar as this was involved in the just concluded faction dispute. But I share agreement on those points with many other organizations and tens of thousands of individuals wholly apart from the Workers Party. To the extent that I function politically, I cannot confine what I say and do to rhapsodies on the desirability of socialism and denunciations of both camps in the war. This was brought home to me with particular keenness by the first public mass meeting of the Workers Party. For a week I tried to figure out what I could say, and I could not find any way of (saying what I felt I ought to say and still appear on the platform as a loyal spokesman of the group. I finally compromised once more, spoke "safely" on the third camp, and felt like a liar when I had finished.

Two alternatives only, therefore, present themselves to me:

Continuing as a member of the party, I can immediately launch a faction struggle along the lines suggested by this document. This struggle would, of course, be, from a political and theoretical standpoint, far broader and more fundamental than the struggle just concluded with Cannon, and would have as its general aim, from my standpoint, to break the group altogether away from Marxism.

Or I can simply separate from the Workers Party.

From the usual conception of "principled" and responsible politics, the first course is incumbent upon me. However, I do not believe that it makes sense under the actual circumstances. On the one hand, a sharp faction struggle now in the Workers Party (in which my point of view would be supported by a very small minority) would mean the breakup of the group, at the very least its reduction to impotence - and it begins with foundations none too firm. What could be gained would not be worth while, would simply not mean anything politically. On the other hand, I personally am not willing to undertake leadership in such a struggle. I am not, have not been, and cannot be a "practical politician," an "organization man," above all not a "leader."

Thus the second course alone remains.

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It will be thought and said by many that my present beliefs and the decision which follows from them are a "rationalization" of, on one side, the pressure of a soft and bourgeois personal environment, and, on the other, the influence of the terrible defeats of labor, and mankind during the past twenty years, and of the war crisis.

I should be the last to pretend that any man should be so brash as to imagine that he knows clearly the motives and springs of his own actions. This whole letter may be only an over-elaborate way of saying the single sentence: "I feel like quitting politics." It is certainly the case that I am influenced by the defeats and betrayals of the past twenty and more years. These form part of the evidence for my belief that Marxism must be rejected: at every single one of the many tests provided by history, Marxist movements have either failed socialism or betrayed it. And they influence also my feelings and attitudes, I know that. As for my "personal life", how is one ever to know which is chicken and which egg, whether unwillingness fully to enter Marxist politics confuses beliefs, or whether clear be-

liofs, keep one from entering Marxist politics fully? I am a little tired, I confess, of the habit of settling accounts with opponents and critics, of deciding scientific disputes, by smug referencos to "rationalizations" and the "pressure of alien classes and influences." Because this habit is a well established part of the tradition of Marxism is not the least of my objections to Marxism.

My beliefs are facts; and the defeats and betrayals, and the modo of my life and my tastes are also facts. There they are, whatever the truth about sources and origins and motives.

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On no ideological, theoretic or political ground, then, can I recognize, or do I feel, any bond or allegiance to the Workers Party (or to any other Marxist party). That is simply the case, and I can no longer pretend about it, either to myself or to others.

Unfortunately, one factor still remains. This factor is a sense of moral obligation and responsibility to my past self - seven years dominated, however, inadequately but on the whole, by Marxism or any comparable structure, cannot be wiped out by a few minutes at the typewriter - and more especially to other persons, to whose with whom I have joined in loyal collaboration on both sides, and to others who have been influenced in their ideas and acts by me. Trotsky and Cannon will exploit my decision as a confirmation of their views - Burnham's quitting will be, by their remarkable by humanly understandable logic, evidence for the truth of their opinions on the character of the war, the nature of the Russian state, and the role of Russia in the war. To many members of the Workers Party, my separation will appear as a desertion. From a moral and personal point of view, I cannot but agree that there will be a good deal of truth in this latter judgment.

But this factor, weighed against the others, is no longer sufficient to decide my actions. Indeed, it now seems clear to me that if it had not been for these moral and personal considerations, I should properly have left the party some while ago. On the grounds of beliefs and interests (which are also a fact) I have for several years had no real place in a Marxist party.

This communication constitutes my definitive resignation from the group. However, because of the obligations which I recognize, I am, within strict limitations, prepared to discuss with the committee, if the committee so wishes, the manner of my separation. There are four alternatives:

1. The committee can expel me. There would be no difficulty in finding grounds for expulsion; I have already written an article, which, if published in the non-party press (and there is the opportunity for such publication), would be adequate grounds.
2. I can simply withdraw, without any special notice being taken on either side, from the group and its activities.
3. I can be, nominally, granted a "leave of absence" for six months. If this alternative were chosen, there should be no misunderstanding. The future is never certain, but the probability of such a leave's coming to an end would be very slight indeed.
4. I am, finally, prepared, if the committee feels that it would make any serious difference in this first period of the group's independent existence, to carry out a form of partial collaboration during the next two months. This would consist primarily of writing signed and unsigned articles for the party press, consistent

with the party's position; and during that time refraining from public acts contrary to the party and its program. At the conclusion of those two months, any of the three other alternatives could be put into effect. I would not like this fourth solution, to be quite honest, but, as I have stated, I am prepared to accept it.

* * * * *

Writing this letter has been a painful and difficult task for me. It is in no way an impulsive act, but has been preceded by the most careful and lengthy deliberation. I am above all anxious that I avoid giving any impression that I seek to excuse or extenuate myself, my own weaknesses or deficiencies or failures. I do not propose to blame others or history for my faults. When I say that I reject Marxism, I do not at all mean that I am scornful of or consider myself "superior to" Marxists. Not at all. I am humble, believe me, before the loyalty, sacrifice and heroism of so many Marxists - qualities found so widely within the ranks of the Workers Party. But I cannot act otherwise than I do.

Believing as I do, I cannot wish success to the Workers Party; but I can and do wish its members well. To the extent that each of us, in his own way and arena, preserves the values and truth and freedom, I hope that we shall continue to regard ourselves as comrades, whatever names we use and whatever labels may be tied around our necks.

Fraternally yours,

James Burnham.

C 6

Statement of the Political Committee on Resignation of
James Burnham from the Workers Party

The letter of resignation of James Burnham from the Workers Party makes it crystal clear that he has abandoned the struggle against the war and for socialism. The Political Committee does not consider it necessary, at this time, to enter into an exhaustive reply to his attacks on our program and movement. Much of what could be said can be found in the article, "Intellectuals in Retreat" (New Internationalist, January 1939), written by Burnham in collaboration with comrade Shachtman. We urge all comrades to re-read the article.

However, some brief comments on Burnham and his letter are in order.

1. We assume to begin with, that the delegates to the national convention of the S.W.P. (and our own conference) reported back to the members the frank and critical speeches of Comrade Shachtman on the question of Burnham. In these speeches it was explained that the part-time participation of Burnham in the leadership of the movement was due to his inability to break fully with his old manner of life, and to subordinate himself - his personal, social and cultural interests - to the needs of the working class movement. The task of the party, Shachtman added, was to utilize Burnham's talents and abilities to the maximum degree possible under the circumstance; and that time alone would tell what his future role in the movement would be. Burnham has now given the answer.

2. His letter informs us that he has become convinced that Marxism must be rejected. It is no secret that Burnham has never accepted dialectic materialism. However, until now he defended the Marxian theory of history (its sociological theories, and particularly its most crucial element from the viewpoint of the socialist revolution, the Marxian theory of the State). On February 1st, 1940, only a few months ago, he wrote that "it is a direct falsehood to say that I, or any other member of the opposition, rejects the Marxian theory of the State." ("Science and Style").

Today he finds that the Marxian theory of "universal history" - a weaseled formula for the materialist conception of history and the Marxian theory of the state - has been disproved by scientific investigation. He has learned quite rapidly; and has so far kept the evidence for this conclusion a dark secret.

So also we are told for the first time that Burnham considers Marxian economics "false or obsolete or meaningless". When did he find this out?

3. Matters are worse when he presents his views on the political problems of the movement. It should be noted at the outset that Burnham falsifies his own previous position. For example, he writes: "The 'transition program' document seems to me - as it pretty much did when first presented - more or less arrant nonsense..."

How easily Burnham deceives himself! As, at least, all the leading comrades know Burnham agreed with, and enthusiastically wel-

comed the general spirit of the transition program and the main ideas contained in it. He, as others, it is true, differed with certain formulations in the document, and insisted that its concepts and slogans be applied concretely to the American Scene - but the criticism did not go beyond that. Now it appears that Burnham has convinced himself that he always considered the transition program as "more or less arrant nonsense"!

4. So it is in the matter of his attack on the "Leninist type of party". He finds that such a party is "incompatible with scientific method and genuine democracy", and gives the impression that this has always been his position.

Again he conceals the real meaning of his attack - which is a repudiation of any revolutionary socialist party - behind criticisms of "Leninism" and "Bolshevism". Precisely what is he against and what is he for? In the recent factional fight, Burnham, as our group as a whole, charged that Cannon had adopted the party theory and practice, not of Lenin, but of Zinoviev. He, as all of us, fought for a revolutionary socialist party in the best traditions of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, Luxemburg and Trotsky; a party with a Marxist program, democratically organized, united and centralized in common action. Are the theory and practice of the Workers Party "incompatible with genuine scientific method and genuine democracy"? Burnham wisely evades this concrete question, and takes refuge in the general clamor of those who desert the movement - against the "Leninist type of party".

This is understandable since what Burnham desires above all is freedom from all responsibility to any revolutionary party.

5. Burnham writes that since the Workers Party is a revolutionary Marxist organization the split from the S.W.P. was not based upon anything "fundamental". Yesterday he understood that our conflict with Cannon and Trotsky was over the strategical orientation of the Fourth International in the second World War; and the character of regime of the party, particularly in face of the war and the existence of two politically irreconcilable tendencies in the party. And that our struggle for the "third camp", against bureaucratic conservatism and for a democratically organized and centralized, activist Marxist party lead to the split precisely because the differences went beyond "details and emphases".

We readily agree with his remark that "Nothing whatever in the faction fight indicated a decisive tendency away from this (Marxist) (Fourth International) orientation; on the contrary every sharp suggestion in such a direction was at once blocked".

His present view of the significance of the split is entirely comprehensible coming as it does from one who has broken with Marxism and the socialist movement; and has given up the struggle against the war.

6. He declares that he is in agreement with the Workers Party on the war, but also shares this position "with many other organizations". Which organizations? Where are they? Again: when did Burnham discover them?

More important is, what practical consequences does he draw from his "agreement" with our anti-war program? Only one...desertion of the movement against the war. And the retirement - his real program - is given a "scientific" basis. "Socialism would be a good thing if it can be achieved" but the next probable stage of development is a new system of exploitation, "managerial society". So why do we need any revolutionary party? Why conduct a hopeless struggle against the war and for socialism? Since this is the real meaning of Burnham's letter of resignation we can attribute his remarks on the war as a "psychological hangover".

7. As he suggests in his statement; "This letter may be an over-elaborate way of saying the single sentence: 'I feel like quitting politics.'" And so it is.

The increased hardships of our small movement in face of the rapid developing war crisis - and the greater difficulties yet ahead - placed him (as every other comrade in the party) before a decisive choice: everything to the movement or personal passivity and retirement from revolutionary politics. The first choice requires confidence in the working class and the party; self-sacrifice, devotion and moral courage. Burnham, lacking these essential qualities, chose to give up the struggle. Where this will lead him tomorrow is yet to be seen.

8. After reading his letter it should be clear why he could not wage a fight for his views in our Party. He has nothing to offer the members, nothing to offer the working class. His attack on Marxism in the name of "scientific method and genuine democracy" and "truth and freedom" cannot be taken seriously since it is a pretext for quitting revolutionary politics. And why should he make any fight in the Party if his aim is to quit the movement?

9. The Workers Party is deeply concerned with the struggle for truth and freedom. Its methods are the methods of science and democracy. This struggle and these methods are inseparable from the struggle against the war and for socialism. They are an integral part of Marxism, the self-critical science of working class revolution, with the aid of which alone one can explain the past defeats of the movement, understand the events transpiring around us, and forge the instruments for proletarian victory. Burnham has abandoned scientific socialism, the socialist movement, the socialist goal. He has therefore deserted the only meaningful struggle for truth and freedom.

10. Confronted with Burnham's letter of resignation, the Political Committee saw no reason to enter into an agreement with him, as suggested by his four alternative proposals. We accepted his resignation, effective immediately, and decided to inform the members as to the true facts in the case.

We are confident that the party members will understand the significance of Burnham's defection, and continue with increased energy our struggle against the war and for socialism.

Political Committee of the
Workers Party

May 31, 1940

C 9

RESOLUTION ON THE RUSSIAN QUESTION

1. The March, 1917, revolution in Russia overturned the Czarist autocracy, and established a provisional bourgeois-democratic regime threatened from its very inception by the dual power of the workers and peasants (the Soviets). Having come to power late in history, in the period of world imperialist decay, the bourgeoisie proved incapable of establishing a peaceful democratic regime and of solving the urgent problems of the democratic revolution, above all the agrarian revolution. The Russian bourgeoisie, as the "revolutionary democracy" of Kerensky, disclosed its impotence and its thoroughly reactionary character from the moment it took over state power. It was inseparably bound up with the reactionary imperialisms of Europe and America, it continued the basic imperialist policy of the Romanov dynasty in the war, it was incapable of breaking with the monarchical, semi-feudal and landholding classes and groups, and could remain in power only by summoning up an arch-reactionary military dictatorship (Kornilov). The character of the historically belated "revolutionary democracy" of the bourgeoisie in Russia was even more clearly emphasized when it was overturned in November, 1917, and thereafter sought to restore itself to power: in the course of the civil war it not only united with, but was dominated by the most reactionary classes and elements inside and outside of Russia. The test of events thus showed that there is no durable basis for a bourgeois-democratic Kerenskiad in Russia, that its dissolution by the proletarian revolution can be prevented only by its transformation into a Bonapartist dictatorship or Fascism.

