

For Members Only

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# INTERNAL

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# BULLETIN

Issued by the  
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Vol. II, No. 1

October 10, 1939

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October 5, 1939

TO ALL LOCALS AND BRANCHES:

Dear Comrades,

PARTY DISCUSSION ON THE RUSSIAN QUESTION

The plenum of the N.C. held in New York on September 30th and October 1st, as one point on its agenda held an extended discussion on the Russian question in the light of the war and the new developments.

(1) The plenum decided to reaffirm the basic analysis of the nature of the Soviet state and the role of Stalinism and the political conclusions drawn from this analysis, including the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack, as laid down in the previous decisions of our party convention and the program of the Fourth International.

(2) The plenum endorsed the political conclusions of a new document by Comrade Trotsky on "The U.S.S.R. in War" and instructed the Political Committee to publish it as an evaluation and elucidation of the new events on the basis of our fundamental position.

(3) Minority points of view were also presented to the plenum in documentary form.

(4) By unanimous agreement a motion to organize a party discussion on the question was adopted, and the provisions for the regulation of the discussion are defined in the motion as follows:

"An educational discussion shall be organized in the party by the P.C. on the Russian question in general and its specific relation to the present war. In this discussion the official position of the party as determined by the plenum will be defended in the party press. At the same time, an internal bulletin shall be published and membership meetings authorized in which all points of view will be given free expression. After the discussion has proceeded for a while, if it appears that differences of such a fundamental character are clearly developed as to require a decision by the party, and if the minority of the N.C. or a considerable section of the party membership desires a party convention to settle the question, it is understood that this will be agreed to."

(5) An internal bulletin containing all documents now on hand is being prepared and will be ready for distribution in a few days. Comrades desiring to contribute to the discussion in subsequent issues of the internal bulletin are invited to send their articles or resolutions to the National Office.

Fraternally yours,

J.P. Cannon  
National Secretary

MOTIONS ON RUSSIAN QUESTION

The following motions were adopted by the Plenum of the National Committee, meeting on September 30th and October 1st, 1939:

- (1) "That we reaffirm the basic analysis of the nature of the Soviet state and the role of Stalinism and the political conclusions drawn from this analysis, including the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack, as laid down in the previous decisions of our party convention and in the program of the Fourth International."
- (2) "The plenum endorses the political conclusions of the document of Trotsky on "The U.S.S.R. in War" and instructs the Political Committee to publish this document as an evaluation and elucidation of the new events on the basis of our fundamental position."

RESOLUTION ON THE SOVIET UNION IN THE PRESENT WAR

has  
The party, thus far failed to give a clearcut and unambiguous answer to the questions raised by Stalin's invasion of Poland. The result has been a serious weakening of the effectiveness of our press, a disorientation of the Party membership, and a corresponding reduction of our striking power against the American Stalinist machine and against the social-democratic and imperialist-patriotic forces who seek to exploit the events for their own reactionary ends and who can be counteracted most successfully only by an unequivocal revolutionary position on our part. This is all the more urgent in view of the Estonian events and the prospective extension of Stalin's invasion to other Baltic and to the Balkan countries.

The new questions raised cannot be and are not answered by a mere reiteration that "the Soviet Union is a worker's State" and that "we stand for the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union." The idea that these declarations provide an automatic reply to the concrete questions posed by the concrete military and political actions taken by Stalin is absurd, and has been proved absurd in practice. Without raising at this time the problem of the class nature of the Soviet state, it is necessary to give immediate answers to the concrete questions raised by the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the ensuing conquest of Poland and matters related thereto.

Considered abstractly, the Hitler-Stalin pact stands on the same level as the Franco-Soviet pact, and revolutionary Marxists have only contempt for the Popular Frontists and patriots of all stripes who endorsed the latter because it was made with democratic imperialists and condemn the former because it was made with Nazi imperialism. For our part, we reject and condemn both, without forsaking our basic position which recognizes the admissibility of temporary agreements between a Soviet state and a bourgeois state.

