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**Revolutionary Defeatism-  
By A British Trotskyite**

**MAX SCHACHTMAN-  
Ghost Of Eugene Duhring**

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## REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM: REVISIONISTS AND MARXISTS

A reply to Comrade T's criticism  
of the Fusion Conference Resolution  
of the Left Fraction of the former  
R S L.

Editors Note - The following document comes from the British Trotskyite movement.

In March 1944 the British Trotskyite groups united to form the R C P (Revolutionary Communist Party). The uniting groups were the Workers International League and the Revolutionary Socialist League. Sharply dissident elements existed in both groups; the latter actually consisted of 3 bitterly-hostile factions: the Trotskyite Opposition, the militant faction, and the Left Faction.

The unity was accomplished on the basis of typically centrist ambiguous formulae, taking no position, so that basic differences now co-exist on such questions as: revolutionary defeatism, the national question, support of China's war, entry into the Labor Party, trade union policy, etc.

The document published below rejects the position of the former Left Fraction on revolutionary defeatism, but also rejects in toto the apology for the Trotskyite position as presented by Comrade T.

The line of the document is Marxist, but Comrade Francis will learn that it is too late to win Trotskyism back to Marxism. Revisionism has long since triumphed. The task of revolutionists is to create a new Revolutionary Marxian International.)

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### A- THE REVISIONIST FRACTION IN THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The Fourth International has been engaged in recent years in a fight between two positions. The centrist position revises the marxist concept of revolutionary defeatism by interpreting it as defeating the government by the revolution instead of as working for the military defeat by revolutionary means. The Revisionists are prepared to accept the military defeat if it is

caused by a successful revolutionary upsurge. If however, revolutionary defeatist actions lead to the temporary victory of the "enemy" imperialists, the Revisionists change their policy and talk of "telescoping" the "struggle" against our own and the foreign bourgeoisie. On the other side, the "Revolutionary Communists of Austria", Comrade Godclaine in Belgium, and other European Comrades stated the MARXIST position that the transformation of the war between governments into a civil war is facilitated by MILITARY defeats and that we must therefore STRIVE and WORK TOWARDS MILITARY defeats by revolutionary MEANS (not thru military defeatism, not thru helping the "enemy"). Only if this is to become again the basis of their orientation will the new Marxist fraction be built within the Fourth International.

In his "Criticism of the Left Fraction's Resolution", Comrade T takes up a contemplative and passive attitude towards the fight between the Revisionist and the Marxist positions.

"As to the Military Policy", he says, "that is a very grave mistake if we don't succeed in correcting that mistake, it MIGHT have very bad consequences. Errors of today, ambiguous policies, MIGHT take flesh and blood and endanger the International TOMORROW. But whom is the party which did NOT make mistakes..etc."

Comrade T does not see that the "mistake" made in 1934 in the "War and the Fourth International" HAS led to an endangering of the International. It directly caused the split in the SWP USA. Schachtman could propose defeatism for Russia only because this concept had previously been revised to mean not the MILITARY defeat and the revolutionary work for this defeat- but the defeat of the government directly by the revolution. Schachtman himself clearly formulated the error: "By defeatism, if I may still use the word, I aim at the defeat of the Stalinist counter-revolution by the Soviet workers" ("Labor Action"-Sept., 1 1941) Nobody in the SWP ever corrected this complete distortion of the content of Revolutionary Defeatism. Burnham actually threw this argument at Comrade Trotsky. Still he was not corrected on that point. Burnham went over to the bourgeoisie, and Schachtman is today outside the SWP, but the mistaken formulations of Revolutionary Defeatism they voiced within the party are still shared by the party today.

This "mistake" thus explains how such elements as BURNHAM and DWIGHT MACDONALD could remain in the SWP.

This "mistake" HAS led to an open advocacy of DEFENSISM by the SWP and the former WIL. Comrade Cannon most clearly expressed this defensism when he said that we must "telescope" the fight against our own bourgeoisie and the enemy bourgeoisie, that we have a method to prevent the "enemy's" victory before the seizure of power: that labor must place themselves at the head of the trade unions to take the lead of the struggle against the "enemy" bourgeoisie - we must "arm the worker" against invasion. The conclusion which flows from this conception is that the main enemy is NOT at home.

This "mistake" was never corrected in spite of the numerous theoretical and practical criticisms sent to the IS. The criticisms sent to the IS by Comrade Godclaine, the Revolutionary Communists of Austria and the Left Fraction of the former British Section of the Fourth International received no ideological answer but were ignored.

In short the Revisionist fraction HAS taken control of all important positions in the International.

Comrade T says:

"In the USA and Britain new life is coming into the movement - revolutionary workers are filling the ranks of the party - THERE IS NO BETTER GUARANTEE AGAINST DEGENERATION."

This is an attitude of complete passivity. The only way to fight against the degeneration is to help in the creation of an INTERNATIONAL MARXIST FRACTION which will fight the Revisionists. In words, Comrade T will advocate the creation of such a fraction. On the other hand, he denies the irreconcilability of the Revisionists and the Marxists within the International.

In his theoretical criticism of the Revisionists, Comrade T obviously forgets what the dispute with the Revisionists is about: not that we shall be for revolutionary action in wartime even when this action furthers the military defeat of our own bourgeoisie. The Revisionists accept this. They do not abandon the strikes, etc. The real dispute centers about WHAT the INTERCONNECTION of the class struggle and the imperialist war is: - what positive direction we must give to the struggle: not "telescoping the fight against our own and the foreign bourgeoisie" - but work ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FRONTIERS thru revolutionary class action for the MILITARY defeat of "our own" bourgeoisie, its government and ARMED FORCES - even if this means the temporary "victory" of the enemy bourgeoisie.