2. The Bolshevik revolution of November, 1917, carried out the tasks of the democratic revolution in the most drastic and thoroughgoing manner known in history, the Great French Revolution no excepted, sweeping away the last remnants of the monarchical and feudal order, and of national oppression. But because at the head of the revolution stood the only class capable, in the Russia of 1917, of carrying out these tasks, namely, the revolutionary working class, it found itself compelled to defend its power by the most radical encroachments upon capitalist private property. The proletarian character of the Bolshevik revolution was determined primarily by the fact that the working class in power proceeded directly from the democratic to the socialist revolution by virtue of the complete expropriation of the industrial and financial bourgeoisie and the nationalization of the means of production and exchange.

In sum, the working class, through its representative democratic organs, the trade unions, the factory committees, and above all the Soviets, established a new type of state, the workers' Soviet state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, guarded by its proletarian Red Army; and with the political, economic and military expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the landlords, proceeded to lay the foundations of a socialist society.

3. The Bolshevik revolution, in its conception, aims and methods, was a national revolution only in form, but the first victory of the international socialist revolution in essence. The revolution broke world capitalism at its weakest link. The Bolsheviks therefore proclaimed their internationalism from the very beginning and declared that without the aid of proletarian revolutions in the more advanced countries of Europe and America, the revolution in Russia would fail. This was true, and by it the Bolsheviks meant two things: First, that

the Russian proletariat in power could not establish a socialist society within the confines of one country alone, that is, on the basis of one workers' state surrounded by a world of capitalist states; and, secondly, that without the state aid of the Western proletariat, the Russian proletariat could not even remain in power in the transitional regime which its revolution had inaugurated. Given the betrayal of socialism by the Second International, the Communist International was then established as the organizing center, the general staff, of the world revolution.

4. Along with the task of advancing a revolutionary class line on the international field, the Soviet state was confronted at home with the task of establishing peace and consolidating the foundations of a socialist society. The miserable heritage of Czarism and the ravages of six years of imperialist world war and the civil wars, left the workers' state with an almost universally ruined economy and an exhausted people in an overwhelmingly agricultural and backward country. The first big post-war revolutionary movement was suppressed by the bourgeoisie of the West, actively assisted by the social democracy, and was followed by a relative stabilization of capitalism throughout the world. The Russian revolution remained isolated in a hostile encirclement. The Bolsheviks were compelled to retreat to the N.E.P., that is, to allowing the development of a capitalist sector of the economy under the control of the workers' state in order to acquire a breathing spell, and a stronger economic basis upon which to proceed at a later stage to the socialist offensive.

Meanwhile, the counter-revolutionary activities of the bourgeoisie and the social democracy had led to the suppression of all parties except the Bolshevik, and, in 1921, even to the temporary prohibition of factions within the Bolshevik Party. The period of War Communism had, furthermore, fostered the development of a semi-military regime in the country and to a considerable extent inside the ruling party. In addition, the Bolsheviks found themselves compelled, in the work of reconstruction, to draw into the economic and political machinery of the country non-revolutionary and even anti-revolutionary elements. All these circumstances contributed to the growth of a powerful bureaucratic stratum in Soviet society and to the bureaucratic distortion of the regime. Control by the representative democratic organs of the working class was gradually weakened. The Soviet state was a bureaucratically-deformed workers' state, whose proletarian character was affirmed essentially through the existence of the revolutionary Bolshevik party of Lenin and Trotsky and its control of the state machine.

5. The sharpest struggles of the best representatives of the revolutionary workers' state, headed by Lenin and Trotsky, were directed against the weakening of the revolutionary internationalist policy of the party (building and cleansing of the Communist International); against the economic and political forces at work to restore capitalism; against the bureaucracy and bureaucratism which threatened to undermine the revolutionary state and its conquests. A whole series of factors contributed to the failure of these struggles. The death of Lenin deprived the party of the most authoritative revolutionary voice in the country. The subsiding of the revolutionary wave in Europe, especially after the defeat in Germany in 1923, ushered in a period of economic, political and ideological reaction in the Soviet

Union. In the preceding period, the revolution and the civil wars had physically destroyed many of the solidest representatives of the revolutionary generation, and had worn down or used up many of those who remained alive. A certain economical revival following War Communism, accompanied by a rise in the living standards of the masses, had the effect of dulling the vigilance of the masses to the social reaction in progress in the country. Under those circumstances, the consistent proletarian revolutionary elements, represented by Lenin and Trotsky, and after the death of the former, by Trotsky and the Opposition, proved too weak to withstand the blows, or prevent the triumph, of the reaction and the counter-revolution in Russia.

6. The reaction and the counter-revolution in Russia took fundamentally different forms, however, from those which had been foreseen by the Marxists. They all agreed that the workers' state could not exist for long in one country alone and that without revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries of the West, the workers' state in Russia would go under. In this, their predictions have been confirmed to the hilt. However, they envisaged the collapse of the workers' state as the culmination of a process in which the capitalist elements would grow and finally triumph by a counter-revolution which would restore the rule of capitalism in Russia. In this, their predictions have not been confirmed. The workers' state was crushed by the Stalinist counter-revolution, but it was not replaced by a capitalist state.

7. The degeneration and destruction of the workers' state in the Soviet Union has its roots in the degeneration and destruction of the revolutionary Bolshevik Party - caused, in turn, by the isolation of the Russian revolution and the backwardness of Russia. The monopoly of political power by the Bolshevik party made it impossible for class forces, tendencies and aspirations to articulate themselves otherwise than through the party itself, now weakly, now strongly, now disguisedly, now openly and bluntly, now distortedly, now clearly. In the post-Lenin period, three groups took clear shape in the Bolshevik party - groups which, with the final destruction of that party, became three separate parties - each of them representing to one degree or another different class interests. The Bolshevik monopoly of political power transferred the class struggle, so to speak, or rather translated the class struggle in the country into an inner-party struggle, at least while the party existed.

The Left Opposition, inspired and led by Trotsky, represented the class interests of the proletariat, and therefore also the interests of the lowest strata of the agricultural population. Hence, the struggle of the Opposition was directed from the beginning towards preserving the revolutionary internationalist line of the party and the Communist International, defending the political and economic positions of the working class in the Soviet Union from the assaults of the ruling cliques, resisting the forces and tendencies of capitalist restoration.

The ruling regime was based upon a combination of the Right wing and the so-called Center, that is, the Stalinist bureaucracy proper. The Right Wing represented, objectively, the social aspirations and interests of the capitalist elements in the country, the kulaks and

the Nepmen, and to a certain extent the labor aristocracy and bureaucrats. Hence its policy of reconciliation with the capitalist world in general, and in particular with the "solidest" representatives of bourgeois democracy, social reformism; its policy of favoring the kulak's economic development ("Enrich yourselves!") and concealing his menacing growth by labelling him the "diligent peasant." Hence its contemptuous and antagonistic attitude towards the "selfish demands" of the workers and the poor peasantry. Hence its opposition to "super-industrialization" and collectivization of agriculture, its theory of the kulak growing into socialism, etc. The Stalinist wing represented, as it still does, essentially the party bureaucracy and all the other bureaucratic strata of Soviet society associated with or dependent upon it, and revealed distinct Bonapartist characteristics, that is, it based itself at all times on more or less open force, seeking to use classes against each other in its own interests, seeking to rise above the classes for the sake of preserving its own rule.

The bloc between the Right wing and the Stalinist bureaucracy, whose policies seemed for a time to be indistinguishable or interchangeable, obscured for a long period those characteristics of the Stalinist bureaucracy which distinguish it from similar (but not the same) bureaucracies in other, i.e., in capitalist countries and under other conditions; and obscured the social process by which it gradually developed into an independent ruling class. The Right-Stalinist bloc had in common not only a reactionary foreign policy, accompanied by the systematic liquidation of the Communist International and the Red International of Labor Unions, but above all the aim of destroying the proletarian wing of the party (the struggle against "Trotskyism") and with it the proletarian organizations and institutions in the country. The wiping out of the Left Opposition, the strangling of the Bolshevik party itself, the disemboweling of the Soviets, the reduction of the trade unions and factory committees to a fiction, in a word, the destruction of all semblance of working-class representation or control in the Soviet Union was the common work of the Right Wing and the Stalinist bureaucracy. Therein the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia revealed one of its outstanding, distinguishing characteristics: while it is unable and unwilling to unite with the revolutionary proletariat against capitalism and its representatives, it is able and willing to unite with capitalism or its representatives against the proletariat and its revolutionary wing. This characteristic made possible its bloc with the Right wing against the Left in the Soviet Union, and on an international scale, its bloc with capitalist imperialism against the revolutionary working class and the colonial peoples (Spain, Ethiopia, etc.). In their social and historical position, the Stalinist bureaucracy and its state are closer to capitalism than to socialism.

But in its break with the Right wing, beginning with the "Third Period" (ultr-"Left" line in world politics, super-industrialization and liquidation of the Kulaks as a class in domestic politics), the Stalinist bureaucracy revealed its fundamental social divergence from its former collaborator. The destruction of the Left Opposition and the gradual liquidation of working-class power was, objectively, only the pre-condition to the gradual restoration of capitalism, so far as the Right wing was concerned. The destruction of the Opposition and of proletarian control was, so far as the bureaucracy was concerned,

not the prelude to abdicating to capitalist restoration, but rather to the complete assumption of all power by the bureaucracy itself. The Right wing and the bureaucracy could travel together only up to a fork in the road of the evolution of Soviet society. At that point, they split asunder, with a violent crash. After having readily leaned on the capitalist and semi-capitalist elements in the country for support in smashing the proletariat, the bureaucracy, with the increased power and authority it had accumulated, proceeded to smash, just as ruthlessly, all the capitalist elements in the country. But, significantly enough, in the period of its so-called "Left zig-zag" (which was neither Left, nor, except in appearance, a zig-zag, but substantially a continuation of its own drive for totalitarian power), it continued and even intensified the work of destroying the remnants of proletarian power in the state, lowered the economic and political position of the working class, and emerged as the victorious representative of the Bureaucratic counter-revolution.

The bureaucracy, contrary to prediction, did not proceed to denationalize the land or the industries and banks and transportation system; it did not wipe out the monopoly of foreign trade; it did not facilitate the "gradual" development of small capitalist production and exchange into a full-fledged capitalist system. On the contrary, it directed an assault against the capitalist elements in the country that was no less ruthless than any before known in the Soviet republic; it enormously increased the importance and specific gravity of the state-property and state-production sector of Soviet economy, and multiplied the number of proletarians manifold; and, with all the contradictions that still remain and are even accentuated, in one form or another, it brutally drove together the myriad of small landholdings into a system of collective farms. In almost direct proportion to these advances, however, the power of the working class in the state ~~was~~ diminished. More accurately, it disappeared, and the workers' state gave way to the bureaucratic-collectivist state.

8. The class character of a state is determined fundamentally by the property relations prevailing in it, that is, those relations which are at the bottom of the existing production and social relations. In any social order based upon private property, the prevailing form of property, be it in slaves, in feudal landholdings, or in capital, determines the property relations, is inseparably interlinked with them, may be used interchangeably with them. The social domination of the ruling class in states based upon one or another form of private property - although not necessarily or at every stage the political domination of such a class - is represented primarily by its ownership of property. The state, i.e., the machinery of coercion, is then the instrument for preserving the existing property relations, for preserving the domination of the economically most powerful class from assaults by classes it oppresses and exploits.

When, however, the epoch of private ownership of social property comes to an end and the epoch of collectivist property is inaugurated, as was done by the Bolsheviki revolution of 1917; when private property is abolished and the means of production and exchange become the property of the state - it is impossible to apply the same criterion as is legitimately applied to states based on any form of private property. It is then no longer possible to determine the class character of the

state by establishing which class owns the property, for the simple reason that no class owns property under such a social system. The state is the repository, the owner of all social property. The state, however, is not a class but a political instrument of classes. Property relations in a collectivist system are therefore expressed, so to speak, in state relations. The special rule of the proletariat - which, unlike all preceding classes, lies and must remain a propertyless class - lies in its political rule and can lie only in its political rule which it employs to destroy all private property and private-property classes as a precondition for safeguarding its own rule, and, eventually, for its own dissolution into a classless socialist society. When the Russian proletariat, through its various organizations and institutions, controlled the Soviet state, in the period of Lenin-Trotsky and for some time thereafter, the Soviet republics were a workers' state, with bureaucratic and even capitalistic deformities. The Stalinist counter-revolution consists precisely in the destruction of all semblance of working-class control over or influence in the state, and the usurpation of all political, and therefore economic, power by the bureaucracy. The final triumph of the Stalinist counter-revolution coincided with - is represented by - the complete destruction of the last representative proletarian organization in the country, the Bolshevik party, and its replacement by the party of the bureaucracy bearing the same name. Like the proletariat, the social rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which is also a private-propertyless class, lies in its political rule and can lie only in its political rule which it employs to destroy all private-property classes in order to preserve its own class domination - to preserve it also from the proletariat it exploits and oppresses.

