

FOR MEMBERS ONLY

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LETTER TO SHACHTMAN

November 6, 1939.

Dear Comrade Shachtman:

I received the transcript of your speech of October 15 which you sent me, and I read it, of course, with all the attention it deserves. I found a lot of excellent ideas and formulations which seemed to me in full accordance with our common position as it is expressed in the fundamental documents of the Fourth International. But what I could not find was an explanation for your attack upon our previous position as "insufficient, inadequate, and out-dated."

You say that "It is the concreteness of the events which differ from our theoretical hypothesis and predictions that changes the situation." (Page 17). But unfortunately you speak about the "concreteness" of the events very abstractly so that I cannot see in what respect they change the situation and what are the consequences of these changes for our politics. You mention some examples from the past. Hence, according to you, we "saw and foresaw" the degeneration of the Third International; (Page 18) but only after the Hitler victory did we find it necessary to proclaim the Fourth International. This example is not formulated exactly. We foresaw not only the degeneration of the Third International but also the possibility of its regeneration. Only the German experience of 1929-1933 convinced us that the Comintern was doomed and nothing could regenerate it. But then we changed our policy fundamentally: to the Third International we opposed the Fourth International.

But we did not draw the same conclusions concerning the Soviet State. Why? The Third International was a party, a selection of people on the basis of ideas and methods. This selection became so fundamentally opposed to Marxism that we were obliged to abandon all hope of regenerating it. But the Soviet State is not only an ideological selection, it is a complex of social institutions which continues to persist in spite of the fact that the ideas of the bureaucracy are now almost the opposite of the ideas of the October Revolution. That is why we did not renounce the possibility of regenerating the Soviet State by political revolution. Do you believe now that we must change this attitude? If not, and I am sure that you don't propose it, where is the fundamental change produced by the "concreteness" of events?

In this connection you quote the slogan of the independent Soviet Ukraine which, as I see with satisfaction, you accept. But you add: "As I understand our basic position it always was to oppose separatist tendencies in the Federated Soviet Republic." (Page 19.) In respect to this you see a fundamental "change in policy". But: (1) The slogan of an independent Soviet Ukraine was proposed before the Hitler-Stalin pact. (2) This slogan is only an application on the field of the national question of our general slogan for the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy. You could with the same right say: "As I understand our basic position it was always to oppose any rebellious acts against the Soviet government." Of course, but we changed this basic position several years ago. I don't really see what new change you propose in this connection now.

You quote the march of the Red Army in 1920 into Poland and into Georgia and you continue: "Now, if there is nothing now in the situation, why does not the majority propose to hail the advance of the Red Army into Poland, into the Baltic countries, into Finland. . ." (Page 20). In this decisive part

of your speech you establish that something is "new in the situation" between 1920 and 1939. Of course! This newness in the situation is the bankruptcy of the Third International, the degeneracy of the Soviet State, the development of the Left Opposition, and the creation of the Fourth International. This "concreteness of events" occurred precisely between 1920 and 1939. And these events explain sufficiently why we have radically changed, our position towards the politics of the Kremlin, including its military politics.

It seems that you forget somewhat that in 1920 we supported not only the deeds of the Red Army but also the deeds of the G.P.U. From the point of view of our appreciation of the state there is no principled difference between the Red Army and the G.P.U. In their activities they are not only closely connected but intermeshed. We can say that in 1918 and the following years we hailed the Cheka in their fight against Russian counter-revolutionaries and imperialist spies but in 1927 when the G.P.U. began to arrest, to exile, and to shoot the genuine Bolsheviks we changed our appreciation of this institution. This concrete change occurred at least eleven years before the Soviet-German pact. That is why I am rather astonished when you speak sarcastically about "the refusal even (!) of the majority to take the same position today that we all took in 1920 . . ." (Page 20). We began to change this position in 1923. We proceeded by stages more or less in accordance with the objective developments. The decisive point of this evolution was for us 1932-34. If we fail to see just what the new fundamental changes are which you propose in our policy, it doesn't signify that we go back to 1920!

You insist especially on the necessity of abandoning the slogan for the unconditional defense of the U.S.S.R., whereupon you interpret this slogan in the past as our unconditional support of every diplomatic and military action of the Kremlin; i.e., of Stalin's policy. No, my dear Shachtman, this presentation doesn't correspond to the "concreteness of events." Already in 1927 we proclaimed in the Central Committee: "For the socialist fatherland? Yes! For the Stalinist course? No!" (The Stalin School of Falsification, p. 177.) Then you seem to forget the so-called "thesis on Clemenceau" which signified that in the interests of the genuine defense of the U.S.S.R., the proletarian vanguard can be obliged to eliminate the Stalin government and replace it with its own. This was proclaimed in 1927! Five years later we explained to the workers that this change of government can be effectuated only by political revolution. Thus we separated fundamentally our defense of the U.S.S.R. as a workers' state from the bureaucracy's defense of the U.S.S.R. Whereupon you interpret our past policy as unconditional support of the diplomatic and military activities of Stalin! Permit me to say that this is a horrible deformation of our whole position not only since the creation of the Fourth International but since the very beginning of the Left Opposition.

Unconditional defense of the U.S.S.R. signifies, namely, that our policy is not determined by the deeds, maneuvers, or crimes of the Kremlin bureaucracy but only by our conception of the interests of the Soviet State and world revolution.

At the end of your speech you quote Trotsky's formula concerning the necessity of subordinating the defense of the nationalized property in the U.S.S.R. to the interests of the world revolution and you continue, "Now my understanding of our position in the past was that we vehemently deny any possible conflict between the two. . . I never understood our position in the past to mean that we subordinate the one to the other. If I understand English, the term implies either that there is a conflict between the two or the possibility of

such a conflict." (Page 37). And from this you draw the impossibility of maintaining the slogan of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union.

This argument is based upon at least two misunderstandings. How and why could the interests of maintaining the nationalized property be in "conflict" with the interests of the world revolution? Tacitly you infer that the Kremlin's (not our) policy of defense can come into conflict with the interests of the world revolution. Of course! At every step! In every respect! However our policy of defense is not conditioned by the Kremlin's policy. This is the first misunderstanding. But, you ask, if there is not a conflict why the necessity of subordination? Here is the second misunderstanding. We must subordinate the defense of the U.S.S.R. to the world revolution insofar as we subordinate a part to a whole. In 1918 in the polemics with Bukharin, who insisted upon a revolutionary war against Germany, Lenin answered approximately: "If there should be a revolution in Germany now, then it would be our duty to go to war even at the risk of losing. Germany's revolution is more important than ours and we should if necessary sacrifice the Soviet power in Russia (for a while) in order to help establish it in Germany." A strike in Chicago at this time could be unreasonable in and of itself, but if it is a matter of helping a general strike on the national scale, the Chicago workers should subordinate their interests to the interests of their class and call a strike. If the U.S.S.R. is involved in the war on the side of Germany, the German revolution could certainly menace the immediate interests of the defense of the U.S.S.R. Would we advise the German workers not to act? The Comintern would surely give them such advice, but not we. We will say, "We must subordinate the interests of the defense of the Soviet Union to the interests of the world revolution."

Some of your arguments are, it seems to me, answered in Trotsky's last article, "Again and Once More Again on the Nature of the U.S.S.R." which was written before I received the transcript of your speech.

You have hundreds and hundreds of new members who have not passed through our common experience. I am fearful that your presentation can lead them into the error of believing that we were unconditionally for the support of the Kremlin, at least on the international field, that we didn't foresee such a possibility as the Stalin-Hitler collaboration, that we were taken unawares by the events, and that we must fundamentally change our position. That is not true! And independently from all the other questions which are discussed or only touched upon in your speech (leadership, conservatism, party regime, and so on) we must, in my opinion again check our position on the Russian question with all the necessary carefulness in the interest of the American section as well as of the Fourth International as a whole.

The real danger now is not the "unconditional" defense of that which is worthy of defense, but direct or indirect help to the political current which tries to identify the U.S.S.R. with the Fascist states for the benefit of the democracies, or to the related current which tries to put all tendencies in the same pot in order to compromise Bolshevism or Marxism with Stalinism. We are the only party which really foresaw the events, not in their empirical concreteness of course, but in their general tendency. Our strength consists in the fact that we do not need to change our orientation as the war begins. And I find it very false that some of our comrades, moved by the factional fight for a "good regime" (which they, so far as I know, have

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never defined) persist in shouting: "We were taken unawares! Our orientation turned out to be false! We must improvise a new line! And so on." This seems to me completely incorrect and dangerous.

With warmest comradely greetings,

Lund

CC to J.P. Cannon.

P.S. — The formulations in this letter are far from perfect since it is not an elaborated article, but only a letter dictated by me in English and corrected by my collaborator during the dictation.

L.

A LETTER ON THE RUSSIAN QUESTION BY
Joe Hansen.

November 16, 1939.

Dear Comrade:

I gather that the minority are more and more letting the "newness" in the situation drop by the board and hingeing their arguments on the "nature of the war". The war is imperialist, hence all the participants are imperialist, we cannot defend any one of them in any aspect, and all their acts must be judged on the basis of the "nature of the war" and not in the light of their internal economy and politics. I always understood that war was but the continuation of the internal politics of a nation and hence its nature was judged in view of the nature of the internal politics. The internal politics were determined by the nature of the economy and the consequent class relationships. Hence if the economy of a country were feudal, its politics were feudal, and its wars were feudal -- even if it expanded its geographical frontiers. In the present conflict, for example, it is not difficult to see that the war carried on by Great Britain, France, Germany and the United States is an imperialist war because these nations have an imperialist economy (finance-capital dominates), their internal politics are imperialist and war merely projects these internal politics in a different and sharper form. With the Soviet Union, however, we have a special case. We have defined its economy and its politics as that of a degenerated workers' state -- at the present time -- and hence any war it conducts must project that nature: the U.S.S.R. now conducts a degenerated-workers'-state war. We oppose the degeneration; we defend the workers' part.