#### E- HOW IS THE IMPERIALIST WAR TRANSFORMED INTO A CIVIL WAR

To this question Lenin gave the following answer:

"The change from imperialist war to civil war cannot be MADE, as it is impossible to make a revolution - it grows out of A MULTIPLICITY OF DIVERSE PHENOMENA - PHASES - TRAITS - CHARACTERISTICS, CONSEQUENCES OF THE IMPERIALIST WAR. Such growth is IMPOSSIBLE without a series of MILITARY REVERSES and DEFEATS of the governments which received blows from their oppressed classes" - (In "Defeat of "our" government in the imperialist war" Social-Demokrat" No. 43 July 26, 1915)

(OUR EMPHASIS)

Lenin's answer shows us quite clearly the axis of the new Revisionism. The Revisionists agree in essence with Schachtman's

formulations of the defeat of our own government not by the foreign government, but directly by the revolution.

"Does Revolutionary Defeatism mean the defeat of "our" army by the Japanese - the British Army by the German - the Italian army by the French?"

asked Schachtman, while he was still within the SWP. And he answered:

"Not at all. It means the defeat of one's own government by one's own proletariat." (OUR EMPHASIS)

(from the SWP Minority Bulletin "What is at issue on the Russian Question" chap. "Forms of Defeatism" Jan. 1940)

Never was this formulation, voiced within the SWP, refuted. On the contrary, Comrade Goldman later endorsed it by saying:

"The claim that we prefer the enemy, the imperialist enemy of the United States, to defeat our own government is entirely false." - (in his opening speech, Minneapolis Trial Defense, Nov. 8, 1941)

In reality, revolutionary defeatism means to work for the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war by military defeats brought about thru revolutionary class means. The defeat of Italian imperialism by British imperialism, e. g., was essential in getting the masses into motion. The military defeat of Italian imperialism by Anglo-American imperialism was the lesser evil for the Italian workers, tho it meant the temporary victory of Anglo-American imperialism. It is the objective circumstances (military defeats by the foreign imperialist power on the one side - and the internal destruction of men and materials by the exploiters government on the other side - the INTERNAL EXHAUSTION) which create a REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION and transform the imperialist war into a civil war.

We, the revolutionary party, help this transformation, work TOWARDS the military defeat. The workers cannot defeat their government as long as the state of imperialist war exists, as long as the imperialist government can prevent decisive defeat of its armed forces. The Revisionists do not differentiate between a condition of imperialist war and a condition of civil war. The analogies with the Spanish Civil War which Comrade Cannon advanced in the Minneapolis Trial Defense expose this confusion. Comrade Cannon asked the party to "telescope" the fight against our own and the "foreign" bourgeoisie. This was possible in the Spanish WAR OF CLASSES - where we do have to march separately from our own bourgeoisie but carry out parallel action against Franco. In an imperialist war, the MAIN ENEMY is AT HOME, our rifle has to be turned against our own bourgeoisie. Comrade T sees that Comrade Trotsky and the other Revisionists do not differentiate between the revolutionary position in a CIVIL WAR (like Spain) and the revolutionary position in an imperialist war. He sees that Comrade Trotsky and the Revisionists indiscriminately talk of "IRRECONCILABLE OPPOSITION TOWARDS THE BOURGEOIS GOVERNMENT" in the one case as in the other, that

they do not indicate that the revolutionary party is irreconcilably opposed to and marches independently from ALL bourgeois governments, but that in the cases of the war of a workers state or the Spanish Civil War, which we classify as progressive, this irreconcilable opposition means WORK FOR THE VICTORY, while in the case of an imperialist war it means WORK FOR DEFEAT. But he does not see HOW Comrade Trotsky comes to such a confusion.

Comrade Trotsky confuses the imperialist war with a civil war because he does not see that the imperialist war is transformed into a civil war thru the military defeats of those governments which received blows from their own oppressed classes.

HOW to turn the imperialist war into a civil war, as Comrade Godaine and other European comrades have clearly expressed it, equals the line of revolutionary defeatism. Comrade Trotsky however does not state that it is necessary to work for the defeat in order to transform the imperialist war into a civil war. THIS is why he confuses a condition of imperialist war and a condition of breakdown, does not take any account of this difference for the determination of our work.

Not to say HOW the imperialist war is turned into a civil war is to emasculate the revolutionary position. If one does not understand this, as Comrade T, one cannot explain why even the slogan and perspective of turning the imperialist war into a civil war has been dropped today and replaced by the slogan and perspective of "turning the imperialist war into an antifascist war".

We shall quote only two examples of this slogan, but this is actually the main axis of the agitation of the centrists in the Fourth International. The editorial of the "Militant" of March 15, 1941 writes: "The real solution lies in an altogether different direction. The real solution is to transform the imperialist war into a war against fascism." To agitate for an "antifascist war" means to call for the substitution of the imperialist government by a "really democratic" government, instead of by soviet power. If the imperialists say: we fight for "democracy" and "against fascism" - the centrists answer: Yes, we would support you if you really fought "for democracy" and "against fascism". (Militant, March 15, 1941: "As horrible as war is, we would not hesitate to urge Roosevelt to enter the war, if it were really to be a war of democracy against fascism"). The centrists accept the empty abstractions of the imperialists, only add: "let us do the job". In reality however, the central opposition in this epoch is not between democracy and fascism, but between the proletarian revolution and the democratic workers' rights and imperialism which uses bourgeois democracy or fascism for its protection on the other hand. We do not oppose an antifascist war to the imperialist war, but civil war on both sides of the frontiers which necessarily includes an "antifascist war."

Comrade T criticizes the Revisionists for their orientation of

"turning the imperialist war into an antifascist war" -. We are fully supporting him on this. But this criticism without the clear theoretical exposition of HOW the imperialist war is turned into a civil war on both sides of the frontiers is an absolutely one-sided attack.

