

The New _____
INTERNATIONAL

APRIL • 1945

NOTES OF THE MONTH

THE MURRAY-GREEN-JOHNSTON CHARTER

**FIVE YEARS OF THE
WORKERS PARTY**

By Max Shachtman

Discussion on the Russian Question

By the International Communists of Germany

Negroes In Organized Labor

By David Coolidge

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Editor: MAX SHACHTMAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Notes of the Month:

THE MURRAY-GREEN-JOHNSTON CHARTER	67
--	----

Articles:

FIVE YEARS OF THE WORKERS PARTY By Max Shachtman	73
NEGROES IN ORGANIZED LABOR By David Coolidge	90

For Discussion:

THE HIGHER SCHOOL OF POLEMICS—II By the International Communists of Germany....	82
--	----

Archives:

TROTSKY ON <i>THE IRON HEEL</i>	95
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THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

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VOLUME XI

APRIL, 1945

NUMBER 3

NOTES OF THE MONTH

The Murray-Green-Johnston Charter

The capitalist class in the United States knows that the years ahead are the "years of decision." It has imperialist rivals, but its greatest problem is the national economy and it knows that its most dangerous enemy is the American working class. The American capitalist class knows that it must solve the contradiction between the productive power of American capital and the consumption of the masses in the social framework within which capital moves and must move. It knows that it will solve this problem or face social revolution. In official publications and in speeches and writings of all kinds, the American bourgeoisie has shown that it fully understands what is hidden behind the term—reconversion. It is not a question of reconverting to peacetime production. That is no serious problem. It is a question of reconverting to a peacetime production *which will be entirely different from the peacetime production of 1929-1939*. As the magazine *Time* put it a year ago. "In 1929 the industrial machine gave the world a brief vision of the abundance that modern technological organization has in store. In 1943 the machine, many times more powerful, gave the world an exciting—but frightening—vision of the possibilities in the post-war peace."

Admirable phrasing! The workers are the ones who are excited—excited at the prospect of security and the material possibilities for a full humane way of life. The capitalists are the ones who are frightened—frightened at this gigantic productive system which they could not control when it was much smaller, far less now. But they are not frightened at the possession of enormous material wealth or the fact that they may not be able to use all of it. They can let half of it lie idle and still make profit. What they are frightened at is the expected reaction of the workers if there is a return to the conditions preceding World War II. That is the problem and there is no other problem.

But there are others also who are terrified. These are the labor leaders. They fear the long suppressed resentment of the workers which during the past year has given repeated manifestations of its depth and its strength. They fear that it may burst out in explosions of growing ferocity against capital and all its works. To them a mass general strike of American workers, not only in San Francisco alone, but in a score of great cities, would be a disaster unparalleled. Having no conception whatever of a workers' government, of a mass political party of labor with a program aimed at making the wealth of the nation serve the great masses of the people, they

naturally view any departure from the well-worn grooves of class collaboration as a step on the road to labor's self-destruction.

But they are terrified by another possibility. If they fear an eruption of labor they know that big capital will miss no opportunity of striking mercilessly at organized labor, and particularly at an upsurging labor movement. They remember the terrible blows labor received at the end of the last war. They know that all the difficulties, contradictions, conflicts, which produced the anti-labor assault of 1918-1921 exist today in intensified form. They therefore wish to suppress the militancy of labor and appease the militancy of capital.

It is out of this particular stage of the class struggle between capital and labor that appears this Murray-Green-Johnston Charter.

"Today We Are United"

The circumstances surrounding the charter are imposing and will no doubt impress the unthinking. The signatories are three highly-placed figures. The President of the C.I.O. The President of the A.F.L. The President of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. Green, Murray and Eric Johnston, these presidential magnates, met together in Washington on March 28 and signed this charter embodying the principles of full employment, a rising standard of living, respect for private property, etc. on the basis of national unity between capital and labor.

"Today we are united in national defense. Tomorrow we must be united equally in the national interest."

One can hardly believe one's eyes. "Today we are united in national defense." Who constituted this "we" who were united, today, March 28, 1945, in national defense? Perhaps these three signers of the charter were too busy to read the papers in the period immediately preceding the publication of their document. The miners who had rocked the country in four gigantic strikes in 1943 were once more taking a strike vote over their 1945 contract. Between John L. Lewis and the coal operators in the arbitration room of their hotel was complete unity on national defense and equally complete disunity over the wages of the miners. But the miners are members neither of the C.I.O. nor the A.F.L., and John L. Lewis has not signed the charter. R. J. Thomas of the U.A.W. endorses the charter. But the Executive Board of the U.A.W., the largest union in the world, was demanding that its members on the War Labor Board retire from that body. In their struggles with their employers during the war period, the W.L.B. had delayed, hampered, badgered and cheated them on behalf of capital. Their employers had avoided all serious redress of their grievances, throwing every possible case in the lap of the W.L.B., knowing that it would be kept warm there for a long time. These same employers were goading and harassing the workers, hiding behind the W.L.B. and the national defense in order to dismiss militants, and weaken the union in the expected struggles of the post-war

period. A series of explosive strikes in Detroit in particular had brought forth the most venomous charges and counter-charges. The workers claimed that the employers were out to break the unions. The automobile manufacturers claimed that the workers were aiming at the usurpation of the powers of management. The President of the Textile Workers on behalf of his union repudiated the no-strike pledge. A fraudulent referendum had been needed to give the official quietus to the powerful movement among the rank and file of the U.A.W. for repudiation of this same pledge. These are the symptoms of the temper of the American workers, their exasperation at all they have had to endure from the capitalists under cover of Roosevelt's unity for the national defense. Were these mere passing phases? No. The President of the United States, the head of the Army and the head of the Navy have given their solemn opinion and word that the future progress of the war demanded a National Service Act. Congress, alarmed at the prospect of taking this responsibility before the people, refused to pass any such act. This is the time when Murray, Green and Johnston declare that "Today we are united in national defense."

No doubt the three Presidents were very much united in their endorsement of the plan and in the glittering generalities which they tossed out to the reporters at their press conference. But the workers and the capitalist class are not united. The cracks in the structure are wide open. Tomorrow we shall see exactly to what stage of decomposition this national unity has declined. Don't our three signers know all this? Of course they do. None better. *But that is precisely why the charter was promulgated and signed.* Not because there is so much unity but because there is so much disunity, because the class struggle is sharpening and moving towards dreaded clashes—that is why this charter is so hastily dished out and set in motion. It is to disarm the workers, to deflect their wrath, to pour the cold water of class peace and class collaboration upon the fires of class conflict. The charter therefore is based on a lie and a conscious, a deliberate, and for its signers, a very necessary lie. Roosevelt endorsed it enthusiastically. So did Dewey. So did the Wall Street Journal. So did the President of General Electric. All have agreed on the wonderful unity which exists at the present time. All conspired to tell the workers that the classes were united as never before and that this unity must be continued. They endorsed the charter because in every way this charter serves capitalism at the present moment in the offensive it must prepare against the needs and aspirations of the workers.

The first necessity of the capitalist class at the present time is to lull the workers into a sense of security, to give them the illusion that the productive power which has achieved such striking results for war, will do the same for peace. Roosevelt promised 60 million jobs. This is a promise on the same order as Roosevelt's promise in 1940, "again and again" that no American boy would be sent to fight in any foreign war. There is no way for American capitalism to give and maintain 60 million jobs in time of peace at decent wages. *Capitalism cannot do it.* And nobody knows that better than Roosevelt and the capitalists themselves.

The great lie of capitalism and its apologists during the past period was that it was struggling mightily for peace. Meanwhile, as we know, it prepared with extreme thoroughness for war. The present lie is that it is preparing for a great epoch of post-war prosperity. In reality it is preparing for the first necessity of the post-war period—a merciless offensive against the working-class. This is not a matter of choice

or evil intentions. Capital has to do it. Any doubts, hesitation, or wavering on this in the minds of the workers is just so much ammunition to the enemy.

What Is to Be Done?

Since 1939 air-craft plant has expanded forty times.

Aluminum capacity has increased seven times.

Steel capacity for the ten years, 1929-1939, had operated at half capacity or less. Since 1939 it has increased by 15 per cent.

Machine tools have been produced to the extent of three times the volume of the years 1929-1939.

Shipyards have been expanded to produce at eighty times the pre-war rate.

Between 1939 and 1943 the United States boosted its production by 100 per cent.

Every adult and most children now know what the American productive system can do. The workers are excited at the prospect. And the capitalists are not merely frightened, they are terrified. Economists, industrialists, politicians, all say: We must solve this problem or the America we have known goes under, either from social revolution by the workers or by the counter-revolution of Fascism.

Obviously here what the workers need above all from their leaders is a clear statement of the problem and leadership for struggle. Instead, Murray and Green (we leave aside Johnston for the moment) declare to the American workers through this charter:

"We in management and labor firmly believe that the end of this war will bring the unfolding of a new era based upon a vastly expanding economy and unlimited opportunities for every American."

Fine words indeed! But just words! What ground have Murray and Green for this belief? What reasons can they give to American workers for thinking that capitalism will be able to do in 1946 or 1949 what it so conspicuously failed to do in 1929-1939? Have they solved the problem of capitalist accumulation—increasing wealth and increasing misery? If they have, why have they kept it a secret? Why didn't they tell the secret to their good friend, Henry Wallace, before he spoke to the Senate Committee? We ask them what the Senate Committee asked Wallace: What do you propose? They propose nothing. Not only do they propose nothing. These two men, Murray and Green, more than any others should know not only in theory but in life, the facts put forward by the government economists, testifying to capitalist bankruptcy. But, themselves terrified at the fearful prospect opening up before American society, all that they can do is to join with the capitalists in creating the illusion of present unity and future prosperity. Having no vision whatever of any other society except capitalism they are thereby compelled at all critical moments to seek an alliance with capital for the preservation of the system against the assault of the workers.

After the entirely false statement about the national unity and the belief that we are now on the eve of an era of prosperity, Section 1 of the charter states the first principle:

Increased prosperity for all involves the highest degree of production and employment at wages assuring a steadily advancing standard of living. Improved productive efficiency and technological advancement must, therefore, be constantly encouraged.

What is this? Government economists say repeatedly of American capitalism that the "highest degree of production" and improved efficiency and technology are the cause of low wages and unemployment. Here, also, they have discovered

nothing new. The Marxian analysis of capitalist production states that "the possibility of a relative surplus of laboring people develops to the extent that capitalist production advances, not because the productive power of social labor decreases, but because it increases." The emphasis is Marx's own. That has been the American experience. The greatest crisis came in 1929, because of the increase in the productive power. It is the increase in that power since 1929 which heralds, sooner or later, a still more devastating crisis. Capitalists know this. But they do not want the workers to think in those terms. They want them for the time being to have faith in capital, to believe that capital can not only use the present productive power and technological advances, but can continue to increase them and still give high wages and full employment. It is to this falsehood that Murray and Green give their authority and prestige. And they have to, because they have no new social organization in mind which will turn the power of science and technology to the service of society instead of the profits of capital.

The Rights of Private Property

The capitalist class knows that the American workers as a whole have been permeated with the capitalist dogma of the sacred rights of capitalist property. But the capitalist class knows that this ancient fetish is being steadily undermined.

Less than two years ago the C.I.O. published a program demanding state ownership of the key industries of the country and government planning of the economy. (Murray presumably knows of this document). The U.M.W. has demanded public ownership of the mines. All over the world today this question of the rights of private ownership of the means of production and the necessity of state or public control is being passionately discussed. America is no exception. While the American workers are more backward in this respect than for instance the European workers, the problem is posed here. In a period of acute class struggle and mass action by the working class, the demand for government ownership can easily assume an urgent and immediate significance. Capitalism therefore needs moral re-enforcement for the sanctity of private property among the workers. Sure as day Section 2 of the charter tells us:

"The rights of private property and free choice of action, under a system of private competitive capitalism must continue to be the foundation of our nation's peaceful and prosperous expanding economy."

The rights of private property! So Green and Murray are leaders of some thirteen million American workers, in order to defend capitalist private property? What property is owned by the vast majority of American workers? If Murray and Green were to defend the little property that remains to the struggling farmers, that would make some sense, perhaps. But the chief economic fact about the workers is their "absence of property."

Socialism proposes to increase the private personal property of the workers and the great masses of the people—their property in housing facilities, in clothes, in automobiles, in all the necessities of civilized life. But the indisputable foundation of this increase in the private personal property of the great masses of the people is the destruction of the private ownership of the social property of the nation—land, mines, factories, capital.

Revolutionary socialism proposes to organized labor to mobilize the great propertyless majority of the population behind it for the purpose of planning the economy for abun-

dant peace-time production. That is the reconversion that the people are groping for. That is the kind they want. That is the kind they will ultimately create, charter or no charter.

Revolutionary socialism seeks to educate them, on the basis of their own experience, to the necessity of building a mass proletarian party to form a workers' government which alone can carry out such a program. All this however, involves a hostile attitude to capitalist ownership of property in the means of production. Murray and Green, however, knowing that a critical attitude towards private property in the means of production is one of the harbingers of revolutionary action, have only one way out. They join the capitalists and try to strengthen the very prejudices which the workers are beginning to cast aside.

Closely allied with the right of private property is the right of the capitalist to use his property as he pleases. This the charter calls freedom of action. What do Murray and Green mean by "free choice of action"? Wasn't it free choice of action which led to the ruinous crisis of 1929? When capital needed to produce for its war, didn't it abandon free choice of action and plan its production of planes, tanks and guns? Didn't Murray and Green agree to this? Didn't capital plan in particular to discipline the workers, to limit their wages, to prevent them striking, to dole out their rations? Didn't Murray and Green agree to all of this? Didn't they stew and sweat and run themselves ragged to assist capital in all these plans? But now it is a question of planning for the workers, for security, for a rising standard of living. Capital cannot do this, even if it wanted to. The days of guaranteed war profits are growing shorter. In the period ahead capital wants its freedom of action for profit-making, for destruction of rivals, for lowering wages, for pursuing profit by abandoning one sphere of production and taking up another, thereby throwing tens of thousands out of work at a stroke of the pen. Capital wants its monopolistic freedom of action to expand or restrict production in its pursuit of profits. Above all, it wants to impress the workers with the idea that if things go wrong, the blame must rest on those who restrict their capitalistic freedom of action. By subscribing to this clause Murray and Green serve nothing else but the interests of capital in the face of the growing consciousness among the workers that capital must somehow be disciplined to serve the interests of the people.

Back to Andrew Jackson or Forward to Socialism?

American capital is aware that its system is in danger. It knows that the American working class, whatever subordination it shows to private property, has hopes and expectations and a will to struggle which must in time tear down the dogma of private property. The capitalist class therefore adds a new tune to its basic repertory. Day in and day out, it strives to popularize the notion that freedom and democracy are inseparable from free competition and capitalist freedom of action in production. It points to Russia and sometimes to Fascist Germany as well, and tells the workers that planned production by the state leads inevitably to bureaucratic tyranny and state-domination of individual rights. The capitalist apologists here are playing upon the workers' desire to maintain and extend their freedom of assembly, their freedom from G.P.U.'s Gestapos, and an all-powerful F.B.I. The capitalist class in publications, press, films, and radio, builds up a sentiment of hostility to the growing interference of the state in all aspects of public and private life. It uses the bureaucratic state-machinery to get subsidies and economic

privileges for itself. It makes full use of the W.L.B. in its conflicts with the workers over wages and production conditions. But at the same time it uses the wrath and bitterness of the people as a basis on which to build a case for its own capitalistic freedom of action. The workers meanwhile turn increasingly to government to help them against capitalist chaos and capitalist oppression. Yet the government is a capitalist government. Though it gives concessions here and there to the workers, it must on the whole serve capital against labor. The result is confusion and a feeling of desperation. Not the capitulatory self-pitying desperation of a demoralized individual but the growing conviction that labor must be a more powerful force in government. It is from this soil that the P.A.C. gained strength.

This instinctive movement of labor is correct, highly progressive, and must and will be carried to its logical conclusion. Labor is correct because the growing influence and expansion of the state is a part of the inescapable, the inevitable movement of modern society. The most distinctive feature of modern society is the socialization of labor. Gigantic concentrations of men and capital in such productive units as Ford's Willow Run, the inter-relations between the different spheres of production, such as coal, oil; manufacture, transport, distribution, are now so interlocked and complicated, that they imperatively need some central governing body. Who will perform this duty? The capitalists naturally want to. But their primary need is to suppress the working class. This becomes increasingly difficult owing to the power which the workers gain from the socialization of production. Competition between capitalists and workers, competition between capitalists and capitalists, keep society in a state of constant turmoil. The state is compelled to intervene. A capitalist state must intervene on the side of the capitalists, brutally in the Fascist state, or with promises of "justice" to the workers, as the Roosevelt government. But whether Fascist or democratic, the movement towards the multiplication of government bureaucracy grows.

The Roosevelt government has created the W.P.A., the N.Y.A., the Office for Emergency Management, the Security Exchange Commission, the Board of War Communications, the National War Labor Board, the Office of Civilian Defense, the War Manpower Commission, the Office of Defense Transportation, the O.P.A., the Office of Economic Stabilization, the War Production Board, the F.E.P.C. . . . Altogether some 200 commissions, boards, offices of administration and organization have been introduced. To call this mere government interference as if these things could have been avoided has no other purpose than to deceive and confuse the workers. *They are the inevitable concomitant of monopoly capital based on the socialization of labor.* They will not decrease or be abandoned after the war. That is an illusion. They may have different names or different forms. But their content will remain. Roosevelt tried hard to get an authority more important than all these. Not satisfied with control of the workers which he had through the War Manpower Commission and the War Labor Board, he sought a National Service Act which would legally give the government final and complete power over the workers.

The old days of "freedom" are gone, never to return. The modern problem is: what sort of government will control society. Either the capitalist governments will continue to usurp more and more functions hitherto carried out by private individuals or groups in private relations, or a Workers Government will organize society on new foundations. On new

foundations because the fundamental reason for the growth of bureaucracy is the class conflict between capitalists and workers. First the state has to act as pretended mediator between the contending classes, (while in reality serving the interests of capitalism). Secondly, the humiliation, degradation and suppression of the workers in a capitalist society, even the most advanced, withdraws from them all possibility of the highest democracy—administering their own affairs. A new society, release of the powers of production, elevation of workers to the status of truly socially developed beings, would strike a death blow at all bureaucracy. The majority of the functions now being performed in Washington and in the various federal and state offices all over the country would be easily and joyfully performed by committees of the workers themselves. That is the choice. Capitalist society and an increase of bureaucracy. Workers' power and a workers' government with an inevitable transference of authority and function from officials to the people. The omnipotent state in Russia is proof not of the bankruptcy of the socialist society but is proof of class differentiation and the degradation of the masses of the people. The freedom of the modern age is freedom from capitalist chaos, capitalist crisis, capitalist war, capitalist degradation, capitalist anarchy in production—in other words, freedom from capitalism. Free society from capitalism and the powers of modern production would create not four but 444 freedoms, new and old, not the least of which will be freedom from bureaucracy.