9. Irrespective of his refusal to accord the rulers of the Soviet Union the status of a class, it is Leon Trotsky in whose works on the subject are to be found the clearest analysis yet made of the origins and the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy to its position of domination. The bureaucracy rose to power as the universal Soviet gendarme in the midst of "generalized want" - traceable in turn to the isolation of the original workers' state. "The basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all." Yet, the growth of the productive forces under Stalinism did not result in a relaxation of the totalitarianism of the "gendarme" (the bureaucracy) but rather in its accentuation. "The present state of production is still far from guaranteeing all necessities to everybody. But it is already adequate to give significant privileges to a minority, and convert inequality into a whip for the spurring on of the majority. That is the first reason why the growth of production has so far strengthened not the socialist, but the bourgeois features of the state". But not the only reason. The bureaucracy is "the planter and protector of inequality". In distributing the wealth of Soviet society, its guide is its own interests and no other. "Thus out of a social necessity there has developed an organ which has far outgrown its socially necessary function, and become an independent factor and therewith the source of great danger for the whole social organism". (Trotsky).

However, it is precisely in this process of becoming "an independent factor" that its development into a class may be established. "With the differences in distribution", says Engels, "class differences emerge. Society divides into classes: the privileged and the dispossessed, the exploiters and the exploited, the rulers and the ruled Distribution, however, is not a merely passive result of production and exchange; it has an equally important reaction on both of these. The development of each mode of production or form of exchange is at first retarded not only by the old forms and the political institutions which correspond to these, but also by the old mode of distribution; it can only surmount distribution which is essential to it in the course of a long struggle. But the more noble a given mode of production and exchange, the more capable it is of expansion and development, the more rapidly does distribution also reach the stage in which it gets beyond its mother's control and comes into conflict with the prevailing mode of production and exchange". The "old mode of distribution" prevalent in the workers' state was based, essentially, on the equality of poverty. A truly socialist mode of production could be based only on equality in the midst of abundance. Abundance was possible only with a tremendous socialist development of the productive forces and of labor productivity.

But it is precisely such a development that was impossible on the basis of one country alone, and a backward country like Russia at that. "...A real upward swing of socialist economy in Russia will only be possible after the victory of the proletariat in the most important countries of Europe." (Trotsky, 1923). It is therefore inadmissible, from the Marxian standpoint, to apply decisively the principal criterion of social progress, i.e., the development of the productive forces, to a workers' state (concretely, to the workers' state of Lenin-Trotsky) in one country alone. The national limitedness of the workers' state prevented the "real upward swing of socialist economy"; so also did the "old mode of distribution", i.e., the equality of poverty. The demands of Soviet economy for development could not be satisfied by a capitalist restoration - quite the contrary. They were satisfied by an unforeseen social development.

The bureaucracy arose and it organized and developed the productive forces, including the principal productive force of society, the proletariat, to an enormous degree. It accomplished "a real upward swing" of Russian economy, but not of socialist economy. With barbarous, anti-socialist, bureaucratic methods, by introducing and constantly accentuating inequality, it lifted backward Russia to the position of one of the economically most advanced countries to the world, expanding the productive forces at a rate unknown in any contemporary capitalist or semi-capitalist country, right in the midst of a raging world capitalist crisis, in a period of a violently contracting world market, and without the benefits of the world market enjoyed in the past by every capitalist country. But it is precisely at that point that one of the fundamental differences between bourgeois Bonapartism and Stalinist "Bonapartism" must be established. Whereas the Bonapartist or Bismarckian regimes of the past operated to strengthen and consolidate the social rule of the bourgeoisie even when they expropriated it politically, the "Bonapartist" regime of the Stalinist bureaucracy undermined and finally destroyed the social rule of the proletariat in Russia and established in its place a reactionary system

of social relations, the class rule of bureaucratic collectivism. Traditional Bonapartism was a political regime established to preserve the rule of the bourgeoisie. The Stalinist regime rose as a new social system which destroyed the rule of the proletariat. For a socialist development of the productive force, i.e., for a development based upon the planned collaboration of a number of workers' states in which are included technologically advanced countries, a democratic political regime and a steady growth of equalitarianism are sufficient. For the bureaucratic-collectivist development of the productive forces in the Soviet Union, a new ruling class was necessary, that is, a particularly brutal gendarme converting "inequality into a whip for the spurring on of the majority", and steadily accentuating the inequality in favor of the ruling class.

Under the social system of bureaucratic collectivism, this inequality can manifest itself economically only, or at least primarily, in distribution, since in the field of property-ownership, all classes are equal - none of them owns social property. With the new mode of distribution, the bureaucracy developed a new mode of production, production for the swelling needs of the bureaucracy, based upon state property and the enslavement of the working class. It was this new mode of production which was, in Engels' words, "at first retarded not only by the old forms and the political institutions which corresponded to these, but also by the old mode of distribution." Classes are the product of struggle. It was in the course of the struggle against "the old forms and the political institutions which corresponded to these (and also) the old mode of distribution" -- that is, against production for the needs of the masses, against the democratic working class political institutions (the Soviets, the revolutionary party), and the more or less equalitarian system of distribution - it was in the course of the struggle against these that the bureaucracy developed as a class, and consolidated itself as the ruling class.

10. The perspectives of the new social order in Russia and the new ruling class are narrowly limited by the specific and unique historical circumstances which gave birth to it. It is not, of course, possible to set down dogmatic and categorical laws of historical development for this new phenomenon; unlike capitalism, for example, it has no long history behind it which permits of a conclusive historical analysis. Political economy, observed Engels, "as the science of the conditions and forms under which the various human societies have produced and exchanged and on this basis have distributed their products - political economy in this wider sense has still to be brought into being. Such economic science as we have up to the present is almost exclusively limited to the genesis and development of the capitalist mode of production". So far as it has been possible to observe and analyze the phenomenon of Stalinist bureaucratic collectivism, however, its essential characteristics may be established even now.

Bureaucratic collectivism is a nationally-limited phenomenon, appearing in history in the course of a singular conjunction of circumstances, namely, the isolation and decay of a proletarian revolution in a backward country and a world-capitalist encirclement. Its ideology is not merely nationalist in general, but Russian-nationalist; its theory and banner is not such must "socialism in one country alone", as "socialism" in this particular country, Russia. Its expansion beyond

the frontiers established by the revolution has been, thus far, episodic, conjunctural. But a far more fundamental consideration is this: Russian capitalist was ripe in 1917 for a socialist revolution but not for socialism; world capitalism was ripe in 1917, and is over-ripe today, not only for the socialist revolution but for the complete socialist reorganization of society. On a world scale, there is already a class, fully matured socially, capable of putting an end to the anarchy of capitalist production, and capable of developing the productive forces socialistically; it is, capable, once it is in power, to do on a world scale what the proletariat in Russia proved incapable of doing by itself, in one country alone.

The bureaucracy in Russia became the ruling class because capitalism in the rest of the world remained in power; in turn, the Stalinist bureaucracy has prolonged the term of power of capitalism. The bureaucracy in Russia is a by-product of the delay of the world proletarian revolution; it will not continue in power with the advent of that revolution. As a new ruling class, in a new, exploitive society, it has come on the historical scene belatedly, as an anti-capitalist anachronism; its belatedness and transitoriness are underscored by the existence on a world scale of a matured, socially-qualified proletariat. From the day of its birth, it is torn by mounting contradictions, which make impossible the firm and durable consolidation of bureaucratic collectivism "in one country". Genuine planned economy on the basis of state property is impossible in one country, in a hostile capitalist world environment. Planned economy conflicts at every turn with bureaucratic management and appropriation of surplus products. The rate of development of the productive forces, made possible by the existence of state property, is decelerated after a period of time precisely by the increase of inequality which was the initial spur to this development, that is, by the increasing appropriation of wealth by a swollen bureaucratic stratum. The totalitarian Great-Russian oppression of the peoples of the national republics engenders disintegrative centrifugal tendencies at the periphery of the bureaucratic empire. The anti-revolutionary nationalism of the bureaucracy conflicts with the "internationalist needs" of the economy, that is, its need of fructification by a rational world economy; this in turn facilitates the destruction of the whole economy by world capitalism, its reduction by the latter to the status of a colony or colonies.

The second world war will therefore be the supreme test of Stalinist collectivism. Should world capitalism gain a new lease on life and be spared defeat at the hand of world revolution, Russia cannot, in all likelihood, escape integration into the capitalist system as a colony or a series of colonies of imperialism. Should world capitalism collapse under the blows of proletarian revolution, the weight of the latter would crush Stalinism to the ground and precipitate the third, final, proletarian revolution in Russia.

11. However, just what stages of development will be passed before bureaucratic collectivism in Russia is destroyed either by the proletarian revolution or capitalist counter-revolution, cannot be established categorically in advance. Bureaucratic collectivism is still in power and it is necessary to have as clearly as possible in mind the revolutionary proletarian attitude towards it and the political problems it raises.

Classes and social orders are historically conditioned; so also are the bureaucracy and bureaucratic collectivism in Russia. Product of reaction, both the ruling class and the social order it dominates are reactionary. The proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard therefore are uncompromisingly opposed to the politics of the regime and strive to overthrow it with all means consistent with the struggle for socialism. But the Marxist proletariat recognizes that while this new social order represents a reaction from the workers' state established by the Bolshevik Revolution, the forces producing this reaction were not strong enough or not of such a nature as to hurl Russia still further back to capitalism.

Russia remains a collectivist society, differing fundamentally from the workers' state of Lenin-trotsky in that it is a reactionary collectivist society. But it has not been integrated into the system of world capitalism. Bureaucratic collectivism is closer to capitalism, so far as its social relations are concerned, than it is to a state of the socialist type. Yet, just as capitalism is part of the long historical epoch of private property, bureaucratic collectivism is part - an unforeseen, mongrelized, reactionary part, but a part nevertheless - of the collectivist epoch of human history. The social order of bureaucratic collectivism is distinguished from the social order of capitalism primarily in that the former is based upon a new and more advanced form of property, namely, state property. That this new form of property - a conquest of the Bolshevik revolution - is progressive, i.e., historically superior, to private property is demonstrated theoretically by Marxism and by the test of practice.

The proletarian revolution in a capitalist country would abolish the reactionary social relations by abolishing private property; the proletarian revolution in Russia would abolish the reactionary social relations of bureaucratic collectivism primarily by destroying the political (and therefore the social) power of the bureaucracy but not the property form on which the bureaucracy and the social relations it established are based, namely state property. This fundamental difference is not calculated to distinguish the two social orders from the standpoint of where it is "easier" to carry through the proletarian revolution. It is calculated, however, to indicate the essential difference between the two social orders - bureaucratic collectivism and capitalism - and the historical superiority of the one over the other. In both cases, the prevailing social relations are based on the prevailing property forms. In the one case, the property form would have to be abolished by the proletariat in order to advance towards socialism; in the other, the property form would have to be preserved. In the case of capitalism, the establishment of state property would be an historical step forward, it would be progressive, in comparison with private property. In the case of bureaucratic collectivism, the restoration of private property would be an historical step backward, it would be reactionary, in comparison with state property. "an enormous mistake is made in counterposing state capitalism only to socialism, when contrariwise it is absolutely necessary in the given economic-political situation to make a comparison between state capitalism and petty-bourgeois production". (Lenin, 1921.) In the same Marxian sense, it may be said that it is a mistake to compare bureaucratic collectivism only with a workers' state or socialism; it must be compared also with what is the main enemy of the world (not merely the Russian) proletariat, namely, world capitalism. From the standpoint

of socialism, the bureaucratic collectivist state is a reactionary social order; in relation to the capitalist world, it is on a historically more progressive plane.

The progressivism of bureaucratic collectivism is, however, relative and not absolute, even in relation to the capitalist world. Thus, for example, in conflicts between the Stalinist regime, on the one side, and a colonial or semi-colonial country, which is part of the capitalist world, on the other, the revolutionary proletariat takes its position by the side of the colonial or semi-colonial country; the revolutionary struggle for colonial independence is a decisive part of the struggle against the main enemy of the proletariat, world imperialism. Thus, for example, in a struggle between Stalinist Russia and capitalist imperialism, on the one side, and another section of capitalist imperialism on the other, the revolutionary proletariat takes its position against both camps, refusing to subordinate or mitigate in any way its struggle against the main enemy, imperialism, and imperialist war, to the defense of the Stalinist sector of capitalist imperialism camp, any more than it would in a similar case with regard to a small nation or a colonial country, big or small, that became an integral part of an imperialist camp. The relative progressivism of bureaucratic collectivism is not of greater significance to the world proletariat than, with all its social differences, is the struggle for colonial independence. Under all circumstances, it is subordinated to the interests and strategy of the world proletarian revolution.

12. The revolutionary proletariat can consider a revolutionary (that is, critical, entirely independent, class) defensist position with regard to the Stalinist regime only under conditions where the decisive issue in the war is the attempt by a hostile force to restore capitalism in Russia, where this issue is not subordinated to other, more dominant issues. Thus, in case of a civil war in which one section of the bureaucracy seeks to restore capitalist private property, it is possible for the revolutionary vanguard to fight with the army of the Stalinist regime against the army of capitalist restoration. Thus, in case of a war by which world imperialism seeks to subdue the Soviet Union and acquire a new lease on life by reducing Russia to an imperialist colony, it is possible for the proletariat to take a revolutionary defensist position in Russia. This, in case of a civil war organized against the existing regime by an army basing itself on "popular discontent" but actually on the capitalist and semi-capitalist elements still existing in the country, and aspiring to the restoration of capitalism, it is again possible that the proletariat would fight in the army of Stalin against the army of capitalist reaction. In all these or similar cases, the critical support of the proletariat is possible only if the proletariat is not yet prepared itself to overthrow the Stalinist regime.