Considered concretely, however, the Hitler-Stalin Pact has meant the following, which was, in general, only potentially contained in the Franco-Soviet Pact:

- (1) Stalin gave Hitler the signal for opening up the Second Imperialist World War -- and linked his fortunes with those of the Nazi war machine;
- (2) Stalin gave Hitler the signal for the brutal Nazi invasion of Poland;

- (5) Stalin not only facilitated this imperialist invasion politically and militarily but jointly divided the spoils with the triumphant Nazis.

The Party must sternly reject any attempt, made inside or outside its ranks, to "explain away," to justify or to condone the Stalinist invasion of Poland and its partition in partnership with Hitler. The Party must reject the essentially capitulatory standpoint summarized in the formula, "As between Hitler and Stalin, the Poles should choose Stalin." We deny that the choice of the multi-national masses of Poland is limited to the rule of the Hitlerite bandits or the Kremlin slave-drivers. The Fourth International calls upon the masses of Poland to fight against both of them as well as against the Polish ruling class - for a Socialist Poland and for the united, independent Soviet Republics of the Ukraine and of White Russia. The Party also rejects the standpoint which, under the guise of an "objective explanation" and in the name of the "defense of the Soviet Union" makes the Stalinist invasion a matter of indifference to the masses of Poland or relegates it to the category of purely military-tactical considerations of the Red Army. It is not a question of military science but a political question, and it must be dealt with accordingly.

The Party condemns the Stalinist invasion and subjugation of Poland as acts of imperialist policy. Regardless of the illusions the Kremlin gang may feed the masses (or itself, for that matter), it is acting as the agent of German imperialism, just as it was ready to act as agent of Anglo-French imperialism yesterday and may act as such tomorrow. Produced by the same cause, German Fascism and Stalinist bureaucratism are now engaged in a joint campaign of imperialist expansion.

The Party must denounce the monstrous claims of the Stalinists that the Red Army is "liberating" the Ukrainian, White Russian and Polish people, just as it denounced the earlier Stalinist claim that the Polish masses would be fighting for democracy and freedom against fascism by supporting the ruling class of Poland and its regime. The war in Poland shows, to an infinitely greater and clearer extent than the civil war in Spain, the utterly counter-revolutionary role played by the Stalin bureaucracy. While we were not and could not be for the defense of "poor little Poland" -- the imperialist Poland of yesterday -- we recognized in the patriotism and the hatred of Hitlerism shown by the Polish masses something potentially progressive. With the inevitable collapse and flight of the rotten Polish military land-owning clique and its government, arose the possibility of a revolutionary defense of Poland, if not a Polish October immediately, then an October reached after a Polish "February". In the class

attending the collapse of the Polish Imperial Army, signs of such a possibility already could be discerned in parts of the country. Instead of helping in any way -- even to the tiny extent to which it was done in Spain, where at least one Soviet rifle out of ten might be counted on to fire at Franco -- to materialize this possibility, i.e., to promote an independent class war against the Nazi invader, Stalin wiped out this possibility completely in partnership with that invader. Stalin and the Red Army thus played a flatly counter-revolutionary role in Poland.

The bitter realities of the recent events, most particularly of the events in Poland, dictate a revision of our previous concept of the "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union". As understood by our movement, this concept meant not only that we call for the defense of the Soviet Union even if it is directed by the Stalinist bureaucracy, but also that we support the Red Army in any military struggle in which it engages, that we are for its victory under all circumstances, be it a so-called "defensive" or "aggressive" war. To be true to its revolutionary internationalist role, the Fourth International must now call upon the Polish workers and peasants to rise in revolutionary struggle and, with their own armed forces, drive out the oppressors of the people -- Hitler in one-half of the country and the Stalin Bureaucracy in the other. The same applies in similar situations elsewhere. This means a struggle, the revolutionary internationalists cannot and will not be for the victory of the Red Army which the Stalinist Bureaucracy has compelled to act as an agent of imperialism and an oppressor of the people. Instead, the Fourth International will call upon the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union, those in the Red Army included, to help their revolutionary brothers in Poland -- just as we call on them to help fight for the establishment of an independent United Soviet Ukraine -- and to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy and its reactionary officer corps at home.