We can now see how points which appear of purely "theoretical" interest are in reality very immediate issues. If Comrade T does not understand the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war thru the military defeats of those governments which received blows from their own oppressed classes, his attacks against the centrists can only play into their hands. He will not be able to expose efficiently the very "practical" errors of "Workers' International News", the "Socialist Appeal", and the "Militant" (in the United States).

Lenin showed quite clearly that military defeats are essential in getting the masses into motion. When Comrade T ridicules us for passively sitting back in our chairs, and waiting for the military defeat to do the job for us, he ridicules Lenin, who always showed the correct interrelation of the objective circumstances ("a multiplicity of diverse phenomena, phases, traits, characteristics, consequences of the imperialist war"), and the subjective factor: work for the defeat.

"The transformation of a war between governments into civil war is on the one side facilitated by military defeats (reverses) and on the other hand it is IMPOSSIBLE TO STRIVE IN PRACTICE TOWARDS SUCH A TRANSFORMATION without at the same time WORKING TOWARDS THE MILITARY DEFEAT".

We shall find another example of the correct interrelation between subjective and objective factors if we remember that when before the last war, the Social-Democrats talked of "preventing the war by a general strike, insurrection, etc., - replying to the war by revolution, etc.," this was a similar over-estimation of the subjective factor as when the Revisionists today talk of the defeat of the imperialists by the revolution without long work for the military defeat which alone allows the revolutionists to increase their forces. Lenin replied to those Social-Democrats that at the start of the war the overwhelming majority will necessarily be FOR the "defense of the fatherland" - that only thru the experiences of the war will the masses wake up and that the only correct subjective activity is to hasten the transformation by year-long illegal propaganda. Thus the Revisionists today, just as the Social-Democrats then, use this "optimists" picture as a screen to cover up their failure to carry out the really necessary subjective activity.

By a sleight of hand, Comrade T shows that a temporary "victory" of the "foreign" power cannot be a consequence of the revolutionary action of the workers. So he says:

"Unfortunately the Left Fraction FAILS TO QUOTE A SINGLE EXAMPLE where it was "clear" before or after the event that the revolutionary action of the proletariat, that is the striving of the proletariat to transform the war into a civil war LED to the military victory of the enemy bourgeoisie - i.e.(!) COULD ONLY LEAD TO THAT AND NOTHING ELSE (!!!)".  
(Our emphasis and points of exclamation)

"Today it is clear", Comrade T goes on, "that the revolutionary action started by one proletariat will not lead to the victory of the enemy bourgeoisie but can and must lead to the victory of the international proletariat over the international bourgeoisie".

Nobody ever said that Revolutionary Defeatism could ONLY lead to the victory of the enemy bourgeoisie - and to nothing else(!). But what we must see is that it CAN lead to a TEMPORARY victory of the enemy bourgeoisie. Revolutionary defeatist actions will definitely have a REPERCUSSION in the "victor" country. Just because we know that the war will not end as a war between governments, as only bourgeois minds could think it will, do we work for the military defeat IN ALL BELLIGERENT COUNTRIES. To accuse us of "lack of faith" in the victory of the international proletariat over the international bourgeoisie, because we state that revolutionary defeatist actions may have as a MOMENTARY effect the victory of the other bourgeoisie, is to reason as Comrade Trotsky did in the last war, who reproached Lenin with concessions to social patriotism, because Lenin, when the bourgeoisie called out: "HIGH TREASON! You are for the DEFEAT" answered: "YES- we commit high treason - we are for the defeat!

WE are also confident that the revolutionary action of the Italian proletariat, for instance, will lead to the victory of the international proletariat over the international bourgeoisie. The mass action of the Italian workers, however, facilitated the defeat of Italian imperialism by anglo-american imperialism. This defeat TRANSFORMED the imperialist war into a civil war, and created a REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION. However, no revolutionary party was able to UTILIZE the revolutionary situation, and as the British and American workers were still stupefied by the victories of their own bourgeoisies, still willing to "fight the Germans" - the IMMEDIATE result was the TEMPORARY occupation of Italy by both German and Anglo-American troops. Now, was the military defeat of Italian imperialists, brought about by the revolutionary actions of the Italian masses a LESSER evil for the Italian workers than the victory of their own imperialism? ALTHO it meant the temporary "victory" of the Anglo-American armies? Or would it have been a lesser evil only if it had "meant" the victory of the revolution? But then the whole comparison would be ridiculous. By "lesser evil" we obviously do not mean a successful revolution which cannot be "guaranteed" -

but the objective class relations which are infinitely more favorable in the case of the military defeat, in spite of all temporary setbacks, than in the case of a military victory. We are confronted not with the mechanical deterministic conception of a revolution rendered IMPOSSIBLE thru a military victory, or CAUSED thru a military defeat. Both the victory and the defeat are factors which respectively retard or further the revolutionary development. There are no black-and-white alternatives.

Or, in the last war, was the military defeat of German Imperialism a lesser evil for the German workers than the victory of French imperialism? The revolutionary action of the masses definitely furthered the German defeat - as no revolutionary party was however able to exploit the defeat - it led to the temporary victory of French and English imperialism.

In Russia, which was defeated by German imperialism, the spontaneous mass action of the February Revolution undoubtedly facilitated the defeat of Tsarism, and even led to the temporary occupation of Russia by the German armies. Still the military defeat of Russia by German imperialism was a lesser evil for the Russian workers than the victory of Tsarism, altho it implied the temporary victory of German imperialism. The two "subjective" factors, the forging of the revolutionary party on the basis of Revolutionary Defeatism which alone could oppose the Kerensky regime which usurped power in the February Revolution in order to continue the "war against Germany" - and the repercussion of the Russian revolutionary upsurge in Germany soon proved that the German "victory" was not the "only" possible outcome of the Russian defeat.