The workers, anxious about the freedoms that they have, anxious, excited and eager about still greater freedoms which the productive power promises, need an incessant, varied and bold education as to what alone constitutes freedom in the modern world. Not to grumble against government interference but to take over the government. But Green and Murray have no use for the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels. They abhor the very thought of workers' power. So what do they give us instead?

"Free competition and free men are the strength of our free society."

Was ever such downright reactionary stupidity? They turn their backs to the whole movement of modern society and call for the freedom and democracy of Andrew Jackson and Daniel Webster. They turn the minds of the workers from moving forward to socialism back to an age which is dead and can never come again. By so doing they will not bring back the days that are past. All they will do is to weaken the workers before the terrific onslaught which modern capital is preparing. Modern big capital does not want to go back to the days of individual free competition. Modern big capital knows the realities of modern society. Modern big capital is now studying ways and means to defend itself, not with utopian nostalgia, but with all the forces of modern organization, means of communication and propaganda. It is preparing to enforce upon society the political conditions necessary for the preservation of capital. Even while capital rails against government interference, it takes care to put its Stettiniuses, its Rockefellers, its Claytons, its Joneses, its Averill Harrimans into all the organs of government. It fights on all fronts. And meanwhile it gets Murray and Green to tell the workers in Section 3:

"The inherent right and responsibility of management to direct the operations of an enterprise shall be recognized and preserved. So that enterprise may develop and expand and earn a reasonable profit, management must be free as well

from unnecessary governmental interference or burdensome restrictions."

We hope that by now any worker who has been misguided into looking at this charter sympathetically will recognize that it is directed against labor. And not against labor in general, but specifically against the recognition by labor that capitalism is a doomed society and that inside it have matured the premises for socialism. That is the fundamental fact of American society today. Murray and Green will not accept it, will not recognize the necessity for labor's power in a workers' government and therefore have to join the enemies of labor in closing the eyes which are being opened.

Murray and Green Join the Imperialists

In politics who says A, usually says B. Terrified at the impending class struggles, renouncing socialism, Green and Murray not only are driven to aid capital in its attempt to bluff and bewilder the working class. They are compelled to associate themselves with the most reactionary plans of these capitalists for the subjugation of the world to American capital.

American capitalism knows that it is absolutely impossible to raise wages to a degree which will guarantee security, or to create production which will guarantee employment. More and more therefore it is openly turning to the idea of a vast post-war foreign trade. The economic follies inherent in such proposals we cannot go into here. But this much is certain. Behind these innocent words, "foreign trade," lie an imperialist program whose reality will mean domination of foreign peoples on a scale undreamed of in previous American history. A powerful section of the capitalist class wants its "freedom of action" to exploit the world without any assistance from rival imperialisms. American capital proposes to dominate not only China but Western Europe. If it has its way, only political régimes satisfactory to American capital will be allowed to exist. American capital, going abroad, will have to be guaranteed, and only governments can do this today. Following or preceding American capital will go American arms backing up reactionary régimes; American political influence and prestige, disguising itself as "relief" and "economic rehabilitation," proposes to place a stranglehold on all areas where the necessary profits can be garnered. These are the realities behind the growing volume of emphasis on foreign trade. The political basis for it was laid at Yalta, where Stalin received Roosevelt's blessing as guardian of Eastern Europe and in turn gave Roosevelt carte blanche in Western Europe. The concrete imperialist division of Asia will be decided by the course of the war against Japan. Repression against the aspirations of the European and colonial peoples, struggle and ultimately war to the knife between imperialist rivals, those are the conditions and consequences of these foreign trade revivalist hallelujahs. The American workers need to be warned against it. It carries dangers not only for foreign workers and suppressed nationalities: It bears not only the seeds of war. It will react drastically upon the economic and social system of America itself.

The American capitalists need to have these plans made palatable at home and abroad. It is the only serious plan they have hitherto advanced for the post-war period. All the rest is talk or repetitions of WPA, PWA, etc. And Green and Murray faithfully support this imperialist propaganda, aimed at the American workers.

Says Section 6 of the charter: "An expanding economy at home will be stimulated by a vastly increased foreign trade. Arrangements must therefore be perfected to afford the dev-

astated or undeveloped nations reasonable assistance to encourage the rebuilding and development of sound economic systems. International trade cannot expand through subsidized competition among the nations for diminishing markets, but can be achieved only through expanding world markets and the elimination of any arbitrary and unreasonable practices."

Previously they merely supported Roosevelt politically. Now they have allied themselves with industry in its determination to help solve the home problem by imperialist ruthlessness abroad.

The Workers Get Nothing

And what have Murray and Green got in return? They have got a promise from capital to observe collective bargaining agreements and a promise of social security.

Did ever responsible leaders sell out so much for so little?

By their endorsement of this document and by their plans for committees to implement it they have fortified capitalism in the mind of every worker who listens to them. Do they think, are they stupid enough to think, that they have fortified in capitalists a love of collective bargaining and faith in the sanctity of agreements with workers? Doesn't Murray above all people know that despite the NRA and Roosevelt's legislation, the CIO was born in struggle and in blood? Does he think that among all those capitalists who so joyfully welcomed the agreement, does he think there is one who would not break a contract or smash down a union of the workers were these not ready to protect themselves? Murray knows this as well as anyone else. But on Murray's part this charter is an attempt, a desperate self-deceiving attempt, to stave off the irrepressible conflict. The last part of Section 4 reads as follows:

"Through the acceptance of collective bargaining agreements, differences between management and labor can be disposed of between the parties through peaceful means, thereby discouraging avoidable strife through strikes and lockouts."

It is the no-strike pledge in a different form. If we can sum up this document in a phrase we would say that it is an embodiment of one principle and one principle only: In the coming years the workers must trust capital. This is the same Murray who at the beginning of 1944 warned the workers that the years ahead were "the years of decision" in which great steps would be taken which would decide the fate of the United States for centuries to come. And now that the time approaches he tells the workers: Have faith in capital; have faith in its illusory promises of prosperity, support its reactionary concept of property; defend its catastrophic freedom of action, obediently turn your thoughts back to the days of free competition, join up with it in its gangster plans for world plunder; in return you will get its promises to observe the rights of collective bargaining. R. J. Thomas is to sit on the committee and of course the charter has been cleared with Sidney Hillman, who will also sit on the committee as one of labor's representatives. The top leadership of the CIO, forgetting or ignoring its traditions, perhaps because it remembers them too well, has shown its bankruptcy as the leadership of labor in the great struggles against capital which lie ahead of us.

Coal Dealers and Toy Manufacturers

We have no space to deal with the peripatetic Mr. Johnston, who once more placed himself in the public eye as a

sponsor of what he at other times has called a people's capitalism. On some future occasion, and this publicity-mad gentleman will provide many, we shall show exactly what he represents. Suffice it to say that two days after the charter was signed Johnston had an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* on jobs. Doubtless it was timed to coincide with the publication of the charter. There he gave his plans for full employment.

"I know a coal dealer whose employment, naturally, showed a sharp winter peak. He got together with two other local merchants. . . ." They worked out a plan and now have year-round employment.

The next example: "A milk-pump manufacturer made the bulk of his sales in the winter. . . ." But he too worked out a plan and now has full employment.

Next example: "A toy manufacturer. . . ."

Next example: "A hardwood flooring manufacturer. . . ."

Of these and other examples Johnston says: "These experiences, to which I could add hundreds of others, show that when management really tackles the problem, continuity of employment can be markedly improved."

This is the tripe to which Murray and Green have given the power and prestige of the CIO and the AFL. Johnston, however, who signed the charter, is not so important as those who did *not* sign. The National Association of Manufacturers did not sign. It sent a representative to the preliminary talks but he came to only one meeting and did not return. *There are capitalists who do not even want to commit themselves in words to any labor-management peace.* Through the NAM they ask: How is this charter to be carried out? That is far more serious than the ridiculous posturings of Johnston and the terror of Murray and Green as the curtain begins to rise on "the years of decision." All capitalists, even big capitalists, do not think the same things at the same time. The NAM is preparing an offensive. It has published its program. We shall deal with it on another occasion. But the differences between Johnston and the NAM are subordinate to the fact that Johnston's charter and the confusion it can cause among the workers is the best possible preparation for the anti-labor plans of the NAM.

Down With It!

There is only one attitude for labor to take to this charter, with its committees and its plans. Down with it! All sorts of specious arguments will be brought forward in favor of it. Johnston is supposed to represent the small business man as against big capital, etc. This is all nonsense or deception. The small business man has no future of any kind except under the protection and the socialist program of labor.

Hesitation there should be none. The labor movement must promptly and decisively repudiate the charter. True there are workers, millions, who are preparing to fight capital as they have fought it in the past, charter or no charter. But the charter is a political document. It is a weapon in the struggle. It must not only be repudiated. It must be answered, answered with a program for labor. The charter seeks to diminish the class struggle. The program must seek to accentuate it. The charter seeks to preserve capitalist society. The labor program must seek to destroy capitalist society. Capitalist society is not destroyed at one blow. All the workers do not arrive at full understanding at the same time. But they are on the road. The work this charter seeks to do proves that. The revolutionary party, while side by side with the workers in their daily struggles, opposes to this charter the socialist

program for American society. That fear of socialism and workers' power which permeates every line of the charter should be a revelation and a stimulus to the thinking workers that the future is with socialism.

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Five Years of the Workers Party

The Drawing of the Balance Sheet

It is an axiom by now that the defeats and setbacks suffered by the working class throughout the world in the last quarter of a century have been due not to the vigor and stability of the existing social order, but to the absence or immaturity of the conscious revolutionary vanguard. A score of times since 1917, the people have either been ready to rise or have actually risen against the ruling classes. Each time, they sought to remove the decomposing barrier to social progress. In every case, there was enough will to struggle, aggressiveness, sacrifice. Defeat was due to the lack of a revolutionary leadership measuring up to its tasks.

The old social order cannot simply be removed. Its removal is dependent upon its replacement by socialism. The victorious struggle to substitute socialism for capitalism is unique in all history, as we have repeatedly emphasized, above all because it is and cannot but be a conscious struggle. Slavery not only could but did take the place of primitive communism without the conscious and planned efforts of the slave-owners. Capitalism could emerge triumphantly out of feudalism without the conscious revolution of the bourgeois class. Feudalism was murdered by the modern machine and the modern market. To the extent that the bourgeoisie participated as a class, it had an essentially *false* consciousness.

It is entirely different with socialism. The first social order in history to be based on conscious planning can be brought into existence only by conscious planning. The process of capitalist production creates *directly* the possibility and the necessity of socialism in the form of a vast, socially-operated machine. It creates *directly* a class, the working class, capable of introducing socialism. The indispensable elements of a socialist consciousness, however, it creates only *indirectly* and in a much more remote sense; and even these must contend with a *systematically fostered bourgeois consciousness*. The struggle against capitalism and social decay is at the same time necessarily a struggle of socialist against bourgeois consciousness. Victory in the one case is impossible without victory in the other. Two generations have lived to see this demonstrated.

Consciousness of any kind cannot exist without a mind for its repository, any more than a mind can exist without a body. Socialist consciousness requires a repository where it can be accumulated and ordered, from which it can be instilled in others, and by which it can be constantly revised, checked, renewed, and defended. The ingenuity of man has invented no repository which even begins to equal—much less one that is superior to—the revolutionary socialist party, the political vanguard organization of the working class. “Without revolutionary theory, no revolutionary practise”—that is only another way of saying, “Without a revolutionary party imbuing the working class with socialist consciousness and organizing its action on that basis, no proletarian victory, no socialism.” And, no socialism means the continuation of the decay and disintegration of society.

Once all this, and what follows from it, is fully grasped, the task of our time is clear. The worker who knows that capitalism is his enemy, but who cannot find time for the revolutionary party because he is “too busy” in the trade-

union movement, has not yet grasped these fundamentals. The result is that his activity among the working class is vitiated and even nullified. The dilettante in or near the labor movement does not feel that he needs to grasp this. He acts like a political crane—now standing on his left foot, his right tucked comfortably under his wing, like a critical reservation he makes against planting himself firmly in the water; and now with his right foot down and his left in the air, where it can be daintily dried of the few drops that managed to adhere to it. Meanwhile, he writes articles with his bill, deploring the chaos in the world, the chaos in the radical movement, and the chaos in his own mind, which, he suggests to the reader, he will one day get around to clearing up.

Fortunately, there are those who have grasped these fundamentals. The fight for liberty, for socialism, is the moral content of their lives. They are therefore able to devote themselves singlemindedly to the building of the revolutionary party. Their success in performing this most important of all tasks must be measured by what is necessary in any given period for the attainment of the main goal—but also by what is possible and by what is accomplished by those whose course is different. With these ideas in mind, we are better able to pass in review the first five years of the Workers Party.

The Founding of the Workers Party

The Workers Party was organized as a result of the factional struggle that broke out in the American Trotskyist movement (the Socialist Workers Party and its youth organization) when the second world war began, and ended in a split. Those who founded the new party had reason to be confident.

First, they had better than held their own in the debate. Difference of opinion and even factional struggle were not new in the Trotskyist movement. But never before had the leadership of any section of the International shown such poverty of ideas, such bewilderment and downright helplessness when confronted by a new situation, a new problem and a critical opposition.

In face of the joint partition of Poland by Germany and Russia, followed by the invasion of Finland and the annexation of the Baltic countries by Stalin, we proposed the abandonment of the traditional position of “unconditional defense of the U.S.S.R.” in war. We argued that Russia was playing a reactionary rôle in the war, having joined one of the imperialist camps in order to share in the booty; and that to support Russia meant supporting the imperialist war in violation of the interests of the international working class and socialism.

The majority had no other reply save the repetition of the formula, “Russia is a degenerated workers’ state; therefore, we are for its unconditional defense in the war.” Its attempts to give more specific answers to the political situation were sorry models of confusion: witness the fact that it produced three mutually contradictory documents on the war in Finland in less than that number of weeks. In effect, it took its political courage into its hands and retired from the debate. Its task was taken over by Trotsky and by him alone.

Never in the history of the movement did we have what

followed. Trotsky found himself obliged to lead and carry on the fight for the paralyzed majority all by himself. One document by him followed another, sometimes in almost daily succession. He found it necessary to write at length on the tiniest questions, or aspects of a question, in dispute, and even questions that were very doubtfully related to the disagreement. One of his principal documents he even sent directly to the branches of the party, without the normal intermediary of the central party committee. The least that can be said about him is that he more than discharged his obligations as a political leader.

The American party leadership could not have been more heavily indicted for political helplessness than it was by the very thoroughness with which Trotsky was compelled to assume the burden that properly belonged to it. The majority confined itself to acting as Trotsky's phonograph. In the days between the arrival of records, it was astutely and firmly silent. To be sure, a phonograph that does no more than reproduce an eloquent voice performs a much more valuable service than a man from whose throat emerges only unharmonious gibberish. Still, if it continues to play the records a thousand times over, it will never develop a voice itself. It will always remain a phonograph that needs a record in order to articulate. The man with the throat has the advantage after all. He cannot only listen to the recorded voice but can, by persistent application, develop a clear voice of his own.

Trotsky enjoyed a tremendous authoritative (authoritative, not authoritarian) standing among the members of the minority. Only the greater strength of their arguments enabled them to continue the debate with him. When the debate ended, they had held not only to their views, but to their forces. In the final vote, the minority had more than forty percent of the votes; if the Trotskyist movement is taken as a whole in this country (party and youth organizations together), the minority had well over fifty percent of the votes. It was a distinct victory for us. As for the Cannonites, it was an utterly crushing defeat from every standpoint. There is no doubt that if Trotsky had not intervened (he had, of course, both the right and duty to intervene), the Cannonites would simply have been inundated in the fight.

In the second place, the way in which the split took place enhanced our confidence. The split, to our knowledge, simply has no precedent in the working-class movement. *To this day*, the Cannonites have carefully guarded against making public even to their membership the full text of the resolution that split the SWP!

The first part of the resolution provided for acceptance of the decisions of the convention that had just taken place (April, 1940) and a commitment "to carry them out in a disciplined manner." This "clever" motion, characteristic of the little mind that conceived it, merely meant that the minority should vote to gag itself in the working-class public on the most vital question of the day, the war, and approve of handing over its inner-party rights to the mercies of a majority that had gone out of its way to prove that it was entitled to no such confidence. We therefore abstained in the vote on this motion. The second part of the resolution provided that those not voting for the first part shall, for that reason alone, be deprived of all party positions, responsibilities and rights!*

*In their introduction to Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism*, Hansen and Warde describe the occurrence (p. xv). They quote the first part of the resolution, and add: "The minority bloc leaders refused to vote for this motion. Instead of expelling them, as would have been wholly justified [!!!], the majority still waited." Two points: 1. The decisive second part of the motion is not quoted. Why? Are our bold men so

A unique contribution to revolutionary party procedure!

We had not violated a single disciplinary provision. We were not even charged with any such violation. We were expelled, in effect, merely for *abstaining from the vote* on the majority's motion, providing that we "accept" convention decisions which among other things branded us as "petty-bourgeois." The whole procedure lasted, as the party boss gleefully noted to a crony at the meeting, exactly four and three-quarter minutes. We knew well in advance what and whom we were dealing with. We knew, in so far as it is possible to be certain in politics, that the leading clique was determined to get rid of the opposition, especially because it was not prepared to proclaim the omniscience and omnipotence of ignorance and impotence. So we were well prepared. The Workers Party was publicly proclaimed and our *Labor Action* and *NEW INTERNATIONAL*** were issued shortly after the expulsion ukase.

Fear of our views, and of our ability and determination to defend them, prompted our expulsion, and nothing else. The consciousness of this only fortified us in our actions.

Thirdly, we had won to our side the overwhelming majority of the youth. In itself, this may not be "proof" of anything, but in such situations it is almost invariably an excellent sign. The history of the revolutionary movement shows exceedingly few, if any, exceptions to the rule that in such disputes the youth takes the side of the left-wing against the right or conservative wing. How reconcile this fact with the accusation that we were a "petty-bourgeois opposition"? The majority simply never made a serious attempt to reconcile the two, except, perhaps, by repeating some of the "explanations" made by the Socialist Party right-wingers when the socialist youth joined with the Trotskyists in 1936, or else by repeating the accusation in a louder voice.

And lastly, the development of the war confirmed our position on Russia's rôle in it, and not that of the majority,

ashamed of their... innovation? 2. The majority did not "still wait," for the simple reason that, as stated above, the second part of the motion provided for our expulsion in every respect except pure form, namely, for removal from all posts and for disfranchisement in the party and deprivation of all rights of party membership. That is how the disciples of the "historian of American Trotskyism" write its history.