The confusion which has arisen from the use by the minority of the general meaning of "imperialism" -- geographical expansion -- is a very impressive lesson to me of the necessity for exact and scientific terminology. But what I don't understand, and perhaps you can give me the minority argument on this point -- why do they judge everything from the "nature of the war"? And if this is the first cause and the first given phenomena from which everything henceforth is to be judged, how in hell do they determine what kind of war it is? Is it the crossing of frontiers, the acquisition of territory that makes an imperialist war? How do they distinguish this war from the "imperialist" war of a feudal state? the "imperialist" war of a slave state? the "imperialist" war of a tribe of cannibalistic head-hunters who do things in more horrible style than Hitler or even Stalin? the "imperialist" war of a healthy workers' state? the "imperialist" war of a state on the verge of transition into something else? This dilemma which seems to me would bother every member of the minority and call forth some explanation from their leaders. Either the nature of the state determines the type of war, or the type of the war must be determined from the concrete acts that are carried out by the warring nations. The first way is the Marxist way ... I was taught.

It would seem from here outside of New York, as best as I can judge from the arguments I have heard, that the minority is actually judging the nature of the war from the concrete events of the war, such and such a frontier crossed, so many people slaughtered, so many people subjected to a change in oppressors -- in brief the empiric method of judging phenomena, each item in and of itself held up and then fitted to the iron pigeonholes of the classification, in place of the Marxist way of looking at things as a whole with their qualitative differences and combinations of forces moving in opposite directions.

I can easily understand Burnham's taking such a position since he has long been an avowed opponent of the Marxist way of looking at things, an advocate of empiricism and if I am not mistaken a student of John Dewey pragmatism which in this war has already ended up with condemnation of revolution "as a means". It seems difficult to believe that Max Shachtman could go along with a position like that, offer it comfort and solace -- if he does not really support it. Perhaps I do not yet understand Max's position fully, or misunderstand it. Nevertheless what I do know of it gives me uneasy forebodings. As for Abern's joining this group, that looks to me wholly opportunistic -- the hope to change the leadership by ganging up with the revisionists. What does he count upon after the change -- does he hope to establish the Marxist line regarding the U.S.S.R. against his former allies? It seems to me that they would annihilate such an attempt as a mere part of the mopping up operations when they had gained their ends.

A second point that is not clear to me: By what criteria will the minority change its opinion of the war? Thus they say that if the conflict changes they, with their "flexible" viewpoints will change too and even defend for example (i) the Soviet Union (but not if Great Britain attacks it.) But what would change the nature of the war? This argument of the minority is not at all clear to me. It sounds as vague as the promise of final redemption offered to sinners by the church. But the church at least has some concrete events by which to determine the redemption -- baptism, confession, etc. What are the redeeming things which will save this war and from an "imperialist" war change it to a whatever-the-minority-name-it war that can be supported? Or will they support an "imperialist" war in a "new situation", and if so what is that new "situation" concretely?

I have heard that the minority use the case of Servia to illustrate their position. That if the fight between Servia and Austria-Hungary at the opening of the World War in 1914 had remained isolated, (and Servia were not a tool of Czarist Russia) the Marxists would have favored Servia, but that in the world conflict which immediately followed this isolated struggle (which might have been?) was drowned out and Servia acted as a tool of the imperialists and the Marxists did not favor Servia). Aside from the fact that the possibility of such a war occurred at the beginning of a world conflict and not in its middle or end (can imperialist wars of world scope end in anything progressive but revolution?) -- I do not understand the relationship between Servia and the Soviet Union which I am supposed to apply to the present world war. Servia was a semi-colony with a basic economy based on capitalist relations and well-riveted to international imperialism. If it had fought against the finance-capital-imperialist nations its struggle could have weakened them and hence would have been progressive. But if it renounced that struggle, acted as their tool, supported them one hundred per-cent, it became a reactionary force. In the case of the Soviet Union on the other hand, the maintenance of the nationalized economy and the defense of that economy weakens the finance-capital-imperialist nations and is a blow for the workers' revolution. The very existence of that economy is a mortal danger to international finance-capital-imperialism and can in no way serve as its tool. The action of Stalin in supporting an imperialist camp in this war, acting as their agent and tool (against the nationalized economy) is reactionary, against the interests of the workers, and that is another and added crime to the long list he has already perpetrated against the nationalized economy for which we fight to overthrow him by political revolution. Where is the similarity between the two cases? Perhaps I don't understand it correctly, or perhaps the minority argument on this point is not clear to me.

Surely they do not argue that the Soviet Union, now after the October Revolution, has the same kind of economy as Serbia in 1914! Or is the similarity only that Serbia was the spot where the first world war started, and Moscow-Berlin the spot where the second one started?

If you can find time, I would surely appreciate your clearing up these points for me and giving me the minority arguments. I have the feeling that because of being away from the center I do not understand the latest twists of their attempt to revise the line of the Fourth International, that their position must be stronger than the above arguments would indicate -- otherwise how account for the number of good comrades in their camp? -- unless one admits that our party was not as well prepared against the war hysteria as we had thought and that the entire basis of the minority position is explainable as the reflection of alien philosophies and politics in our party reacting to the war pressure.

Warmest regards,

Joe Hansen

P.S. I hear that the minority are fond of propounding riddles -- that one of their favorites is: What do you tell the Polish workers in view of the invasion of "their" country? I would like to hear the minority's answer to this riddle since they are patting themselves on the back for their originality in thinking it up. Do they propose that the Polish workers defend their "fatherland"? Why didn't they propose this in the case of Czechoslovakia when only Hitler invaded the nation? If I remember correctly not one of them advocated any other course for the Czechoslovakian workers to pursue but an independent class policy and revolutionary defeatism. Whoever dreamed our ranks would shed all these tears over "poor little imperialist Poland"?

One final question I would like to know the minority position upon. Will they defend the Soviet Union if it is attacked by Stalin?

J.H.

STALIN'S WAR IN POLAND

By
Ben Hall

The present imperialist war has hardly begun. So long as the United States, Italy, and the Soviet Union do not participate with their full force, the real trends and developments can only take place in a concealed and distorted form.

At the present moment the Soviet Union appears to be in a comfortably safe position with a non-aggression pact with Hitler signed and sealed. The Allied Powers engaged at the front are consequently anxious to placate Stalin and to forestall his throwing full military support to Hitler. Should any or all of the major powers enter the war on the side of the Allies, the tremendous new man power at their disposal will enable them to discard their enforced friendship for Stalin and will make it possible for them to deliver real hammer blows at the Soviet Union. In such a case, the Defense of the Soviet Union will be an immediate and direct task for the world proletariat.

For world capitalism as a whole, the division of the territory of the Soviet Union still remains the only possible hope of staving off the total collapse of imperialism. The second world war, in spite of the form which its initial stages may take and the possible gyrations of Stalinist policy must sooner or later pose squarely the question of military intervention against the U.S.S.R. While the Allied powers have entered the war for the purpose of maintaining their present colonial domains, they will, in the course of the war, have completely mobilized themselves upon a war footing and will have gained war time momentum. They will never remain satisfied to end the war at the same point at which they began. The territories of the Soviet Union offer compensation for the tremendous costs of the imperialist conflict. This dictates an imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union.

Nothing in the present situation justifies a withdrawal of this fundamental strategic approach.

An attack upon the Soviet Union may take place by a combination of all the imperialist powers against an isolated Russia; by Hitler alone; or by one group of imperialist powers (possibly the Allies) against a Russia which is in alliance with an opposing imperialist power (possibly Germany). In all these cases our policy of defense remains fundamentally the same. Just as the Franco-Soviet pact did not cause us to abandon the defense of the Soviet Union so the Hitler-Stalin pact cannot cause this change.

The great danger of the Hitler-Stalin pact (as of all such pacts with imperialist powers) is that in the course of a war conducted jointly with Hitler, such economic concessions will be made (end of foreign trade monopoly, changes in property relations) as to destroy the workers in the Soviet Union and convert it into a mere pawn of German capitalism and the German military machine. But this has not yet occurred and to base any policy upon its already having taken place would be false.

The invasion of Poland by the troops of the Red Army, the threat of force against the Baltic nations and of war against Finland, ...all carried through regardless of the will of the masses whose fate was being decided in typical Stalinist bureaucratic fashion, ...can only serve to place the Soviet Union in an even more precarious position. On the one hand these policies repel

the oppressed nationalities and colonial peoples all over the world, who throw the Soviet Union into the camp of oppressors-together with the imperialist nations; and who consequently see little reason, from their point of view (erroneous as it may be), for rallying to the defense of the USSR; and on the other hand, these acts tend to destroy the revolutionary initiative of the world working class (particularly those in fascist countries) who look for the overthrow of their own oppressors not by their own revolutionary initiative but by military intervention from the outside. For these reasons and for its disorienting of the workingclass, Stalin's intervention in the present war has been a blow at the world working class.

Long ago having discarded the perspective of the world revolution the Stalinist bureaucracy has only one guiding aim: the defense of its own privileges and income. In its intervention in Poland and in the Baltic, the bureaucracy pursued these aims not by striking blows at capitalism but by blows at the working class revolution and hence carried on a reactionary war which we do not support and which we oppose.

To defend the interests of the bureaucracy, Stalin adopted the policy of People's Front and strangled the French revolution and delivered the Spanish proletariat into the hands of fascism. For precisely the same fundamental motives, Stalin made his alliance with Hitler and carried on a war against Poland. This was a reactionary war and has opened up the possibility of a whole series of military ventures of the same order and in each case our policy must be the same.

During such a war we say to the Soviet masses: this war is not in our interests and only reveals more clearly than ever before the reactionary nature of Stalinism. Not an ounce of our strength can go to its support while all our energies must go into the fight against Stalinism.

It goes without saying that our condemnation of the Stalinist moves in the Baltic has nothing in common with the hue and cry raised by the spokesmen for the democratic imperialisms. They condemn Stalin for deserting the bourgeoisie of the Allied camp. We condemn him for betraying and disorienting the world working class. Above all in our agitation among the masses we must first of all expose the hypocritical lamentations of the Allies over the fate of the "poor" little nations gobbled up by Stalin and Hitler.

THE SLOGAN: "FOR THE UNCONDITIONAL DEFENSE OF THE SOVIET UNION AGAINST IMPERIALIST ATTACK."

This slogan cannot apply to a reactionary war such as that conducted against Poland. This by no means implies that we discard or reject the slogan. The question may be asked: what good is a slogan that does not answer the question of our attitude toward so concrete an event as the invasion of Poland? Slogans do not provide us with a ready made answer for every situation. They sum up the line of the party. The slogan of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union DOES NOT AND CANNOT BE APPLIED IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE because we are not dealing with a war for the defense of the Soviet Union but with a reactionary war.