The immediate perspective, however is different from the ultimate one. In September, when the Germans threatened to occupy the revolutionary centre of Petrograd, did Lenin advocate its defense? - No! He remained defeatist tho this policy could have led to the temporary victory of German Imperialism and a tremendous setback of the Russian Revolution thru the smothering of the Petrograd soviets.

The Russian example moreover clearly shows that the policy of working for the military defeat ON BOTH SIDES can be implemented: the mass action of the Russian workers first led to the temporary victory of and occupation by German imperialism. Still the revolutionary action of the Russian workers did not end up with the victory of one gang of imperialist robbers over the other gang. The military defeat of Russia, disintegration of the Tsarist army, dampening of the war enthusiasm of the masses, transformed the war into a civil war. The Bolsheviks, the only party who maintained the line of revolutionary defeatism (thanks to the "rearming of the party" in April by Lenin) led the civil war to the successful conclusion, which meant a victory of the

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workers over Tsarism and a serious undermining of the position of German Imperialism. The mass action of the German workers, on the other hand, facilitated the military defeat of German imperialism by Anglo-French imperialism. As no revolutionary party, however, was able to transform the revolutionary situation into a successful revolution, it led to the temporary victory of French and English imperialism.

Thus both belligerent countries were defeated - and these defeats transformed the war into a civil war. The strong impetus of the revolutionary movements facilitated by those defeats - especially that of the Russian revolution, infected the "victorious" armies. The war was ended on all sides. There were no "victors".

C- WHEREIN LIES THE REVISION OF  
THE LENINIST CONCEPT OF  
REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM?

In "War and the Fourth International" (1934) - Comrade Trotsky said:

"Lenin's formula "The defeat is the lesser evil", does not mean that the defeat of our country is the lesser evil compared with the defeat of the enemy country, but that the military defeat caused by the DEVELOPMENT OF A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT is incomparably more profitable for the proletariat and the whole people than the military victory secured thru civil peace"-Page 29. (Our emphasis and translation).

In the "New International" of July 1939, p. 208, speaking in the name of the Editorial Board of The Russian Left Opposition, Comrade Trotsky says: "The idea of defeatism means an irreconcilable revolutionary struggle against one's own bourgeoisie without being deterred by the fact that the struggle may result in military defeat". The only perspective which Comrade Trotsky gives to the revolutionary party in these two statements is: if a revolutionary movement brings about a military defeat this defeat is a lesser evil. It is not so much that the statement is false, as that it stresses only ONE aspect of the question and omits the other aspect, from which the decisive line of march flows. THIS IS THE ONLY STATEMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM WHICH COMRADE TROTSKY GAVE FROM 1934 to 1940. His article "Learn to Think" (May 38) and the letter of the editorial board of the Russian Left Opposition written in answer to the Palestinian comrades who had deserted to open social patriotism only repeat this statement. When, however, Comrade Trotsky states the concrete line of march, he formulates it in the way he formulated it before the Dewey Commission to investigate the Moscow trials (also in "War and the Fourth International") - in those countries fighting against the Soviet Union we shall disorganize and smash the military machine thru sabotage. In those countries allied with the Soviet Union we shall remain in political opposition to the bourgeoisie. If criticized for this

statement, the Revisionists ask us, "Do you want us to advocate sabotage in the democratic imperialisms?" No, not at all, but we want you to give a clear political statement on your attitude to the war quite independently from the alliance of your country with the Soviet Union.

Comrade Trotsky's formulation leaves the escape clause that because our forces are not strong enough yet, there is no concrete application of revolutionary defeatism at the present moment. In reality it should be stressed that every class action leads towards the defeat, at all stages must we therefore work for the defeat. Nowhere does Comrade Trotsky present that other aspect of defeatism without which the first here presented remains absolutely meaningless, viz., that in Lenin's own words, the TRANSFORMATION of the imperialist war into a CIVIL WAR is FACILITATED by the military defeats of the governments, and that in order to bring about this transformation we must WORK TOWARDS military defeat. (p. 198, Collected Works)

Comrade T has accused us of losing sight of the "determining factor, the class struggle", and asserts that revolutionary defeatism only means to pursue the class struggle most consequentially in wartime, the "Revolutionary Communist Party" is a thousand times more defeatist "in deeds" than all sectarians put together. Comrade T obviously does not advance beyond Comrade Trotsky's formula. Comrade Trotsky, as we have seen, did not stop at "any patriotic considerations". Comrade Trotsky would not have abandoned the revolution "even if it meant the military defeat of his own country". But did Comrade Trotsky agree to "work for the military defeat by revolutionary class means" (not military defeatism, not "blowing up bridges", organizing unsuccessful military strikes, artificial methods such as burning warehouses, setting off bombs, wrecking trains, etc.). No, Comrade Trotsky agreed to "political opposition to all bourgeois governments". But IN THE LAST WAR, when Comrade Trotsky was for "NEITHER VICTORY NOR DEFEAT", Comrade Trotsky could have easily agreed to his present statements on revolutionary defeatism, without abandoning his position. EVEN IN THE LAST WAR COMRADE TROTSKY WOULD HAVE REMAINED IN "POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO THE BOURGEOIS GOVERNMENT" EVEN IF IT MEANT THE DEFEAT OF "OUR OWN" COUNTRY. But he would not have agreed that the class struggle in an imperialist war must, if it is consequently carried thru, lead TOWARDS the defeat of our own country and that we must therefore work TOWARDS the defeat by revolutionary means. To this Comrade Trotsky would have replied in the last war: "to work for the defeat is an uncalled for and unjustifiable political concession to the methodology of social patriotism which substitutes for the revolutionary struggle against the war and the conditions that cause war, an ORIENTATION ALONG THE LINE OF the lesser evil, an orientation which under given conditions, is perfectly arbitrary." (from "Nashe Slovo"- No. 105-June 4, 1915). It is not by chance, by the way, that Comrade T makes