**The moralistic hue-and-cry that was raised when we continued to issue the *New International* under our own auspices is hard to imagine. It is only deplorable that Trotsky added his own voice to it. We had not only been the responsible editors and manager of the magazine, but generally speaking, it was our comrades who were most active in promoting it and who evaluated it properly. For the most part, the Cannonite leaders either ignored it or sneered at it openly as superfluous to the party and of interest only to a "little gang of petty-bourgeois intellectuals," as one of the Cannonite spokesmen said in our 1939 convention. The contempt these people really had for "theory" was notorious in the party. In the long list of contributors to the magazine's many rich years, Cannon's name stands, characteristically, at the very bottom, as the author of two-or-three journalistic articles. Except for a couple of comrades in his entourage, the names of the others are not even on the list. In his recent *History of American Trotskyism*, the *New International* is mentioned a couple of times in the most casual way. Once, with reference to one of the rare articles by Cannon; a second time, with reference to its suspension upon our entry into the SP. In other words, he has nothing whatsoever to say about the magazine which, if we may be permitted, played such a decisive rôle in the development of the Trotskyist movement both here and abroad. This did not prevent him, in 1940, from threatening us with court action to get back the "stolen" magazine! A precedent for this threat (very wisely not carried out) was the action of the right-wing socialist, Ward Rogers, in sending a sheriff's notice to the Trotskyists who, in the SP split, had taken with them some of the chairs belonging to a party local in the West. As for ourselves, we felt in perfectly good conscience about the *New International*, not only for the reason given above, but also because it represented a very modest part of what so large a section of the party as we constituted was entitled to have. We recommend to the attention of the protesters a reading of what Cannon wrote about Ward Rogers in the *Socialist Appeal* some seven years ago.

which found itself compelled with each new event and turn to explain away the arguments it had given for its position the day before.

The "Russian Question" After a Five Years' Test

The political question around which the dispute revolved was the question of Russia. Far from a "foreign question," for the whole world and the whole labor movement finds itself forced, more and more each day, to discuss and decide it! In politics, nobody has the right to rest on an adopted position without constantly submitting and re-submitting it to the test of events, to the test of honest self-criticism and the criticism of opponents. Only lead-bottomed and brass-headed smugness can speak in the revolutionary movement of "our finished program" (finished: exsanguinated and embalmed, waxed and polished, shrouded, crated and consecrated, entombed and headstoned). This phrase is now the favorite shibboleth of the SWP. If Marx and Engels had so much as thought in such terms, even after writing the program of the communists which we know as the *Communist Manifesto*, we would not have the Marxian theory of the state today, to say nothing of a few other trifles in our arsenal, like the theory of the permanent revolution.

How have the positions taken in 1939-1940 stood up under the test of the years that followed? In a word, we have strengthened ours; they have had to abandon theirs and they will have to abandon more before long.

Our opposition to the defense of Stalinist Russia in the war was explained by the Cannonites as due to "bourgeois-democratic pressure." How? It appears that we had left Russia to fight single-handed against Poland and Finland. The bourgeoisie of the democratic countries had launched a big campaign against Russia for the alliance with Fascist imperialism; and to this campaign, we succumbed.

However, nowhere, in any of our writings of the time or since, did we motivate our position on the grounds that Russia had made an alliance with wicked Fascist imperialism instead of with benevolent democratic imperialism. The Cannonites, completely off the track, worked themselves into the belief that this was our motivation, and nothing else. Predictions were freely made that if and when Russia switched to the camp of Anglo-American imperialism, and the "bourgeois-democratic pressure" would be exerted in the other direction, we would make a turn in our course.

Naturally, nothing of the sort occurred. More exactly, it did occur in the case of about a dozen party members who had taken our position in 1939 but who proposed to reverse it in favor of support of Russia in the war once Hitler attacked in the East and Russia joined the camp of the democratic imperialists. It is interesting to note that it was this group of comrades, who failed to win any support for their position in our party, that thereupon returned to the SWP where it was welcomed with enthusiastic cheers! The accusation against us on the score of "bourgeois-democratic pressure" obviously made no sense.

It makes even less sense, and stands out as the factional invention that it was from the outset, when the record of the Workers Party on the imperialist war in general is examined. If, as "petty-bourgeois," we had succumbed to the pressure of bourgeois democracy even before this country was in the war, and in connection, after all, with another country, it stands to reason that we would certainly succumb to this pressure when it was exerted in the *direct* interests of American imperialism, namely, when the United States itself entered the

war. And as Trotsky once remarked, there must be some reason even in slander. Yet, to put it with restraint, there was not and is not the slightest evidence of our "succumbing." On the contrary. The Workers Party was the *only* working-class organization, with *no* exception, which took a forthright, unambiguous position in public in opposition to American imperialism in the war. Our manifesto in *Labor Action* on this score was the only one to appear in the labor movement immediately after the Pearl Harbor events. In this, we did our elementary duty. It was our political demonstration against American imperialism, and under the circumstances, the best that could have been (certainly the least that should have been) made. The SWP did not follow suit. This fact cannot be talked away, although efforts have not been lacking. And since Pearl Harbor, as before it, our position has been equally forthright and unambiguous. It has formed part of our work of awakening the consciousness of the American working class, of arousing it to its class interests, of imbuing it with the spirit of socialist internationalism.

We did not change our position on Russia but, as stated, we did strengthen it. Unlike the Cannonites, we sought to learn from the 1939-1940 discussion. If Trotsky was the only one we could learn from, that was neither his fault nor ours. He was the only one who contributed to his side of the debate. Trotsky never succeeded in freeing himself from the basic contradictions of his position. He could not (nor did he attempt to) explain how the counter-revolutionary, anti-socialist, anti-Soviet, Bonapartist bureaucracy, as he rightly called it, could nevertheless establish in the capitalist countries (Poland, the Baltic lands) what he called the foundations of a workers' state, i.e., carry out a social revolution "via bureaucratic military means." He could not explain why, if Stalinist Russia is like a big trade-union in power whose army is to be supported, he is nevertheless opposed to this "union" gaining in membership and strength, so to speak, by extending its frontiers ("We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin," he wrote). But he did succeed in pointing out many of the contradictions in our position as it was developed and defended at that time. At least, that is the opinion of the present writer.

The untenability of Trotsky's basic position, and the defects and contradictions he revealed in our original position, only stimulated us to further and deeper analysis of the question. The result, a product of genuinely collective thought and elaboration by the leading comrades of our party, was worked out and presented (not, thank God, as a "finished program") in our theory of Stalinist Russia as a *bureaucratic-collectivist* state. Our theory has been put forward in great detail elsewhere. Here it is necessary to point out only two things. One is that our theory not only made possible a more harmonious relationship to our practical policy than before, but enabled us to eliminate the weaknesses contained not so much in the policy (i.e., refusal to defend Russia in the war), as in some of the motivations for it. Two is that the Cannonites, once so insistent on discussing the "class character of the Soviet Union," have shrewdly avoided dealing with this question from the moment that we presented our own systematic position on it.

The question itself is so momentous, however, that it will not tolerate silence. One way or another, the silence had to be broken, and it has been. Stalin's spectacular successes in the defense of the "degenerated workers' state," have now imposed a "turn" in policy upon the SWP. It is one of the most remarkable "turns" in the history of the movement. The slogan of

"unconditional defense" of Russia in the war was what distinguished the SWP from the rest of the world. So it said repeatedly during the war, and in just those words. Whoever did not work for the victory of the Russian army in the war, thereby placed himself on the other side of the barricades. That too was said in those words, and more than once. It would seem now that this slogan has been favored by truly rich success. The Russian armies are victorious on every front. Now, if ever, is the time for the bearers of the slogan to cheer their victory, and to express a justified pride in themselves and in the modest contribution they made to the victory.

It is almost the very opposite that has happened. Near the very pinnacle of overwhelming victory, it has been discovered that the slogan which aimed to bring about this victory must now be abandoned! Slogans have been abandoned and policies changed before now, and so it will be in the future. This is the first case we know of, however, where a slogan has been abandoned because it proved to be too successful! An indispensable addition to this is the fact that it has been abandoned with an accompanying insistence that the *only* reason ever given for advancing it in the first place still holds, namely, that Russia is a workers' state.

To be sure, "abandoned" is a strong, simple and forthright word, and above all, in the present case, a most embarrassing word. A substitute, of the requisite delicacy, equivocalness and face-saving quality had to be found, and it was. The slogan is not really "abandoned." No. It merely "recedes to the background" (like a coffin "receding" to the grave); it is merely that we "are shifting our emphasis" to another slogan. Priceless formulas! Classics of their type! Their author should somehow be rescued from modest anonymity. He may not be worth a damn as a revolutionary party leader, but what a diplomat he would make in Monaco!

What slogan do the Cannonites "push to the fore"? To which one do they shift the emphasis? To the "defense of the European revolution... against the Kremlin bureaucracy, against all its agents and agencies," presumably including the "Red Army" which has suddenly become "an instrument of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy." Good. Very good. But just why is it necessary to push and to shift right now? Because... because... because the slogan of the past five years was too good—it suffered from an over-abundance of success! How did it come about that the European revolution is so perilously threatened by the Russian army? Because... because... because the Russian army has been so victorious, as a result (in microscopic part, to be sure) of the slogan that was just "receded." We read in the SWP press *today* that "the attitude of the revolutionary vanguard toward the Red Army occupation troops in eastern Europe is thus essentially no different than its attitude toward Anglo-American troops in western Europe." But the very reason why it is necessary today to adopt this "attitude," is that for five years the SWP has urged everyone to be the "best soldier in the Red Army" in order that it might be victorious, i.e., so that it might become the "occupation troops in Eastern Europe."

There you have the balance-sheet after five years: The old line must "recede" because it was such a success. Honest and open abandonment of the fatal policy, with honest and open self-criticism, is the very pre-condition of educating the party and the workers around it. The SWP leadership is not concerned with education; it is concerned only with face-saving, with bureaucratic prestige. Honest self-criticism would show that virtually every point on which Trotsky assailed the

Chinese policy of Stalin in 1925-1927 applies to the Cannonite policy on Russia in the war. Like Stalin in China, they embellished their "ally"; they confused the banners; they urged capitulation to Stalin by those who were rising independently. Proof? Here it is:

The Fundamental Sophism

They disseminated glibly what Trotsky called *the fundamental sophism of Stalinism*, namely, that the Russian workers own the factories and the land. This sophism is contained not only in numerous articles in the SWP press but in a unanimously-adopted convention resolution. It has yet to be repudiated. They disseminated glibly the declaration that the army they *now* call counterrevolutionary was "Trotsky's Red Army." They proclaimed that this army of counterrevolution, which is *now* to be treated like the other imperialist armies, is *bringing socialism* to Europe. (Now, the revolution in Europe must be defended from the army that was... bringing socialism to Europe. A real "shift in emphasis" if we ever saw one!) They advised the rebellious peasants of Iran not to impede the progress or damage the interests of the "Red" Army (by the way, they *still* call "the instrument of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy" a *Red* army; the shift has not yet been made in full, it seems). And only yesterday, their leader, who still thought the background was the foreground, advised the Warsaw revolutionists to put themselves voluntarily at the disposal of the Stalinist hangmen.

This is no shift in emphasis, it is a rout. It is the collapse of a policy. They are not even trying to save the fragments, but only their faces. Here too the comparison with Stalin in 1927 is striking. Old, previously obscured and never-used quotations are dug up to show that they really "foresaw everything" and were not caught unawares. They even have the coolness to say that they made the "shift" a long time ago, when every child in the party now has the documents that prove how they resisted a change in line and adopted it at the very last minute under the pressure of the "outside" comrade who has been called an Eminent Interventionist. The new tactic, says the loudest of the party's empty barrels, was made "some nine months ago [by] our committee." And "the discerning reader will have noticed that we conducted our propaganda in this spirit for a good many months." But since hellishly few readers are discerning, and since those that are would have needed a microscope; and since, after all, a turn in policy ought to be made for the information and guidance of every reader including those with less "discernment"; and since the empty barrel has discerned that it requires little discernment to see through his dodges—he adds, "We propose now to incorporate this tactical prescription in our resolution, in order to make unambiguously clear to all the nature of our tactical adjustment and the reasons for it." (*Fourth International*, Feb. 1945, p. 60.) Push? Shift? Adjustment? No, a first-class rout.

The rout is not yet complete. What we are also witnessing in the SWP after five years is the collapse of its basic theory on Russia. Unable to speak any longer with enthusiasm or conviction for the theory that Russia is still a workers' state, and dogmatically refusing to examine objectively the theory we have put forward, they have nothing left to do but hunt feverishly for signs that Stalin is restoring capitalism in the form of private property. In the hunt, Wright, with the inevitable aid of *Pravda*, has already turned up the usual kulak with the usual extra cow in the usual mountain village. Of more significant signs in Russia, there are none. The huntsmen have

a long search in store for them. Outside of Russia, in the occupied countries, they have noticed that Stalin has yet not nationalized property everywhere. They have not reflected that *for the time being*, the Russian bureaucracy can very well exploit these countries as semi-colonies without in the least changing the social and economic structure of its own régime. It will not be the Rumanian economy that will determine the Russian, but the other way around. The hunt for "capitalism" in Russia is, so far as the Cannonites are concerned, a desperate search for a way of abandoning their untenable theory without losing their dearest possession, face. He who lives, will see.

The Workers Party never had the need for such gyrations. From the beginning of the war, we repeated that the victory of the armies of the Stalinist counterrevolution did not coincide with the interests of the working class. Whatever errors we may have made in detail, our basic policy was clear and correct, and is now fully confirmed. We warned the workers that Russia was playing a reactionary and imperialist rôle in the war, that it was participating in the imperialist division of the spoils—now on the side of Germany, now on the side of England-America. We urged that the workers and colonial peoples declare their independence of both imperialist camps, and form their own movement: and that organization of this "Third Camp" was the first step toward real peace and freedom.

Now, the Cannonites who derided the idea of the "Third Camp," are compelled to advance it themselves, but of course without using the same term! Now they no longer repeat that Russia is part of the camp of the proletariat and the colonial peoples. They laughed themselves wet at the idea that Russia was following an *imperialist* policy for its share of the spoils—it was merely defending itself, you see, by bureaucratic methods. Now, in their shamefaced "shift," they make their involuntary retractions. We now read that Russian "foreign policy has lost every vestige of its former isolationism and defensiveness and is becoming aggressively expansionist and adventurist." Imperialist? Good Lord, no! That term is petty-bourgeois heresy. Russia is merely... "aggressively expansionist and adventurist." Apparently a whim on Stalin's part. We read further that the allies "accept Stalin as a third partner and in business-like manner arrange with him a division of spoil." (*Fourth International*, March, 1945, p. 68.) Imperialist? My God, no! It is simply a case of the poor little workers' state, in sheer self-defense, getting a share of the... spoils. It is to be regretted that there are people who begrudge it even so modest an award for its efforts to bring socialism to Europe on the bayonets of Trotsky's Red Army.

Five years have sufficed for the test on the "Russian question." There is incontrovertible evidence to show who survived the test.

The Workers Party and the Labor Movement

The dispute on the Russian question was important, and so it will continue to be. But far more important is the question of participation in the class struggle in the United States. In this field, the work of our party has been valuable and fruitful.

We founded the Workers Party with a membership composed for the most part of youth. The preceding years of crisis and depression had deprived many of them of the opportunity of entering industry and taking part in the trade-union movement. The war gave those who were not drafted the oppor-

tunity they sought. Before long, virtually our entire membership was concentrated in important industries and active in the labor movement, acquiring experience not only from the older party members but also from the militants in the labor movement with whom they established friendly contact.

The difficulties encountered in carrying on militant activities in the trade unions during the war, need little elaboration. There is the powerful pressure exerted on all sides for "national unity," so that the ruling class may increase its power and carry out its reactionary policies without interference by the workers acting in defense of their class interests. There are the conservative trade-union leaders, tied to the imperialist machine, and exerting every ounce of their strength against effective independent action by the workers and against the militants who urge it. There are above all the Stalinists, ready and eager to pounce upon every progressive and every genuine socialist, to frame him up, to hound him and drive him out of the labor movement. And there is always the unholy combination of the employers, trade-union bureaucrats and draft boards which does not hesitate to use its power to ferret out militants and get rid of them. All in all, not the easiest conditions for the activities of militants.

Yet, apart from considerations of socialist duty to the working class, there were also favorable conditions. The measure of our activity in the labor movement was not determined, as some would like to put it, by arbitrary considerations. Before the war, we had all declared in our analyses that once the war got under way, the political differences between the totalitarian and the democratic countries would dwindle rapidly. We also foresaw a working class swept by a mighty chauvinistic wave with the beginning of the war in this country. Neither prediction proved correct. In the United States, the working class soon showed that while it supported the war, above all in the sense of not wanting to see the country defeated by Germany or Japan, its support was reluctant, mingled with healthy suspicion of imperialism and the class intentions of the capitalists. Without the opportunity to express itself in organized form, it nevertheless showed growing hostility to all attempts to lower its living standards or deprive it of political rights. The labor movement was bent to its knees by the union leaders, but they could not prostrate it; they could not even prevent it from rising repeatedly to its feet and fighting for its interests. The existence of a powerful labor movement, plus its barely suppressed mood of militancy, undoubtedly slowed down enormously the tendency toward totalitarianism in the United States during the war. Refusing to be guided by disproved assertions of yesterday, we established these facts early in the war and proceeded to orient our activities accordingly. In this respect, too, our analysis was justified by the results.

We set ourselves the goal of bringing the militant moods of the workers to the surface, of stimulating them to more conscious action in defense of their class interests, of awakening them to independent political action. We did not retire to a storm cellar for the duration, "until it blows over," and if we did not, it was not out of intemperate brashness or heroism. We rightly judged both the needs and the possibilities.

Our party during the war constituted the principal and the clearest center of the militant movement in the trade unions. It is absurd to think that the progressive forces revolved around our small party, and it is far from our mind to say any such thing. Literally thousands, even tens of thousands of workers in the unions did not allow the outbreak of

the war to stop the struggle for a progressive labor movement. Many times they would put forward ideas and launch campaigns on their own initiative which our party thereupon decided to champion. This is true not only of many of the nameless rank and file, but of better known rank-and-file union leaders, too. If our party was distinguished from them, it was not necessarily in degree of aggressiveness, but primarily in the fact that we sought to harmonize the fight for all the progressive measures, to explain their fundamental significance in the class struggle, to show their connection with the imperialist war, and to relate them to the need for independent political action and socialism. It could be summed up saying that our party sought to imbue the American workers with *class consciousness*.

We were among the front-rank fighters, as we still are, against the paralyzing "no-strike pledge," urging the labor movement to reclaim its power to resist the encroachments of war-swollen capitalism. Toward the same end, we called upon labor to withdraw its representatives from the War Labor Board, which we characterized as the cemetery of labor's grievances. Our party carried on a persistent propaganda in favor of labor breaking from the capitalist parties and forming a Labor Party of its own, based on the representative mass organizations of the workers.

Unquestionably, thousands of progressives developed these ideas on their own. Our contribution was to provide the best reasons for these demands, an unceasing agitation for them, an organized center from which the movement for these demands could be systematically maintained, stimulated and clarified. We sought, furthermore, to connect up these demands with a far broader, more significant Program of Action to be adopted as the fighting platform for the American working class. The central aim of this program still is: the mobilization of the American working class as a unified, conscious political force, the struggle against the capitalist class and its government, the defense of labor's interests at every step of the road and at the expense of capitalist profit and capitalist power, and the establishment of a party of labor and a workers' government.