For example, we stand for the "Defense of China from Japanese Imperialism." But suppose China conducts an invasion of Siam and annexes it in the interests of the Chinese bourgeoisie? What position can we take? We cannot answer this question by referring to our previous slogan for it does not relate to this

situation. Nor would we be justified in discarding our position for defense of China against Japanese imperialism from this act alone.

Previously, we interpreted our slogan of unconditional defense as implying that we would support any war by the Soviet Union against any capitalist (even semi-colonial) state. Now, however, it is necessary to recognize the possibility of reactionary wars conducted by the Soviet Union, ... wars which we do not support. In such wars we do not apply our slogan for the defense of the USSR,

Since the Soviet Union under the Stalin regime and its Red Army are capable of conducting reactionary wars as well as progressive wars, the Fourth International must determine its stand toward any particular war on the basis of the facts of the real situation.

It is likewise fully possible that some move by Stalin which is purely reactionary, (e.g. invasion of Finland) may provide the Allied Powers (or Hitler) with a pretext for launching a general offensive against the USSR. In such a case we must stand for the defense of the Soviet Union regardless of the immediate cause for the outbreak of the war.

The majority of the N.C. The majority of the N.C. has thus far failed to give any answer to the problems raised by the invasion of Poland. To the question: do we support the war of Stalin against Poland; do we give it material assistance - the majority replies....the soviet union is a degenerated workers state. This is an answer to another question. We cannot support the majority in this present dispute because it has no stated position on the question at issue.

The minority of the N.C. Considered as an amendment to the party position on the nature of the Soviet Union and the defense of the USSR and not as a substitute for it, the position of the minority on the events arising out of the Polish invasion deserves the support of the party. This by no means implies an endorsement of every line of the Shachtman resolution which has been presented by it. While the majority blinds its eyes to the concrete reality, it is possible to work out the answer to problems as they arise in life together with the minority.

Ben Hall
November 20, 1939.

STALINIST IMPERIALISM & THE COLONIAL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT.

By: Sherman Stanley

The majority National Committee comrades conceive of Stalin as a straw figure, sitting in trembling fear behind the Kremlin walls and fearful of making the slightest move to upset the status quo. One majority supporter has described Stalin as a "paper-maché Sphinx" scared out of his wits lest someone light a match to him.

We have no desire to overestimate the strength of the Stalinist bureaucracy which remains in power only as a result of the defeats of the world proletariat. But nevertheless, it would be utterly false to refuse to recognize that Stalinism has increased its strength as a result of its Polish and Baltic campaigns and the heavy blows that these actions have been to the Russian working class. With its present position which, in our opinion, is simply a refusal to analyze events by ignoring them, the Majority faction cannot even offer a prognosis as to (a) the meaning of the new turn in the Communist International; (b) what may be expected from Stalinism in the near future.

It is clear to us from the first few months of the war that the only immediate serious revolutionary hopes lie in the colonies - concretely, the colonies of British and French imperialism. Sufficient evidence exists to prove - even to our conservative minded majority supporters - that the colonial people in the "democratic" imperialist empires have rejected in toto any idea of supporting the present imperialist war.

With rapid strides, India is leaping to the forefront of the world revolutionary movement. As a matter of fact, one might say that this vast colony alone constitutes today the only active source of revolutionary activity and militant progress. The Indian Revolution is before us in its preliminary stages. It commands the attention of our International.

At the same time it constitutes a decisive testing-ground as to who is correct in their present analysis of Russia's role in the war - the minority faction, whose viewpoint we state, or the majority faction of our Party. When the question of Stalinist intervention in the colonies and India has been raised the responsible majority comrades have ridiculed the idea - "why bring up India" - "fantastic speculation" - "Stalin doesn't have the economic base to fling himself against the colonies" etc. We reject this shortsighted and blind conservatism and in this article shall attempt to point to the realities of the situation; Stalinism is today preparing overt and decisive intervention in the colonial revolutionary movements in general, and India in particular.

*** By the term "Stalinist Imperialism" we mean precisely the meaning given to it in the minority resolution. The present, new policy of the Soviet bureaucracy aiming at conquest, aggrandizement, plunder, revenues to replete its exhausted fixed capital, etc. We consider that Stalin is driven to these imperialist measures by the internal contradictions of Soviet economy (the inability to build "socialism in one country"). Despite its desires for peace, the bureaucracy is not the master of its own destiny. Despite itself, it is forced to act.

We make no effort to predict the exact nature of this intervention - whether it will be conducted from "inside" as it was in Spain, with the direct intervention of the GPU, and small Red Army detachments; or whether it will take on the form of open invasion, as with the invasion of Poland and the Baltic nations. We present below the concrete facts and theoretical considerations behind our analysis. We submit that before the year 1939 has run its course the material evidence will have accumulated mountain high.

(a) The character of the present war: It is not sufficient for us as Marxian scientists to state "this is an imperialist war" and let it go at that. Marxism assumed that the only kind of world war that could be fought today would be an imperialist war. The Majority comrades are satisfied with uttering this Marxist truism. We, however, insist upon a more concrete analysis - what are the strategic goals of the rival imperialisms and their allies, how does the strategy of world revolution fit into our analysis, etc.

To us the present war as it is being fought now consists of a united front (military, economic and political) between German imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy having as its basic strategic aim the destruction and re-division of the British Empire. The rival Allied imperialists are fighting specifically for the retention of the colonial slave Empires. It is a struggle for world redivision between two imperialist blocs - in one of which the Soviet bureaucracy must be included. Naturally, Hitler aims ultimately at the destruction of the Soviet Union. Nobody excludes the possibility (even probability) that the war will ultimately turn into an imperialist assault on the U.S.S.R. But today this is not the case. Today there is a united front between Stalin and Hitler aimed at destroying the British Empire and by that action likewise subjugating the second-rate French colonial Empire. The fact that Hitler has not yet launched his full frontal attack upon the British is in all likelihood due to the serious internal difficulties within Germany. But this is not decisive as we shall soon see.

(b) The New Turn of the Communist International: The Majority comrades describe the new turn as a "left cover" for the Hitler-Stalin alliance. We agree with this insofar as it goes, but it is more than that. Those comrades who see in the new line a return to the "Third Period" are victims of a superficial - that is, false - analysis. True, there are certain slogans in common ("united front from below" etc.). But there are fundamental differences between the "Third Period" and the new period. The historic circumstances, the motives, the aims are entirely different.

The new line we consider a reflection of (1) the Stalin-Hitler alliance aiming to serve the interests of German imperialism; (2) the independent aims of Stalinist imperialism aiming to serve the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. The new line is aimed primarily at the colonial revolutionary movements, with the goal of seizing their leadership and distorting the genuine revolutionary feelings of the masses in the interests of the bureaucracy. The new line is a strategy to deceive the colonial masses, to deliberately divert the revolutionary current into counter-revolutionary channels. The Majority comrades refuse to recognize this and limit their analysis to describing the new line as a cloak for the alliance. We however maintain that the Comintern is directing all its concentrated powers today at the colonial revolutionary movement - with India in the forefront.

As concrete evidence of our viewpoint we offer the following: The material is given not necessarily in the order of its importance.

(1) Intensified activities of the Stalinist Red Armies and its GPU agents has been reported in the various border and buffer states that lie around Russia and India. These include Sinkiang, Afghanistan, Waziristan, the Northwest Frontier of India, Iran, Iraq, etc. The activities include concentration of Red Army troops, GPU agitation among the tribesmen and peasants (Afghanistan primarily), stirring up of Hindu-Moslem troubles (Waziristan), general anti-British propaganda on an increased scale. Practically none of these reports have been denied by the Soviet government. The British authorities, on the other hand, do not hesitate to accuse the Stalinists of activity in the buffer states surrounding India. This despite Chamberlain's wooing of Russia!

(2) The Comintern and the English Communist Party have been directing "revolutionary" manifestoes at the colonial people - particularly India - for the past few weeks. They raise nationalist, anti-British slogans - "down with British imperialism, independence for the colonies" etc. Interestingly enough, the leader of the English C.P., replacing the demoted Harry Pollitt, is the Stalinist Indian authority, the half-Hindu B. Palme-Dutt.

Pravda likewise displays intense "interest" in the plight of the Indian masses, devoting long articles describing British imperialism and, according to a N.Y. Times dispatch from Moscow, "depicting the growing forces of revolt." Stalinist propaganda today, aside from agitating for an imperialist peace, makes much of the colonial slave populations and their revolutionary activities. Speeches on policy delivered by Molotoff and other leading bureaucratic figures go out of their way to mention India and warn the British to watch their Empire.

(3) Mobilization of the British armies: It is a fact of the highest significance that the real concentration of the British forces (infantry, airplane, etc.) is not in France, but in the Asiatic colonies. There are less than 200,000 men on the Western front. There are at least 600,000 British troops (mostly colonials) concentrated within India alone. The real British army is strung from Egypt, through Palestine, Iran, Iraq, the Northwest Frontier Province and Punjab, Burma, etc. In recent weeks the British forces in Iran, Iraq, Suez Canal, Northern India etc. have been greatly augmented by Moslem troops. It is apparent that the British imperialists are expecting the greatest threat to their imperial domination in these areas. These forces are concentrated there not merely to be employed against the revolting masses, but also against rival imperialist invaders - namely, Russia and Germany.

(4) Activities within India itself:

We must first of all realize the fact that Stalinism was already a powerful force in India before the war began. Despite the small size of the Party itself, it had a tremendous influence in the trade union, peasant and States' Peoples movements. It exercised leadership over some of the most powerful unions - textile, jute, printing workers etc. As an example of its influence, in local elections held in Bombay, Stalinist candidates who ran against official Congress candidates, were elected in all cases over the Congress candidates! Stalinism had penetrated deeply into the ranks of the Congress Socialist Party and on the eve of war was well advanced toward its goal of swallowing up the latter party.

Is it reasonable to believe that Stalinist influence had declined with the adoption of the new line and its concomitant pseudo-revolutionary slogans? Far from it. Everything indicates, unfortunately, the opposite.