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From this position -- the only one compatible with the revolutionary interests of the international proletariat as well as of both the Polish and Soviet masses -- does not necessarily follow the abandonment of the slogan of the defense of the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Franco-Soviet Pact demonstrated once more the fragility and temporariness of alliances between the Soviet Union and capitalist states. It is quite possible - even probable - that the Hitler-Stalin Pact will last an even shorter time. All of Stalin's hopes and ruses to the contrary, notwithstanding a change in the character of the war into direct imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union by one or more states is not at all excluded. Assuming that the bourgeois counter-revolution, which is now on the order of the day in the Soviet Union, has not triumphed, the defense of the Soviet Union,

\* (insert in starred space): both against the Reichswehr and against the Red Army. In this struggle, the revolutionary.., etc.

even under the rule of the bureaucracy, will again become an immediate and paramount task. In other words, just as wars of national liberation can change into imperialist wars and vice versa, and imperialist wars into revolutionary wars, so we cannot exclude the possibility of the present imperialist war turning into a war of intervention in the Soviet Union. The Party cannot adopt a position which may result in new events catching it unawares and it must therefore envisage the possibility of a radical change in the decisive nature of the present war and in the position occupied by the Soviet Union.

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It is necessary to submit these questions immediately to the discussion of the Party membership -- and of the International -- in a sober, orderly and responsible manner. There is no other way of arriving at a firm and clear revolutionary position, thus enabling us to discharge the enormous responsibilities faced today by the Fourth International.

September 28, 1939

Max Shachtman



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(N.B. Literal Translation)

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The German-Soviet Pact and the Character of the U.S.S.R.

Is it possible after the conclusion of the German-Soviet Pact to consider the U.S.S.R. a workers' state? The nature of the Soviet State has again and again aroused discussion in our midst. Small wonder; we have before us the first experiment in the workers' state in history. Never before and nowhere else has this phenomenon been available for analysis. In the question of the social character of the U.S.S.R., mistakes commonly flow, as we have previously stated, from replacing the historical fact by the programmatic norm. Concrete fact departs from the norm. This does not signify, however, that it has overthrown the norm; on the contrary, it has reaffirmed it, from the negative side. The degeneration of the first workers' state, ascertained and explained by us, has only the more graphically shown what the workers' state should be, what it could and would be under certain historical conditions. The contradiction between the concrete fact and the norm constrains us not to reject the norm but, on the contrary, to fight for it by means of the revolutionary road. The program of the approaching revolution in the U.S.S.R. is determined on the one hand by our appraisal of the U.S.S.R., as an objective historical fact, and on the other hand, by a norm of the workers' state. We do not say: "Everything is lost, we must begin all over again." We clearly indicate those elements of the workers' state which at the given stage can be salvaged, preserved, and further developed.

Those who seek nowadays to prove that the Soviet-German pact changes our appraisal of the Soviet State take their stand, in essence, on the position of the Comintern -- to put it more correctly, on yesterday's position of the Comintern. According to this logic, the historical mission of the workers' state is the struggle for imperialist democracy. The "betrayal" of the democracies in favor of fascism divests the U.S.S.R. of its being considered a workers' state. In point of fact, the signing of the treaty with Hitler supplies only an extra gauge with which to measure the degree of degeneration of the Soviet bureaucracy, and its contempt for the international working class, including the Comintern, but it does not provide any basis whatsoever for a re-valuation of our sociological appraisal of the U.S.S.R.

Are The Differences Political or Terminological?