In this campaign, we had from the outset an invaluable instrument, *Labor Action*. Our party is exceptionally proud of this paper. To publish it, we had to break with a long tradition. But the break did not prove to be difficult, and the results more than justified it. We decided to issue, for the first time in the history of the revolutionary movement in this country, a popular socialist agitational weekly addressing itself primarily to the progressive trade-unionist. It was to be written in simple language, with an absolute minimum of the special jargon familiar in the radical movement and only in it. It was not to be written on the assumption that its readers already agree with every political and theoretical idea of the editors, but rather on the assumption that the readers agree only with a very few of the more elementary ideas of the editors. It was to appeal to the readers on the basis of his daily experiences, of his immediate problems, of those views which the editors, the party and most if not all the readers already had in common. Only by having this as its point of departure, as its main emphasis, could the paper then bring the attention of the reader to the fundamental principles of socialism, to the more advanced political conceptions, for which the paper stood, and develop his understanding and sympathy. Above all, it was to be an active participant and guide of the militant workers in the labor movement.

The Influence of Labor Action

If *Labor Action* has not always succeeded in achieving every detail of its original purpose, it has nevertheless come so much closer to it that no other radical paper even merits serious comparison with it. The type of paper *Labor Action* aimed to be, dictated a mass distribution among workers. The popularity and influence of the paper among tens of thousands of workers exceeded our most ambitious hopes. Indirectly, through the agitation and activity of its readers, its ideas reach additional tens of thousands. It is no exaggeration to say that in some of the largest working-class concentrations of the country, the weekly arrival of *Labor Action* is eagerly awaited. Lunch-time in many plants finds thousands of workers with their copies of the paper opened before them. Factory walls are decorated with articles, editorials and cartoons clipped from its pages. Time after time, and in city after city, unaffiliated militants have collected subscriptions to *Labor Action* from fellow-workers, and done it completely on their own initiative.

The influence exerted by the ideas of the Workers Party has not been limited for its source to the written word. In plant and in union, the members of our party have not been missing from the fight for progressive and militant policies. Our paper has not called upon the workers in general to do what our members have refrained from doing.

From the beginning, the activities of our party members has been directed toward the formation of broad progressive groups of all the militants in the trade unions who agree on a minimum program of action to restore the fighting capacity of the labor movement. Where such groups already exist, we have worked to unite them on a national scale in order to increase their effectiveness. Our activities have yielded fruit. The rabid concentrated tury of the Stalinists, in particular, against what they call Trotskyism in the labor movement, is a notable tribute to these activities.

It goes without saying that we do not deserve one-tenth of the compliments paid us by the Stalinists. The activities they denounce as Trotskyist are due only in small part to the work of our party. But the significance of their denunciations cannot be overrated. There is a good deal of truth even in their frenzied falsehoods and calumny. Under Trotskyism, they include every policy, every act, calculated to strengthen the working class, to retrieve its independence and freedom of movement, to advance its economic and political interests. If by this they mean to convey the idea that Trotskyism is the most consistent, most clear-headed, and most aggressive advocate of such policies, they are involuntarily telling the truth. The falsehoods consist in their declarations that everyone who takes a progressive position on any question confronting the labor movement—be it John L. Lewis or Norman Thomas Thomas de Lorenzo or Jesse Ferrazza, Samuel Wolchok or David Dubinsky—it thereby a Trotskyist or in a "conspiracy" with the Trotskyists. The falsehoods become calumny when they associate every progressive or militant or revolutionist with Fascists like Coughlin, or with their own blood-ally of yesterday, Hitler.

We readily accept another involuntary tribute the Stalinists pay us. Wherever they attack the work not of those they try to label as Trotskyists, but of real Trotskyists, in four cases out of five it is the activities of the Workers Party they have in mind. We of the "petty-bourgeois opposition" are proud of the fact that we are a thorn in the side of the totalitarian gangsters in the labor movement. We are proud of the fact that

in the past year, for example, the brunt of the fight for progressive and class-struggle policies in some of the most important unions of the CIO, *in so far as it was borne by organized and conscious revolutionists*, was borne by militants of the Workers Party and their close friends, and by no other party. We do not hesitate to say that it was our comrades and other trade-union militants working with them who led, or helped to lead, the fight for a regenerated labor movement in the conventions of the shipbuilding workers, the rubber workers, the auto workers, the electrical workers, the steel workers, and in such movements as the Michigan Commonwealth Federation. The Socialist Party played no part in these movements, lined up with the conservatives, or else its members acted in an individual manner as each saw fit. The Cannonites were conspicuous by their absence, or by their silence, or, in some cases, by their factional sabotage of progressive movements which they could not dominate.

The policy of the Cannonites in the trade unions during these five years is worth an added comment, if only to contrast it with the policy we pursued. They did not follow a policy cautiously; caution *was* their policy. And by "caution," they meant abstention from any notable activity in the unions. The policy their leadership imposed upon the members was argued as follows: This is wartime; the workers are not in motion; we must lie quiet until they do get into motion; then we will offer them our leadership; meanwhile, we must confine ourselves to "preserving the cadres." A more specious opportunism is hard to find. It became disgusting when it was coupled with sneers at the "adventurism" of those who did their revolutionary duty.

This policy was not swallowed by all the SWP members. In Detroit, at first, and elsewhere later, protests were made against it; but in vain. One of the protests of recent date correctly attacked the policy as follows: "We cannot lay low and abstain from any substantial leadership now while awaiting the upsurge itself and expect the workers to follow us once it comes . . . when the workers do begin to move on a mass scale, why should they follow anyone who did not previously supply some type of leadership? How would they know that we are even capable of this leadership? How would a young comrade ever gain his leadership experience and confidence while sitting it out?" (*SWP Bulletin*, October, 1944.)

It is interesting to note in passing that Trotsky warned us all against such an interpretation of the formula, "preserve the cadres." The question was raised by the SWP boss in our discussion with Trotsky early in 1938 about the party in the coming war. Trotsky answered in effect: Naturally, if we do nothing but "preserve the cadres" during the war, the workers will treat us like preserves and put us on the shelf! That last phrase of his I remember word for word: "They will treat us like preserves and put us on the shelf." The warning was not heeded by Cannon. A contrary course was imposed and the SWP kept itself on the shelf.

For our part, we operated in the trade union movement on the basis not only of what was possible but what was necessary. We understood that the class-consciousness and cohesion of the revolutionists cannot be "preserved" without continuous activity to awaken the class-consciousness and strengthen the cohesion of the working class as a whole. To break this link can only have pernicious consequences.

Our Losses and Our Progress

It is impossible to deal here with every aspect of the work and life of our party in these five years. But a balance-sheet of losses and gains should be cast up.

Our losses have been of different kinds, and not easy to bear. Our first loss was Burnham. He betrayed everything he had stood for, including the movement that nurtured him intellectually. Ever since he turned coat, he has cut a sorry figure. People wonder how can such transparent drivel flow from such an intelligent mind? . . . The explanation is easier than is generally assumed. He feels driven to attribute his own betrayal to the betrayal of others. It was Trotsky that betrayed him; Marxism betrayed him; socialism betrayed him; the proletariat betrayed him. It is all false, but it is comprehensible. Incomprehensible is the fact that he continues to speak authoritatively (and in the very pools into which he used to spit so eloquently!) on politics. Surely a man who insists that he was so easily, so systematically and so thoroughly fooled on the most important political questions of our time, disqualifies himself as a political thinker by that very admission. If a lady kept moaning that for ten years running she was unable to walk along a lighted street without surrendering enthusiastically to every gay blade she met, she might be entitled to sympathy, or to a guardian, or to seclusion in a convent. She might pose as a martyr and do penance far from the sight of men. But if, instead, she remained at large, posed as an authority on how to resist temptation, and blamed her eager fall on the bluishness of the blades, even though there were always enough wiser ones at hand to warn her against them—people might very well say: Lament and repent in silence, teach æsthetics if you wish, but in heaven's name do not speak about virtue!

Burnham's defection lost the party a talented intellect. We have not the slightest interest in denying this. The Cannonites, for unworthy factional reasons, tried to present Burnham as the political leader of the opposition, and the opposition itself as "Burnhamite." There was no truth in this, as our comrades knew and as was soon proved clearly. What is true is that the leading comrades made every reasonable effort to keep Burnham in the movement, where his talents would have a fertile field and not be sterilized as they are now. The efforts, entirely justified in themselves, proved vain. To say that his defection is part of a much more general political or social phenomenon, is correct. But it does not suffice to explain every individual case. Most of the radical intellectuals collapsed. But some, like James T. Farrell and Dwight Macdonald, did remain loyal to their basic principles. It was Burnham's character that was inadequate to the task; he could not bring himself to make a thorough break with a bourgeois existence. Everything else was rationalization, and still is.

Other losses were inevitable, and we reckoned with them from the outset. If there are "laws of split," they include this one: Not all those who vote with you in a dispute go along with you in the final division. Some stay behind. Others use the turmoil of the split to drop away in the hope that they will not be noticed. We had that experience when the Trotskyists were expelled from the Stalinist party, and during the split in the Socialist Party, and again in the split of 1940. Nothing can be done about it, except write them off in advance. Another law is this one: Whenever a political fight is connected with a fight against bureaucratism, the opposition inevitably attracts to its side people who have the most pecu-

liar notions about organizational questions and who have little in common with the opposition politically. In the showdown, they often prove to have been "against bureaucratism" only to the extent that they were against democratically-organized *discipline* and *responsibility* in the movement. Or else they think that the "anti-bureaucrats" are fighting for the policies that the bureaucracy maliciously attributes to them. When they learn differently, they too drop away, often very bitter over the fact that they listened not to what the opposition really stood for, but to what the bureaucracy said it stood for. For example, Trotsky's fight against Stalinism actually attracted some dillettantes and anti-Bolsheviks who thought Stalin was right in charging that Trotsky wanted a party of dillettantes and anti-Bolsheviks. The mistakenly attracted were soon . . . disillusioned. Thereafter they denounced not Stalin, but Trotsky! In the SWP split, we had our modest quota of such people—for a while.

Their defection, as well as Burnham's, was not one-hundredth as serious as our real loss. Our party was composed overwhelmingly of people of draft age. It is doubtful if there is another political organization in the country which has had such a high percentage of its membership taken into the armed forces as our party. Being a militant working-class organization, and not a group of pacifists, our people claimed no exemptions on grounds of conscience. They did not simply talk about taking on the responsibilities and tasks of their generation; they took them on, even if it meant severing relations with party activity. Among those who went off were some of our ablest and most experienced men, our indispensables; and we know that not all of them will be returned to us. Our corps of organizers, speakers, writers was cut into heavily, and that from top to bottom. It was an oppressive blow, and we suffer from it yet.

Their departure laid a heavier burden on those who remained. What has been done by those who remained, especially by our magnificent female comrades, is perhaps the most inspiring and encouraging thing in our movement. Comrades have taken on doubled and trebled responsibilities and labors. Distributions of literature before and after a working day that often lasts ten hours; meetings of branches and committees piled on to meetings of their unions and union committees; organization of classes for their own education and classes for sympathizing workers; hours spent every week in personal agitation and propaganda among fellow-workers; systematic and generous financial contributions to the party's work on a scale higher than that of any other movement—these are the marks of conviction, zeal and devotion that are seldom found elsewhere. They are a guarantee of our future and the future of socialism.

There are also gains to record.

We have won to our party some of the best militants in the labor movement. They have learned, from studying our program and observing how our deeds conform to our words, that the best trade union activity in the world is incomplete and, in the long run, ineffectual, unless it is coupled with political organization, rendered coherent and consistent by a fundamental political program and political direction. The popularity of our program is an assurance that we will succeed in recruiting more of these militants in the future.

The Danger of Stalinism

The party has gained tremendously in the clarity of its program. What has been contributed to our political strength by the development of our position on Russia has

already been dealt with. On the basis of this position, we have been able to deal more thoroughly with the problem of Stalinism as the greatest menace to the integrity and future of the labor movement. The importance of this question cannot be stressed too heavily. Among revolutionary socialists, it was long argued that the Stalinists and the conservative or reformist labor officialdom are equally dangerous to the working class. This point of view is no longer valid; to try to maintain it in practice can only lead to grave blunders and even to disaster. Reformism in the labor movement means the weakening of the working class, but even the most reformist bureaucracy is vitally concerned with maintaining the organized labor movement, for it cannot exist without it. Stalinism means the totalitarian strangulation and destruction of the labor movement. Wherever class-conscious militants are unable to challenge both in a directly independent form, and are obliged to choose between the two evils, there is no question of which is the lesser evil of the two. A consciousness of this fact has enabled our party to function more effectively and more progressively in more than one fight in the labor movement. Maximum clarity on the problem of Stalinism in the labor movement is possible, however, only as a result of complete clarity about Stalinist Russia. The Cannonites are anything but alone in their confusion on this score. It is shared and multiplied many times over not only by the labor movement in general, but in particular by the leading men in it. Among our tasks is the dissipation of this dangerous confusion.

Our party was the only one in this country to analyze and appraise correctly the great significance of the revolutionary "national movements" that sprang up throughout Europe under the rule of German imperialism. Along with our German comrades, who developed their standpoint independently of ours but in harmony with it, we have made a contribution on the "national question" whose value will not diminish in the period ahead. In contrast, the futile word-mongering and sterile dogmatism of the Cannonites on this question has been typical of their helplessness when confronted with a new problem or an old problem in new form. They have so thoroughly disaccustomed themselves from critical, independent thought, and gone so far in converting Trotskyism from a guide to action, and a means of arriving at a guide to action, into a body of scriptural revelation, that the most important revolutionary movement in the last ten years could develop and shake all Europe without producing anything more than a stereotyped and utterly false reaction from the SWP. Like the Socialist Labor Party, which answers all problems, big and small, with the mouth-filling demand for the "unconditional surrender of capitalism," the SWP avoids taking a position on the most urgent problems of the day by repeating, in season and out, its demand for the "Socialist United States of Europe." The struggle for democracy and for national freedom, which is increasingly the key to the struggle for socialism, is simply not grasped by the Cannonites. They are paralyzed by some obscure fear that, somehow or other, the struggle for democracy, carried on in a working-class way, with a working-class program, makes you a "bourgeois democrat" who has given up the fight for socialism. That means, so far as the SWP is concerned, that at least four men have worked in vain: Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Perhaps our greatest gain is in the *kind* of party we have succeeded in building. In it, we have living proof that a Bolshevik party *does not* mean the totalitarian prison so many

people have been led to believe it always was and must always be. The democratic character of our organization is not merely our boast. Militants and radicals outside our party know the facts and acknowledge them. Our party is intolerant of any attempts to curb the intellectual freedom and critical independence of its membership. All it demands is rigid discipline *in action* and a high degree of responsibility in building up the party. It is able to make and enforce this demand not only because its main policies have proved to be correct, but because there is no bureaucratic régime, "benevolent" or otherwise, in the party. Without ever descending to the futility of a "debating society," our party has repeatedly had the freest discussions of political and theoretical questions. Some have been confined to the party ranks, but the more important ones have also been discussed in public, in the pages of our **NEW INTERNATIONAL**. Some of them have been extremely ardent, even sharply polemical. Groups, ideological formations, of different kinds have existed in the party and continue to exist; in one form or another, on one question or another, they will probably always exist. But we have no resolutions calling for the "dissolution of factions," and if good Bolshevik practice continues to prevail, we shall never have such resolutions. We have established in our party such a relationship between leaders and members and of all members with each other, and between adopted program and criticism of it, that there is no air in the party for a bureaucratic or clique régime. And there, after all, lies the secret of the absence of permanent factions, as distinguished from ideological groupings. There are no such factions because there is no soil—a bureaucratic régime—for them to grow in.

It might be said that the kind of party we have built up is our richest possession. In itself, it does not guarantee against making political mistakes, including serious ones. But it makes possible a speedy correction of such mistakes if they are made, a correction without the convulsive crises to which bureaucratized parties are doomed whenever a serious difference of opinion forces its way past the lid.

From this standpoint, it might be added in passing, the big obstacle to the union of the two Trotskyist organizations in this country is not so much the political differences that exist. Although some of these differences are greater than they were five years ago, others have become less acute. In any event, people with even greater political differences could live and work side by side in a single party *provided* it were a normal party. It is no secret, for example, that in our own party close coöperation is possible between comrades who, on some questions, have greater differences between themselves than our party as a whole has, on other questions, with the SWP. The principal obstacle (as this writer sees it) lies precisely in the sterile, bureaucratic régime which the Cannonites have imposed upon and continue to maintain in the SWP, a régime which the new minority in the SWP rightly describes as Stalinist in its trend. Unity is a precious thing. The kind of party that would result from unity is, however, far more important. Our comrades are not disposed for a minute to trade off what they have built up for any régime that smacks of Cannonism.

Capitalism and Socialism

The last thirty years have been rich in events and in lessons for the working class, if not in victories. If we were asked to tell what makes us believe that the final victory will go to socialism, we would answer:

Capitalism has shown conclusively that it cannot advance society and civilization, but only drive it further along the

road of exhausting conflict, human degradation, barbarism and ruin. It no longer has a capacity for stability, order, peace and progress.

The working class, even those sections of it that have been most cruelly oppressed, has shown a power of recuperation from defeat and resources of resistance to capitalist decay that amply justify our confidence in its eventual triumph. It has proved repeatedly that the conditions for its existence and progress is the struggle against the conditions of its existence. That is how it has been and that is how it must be.

Although the connections between conscious socialism and the working class were broken once by the old social-democracy and again by Stalinism, they have not been destroyed. They exist in the form of our movement and its program, and they will be strengthened. The firmness of our party and the confirmation of its program by events justify the confidence we have in both. They justify also our confidence that the Revolutionary International of the working class—a most important matter that cannot be dealt with briefly because it requires and deserves a chapter for itself—will be restored and solidified.

What makes the struggle for socialism and freedom seem more difficult, also makes it more urgently necessary. It simply makes no sense to us when we are told that encroaching capitalist barbarism is destroying the prospects of socialism and it is better to give up the fight. That is the talk of demoralized and spiritually vanquished serfs. It is precisely the fact that decomposing capitalism is filling the air with its poisonous fumes, that imposes upon us the redoubling of our efforts to bury the putrid beast.

Let the cowards flinch and the traitors sneer. Our minds are incapable of absorbing the truly monstrous idea that humanity, which has shown so often an irresistible passion for liberty and an inexhaustible capacity for achieving it progressively, will, now, at the historic pinnacle of its intellectual and social development, finally yield to the yoke in permanence, like brute cattle. We reiterate our faith in the people, in the working class, and dedicate ourselves again, on this fifth anniversary, to the socialist emancipation.

MAX SHACHTMAN.