On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that at their inception the inevitable, progressive mass movements of the workers and peasants against the reactionary regime, particularly those movements which arise in the oppressed national republics, will be politically immature and confused, and influenced by nationalist, federalist, democratic and even reactionary prejudices. The Fourth Internationalists count heavily, however, on the decisive revolutionary influence that can and will be exerted upon such movements by the hundreds of thousands of revolutionary militants who are imbued with the still living traditions of October and who would be the guarantee that the popular mass movements

would take a proletarian direction. This is particularly true of such movements in republics like the Ukraine, White Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Aserbaidjan, etc., where the people's hatred of Stalinism has been cunningly and systematically exploited by reactionary imperialist forces from abroad. However, in the event of a civil war, especially in a totalitarian country like Russia, when the contending movements take the clearly-defined form of armies, with clearly discernible social and political aspirations, the Fourth International must be free to choose, depending on the concrete conditions, between support of one armed camp or the other, or, if neither is possible for the revolution-are proletariat, to work for the completely independent victory of the third camp.

13. The Workers Party rejects the theory that the Soviet Union is a degenerated workers' state which must be unconditionally defended against any capitalist country regardless of conditions and circumstances. This theory covers up the class nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the reactionary character of the regime. By the same token, it tends to underestimate the full, reactionary significance of the bureaucracy. It disseminates the notion, discreditable to socialism, that a regime which is a prison for the working class and in which the latter does not have one iota of control, nevertheless has something "proletarian" -- indeed, decisively proletarian -- about it, simply because of the existence of state property. It conflicts with the revolutionary Marxian criteria for establishing a collectivist state as a workers' state. By the policy of "unconditional defense," it has already, in the second world war, been compelled to give objective support first to one imperialist camp (the Axis, in the invasions of the Baltic, the Balkans and Finland) and, in the second stage of the war to another imperialist camp (the Allies, in Iran, in the Pacific and in the Arctic). The theory denies, further, the existence of Stalinist imperialism, as the policy of bureaucratic aggression and expansion, and thus objectively covered the invasions of 1939-1940-1941 while declaring contradictorily at the same time its opposition to "the seizure of new territories by the Kremlin". The Party therefore rejects also the policy of unconditional defensism with regard to the reactionary Stalinist state.

14. The Workers Party rejects the theory that the Soviet Union is a fascist capitalist state and the political line flowing from it. The bourgeoisie scarcely exists in Russia as a substantial class. The ruling class in Russia is not composed of capitalist, that is, of owners of capital; the income of the members of the ruling class in Russia is not derived from profit accruing from the ownership of capital. Free labor in the Marxian sense of the term long ago ceased to exist in the Soviet Union. Neither is there the prevalence of commodity production, that is, production for the market. The Party also rejects the policy, associated with this theory, of support of democratic capitalism against the "fascist capitalism" of Russia as a disguised form of support for capitalist restoration; and on the same grounds, rejects the petty-bourgeois utopia of a struggle for a "Constituent Assenbyl". The Party finally also rejects the policy, associated with this theory, of no united fronts under any conditions in this country with the "fascist" Communist Party, as only a new version of the old Stalinist theory of "social fascism"; the Party reaffirms the admissibility of united fronts, under certain conditions, with the Communist Party as a party.

15. The Workers Party rejects the theory that capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism are "equally reactionary" and the political line flowing from it. This theory implies the superiority of "democratic capitalism" to totalitarian collectivism, which can lead in practise only to supporting reactionary movements of capitalist restoration. The Russian proletariat could take power in 1917 only when backed by the revolutionary-democratic peasant masses. Capitalist democracy can struggle for power again in Russia only if backed by reactionary world imperialism; that is, Russia can be reintegrated into capitalist world only in one of two forms - either under a savage, fascist or semi-fascist dictatorship, or as a group of colonies of imperialism, with the latter as the more likely form. The theory of a "bourgeois-democratic" or a "democratic" revolution against the Stalinist dictatorship which "will not restore capitalism" but "only" establish "democracy" under the rule of a "Constituent Assembly" is a reactionary dream propagated for years by Kautsky. The reactionary liquidation of Stalinism can be accomplished only by means of the most brutal military dictatorship of the bourgeoisie; the revolutionary liquidation of Stalinism can be accomplished only under the leadership of the proletariat fighting under the banner of international socialism. Any intermediate choice is an illusion, a trap, a dream, a petty-bourgeois Utopia. The theory of the "equally reactionary" character of the two mutually hostile and irreconcilable classes and regime can only have the objective effect of disarming the Russian Proletariat in face of capitalist restorationism, by preaching the lie that it is a matter of indifference to the workers if the present regime is liquidated by capitalist reaction and the bourgeoisie restored to power.

16. In the Soviet Union, the revolutionary proletariat stands on the fundamental program of the Fourth International. It declares an uncompromising struggle against Stalinism, and against all its reactionary theories and policies. Under no circumstances does it give an iota of political support to the regime. It call for the revolutionary overthrow of the ruling class. The program of the Fourth International calls for the restoration, not of democracy in general, that is, of bourgeois democracy, but of proletarian, Soviet democracy. It works for the re-assembling of the forces necessary to establish a genuine Bolshevik party. It works for the transformation of the trade unions into fighting organs of the working class, defending their interests against the class interests, the exploitation and oppression of the ruling bureaucracy. It calls for the re-establishment of the democratic Soviets and the Soviet regime, and works to drive the bureaucracy and all other alien class elements out of the reconstituted Soviets. It proclaims its sympathy with the national aspirations of the oppressed peoples and minorities, fights for their independence, and pledges itself to recognize the right of self-determination of these peoples, warning them at the same time of the dangers of falling into the trap of bourgeois nationalism or becoming tools of enemy, exploiting classes of foreign imperialism. It pledges itself to work for the support of the workers and toiling people throughout the world to every progressive struggle of the Soviet peoples against the tyrannical regime that

oppresses them. It calls upon them to rekindle the fires of the October Revolution, to destroy root and branch the incubus of bureaucratism that has fastened itself upon them, to unite with the proletariat of the whole world in renewed struggle for the socialist emancipation of the toilers.

September 19, 1941

Max Shachtman	Ruth Taylor
Harry Allen	Ernest Lund
David Coolidge	Norman Saunders
Albert Gates	Jack Wilson
Mike Stevens	

For submission to the
Second National Convention
of the Workers Party

On the Transitional Program Today and Our Need of Basic Socialist Propaganda

Our transitional program has served us as our main agitational weapon since 1938. Despite profound changes in the general social and political scene and in the status of our party, we have never devoted a serious and fundamental discussion to the program and its implications since then. The discussions on the subject dealt with the individual slogans, rather than the program as such in relation to our current tasks and our perspective.

Today, two important developments require that such a discussion be no longer postponed. These are (a) the war and its affect upon the general scene and (b) the growing opportunity and burning need of recruiting workers from the shops.

This document does not seek to pose as a comprehensive treatment of the subject. It will strive only to initiate thought on the subject generally and put forth some concrete proposals in reference to part (b) of the above paragraph.

The transitional program was first advanced by Trotsky for the American scene as a result of the following perspective. America is, economically, over-ripe for Socialism. The severe economic crisis is really a phase of a social crisis gripping the whole range of society. The American proletariat is the most backward in the world. Unless the revolutionary party finds a means of bridging the terrific gap between the economic ripeness of the country and the ideological backwardness of the proletariat, the victory of fascism will be a certainty. History does not give us the time to educate a Socialist-conscious proletariat. The revolutionary party must therefore advance a program of demands as far-reaching as the crisis is severe. These demands will at once be the only adequate approach to the problem and, by their thorough-going nature, be impossible of realization within the frame-work of capitalism. The crisis would drive the trade unions into politics in the form of a Labor Party. The revolutionary party would support the Labor Party and use the transitional program to drive it toward a radical solution. Since the transitional demands would raise more problems than they could solve, they would educate the workers to accept socialization under a workers government as the only way out. The Socialist education of the proletariat would therefore be achieved in the very process of fighting for Socialism.

This last great contribution of Trotsky to Marxist thought had a most salutary effect upon the movement. We began finding points of contact between the mass movements and our agitation. For the first time we found ourselves in the unions, among the unemployed, in the anti-fascist struggle, armed with something better than a thesis on the permanent revolution. Unfortunately, the success of our agitation found no commensurate success in recruiting and building the party. This continues to the present day. The journalistic superiority of Labor Action over any of our previous efforts, its increased circulation and wholesale distribution at the factory gates, its favorable reception stands in contrast to our difficulty in recruitment.

Though a number of obvious objective reasons can be advanced in explanation, it is my view that one of the important factors is that a program of transitional demands, designed to set masses in motion, cannot be a substitute for basic propaganda for Socialism designed to educate, inspire, and give a Socialist idealism to the workers who read our press.

Labor Action arms our comrades on the floor of the union to be able to advance a program to revolutionize the mass movement but fails to provide a line of Socialist agitation to make Socialist-conscious workers and consequently, party members out of a growing number of sympathetic readers.

It is not here a question of an article or two devoted to "socialism". Unless we impregnate our entire agitation on the questions of the day with this approach we may as well not begin. A "socialist" corner in Labor Action would only serve to mis-educate our agitators by such isolated presentation. Only a systematic integration of transitional demands with an agitation for Socialism can present a rounded perspective to the reader.

This will not be easy. Virtually none of our writers and agitators have the knack for basic Socialist agitation. Our organization has no tradition in this form of agitation. Its historical development never gave it the opportunity to learn. An historical explanation for this becomes apparent with a few moments thought.

With the partial exception of the English, the European proletariat was convinced of Socialism long before the last war. Even in Catholic countries like Austria and Italy, the overwhelming mass of the workers were Socialist-conscious. During the post-war revolutionary wave, the question that confronted the European proletariat was how to achieve Socialism. It was a struggle between the Comintern and the reformists for hegemony over a Socialist proletariat. The Communists concerned themselves with the decisive questions of strategy and tactics. Not the capitalist illusions of the workers, but their reformist illusions had to be overcome. In America the Communists followed the same lead, forgetting that the Socialist education of the virgin proletariat was as important as the Marxist education of the small minority under reformist Socialist influence. (Despite an underestimation of its importance, the C.P. in its early days put out some excellent propaganda on Socialism and capitalism. Even in its Stalinist period, the C.P. turned out some effective material, like the pamphlets of Olgin. By this time, of course, it became interested primarily in selling the Soviet paradise.)

Trotskyism arose as an opposition within the Communist movement, concerned, in the first place, with strategical questions (China - England - etc.) Its problem was that of saving the Communist movement from Stalinist degeneration. When the movement set out to build an independent world party (the 4th Int.) its task in Europe was still one of winning over the workers from the two old movements. The American movement, however, also continued on the same track in its agitation.

Though it knew that its future depended upon the mass of unpoliticalized workers still living in their capitalist prejudices, by force of tradition and training it continued to speak a language and concerned itself primarily with questions of interest only to workers already politically awakened by the Socialist or Communist movements.

For a brief period following the formation of the first W.P. (perhaps under the influence of the Muste forces) the movement began to think in terms of agitation among the mass of the workers. The internal factional situation and the entry into the S.P. ended this development. Inside the S.P. the fight against reformism again became, by necessity the main pre-occupation.

With the formation of the S.W.P. the movement continued its agitation in the old sectarian rut until the transitional program was formulated. As noted at the outset, the latter became to be considered a self-sufficient weapon in agitation.

It was precisely the absence of basic Socialist agitation that tended to give our transitional demands an aspect of unreality on the one hand and of reformism on the other.

From Trotsky's view that a bridge was necessary to make up for the absence of a basic Socialist understanding on the part of the workingclass, we permitted ourselves to assume that the bridge had obviated the need of direct Socialist propaganda or somehow might even be in conflict with it.

However, as revolutionists, we could not escape the need of referring to Socialism. We "solved" this by "hanging" on to almost every editorial and article a sentence saying that "Whereas the points advanced above are a partial solution, only Socialism can be a final solution." The race question, war, unemployment, equality for women, colonial and national questions, sharecropping, housing, poor health, fascism, etc. etc. will be solved by Socialism our readers are told. Will any of them ever be told what Socialism is, just how and why it will solve these problems?

Sometimes one would suspect that our writers assume that every worker wants Socialism and he need only be told how to achieve it. The truth is that the mass of the American workers are still ignorant of what Socialism is.

There is still another important consideration for such agitation. The average worker thinks in terms of two radical movements, the Socialists and the Communists. When identified, we are associated not with Socialism or Communism as streams in the workingclass, but rather with an individual, Trotsky. This, of course, is what the Stalinists wish workers to think. It makes their work all the easier. Though the worker will not agree, he will accept Socialists, even radical ones, as part of the indigenous movement.

Some advance the view that the need for basic Socialist propaganda ended with the Russian Revolution. That such "old fashioned"

approach, as they put it, is impractical today. Nothing could be further from the truth. No one proposes that we agitate today exactly as Debs did in the period before the war. Neither the capitalist system nor Socialist thought has remained stationary. But this has made the agitational task of the Socialist all the easier! Who today can not answer the average worker's foolish prejudices about Socialism ten times easier than it was possible in Debs' day?

What has become more difficult is that Stalinist Russia becomes today a part and parcel of every discussion of Socialism. But far from being a reason to dodge the need for direct Socialist propaganda, it is this, perhaps above all other considerations, that makes it necessary to deal with it. The collapse of capitalism and now the war make a "socialistic" organization of economy inescapable. Everything assumes a "socialistic" tinge -- Stalin's Russia, Hitler's "New Order", Churchill's "levelling of wealth", Roosevelt's intervention in private business, etc. Unless we define and re-define Socialism -- not abstractly but in the terms of the America we know -- we are only doing half a job in combating the Stalinist mis-education of the working class.