Let us begin by posing the question of the nature of the Soviet state not on the abstract-sociological plane but on the plane of concrete-political tasks. Let us concede for the moment that the bureaucracy is a new "class" and that the present regime in the U.S.S.R. is a special system of class exploitation. What new political conclusions follow for us from these definitions? The Fourth International long ago recognized the necessity of overthrowing the bureaucracy by means of a revolutionary uprising of the toilers. Nothing else is proposed or can be proposed by those who proclaim

the bureaucracy to be an exploiting "class." The goal to be attained by the overthrow of the bureaucracy is the reestablishment of the rule of the Soviets, expelling from them the present bureaucracy. Nothing different can be proposed or is proposed by the Leftist critics.\* It is the task of the regenerated Soviets to collaborate with the world revolution and the building of a socialist society. The overthrow of the bureaucracy therefore presupposes the preservation of state property and of planned economy. Herein is the nub of the whole problem.

Needless to say, the distribution of productive forces among the various branches of economy and generally the entire content of the plan will be drastically changed when this plan is determined by the interests not of the bureaucracy but of the producers themselves. But inasmuch as the question of overthrowing the parasitic oligarchy still remains linked with that of preserving the nationalized (state) property, we called the future revolution political. Certain of our critics (Giliga, Bruno, and others) want, come what may, to call the future revolution social. Let us concede this definition. What does it alter in essence? To those tasks of the revolution which we have enumerated it adds nothing whatsoever.

Our critics as a rule take the facts as we long ago established them. They add absolutely nothing essential to the appraisal either of the position of the bureaucracy in Soviet society, the interrelation between the bureaucracy and the toilers, or of the role of the Kremlin on the international arena. In all these spheres, not only do they fail to challenge our analysis, but on the contrary they base themselves completely upon it and even restrict themselves entirely to it. The sole accusation they bring against us is that we do not draw the necessary "conclusions." Upon analysis it turns out however that these conclusions are of a purely terminological character. Our critics refuse to call the degenerated workers' state -- a workers' state. They demand that the totalitarian bureaucracy be called a ruling class. The revolution against this bureaucracy they propose to consider not political but social. Were we to make them these terminological concessions, we would place our critics in a very difficult position, inasmuch as they themselves would not know what to do with their purely verbal victory.

#### Let Us Check Ourselves Once Again.

It would therefore be a piece of monstrous nonsense to split with comrades who on the question of the sociological nature of the U.S.S.R. have an opinion different from ours, insofar as they solidarize with us in regard to the political tasks. But on the other hand, it would be blindness on our part to ignore purely theoretical and even terminological differences, because in the course of further development they may acquire flesh and blood and lead to diametrically opposite political conclusions. Just as a tidy housewife never permits an accumulation of cobwebs and garbage, just so a revolutionary party cannot tolerate lack of clarity, confusion and equivocation. Our house must be kept clean!

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\*We recollect that some of those comrades who are inclined to consider the bureaucracy a new class, at the same time objected strenuously to the exclusion of the bureaucracy from the Soviets.

Let me recall for the sake of illustration, the question of Thermidor. For a long time we asserted that Thermidor in the U.S.S.R. was only being prepared but had not yet been consummated. Later, investing the analogy to Thermidor with a more precise and well-deliberated character, we came to the conclusion that Thermidor had already taken place long ago. This open rectification of our own mistake did not introduce the slightest consternation in our ranks. Why? Because the essence of the processes in the Soviet Union was appraised identically by all of us, as we jointly studied day by day the growth of reaction. For us it was only a question of rendering more precise an historical analogy, nothing more. I hope that still today despite the attempt of some comrades to uncover differences on the question of the "defense of the U.S.S.R." --with which we shall deal presently -- we shall succeed by means of simply rendering our own ideas more precise to preserve unanimity on the basis of the program of the Fourth International.

Is It a Cancerous Growth or a New Organ?