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The Higher School of Polemics — II

On the Russian Question

Continued from the last issue

Inasmuch as the development cannot stand still and is admittedly moving along the line toward restoration, there only remains to pursue the "path" and the "timing of its realization" on the basis of available data. On the other hand, we have seen that speculations on an "open" or concealed restoration can, at most, only distract us from the concrete investigation. Thirdly, we have said that the civil war has been raging for years and appears to be conducted "under cover" only because it is permanent.⁵ One of the most important questions therefore, is this: Is the civil war continuing? In this respect, the author of the third article provides a valuable indication:

For a long time the bureaucracy has been bending its efforts toward the preparation, in accord with its interests, of a way out from the insupportable contradiction between itself and the planned economy. During the war itself the abyss which separates its privileges from the people has deepened, its system of permanent repression intensified, and new armed instruments created for the purpose of crushing every resistance or attack of the people. The most striking among these is a kind of Stalinist SS, a privileged section within the army which already had a large degree of privileges in peacetime. For these Janizaries the normal army pay is doubled or trebled; they are better clothed, better fed, and relieved of the dirty and dangerous work. What object can there be in the formation of this corps except to set up around the régime an armed instrument completely tied, by its own material interests, to the bureaucracy? Like every reactionary social layer, the bureaucracy, under the cover [!] of war against the imperialist enemy, is carrying on a second civil war against the defenseless and starving people.

Hence, the first consequence that results: there is nowhere a moment in the Russian or international development which is not a proof of the growth and the progress of the restoration. Everything, every single thing, indicates that it is impossible without an open break. . . ." On the contrary: the war against the imperialist enemy serves as a "cover" for the endeavors of the restoration. In considering the possible forms that the final restoration might assume, the author himself puts the question: "Will the Marshal continue to be the supreme leader in the stage of reintroduction of capitalism?" He comes finally (for the word "stage" does not in reality have much meaning here) to the conclusion: "But it is of very minor importance whether the Marshal continues as leader or falls victim to his own methods." This is all the more correct,

5. Trotsky rightly calculated the victims of the Stalinist reaction during the "forced collectivization," the unintermittent "purges," etc., etc., at many millions. In addition, the number of prisoners, deported, slave-workers, etc., are estimated by some observers at ten, and by others at twenty, millions. Such a civil war is unexampled in all history, and it shows that the restoration must immediately give expression to the essence of decaying capitalism in its most hideous and massive form. It is of the highest importance to enlighten the masses on the developments in the S.U., but in this respect too there has been a gloomy experience. Again in the document of Comrade Roland you can read how the highly interesting material submitted by him was handled. With a motivation which was entirely worthy of the notorious "Friends of the Soviet Union," the SWP leadership refused the publication of this material. If ever a genuine principle of Trotsky (or of Bolshevism in general) was violated, it was here. For Trotsky heaped scorn and contempt upon the "arguments" of this Society of "Friends" and insisted emphatically that the workers need no embellishment of the reality and no "indulgence," but, under all circumstances, the truth and nothing but the truth. In reality, the bureaucrat gives no "consideration" to the masses. He takes himself into consideration, because the truth might smash his sacred (and false) "line."

in our view, inasmuch as the Fourth always left open the possibility of a section of the bureaucracy becoming merged into the new bourgeoisie. And again, everything, nationally and internationally, speaks for the idea that the world reaction is highly interested in settling the affair *with* Stalin at the head. Nobody is a better "cover" than he, if it is a matter of deceiving the masses of the world and of bloodily suppressing revolutions. Yet, this is only the beginning of all the consequences.

In the first place, the Fourth has been saying, not just since today but for a long time: The impulsion for a rising of the Soviet masses against the Stalin régime cannot come out of Russia, it must rather be sought in the European revolutions. Taken on the whole, this is only a modification of the old formula: Without the aid of the international proletariat and its revolutions, the Russian revolution is doomed to perish. But as a modification (in its specific form) it signifies: Russia itself has already ceased to be an *independent impetus* of the revolution (*revolutionary* influence upon the world movement) and a "danger" to the bourgeoisie. Since Stalin's murder of the Spanish Revolution, it was demonstrated even to the "blind" that Russia and its revolutionary achievements can *no longer be separated, in their isolated helplessness*, from the counterrevolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy, and this bureaucracy is the most reliable and zealous servant of the world bourgeoisie. In this sense, we wrote, as did Walter Held in his article:

Originally endowed with the *dynamic idea of world revolution* [our emphasis], the Soviet Union is transformed into a *bureaucratic-conservative aim-in-itself*, and finally into a totalitarian police state, a stifling parasite on the foundation of October, *without any historical perspective*. (Emphasis of the critics.)

Before we enter into the grandiose "criticism" which is hereupon meted out to Held, we would like to call attention to another consequence which, again, was drawn by the entire Fourth. At a certain point, the Fourth gave up its hopes in a "reform" of the Soviet Union and put in its place the necessity of a *political* revolution in Russia. For people endowed with understanding, this means precisely that *the Soviet Union has become identical with the system of Stalin* and that it must first *regain* its historical perspective with the aid of a political revolution. In any case, this was the spirit in which Held wrote his entire article, in which he naturally presupposed readers whose loyalty would preserve them from malicious plucking-at-commas. However, inasmuch as we are discussing on the basis of facts which the *Fourth International* has now furnished us, we regret that we must drive the consequences a little further. We have learned that we have come, economically and politically, "to the very edge of capitalist restoration," and we possess a ("scientifically designated") rural bourgeoisie, a free market that has grown enormously, a thoroughly sick "planned economy," and more of the same. We must therefore present the criticism with the sad communication that it can now throw onto the scrap-pile also the "purely" political revolution in Russia. No revolution is any longer possible in Russia *which does not have to settle anew the question of the "foundations" or the property relations*. And because we immediately run into nothing more and nothing less than the "dialectic" (which has always given

us much pleasure), we should like to note carefully: a very simple proceeding, which we call the transformation of quantity into quality, has brought it about that today, after the "reform" and the "political revolution," the social revolution has become necessary for Russia.

On the Trail of the Dialectic

We must certainly acknowledge that with respect to our last assertion, "serious" differences of opinion may arise. Up to now these differences of opinion existed exclusively in the imagination of the stupid critics who nonchalantly palmed off their incompetence, their confusion and their "polemical requirements" as the "position of Trotsky" and the Fourth. Here the situation is different, at last, for there is no doubt that the "official" Fourth has not yet arrived at the recognition of a revolution also with regard to the property relations, in brief: a *social* revolution in the sense of the proletariat. And it is only from this moment on that they may "accuse" us (but not Walter Held) of being "defeatists" for Russia, too, *i.e.*, of rejecting the famous "defense of the Soviet Union."

You see: we are giving our critics a course here in the art of tidy and clear thinking which is interested in the truth, for thinking is an extremely difficult thing, especially for people who have no head and must feel the results of thinking on the whole body, so to speak. If the criticism presented itself simply as a football that can be kicked around as you please, then that is the way it will be dealt with. That is why it will surely be surprised at flying in an "unexpected" direction when we declare: Yes, we have a different *estimation* than you with regard to the *stage of development attained in Russia*—and nevertheless we remain *theoretically* entirely on the standpoint of Trotsky. To convince the ball of this, we must first turn it around a little, that is, dampen its anger over Held, to whom Stalin's Soviet Union appeared to be "without any historical perspective." The criticism finishes off Held in this wise:

Let us consider the "dynamics" of the sentence in order the better to see its senselessness. The Soviet Union is here transformed into a bureaucratic conservative "aim-in-itself," "a totalitarian police state," "a stifling parasite on the foundations of October"... "without any historical perspective."

Actually, it is the Stalinist bureaucracy which has no historical perspective—the parasite on the foundation of October, the abcess on the body of the Soviet Union which does not base itself on and does not serve that class to which the future belongs—the proletariat—but becomes the agent of the world bourgeoisie and will perish with it....

Well jumped, little ball, only—senseless! What is called "considered," is a play with empty words. The "Soviet" Union is unfortunately what the Stalinist reaction has made out of it, whereas the "dynamics" of the development force the bureaucracy to become "the agent of the world bourgeoisie"⁶

6. Let us dispose of another "critical" argument at this point:

"What the English Tories have understood relatively late, the Fourth International, according to Held, has not understood to this day. Then, why not say so openly? The Fourth International has always been of the opinion that the existence of the Soviet Union represents a danger to imperialism, that the socialist [!] economy [!] of Russia, *i.e.*, the workers' state, is an important part of the world contradiction—Proletariat-Bourgeoisie—a point that Shachtman did not understand, but which is very well understood by the English Tories as well as by all other imperialists."

It is not quite comprehensible to us how they can say "according to Held," and then ask: "Then, why not say so openly?" Let us say so as "openly" as possible: The American, English and French sections of the Fourth, at the least (for we know precisely about these) have not understood to the present day that Stalinist Russia must be recognized as an "agent" of the world bourgeoisie which no longer represents any danger. For America, the proof lies in the false policy that Comrade Roland analyzes, and the inconsistent "correction" which the present polemic only makes possible. For the rest, the

and bring the Soviet "to the very edge of capitalist restoration." In a progressive respect, the Soviet Union has only the *revolutionary* perspective which is first to make it—the *Soviet Union again*. As soon as the necessity of a revolution, even if only "political," is admitted, and in addition it is made dependent upon the revolution outside of Russia, it ceases to be "dangerous" for the bourgeoisie. *Entirely dependent upon itself*, it no longer has any other "perspective" than the *completed restoration*.

In this result lies the "dialectic" of the process, and that is what Held meant with the "S.U." without historical perspective. It is necessary to be loyal also toward an opponent and to quote him scrupulously according to the sense—otherwise the criticism hurts itself. If it is suddenly of a different opinion with regard to perspective, it should say so and report it to its friends: on this score we wrote a lot of sheer nonsense. And even then it would have to guard itself, in "refuting" Held's perspective, from inserting the lightminded remark: "Not a trace of dialectic! Any bourgeois writer could have said this."

So we find ourselves on the trail of the dialectic. As a much-extolled cryptic science the dialectic has always given us great pleasure because in the hands of certain "critics" it is a picture-puzzle. The critic, who does not discover a trace of it (and how could he with his narrowmindedness?), acts like Doctor Know-It-All in the fairy tale, who could not find the rooster in his Fiebel and cried out in his search: But he must be in there and he must come out! Whereupon the thief sprang out of the fireplace and confessed: Lord, I was in there all the time—he (the doctor) knows everything! While no thief appears in reply to the outcry of our critics, there appears, just as surprisingly, a—metaphysical distinction between the Soviet Union and the Stalin bureaucracy, which we have already resolved in the dialectic. But now we must turn around the picture-puzzle and stand it on its head in order to find the whole rooster. He is hidden in the "annihilating" assertion: "Any bourgeois writer could have said this."

If this remark (which is supposed to be an "argument") is stood on its head, it says: Any bourgeois writer can say the opposite." Only in this form is the whole—dialectic of the situation disclosed. In case the criticism should still be unable to grasp it: the bourgeois writing world is split with respect to the "perspectives" of the S.U. (as it is on all other questions). We do not want to speak here of Earl Browder and kindred creatures, who are not only bourgeois writers but also bourgeois con-men. But infinitely great is the gang of those scribblers who (often enough with starkly deceptive intent) rattle off in a thousand keys, entirely in the spirit of our critics: "The Stalin bureaucracy may be what it will—the Soviet Union, on the other hand, has great historical perspectives." It may be that the SWP leadership considers itself and these people (who know how to "separate" metaphysic-

question is reduced to the same "argument" from the manifesto on "The Imperialist War and the Proletarian Revolution," to which we promised to return: "Taken on the historical [!] scale the contradiction between world imperialism and the Soviet Union is infinitely more profound than the antagonisms which set the individual countries in opposition to each other."—It is noteworthy that Held also believed this, for he wrote in the criticized article: "The bellicose dispute between German neo-imperialism and the S. U. is nevertheless unavoidable. It has only been postponed to a more favorable period for Hitler..." A *seeming* contradiction, therefore, in Held's exposition. Yet, on what does this alleged contradiction rest? It rests upon the diletantism of the criticism itself, which has not the slightest notion that "danger" and "contradiction" are two different things. It is of no concern to us whether the Fourth has "always" gone along with this confounding of two things—we shall simply see how things are in reality.

ally) to be revolutionists, and us, on the other hand (for whom the quality of the phenomenon is decisive), to be "revisionists." Everyone has the right to seek out the company to which he belongs. But inasmuch as it is a question of clear thinking: the "bourgeois writer" is no proof so long as he is also a proof of the opposite.

Theoretical

In his introduction to Marx's *Class Struggles in France*, Engels makes the following important statements:

In an attempt to judge events and series of events taken from current history, one will never be able to go back to the *very last* economic causes. Even in these days, when the professional press furnishes material so copiously, it will be impossible even in England to trace the course of industry and commerce in the world's market, or to follow the changes in production methods day after day in such manner as to be able to draw at any given moment a general conclusion from these highly complicated and ever-changing factors, factors of which the most important often work for a long time under cover before they suddenly and forcibly come to the surface. A clear survey of the economic history of a given period can never be gained at the time; it is possible only later, after the subsequent collection and assortment of material. Here statistics are an indispensable aid, but they always limp behind the event. When dealing with current contemporary history one will often be forced to treat this, the most decisive factor, as constant and to consider the economic situation found at the beginning of a given period as governing the entire period without variation, or to consider only such changes of the situation as emanate from events plainly visible and therefore also quite manifest. The materialist method must here too often confine itself to a tracing back of political conflicts to the conflicts of interests among the social classes and class factions of a given economic development, and to prove that the different political parties are to more or less adequate political expression of these same classes and class factions.

It goes without saying that the inevitable neglect of the simultaneous changes of the economic situation, the real basis of all the events to be investigated, is bound to be a source of error. But all the conditions of a comprehensive presentation of the history of the day inevitably include sources of error—which deters no one from writing current history.

The significance of this exposition by Engels can hardly be overrated. If the Russian question in particular is considered in the light of it, it should become as plain as day why, especially here, the source of error must be particularly great. For example, statistics under Stalin was not only a discipline that always limped behind, but also a well arranged deception. Under such circumstances, neither the genius, Trotsky, nor anyone else, was in a position to draw the general balance-sheet for any given period out of the manifold complicated and constantly changing factors which formed the Russian reality. Whoever has followed the working out of the theory by Trotsky knows that the theory was forced to run behind the statistics, the "symptoms," the changing factors (expressed in the famous "zig-zags" of Stalinist policy), *etc.*, just as the statistics and everything else ran behind the reality (and, in addition, falsified it). Hence: from the *New Course* past Bonapartism to the Thermidor and the political revolution, an unbroken chain of appendices, corrections, re-evaluations or—elimination of sources of error. What is involved here, however, is this: who could imagine that since the outbreak of the war (which has still more substantially reduced the information about Russia) the source of error has not grown once more? It must be said, on the contrary: the errors have grown gigantically, because the constantly vigilant, constantly critical (and therefore revolutionary) spirit of Trotsky has been transformed into a catechism of dead articles of faith and then passed off as the present reality. But with

that we have absolutely no way of knowing by what criteria we are to judge the present reality.

The question then is whether we know of factors that have been at work "for a long time in concealment," before they have become operative "suddenly and forcibly come to the surface." Or: are we today able "to consider the economic situation found at the beginning of a given period as governing the entire period without variation, or to consider only such changes of the situation as emanate from events plainly visible and therefore also quite manifest."

If the situation is considered from this angle, we learn first of all what we already know. In the first place, our critics (like ourselves, in agreement with Trotsky) count the factors of restoration among those forces that have been at work for a long time, if not in a hidden then in thousandfold concealed way, and which could never be grasped "statistically." Second, they acknowledge that the war has pushed these forces "powerfully" to the surface. Third, the second imperialist war is thus among the openly present events out of which further changes originate, which shows them openly and—makes them accessible to consideration. (In passing: with this enumeration we are naturally doing our critics too much honor. In actuality, we are enumerating and putting in order for them only those elements which have accumulated in their hands chaotically and without consequences as purely empirical material. According to Hegel, those people are also "eclectics" who assemble "all the good things," but who do not have the consistency of thought and therewith thought itself.)

For the theoretical treatment, it is now of special importance to hold firmly to this: If we have subsequently succeeded, after the assembling and sifting of the material, in gaining a general view of the economic history of a given period (including the changes), the political conflicts must be traced back to the struggles of interests on the basis of the social classes and class fractions given by the *new* economic development. In such a case it is clear that the political conflicts and measures must give expression to the existing economic interests all the more crassly and directly the more suddenly—violently the most important factors, secretly at work for a long time, push to the surface. No theoretical investigation can, therefore, pass over the political events which reflect the crass reversal in the economy of the S.U. The S.U. long ago ceased to be a danger to the bourgeoisie, but the contradiction (taken on the *historical* scale, honored critics!) between the Soviet Union and world imperialism could continue to exist so long as the restoration had not fully triumphed. If it is assumed, as we assume, on the basis of the new facts that the decision has meanwhile taken place, then this "contradiction" is also dissolved and gives way to other contradictions. As the author of the third article says: the term imperialism takes the place of the term bureaucratism. And as we add: the social revolution replaces the "political." The question then is, what disclosure do the political events give us?

The Trap of History on the Political Side

This time we take as the crown witness the resolution on the "European Revolution and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Party," which has meantime appeared also in the *Fourth International* (Dec. 1944). The Lord has nothing to forgive the writers of this document, which is so pitiable in every respect, for they know not what they do when they speak to us about Russia:

Stalin's program, both internal and external, is reactionary

through and through. It represents a terrible danger for the European revolution, and to the further existence of the Soviet Union itself.

[Which is why we once more emphatically warn the bourgeoisie against the deadly "danger"!]

This program only [!] plays into the hands of world capitalism and, if successful, would help convert Europe into the vassal of Anglo-American imperialism. If the dastardly conspiracy which Stalin hatched with Roosevelt and Churchill at Teheran to crush the European revolution were to succeed, it would simply open the road to capitalist restoration inside the Soviet Union itself, by internal counterrevolution or military intervention or both.

[These are the usual phrases and speculations which "simply" open the road to restoration which, at the same time, according to previous evidence, is already wide open. For it should not be forgotten that for twenty years Stalin has been extremely "successful" in playing into the hands of world capitalism.]

The Anglo-American imperialists cannot—any more than could the Nazis—reconcile themselves to the existence of nationalized property for any extended period in the territory comprising one-sixth of the earth's surface.

[Whether for a short or an "extended period," this is extended nonsense. If the nationalized property were still involved, and if it were the main thing, Anglo-American imperialism would be able, precisely after the end of the war, to reconcile itself with it for a long time and do a tremendous business with it. But the fetish of "nationalized property" will play the very smallest rôle in the coming conflicts. They will be determined much more far-reachingly by a phenomenon which has made its way with astonishing "dynamic" and in consequence of which "antagonisms" arise which are certainly unbearable for "any extended period." It is *neo-Russian imperialism*, whose violence can be explained all the less by the "nationalized property" the more it renounces the "nationalization" of this property in the subjugated countries. From the standpoint of the nationalized property in the Soviet Union, its "new acquisitions" are foreign bodies with which Stalin, in the same way as Hitler, has stuffed his throat with a *national question* that he will not be able to digest. Stalin's policy of conquest may be far better explained from the standpoint of the actual economic development. It is then the result of a constantly growing dependence upon the capitalist environment and an increasingly extensive adaptation to its property laws. In the first Russo-Finnish war, it could at least still appear to be different—today the conquered countries link Russia directly with the capitalist property forms and show *openly* what is taking place in concealment inside Russia. The resolution itself will soon offer us the occasion to say more on this score.]