the same accusation against our formulation of "working for the military defeat even if it means the temporary victory of the other power." The meaning which Comrade T gives to "revolutionary defeatism", i.e. that we must not abandon the revolution even if it means the military defeat of our government, without precisifying what we must POSITIVELY WORK FOR (phrasemongering about "class-struggle is here not enough - we must know what this class-struggle means in relation to the war) is the same as Comrade Trotsky gives to it in the last war, and in his statement in "War and the Fourth International". Lenin, however accused Comrade Trotsky of asking concessions to the real social-patriotism, and not only to its "methodology", by not clearly declaring himself for the SLOGAN of the MILITARY DEFEAT.

Comrade Trotsky, when he rejected the slogan of military defeat as a concession to social-patriotism obviously used the same argument as Comrade T that the class struggle leads neither to the victory of the one or the other power - but to the victory of the proletariat over both imperialist powers. Comrade T does not see that the victory of the other power can be a TEMPORARY consequence of revolutionary action which can only cause the moral and military weakening of the camp in which we find ourselves, can only disintegrate the war potential of the army, can only dampen the war enthusiasm of the masses, and bring about a defeat. This does not mean that we work in any way for the victory of the enemy power, or help this victory, or by any action behave like the German Social-Democrats, Parvus in the last war, etc, who all tried to help the enemy. The German Social-Democrats and Stalinist however, are not at all for the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war thru revolutionary defeatism, but only for the change of one bourgeois government for another. They will attempt to kill the incipient revolutionary situation in the germ, aided therein by the foreign imperialist power which they worked for all along.

Comrade T advances the ultimate perspective of a civil war on both sides as an immediate concrete one: he proceeds from the assumption of a successful civil war. In reality however, every revolutionary action during the war leads to a temporary gain of the enemy. On the other side, such a military defeat accelerates the workers loss of faith in their own bourgeoisie. As however, the strategy of revolutionary defeatism is carried out in ALL imperialist countries, revolutionary action for the military defeat of our own bourgeoisie will lead ultimately not to the victory of one gang of imperialist robbers over another gang - but to the victory of the proletarian revolution in all imperialist countries - just as Comrade T desires it. It is however not a question of desire, but of immediate concrete perspective.

Comrade Trotsky in the last war, just as Comrade T now, was "for the class struggle" and the "revolution" in the abstract, sepa-



rated from the imperialist war. Lenin answered Comrade Trotsky by pointing out that we wish and STRIVE, WORK for the military defeat in both imperialist countries precisely because we know that the war will not end as a war between governments, with the victory of the one or other power, but that the revolution will find an echo in the "other" country, momentarily "victorious", and that both powers will in the end be defeated. But to reject the slogan of defeat under this argument means to capitulate to Social-patriotism. Comrade T is not against the military defeat - oh no! He is for the revolution even if it means the defeat. But is he for working for the military defeat in both countries, even if it means the temporary victory of the other power? No.

No wonder that Comrade T merely criticizes the Revisionists for their "mistakes", does not see that Comrade Trotsky is not only guilty of some omissions and confusions. The important fact is that Comrade Trotsky accepted the concept of revolutionary defeatism after having systematically revised it, abandoning the content and retaining the EMPTY SHELL. Comrade T jeers at our formulation and says we tell the toiling masses to passively wait for the military defeat instead of acting.

We never said that a revolution cannot take place in the "victorious" country. The development of the revolutionary movement is only retarded by the victories. The revolutionary movements in the "victorious" countries in the last war are the best proof to the contrary. However these movements were born out of a "multiplicity of diverse phenomena-phases-traits-characteristics-consequences of the imperialist war". The imperialist war contains civil war elements which at the beginning are subordinated to the purely intra-imperialist struggle. In the last war, there were no "victorious" countries. The "victorious" British troops revolted at the contact of the October revolution. This however brought about a situation in the "victorious" powers which was equivalent to defeat. It meant the end of the war, the advance of the revolutionary movement in all countries. In the present war, the "second front", like the anti-soviet adventure in the last war will bring to the fore the civil war elements in all countries. At the contact of the European revolution, the civil war elements in the war of the "allied" imperialists will be developed. The allied imperialists will then come to a stage where they will not be able to avert decisive defeat. The condition of imperialist war will be transformed into a condition of breakdown, of civil war. But this will mean the end of the war.

D - CONCLUSION: THE RESOLUTION  
OF THE LEFT FRACTION.

Comrade T denies that Revolutionary Defeatism can have as an immediate consequence the momentary victory of the other power. The Left Fraction falls into the opposite mistake, identifies the

military defeat of our own armed forces with the military victory of the other power - says that the CLASS-CONSCIOUS French worker sees in the victory of Germany over France only the defeat and humiliation of his own bourgeoisie which he ardently desires.

It errs. It is the DEMORALISED worker who sees therein the humiliation of his own bourgeoisie, who in his hatred of the bourgeoisie but at the same time his powerlessness, rejoices about the victory of the enemy bourgeoisie over his own bourgeoisie, whose EMBARRASSMENT and DIFFICULTIES he was not able to take advantage of himself.

The REVOLUTIONARY worker, however, sees very well that the victory of the enemy bourgeoisie has not solved a single social issue, and that his own bourgeoisie adapts very quickly to collaboration with the "enemy" bourgeoisie for the purpose of preventing the revolutionary potentialities of the situation and safeguarding its social position by the only way open to it, a change of "allies".