Our critics have more than once argued that the present Soviet bureaucracy bears very little resemblance to either the bourgeois or labor bureaucracy in capitalist society; that to a far greater degree than fascist bureaucracy it represents a new and much more powerful social formation. This is quite correct and we have never closed our eyes to it. But if we consider the Soviet bureaucracy a "class", then we are compelled to state immediately that this class does not at all resemble any of those propertied classes known to us in the past: our gain consequently is not great. We frequently call the Soviet bureaucracy a caste, underscoring thereby its shut-in character, its arbitrary rule, and the haughtiness of the ruling stratum who consider that their progenitors issued from the divine lips of Brahma whereas the popular masses originated from the grosser portions of his anatomy. But even this definition does not of course possess a strictly scientific character. Its relative superiority lies in this, that the make-shift character of the term is clear to everybody, since it would enter nobody's mind to identify the Moscow oligarchy with the Hindu caste of Brahmins. The old sociological terminology did not and could not prepare a name for a new social event which is in process of evolution (degeneration) and which has not assumed stable forms. All of us, however, continue to call the Soviet bureaucracy a bureaucracy, not being unmindful of its historical peculiarities. In our opinion this should suffice for the time being.

Scientifically and politically -- and not purely terminologically -- the question poses itself as follows: does the bureaucracy represent a temporary growth on a social organism or has this growth already become transformed into an historically-indispensable organ? Social excrescences can be the product of an "accidental" (i.e. temporary and extraordinary) onmashing of historical circumstances. A social organ (and such is every class, including an exploiting class) can take shape only as a result of the deeply rooted inner needs of production itself. If we do not answer this question, then the entire controversy will degenerate into sterile toying with words.

### The Early Degeneration of the Bureaucracy.

The historical justification for every ruling class consisted in this - that the system of exploitation it headed raised the development of the productive forces to a new level. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the Soviet regime gave a mighty impulse to economy. But the source of this impulse was the nationalization of the means of production and the planned beginnings, and by no means the fact that the bureaucracy usurped command over the economy. On the contrary, bureaucratism as the system became the worst brake on the technical and cultural development of the country. This was veiled for a certain time by the fact that Soviet economy was occupied for two decades with transplanting and assimilating the technology and organization of production in advanced capitalist countries. The period of borrowing and imitation still could, for better or for worse, be accommodated to bureaucratic automatism, i.e. the suffocation of all initiative and all creative urge. But the higher the economy rose, the more complex its requirements became, all the more unbearable became the obstacle of the bureaucratic regime. The constantly sharpening contradiction between them leads to uninterrupted political convulsions, to systematic annihilation of the most outstanding creative elements in all spheres of activity. Thus, before the bureaucracy could succeed in exuding from itself a "ruling class", it came into irreconcilable contradiction with the demands of development. The explanation for this is to be found precisely in the fact that the bureaucracy is not the bearer of a new system of economy peculiar to itself and impossible without itself, but is a parasitic growth on a workers' state.

### The Conditions for the Omnipotence and Fall of the Bureaucracy.

The Soviet oligarchy possesses all the vices of the old ruling classes but lacks their historical mission. In the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet State it is not the general laws of modern society from capitalism to socialism which find expression, but a special, exceptional and temporary refraction of those laws under the conditions of a backward revolutionary country in a capitalist environment. The scarcity in consumers' goods and the universal struggle to obtain them generate a policeman who arrogates to himself the function of distribution. Hostile pressure from without imposes on the policeman the role of "defender" of the country, endows him with national authority, and permits him doubly to plunder the country.