As for the "friendly" coalition capitalist [!] governments, which the Kremlin bureaucracy is propping up with the Red Army bayonets, they will prove no more trustworthy than the alliance with Anglo-American imperialism.

[This playing around with the word "trustworthy" is one of the hobbies with which organized stupidity whiles away its time. The robber Hitler gives loans to the robber Stalin and concludes a pact of friendship with him, while the robber Molotov assures Hitler "of the strength of the blood ties between Germany and Russia." The robber Stalin said in 1936 and it was repeated a million times throughout the world; "We want not one foot of foreign soil but we will not give up an inch of our own soil." Thereupon, in agreement with the robber Hitler he steals for himself half of Poland and is later attacked by Hitler himself. Thereupon he allies himself with Anglo-American imperialism, whom he denounced during the friendship pact with Hitler as the "disturbers of the peace" and treated in exactly the same way as he did "fascism" the day before the pact with Hitler. Thereupon, based upon the "trust" of the democracies, he steals back for himself the Poland stolen by Hitler and all of Eastern Europe to boot. This is the usual game among imperialist robbers, regardless of their color. These gentlemen treat with each other only on the assumption that they are not "trustworthy." And now comes the resolution and makes the magnificent discovery: the friendly capitalist governments are not "trustworthy." But dear resolution: neither is Stalin, neither is Stalin! Which does not prevent both sides from finding each other absolutely "trustworthy" with regard to the contemplated reaction. And with great success.]

In the event of future conflict, these spurious "friends" of the Soviet Union [My God, my God, the resolution is completely mad—

it is talking about friends of *Stalin* and not of the S. U.!] representing the capitalists and landlords of Eastern Europe, will act in accordance with their *class* interests and needs: they will join with the Anglo-American imperialists in the assault against the Soviet Union. Stalin's elaborate structure will collapse like a house of cards. The alliance of the Soviet proletariat with the insurgent masses of Europe is thus indispensable for the preservation of the Soviet Union.

May the reader excuse our copious quotation, but the movement will gain substantially in clarity if we make an example of at least a part of this resolution (a bungled-up job which is wholly like the resolution of the sub-district committees of the days of the lowest state of the German C.P.). The most important thing we have learned up to now consists in the "friendly" coalition *capitalist governments*, which the Kremlin bureaucracy is popping up with the *Red Army bayonets*. *Capitalist governments* can of course be only such governments which (representing the capitalists and landlords of Eastern Europe) act in accordance with their *class interests and needs*. It does not matter at all to us here whether, and to what extent, they are impeded or restricted in looking after their interests. We are interested only in the fact that capitalist governments are precisely—*capitalist* governments, which are propped up, in the case before us, by the bayonets of the Red Army. The resolution, on the other hand, pursues a certain line (that of organized stupidity) and seeks to talk us into how little "trustworthy" the wicked capitalists are: in the *event* of future conflict these . . . capitalists will act in accordance with their *class* interests and needs. In this way, the bureaucrat saves his "line," *i.e.*, the "defense of the Soviet Union": the alliance of the Soviet proletariat with the insurgent masses of Europe for the preservation of the Soviet Union, instead of the alliance of both for ending the Stalinist robberies and restoring the S.U. In reality, in a future conflict, imperialist Russia alone or together with others, will stand against another imperialist grouping, and it is a matter of complete indifference to us who fights in this conflict on the side of Anglo-American imperialism and who does not. The resolution may very well get ready for "surprises" in this respect, too, however much we may wish that Stalin's elaborate structure, in accordance with its assurances, collapses like "a house of cards." In any case, the madness of the resolution mounts as we learn further:

Stalin is betraying the European revolution through his agents from within [by which the friendly capitalists only show that they know how to place their class interests *above* their national and particular interests] and has given clear warning that he will if necessary attempt to drown it in blood from without. The decisions of the Teheran Conference as well as the actions of Stalin's agents in Yugoslavia, Greece, Rumania, Poland, Italy, etc., constitute unmistakable danger signals that Stalin is prepared to repeat his hangman's work in Spain on a continental scale.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. The advanced workers of Europe must sound the alarm! They have the clear duty of warning the working class against the counter-revolutionary schemes of Stalin and his native henchmen. The working class must be prepared to combat Stalinist treachery and sellouts. *The Fourth Internationalists will work unceasingly to destroy the Stalinist influence in the labor movement.* This is an indispensable prerequisite for healthy growth and all future successes.

We sound the alarm and take cognizance of the solemn oath that we "will" destroy the Stalinist influence, etc. We are overjoyed at the "timely" decision of the SWP, especially in view of the fact that on the other side the capitalist governments are already basing themselves on the bayonets of the Red Army. It might be supposed that with this we have at least reached a useful propagandistic or agitational line with

regard to the "Red" Army as one of the agents of Stalin. A resolution on the question of the European revolution would have the task, in the first place, of defining exactly and concretely the attitude toward the Red Army in every single case, even if it was written in the spirit of the unconditional defense of the S. U. Unfortunately, its authors do not live at the level of the times and of the tasks posed—they live on the abstract "defense of the S. U." even when this part of the task has been carried through "victoriously," in their opinion, and the "emphasis" upon the slogan has been shifted: "Defense of the European Revolution Against All (!) Its Enemies." They live in the deepest depths on the memory of the great "danger" that the S. U. is supposed to be to the bourgeoisie, and they must leap into the trap no matter what it costs. As soon, therefore, as it is a problem of taking a position concretely on the actions of the "Red" Army and as "a correct guide to action," we get nothing but empty chatter which has nothing to do with the matter (just as in general the whole resolution is nothing but fearfully lumped-together babbling, not on the "Tasks of the Revolutionary Party," but *right past them.*) As soon as it is a problem of putting an end to the bayonets of the "Red" Army and of rightly employing the material gained, we get from the resolution—and under the "promising" title of "The Task Ahead" (get this straight: the task *ahead*), at that—the world-redeeming intelligence of the bureaucrat richly provided with space-filling formulas:

The Trotskyists stand for the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack. Despite Stalin's crimes and betrayals, the Trotskyists everywhere urge the masses to work and fight for the victory of the Red Army against the military forces of imperialism, for the preservation of the nationalized property relations of the Soviet Union against all imperialist assaults from without or counter-revolution from within.

This then is what a bureaucrat poses for himself as the task "ahead"! But, it may be asked, why shouldn't the bureaucrat be able to put forth the formula he has learned by rote, especially when for the sake of argument we have assumed that he can stand on the basis of "unconditional defense" to his heart's content?

Right! we answer: he could cheerfully tell all his beads and besprinkle himself with holy water, if only he would tell us what he thinks of doing with the Red "bayonets," the friendly capitalist governments, all of the economic and political material he has gathered and—with the European revolution. He does not, however, have the slightest idea of coming to grips with the material, and expects to send us home "well fed" with a few more phrases and stupidities. That is what hurts: his resolutions only makes us hungrier; it is as useless and harmful as his whole rosary. All in all, what we have here are critics who confound danger for the bourgeoisie with *contradiction*, and who point out to us: the Soviet Union is as good as dead—only the revolution is in danger. If this confusion was already pernicious enough for the past eight years, the criticism (in view of the new economic and political facts and the simultaneous maintenance of the defense of the S. U. as the task "ahead") does not emerge from the historical trap. It is no accident that the resolution exhausts itself in more or less one-sided declamations *about* the revolution (in a vacuum) and, for the rest, is evidence of complete passivity. And it is inevitable that its attitude must work out in favor of the bloodiest enemy of the all-sidedly threatened European revolution, in favor of Stalin. For this, the *political passivity* alone is already decisive, while the only task "ahead" provides auxiliary assistance propagandistically, and the rest

of the confusion muddles up the masses politically—again in favor of Stalin and consorts.

Thinking people (in so far as they still believe in the existence of the "Soviet" Union and seriously want to save it) would have taken the situation into account and applied all their energies to the *revolution* itself. They speak about it being possible to set the Russian masses into motion against the Stalin régime only as a result of a European revolution. If this is to be taken as an article of faith, then the masses must rise against Stalin, too, if the restoration in Russia has already triumphed. We share this view with Trotsky, who rightly believed that the memory of the great historical achievement of the proletarian revolution could never perish and would have to rise again as a deed. The revolution, learned critics, has the peculiarity of summoning once more on to the historical plane both the still living and the already "dead" Soviet Union. In accordance with this understanding, the task must be formulated at a time when Stalin is once more assiduously active as the butcher of the revolution, and is systematically extirpating everything in the conquered countries that offers resistance or that *might* offer resistance. The all-sided organization of the direct resistance, the fanning of the revolutionary (the national, included) struggle against Stalin and his tools (the Red Army and the GPU) is the most urgent command of the hour in all countries. This struggle will in no wise (even if we remain entirely within the logical framework of our critics) imperil the "Soviet" Union, although it certainly will imperil the entire counter-revolution which can bear up under anything but revolutionary struggle. The dialectic of the present situation may be expressed in the seemingly paradoxical formula: The driving out of the Red Army by the masses of the people of the nations enslaved by Stalin will signify the deliverance of the Soviet Union and the victory of the world revolution.

Concluding Political Proof

Let us now consider the butcher's work of Stalin, so far as the resolution deigns to take cognizance of it:

In Yugoslavia, the Stalinists, headed by Tito, took the leadership of the revolutionary [!] mass movement under the guise of aiding and organizing it and then proceeded to bend it to their own reactionary purposes. They were able to do this because they are still able to cloak their reactionary designs with the moral authority of the October Revolution. The Yugoslav Partisan movement originated as an indubitable movement of the masses, whose worker-peasant sections aspired not only to drive the Nazi conquerors out of their country, but to abolish the rule of the rapacious and reactionary landlord and capitalist cliques represented by King Peter and his Government-in-Exile. The determination of the masses to drive out the imperialist invaders and to win national freedom was fused with the social struggle against the native exploiters. The Stalinists have betrayed the aspirations of the masses; they have already united with the hated régime of King Peter, set up a class-collaborationist government, and have proclaimed their intention of preserving the capitalist set-up, dominated by the same old crew of monarchists, landlords and capitalists. Utilizing the slogan of national liberation, the Stalinists are working to deliver the Yugoslav masses into the hands of their oppressors.

The Stalinist program of betrayal is not, however, proceeding unchallenged. Already in Greece active opposition and resistance has appeared in the ranks of the Greek Partisan movement to the Stalinist leaders who have conspired to perpetrate a betrayal similar to Tito's and to unite with the Greek Government-in-Exile, representative of the Greek capitalists and landlords. Undoubtedly, similar developments, to one degree or another, are taking place in all the movements of struggle which the Stalinists head in order to behead.

In Rumania, the Stalinists are carrying through the program proclaimed by Molotov in April, 1944, when the Red Army first

entered Rumanian territory. Molotov assured the capitalists that the Stalin bureaucracy will not alter "the existing social structure of Rumania." Stalin is keeping this promise. The Stalinist military authority is preserving the totalitarian filth of the semi-fascist régime of the Rumanian landlords and capitalists. The Stalinists are pursuing similar reactionary aims in Poland and are pledged to the same policy in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. Stalin thus assures the Allies that under his rule the Red Army [!] will be used in Europe as a gendarme of capitalist property.

Inadequate and merely phrasemongerish though this description is, it is economically as well as politically impressive enough to awaken the expectation: Now it must come, now we will be told what is to be done! But the only thing we learn is:

In the countries under Red Army occupation, the advanced workers will [!] have to organize workers and peasants councils, factory committees, trade-union bodies, etc., in a spirit of deepest distrust of the Stalinist agents. They will [!] warn that Stalinist promises of fundamental reforms are lies. They will [!] urge the masses to organize their *independent actions* to confiscate the landlords' estates, to place factories under workers' control, to arm the masses. In this *independent activity of the masses* lies the only guarantee for the success of the European revolution and its protection from the Stalinist hangman.

This lamentable babbling goes to the point of grammatical absurdity: "They will urge the masses... to arm the masses." And they will, and "they" will, and they "will." The SWP leadership also "wills". Or better: It has already wanted, many times, and never *been able*, and that in an exceptionally favorable situation, with neither a "Red" Army nor a GPU hanging around its throat. We recognize, of course, that it is a difficult thing (even "in a spirit of deepest distrust of the Stalinist agents") to create in America merely a Labor Party, for example. But that is truly child's play in comparison with the task of creating under the eyes of the GPU and the "Red" Army, workers' and peasants' councils, factory committees, trade union bodies (etc.) while the "advanced workers" are slaughtered by the thousands, dragged off to Siberia, stuck in the concentration camps and prisons (etc.). The question of how the masses are to be mobilized nationally and internationally "to drive out the [Red] imperialist invaders and to win national freedom" for the revolution, is carefully evaded and replaced by cheap commonplaces. These commonplaces are then followed by an assurance which, in view of the hollow babbling, is nothing but a mockery of the masses:

Through these measures [?] and in no other way, will the European masses be able to approach the Red Army soldiers and organize fraternization with them in order to protect the European revolution. Only in this way, and in no other, will the European proletariat be able to forge bonds of solidarity with the Red Army soldiers and the Soviet masses and help the latter settle accounts with the murderous Stalinist bureaucracy.

How to start digging into this rubbish? Only in this way, and in no other: If ever a revolution triumphs "in this way," we will voluntarily surrender to it as "counter-revolutionists," so that it has somebody whom it is at least worth the effort to shoot. But the authors of the resolution themselves don't believe in their victory, which is why they promptly pose the profound question:

And what if Stalin nevertheless succeeds in using Red Army troops to suppress workers' revolts?

We are as tense as can be: aha, what's coming now? Will this, in accordance with previous assurances, "simply open the road to capitalist restoration inside the Soviet Union itself, by internal counter-revolution or military intervention or both?" And what will be our work then?

A complete fool can wait for an answer—the resolution has other worries. It answers its question with another question, which serves to be distinguished with the Nobel Prize for the "greatest worry" and its "most peaceful solution":

How will we reconcile our position on the defense of the Soviet Union with support of the European revolution?⁷

This question seems to introduce directly the "independent activity of the masses" and Mr. Eisenstein ought to be summoned speedily to take a faithful picture of it. For the great worry of the bureaucrat rushing hither and yon comes all the more surprisingly because of what the resolution thereupon tells us:

Throughout the period when the Nazi military machine threatened the destruction of the Soviet Union [what is this: threatened the "destruction"?], we pushed to the fore the slogan: *Unconditional Defense of the Soviet Union Against Imperialist Attack*. Today the fight for the defense of the Soviet Union against the military forces of Nazi Germany has essentially been won. Hitler's "New Order in Europe" has already collapsed.

The authors of the resolution seem to imagine that the workers have won "the fight for the defense of the Soviet Union," when it was the bourgeoisie and Stalin who were the only victors. In any case, the influential interventionist reminded them a little about the reality, and so we hear:

The present [!] reality is the beginning of the European revolution, the military occupation of the continent by the Anglo-American and Red Army troops, and the conspiracy of the imperialists and the Kremlin bureaucracy to strangle the revolution. We therefore push to the fore [!] and emphasize [!] today that section of our program embodied in the slogan. *Defense of the European Revolution Against All Its Enemies. The defense of the European Revolution coincides with the genuine revolutionary defense of the USSR.*

But didn't the same resolution, on the other page, push to the fore and emphasize the "task ahead": "... the Trotskyists everywhere urge the masses to work and fight for the victory of the Red Army" (etc.). Now a "better" slogan comes to the fore and pushes the task ahead into the background, with us still in ignorance on *how* the defense of the European revolution against "all" its enemies is to be conducted. The writers of the resolution evidently thought that the problem of the revolution and all other problems are solved if only they ask stupid questions on how, indeed, to "reconcile" the old position (defense of the Soviet Union in the foreground) with the new, bureaucratically-adopted position (defense of the European revolution, likewise in the foreground). Since they have no answer themselves, they resort to a Trotsky quotation:

... In every case the Fourth International will know how to distinguish where and when the Red Army is acting solely as an instrument of the Bonapartist reaction and where it defends the social basis of the USSR.

The quotation is good, and it is not Trotsky's fault if the resolution gains nothing by it. For anyone who believes that, set on the right trail by Trotsky, they would yet think better of it at the last moment, get to the "tasks," and try to "distinguish" whether the "Red" Army, for example in Bulgaria, the Baltic countries, Poland, etc., is playing a "solely" reactionary rôle because it is propping up capitalist governments with bayonets... ah, whoever believes in anything at all but organized stupidity, can go to the dogs. Trotsky himself is defenseless, like Held, and can do nothing about it if the

⁷ "Defense" of the Soviet Union and "support" of the revolution is positively precious.

"policy" of the SWP is just as "effective" as that of the German CP leadership before Hitler's victory. According to Trotsky, the policy of these people was a policy "with extinguished lamps," and on all questions the "mouth was filled with water." Unfortunately, the resolution also has a mouth full of water, and instead of following the good quotation with the "distinction" it reacts with its favorite phrase:

The independent revolutionary action of the European masses, in deadly combat against the Stalinist scoundrels, will [!] assure the victory of the European Revolution and the survival and further development of the October Revolution inside the Soviet Union.

Wherewith the stupidity "inside" the resolution attains its highest independent action, and the time has come when the incense burner must be swung to and fro:

Of all the "programs" and "theories" on the Soviet Union and the Kremlin bureaucracy, only the Trotskyist analysis and program have been confirmed by events and have provided the revolutionary vanguard with a correct guide to action.

The reference to "action" is worth exactly as much as Stalin's reference to socialism—not the slightest trace of either one can be discovered. No analysis and program, no confirmation, no provision, no revolutionary vanguard, no correctness, no guide, but complete confusion, revolutionism of the phrase (which must be driven out *mercilessly*, according to Lenin, because it is *betrayal*), false agitation and propaganda, the arrogance of ignorance—that is what was to be proved as the "peculiarity" of our critics. Only in the sense of the total falsity of their whole "policy" in the past are they now justified in opening their resolution, with regard to the future, with the assertion:

This resolution is a *reaffirmation* and an *extension* of the Plenum resolution.

This resolution is a *reaffirmation* and an *extension* of the Plenum resolution.

From what we knew of our friend Held, he will be content with his self-punishment of his slanderers.

What Would Trotsky Say?

We put this question here only in so far as it is a question of the *estimation* of the situation that has been given through the development of the Soviet Union in the war. Naturally, nobody knows how Trotsky would have evaluated the events in detail. But he left enough unmistakable indications of the greatest importance for us not to go wrong on the main line. Let us go back for the last time to the *Fourth International* of November, 1944. Animated by the need of covering up their insincere, imposed change of front in the Russian question, the editors present us with a fourth contribution under the title, "Two Pertinent Quotations from Leon Trotsky." In reverse order, the essential in the quotation reads:

We revolutionists fight against the bureaucracy in the USSR because by its parasitic policies and its repressions it *undermines the nationalization* of the means of production and the *monopoly of foreign trade*, that is to say, the fundamental bases of socialist construction. World imperialism demands of the Kremlin oligarchy that it carry through its work to the end, and after the reestablishment of ranks, decorations, privileges, domestic servants, marriages for money, prostitution, punishment for abortions, etc., etc.—the reestablishment of private property. [Let us note here: Still according to the evidence of our critics, the development is proceeding entirely along the line of capitalism and the Kremlin oligarchy has already conceded the demand of world imperialism with bayonets, gold, etc.]