In the course of a discussion on the subject, the Left Fraction went even so far as to consider the state of MILITARY OCCUPATION as being favorable for the revolutionary party to exploit, because of the potential fraternization between the soldiers of the occupying army and the workers. But this presupposes a REVOLUTIONARY PARTY, which, if it is not created on the basis of the military defeat will find no immediately favorable terrain when the occupying army has already consolidated the position of the collaborating bourgeoisie whose DIFFICULTIES we want to take advantage of. It is the complete disintegration of the bourgeois army which we want to exploit, as the Russian workers did in 1905. If the military defeat has not been exploited by a revolutionary party, (as in France in 1940) the new chauvinism created on the basis of "National Liberation" will be the immediate result of the military occupation. But a revolutionary wave will not be stifled by the TEMPORARY victory of both "enemy" and "allied" imperialists, (Italy). This is why the MARXISTS advocate WORK for MILITARY DEFEAT of their own ARMY by REVOLUTIONARY CLASS MEANS even if it means the temporary victory of the "enemy" imperialists. It is this mechanical identification of military defeat and military occupation of the Left Fraction which Comrade T exploits in order to justify his own rejection of REVOLUTIONARY WORK for MILITARY DEFEAT even if it means the temporary victory of the enemy imperialists.

Correctly opposing the mechanical identification of military defeat and military occupation by the "enemy" power, Comrade T also denies that it is the MILITARY DEFEATS of our own ARMY (objective factor) which TRANSFORM THE IMPERIALIST WAR INTO A CIVIL WAR, and that we must HELP and WORK TOWARDS this transformation even where it means the temporary victory of the "enemy" power. Like the former leader of the revisionist fraction, Comrade Trotsky, he is

ready to accept the military defeat as a "lesser evil" when it was brought about by a SUCCESSFUL revolutionary upsurge, but like Comrade Trotsky, he does not stress the positive direction of our work; practical actions leading towards defeat, which gives no GUARANTEE OF A SUCCESSFUL civil war.

Thus: in the last few years a fight has been going on in the Fourth International on the question of revolutionary defeatism, led by the Revisionist Fraction of Comrades Trotsky-Cannon-Goldman (and formerly) Schachtman against the Marxist position.

What position does Comrade T take in this fight? The RCP and the SWP, says Comrade T are organizations a thousand times more defeatist "in action" than all sectarians put together. Why? Because the RCP and the SWP participate in the class struggle. But HOW? The Leninist conception of the party is not merely an empty phrase about "participation in the class-struggle". The independence of the proletariat is safeguarded only in the independence of the Marxian organization. If the Marxian organization tailends the masses, by adapting itself to their consciousness, as the RCP and the SWP do at the present, it has obviously abandoned revolutionary defeatism in action. An independent political line is the necessary prerequisite for independent class action. Comrade T reasons that if an organization delineates itself a)-from the 2nd International, b)-from the 3rd International, and c)-from the centrist ILP, then it is obviously fulfilling the historical role of the Fourth International. In reality this task will be fulfilled only by a leadership which does not tailend the centrists, but advocates an independent revolutionary line.

Comrade T is indignant over the Left Fraction's analysis of the revisionist tendencies in the Fourth International. The Left Fraction asserts that defensist tendencies have manifested themselves most markedly in those countries which possess or possessed at the outbreak of the war colonial empires on the basis of which the bourgeoisie could grant its proletariat a privileged position. Comrade T attempts to refute this by pointing out that the Indian, South African, and Palestinian sections of the Fourth International are also for the Military Policy. This however does not disprove at all the Left Fraction's analysis. All that is interesting is that the New Revisionism originated in France, England, America; that one of the main reasons of its appearance is the preoccupation of safeguarding the cadres without combining legal and ILLEGAL organizations. Marxist comrades in the European sections (Comrade Godelaine in Belgium, the Revolutionary Communists of Austria, and other comrades) made repeated concrete proposals to the IS for preparations for illegality. These were all turned down. The only other way the cadres could be safeguarded was by making concessions to social-patriotism. It is absolutely irrelevant that these concessions were tailended in other countries.

Comrade T does not recognize the adherents of the Military Policy as Revisionists. He forbids us to point out that the Fourth International is following in the footsteps of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals if it does not accept the Marxist policy of Revolutionary Defeatism, unless we discover some special social stratum as the basis for this degeneration. He completely ignores that the fear of losing their legal positions was one of the main reasons for the degeneration of the 2nd International, just as it is the cause of the Revisionism in the 4th. We may end this discussion by asking the appropriate question of one comrade from the "REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISTS OF AUSTRIA": The methods of the Revisionists may eventually safeguard our cadres from PHYSICAL annihilation, but WHO will be saved from destruction - will this be a COMMUNIST organization?

Our conclusion is:

CAPITULATION TO THE REVISIONISTS DOES NOT PAY!

BUILD THE INTERNATIONAL MARXIAN FRACTION TO TAKE UP THE FIGHT AGAINST THE REVISIONISTS!

FIGHT FOR IMMEDIATE PREPARATIONS FOR A NEW INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS AT WHICH REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL SECTIONS WILL BE PRESENT!

## MAX SCHACHTMAN — THE GHOST OF EUGENE DUHRING

About 1875 a professor of the University of Berlin by name of Eugene Duhring presented to Germany and to the world a solution of all its troubles in the form of three or four bulky volumes commencing, as Engels said, "With the nebular system and winding up with the latest theory on bi-metalism". We do not have time to review all the "wisdom" of Professor Duhring. Suffice it for our purpose to say that two of the main ideas propounded by him were; first, that politics determines economics and secondly, flowing from the above, that the possessor of state power creates the economic mode of exploitation. Since the worthy professor had quite a number of followers in the academic circles of Berlin, and since the editors of the German social democratic paper were pursuing a very wishy-washy policy towards the bombastic utopian, and primarily for the reason that to let the "works" of Professor Duhring go unchallenged might lead to the growth of a bourgeois faction in the Social Democratic Party, Engels was compelled to take issue. This he did in that masterpiece of Marxist classic known as "Anti-Duhring". Probably not in literary history was there such a massacre as that of the poor Berlin professor. Engels literally tore Duhring's ideas to pieces. As a result of this book Duhring died politically and some years after apparently died physically. At least according to all accounts he was buried and nobody, with the possible exception of Madame Blavatsky or some other apostle of transmigration, ever expected to see or hear the hapless academic any more.