An entirely erroneous notion is widely held on how the masses were won for Socialism in Russia in 1917. This view has it that a tiny party with a clever leadership "hooked" the Russian masses with the slogans of "Land, Peace, Bread" and made a revolution. Aside from the party not being so tiny, the mistake in this view is to overlook the fact that the Russian industrial proletariat in 1917 was a Socialist proletariat and that primitive socialistic ideas were widespread among the peasantry. If the American proletariat will learn its Socialism only in the actual struggle that introduces Socialism (and history seems to leave us this as the only possible variant if we are to escape fascism) it is still a thousand times true that every individual worker we convert to consciously fight for a Socialist goal will make our task all the easier. (This is not the place to take up the question of whether there can be such a thing as a Stalinist-led anti-capitalist revolution. If such a possibility exists, it is only an additional argument for the view here presented. Our party must educate workers to distinguish one "brand" of Socialism from the other.)

Our transitional program maintains, of course, its basic validity in the present war. The war requires only that we find new forms, new demands, new emphasis. However, the war also raises problems that become increasingly difficult to answer with anything short of a complete Socialist answer. Rationing is such a question. We can call for the suppression of the "black market", trade union control of distribution, etc. but in essence we are only calling for equality in poverty. We cannot escape telling the workers that they will have to put up with rationing as long as they put up with capitalism and war. The unbearably long hours of labor are another such problem.

But by far the most important reason for basic Socialist presentations arises out of the change in the status of the party itself,

viz: Labor Action brings us for the first time in contact with thousands of workers in industry, our members are in personal contact with hundreds, and between the two we are in a position to recruit industrial workers. For us today, the latter becomes our most important immediate task. There are no mass actions we can influence today nor will our tiny forces provoke them. Our transitional demands are planting the seeds that will sprout in the mass actions of tomorrow. But immediately we can recruit. Not thousands, or even hundreds. But three or four in this shop, one or two there, etc. What will we offer to recruit them to? Today our party appears not as a party of Socialism but as a party of transitional demands. The program we formulated to fight for in a Labor Party and in the unions, becomes the only program we are known by. Good! some will say, it will make us more popular. But what they fail to comprehend is that our transitional slogans were something a mass movement would be forced to accept in trying to struggle out of the contradictions of capitalism. Only Socialism can present the breathtaking perspective of a complete re-organization of society and the ushering in of the era of peace and plenty which can inspire a worker to throw in his lot with a small revolutionary party. Of course, the average worker, he who multiplied by millions makes up the working class today, dulled and routinized by exploitation and propaganda can only be moved by the practical, immediate considerations. But the thousands of workers, particularly the young workers, who will form the revolutionary cadres tomorrow can only be inspired and brought to their feet by a bold picture of the world we seek to create. Today he is more likely to regard LA as a "left-wing C.I.O." organ than as the organ of a movement to re-make the world.

Winning support in our movement for these views will be far less difficult than putting them into practice. The inertia of the years lays heavily upon us. Yet if the leading committee approached the problem with the necessary spirit it would soon be an integral part of our activity. The first attempts may be stilted and mechanical, but the real knack would soon be learned. Instead of a ceremonial phrase that "only under Socialism will there be racial equality", we will stop to explain why. Instead of saying "only under socialism will unemployment be permanently abolished" we will demonstrate why this will be so. Instead of merely saying "Peace through Socialism", we will explain why Socialism as a world order would end war.

The first public appearance of our party, on May Day 1940, in Columbus Circle, was marked by an historic speech by Comrade Shachtman, which could well serve as a model on how we integrate our transitional demands with basic Socialist propaganda. This proves that we are not without agitators gifted for this type of approach. Nor would the rest of us fail to learn. Labor Action could find examples from many agitational classics of the past and would do well to run some in its columns. Trotsky's now-forgotten article on "Yankee Communism" that appeared in Liberty magazine is one such. Serial presentation of classics like Jack London's "Iron Heel" in condensed form is another. These would serve to bolster a Socialist content in our general material.

Therefore, in summation:

1. There are at present no mass movements underway that can be influenced by our transitional demands. Our primary task must be recruitment in the shops. For this it is necessary to bring into our general agitation a constant explanation of how Socialism today becomes literally the only way out.

2. The war presents an increasing number of problems that permit no answer short of Socialism.

3. The totalitarian tendencies of economy appear socialistic. It is our duty to educate workers to real socialism.

E. Lund

December 1942

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Recruitment by Clubs is as follows:

		Concentration	General Ind.	Non-Ind.
Q1	- 6	6		
Q2	- 5	5		
B2	- 2	2	1	1
B3	- 5	5		
Harlem	- 4		4	
Bronx	- 2		1	1
General	- 5	1	2	2
Reappli- cations	- 3		3	

Of the total number of new members recruited, 8 were Negro members - all industrial workers.

The above recruitment and membership figures reveal the following factors:

1. Recruitment has definitely become a "way of life" for the organization. Most of our activity is now carried on with recruitment as a conscious goal, instead of an incidental thing which might or might not take place.
2. Most of our recruitment was done through our concentration work, and the overwhelming majority of our new members are industrial workers.
3. Of those who did not pass their probation period, only a negligible number were industrial workers. Almost all our new worker members stayed in the organization and became active in it. Our organization is better equipped today to attract and keep industrial workers.
4. One proof of the above is that today, unlike a year ago, we are not worried about "what to do with contacts," "how to get them into the party." It is true, of course, that we have to discuss and plan and work for recruitment; that it doesn't happen by itself. But there certainly is that concern about "bringing new people into the clubs" as there was a year ago and more.
5. Most of the recruitment was done during the first half of the year. Following that period, which itself had come after a time of slow, preparatory work, came a period of integration and education of new members. This in part is responsible for the slowdown in recruitment. Another factor was the loss of one of our concentrations the loss of several of our best "recruiters" who left on other assignments.
6. Although on the whole our attitude towards the recruitment is vastly improved, there are still some comrades who are hesitant in this sphere. In addition, we are still plagued by an old weakness - that of starting on a job, but not following it through to the end. Instead, we tend to let our activities get shifted into other fields which might be more alluring and profitable for the

organization. The result is that we are left with many loose ends - contacts, friends, others who do not become members of the party.

Our membership today is more active today than it was previously, although there are still a few comrades who do not share in one way or another in our work. Following the last convention, the city committee and club organizers combed through the membership for the purpose of activizing each one. The result was that 15 members, who for one reason or another, could not undertake any party assignment, were dropped to the status of sympathizer.

During this same period, a number of leading people left town on other assignments. These included several CC members.

THE SITUATION IN THE CLUBS:

Bronx: After a long period of extreme activity on the part of the Bronx membership, who were composed in the main of young enthusiastic people, the club found itself with a very long subscriber and contact list. However, due primarily to the composition of the Bronx club, its youthfulness, etc., the club found it next to impossible to recruit any members into the party from all this work. Its several attempts to hold public meetings fell through because of circumstances completely outside the control of the club or the organization.

The C.C. discussed on several occasions proposals made by this club for "neighborhood work", i.e., involvement in tenant organizations etc., but rejected these proposals on the ground that we did not have the suitable personnel in the club for initiating such activity in the neighborhood. A canvass of the neighborhood revealed no existing organization in which our members could work, so that we would have to be the initiators of such organizations and activities. It was the opinion of the C.C. that we were not in a position to do this unless the Bronx club were re-inforced with new members, which unfortunately the city organization could not supply.

Faced with this situation, an active membership placed in a position where it could not recruit to the party, the C.C. together with the Bronx club, after long deliberation, decided upon the dissolution of the club and the transfer of its members into other clubs where they have continued to be active and in many cases playing leading roles.

As a result of the activity of the Bronx club, however, we have created a certain amount of sympathy for our paper and ideas in the neighborhood, still retain quite a few subscribers who have renewed their subs, have several contacts. At the present time, the Harlem club is following up on this work.

Harlem: This club has turned its attention from work in the Harlem community as a whole to activity which is commensurate with our strength in Harlem. House-to-house distribution of the paper in a housing project has brought in a large number of subscriptions and has given us some excellent contacts. As a result, the club was able to organize a contact class through which two members were recruited to the party.

At the present time, the club is once again in the position of

to organize another contact class with good possibilities for recruitment. In this way the club is building up and getting into a condition where it can intervene in community affairs on a more realistic basis than we have ever been able to do in the past.

A section might be devoted at this point to our "Negro Work." During the past year the party recruited a greater number of Negro workers than it ever did before. What is more important, however, is that these comrades have remained in the organization and have become a very active part of it, taking leadership in some very important work. Most of these comrades, however, were brought into the party as a result of our concentration work and this in large measure accounts for their speedy integration into our organization. In this sense, Negro work - or work among Negro workers - has now become the task of every club and almost every member and is no longer relegated to special committees.

Q-1: (Report does not include concentration work reported on orally). For the greater part of the year, this club's work was almost exclusively concentration work. With the liquidation of this concentration, and the transfer of many of its members to other clubs, Q-1 is now following up on the contacts of the old concentration. It is also doing some house-to-house activity in connection with the sub drive; general contact work, etc. In this club/the comrades of a new concentration which has still to be formally organized.

The work started by this club in recruitment has in many respects served as a model. It was this concentration which started the organization of contact classes, getting of subs on a large scale, sales of Plenty for All, etc. The particularly favorable conditions of this concentration was naturally very helpful. Nevertheless, this concentration showed a good grasp of what its tasks were in regard to recruitment.

Q-2: (Report does not include actual concentration work). Most, if not all, the work of the club has been in connection with its concentration which has been the most stable of all. From a very small group, this concentration has grown through recruitment and employment of new people to considerable size.

Almost all the members of the club are actively involved in the work of the concentration and the general work is carried out well. Unfortunately, this club still overlooks or relegates to last consideration the specific task of recruitment, with the result that it has some good contacts, but does not get around to bringing them into the organization.

Soon after the last convention, five members were recruited into the club, three of whom had originally been contacted through the School. Since that time, recruitment has come to a complete standstill, although the number of contacts has grown. The integration of the new members has been very good, for the very nature of the club's work immediately involves all members.

At the present time, the club has an added activity in connection with the sub-drive. They are canvassing a housing project and receiving a substantial number of subs.

In the coming period, this club will have to place emphasis upon

the problem of party recruitment, or its excellent concentration work may well go wasted for the party.

B-2: From the largest concentration a year ago, this has now become very small. In the oral report, we pointed out what the circumstances of work were in this concentration, and the limitations this places upon our perspectives there. At the beginning of the year, two members were recruited from this concentration. At the present time, there is prospect for the recruitment of at least one more.

In addition to its concentration work, this club conducts general contacting work and is doing work in a housing project in connection with the sub-drive. There are also three students in this club who are working among youth contacts, getting subs, etc.

B-3: Since the last convention, the work of this club has undergone considerable change. From general contacting, house-to-house work, this club has become one which devotes almost all its energies to its concentration. It is a very new concentration, with most of its members in it not more than six months. To date, two new members have been recruited from one section of this concentration, and one from another. A contact class is now under way which should result in some recruitment.

(The problems of this concentration, type of work, etc. were in the oral report.)

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

At the beginning of the year we attempted to have a functioning educational department. The committee met for a while and worked out a number of plans and projects. It was able to publish a few informational, educational bulletins which were to be used by club members. It also met with the club educational directors and assisted in the working out of club educational programs. Beyond that, the department could not longer function as a department for the simple reason that almost every member of it was already overburdened with other party activity.

The WP School which we ran last year was by far our best achievement in this field. Its excellent attendance both by members and non-members alone testifies to this. The continuation of the school as a party institution and its expansion should be one of the things to which we must devote the most serious attention.

In the clubs, most of the educational activity has been devoted in the recent period to the study and review of Marxian fundamentals. For example: B-2 has studied several of the Lenin pamphlets, as has B-3. Harlem and Q-2 have both used the Communist Manifesto as texts for educational work in the clubs. Q-1 has had a class on the principles of the WP.

In addition, almost every club has had functioning study groups, that is, small groups which meet once a week and study together some important piece of literature on a given topic.

At the beginning of the year, most of the discussion in the clubs naturally centered around the issues which came up at our national

convention and this discussion had great educational value for all our members.

PROPAGANDA:

Outside of L.A., whose distribution has declined somewhat during the year (due to loss of one distribution point, shortage of distributors), Plenty for All has been our main propaganda instrument. We do not at the present time have sufficient material which will bridge the gap between L.A. and the party program and it is necessary that we exert the utmost pressure that such pamphlets be issued by the NO immediately.

Plenty for All has had continued good sales as we meet new contacts, but after that we have nothing to give to these contacts other than the NI and the old Marxian classics sold by the Book Service.

We made one attempt to issue a special leaflet addressed to the CP. The distribution of these leaflets was good, but the response was practically nil. Our energies could have been much better expended had we issued a leaflet or pamphlet on some subject like the Labor Party, the No-strike pledge, the transitional program, Re-conversion, etc. and distributed to our contacts.

Our public meetings have played a large role in our propaganda work. The tendency has been for our meetings to grow in size, and to attract more and more the newer contacts we are meeting in the shops. These meetings should be utilized more for recruitment purposes than they have been in the past. From an organizational point of view the meetings are still poorly run and lack the necessary sparkle to make them really peppy and colorful. This problem too merits the most serious attention of the next committee.

SWP:

In view of the fact that we meet members of this organization in almost every one of our fields of endeavor and also because of the special situation in that organization, we must in the coming period establish closer contact with these members. Special attention should now be paid to this work. As a first step, it is necessary to conduct an educational program on the differences between the two organizations and to keep our members fully informed of the developments which are likely to take place in the coming period. The special literature addressed to the SWP must be gotten into the hands of SWP members and every effort made to conduct discussions with them.

DISTRIBUTIONS:

As we stated above, there has been a decline in the circulation of the paper. At the present time we distribute about 5,000 copies per week, in addition to special distributions. This is a drop of about 2,000. Part of the drop was caused by the closing of two places of regular distribution. However, we have found another field for distribution and at the present time this field can be greatly expanded if we can get a sufficient number of comrades to participate in this work.