War accelerates the various political processes. It may accelerate the process of the revolutionary regeneration of the USSR.

But it may also accelerate the process of its final degeneration. [In the opinion of our critics and in our own, the latter has already occurred.] For this reason it is indispensable that we follow *painstakingly* and *without prejudice* these modifications which *war* introduces into the internal life of the USSR so that we may give ourselves a *timely accounting* of them. (Emphasis ours throughout.)

The living spirit of Trotsky, which breaths in these lines, obligates us to insist unsparingly upon driving out the "revolutionists of the phrase." Well: in the behavior of our critics, there can be no talk about painstakingly, without prejudice, timely accounting, *etc.* In the best of cases, an interventionist pushes them a half-step forward and puts them to the trouble of having to "reconcile" two false positions. The first thing, however, that Trotsky would say without absolute certainty on the basis of the present situation, as it is presented by the criticism itself, would be an energetic repetition of his old statement: the interests of the world revolution stand *above* the interests of the Soviet Union!

Taken without its consequences and voided of its content, this statement, like any other, is only a phrase. Taken with its content and thought out to the end, however, it says that the interests of the S.U., *must* be violated under certain conditions (something like the way a sick person is given poison in order to save him), in order not to doom it to ruin.

Now (as our critics who are on the hunt for the "dialectic" themselves testify), when the S.U. has entered completely into the net of world imperialism; when the interests of the Kremlin oligarchy have become completely interlaced with those of the bourgeoisie; when Stalin is restoring the health of capitalism outside of Russia and is protecting it with the arms in the hands of the "Red" Army; when the S.U. appears on the scene just like an imperialist robber; when Stalin already has the world revolution by the throat and is its most dangerous foe... what now?

We leave it to our critics to dig up for themselves where Trotsky has already given the answer to this. But since the answer actually lies before us, we can speak out with certainty on what Trotsky *would* say in view of the accomplished facts. He would perhaps not employ the same words as we, who, a few years after his physical slaying, are the witnesses of his intellectual slaying, and who are face to face with organized stupidity. However, he would undoubtedly speak up in this sense: Get out of the way the revolutionists of the phrase, who conceal their passive impotence behind the defense of the S.U. and betray the revolution... under present circumstances a defence of the "Soviet" Union is a violation of revolutionary interests.

Theoretical Balance

Practise without theory is the same absurdity as theory without practise. This truth is so strong that with a false theory (if it is only sufficiently consistent) you can much sooner reach a correct practise than, for example, with the confused and unthinking empiricism and eclecticism of the SWP leadership. Its "theory" is a store of undigested quotations, wedded to their peculiar diletantism, which are thrown together according to need and rearranged with the same old printer's ink. The result is a—political vacuum or the pure "action" of "pre" printer's ink. But if we leave the SWP aside as a thing in itself, there remain two possible theoretical positions with regard to the S.U.

The first position is that of Trotsky, which is *theoretically* completely maintained so long as it is assumed: either the S.U. must go forward to socialism or back to capitalism. Who-

ever takes this position, may have substantial differences with Trotsky on the stage of the development, the *estimation* of the facts, the situation, *etc.*, without having to depart from him theoretically. We ourselves, for example, as already stated, hold firmly to the theoretically decisive formula of Trotsky and believe that Russia must go back to capitalism, failing new revolutions. Not despite this, but precisely on the basis of this theoretical position, we have finally come to the conclusion (following painstakingly and without prejudice the modifications which *war* introduces into the internal life of the S.U.), that the S.U. is lost and that its "defense" is a covering of the rear of imperialism, incompatible with the revolution. Meanwhile, in our opinion, what is decisive for the victory of capitalism over the S.U. is not 20, 30, 40 or 50 percent "restoration" in Russia itself, but the *totality of the international* economic and political factors and relationships.

The second position is that of "bureaucratic collectivism," as the representative of which we know, primarily, the "wicked" Max Shachtman. Whoever takes this position, achieves thereby in advance the advantage of an unambiguous and consistent line, but on the other hand falls into strong dependence upon the once-given *estimation* of those factors that determined the formula, "Neither capitalism nor socialism, but bureaucratic collectivism." Inasmuch as the formula itself is easily subject to oscillation as soon as the given and above all the newly-adhered factors (*e.g.*, war) have developed further, and require a different estimation (new quality) under certain circumstances, the danger is ever-present of considering the things not in their self-movement and in "flux," but in accordance with the rigidity of the formula. This danger is theoretically absolutely inevitable, because the formula is itself rigid, undialectical, in premise and conclusion. It is not capable of grasping the flow of things or their self-movement—rather it excludes itself, by its very foundations, in itself, from development and transition (the essence of all things). The great theoretical weakness of this position may be easily perceived when it is borne in mind that exclusion from change is fundamentally absurd; and on the other hand, every essential transition must destroy the formula. Theoretical objection is further strengthened when it must be admitted: the development of the S.U. is a result of the capitalist encirclement and of the dependence of the S.U. upon the world market, whose laws (impossibility of socialism in one country) it cannot escape. If changes are not to be denied fundamentally, their direction is therewith given in advance by virtue of the law of the capitalist environment and—we land again at the alternative: forward to socialism or back to capitalism. The "third" possibility that then exists is not bureaucratic collectivism, but the intermediate condition that is provided with both features, the formula of the movement (forward or back), the stages of the transitions themselves. Arrived at this point, everything is again reduced to the *estimation* of the old and the incontestably newly-adhered factors, that is, to the question of whether the changes have become essential enough to make it possible to say: the S.U. must be created all over again from the ground up.

So that whatever stand may be taken on the two positions: on the basis of the *estimation*, Shachtman and ourselves come to the same conclusions which, speaking politically, mean the rejection of "defense" of the S.U. Put differently: in the *Russian* question, we have theoretically different views, but in the political line we are in agreement. One must be struck with factional blindness not to recognize that the sheer consistency of the (in our opinion false) theory of Shachtman enabled

him to conduct a correct policy (which, given the state of things, can be little more than a correct agitation and propaganda). Anyone who says the same about the SWP policy, may do so on his own account, but it is just as certain for us that the "obviously false" line, the covering of the rear of Stalinism, the dismal confusion, the two "reconciled" positions which both stand in the fore, *etc.* (the evidence of which we find here, in the document of Comrade Roland as, in general, in all the materials for the convention), especially in the Russian question, cannot be derived from Trotsky's position. For this, the evidence is, first, ourselves, and second, Comrade Roland who demonstrated in detail: the leadership was unable to do anything with the theory, was not up to its level and—thereby lost all theory in general. The secret of the present situation consists in this, that you can still be theoretically for the "defense" of the (monstrously mutilated) Soviet Union *without landing in the treadmill of the SWP*. If the modifications are followed painstakingly and without prejudice (*e.g.*, unconditional defense *under all circumstances*), you will be able to seek for a long time, in *practice*, for an opportunity to "defend" (which is why we have characterized this slogan as directly misleading), while you have both hands full with the struggle against the "Red" Army, the GPU, Russian imperialism and its enslavement of peoples. From which it follows: Theory is indispensable, and the first premise for a successful policy. But theoretical *differences of opinion* are far from being *decisive under all circumstances* for that reason. In the Russian question, for example, they are not today. Whether or not they can again become decisive tomorrow is a question we do not deny, but we leave that to the wise owls of the SWP for "advance decision."

What Attitude to Take?

When Max Shachtman had our study on "Capitalist Barbarism or Socialism" at hand, we were most assuredly interested in its publication also for—factional reasons. We record this being-factionally-interested as laudable—for a miserable politician is he who has his "views," but is blind to the advantages of the situation and does not know how to conduct the political-factional struggle for his convictions. However, political-factional struggle has nothing in common with factional delusion. Success can be the lot of a proletarian organization only when it remains truth-loving, scrupulous, honest, and refuses to wipe out differences artificially or to eliminate them by bureaucratic maneuver. Max Shachtman was therefore a faction-man as he "should be" when he wrote in the "Introduction" to our study:

To be sure, the establishment of a common standpoint between us on the tasks of the proletariat and the revolutionary vanguard in the present period—and this is now decisive [!Bravo!]—does not necessarily imply literal agreement with every single word in the German document. Indeed, so far as the section on Russia is concerned, our differences with the views of Trotsky, which the German comrades still seem too accept, at least by implication, are too familiar to need special emphasis.

Although Shachtman knew that for us the discussion on the "workers' state" has been passed over and become pointless, he was not willing to hush up a difference of opinion even if it exists only by implication. That is what we call coming to grips with questions not in the manner of organized stupidity, but in a *Bolshevik* way. This method makes it possible for everyone to reflect on the essence of the conflicts of opinion, to follow their development, to gain a broad view of them, and to become acquainted with every concrete detail. The result is precisely that universal knowledge of detail that

permits the Bolshevik organization to find its way in the confusing mass of phenomena, to trace the general connections, to carry through its own class line without error in the midsts of antagonisms and contradictions, without which a mastering of the manifold and complicated problems is not possible. Anyone who carefully compares the Bolshevik method with that of our critics, will recognize without difficulty whereon the intellectual poverty of their arguments (which we have cited down to the last letter, so far as the Russian question goes) rests. Unbelievable as it seems: we will encounter still greater poverty, still greater confusion, still greater stupidity, as soon as we pass over to the *European* question. Let us conclude the Russian section with the assurance:

We shall follow the development painstakingly and without prejudice, and see, for example, if Stalin will be able to

change his present policy in Eastern Europe and adapt it to that system which is regarded by Shachtman as "bureaucratic collectivism." If weighty facts speak, and force us to another conclusion, we will draw that conclusion and revise our theoretical standpoint. Neither we nor Shachtman can lose anything in "prestige" or anything else (there are people who have such "worries"), if we are compelled to acknowledge the falsity of an opinion and to lay bare the roots of the mistake. Quite the contrary! There was "no better" Bolshevik, none endowed with more "authority," none more worthy of confidence, than the one who was capable of thoroughly thinking out his mistakes and learning from them.

International Communists of Germany,

by N. T.

Negroes In Organized Labor

Account of a First-Hand Investigation

Herbert R. Northrup's first-hand study of the Negro in the labor movement in the United States* should be a textbook for every union official, for every white and black worker and particularly for revolutionists who want to see the trade-union movement as it really is in relation to the Negro worker. This holds especially for the AFL and the non-affiliated railway unions. These unions are revealed in all their stark nakedness and hypocrisy in connection with their anti-Negro position. Mr. Northrup made personal investigations and has told in this book the results of those investigations. He reports what the AFL, railway and CIO unions stand for, what they do and how they act when faced with the problem of the Negro in industry. He tells what their constitutions say, what is provided for in their rituals and to what extent the organized labor movement practices what it preaches in relation to the Negro worker and the Negro member.

The author has been well placed for acquiring the necessary information and experience for this study. He has worked for the WLB, was a consultant to the Fair Employment Practices Committee and is now connected with the National Labor Relations Board. In his preface he reports that "the basic material for this book was gathered in the field during the summers of 1940-1943."

The book is divided into sections dealing with the building trades, railroads, tobacco industry, textiles, clothing and laundries; longshoremen, coal mines, iron and steel, automobiles and aircraft and shipbuilding. There are explanatory notes on the material in the various chapters, a bibliography and an introduction by Prof. Sumner Slichter of Harvard University, where Mr. Northrup took his doctorate in economics and wrote his thesis on "Negro Labor and Union Policies in the South."

Mr. Northrup not only presents the reader with an abundance of factual material on the subject with which he is dealing but he has a point of view which he gives in summary form at the end of the book in his "Concluding Remarks."

**Organized Labor and the Negro*, by Herbert R. Northrup; Harper & Bros.

Union Discrimination Against Negroes

The author warns that care must be exercised in any attempt to evaluate the "racial policies" of the unions for the reason that "the attitude of unions toward Negroes... often varies within the same organization from region to region..." He classifies the unions which exclude Negroes by ritual, the machinists, for example; unions which exclude Negroes by the constitution, and names six AFL affiliates and seven non-affiliated railway unions. Then he gives the unions which exclude Negroes by "tacit consent," naming six AFL affiliates and ten unaffiliated organizations. His last category is unions "which afford Negroes only segregated auxiliary status." He finds seven of these in the AFL and two unaffiliated. It is probably not necessary to say that no CIO international or local union falls within any of these exclusionist categories.

In connection with Northrup's catalog of unions which discriminate against Negroes in one way or another, it is necessary to bear in mind his own warning about "dynamic elements" which operate to change the picture. For instance, Northrup gives the Seafarers International Union as one of the unions excluding Negroes by "tacit consent." Today the SIU does not exclude Negroes but I have been told that this international maintains a separate hiring hall for Negroes in New York City. Also it should be remarked that since Mr. Northrup wrote his book the courts of California have upheld a petition of Negro members asking that the Boilermakers be ordered to dissolve its auxiliary locals and to admit Negroes to the regular locals. It is too early to say what the final results will be, as the Boilermakers have appealed to a higher court.

Northrup contrasts the policies and practices of the AFL with those of the CIO. He points out that in the first few years of its existence the leaders of the AFL "apparently" made an effort to live up to their "expressed policies of racial equality... These sentiments, however, were of short duration." In this statement Northrup reveals what is brought out throughout the book in those parts dealing with interpretation: namely, that the author evaluates the labor movement as just one of the important and significant social movements in the

American scene. The formation of the AFL was a class in motion but this is not expressed in the book. The coming of the AFL represented a class in motion, despite the fact that its leaders failed to recognize this fact and its tremendous importance for the future of organized labor in the U. S. The fact that the AFL displaced the Knights of Labor despite the latter organization's equalitarian policies, demonstrated that there was objective need for an organization *basing itself* on the skilled workers and excluding some of the elements which were admitted to the Knights. The AFL leaders did not live up to their "expressed policies of racial equality" mainly for the reason that they did not recognize American capitalist society as a class society and therefore did not understand or agree that class solidarity across racial lines was imperative for the health and vigor of the labor movement. The AFL developed a "success" philosophy based on expansion among the skilled workers.

Negroes in the Building Trades Unions

Mr. Northrup begins his consideration of the several groupings in the labor movement with the building trades. Since the space allotted is not sufficient to discuss the author's treatment in detail I can only give what is of outstanding significance. He points out that one-half of Negro skilled workers are in the building trades and that of these, sixty per cent are in the South. The Negro lost ground in the building trades due to the pressure of the white workers as unionization proceeded. He goes into the attitude of the plumbers and electricians in their efforts to bar Negro mechanics by finagling with city councils to pass ordinances which worked hardships on Negroes. Also both of these internationals adopted apprenticeship standards which Negroes could not meet due to the discriminatory practices of the unions themselves. The carpenters, although having no formal discriminatory policy against Negroes, have found such subtle ways of exclusion as confining Negro carpenters to the Negro section of the community. In the South, the Carpenters' International has not bothered to intercede in behalf of Negro carpenters who were denied work on account of race. In this connection Northrup relates the results of government intervention in behalf of Negro carpenters in the case of federal public housing as well as the opposition against equality for Negro mechanics voiced by members of Congress.

The set-up in the Painters is similar to that of the Carpenters. They too set up separate Negro locals. This has been done by the Painters in the North to a greater extent than in the Carpenters. The Painters also resort to various schemes to keep Negro workmen from obtaining jobs.

Unlike the Carpenters and the Painters, the Bricklayers' officers began a campaign "as early as 1870 . . . to achieve equal status for Negroes." Unlike the Carpenters, the Bricklayers did not adopt the separate local as a national policy. In his field survey in 1940-41 Northrup found separate Negro locals in only three cities, all in the South. In this international too, however, the Negro worker runs into difficulties in getting admitted to certain locals and in getting his share of the work.

In 1940, 15.2 per cent of the plasterers in the country and 54.5 of those in the South were Negroes. This is accounted for by the ease with which Negro hod carriers and plasterers' helpers may graduate into the higher trade. Negro plasterers have less difficulties over discriminatory practices than other Negro building craftsmen.

Northrup's investigations serve to underscore and give the concrete material to buttress what was generally known: that

the building trades unions of the AFL, all of them in one way or another, discriminate against the Negro mechanic. These were the unions which first came under notice and against which the main fire was directed for the reason that it was these unions which sought jurisdiction in the field occupied by the overwhelming majority of Negro skilled workers.

Railroad Organizations and the Negro

Northrup next deals with the railroad organizations and here he tells a sordid story indeed. He says: "The Negro railroad worker is in an anomalous position. He is denied a voice in the affairs of nearly all railway labor organizations; yet collective bargaining on the railroads has received wider acceptance than in almost any other American industry." He relates how violence has been used against Negro railway workers by white union members, how the brotherhoods have connived with railroad management to bar Negroes and discriminate against them and how "since 1934" the brotherhoods "have found federal agencies useful in accomplishing their purpose." The Engineers, in their jurisdictional quarrel with the Firemen, have attempted to use the Negro firemen as pawns in the game. On the Florida East Coast Railroad "the general chairman of the Engineers' Union acted as representative for the Negro firemen in return for monetary consideration." Dr. William Leiserson, chairman of the Railway Mediation Board, wrote to the Firemen and Engineers suggesting that they withdraw a request for an election because no matter what bargaining units resulted, the colored employees would control the results for the particular region for which the election was requested. James W. Carmalt, a member of the board, wrote to the Engineers and Firemen that in the "Southeastern region the Negro question interjects itself in that the B. of L. E. are (sic) soliciting the votes of Negro firemen. . . . This demonstrates the unhealthy condition that has grown in the relation between the two organizations *when the votes of the colored employees are used to determine white representation.*" Northrup adds: "One cannot avoid receiving the impression that the board regards collective bargaining in the train and engine services as strictly a white man's affair." It is necessary to emphasize that the Railway Mediation Board is a federal government board appointed by the President.

Northrup goes over the whole miserable affair and closes by saying that discrimination against the Negro railroad workers by the employers and the unions "is assisted by the policies of government agencies."

There is one argument which Northrup makes which needs examination because here again his point of view appears. He argues against a suggestion which has been made to the effect that the Amended Railway Labor Act should be extended to other industries because this Act has made for industrial peace in the railroad industry. Northrup admits that peace has been preserved "and due credit should be accorded to the Railway Labor Act and its administrators for this laudable accomplishment. But peace on the rails has had its price. One price . . . is the acceptance by employers of obsolete made-work, or 'featherbed' working rules. Another has been the toleration of intense discrimination against Negroes."