Both conditions for the omnipotence of the bureaucracy - the backwardness of the country and the imperialist environment - bear, however, a temporary and transitional character and must disappear with the victory of the world revolution. Even bourgeois economists have calculated that with a planned economy it would be possible to raise the national income of the United States rapidly to 200 billion dollars a year and thus assure the entire population not only the satisfaction of its primary needs but real comforts. On the other hand, the world revolution would do away with the danger from without as the supplementary cause of bureaucratization. The elimination of the need to expend an enormous share of the national income on armaments would raise

even higher the living and cultural level of the masses. In those conditions the need for a policeman-distributor would fall away by itself. Administration as a gigantic cooperative would very quickly supplant state power. There would be no room for a new ruling class or for a new exploiting regime, located between capitalism and socialism.

And What if the Socialist Revolution Is Not Accomplished?

The disintegration of capitalism has reached extreme limits, likewise the disintegration of the old ruling class. The further existence of this system is impossible. The productive forces must be organized in accordance with a plan. But who will accomplish this task - the proletariat, or a new ruling class of "commissars" - politicians, administrators and technicians? Historical experience bears witness, in the opinion of certain rationalizers that one cannot entertain hope in the proletariat. The proletariat proved "incapable" of averting the last imperialist war although the material prerequisites for a socialist revolution already existed at that time. The successes of Fascism after the war were once again the consequence of the "incapacity" of the proletariat to lead capitalist society out of the blind alley. The bureaucratization of the Soviet State was in its turn the consequence of the "incapacity" of the proletariat itself to regulate society through the democratic mechanism. The Spanish revolution was strangled by the Fascist and Stalinist bureaucracies before the very eyes of the world proletariat. Finally, last link in this chain is the new imperialist war, the preparation of which took place quite openly, with complete impotence on the part of the world proletariat. If this conception is adopted, that is, if it is acknowledged that the proletariat does not have the forces to accomplish the Socialist revolution, then the urgent task of the stratification of the productive forces will obviously be accomplished by somebody else. By whom? By a new bureaucracy, which will replace the decayed bourgeoisie as a new ruling class on a world scale. That is how the question is beginning to be posed by those "leftists" who do not rest content with debating over words.

The Present War and the Fate of Modern Society.

By the very march of events this question is now posed very concretely. The second world war has begun. It attests incontrovertibly to the fact that society can no longer live on the basis of capitalism. Thereby it subjects the proletariat to a new and perhaps decisive test. If this war provokes, as we firmly believe, a proletarian revolution, it must inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR and regeneration of Soviet democracy on a far higher economic and cultural basis than in 1918. In that case the question as to whether the Stalinist bureaucracy was a "class" or a growth on the workers' state will be automatically solved. To every single person it will become clear that in the process of the development of the world revolution the Soviet bureaucracy was only an episodic relapse.

If, however, it is conceded that the present war will provoke not revolution but a decline of the proletariat, then there remains another alternative: the further decay of monopoly capitalism, its further fusion with the state and the replacement of democracy wherever it still remained by a totalitarian regime. The inability of the proletariat to take into its hands the leadership of society could actually lead under these conditions to the growth of a new exploiting class from the Bonapartist fascist bureaucracy. This would be, according to all indications, a regime of decline, signaling the eclipse of civilization.

An analogous result might occur in the event that the proletariat of advanced capitalist countries, having conquered power, should prove incapable of holding it and surrender it, as in the USSR, to a privileged bureaucracy. Then we would be compelled to acknowledge that the reason for the bureaucratic relapse is rooted not in the backwardness of the country and not in the imperialist environment but in the congenital incapacity of the proletariat to become a ruling class. Then it would be necessary in retrospect to establish that in its fundamental traits the present USSR was the precursor of a new exploiting regime on an international scale.

We have diverged very far from the terminological controversy over the nomenclature of the Soviet State. But let our critics not protest: only by taking the necessary historical perspective can one provide himself with a correct judgment upon such a question as the replacement of one social regime by another. The historic alternative, carried to the end, is as follows: either the Stalin regime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalin regime is the first stage of a new exploiting society. If the second prognosis proves to be correct, then, of course, the bureaucracy will become a new exploiting class. However onerous the second perspective may be, if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except openly to recognize that the socialist program based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a Utopia. It is self-evident that a new "minimum" program would be required - for the defense of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society. But are there such incontrovertible or even impressive objective data as would compel us today to renounce the prospect of the socialist revolution? That is the whole question.