"It has been the unfortunate practice of our organization to so routinize the matter of distributions that many comrades don't attach the necessary importance to this work. Actually next to our work inside the concentrations, the distribution of the paper is the most important activity that we conduct. There are very few places indeed where the distribution of our paper has failed to have important political results.

In the coming period, we shall have to devise means of making this work assume the importance it deserves by organizing our activities accordingly.

HOUSE-TO-HOUSE WORK:

This work, engaged in to some extent by nearly all the clubs, is not, at the present time, a major form of our activity and we do not look to it as a major source of recruitment. Yet, in the opinion of the City Committee, it is wrong to conceive of this work as utterly useless. If nothing else were accomplished by it - and this is not the case - our paper and organization become popularized among large sections of people in this way. However, this work has offered us the opportunity of meeting some very good contacts. In the coming period, the organization of this work, and the inter-change between clubs of contacts, etc. will have to be better organized in order that we may get the best and most out of this work.

CITY COMMITTEE:

The organizational weakness of the committee is manifest at first glance. Practically every member of the committee is so involved in his particular sphere of work, club, concentration, etc., as to be able to devote very little time to general, departmental work of the committee itself. Our several attempts to strengthen the city office but at least another part-time worker have fallen through. In addition to that, during the course of the year, five of the original nine members of the committee left, either to out-of-town assignments or for special reasons.

As a result of this situation it has proven impossible to have a functioning educational department, labor department, person in charge of distributions, etc. This is the first time in the history of the NY organization that we have had only one functionary - and at a time when the number of our activities has been growing.

The committee therefore tried to act on all these matters in committee. Labor problems were discussed at greater length by this CC and it took a more active part in the formulation of policy. It also did this with regard to educational work. This CC tried to act on a number of other political questions, namely the ALP problems, our role in the concentrations, etc.

YOUTH WORK:

In the past period, the number of young sympathizers and contacts that we have been making has been growing. We have several young comrades who can now begin to work with these contacts for the purpose of organizing them. Action on the proposals which are now being discussed should be taken immediately after the city convention.

Among those proposals is that we attempt to organize some sort of youth forum, run entirely by these contacts and sympathizers and in which our members will function. This forum or club should have as its main aim at the present time educational activity, social activity, etc. In it, naturally, our comrades will present the point of view of the party and try to give direction.

The next CC should have on it one person who will be able to devote himself to the problems of this work.

(The work on concentrations and concrete perspectives in that field were reported on orally. These should be discussed in the clubs and will be discussed and acted on at the convention.)

SUMMARY:

In the opinion of the City Committee, the NY organization has made a good deal of progress in the last year. We have more than "held our own." That is, we have grown through recruitment, and in the last year our influence has grown even more. In a great many situations, where a year ago we were outsiders looking in and having something to say about what ought to be done, today we are active factors and what we have to say counts.

There are almost daily inquiries from all kinds of people about what the party thinks on this or that question, what the paper would say about this or that situation, etc.

We are in the concentrations and our problems now are mainly on how to do things rather than what to do. The best work of course is carried out by those who made the turn when it was first proposed and have stuck to this kind of work.

The NY organization still continues to supply forces for our out-of-town work,

PERSPECTIVES:

- 1 - Recruitment: This point to be discussed by clubs, with each club reporter bringing to the city convention the concrete perspectives for the club.

There are a number of friends and contacts who can be recruited into the organization in the coming period without very much effort.
- 2 - School: Build up the WP school as an institution which will be able to run classes for members and non-members, organize study groups, prepare outlines of study, run lectures and forums.
- 3 - Sub Drive: To go over the top of our quota. Upon conclusion of LA drive, to start an NI drive.

4 - Distributions:

To raise our distributions to at least 7,000 by the addition of two more distribution points.

5 - Party Center:

To work towards the establishment of a NY party center, where classes, lectures, forums, can be held. A Headquarters which can be kept open evenings, etc.

6 - Youth Work:

Immediate action on the formation of a youth group as outlined above.

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C I T Y C O N V E N T I O N

New York Local

Workers Party

January 6th, 1945

Bulletin No. 3 -- Discussion Articles

1. V. Jensen: The Crisis in the
New York Party
2. F. Forest: On the City Committee Report
and the Need for a Political
Perspective

Issued December 19,
1945.

The Crisis in the New York Party

by V. Jensen

While for the most part I am in agreement with the convention report as far as its perspectives for future work, and am in wholehearted agreement with its emphasis on re-industrialization for the coming period, and to a certain extent agree with some of its analyses of our past period - the report as a whole leaves me with an uneasy feeling that it does not really come to terms with the problem that is uppermost in the comrades' minds. That problem is - what is wrong with the New York party? The New York comrades reading the report can get from it little or no direction for channelizing his extremely understandable and justifiable doubts and questions as to the weak state of our local into constructive convention discussion and activity.

To my mind, the main weakness of the report is its failure frankly to realize and state that the New York party is in a state of crisis, to analyze the causes and symptoms of this crisis, and to show how the perspectives outlined for the future flow from an understanding of this crisis and are designed to help the party hoist itself by its own bootstraps from its stagnation.

There is no virtue in crying havoc for its own sake. On the other hand a membership that is not entirely mentally deficient, that has been attending its branch meetings (usually deadly) for the past year, and has become either deadened to or cynical about one smaller or larger failure after another, has a right to demand that its leadership have guts enough to call a spade a spade instead of vaguely defining it as an agricultural instrument.

This the convention report does not do. To be sure strewn throughout the report are acknowledgements of various failures: we fell down miserably in our recruitment drive; we could not mobilize our membership for our important election campaign; our city committee showed no leadership either on a citywide or even (pitiful admission) on a branch scale, with few exceptions; our labor (and other committees) functioned only sporadically; our membership has become apathetic towards its daily tasks, demoralized to a point where many comrades have lost faith in the revolution, etc. etc.

These are not the symptoms of a party local that has a few "bugs" that is dangerously ill. That is why the city committee must hoist the danger flag with more vigor. The New York membership and leadership must look at the pretty grim spectacle of themselves straight in the face. Unless they do and recognize the seriousness of the situation, there is no reason to hope that the New York party which has failed in many smaller tasks will be prepared for the sacrifices and efforts which the coming period demands.

What Is Wrong with New York?

Last May a recruitment drive which has as its modest goal a quota of 25 to be recruited in three months ended with results that fell far below this goal. As the convention report details, the report on the drive ushered in a discussion which went far beyond the recruitment drive, and yet which was, to my mind at least, cer-

tainly not for the most part, beyond the scope of the discussion. Comrades seeking the causes for our failure had to discuss a situation where branches functioned in deadly manner; a large part of our older members were inactive or doing only the minimum of activity; our membership as a whole was unenthusiastic, our working habits conservative and routine. Criticism was made of the committee and the city organizer, as well as of the failure of the NO to give us political direction and political ammunition in the form of propaganda material. For the most part, the committee felt that the manner in which NY was conducting itself represented a lag in relation to the turn the rest of the party was trying to make; we were underground as party branches and what open activity we did was directed in appeal towards the older or so-called "political" periphery (i.e., ex's, radicals and petty-bourgeois intellectuals.) LA would have a campaign on the labor draft for a month, but in NY neither the city committee nor the fractions discussed the LA campaign in relation to party work that we might do.

Groping for understanding and solutions, the committee recommended more open activities for the branches and the launching of a campaign on reconversion which was to take the form of the election campaign. To be sure, as the convention report states, this discussion was not a model of clarity but we did represent the beginning of consciousness, much belated to be sure, of danger within the New York organization.

It is regrettable that this first attempt to cope, however haltingly, with the NY situation met with a most conservative and defensive attitude and lack of understanding on the part both of the city organizer and the PC. Comrade Shachtman's attitude in particular was that the comrades who were raising the issues were simply trouble-makers, trying to make a "crisis" in NY where none existed and were delinquents who tried to conceal their own shortcomings by blaming everything on the city organizer. I hold no brief for the present city committee - as a matter of fact I wouldn't wish it on a dog. It was undoubtedly delinquent and undoubtedly had a tendency to lay every shortcoming of the organization at the doorstep of the city office. Nonetheless, I considered this attitude of the NO shortsighted in the extreme. And I do not think that even they think they can any longer afford to ignore the crisis in NY.

Naturally, the shortcomings of the organization could only be reflected in the campaign. And they were. I do not want to minimize the step forward that the campaign was; for the first time since the war we appeared openly and consistently with our propaganda. I agree with the analysis in the body of the convention report of the opportunities opened to us by the campaign. The great danger is that we will not be able to use them as we were not able to use so many opportunities during the campaign.

The campaign, in spite of its many good points, revealed in a more ugly and inescapable manner than before the shortcomings of the party organization. The leadership in NY was not really a leadership in any sense, the membership could not be rallied in its first important political and organizational campaign for a long time. Apathy and indifference were the order of every campaigning night. In spite of much better literature, more publicity, more finances -- from the point of view of party accomplishment, I do not think this

campaign can be compared with the one held four years ago. No better criterion of that can be had than the general low state of membership morale at the end of this campaign. From that point of view, the opening sentence of the convention report calling the campaign the "outstanding accomplishment of the year's work" can be considered true only in a very relative sense.

The end of the campaign throws the party crisis into ever sharper light - The crisis is characterized most sharply by the reluctance and resistance of the membership to reenter industry, by low personal morale and a feeling of hopelessness about the prospects of our own party. The branches torn from their activity (such as it was) by the campaign, deprived of their fractions, display their rootlessness and purposelessness.

Whence does it stem?

The crisis in New York is no isolated phenomenon. It represents fortunately in an exaggerated form, a crisis that confronts or will confront the entire party. It is for that reason that it deserves the closest attention and thought not only of New York but of the national organization.

The war opened the gates of opportunity to our party. For the first time our comrades were permitted outside the pale of isolation from the working class into its company, at least, if not into its ranks. Labor Action, as an agitational organ could reach the workers. For the first time the party could hope to make an appeal otherwise than as a Trotskyist sect.

But in the flush of this important gain, and in the surprise we experienced when we held our ranks against patriotic pressure, we have a tendency to forget that we have paid a price for the war. The biggest price we have paid is undoubtedly in leadership. In this crucial period we were deprived of our best leadership, not only in the secondary ranks but in the primary. The results on both levels from which many of the best were missing was much the same: overwork of inadequate and in many cases mediocre comrades, resulting in routinism, conservatism, touchiness about criticism, expensive inefficiency, buck-passing, arbitrary or spasmodic discipline alternating with laxity, and failure to train leadership.

As Comrade Lund pointed out in his pre-conference documents, the party as the enormous task of closing the gap between the agitational nature of our paper and the reality of our small party in the person of our comrades in the shops and our branches. This task is made no easier by the social composition of our party whose members are overwhelmingly young and petty-bourgeois.

In New York these difficulties were especially apparent. Our social composition is worse than any other place. Our comrades, due primarily to the atomized nature of New York industry, were scattered in shops throughout the city. The lives of the branches, with one possible exception, did not revolve around the work of the comrades in the factories.

These are objective circumstances. The job of the party is to give direction so as to help overcome the difficulties inherent in

the objective circumstances. Particularly in New York we did not do so. We lagged badly behind LA - in our forums, our schools, our activity. Our branches were given no task beyond sending people out knocking at doors to visit contacts once a week. That we had no place to bring these people that we contacted to, except a forum or school organized to appeal on an old-line propagandistic basis was not considered. Why should we be surprised then, when during the campaign which we have organized on an individual rather than a branch basis, we turn over a job to the branches only to find they couldn't do a job? We have no branches - we have our membership divided into groups that meet on Wednesday or Thursday - but no branches. No wonder that we did little recruiting, the wonder is that we recruited and managed to integrate even the few we did.

And now what?

New York stands at the crossroads. The organization does not have too long to mull over its fate, search its soul as to what is wrong, seek for a source of blame. If we stand still, we'll find ourselves on the skids, a process that to my mind has already begun. To get out of our crisis, two things mainly are demanded.

First and foremost - back into industry. All ingenious schemes, any vow of individual responsibility, any plan of extensive education - all are completely meaningless if we are isolated from the working-class. It is not an easy thing to do. We will be working in small shops, at low wages. It may be a long time before we are in a position to make even the modest splash in trade union politics that we did in the past period. But it is the only way in which we can be in the stream of the labor struggles that face the United States. Those comrades who are reluctant to take this step must face the consequences for the party. Either we are in the labor movement, or we go back to being the propagandist sect we were before the war - and for that the time is certainly out of joint.

And concurrent with the process of reestablishing ourselves in industry, the New York party must reorganize itself so that workers may be brought to it, integrated in it, educated in it. If it does not, the demoralization and frustration of any industrialization program is inevitable. In my branch, some comrades protested an execution that the branch hold open meetings twice a month as well as a social for contacts. They feared that the "internal education and life of the party would be diluted". Besides it wasn't the party "tradition". The answer to that was given by a new comrade who said in a disgusted voice that if never seeing any new faces at a meeting was a party tradition it ought to be broken. New York has a lot of bad habits, not to be graced by the name of tradition, that must be broken.

We have opportunities. We have a program. We have a membership that once cognizant of the seriousness of the crisis places on serious revolutionaries, must hoist itself by its own petard out of its stagnant pool into the main stream of the labor movement. Such a membership can and will demand a serious leadership ready to assume responsibilities and do its share. In the coming period, the New York organization must effect a revolutionary change of habits. Nothing less will do.