We cannot agree to Northrup's equating what is called "featherbed" working rules with discrimination against Negroes or any other group of workers. No matter what its merits or demerits today, what is called "featherbedding" was devised by the unions as a protection against unemployment due to technological changes and covert anti-union acts of the

employers. All unions and the whole working class at some time or another are confronted with this problem (one-man street cars, for instance). Historically, made-work rules were an effort on the part of labor to ward off unemployment due to the ups and downs in the development of capitalist production and organization. These shifts and developments affect all of labor. These demands of labor are directed at and against the employer. Discrimination against Negroes or any other group in the working class is not an act directed at the employer but at the worker group discriminated against. This creates a rift in the working class and operates against the interests of the labor movement at any and all times. The basic reason that the Railway Mediation Act should not be extended to cover other industries is not that it tolerates "made-work" or even that its administrators have promoted discrimination against Negroes. The basic reason is that this act, in so far as it establishes government control over unions, would be detrimental to the unions and to the working class, including the Negroes. The experience of the unions with the WLB, which is looked upon as a temporary war body, has illustrated the danger of the intervention of capitalist government into union affairs.

In March of this year, the Regional War Labor Board denied a request of Radio Station WOV in New York City for permission to reduce the number of musicians hired under contract with the American Federation of Musicians. WOV charged "featherbedding" on the part of the union. The regional board said that it had no authority to "destroy or diminish privileges won by a local union through collective bargaining." The question as to what "featherbedding" actually is in practice always arises. In the case cited, the radio station planned to reduce the number of musicians from twelve, as called for in the collective bargaining agreement, to five. Furthermore, in these days of "government control," "featherbedding" can become a very useful dodge to be used by employers for contract breaking and by government boards for an assault on the unions.

The Organization of Separate Locals

Northrup deals with a group of unions which are divided between the CIO and AFL. Here are the Tobacco Workers; Textile, Clothing and Laundries; Longshoremen and Shipbuilding Workers. In pre-Civil War days tobacco was grown and processed by Negro slaves. In the industry today "whites operate the machines and weigh and pack the final product. . . . The racial-occupation segregation pattern is made practical because the stemming and blending and shredding departments where the majority of Negroes are employed, have to be housed in separate buildings, or at least on separate floors." The jobs the Negroes have are the least desirable because they work in the heat and the dust. Furthermore there are wage differentials based on race.

The AFL Tobacco Workers Union forbids discrimination in its constitution but has organized separate locals in the South. A new administration elected in 1940 has adopted a policy of mixed unions "wherever possible" and at the 1940 convention a Negro was elected to a vice-presidency.

Few Negroes have ever been employed in the cotton textile industry either North or South. In the South, "legislation demanding the complete segregation of workers of the two races . . . has not only helped to institutionalize the exclusion of Negroes . . . but has assisted white workers to preempt most of the desirable work opportunities." In the South, the CIO Textile Workers Union has adopted the policy of organizing

separate locals for Negroes under certain conditions. This is the case at a Virginia mill and at the Marshall Field Mills in North Carolina. "To the writer's knowledge," says Northrup, "no other CIO affiliate has adopted the separate Negro local as a union policy." This means that the Textile Workers Union "has accepted the racial employment pattern in the industry." The author doubts that the union can do otherwise now because the TWU has only a small portion of the industry under contract and to "advocate an alteration in the *status quo* at this time would insure the Textile Workers Union, or any other organization, complete defeat in the Southern textile mills." I do not believe that there is any warrant for this position. In the first place, it smacks too much of the philosophy of the Southern inter-racial committees, that is, it is too tinged with liberal opportunism. Admitting that the poor whites in Southern textile mills are an ignorant and very debased group of workers, there is no good reason for approaching them in any fundamentally different way from the miners and steel workers, for instance. Also, the way to organize these backward textile workers and force contracts from the mill owners is not to hold the very small Negro minority in the foreground but the very large unorganized white majority already in the mills. The mill owners at present are not so much concerned with Negroes who are not present but the white workers who are now employed by the thousands. They are not organized. The TWU has the task of pushing a vigorous organization campaign in the South. The road to changing the attitude of white workers toward Negroes is to get the white workers organized; let them learn something about trade unionism and they will at the same time learn the value of a different outlook on the Negro worker. Any other attitude is to advocate the acceptance of "the racial employment pattern in the industry."

In the same chapter Mr. Northrup relates that in Miami, Fla., separate locals of laundry workers were established by the Laundry Workers Union, "but their charters were recently revoked and a new charter for a mixed local granted instead. In most of the local organizations Negroes are well integrated, holding various offices and being well represented as shop stewards." It seems that what the Laundry Workers could do in Miami, the Textile Workers might attempt in South Carolina.

"The Greater Tractability of Negroes"

Northrup says that in longshore work one finds emphasis on speed and "in view of the greater tractability of Negroes in submitting to continual prodding—a result of their inferior socio-economic status—it is not difficult to imagine that many employers hire them even when white workers are available at the same pay." Here Mr. Northrup sounds like a "car window" sociologist. He certainly did not discover this about Negroes generally in the course of his *investigations*. What often seems to be tractability on the part of Negroes is often nothing more than a very astute physical procedure for reducing physical exertion to the level of the pay received without getting into conflict with a brutal but stupid anti-Negro superintendent.

About ninety per cent of the longshoremen at Hampton Roads are Negroes. Before 1900, the locals were entirely Negro. White workers refused to join and "the colored longshoremen were finally persuaded to consent to the issuance of a separate charter for white men." I suppose that one of the arguments made by the white men was that if the situation

were reversed and the Negroes wanted a separate local, the whites would readily consent.

For the coal industry, Northrup holds that increasing mechanization has injured Negro employment and "if past experience is any guide, Negroes will suffer disproportionately heavy losses in jobs. . . . These post-war adjustments will put the equalitarian policies of the UMWA to their severest test."

In the steel industry, Northrup finds that employment has tripled since 1910 but that there was a decrease in the proportion of Negro workers in the Thirties. This was due to personnel policies of the corporations. Most of the Negroes were held in unskilled classifications and were not therefore in the indispensable class. The majority of Negroes in the industry remain in the unskilled class. This is particularly true of the South. Equalitarian policies have met more obstacles in steel than in coal. "Successful unionism is newer," there is a wider wage differential "between the unskilled and skilled work" and there is more "job segregation" in the steel industry.

Here again, however, it is necessary to remark that these are problems for the unions to tackle and solve. There are all manner of differences in the world in everything. It is true that it is easier to open "all white" departments in steel than in coal. But all white departments are just as unnecessary in steel as in coal. There is nothing about the steel industry which makes some operations more effectual if done by white workers. This is one of the problems for the United Steel Workers to solve by effective and militant union action.

How seniority is applied affects the welfare of Negro workers, according to Northrup. The prevalence of departmental seniority "accounts in large measure for the failure of the USA-CIO to open up some all-white departments to Negroes. On the other hand, in periods of depressed business . . . departmental seniority works to the advantage of Negroes . . . where they are heavily concentrated in a few departments."

Northrup makes a queer and unexplained statement when he writes that "Most companies prefer departmental seniority, for its operation interferes the least with the established order of things, and hence has not the adverse effect on the efficiency of operations which the application of plant seniority does." (My emphasis.—D.C.) It is true that any seniority operations interfere with the "order of things," but just how does plant seniority interfere with "efficiency of operations?" Which is better for the union and the workers?

Negroes as Active Union Members

In the automobile industry, Negroes are also predominantly in the unskilled class. (Of course, there has been some change in all industries since this book was published.) Northrup found that generally Negroes had not been dealt with unfairly in layoffs. This was largely due to the fact that they had acquired seniority in departments where they were concentrated. "On the other hand, a majority of Negroes have been quite unsatisfied with the operation of departmental and occupational seniority. They regard it as a thinly disguised ruse to keep them concentrated in the poorer and more undesirable departments and occupations."

In the automobile industry, Northrup makes a statement on Negro participation in union affairs similar to the one he makes about the United Steel Workers. "UAW-CIO leaders continue to be hindered in their attempts to secure equality of opportunity for Negroes by the failure of Negroes in some plants to give the union their full support." He mentions the Flint Buick plant, where the union was successful in getting

500 Negro foundry workers upgraded to production. "Yet in July, 1942, less than fifty per cent of the Negroes were union members, as compared with ninety per cent of the white workers."

It is true that Negroes have been slow in getting into the union and becoming active. However, it should not be expected that Negroes will rush into a union merely through the impetus of one event in which the local has succeeded in getting Negroes upgraded. Whereas Negro workers have a single experience of the value of the union to them, white workers in the same plant may have had a hundred such experiences. It will take a long time to convince Negroes that getting upgraded through the activity of the union will be a permanent and regular experience in their working lives. There must be no attitude that Negroes give thanks for any fight which unions carry on against discrimination. This sounds too much like "remember Abraham Lincoln." What is necessary is the complete integration of Negroes into the union, equality in the union, a persistent demand for job equality and the education of Negroes in the principles of trade unionism. If this is done more and more Negroes will join the unions and become among the most active members.

On the aircraft industry, Northrup points out that "the responsibility for excluding Negroes from the industry clearly rested upon the management." In those cases where the union or the international officers acted vigorously against Jim Crow the Negroes rally to the CIO against the AFL, as was the case in Kansas City, where the Negroes supported the UAW-CIO against the IAM-AFL.

Mr. Northrup deals with the AFL Metal Trades Department in his discussion of the shipbuilding unions: with the Boilermakers' Jim Crow auxiliaries, whose international removed the Negro exclusion clause from its ritual in 1937 and resorted to the Negro auxiliary set-up as a substitute. In a Tampa yard, where one-half of the employees were Negroes, the Boilermakers and the Machinists did not establish Negro auxiliaries but "used the closed-shop contract to secure the dismissal of about 500 Negroes and the demotion of all but two of the remainder to unskilled jobs."

On the CIO Shipbuilding Workers, the author deals with the situation at the Sun Co., where a Jim Crow yard was established in the midst of three nearly all-white yards. He also discusses the situation in the yards on the Gulf Coast, where there have been many difficulties in connection with Negro employment. He concludes as of the date of the book that "serious attempts have not been made to utilize Negro labor." Negroes have had the best opportunities on the Atlantic Coast in the yards under contract to the CIO Shipbuilding Workers.

In his "Concluding Remarks," Mr. Northrup expresses his point of view on several complicated and controversial questions. He observes that there is a tendency for "union racial policies to be conditioned by their environment." Unions have the habit of accepting "the racial employment pattern of an industry." He finds that national officers "can and do take a more detached view of the situation, to the resultant advantage of Negroes." This is probably true but in the AFL this "detached view" is usually filled with a great deal of hocus-pocus and hypocrisy. In the CIO it is certainly true that the national officers have been outstanding in their efforts to wipe out discrimination both in the CIO unions and in industry. But here too there are many things yet to be done.

The Question of Government Intervention

An important section deals with "Public Policy, the Ne-

gro and Unions." He asks the question: should unions which discriminate be permitted to limit employment opportunities, to sign closed shop contracts, to use public labor relations boards, or be designated as the bargaining agent? Northrup makes a distinction between what he, following the courts, calls "private institutions such as the church or the Elks," and "quasi-public institutions," in which category he places the unions. Mr. Northrup writes: "The claims of unions that they should be permitted to govern their own affairs, free from government interference of any sort, is a 'sheer anachronism,' out of keeping with their actual status in our present social organization. . . . Once unions are admitted to be quasi-public institutions, it follows that their rules and practices should be subject to some public scrutiny, and those found contrary to the public interest should be forbidden."

It is precisely by the acceptance of this premise that Congress passed the Smith-Connally Act, that the no-strike pledge was demanded, that the Little Steel formula was established and that Roosevelt demanded passage of a National Service Act. The question must be asked: What is a quasi-public institution? Unions are institutions of a class, organized for the purpose of protecting the interests of a class. They are or should be public in their relations to the class which they represent. Implied in the demand of the unions that they be free from government interference is the position that government interference in the affairs of unions is interference by another and a hostile class. The fact that this notion is usually not explicit is only demonstrative of the lack of class-consciousness and political understanding in the labor movement.

It is a tragedy in the labor movement that the unions do not understand that they can hold to their discriminatory policies only so long as the employers and the government have no need for the services of the whole labor force. When, as at present, there is a war to fight, the class interests of the employers and the government will result in the intervention of the government by law and administrative or presidential decree.

Mr. Northrup argues further, apropos the closed shop, that "it seems quite sound, also, that unions which sign closed shop contracts should also be subject to further regulation." Also the existence of "race wage differential" indicates "the need for strong governmental action." We agree with and support Mr. Northrup's very laudable attitude against the discrimination and Jim Crow. But we do not agree with the cure which he proposes, namely, government intervention or control. Even the most ordinary workers have acquired an education in the meaning of government intervention in the "public interest" through their experiences with the "public" members of the WLB.

Negroes may profit materially, for the time being, by virtue of government action against discriminatory unions but as a section of the working class they have suffered along with the white workers from the government and employer restrictions on the functioning of the unions. The organization of the CIO did more to advance the interests of Negroes and Negro labor than all the government intervention in the twentieth century.

The Liberal and the "Public"

In advocating government regulation as a cure for racial discrimination, Mr. Northrup takes the viewpoint of the middle-class liberal in setting up an entity known as the "public"

and then arguing for action in the "public interest." This attitude, as we have remarked, ignores the class organization of capitalist society and the further fact that unions are basically class institutions participating in a struggle between classes. As the working class develops greater class-consciousness and the Negro worker becomes more firmly integrated thereby into the labor movement, Jim Crow and discrimination will tend to vanish and the solidarity of labor will be increased.

Despite his point of view for government regulation, Mr. Northrup seems to agree with this position. He writes: "The overwhelming bulk of organized labor . . . has everything to gain from continued improvements in the economic status of Negroes." Also "it is difficult to understand how Negroes can improve their lot without the aid of organized labor. It is therefore obvious that Negro workers who want unions to continue their fight for equal opportunity must join and support the unions."

DAVID COOLIDGE.

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Trotsky and the Iron Heel

His Observations on the Famous Novel

Trotsky's commentary on Jack London's great classic, *The Iron Heel*, was written in Mexico some time in 1937. Originally, it was published as part of the biography, *Jack London and His Times*, written by his daughter, Joan London, to whose courtesy we are obliged for its reproduction in these pages. Joan London writes us that an earlier letter from Trotsky explained why *The Iron Heel* struck him so forcibly, due to the fact that he had been unaware of its existence until she sent him a copy. It is not necessary to add anything else to what we print here by Trotsky, except to note that the abruptness of its opening sentence is due to the omission from the original published text of the first paragraph.—Editor.

... The book produced upon me—I speak without exaggeration—a deep impression. Not because of its artistic qualities: the form of the novel here represents only an armor for social analysis and prognosis. The author is intentionally sparing in his use of artistic means. He is himself interested not so much in the individual fate of his heroes as in the fate of mankind. By this, however, I don't want at all to belittle the artistic value of the work, especially in its last chapters beginning with the Chicago commune. The pictures of civil war develop in powerful frescoes. Nevertheless, this is not the main feature. The book surprised me with the audacity and independence of its historical foresight.

The world workers' movement at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century stood under the sign of reformism. The perspective of peaceful and uninterrupted world progress, of the prosperity of democracy and social reforms, seemed to be assured once and for all. The first Russian revolution, it is true, revived the radical flank of the German social-democracy and gave for a certain time dynamic force to anarcho-syndicalism in France. *The Iron Heel* bears the undoubted imprint of the year 1905. But at the time when this remarkable book appeared, the domination of counter-revolution was already consolidating itself in Russia. In the world arena the defeat of the Russian proletariat gave to reformism the possibility not only of regaining its temporarily lost positions but also of subjecting to itself completely the organized workers' movement. It is sufficient to recall that precisely in the following seven years (1907-14) the international social-democracy ripened definitely for its base and shameful rôle during the World War.

Jack London not only absorbed creatively the impetus given by the first Russian revolution but also courageously thought over again in its light the fate of capitalist society as a whole. Precisely those problems which the official socialism of this time considered to be definitely buried: the growth of wealth and power at one pole, of misery and destitution at the other pole; the accumulation of social bitterness and hatred; the unalterable preparation of bloody cataclysms—all those questions Jack London felt with an intrepidity which forces one to ask himself again and again with astonishment: when was this written? Really before the war?

One must accentuate especially the rôle which Jack London attributes to the labor bureaucracy and to the labor aristocracy in the further fate of mankind. Thanks to their support, the American plutocracy not only succeeds in defeating the workers' insurrection but also in keeping its iron dictatorship during the following three centuries. We will not dispute

with the poet the delay which can but seem to us too long. However, it is not a question of Jack London's pessimism, but of his passionate effort to shake those who are lulled by routine, to force them to open their eyes and to see what is and what approaches. The artist is audaciously utilizing the methods of hyperbole. He is bringing the tendencies rooted in capitalism: of oppression, cruelty, bestiality, betrayal, to their extreme expression. He is operating with centuries in order to measure the tyrannical will of the exploiters and the treacherous rôle of the labor bureaucracy. But his most "romantic" hyperboles are finally much more realistic than the book-keeper-like calculations of the so-called "sober politicians."

It is easy to imagine with what a condescending perplexity the official socialist thinking of that time met Jack London's menacing prophecies. If one took the trouble to look over the reviews of *The Iron Heel* at that time in the German *Neue Zeit* and *Vorwärts*, in the Austrian *Kampf* and *Arbeiterzeitung*, as well as in the other socialist publications of Europe and America, he could easily convince himself that the thirty-year-old "romanticist" saw incomparably more clearly and farther than all the social-democratic leaders of that time taken together. But Jack London bears comparison in this domain not only with the reformists. One can say with assurance that in 1907 not one of the revolutionary Marxists, not excluding Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, imagined so fully the ominous perspective of the alliance between finance capital and labor aristocracy. This suffices in itself to determine the specific weight of the novel.

The chapter, "The Roaring Abysmal Beast," undoubtedly constitutes the focus of the book. At the time when the novel appeared this apocalyptic chapter must have seemed to be the boundary of hyperbolism. However, the consequent happenings have almost surpassed it. And the last word of class struggle has not yet been said by far! The "Abysmal Beast" is to the extreme degree oppressed, humiliated, and degenerated people. Who would now dare to speak for this reason about the artist's pessimism? No, London is an optimist, only a penetrating and farsighted one. "Look into what kind of abyss the bourgeoisie will hurl you down, if you don't finish with them!" This is his thought. Today it sounds incomparably more real and sharp than thirty years ago. But still more astonishing is the genuinely prophetic vision of the methods by which the Iron Heel will sustain its domination over crushed mankind. London manifests remarkable freedom from reformistic pacifist illusions. In this picture of the future there remains not a trace of democracy and peaceful progress. Over the mass of the deprived rise the castes of labor aristocracy, of prætorian army, of an all-penetrating police, with the financial oligarchy at the top. In reading it one does not believe his own eyes: it is precisely the picture of fascism, of its economy, of its governmental technique, its political psychology! The fact is incontestable: in 1907 Jack London already foresaw and described the fascist régime as the inevitable result of the defeat of the proletarian revolution. Whatever may be the single "errors" of the novel—and they exist—we cannot help inclining before the powerful intuition of the revolutionary artist.

LEON TROTSKY.

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