### The Theory of "Bureaucratic Collectivism".

Shortly after the assumption of power by Hitler, a German "left-communist", Hugo Urbahns, came to the conclusion that in place of capitalism a new historical era of "state capitalism" was impending. The first examples of this regime he named as Italy, the USSR, Germany. Urbahns, however, did not draw the political conclusions of his theory. Recently, an Italian "left-communist", Bruno R., who formerly adhered to the Fourth International, came to the conclusion that "bureaucratic collectivism" was about to replace capitalism. (Bruno R. - La bureaucratisation du monde, Paris, 1939, 350 pp). The new bureaucracy is a class, its relations to the

toilers is collective exploitation, the proletarians are transformed into the slaves of a totalitarian exploiters.

Bruno R. brackets together planned economy in the USSR, Fascism, National Socialism, and Roosevelt's "New Deal". All these regimes undoubtedly possess common traits, which in the last analysis are determined by the collectivist tendencies of modern economy. Lenin even prior to the October Revolution formulated the main peculiarities of imperialist capitalism as follows: Gigantic concentration of productive forces, the heightening fusion of monopoly capitalism with the state, an organic tendency toward naked dictatorship as a result of this fusion. The traits of centralization and collectivization determine both the politics of revolution and the politics of counter-revolution; but this by no means signifies that it is possible to equate revolution, Thermidor, fascism, and American "reformism". Bruno has caught on to the fact that the tendencies of collectivization assume, as a result of the political prostration of the working class, the form of "bureaucratic collectivism". The phenomenon in itself is incontestable. But where are its limits, and what is its historical weight? What we accept as the deformity of a transitional period, the result of the unequal development of multiple factors in the social process, is taken by Bruno R. for an independent social formation in which the bureaucracy is the ruling class. Bruno R. in any case has the merit to seek to transfer the question from the charmed circle of terminological copy-book exercises to the plane of major historical generalizations. This makes it all the easier to disclose his mistake.

Like many ultra-lefts, Bruno R. identifies in essence Stalinism with Fascism. On the one side the Soviet bureaucracy has adopted the political methods of Fascism; on the other side the Fascist bureaucracy, which still confines itself to "partial" measures of state intervention, is heading toward and will soon reach complete statification of economy. The first assertion is absolutely correct. But Bruno's assertion that fascist "anti-capitalism" is capable of arriving at the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is completely erroneous. "Partial" measures of state intervention and of nationalization in reality differ from planned state economy just as reforms differ from revolution. Mussolini and Hitler are only "coordinating" the interests of the property owners and "regulating" capitalist economy, and, moreover, primarily for war purposes. The Kromlin oligarchy is something else again: It has the opportunity of directing economy as a body only owing to the fact that the working class of Russia accomplished the greatest overturn of property relations in history. This difference must not be lost sight of.

But even if we grant that Stalinism and Fascism from opposite poles will some day arrive at one and the same type of exploitive society ("Bureaucratic Collectivism" according to Bruno R.'s terminology) this still will not lead humanity out of the blind alley. The crisis of the capitalist system is produced not only by the react-

ionary role of private property but also by the no less reactionary role of the national state. Even if the various fascist governments did succeed in establishing a system of planned economy at home then, aside from this, in the long run, inevitable revolutionary movements of the proletariat unforeseen by any plan, the struggle between the totalitarian states for world domination would be continued and even intensified. Wars would devour the fruits of planned economy and destroy the bases of civilization. Bertrand Russell thinks, it is true, that some victorious state may, as a result of the war, unify the entire world in a totalitarian vise. But even if such a hypothesis should be realized, which is highly doubtful, military "unification" would have no greater stability than the Versailles treaty. National uprisings and pacifications would culminate in a new world war, which would be the grave of civilization. Not our subjective wishes but the objective reality speaks for it, that the only way out for humanity is the world socialist revolution. The alternative to it is the relapse into barbarism.