C 43

On the City Committee Report and the Need for a Political Perspective

by F. Forest

1. Depoliticalization

The City Committee's report contends that the Party is at the crossroads and defines the crossroads to be the decision, to reindustrialize the party, or go back to the old system of white collar jobs. That is an unpostponable task for the Party, but a perspective cannot be passed off for an analysis of past achievements and past failures. If there is one thing which we did achieve, it was the turn to proletarianization. 75% of our membership, or pretty much all that could be proletarianized, were located in industry. Our membership went into industry wholeheartedly and enthusiastically took their place among the organized proletariat. Yet the indispensable turn to industrialization did not bring commensurate political results in terms of party recruitment. Instead of practically ignoring the question of the small results gotten from our industrialization, it is this precisely which the Committee's report should have analyzed, not merely as an account of the past, but as a guide to our future reindustrialization and the results we should expect from that.

This was also the major problem at the last convention of the New York local. I pointed out then that unless we politicalized our work we could not expect the future recruitment drives to be any more successful than the past ones. Though I was attacked by the C.C. members for this analysis, the report, brought in by the Political Committee to the city convention, announced just such a turn to politicalizing our trade union work. However, the turn was never really made. It could not have been made without overhauling all our work and not only in the trade unions, but in Labor Action, and within our own ranks for in the process of proletarianization we had lost precisely that which should have been our special contribution to the trade union movement: the line and revolutionary face of the vanguard party. What clearer demonstration of our depoliticalization than the absence in the Committee's report of even any mention of the trade union turn, not to speak of an analysis as to how the New York local carried out this turn?

The process of depoliticalization is glaringly revealed in the lamentable state of our internal education. Yet not a single of the following facts gets even a cursory reference in the report:

(1) Never --and I am no novice in the revolutionary movement-- have I known of a case where a political position is adopted by the P.C. and its resolution, along with an opposition one, is published, and yet the central local of the Party does not arrange a single city-wide discussion, as was the case here with the Resolutions on the Negro Question. This question is especially vital to the New York local which is trying to get a foothold in the largest Negro community in the country. Yet the first time I made a motion for a city-wide discussion on the Negro Resolutions. it was rejected on the ground that Com. Coolidge was on tour. (Was there not a single member of the PC supporting that thesis who could present his position "as well"?) The second time I presented the motion the election campaign was being launched, and the motion was again rejected, this time on the ground that the campaign left no time for discussion. Evidently there is

still no need felt for clarity on the political position on the Negro question -- at least no efforts are exerted toward the first, elementary point for this work: a city-wide discussion of the opposing positions, though Harlem is made a concentration point in New York work.

(2) I have never known of a case where the main local of a revolutionary party does not have a single city-wide discussion preceding the calling of a national conference, as was the case with the New York local preceding the Active Workers Conference.

(3) The disdain for theoretical questions stems, of course, from the National Committee; the New York local only reflects that attitude, as seen from the handling of the German comrades' retrogression thesis. (Cf. Capitalist Barbarism or Socialism, N.I., Oct. 1944.) Consider the prominence and advertisement given this work, and then contrast it (1) to the few discussions held, and (2) the lack of responsibility felt by the P.C. to explain its position which evidently differed from Com. Shachtman's, who applauded the German thesis. It differed also from the German comrades who, the editorial note stated, arrived at their position from motivations of their own. At the same time it opposed Com. Johnson who rejected the retrogressionist theory in its entirety. No wonder then that the CC arranged only two meetings, which, strictly, cannot be called city-wide meetings since attendance was purely on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, these were never followed up, although the City Organizer announced that the two meetings held on the question were the first "in a series".

(4) Finally, consider the unity negotiations with the SWP. The first time the membership heard of these was through the press. Then a meeting was called and a discussion held. New developments occurred, and another meeting called, but no time for discussion arranged. Since it was only an informational meeting it seemed clear that other meetings should be held where the membership could express its views. Moreover, the PC as well as the CC is most surely obliged to draw a balance sheet of the unity negotiations.

All this is not accidental. It flows from lack of political clarity and a wavering political line which tries to plunge the party into activity without giving it a clear perspective. Sometimes in fact the activity is undertaken as a sort of substitute for political clarification on the state of the party. Such was the case, for example, with the launching of the election campaign.

2. The three tendencies in the City Committee

Before the election campaign was undertaken the CC was in the midst of a series of discussions regarding the failure of our recruitment drive. These discussions revealed three lines of argument, characteristic of the three tendencies in the Party nationally on the question of party building:

(1) Com. Lund's idea of what our party should be and act like -- a small edition of a mass party -- finds its perfect expression in the C.C. in Com. Hoffman, whose idea of doing away with the "dichotomy" between our agitational weekly organ and the propaganda party which we are is best expressed in her own words: "Make the W.P. more

like the L.A."

(2) Com. Shachtman's constant complaint of lack of forces and attempt violently to combine the agitation and propaganda stages through the creation of a "cadre" (read: faction) finds its most characteristic expression in Com. Craine, who thinks the failure of the New York local to make greater progress is more or less a question of whether we have one or two full-time organizers.

(3) On the other hand, there is Com. Johnson, who clearly predicted the consequence of a lack of clarity on the type of party we are when he wrote: "Clarity on this is the first task of the party to check confusion and avoid frustration...At the present stage the WP can only be a propaganda organization whose main purpose must be to propagandize socialism and to make socialists. All Marxist parties aim at raising the class consciousness of workers at all times. But to circumscribe the task of the WP by this is Utopian and results in a steady dilution of socialism. The consequence is a growing loss of identity, both external and internal of the WP as a revolutionary party." (Cf. Building the Bolshevik Party)

In terms of New York local problems I expressed these same ideas when I attributed the failure of the recruitment drive to the depoliticalization of the Party itself as reflected in (1) its failure to respond politically to current events both on the national scene (National Service Act, Reconversion, etc.) and on the international arena (European events, growth of Fourth International, etc.); (2) in its failure to integrate our trade union and political work into one cohesive line; (3) the apoliticalization of our public organ which reaches the vast majority of the workers we are trying to influence, and (4) lack of directives from the National Committee.

The Lundites also complained (1) against the NC for lack of directives and lack of socialist articles in the LA, and (2) against Com. Craine for her "conservatism" (Fenwick's phrase) and her failure to put forward the face of the party by issuing leaflets, holding more public meetings, etc. They considered the cleavage between themselves and Com. Craine deep enough to insist on two separate reports, though by the time these reached the membership there was as much difference between them as between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and hence the necessity for two reports seemed completely inexplicable to the membership.

These differences the Committee's report now glosses over. It does not even mention the novelty of two separate reports. Instead it aims to create the impression that the difference was only with the Johnsonites. "Depoliticalization" as a cause for the failure of the recruitment drive, it states, was rejected by the majority of the CC. Then it continues to sum up the other differences thus: "Actually what the JC was doing here was expressing the need for a change of functioning...The comrades recognized that we were slow in making a turn to open activity which was opened by the pending end of the war and the end of the war itself." This is putting some very clear-cut hindsight consciousness into the former dispute. It clears the decks for an attack on the Johnsonites as the only critics. There is only one thing wrong with this impression: it does not reflect the true situation. The truth of the matter is that not only were three tendencies seen in the former discussion on recruitment,

but these reappeared again when the present report was read.

The fact that all was patched up in the interim period only proves the unprincipled character of the Lundites. They were irresponsible in insisting on two separate reports previously when there were no major differences between themselves and Com. Craine. They are as irresponsible now in voting on a single report which they were the first to characterize as "snug" and as lacking a realization that "the party is in a crisis". The latter opinion Com. Jensen said she still held even when the report was rewritten, or so she said when I asked her whether her vote meant that she now does not consider the party to be in a crisis.

3. The crisis in the party

The party is in a crisis. After a year's intensive activity in a situation favorable to the growth of the revolutionary party, our New York local can record a net gain of only 13 members (27 were recruited but 14 were dropped), and a vote of some 800 (as contrasted to 4000 the SWP got). Under such conditions the membership has a right to ask two questions: (1) what accounts for the miserable showing in recruitment despite the new turn to politicalize our trade union work, and (2) how does it happen that the election campaign, for which all other activities were practically stopped, during which we distributed 100,000 copies of the LA carrying a special election page, and sold 10,000 copies of Jobs for All, 5000 of the Anti-Jim Crow pamphlet and 5,000 of the pamphlet on Socialism got such poor results. It cannot be that the American proletariat is backward and not ready to accept a revolutionary program since the Trotskyist label polled the largest vote it ever did in New York,

The CC report answers neither of these questions satisfactorily. The first, as I showed, it hardly attempts to answer; the second it answers by the assertion of the rather obvious fact that the 5:1 relationship in the strength and influence of the respective parties. That assertion, no matter how belligerently made, does not explain either why our vote was so small or why the SWP is growing faster than we for the truth is that the relationship between the two parties is not the 60:40 it was at the time of the split. Why our party, without a bureaucracy such as characterizes the SWP, should record progress at a snail's pace is not answered by such evasions. Nor surely is the answer to be found in the organizational practices of the SWP. No, the answer is political. The truth is that they have a revolutionary perspective and we do not. The truth is that, regardless of what you think of their political line, nobody reading their press can fail to see that it is the press of the SWP, while anyone reading the LA makes no such connection between it and the WP.

While political questions are not within the province of a city convention, it is important at least to indicate the real reason for the crisis in the party's morale. It is hard to build a party that has no revolutionary perspective. Com. Born admitted, for example, that the pessimism prevalent in the party was due to the "failure" (his quotes) of the European revolution to take place after such a catastrophic war. He argued, however, that that ought to have a "sobering" rather than a demoralizing effect. Com. Craine added that it would be "irresponsible" for us to see revolutions "around every corner", that the policy of our party is a "responsible"

and realistic one. I am not reopening the European question or the question of world revolution, which, no doubt, will be thrashed out at the national convention, but insofar as it has a direct effect on our New York work, one thing must be seen in all its significance. Our vacillating line on the developments in Europe has had a demoralizing effect on our membership which feels frustrated and begins to doubt its own effectiveness. It is this which accounts for the dropping out of some of the older members. It is this which accounts for our poor results in recruitment. Our tail-endist first reaction to the U.A.W. strike fully exemplifies this.

The incapacity to understand the full significance of the strike only climaxed the lack of a political line which has been characteristic of our weekly organ for the past two-three years and which can by no stretch of imagination be blamed upon the two-three months unemployment in the ranks. The report states that the let-down feeling in the membership is due to its deindustrialization and consequent failure to be on the picket line. If every one of our comrades had been on the picket line, how, pray, could that have changed the line of Labor Action when it, despite the long preparations by the union for the strike, despite its open announcement of its strategy, which included the revolutionary slogan of Open the Books, despite the fact that the slogan had been a part of our transitional program and thus should have had us prepared to analyze its socialist content, nevertheless came out following the outbreak of the strike, devoid of political content? It is not up to our membership that is ready to do everything. It is a question of political line.

The party is at the crossroads, but the crossroads are not those defined by the CC. There is not a single member who disagrees with the need of reindustrializing the party. What is in question is the type of party we are building and hence the method of building it. Unless we get that clear our plans will go up in smoke. It is not merely the face of the party that is missing, but the party itself, that is, the consciousness of its vanguard role. Lack of forces does not explain why the forces that we have have lost that consciousness in their daily work. Lack of forces too is a political question. Neither returning veterans nor any forces that we may get from the SWP will solve the politico-organizational problem of building the Bolshevik party and is as poor a substitute for a party perspective as was Cannon's slogan for 30 organizers and \$10,000.

December 18, 1945.

C 48

INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST LEAGUE

NEW YORK LOCAL

114 WEST 14th STREET • NEW YORK 11, N. Y. • CH 2-9681

November 15, 1957

Robert Bloom
35 Orange Street
Brooklyn, New York

Dear Comrade Bloom:

In view of the discussion of the question of unity of the ISL with the SP-SDF, I think you will find the enclosed correspondence relevant and informative about our point of view on those matters which are in the mind of many comrades. It consists of an exchange of letters recently between comrade Norman Thomas and myself. The letters were not intended originally for publication or even wide circulation among comrades. They are not so intended now. They are not intended as material for controversy, but only for your personal information as a leading representative of the Party who is considering the question of unity.

It goes without saying that before sending this correspondence to you, I discussed the matter with comrade Thomas. He agreed to have me send his letters to you, provided they were sent in full text, that they were confined to leading responsible comrades, and that the communications be treated with the discretion that seems to be clearly indicated.

Fraternally yours,

Max Shachtman
Max Shachtman

September 20, 1957

Max Shachtman
Independent Socialist League
114 W. 14 Street
New York, N.Y.

Dear Max:

From our former conversation, you know that I would like unity on a proper basis. I am aware that, especially in Detroit, you have some valuable people. I think, however, that it is necessary, as far as I am concerned to get a clarification that does not now exist on such points as these:

Would the ISL explicitly and honestly abandon existence as an organized caucus, open or secret, in the Party?

Where do you stand on Leninism?

I would not want to impose on a democratic socialist party absolute identity of opinion about Lenin but it is to me of primary importance to say that Leninism is not democratic socialism. Out of Leninism grew by natural processes that Stalinism which we repudiate. This although I personally believe that if Lenin had lived, he might have repudiated Stalinism or been repudiated by it. You see, I am more and more of the opinion that communism as it developed wasn't a mistaken form of socialism but a betrayal of socialism.