We have already explained in articles published in the SOCIALIST APPEAL the reasons behind the present aggressive stand of Gandhi and the bourgeois leaders of the National Congress. They are bending backwards to absorb the terrific revolutionary pressure exerted by the masses. But who is the organizing force behind this revolutionary energy? Is it spontaneous? The answer is that this is undoubtedly partly so, but primarily no. The organized pressure on the Congress right-wing is being mobilized by the Stalinists and the left nationalists who are rapidly falling under Stalinist control.

Gandhi has reversed 100% his position when the war began. Because he has suddenly become revolutionary? No, because he was forced to by the masses whose revolutionary energies create an ideal environment for the dirty work now being conducted by the Comintern and its Indian GPU. These are the facts.

The Stalinists are advancing the most "militant" slogans in India; the Stalinists are leading a general strike of 40,000 textile workers in Cawnpore; the Stalinists are heading a walkout of 31,000 jute workers in Calcutta. The Stalinists have organized a united "Left Consolidation Bloc" which has joined together all the left nationalists and petty-bourgeois centrists in a bloc under Stalinist control. Due to the rigid censorship it is still impossible to get complete details as to their activities but we assure the comrades that the facts we cite above are only a few instances of the mounting influence of demagogic Stalinist propaganda.

(5) Stalinism and the Petty-Bourgeois Nationalists: The petty bourgeois nationalists who are the outspoken and active leaders in the National Congress today are extremely susceptible to Stalinist influence. Where political resistance is offered, the gold of the GPU is employed - a familiar method in Comintern history. There are decisive illustrations of how the present "left" leadership of the Congress is coming under Stalinist influence. We cite the most significant:

(a) Pandit Nehru: Next to Gandhi he is the most important Congress spokesman and leader. For years under Stalinist influence he has recently issued a statement (Times of India) giving his tacit endorsement to the Stalin-Hitler Pact. We once compared him to Largo Caballero - the resemblance is becoming clearer as he emerges as the leading Stalinist "front" in India.

(b) M.N. Roy: This man is familiar to all revolutionists as one of the world's most cynical opportunists, sensitive to every straw in the wind. Of utmost significance therefore are his gyrations. At the beginning of the war Roy prepared to support the British on the basis of a struggle against Nazism. Today he has changed completely and come back to Stalinism, endorsing the Hitler-Stalin pact etc.

(c) Kamaladevi: Foremost woman nationalist leader, member of the Congress Executive Committee, one of the founders of the Congress Socialist Party. In a conversation with the author of this article (she is at present touring America) this prototype of the petty bourgeois nationalist stated her support of the Stalin-Hitler Pact. Well known to have violently disagreed with the Stalinists during their Popular Front period, she now openly states that a "basis for collaboration between her Party and the C.P. exists." She admitted to discussion and collaboration with R. Palme Dutt, English Stalinist leader.

The official representative of the Congress in London is the well known Stalinist, Krishna Menon. All this is illustrative of what is happening in the ranks of the petty bourgeois nationalists.

Stalinism can go to these people and offer them Russian support - money, advisors, prestige, possibly even munitions, etc. The colonial petty bourgeois with his limited perspective, has always been susceptible to the influence of external agencies. This has been particularly true for the Indian petty bourgeois who at various times has passed through the camps of German, English and Japanese foreign service. Stalinism will have a comparatively easy task with these people. It is buying them off right now.

CONCLUSIONS: (1) Stalinism and the Soviet bureaucracy, basing itself on the new line, are preparing for drastic intervention in the colonial revolutionary movements which now center around India. This intervention will aim to behead the genuine revolutionary movement in the interests of the Imperialist alliance with Germany and in the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy itself. It is impossible to state the exact form this intervention will ultimately assume except to state that it has already begun with an attempt to seize the leadership of the workers and peasants within India itself.

(2) Our international movement must place itself on guard and give serious consideration to the meaning of the new Stalinist line and its imperialist objectives. The sterile, formalistic Majority position is incapable of this precisely because of its indirect and passive support of the present Soviet foreign policy. Defensism in the Soviet Union in the present war means support of Stalinism's imperialist aims, whether it be with regard to Finland, Bessarabia, Turkey, India etc.

(3) Given the present circumstances, if a struggle takes place in the Near and Far East between the armies of British imperialism (striving to retain its colonial slave Empire) and the Red armies of the Stalinist bureaucracy (striving to seize and divide up the colonial Empire of the British) the Fourth International cannot have any other position than that of revolutionary defeatism on both sides, in ^{both armies} Our position should be support to the camp of the colonial revolutionists who are conducting their fight against today's imperialists (the British) and the would-be-imperialists of tomorrow (the Stalinist bureaucracy).

China: It is necessary to add a brief note on China. Stalinism is today deeply entangled with Chinese matters and is openly preparing another monstrous betrayal with definite imperialist aims. Clashes between the Chinese Red Army and the Kuomintang armies, the Japanese truce, the current trade negotiations with Japan, the seizure of certain of China's northern provinces - all point toward one thing. That is, an imperialist agreement with the Japanese bourgeoisie by which Stalin gets sections of northern China and the Japanese settle for good with Chiang Kai Shek - that is, become the master of central and south China. Such an agreement will also give the Japanese a clear signal to move against the British possessions (Hong Kong etc.); French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies. It will be a Far Eastern version of the Russo-German Alliance.

The Role of Soviet Russia in the Present Epoch.

by
Victor Fox.

1. The Character of our Epoch.

The outbreak of the new imperialist war renders obligatory a revision of the general perspectives of our development. To console our impotence, as one by one the nations of the earth are crushed beneath the iron heel, with the repetition of well-worn phrases dealing with the weakness and isolation of the internationalists in 1914, no longer suffices. Our former tendency to deduce from our minute size a lengthy period of development has been proven radically false. We have reached the end. The Fourth International is making its last stand. Either the present imperialist war will be terminated by revolution or the possibility of revolution itself will disappear.

In the light of this situation; the telescoping of long and short term perspectives into a brief span of years, the relative importance of various forces is transformed. The nationalized economy of the Soviet Union is still relatively progressive, but its specific weight in the total world situation has been immeasurably lightened. Contrariwise, such factors as tend to retard the development of class consciousness or constitute obstacles between the Fourth Internationalists and the masses, even if only in slight degree, now loom as immensities.

Either the proletariat will make a decisive bid for world dominion in the immediate future, or the preservation of the Soviet Union will become a matter of complete indifference to the exploited masses. The Soviet government, nationalized economy included, provides the Russian people only with poverty and suffering. Its justification can be found only in the world revolution. If that perspective fades away into a temporal haze, then the question of whether Stalin or Hitler rules from the Kremlin will become a matter of little importance either to the Russian people or the history of mankind.

11. The "Workers' State" Formula.

The altered character of the general situation has been supplemented by a virtual revolution in the diplomatic and military position of the European powers. Yet many comrades stubbornly refuse to re-evaluate the European scene and the place of the S.U. in it. The role of Stalinism, the form of the Russian state, its nationalized property relations, etc. have undergone no significant changes in the past two years; they declare quite justly. Why then is a new evaluation necessary? In reply it may be pointed out that the chemical properties of silver have undergone no alterations for several years, a fact which has not prevented the widest fluctuations in its value.

When we insisted upon calling the Soviet Union a "workers' state" two years ago, what was the concrete meaning of our action? It was an assertion of the dual role of the Russian state and of our intention to defend Russia's nationalized economy. The "workers' state" formula did not and could not have defined our position on the military expansion of the Soviet Union because we never seriously considered that a possibility. We considered the extension of the Soviet Union impossible apart from the extension of the revolution. The speculations upon which we based our formulae dealt exclusively with the cession of territory by the Soviet Union and not at all with its acquisition. Our previous discussion has absolutely no

relevance to the questions now at issue. The insistence upon the formula "workers' state means unconditional defense" can serve only two purposes: 1) evasion of an answer to Russia's Polish and Baltic expansion, and 2) the reservation of the privilege of later providing any answer which seems expedient. The disgraceful reality of this evasion is well known not only to ourselves but to the labor movement at large.

III. The Invasion of Poland.

Many supporters of the majority viewpoint were inclined to justify the Soviet invasion of Poland on the grounds of military necessity. It cannot be denied that the present Soviet frontier has many military advantages over the old. It has been greatly shortened, it now runs largely along river banks, and the Pripet marshes have been interposed between Russia and any possible German offensive. Yet to judge the issue on this basis is to relapse into complete subjectivism. We may assume either a) the Kremlin was frightened by the rapid German advance and so decided to take military precautions, or b) Stalin made a deal with Hitler in order to acquire new territories to bolster his prestige and revenues. Either hypothesis will account for the known facts, and precisely because of that, these and all similar speculations have no relevance whatsoever to the issue. For the consequences of the invasion are in no way affected by the motives or antecedent manoeuvres of the Kremlin clique. The purity of Stalin's thoughts is of interest only to a moralist.

Comrade Trotsky apparently falls into a similar false approach with his analogy of the burning house (Bulletin no. 2, page 4). Let us suppose that it was not Stalin and his clique who set the house on fire. What then? Let us suppose that prior to the war Stalin had denounced Germany's territorial ambitions and pledged support to Poland; that following Germany's thrust, Russia actually had sent supplies to the Poles; that German successes had continued; and that Russia had thereupon sent in troops, an action which raised the danger of a war on two fronts and forced Hitler to yield half of Poland to Russia. If Comrade Trotsky were consistent, he would then have hailed the annexation as a progressive act, as a bit of life-saving on Stalin's part, performed in a catastrophe for which he was in no sense responsible. For Trotsky regards Russian annexation as the "lesser evil", to be condemned under the present circumstances largely because it facilitated Germany's annexations (the "greater evil"). In short, Trotsky is content to base his position on the vital question of Soviet expansion upon the episodic shifts of Stalin's foreign policy.

There is a very simple method of determining our position on Soviet expansion. Has the Polish revolution been advanced or retarded by Russian annexation? This is the decisive question in the present period. If the world proletariat makes no bid for power, it is altogether likely that the Russo-German border will be shifted many times in the next century. But such shifts will have an importance corresponding to those involved in the medieval conflict between Hapsburgs and Wittelsbachs. Revolution is far more likely in the German-occupied areas than in those annexed by Stalin. And the revolutionary potentialities even of the German-occupied districts have been reduced by Russia's overshadowing position. Therefore Russian annexation is not the "lesser evil" despite certain minor progressive features. Russian neutrality would have been the genuine "lesser evil".