But wonders never cease. Unfortunately too late for Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, it appears that Herr Duhring has been reincarnated and now walks and talks and writes in New York City, having assumed the shape and name of one, Max Schachtman. And it is difficult, even in the face of chemistry and biology, to believe that anyone could so adopt and adapt the ideas of the old professor to modern times without being the reincarnation of Herr Doktor Duhring.

### "STRUGGLE FOR A NEW COURSE"

As proof we submit the following. The fundamental idea of Duhring was that exploitation arose from the use of physical force by one section of the population against the other. This is, of course, nothing but the very old idea that politics determines economics. In three chapters of "Anti-Duhring" entitled "The Force Theory", "The Force Theory, Continued", "The Force Theory, Conclusion", Engels took this typically bourgeois professorial attitude to pieces, then mopped up the pieces and swept them into

the dust bin of history. Of course, when Herr Duhring was reincarnated in the person of Mr. Schachtman, it is to be supposed that he knew of his former flaying. Therefore, in the latest effusion, which the revived professor entitled, "The Struggle for the New Course" we will not find the same egregiousness characteristic of the 1875 production. But we still find the fundamental idea set out in a different form.

The "Struggle for the New Course" is supposed to be an analysis of the evolution of the Soviet Union. On page 219 Schachtman sums up as follows: "The past fifteen years of economic progress and political transformation in Russia are the years of the rise and consolidation of a new type of slave-state, with a new type of ruling class". Again quoting from Schachtman's book on pages 234-235 we find the following:

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"The question can be examined in still another way, and the conclusion will still be the same. Where property is privately owned, the problem of the class nature of the existing state can be settled by asking: Who owns property? In the United States as in Germany, in England as in India, the answer is fundamentally the same: the bourgeoisie. The state exists to defend this bourgeois property: regardless of its political form, it is a bourgeois state. But where property is collectively or state-owned, it means nothing to ask merely: Who owns the property, that is, who owns the state-property? The meaningless answer is: The state, of course! Under such circumstances, the meaningful question is: Who owns the state that owns the property, that is who has political power? In Lenin's time, the answer was fairly obvious: the proletariat. But under Stalin? When Trotsky wrote that 'the bureaucracy is in direct possession of the state power,' that was tantamount to saying: the bureaucracy is the ruling class; the state is no longer a workers' state; state property has been converted into the economic foundation of a new ruling class; new property relations have been established."

One final quotation, on pages 225-226 Schachtman writes, "'The trials and purges' were the one-sided but bloody civil war by which the new political bureaucracy definitely smashed the last remnant of workers' power and established a new class power of its own". The book abounds in boners of the same sort, but the full revisionist flavor can only be appreciated by reading the whole thing. We think the above quotations sufficiently and fairly establish Schachtman's "new position", and merely wish to further amplify in this article certain broader aspects of the matter not brought out in the article in the July 1944 IN entitled "Once again the Russian Question".

In our July issue, in the article above quoted we have once again

gone over the fundamentals of the Russian question. The purpose of this article is to show that Schachtman is not making an accidental slip but is today in the ranks of the would be revisors of Marxism as Eugene Duhring and Eduard Bernstein were in the past. This article, therefore, naturally divides itself into two sections. The first is an examination of the question as to whether Schachtman is a revisionist of Marxism. The second is whether Schachtman is correct in his revision of Marxism. The remainder of the article will be devoted to elucidation of these two questions.

#### MAX SCHACHTMAN REVISES MARXISM

From 1846 down to the present time the revolutionary proletariat has at all times found Marxism a reliable instrument for the solution of its theoretical and practical problems. Time after time representatives of capitalist ideology have attempted to do away with Marxism only to find that after each attack Marxism rose stronger, more vigorous than ever. The proletarian vanguard, therefore, has the right to feel that a hundred years have pretty well proved the scientific nature of Marxism and its value to the working class. Hence it is a question of more than academic importance as to whether Schachtman has revised Marxism. The answer must be unequivocally in the affirmative. In the preface to the "Critique of Political Economy", Marx wrote, "In every historical epoch the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange and the necessary distribution resulting therefrom, forms the basis upon which arises and from which alone can be explained the entire history of that epoch." Engels said that the formulation beginning with this sentence did for the history of man what Darwin's "Origin of Species" did for biology. When Lenin wrote a polemic against the Russian populists entitled "Who are the 'Friends of the People' and How They Fight the Social Democrats" this formulation of Marx was the leit motif of the whole work. And now comes Duhring-Schachtman and modifies this, revises it to read, "In every-historical epoch, except that of the proletarian dictatorship, etc.". In analyzing whether or not Schachtman's "New Course" constitutes revisionism, we are, therefore, confronted with two further questions. Did the above formulation of Marx include in itself any exceptions? The answer to that is absolutely in the negative. The last few sentences in the formulation take up the transition from capitalism to communism and do not negate or modify to any extent the main thesis of the formulation. The second question is did Marx or the Marxists subsequently modify or revise the above formulation? The answer again is no. In the Critique of the Gotha Programme, which it is obvious that either Schachtman did not read, or, if he read it, did not understand, Marx takes up the specific question of the stages of transition from capitalism to communism and points out that in the initial stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat the proletarian state retains traces of its origin and is in a certain sense a

bourgeois state. Proceeding from this Lenin in "The State and Revolution" develops and amplifies the conception and points out that in all stages up to the final stage of communism the economic base determines, in the final analysis, the political superstructure. Therefore, it can be taken to be conclusively established that Duhring-Schachtman had revised Marxism, and revised it in what every Marxist has stated to be the fundamental declaration of Marxism.