As you know I am not active in any Socialist committees but so far as my influence goes I want to use it pretty much in accordance with your answers to these questions. The questions apply of course to your young folks movement, the Young Socialist League. I have already told you of my distrust of Bogdan Denitch. I am holding up any invitation to speak at any of your forums until I get an answer to these questions.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)
Norman Thomas

C 50

October 1, 1957

Dear Norman;

I want to do all I can to rebuild a democratic socialist movement in this country that is capable of dealing with the political problems of our time. To me, this means a healthy union of all socialists under the banner of the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation so that there may be a maximum concentration of efforts to utilize the growing possibilities now offered us. The Independent Socialist League has, I believe, a worthwhile contribution to make to this union if it is achieved, as you put it in your letter of September 20th, on a proper basis. Past relationships have created difficulties for unity between us. I welcome your request for clarification that will remove remaining obstacles. I do not want unity attained by force, by stratagem or in the dark of the moon. I want it by intelligent understanding of what all of us really want and of how we hope to resolve our common problems.

First: the Independent Socialist League does not want or intend to form or maintain "an organized caucus, open or secret, in the Party." I would not want you to take this statement, which I make emphatically as the general view of our comrades, merely as a matter of personal assurance. It represents above all good common sense. The Party is today exceedingly weak. We do not want to unite with it in order to make it weaker. As the Independent Socialist League's convention resolution put it, we do not want to convert the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation into a "vanishing battleground" of dispute among factions and sects, but into a broad movement including all socialists who are ready to cooperate earnestly and responsibly despite the differences among individuals or even tendencies.

Any Independent Socialist League caucus would automatically establish walls between Party members. What we want is to break down such walls which generate and stimulate prejudices, antagonisms and artificial or outdated factional alignments, and prevent the Party from deciding the urgent problems of the movement in an atmosphere of mutual influencing of comrades by the free exchange of opinions and free thinking about them. We do not want a loose federation of hard factions under the common name of the Party, threatening it with bitter internal battles, interminable dispute and new splits. We want a durable unity and a broad socialist movement. We must learn to live together in a single political home, where regard for the unity and progress of the Party determines the respect we have for each other's views and the relationship we maintain in discussing them. That is why I oppose the formation of any open or secret Independent Socialist League caucus. By the same token I would regret the formation of a caucus by anyone else.

Naturally, we would not like to see any attempt to introduce or enforce rigid intellectual conformity or political conformity. Many of us know from bitter experience the result of "monolithism," and we abhor it as alien to socialism, either as an organized pol-

ical movement or as a social order. Our generation knows only too well the crimes committed in the name of "democratic centralism". In your preface to "The Aims and Tasks of Democratic Socialism," it is pointed out that "many socialist tendencies helped to form the whole." That is true. The comrades of the Independent Socialist League generally represent in the broad socialist movement a tendency whose counterparts are to be found in many of the sections of the Socialist International. As their special obligation, so to say, all tendencies owe loyalty to the Party as a whole. We are ready to assume that obligation in full and in all sincerity, with conscious regard to the special tasks we share in building the Party in this country. We are not asking for special consideration or special rights. We do want exactly the same rights as all other members of the Party, not more and also not less. We do not believe a smooth and fruitful unity can be based on approaching or dealing with any comrade, or group of comrades, in such a way as leaves them with the feeling of "second-class citizenship" or "trial membership" or any other kind of special status - that of inferiority or that of superiority.

I mean every word of it - and I am sure I speak for all our comrades - when I say: we are prepared to lean over backward to prove in deeds that any concept of a "raid" on the Party or the "capture" of the Party is utterly alien to our views and intent. We regard all the party comrades as our equals in the work of rebuilding socialism, not as a narrow or slightly refurbished sect, but as an effective * in this country. In turn, we want to be regarded by all others as their equals. That would be one of the best assurances of a sound basis for the unification.

Second: the Independent Socialist League does not subscribe to any doctrine called Leninism. It does not have an official position on the subject and I am pretty certain that nobody could get the League to commit itself officially on a term which has been so varying and conflictingly defined as to make discussion of it more often semantic than ideological or political.

To me, and surely to most of our comrades, Leninism is a question primarily of historical importance in our time. Most often what is in people's minds is the Russian Revolution and democracy as the road and aim of socialism. In our view the Russian revolution has long ago been crushed. What is the fundamental and urgent political question is the relation between democracy and socialism. These questions concern socialists today and I want to outline my views on them.

We regard the Russian revolution of 1917, which Lenin led, as a socialist revolution that established a genuine worker's government. I have always defended this proposition and so have our comrades. You yourself have often in the past taken a similar view. I think it worth while here to note the fact that four years after the revolution, Morris Hillquit, a pretty severe critic of the Bolsheviks, wrote these interesting words: "It is pretty idle caviling to dispute the Socialist character of the Russian revolution....The Russian revolution has taken possession of the government in the name of the workers. It has effectively expropriated capitalist owners and nationalized the greater part of the industries. It has also written into its program the socialization of the land. Measured

* movement

by all practical tests it is therefore a Socialist revolution in character as well as intent. If it has not come as a result of the course of historic and economic development outlined by Marx, it has occurred through the working of another set of social conditions and forces, which have proved potent enough to create and maintain it. Its continued existence, year after year, in the face of almost incredible domestic difficulties and embittered foreign attacks, proves that we are not dealing with a mere freakish episode, but with a monumental historic event. This will remain true even if the Soviet government should not prove able to maintain itself indefinitely and should yield to another and substantially different form of government."

Now, I believe that the Soviet government finally yielded to "another and substantially different form of government" under the rise and consolidation of Stalin's power. I believe it to be as different as counter-revolution is from revolution, as different as the destruction of socialism is from the movement toward socialism. When you say that one grew out of the other "by natural processes," I would agree with that if it means "as a result of objective material forces." To that, I believe it important to add that Stalinism based itself to a considerable extent upon some of the ideas and institutions defended by Lenin. These it exploited or distorted to serve its own totalitarian and anti-socialist ends. Mainly, they were put forth originally in the desperate, groping attempt to get out of the blind alley formed around the revolution by the walls of the terrible backwardness of the country and the isolation of the republic.

I have in mind, most particularly, the decision of the Tenth Bolshevik Congress to prohibit factions inside the party, which played an enormous role in facilitating the rise of totalitarianism; and the point of view which became a principle defended by all the Bolshevik leaders that all parties must be outlawed and kept outlawed. I must say that I unthinkingly accepted this proposition for years in the Communist and Trotskyist movements. But the grim realities of Stalinism forced a reconsideration of many questions. This one was not the least important. Fourteen years ago, I tried to re-examine this vital question, and I hope you will bear with a quotation from my article of 1943:

"The idea of one party in power is one thing, and not at all in violation of either bourgeois or worker's democracy. The idea that all other parties must be, not in opposition, with the rights of oppositions, but in prison, violates both bourgeois and worker's democracy, and it is with the latter that we are concerned here. Even if every non-Bolshevik group, without exception, had resorted to armed struggle against the Soviet power, it was a disastrous mistake to outlaw them in perpetuity...

"The whole Bolshevik party was politically miseducated and ideologically intimidated against the very idea of more than one party in the country, and for this miseducation none of its leaders can escape his share of the responsibility...

"The revolutionary Marxists must learn, and then must teach, that the struggle for democratic rights is not just a clever device

for embarrassing the undemocratic bourgeoisie, that the struggle is not confined to the days of capitalism. On the contrary, it is precisely when the new revolutionary power is set up that the struggle for democratic rights and democracy acquires its fullest meaning and its first opportunity for complete realization.

"The revolutionists after the overturn of capitalism differ from revolutionists before that overturn not in that they no longer demand them, but in the fact that they are for the first time really and fully able to promulgate them and to see to it that they are preserved from all infringement, including infringement by the new state or the bureaucrats in it. The right of free speech, press and assembly, the right to organize and the right to strike, are not less necessary under the dictatorship of the proletariat, but more necessary and more possible.

"Socialism can and will be attained by only the fullest realization of democracy ... That is what the revolutionary Marxists should teach. But first of all they must learn it, and thoroughly. It is one of the most important lessons of the Russian revolution and its decay."

In the past fourteen years, I have expressed these views with increasing insistence and emphasis. I consider them today to be of fundamental importance to the coexistence and cooperation of all socialists, whatever other matters they may differ on. It is from this socialist standpoint that I want to fight against the Stalinist regime, the Communist movement, their supporters, defenders and apologists. I am completely agreed that the regime is not just a "mistaken form of socialism" or any kind of socialism, but its betrayal and negation. And as you know, for years I defended the view that far from being some kind of socialism, the Russian regime represents a new form of totalitarian exploitation dominated by a new ruling class.

But I cannot see the political wisdom, or the factual foundation, for considering such an anti-socialist regime as the logical, inevitable and authentic continuation of a socialist revolution. This is precisely the main claim to socialist justification and legitimacy made by the Stalinists. I want to be able to say in any polemic it is necessary to conduct against them: You have not carried out the ideal and principles of the socialist revolution to a logical conclusion - you have betrayed and destroyed it. And I believe that the basic and relevant facts enable me to make the assertion honestly and sincerely. By defending everything that was said and done by Lenin or the other leaders of the revolution? Certainly not! But by emphasizing the radical differences between the revolution and the present regime.

I have looked back on some of your own writings of fairly recent times and find them highly relevant to my point. You have written: "In Lenin's time the Communist Party was itself democratic." And: "Everybody knows that Lenin started with an extreme approach to equalitarianism." And: "It is true that in the very early days of the revolution the degree of worker's control in the factories was very great." And - more along similar lines.

Now I want to be able to say, in such debates as I have mentioned, that the Stalinist regimes have wiped out and betrayed all of that. To me, this is dictated by good political sense and is justified by ascertainable facts. I consider it of high political value and significance to say, as you do in your letter to me: "...if Lenin had lived, he might have repudiated Stalinism or been repudiated by it." If anything, I would put it more emphatically, for it is my deep conviction. I say this without any thought of absolving Lenin or any other Bolshevnik leader from their own responsibilities, excesses in the revolution, or of mistakes afterward. But also without any thought of making -- mandatory upon all members of a democratic socialist party what you called "absolute identity of opinion" on a subject that is primarily of historical importance, and on which a pretty wide diversity of view exists - as it should - in every part of the Socialist International with which I am familiar. Only a sterile sect demands uniformity of opinion on all questions: historical, theoretical, philosophical, political and tactical. A political movement should and can be built only upon the degree of agreement that is necessary for it to carry out its political tasks of the day effectively. Organizations like the Socialist Labor Party or the Socialist Workers Party are sorry examples of the former. I would like to see the SP-SDF as an encouraging model of the latter.

From my standpoint, an adequate and acceptable basis for the necessary degree of agreement is offered (I was pleased to note this upon re-reading the document in recent times) by the declaration of the Socialist International, "The Aims and Tasks of Democratic Socialism," as presented with the prefatory statement by the Socialist Party in this country. In the words and spirit of that preface, I subscribe to the declaration as a sound basis for the unification of all democratic socialists in this country today. I will not say that I agree with every word in it or with every omission from it. But I accept it as adequate for our problem. I accept the prefatory statement that: "Some will be disappointed that the statements are so general. Others will recall that Socialists themselves differ widely on important immediate issues. A few will look in vain for a complete blueprint of a socialist society. The American Socialist Party, too, has some differences with the sentiments expressed, and this is doubtless true of every party affiliated or otherwise connected with the International. In the Socialist International, there is room for constructive dissent."

I cannot hope that even this long letter has dealt with the questions you and other comrades have in their minds exhaustively or with the fullest satisfaction. But I hope it suffices to throw a clearer light on these questions than now exists. And I hope that it will bring a little closer the day of unification toward which the ISL is eager to make its contribution in our common cause.

The views I have set forth are necessarily my own and in my words. But I feel sure that they are fairly and honestly the consensus of our comrades, even if others might put forth substantially the same views in different words.

I think I can say the same about the consensus among the comrades of the Young Socialist League. They are naturally less involved in direct association with old and outlived doctrinal disputes and organizational or factional conflicts. So much the better for our time and our task, I say. I know you have expressed some distrust about one of their members. I assume you have your reasons. I must say, however, that this is a personal case which cannot have political importance and that, so far as my own experience goes, I have found no grounds for questioning his loyalty to the movement. I would doubt that the YSL is composed of angels. But I have no doubt about this, that in almost forty years of socialist activity, which began in the youth movement and was never divorced from it, I have not seen or worked with a better or more devoted and enthusiastic group of young socialists than these comrades. They would be a pillar and a credit to any movement they supported. I am especially appreciative of their work and their importance because I am highly aware that a socialist movement that does not make its greatest headway among the new generation will never succeed in really breaking out of the isolation that afflicts us all.

I ought to -at any rate - I want to say one closing word about yourself. It is to express my esteem for the part you have been playing in the work of a new beginning for socialism in this country to enable it to face forward with some real confidence. I think I know that it has not been an easy job; I do know that it has not brought everybody's approval. I would like to see the job done. To restore socialist comradeship between us is one of my hopes. Your help in realizing it, in putting many of the old conflicts that divided us into the old lumber room, has been precious, and not to me alone. I look forward with frank impatience to the time when you and I, and all our comrades, can appear on the same platform, not in order to debate or to tear each other down, but to build up a socialist movement that will make us happy and proud.

Sincerely yours,

Max Shachtman
(signed)

October 8, 1957

Max Shachtman:
Independent Socialist League
114 W. 14 Street
New York, N.Y.

Dear Max:

I have read your long and careful letter with interest.

I am not concerned about a categorical and creedal renunciation of Leninism. I am concerned in a democratic socialist party with a categorical and creedal renunciation of any one-party system or any sort of dictatorship.

I brought up the matter of Bogdan Denitch, not because I want to haggle about individuals but because in the Socialist Party he showed a kind of socialist ethics or what he probably regarded as socialist ethics far from suitable to a democratic socialist organization and I should be concerned lest that be typical.

The main point of this inquiry is to know whether you would have objection to my showing your letter to a number of other Socialists or would you rather that I should summarize your views? I would, of course, be discreet to whom I showed it.

Fraternally yours,

(signed)
Norman Thomas

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