The Soviet Union remains the country least likely to initiate the coming revolutionary upsurge. Franco's Spain and Hitler's Germany are more plausible loci for the first act. The extension of the revolution to the Soviet Union will take the form of an invasion -- certainly in the political sense and possibly in the military sense as well. The extension of the frontiers of the Soviet Union, in addition to the baleful effects it has on its immediate victims, limits the possible field of operation of the proletariat and strengthens the forces of social inertia both in the Soviet and capitalist worlds. Concerning any given territory we must always ask: will the incorporation of this capitalist area into the Soviet Union further the revolution? The answer will always be no.

Many comrades stress the subjective consequences of Stalin's annexation: It spreads the illusion that military operations alone can destroy capitalism, apart from any activity of the working class. Undeniably true. But let us suppose that reality corresponded to this illusion; let us assume that the red army were capable of conquering the nations of the earth and destroying their social institutions. Should we then favor a policy of military expansion? Since no sane person considers the condition of life of the Russian worker a desirable one, the question really amounts to this: would the termination of capitalist encirclement and the integration of Russian and world economy result in the elimination of the Russian state, or would they merely enable this organism to extend its depredations to new fields? It should by now be clear that this bureaucratic organism can no longer be destroyed simply by removing the causes which brought it into being. A considerable mitigation of the pressure of capitalist encirclement as a result of sharpening imperialist rivalries; an increased participation in world trade; a steep rise in production, with a concomitant multiplication of the ranks of the proletariat -- all these things have been accompanied not by a weakening but rather by a tremendous growth of the bureaucracy. That is our answer. And speculation on this problem, the consequences of Soviet conquest of the planet, provides us with an answer to the Polish question. For it is the macrocosm of which the recent Soviet annexation is the microcosm.

The practical conclusions to be drawn from this analysis are as follows:

- 1). Russia's participation in the present war is reactionary, inasmuch as the conquest of new territories is the dominant characteristic of that participation.
- 2). We advocate a policy of revolutionary defeatism of the Soviet army as well as for the bourgeois armies, laying greatest stress upon fraternization of the troops.
- 3). We recognize as progressive the hostility of the peoples of the border nations to Soviet advance, and seek to separate their struggle from that of their bourgeois overlords fighting for their property.

IV. The Problem of Finland.

The issue in Finland is beclouded by no such incidental question as community of language with Russia or the danger of German attack. It is still unresolved. Yet despite the golden opportunity of our party to intervene with a program before the event instead of an analysis after it, our press remained silent on

the subject until the recent article of Comrade Morrow (Appeal, Nov. 7). Comrade Morrow declares bluntly that he is suspicious of Molotoff's explanations. In this he reveals a healthy scepticism. But however adequate Comrade Morrow's suspicions may be for the Political Committee, they do not suffice for the Finnish people. For the Finnish workers and peasants are in advance of Comrade Morrow. They are not merely suspicious of Russian invasion, they are opposed to it. If we do not provide them with a formula for fighting the Soviet Union, the Finnish bourgeoisie unquestionably will.

What will Soviet annexation mean to the Finnish people? The destruction of their national independence, liquidation of workers' organizations and democratic rights, GPU terror, the murder of militant workers and leading intellectuals, the plundering of personal belongings and, not least in importance, a lowering of seventy-five percent in the standard of living. Are these things trifles? Will the abolition of private property compensate for them? Finnish democracy is far from perfect, even in a bourgeois sense, but can we seriously contend that the Finnish people have nothing to lose? However incorrect Finnish patriotism may be in the present conjuncture, it is far more understandable and far more pardonable than Soviet patriotism. Those among us who support the Red Army against Finland do not attain the status of the patriots of 1914 solely because of the more limited extent of their opportunities. Their policy in action would deliver the Finnish proletariat to its ruling class.

Our program for Finland must stress the election of army officers by the troops, direction of the army by soldiers' committees, all democratic rights for the soldiers, nationalization without compensation of all factories necessary to national defense, commandeering of all commodities needed by the army, election of workers' committees in each city to supervise defense work, etc. We must start the Finnish revolution by taking the army away from the bourgeoisie. We must utilize nationalism as a weapon against capitalism and Stalinism. In Finland we must take our place as super-defensists, and in Russia as saboteurs and agents of the enemy. Only thus can we advance the revolution. Failing a regime of dual power in Finland, we must, of course, simply condemn the war as reactionary on both sides.

V. The Occupied Territories.

If the expansion of the Soviet Union is reactionary, we cannot, of course, defend its acquisitions. If, on the other hand, it is progressive, then we must not merely defend Soviet acquisitions, but take the initiative in urging new invasions and conquests. Intermediate between these two positions there exists only confusion and inconsistency. No defensible third position is possible. Either a) it is better that territory XYZ be inside Russia than outside it, or b) it is not better. If it is better, then we must say so before as well as after annexation.

Let us consider the concrete case of the Red Army invading a resisting Roumania, nationalizing property as it goes. Shall we be defensists or defeatists? Shall we condemn the invasion but defend the already conquered area? Shall we be defeatists in artillery brigades (offensive) and defensists among the machine gunners (defensive)? The Roumanians will scarcely comprehend our subtle distinctions.

The half-and-half position looks more plausible only when applied to an issue already settled, such as the Polish invasion. Having valiantly kept our heads well under the bedclothes while the shooting was going on, we were enabled to

conserve our energies sufficiently to take a very strong point of view afterwards on another fight that might be brewing. But if we abandon our ancient vice of drawing lessons from events, and think in terms of anticipating them, the issue becomes clearer.

Let us suppose that Hitler attempts to retrieve the Soviet annexations. We will say to the German soldier: "Your struggle is reactionary. Your government is fighting for the right to enslave thirty million Poles." He will reply: "So is Russia. But you support Stalin's army. I won't listen to any Russian agent." Logic will be with the German soldier. Our hopes of influencing the German proletariat, not to mention the peoples of the smaller European and Asiatic nations menaced by Russian advance, depend upon our taking a clear position against defense of any status quo established by Stalin outside his borders, neither the nationalized property of Poland nor the fascist dictatorships in Esthonia and Latvia. For the social regimes maintained in the various areas are merely incidental features of reactionary Stalinist expansion. We cannot appear as accessories after the fact and expect the trust of honest men.

In the event that the attack on Russia assumes the nature of an assault on her property institutions, then the question of acquisitions becomes subordinate and a different policy is indicated.

Vl. The Defense of the Soviet Union.

If this analysis be accepted, then what of the defense of the Soviet Union? Can we consistently defend it under any conditions?

We must face the fact that the Soviet Union with all its appurtenances, as it actually exists today, constitutes a gigantic negative factor in the world situation, and the chief barrier to the world revolution. The disappearance of the Soviet Union in a great natural catastrophe however deplorable from a humanitarian point of view, would in no sense be a setback for the revolution. Rather would it constitute the removal of an obstacle.

What are the foreseeable consequences of an imperialist overturn? The existence in Russia of a regime capable of guaranteeing investments would open the doors to American expansion, as America alone is in a position to export large amounts of capital. The development of the Russian railways could easily absorb five billion dollars. The creation of a public debt for road-building might readily involve two or three billion more. And these sums would merely pave the way for larger investments in utilities and factories. Russia would be flooded with American manufactures, paid for in part by grain exports and in part by capital imports.

That is the real danger involved in Soviet overturn. Such an event would not only go far toward solving the problems of American capitalism, but would raise the United States to the position of dominant world power, from which height it could impose a "pax Americana" on the rest of the world, and police Europe for world capitalism against the proletarian revolution.

This is what we prevent in defending the Soviet Union. We defend not Russia's progressiveness but her backwardness. Our defense of the Soviet Union converges with that of colonial nations.

Note on the Organizational Question:

Happily the long-apparent weaknesses of the party leadership have been brought out in the open by the disagreements on the Russian question. There is thus time to correct these weaknesses before war conditions make internal democracy impossible. The special importance of our party as the political reservoir of the Fourth International makes this correction doubly imperative. The fact that members of the minority bear a share of the responsibility for the past defects in the party's functioning in no sense ameliorates the situation. The leadership of the party must possess not only organizational initiative, but the ability to react to new situations with lightning shifts of position. The general staff of the proletarian vanguard must not lag behind bourgeois diplomacy in this respect. For two months now we have been reacting to events with silence. We have always characterized such silence on the part of other parties as bankruptcy. We must draw the moral from our analyses.

November 11, 1939.

Victor Fox.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL IN EUROPE.

(Stenographer's note: Rough draft uncorrected by participants)

Comrade Johnson: (1) I should very much like to hear what Comrade Crux thinks about the tremendous rise in the fighting temper of the French workers and the actual decline of our movement in that period. At the founding conference there were six sessions devoted to the French question and at the very end there was a dispute about the nature of the resolution to be drawn up. This gives some idea of the difficulty. C. and S. thought that it was almost entirely a question of leadership and organization. Blasco thought that the comrades could analyze the political situation but lacked the capacity to intervene actively in the struggle of the masses. My personal view is that it is due to the social composition of the group, its concentration in Paris and its predominant interest in politics rather than in industry, although I noticed in the middle of 1937 a great change in that direction. I still believe however that this is a question which demands careful thought and analysis.

(2) The Spanish question. I believe that it is not too late to initiate, from all possible sources, an investigation into the organizational activity of our comrades in Spain beginning in 1936. From all that I have heard, 500 well organized comrades inside the POUM would have been able at least to make an attempt at the seizure of power in May 1937. I believe that we have a great deal to learn from the methods of work pursued by our comrades inside the POUM and outside. And inasmuch as in France, and perhaps in Holland and in Britain, where there are centrist parties between us and the Social Democracy and where it is likely that we may have to work as our comrades had to work in the POUM in Spain, for all these reasons I believe it is important that some work should be done on the actual experiences of our comrades in Spain.

(3) The British section. You are familiar with the history of the section; the split in 1936 and the formation of two groups, one consolidated in the Labor Party and one outside. When C. arrived in the summer of 1938, both groups were about seventy strong. The Labor Party group was more stable. The RSL consisted of a fusion between the old Marxist League which split with Groves and the Marxist group and was in contact with about twenty admirable comrades from Edinburgh. The pact for unity and peace stipulated that each group was to continue its own activity and after six months a balance was to be drawn. The last news is the friction has continued and that the Labor Party group is now dominant.