#### SCHACHTMAN'S REVISIONISM DOES NOT CORRESPOND WITH REALITY.

The mere fact that Schachtman has undoubtedly revised Marxism does not necessarily mean that his revision is incorrect. Despite the fact that we Marxists have seen a hundred revisions fall in the face of objective reality, it is quite true that maybe the 101st revision could be correct. We, therefore, approach the question of whether Schachtman's revisionism is a correct theoretical explanation of objective reality. This has been very well done in a preceding issue of the IN but there are a few things that can still be pointed out. First there is the brilliant thesis of Duhring-Schachtman to the effect that from 1936 to 1938, "The new ruling class" came into power by a bloodless revolution directed against the degenerated workers bureaucracy of the former period. We thank Mr. Schachtman for this formulation. First, because it serves to demolish his entire structure. Secondly, because it is an invaluable contribution to the gayety of the masses so sorely needed in these times of war and revolution. Schachtman should have given us something better than this. He should have remembered that before 1936 the Zinovievs, Kamenevs, the Bucharins, and others whom he calls the degenerated workers' bureaucracy were bureaucrats ruling from inside jail! Never before in history, that we know of, have we heard of this delectable phenomenon that a degenerated workers' bureaucracy or any kind of bureaucracy carries on its regime behind the bars.

Of course, this does not take into account the fact that before 1930, in fact from 1928, at the latest, thousands upon thousands of oppositionists were jailed, killed, exiled. No, Schachtman has to take the fate of former partners of Stalin, abject capitulators over and over, as a criterion for the establishment of a new ruling class. Until 1944, nobody in the Soviet Union or outside the Soviet Union knew anything about the existence of a revolution, and in this case a social revolution if you please. Such a phenomenon was never witnessed before. In all previous history, 1648, 1689, 1789, 1793, 1830, 1848, 1919, 1918, not only Marxists but even the man in the street was able to point definitely towards places, and classes, as related to revolution. But this time a revolution, and again a social revolution if you please, came so stealthily, so unobservedly, that even Schachtman didn't know it until six years afterwards!

This whole thing is an example of the idealistic a-priorism of Schachtman. First he constructs an ideal workers' state. Then since he does not see that in the Soviet Union, he makes his communication, "Yea, yea, nay, nay, and whatsoever is more than these commeth of evil", and he denies the existence of any workers' state. Then since he has certain dupes in the ranks of the Workers Party who have been given some minimum of Marxist diet, and have been told some of the elements of politics, let alone social revolution, he constructs a revolution all by himself.

In this connection the following quotation is interesting:

"I know that the revolutionary Marxians tried to invalidate this argument by pointing out that "Their State" is the proletarian dictatorship, in which there can be no antagonism between employee and State. However, so long as a bureaucracy exists, there is no genuine proletarian dictatorship, but only the rule of a class, the official class, over the great mass of the working people, who are far more effectively subjected to the class dominion of the bureaucracy than today under capitalism they are subjected to the class domination of the owners of the means of production."

No, the above was not written by Max Schachtman in 1944. It was written by the fascist Otto Strasser, page 149 of his book "Germany Tomorrow", which was completed at Easter 1940 and first published in July 1940. We do not, of course, assert any connection or amalgam between Otto Strasser and Schachtman but we do wish to point out that beneath the expressions of both Strasser and Schachtman there is the foundation of petty bourgeois ideology.

#### WHERE DID SCHACHTMANISM COME FROM?

Schachtmanism, like any other social manifestation has its history. Max Schachtman broke with Trotsky and Cannon in 1940 over the question of the nature of the Soviet Union. The Schachtmanites reacted against the Trotsky revisionist theory of the dual nature of Stalinism and broke with them organizationally. At the time of this break, the dominant and consistent intellectual factor in the Schachtman group was James Burnham. Although Burnham later broke from the Schachtmanites, his intellectual influence remained. Let anyone compare the thesis of "The Struggle for the New Course" with the thesis of Burnham's "Managerial Revolution", and particularly "The Machiavellians" and they can see this for themselves. The only difference at the present time is that Burnham extends the conception of politics dominating economics, or in other words, the absurd thesis that the superstructure determines substructure to all countries in all epochs. Schachtman timidly stretches out only one finger to this theory today with regard to the Soviet Union. But already with his Labor Party for the U.S.A. and his Constituent Assembly for India and Italy, and his nation-

alism for France he is preparing to give the whole hand. Schachtmanism in theory is theoretical capitulation to bourgeois ideology. Schachtmanism in practice is capitulation to German imperialism and world imperialism on the question of the Soviet Union, a surrender of the economic base won by the October revolution, a capitulation to English and American imperialism in the form of a Labor Party, a capitulation to the Italian bourgeoisie and to Ghandi and Nehru on the question of the Constituent Assembly. Theoretically and practically this latest manifestation of revisionism must be crushed and the wandering spirit of Eugene Duhring restored to a grave where the only damage that can be done will be the creation of an intolerable stench.

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GERMAN FASCISM  
OR ANY OTHER KIND OF FASCISM  
CAN BE SMASHED  
ONLY BY  
SOCIAL REVOLUTION

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BUILD THE NEW COMMUNIST  
(4<sup>TH</sup>) INTERNATIONAL  
THROUGH SUPPORT OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
CONTACT COMMISSION