There is also another group - Lee's group in the Labor Party which refused to have anything to do with fusion, saying that it was bound to fail. The Lee group is very active.

I told Comrade C. that I had ultimately arrived at the conclusion (a) that I had no objection to even the larger part of the comrades of the fusion group being in the Labor Party; (b) but that the independent group with its paper should continue. In the last analysis, the fraction in the Labor Party would not gain any large number under present circumstances our independence as a group with a paper was absolutely necessary. Wicks, Sumner, Sara and others of the old Marxist League who had worked in the Labor Party for four years and were still in it, thoroughly agreed with us that an independent voice was needed. The Labor Party comrades wanted a theoretical paper like the New International. We said no; we wanted a paper like the old Militant, part theoretical and part agitational. There is not much further to discuss about the English question as one has had time to consider it at a distance. It is clear that no advice or policy can perform miracles.

The position of the IIP however is important for us. Organizationally it is weak, but it has four M.P.'s, its paper sells between 25 and 30 thousand copies per week, its conferences and statements are published in the bourgeois newspapers, it gets enough financial support to run 15 candidates in an election (most of them lose their deposit of \$750 per candidate). In general it says much the same sort of thing that we say and it takes away all that moral and financial support which, for instance, is ours in the United States where there is nothing between us and the Social Democracy, such as it is. Furthermore the IIP is always opening and then closing, but we are unable to take advantage of the consistent splits and general dissatisfaction of the left wing. If we could split the IIP and, as Maxton has threatened to do of his own accord, drive the Scottish members into Scotland and leave the field in England open, we would be able not to create a great party leading the masses immediately, but we would make extraordinary progress.

I believe that the 1936 resolution on the centrist parties which stated that the IIP would soon descend into Stalinism was an error and disorientated the English section. At the present time it would seem that our future progress in Britain in regard to the IIP would depend largely on whether our French section is successful in attracting to itself the best elements in the PSOP. Nevertheless, I propose that our British section should not neglect the IIP in any way and by means of pamphlets, in our press and articles should make a concentrated drive at its weaknesses and divergences and do its best to accentuate the splits which are constantly opening up in it so as to facilitate its destruction.

Finally there is the question of the comrades going into industry as has been done in one or two districts in America where intellectuals, in their determination to get into contact with the masses, have entered the food industry and other industries wherever that was possible; in certain places with great success. It seems to me in France and most certainly in Britain, this is a means which could very well be attempted in order to strengthen that contact with the masses which is one of the great weaknesses of our party in great cities like London, Paris and to some extent New York; whereas the Belgian party, based on a working class area in the provinces, is extremely well organized and despite certain political weakness during the past period shows that in any upheaval such as had taken place in France, it is likely to play a far more powerful part and at least to show infinitely greater progress than our French section has shown.

Comrade Crux: Yes, the question is why we are not progressing in correspondence with the value of our conceptions which are not so meaningless as some friends believe. We are not progressing politically. Yes, it is a fact which is an expression of a general decay of the workers' movements in the last fifteen years. It is the mere general cause. When the revolutionary movement in general is declining, when one defeat follows another, when Fascism is spreading over the world, when the official Marxism is the most powerful organization of deception of the workers, and so on, it is an inevitable situation that the revolutionary elements must work against the general historic current and that our ideas, our explications, can be so exact and wise that one can only demand. But the masses are not educated by the prognostic theoretical conception, but by the general experiences of their lives. It is the most general explanation — the whole situation is against us. There must be a turn in the class realization, in the sentiments, in the feelings of the masses; a turn which will give us the possibility of a large political success.

I remember some discussions in 1927 in Moscow after Chiang-Kai Shek stilled the Chinese workers. We predicted this ten days before and Stalin opposed us with the argument that Borodin was vigilant, that C.K.S. would not have the possibility to betray us, etc. I believe that it was eight or ten days later that the tragedy occurred and our comrades expressed optimism because our analysis was so clear that everyone would see it and would be sure to win the party. I answered that the strangulation of the Chinese revolution is a thousand times more important for the masses than our predictions. Our predictions can win some few intellectuals who take an interest in such things, but not the masses. The military victory of Chiang-Kai-Shek will inevitably provoke a depression and this is not conducive to the growth of a revolutionary fraction.

Since 1927 we have had a long series of defeats. We are similar to a group who attempt to climb a mountain and who must suffer again and again a downfall of stone, snow, etc. In Asia and Europe is created a new desperate mood of the masses. They heard something analagous to what we say ten or fifteen years ago from the C.P. and they are pessimistic. That is the general mood of the workers. It is the most general reason. We cannot withdraw from the general historic current -- from the general constellation of the forces. The current is against us, that is clear. I remember the period between 1908 and 1913 in Russia. There was also a reaction. In 1905 we had the workers with us --- in 1908 and even in 1907 began the great reaction.

Everybody invented slogans and methods to win the masses and nobody won them--- they were desperate. In this time the only thing we could do was to educate the cadres and they were melting away. There were a series of splits to the right or to the left or to syndicalism and so on. Lenin remained with a small group, a sect, in Paris, but with confidence that there would be new possibilities of arising. It came in 1913. We had a new tide, but then came the war to interrupt this development. During the war there was a silence as of death among the workers. The Zimmerwald conference was a conference of very confused elements in its majority. In the deep recesses of the masses, in the trenches and so on there was a new mood, but it was so deep and so terrorized that we could not reach it and give it an expression. That is why the movement seemed to itself to be very poor and even this element that met in Zimmerwald, in its majority, moved to the right in the next year, in the next month. I will not liberate them from their personal responsibility, but still the general explanation is that the movement had to swim against the current.

Our situation now is incomparably more difficult than that of any other organization in any other time, because we have the terrible betrayal of the Communist International which arose from the betrayal of the Second International. The degeneration of the Third International developed so quickly and so unexpectedly that the same generation which heard its formation now hears us and they say, "But we have already heard this once!"

Then there is the defeat of the Left Opposition in Russia. The Fourth International is connected genetically to the Left Opposition; the masses call us Trotskyists. "Trotsky wishes to conquer the power, but why did he lose power?" It is an elementary question. We must begin to explain this by the dialectic of history, by the conflict of classes, that even a revolution produces a reaction.

Max Eastman wrote that Trotsky places too much value on doctrine and if he had more common sense he would not have lost power. Nothing in the world is so con-

vincing an success and nothing so repelling as defeat for the large masses.

You have also the degeneration of the Third on the one side and the terrible defeat of the Left Opposition with the extermination of the whole group. These facts are a thousand times more convincing for the working class than our poor paper with even the tremendous circulation of 5000 like the Socialist Appeal.

We are in a small boat in a tremendous current. There are five or ten boats and one goes down and we say that it was due to bad helmsmanship. But that was not the reason — it was because ^{never} the current was too strong. It is the most general explanation and we should forget this explanation in order not to become pessimistic — we, the vanguard of the vanguard. Then this environment creates special groups of elements around our banner. There are courageous elements who do not like to swim with the current — it is their character. Then there are intelligent elements of bad character who were never disciplined, who always looked for a more radical or more independent tendency and found our tendency, but all of them are more or less outsiders from the general current of the workers' movement. Their value inevitably has its negative side. He who swims against the current is not connected with the masses. Also, the social composition of every revolutionary movement in the beginning is not of workers. It is the intellectuals, semi-intellectuals or workers connected with the intellectuals who are dissatisfied with the existing organizations. You find in every country a lot of foreigners who are not so easily involved in the labor movement of the country. A Czech in America or in Mexico would more easily become a member of the Fourth than in Czechoslovakia. The same for a Frenchman in the U.S. The national atmosphere has a tremendous power over individuals.

The Jews in many countries represent the semi-foreigners, not totally assimilated, and they adhere to any new critical revolutionary or semi-revolutionary tendency in politics, in art, literature and so on. A new radical tendency directed against the general current of history in this period crystallizes around the elements more or less separated from the national life of any country and for them it is more difficult to penetrate into the masses. We are all very critical toward the social composition of our organization and we must change, but we must understand that this social composition did not fall from heaven, but was determined by the objective situation and by our historic mission in this period.

It does not signify that we must be satisfied with the situation. Insofar as it concerns France it is a long tradition of the French movement connected with the social composition of the country. Especially in the past the petty bourgeois mentality — individualism on the one side, and on the other an elan, a tremendous capacity for improvising.

If you compare in the classic time of the Second International you will find that the French Socialist Party and the German Social Democratic Party had the same number of representatives in parliament. But if you compare the organizations, you will find it is incomparable. The French could only collect 25,000 francs with the greatest difficulty but in Germany to send half a million was nothing. The Germans had in the trade unions some millions of workers and the French had some millions who did not pay their dues. Engels once wrote a letter in which he characterized the French organization and finished with "And as always, the dues do not arrive."

Our organization suffers from the same illness, the traditional French sickness — This incapacity to organization and at the same time lack of conditions for

improvisation. Even so far as we now had a tide in France, it was connected with the Popular Front. In this situation the defeat of the People's Front was the proof of the correctness of our conceptions just as the extermination of the Chinese workers. But the defeat was a defeat and it is directed against revolutionary tendencies until a new tide in a higher level will appear in the new time. We must wait and prepare -- a new element, a new factor, in this constellation.

We have comrades who came to us, as Haville and others, 15 or 16 or more years ago when they were young boys. Now they are mature people and their whole conscious life they have had only blows, defeats and terrible defeats on an international scale and they are more or less acquainted with this situation. They appreciate very highly the correctness of their conceptions and they can analyze, but they never had the capacity to penetrate, to work with the masses and they have not acquired it. There is a tremendous necessity to look at what the masses are doing. We have such people in France. I know much less about the British situation, but I believe that we have such people there also.

Why have we lost people? After terrible international defeats we had in France a tide on a very primitive and a very low political level under the leadership of the People's Front. The People's Front -- I think this whole period -- is a kind of caricature of our February Revolution. It is shameful that in a country like France, which 150 years ago passed through the greatest bourgeois revolution in the world, that the workers' movement should pass through a caricature of the Russian Revolution.

Comrade Johnson: You would not throw the whole responsibility on the C.P.?

Comrade Crux: It is a tremendous factor in producing the mentality of the masses. The active factor was the degeneration of the C.P.

In 1914 the Bolsheviks were absolutely dominating the workers' movement. It was on the threshold of the war. The most exact statistics show that the Bolsheviks represented not less than three-fourths of the proletarian vanguard. But beginning with the February revolution, the most backward people, peasants, soldiers, even the former Bolshevik workers, were attracted toward this Popular Front current and the Bolshevik Party became isolated and very weak. The general current was on a very low level, but powerful, and moved toward the October revolution. It is a question of tempo. In France, after all the defeats, the People's Front attracted elements that sympathized with us theoretically, but were involved with the movement of the masses and we became for some time more isolated than before. You can combine all these elements. I can even affirm that many (but not all) of our leading comrades, especially in old sections, by a new turn of situation would be rejected by the revolutionary mass movement and new leaders, fresh leadership will arise in the revolutionary current.

In France the regeneration began with the entry into the Socialist Party. The policy of the Socialist Party was not clear, but it won many new members. These new members were accustomed to a large milieu. After the split they became a little discouraged. They were not so steeled. Then they lost their not-so-steeled interest and were regained by the current of the People's Front. It is regrettable, but it is explainable.

In Spain the same reasons played the same role with the supplementary factor of the deplorable conduct of the Min group. He was in Spain as representative of

the Russian Left Opposition and during the first year we did not try to mobilize, to organize our independent elements. We hoped that we would win Min for the correct conception and so on. Publicly the Left Opposition gave him its support. In private correspondence we tried to win him and push him forward, but without success. We lost time. Was it correct? It is difficult to say. If in Spain we had an experienced comrade our situation would be incomparably more favorable, but we did not have one. We put all our hopes on Min and his policy consisted of personal maneuvers in order to avoid responsibility. He played with the revolution. He was sincere, but his whole mentality was that of a Menshevik. It was a tremendous handicap, and to fight against this handicap only with correct formulas falsified by our own representatives in the first period, the Mins, made it very difficult.

Do not forget that we lost the first revolution in 1905. Before our first revolution we had the tradition of high courage, self sacrifice, etc. Then we were pushed back to a position of a miserable minority of thirty or forty men. Then came the war.

Comrade Johnson: How many were there in the Bolshevik Party?

Comrade Crux: In 1910 in the whole country there were a few dozen people. Some were in Siberia. But they were not organized. The people whom Lenin could reach by correspondence or by an agent numbered about 30 or 40 at most. However, the tradition and the ideas among the more advanced workers was a tremendous capital which was used later during the revolution, but practically, at this time we were absolutely isolated.

Yes, history has its own laws which are very powerful -- more powerful than our theoretical conceptions of history. Now you have in Europe a catastrophe -- the decline of Europe, the extermination of countries. It has a tremendous influence on the workers when they observe these movements of the diplomacy, of the armies and so on and on the other side a small group with a small paper which makes explanations. But it is a question of his being mobilized tomorrow and of his children being killed. There is a terrible disproportion between the task and the means.

If the war begins now, and it seems that it will begin, then in the first month we will lose two-thirds of what we now have in France. They will be dispersed. They are young and will be mobilized. Subjectively many will remain true to our movement. Those who will not be arrested and who will remain -- there may be three or five -- I do not know how many, but they will be absolutely isolated.

Only after some months will the criticism and the disgust begin to show on a large scale and everywhere our isolated comrades, in a hospital, in a trench, a woman in a village, will find a changed atmosphere and will say a courageous word. And the same comrade who was unknown in some section of Paris will become a leader of a regiment, of a division, and will feel himself to be a powerful revolutionary leader. This change is in the character of our period.

I do not wish to say that we must reconcile ourselves with the impotence of our French organization. I believe that with the help of the American comrades we can win the PSOP and make a great leap forward. The situation is ripening and it says to us, "You must utilize this opportunity." And if our comrades turn their backs the situation will change. It is absolutely necessary that your American comrades go to Europe again and that they do not simply give

advice, but together with the I.S. decide that our section should enter the PSOP. It has some thousands. From the point of view of a revolution it is not a big difference, but from the point of view of working it is a tremendous difference. With fresh elements we can make a tremendous leap forward.

Now in the United States we have a new character of work and I believe we can be very optimistic without illusions and exaggerations. In the United States we have a larger credit of time. The situation is not so immediate, so acute. That is important.

Then I agree with Comrade Stanley who writes that we can now have very important successes in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. We have a very important movement in Indo-China. I agree absolutely with Comrade Johnson that we can have a very important Negro movement, because these people have not passed through the history of the last two decades so intimately. As a mass they did not know about the Russian revolution and the Third International. They can begin the history as from the beginning. It is absolutely necessary for us to have fresh blood. That is why we have more success among the youth in so far as we are capable of approaching them. In so far as we have been capable of approaching them we have had good results. They are very attentive to a clear and honest revolutionary program.

Great Britain and the IIP? It is also a special task. I followed it a bit more closely when I was in Norway. It seems to me that our comrades who entered the IIP had the same experience with the IIP that our American comrades made with the Socialist Party. But not all our comrades entered the IIP and they developed an opportunistic policy so far as I could observe and that is why their experience in the IIP was not so good. The IIP remained almost as it was before while the Socialist Party is now empty. I do not know how to approach it now. It is now a Glasgow organization. It is a local machine and they have influence in the municipal machine and I have heard that it is very corrupt. It is a separate job of Maxton. Rebellions of the rank and file are familiar things in the IIP. In preparing for a new convention Fenner Brockway becomes a patron of the rebellious section and secures a majority. Then Maxton says he will resign. Then Fenner Brockway says, "No, we will abandon our victory. We can give up our principles, but not our Maxton." I believe that the most important thing is to compromise them -- to put them in the mud -- the Maxtons and the Brockways. We must identify them with class enemies. We must compromise the IIP with tremendous and pitiless attacks on Maxton. He is the sacrificial goat for all the sins of the British movement and especially the IIP. By such concentrated attacks on Maxton, systematic attacks in our press, we can expedite the split in the IIP. At the same time we must point out that if Maxton is the lackey of Chamberlain, then Fenner Brockway is the lackey of Maxton.

Comrade Johnson: What do you think of an independent paper for the work of slashing at Maxton, etc.

Comrade Cruz: It is a practical question. In France, if our section enters the PSOP I believe that the IS should publish the Q.I. for all French speaking countries twice-monthly. It is simply a question of the juridical possibility. I believe that even if we work inside the Labor Party we must have an independent paper, not as opposed to our comrades within, but rather to be outside the control of the IIP.

NOTES ON SHACHTMAN'S SPEECH

by

Albert Goldman.

One of the serious defects of the Shachtman resolution, as I stated in the Internal Bulletin of October 10, 1939, is the difficulty one encounters in ascertaining exactly what fundamental policy the resolution proposes to change and how. In the case of the principle of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union it would appear that the resolution does not propose to abandon it because it states: "From this position.....does not necessarily follow the abandonment of the slogan of the defense of the Soviet Union." It would appear that the resolution simply proposes to revise the slogan but we are given no clue as to how it should be revised. It is obvious that the author of the resolution drew it up hastily and without thinking things through.

In his speech (Internal Bulletin Nov. 14) Shachtman is at least clear in one respect - he advocates in so many words the abandonment of the slogan of unconditional defense. Upon analysis, however, it will be seen that, although the inference is quite clear that Shachtman proposes the abandonment of the principle enunciated in the motion of the majority, that is, the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack, there is room left for quibbling whether he actually means that or not. He nowhere uses the phrase "against imperialist attack", thus giving some of the followers of the minority, who believe in the principle adopted by the majority, a chance to claim that Shachtman's speech is not against that principle.

Why should the slogan of unconditional defense be abandoned? Because, says Shachtman, it means supporting the red army in all its possible counter-revolutionary activities.

We answer: It did not and does not mean anything of the kind but if anyone was or is so foolish as to misinterpret it in that way, the motion passed by the majority should do away completely with the possibility of such a misinterpretation. For it states specifically, "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack".

Why then talk of abandoning a slogan which has been made so clear as to leave no room for misunderstanding, unless one does not believe in defending the Soviet Union against imperialist attack?

We are justified in asking the comrades of the minority: are you or are you not in favor of defending the Soviet Union against imperialist attack? If you are why do you object to the slogan? If not why not say so, as comrade Burnham does in his clear statement on "mixed wars" in his resolution? If the comrades of the minority clear up this point there will be then the possibility either of settling the whole controversy amicably or else go to the membership on a clear-cut issue.

Do not evade the subject by talking about defending the red army if it will be used against a revolutionary uprising in India. If you want to, we shall join you in a resolution condemning the red army if it will be used to crush the Indian revolution. What we want to know, for the sake of an intelligent compromise or an intelligent discussion, is: why do you object to the slogan of the majority as formulated at the last plenum?

That is the real crux of the whole controversy. Personally I believe that every other disagreement can be easily compromised without compromised

of principle but there can be no compromise on defending the Soviet Union against imperialist attack. It is absolutely necessary for the minority to say clearly what its position is on that question.

And to make sure that there can be no possible evasion and misunderstanding it is necessary to put the question even more clearly. What is the position of the minority on the question of defending the Soviet Union in case Stalin allies himself with one of the imperialist camps in this war?

It is clear from Shachtman's whole argument to the effect that the imperialist character of the war should determine all our policies, that he has gone over completely to Burnham's position of no defense of the Soviet Union in case of a "mixed war". Shachtman, however, does not say so explicitly and he owes a duty to the membership to make another speech and further clarify his position. It is absolute folly to argue whether Shachtman does or does not mean to accept Burnham's position on that question when a simple statement can clear that up.

Is it not as clear as daylight that Shachtman has gone over to Burnham's position on "mixed wars"? Otherwise why the insistence that the sole criterion which should guide us in determining our attitude to the Soviet Union is the imperialist character of the war. Otherwise why give the analogy of Lenin's attitude on Serbia? Otherwise why ignore, what to us is a very important additional factor, namely, the nature of the Soviet Union?

But still there are comrades with whom I have discussed the matter who do not agree that Shachtman means that and it is essential that he make another speech clarifying his first one just as his first speech somewhat clarified his resolution. This time I hope in such a way as to leave nothing of vital importance left to inference.

In discussing the question of unconditional defense one can not resist the temptation to comment on what is a minor point in Shachtman's speech but which comrades have repeated with a naivete which is really surprising.

"How there is not a soul in our party", says Shachtman (this time I am sure without intending to be humorous) "who stands for the denationalization of property in the Soviet Union — not Burnham, not Cannon, not Shachtman, not Johnson. The only question that can possibly be in dispute is — How do we defend the nationalized property?" (page 7).

By this kind of reasoning does Shachtman want to reassure himself and his followers that the question of defense of the nationalized property is not in dispute and only, perhaps, the question of the invasion of Poland.

Now we must admit that it is absolutely true that no one, outside of those who stand for the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, wants to denationalize property there. And I am positive that no one has accused the minority of wanting to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union. This simply proves that all of us want socialism in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, a very praiseworthy idea to be sure, but absolutely irrelevant.

It is exactly the question — How — that is all important. Mayor Hoan, Norman Thomas, Louis Waldman — all want socialism. But these nice people frown on the

uncultured method of revolution to achieve it. They want to achieve it in their own civilized manner. The difference between us and the reformists on the question of socialism is found in the answer to the question -- How?

If, while Stalin is in a military alliance with one of the imperialist camps during a war, some members of the Fourth International would adopt a defensist policy, in order to prevent the denationalization of property, and others would adopt a defeatist policy to achieve the same objective, there would ensue a very serious struggle between these two groups, with the danger of a split staring them in the face. At times the answer to the question - How - can and does lead to very serious results.

One of the criticisms levelled at Shachtman's resolution is that it fails to characterize the Soviet Union as a workers' state, a position adopted by two conventions of our party and not subject to change except by a duly elected convention. When the resolution asserts that it does not want to raise "at this time the problem of the class nature of the Soviet state", there is, to say the least, a strong suggestion that our position on that question is not quite what it should be.

Shachtman replies: it is not important to characterize the Soviet Union as a workers' state in a resolution dealing with the invasion of Poland, because this does not guarantee a correct attitude on the latter question.

True it is that the mere assertion that the Soviet Union is a workers' state does not solve every concrete problem facing us. But, pray, does that assertion of our party's position hinder the adoption of a correct policy on a particular question? Does it necessarily lead to an incorrect attitude? Why then, if you believe in the present party policy, should you object to including a statement of that nature in a resolution which directly involves the Soviet Union? Especially at a time when all the democrats are howling about the identity of the Soviet Union with Hitler Germany?

I can understand those comrades who contend that the Soviet Union is not a workers' state in any sense of the term raising an objection to the inclusion of such a statement in a resolution dealing with the Soviet Union. But why comrades who contend that they still believe in that principle should raise the same objection is beyond me. I could understand them if they would do so on the ground that they want to leave it out as a concession to anti-workers'-state adherents or on the ground that, like Burnham, they intend to determine their attitude to the Soviet Union solely on the principle that this is an imperialist war.

It is only fair to ask the leading comrades of the minority to clarify their position so that the membership understands the issues clearly without resorting to inferences. Those comrades of the minority who, unlike Burnham, have not yet thought out their position, are obviously thinking aloud and it is necessary to keep asking them questions in order to have their position clarified.

To the comrades of the majority it is exceedingly important to include a characterization of the Soviet Union as a workers' state in any resolution dealing with the Russian question. Not only because it represents the party policy and because in view of the general pressure of the democrats, it is necessary to be absolutely clear on that question, but because it is our guiding line in dealing with all questions relative to the Soviet Union and to Stalin's policies.

We may be wrong in the application of this fundamental principle to a particular question, just as a Marxist may be wrong in his interpretation of a particular event. But a Marxist insists on dealing with events from the point of view of the fundamentals of Marxism.

Even in our criticism of the Stalinist bureaucracy we differentiate ourselves from the democrats of all types. Roosevelt, Norman Thomas and others criticized the Polish invasion but our criticism can come only from a totally different viewpoint. A revolutionary worker criticising a company union has a different attitude from that which he assumes when criticising reactionary leaders of an independent workers' union, even though the leaders of the latter union may do things far worse than the leaders of the company union. All the crimes committed by the Stalinists in the leadership of some of the unions of the C.I.O. could not possibly lead us to drop the principle of unconditional support of the trade unions against the bosses, applying that principle also to those unions controlled by all the labor fakers including the Stalinists.

He who accepts the Soviet Union as a workers' state and he who rejects that idea can criticize Stalin's invasion of Poland but their criticism has a different character. The former criticizes the invasion because under the particular circumstances it creates tremendous confusion in the ranks of the masses and thus weakens the Soviet Union; the latter because it is an act of "imperialism". The former's criticism makes clear that the Soviet Union does not cease to be a workers' state by virtue of the invasion and that it is necessary to defend it against imperialist attack in spite of the invasion; the latter's criticism, basing itself on the "imperialist" nature of the invasion, tends to place the Soviet Union in the same category as Hitler Germany and thus makes more difficult the defense of the Soviet Union. The latter in fact, on the basis of the invasion, advocates the abandoning of the slogan of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack.

We attacked the resolution on the ground that it uses the term "imperialist" in characterizing Stalin's crimes. We said that Marxists use the term imperialism in the same way that Lenin used it when he did not modify it by the terms "Roman" or "colonial", that is, to designate a stage of capitalism. To use it in a resolution, as Shachtman does, would indicate that we have, without saying so, changed our conception on the nature of the Soviet Union.

Shachtman's reply: I did not mean to use the term imperialism in the strict Marxist sense but in the more general sense. Good! If you will amend the resolution so that it is clear from the resolution itself that you do not confuse the "imperialism" of Stalin with the imperialism of Germany, Great Britain etc. there will be an objection but no serious struggle against that part of the resolution. It is obvious of course that a resolution should be so drawn as not to leave room for very serious misinterpretations and one cannot expect that everyone who reads the resolution will also read the speech explaining it.

But after he gets through explaining that he did not use the term imperialist in the sense in which Marxists use it, Shachtman proceeds to justify the use of the term in the resolution without any explanation by a most curious analogy. He exultingly refers to the use of the term Bonapartism by Trotsky as justification for the use of the term imperialist by Shachtman. It is true that when Trotsky used the term Bonapartist to refer to the Soviet bureaucracy there were objections by carping critics that the term was used by Marx to denote some other

social phenomenon. There is however, one little difference between the use of Bonapartism by Trotsky and imperialism by Shachtman. No one in his right senses could possibly have inferred from the use of the word Bonapartism by Trotsky that the latter changed his views on the nature of the Soviet Union. When Shachtman uses the term imperialist in his resolution, without any explanation, no one in his right senses would fail to raise the question whether that did not mean a change in our views of the nature of the Soviet Union.

That, even with an explanation, the use of the term imperialist is very dangerous is evidenced by the fact that Shachtman is willing to determine his attitude on the defense of the Soviet Union by the imperialist nature of the war. "Imperialist" in what sense? In the general sense which would include all forms of imperialism beginning with Cain who killed his brother Abel or in the Marxist sense? If in the latter sense then we can have a different attitude to the Soviet Union because it is not a capitalist state. If any one wants to determine his attitude to the Soviet Union by using the term imperialist in its widest connotation then he is not using it in the Marxist sense and is adopting policies on the basis of general humanitarian and not of Marxist principles.

Shachtman is especially resentful when the statement is made that the desire of the minority to change a fundamental policy of the party is based on the Hitler-Stalin pact and that this is a sort of left-handed support to the idea of an alliance between the Soviet Union and the "democratic" imperialists.

After laboring for several pages to show that the comrades of the majority are slanderers when they make such a statement, Shachtman proceeds to consume several more pages to show why the Hitler-Stalin pact together with the invasion of Poland by Stalin should lead one to abandon the slogan of unconditional defense. In doing so he entertains us with some of the most fanciful analogies produced in this or any other discussion.

Reduced to the simplest terms our contention is as follows:

- a) The slogan of the defense of the Soviet Union is based on our concept of the Soviet Union as a workers' state.
- b) We designate the Soviet Union as a workers' state because of the property relations existing therein.
- c) They who want to abandon the slogan of defense of the Soviet Union because of the Hitler-Stalin pact have the burden of showing either that the pact has caused a change in the property relations or that it is evidence of such a change in the property relations as to alter the nature of the Soviet Union.

Here Shachtman tries some fine juggling. Somehow or other he wants us to see a distinction between the Stalin-Hitler pact considered abstractly and the same pact considered concretely. I dealt with this question in the Internal Bulletin of October 10th.

Consider it any way you please - abstractly or concretely - if you want us to change a fundamental policy on the basis of the pact you are under the obligation of showing how the pact affected property relations since our defense of the Soviet Union is based on those relations.

Let us consider only the first two of Shachtman's analogies by which he attempts to prove that the Hitler-Stalin pact is of such a nature as to justify the abandonment of the slogan of unconditional defense. Lenin's "prognosis about the democratic dictatorship", says Shachtman, "did not and could not conform with the concrete reality. He had no hesitation in altering his political conclusions to suit that reality". So what? It only proves that Lenin was wrong. But were we wrong about the Hitler-Stalin pact? Did we not assert, on frequent occasions, that such a pact was very probable? The Stalinists and democrats were taken by surprise but we were not. And even had we not foreseen the pact there would still be the necessity of proving that in some way or other the pact was an indication of a change or it itself caused a change in the property relations existing in the Soviet Union.

Another analogy. Lenin foresaw the degeneration of the Second International. But it was only after August 4, that he proposed to build the Third International. That is simply saying that Lenin foresaw the death of the Second International, fought against the factors tending to cause its death and only after it died, did he decide to come out for a new International. We also see the possibility of the death of the Soviet Union, that is, of the destruction of nationalized property at the hands of Stalin. We fight to prevent Stalin from destroying nationalized property. When and if the time comes when, in spite of our efforts, nationalized property will be destroyed then we shall change our attitude to the Soviet Union.

All of his other analogies limp just as badly. They would prove something provided we had postulated our defense of the Soviet Union not upon the existence of nationalized property but upon the character of Stalin's acts. Had we done that we might have decided to stop defending the Soviet Union long before Stalin turned to Hitler for aid, friendship and comfort. In our attitude of defending the Soviet Union against imperialist attack Stalin's crimes are important only in so far as they indicate or are the cause of a change in the economic structure of the country.