### Proletariat and its Leadership

We shall very soon devote a separate article to the question of the relation between the class and its leadership. We shall confine ourselves here to the most indispensable. Only vulgar "Marxists" who take it that politics is a mere and direct "reflection" of economics, are capable of thinking that leadership reflects the class directly and simply. In reality leadership, having risen above the oppressed class, inevitably succumbs to the pressure of the ruling class. The leadership of the American trade-unions, for instance, "reflects" not so much the proletariat, as the bourgeoisie. The selection and education of a truly revolutionary leadership, capable of withstanding the pressure of the bourgeoisie, is an extraordinarily difficult task. The dialectics of the historic process expressed itself most brilliantly in the fact that the proletariat of the most backward country, Russia, under certain historic conditions, has put forward the most farsighted and courageous leadership. On the contrary, the proletariat in the country of the oldest capitalist culture, Great Britain, has even today the dullest and most servile leadership.



The crisis of capitalist society which assumed an open character in July, 1914, from the very first days of the war engendered a sharp crisis in the proletarian leadership. During the 25 years that have elapsed since that time, the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries has not yet created a leadership that could rise to the level of the tasks of our epoch. The experience of Russia testifies, however, that such a leadership can be created. (This does not mean, of course, that it will be immune to degeneration). The question consequently stands as follows: Will objective historical necessity in the long run cut a path for itself in the consciousness of the vanguard of the working class; that is, in the process of this war and those profound shocks which it must engender will a genuine revolutionary leadership be formed, capable of leading the proletariat to the conquest of power?

The Fourth International has replied in the affirmative to this question, not only through the text of its program but also through the very fact of its existence. All the various types of disillusioned and frightened representatives of pseudo-Marxism proceed on the contrary from the assumption that the bankruptcy of the leadership only "reflects" the incapacity of the proletariat to fulfill its revolutionary mission. Not all our opponents express this thought clearly, but all of them - Ultra-Lefts, Centrists, Anarchists, not to mention Stalinists and Social Democrats - shift the responsibility for the defeats from themselves to the shoulders of the proletariat. None of them indicate under precisely what conditions the proletariat will be capable of accomplishing the socialist overturn.

If we grant as true that the cause of the defeats is rooted in the social qualities of the proletariat itself then the position of modern society will have to be acknowledged as hopeless. Under conditions of decaying capitalism the proletariat grows neither numerically nor culturally. There are no grounds, therefore, for hoping that it will sometime rise to the level of the revolutionary tasks. Altogether differently does the case present itself to him who has clarified in his mind the profound antagonism between the organic, deep-going, insurmountable urge of the toiling masses to tear themselves free from the bloody capitalist chaos, and the conservative, patriotic, utterly bourgeois character of the out-lived labor leadership. The choice is between those two irreconcilable conceptions. Which must we choose?

(Continued on Page 15)

Totalitarian Dictatorship - A Condition of Acute Crisis And Not  
a Stable Regime.

The October Revolution was not an accident. It was forecast long in advance. Events confirmed this forecast. The degeneration does not refute the forecast, because Marxists never believed that an isolated workers' state in Russia could maintain itself indefinitely. True enough, we expected the wrecking of the Soviet State, rather than its degeneration; to put it more correctly, we did not rigidly differentiate between these two possibilities. But they do not at all contradict each other. Degeneration must inescapably end at a certain stage in downfall.

A totalitarian regime, whether of Stalinist or Fascist type, by its very essence can be only a temporary transitional regime. Naked dictatorship in history has generally been the product and the symptom of an especially severe social crisis, and not at all of a stable regime. Severe crisis cannot be a permanent condition of society. A totalitarian state is capable of suppressing social contradictions during a certain period, but it is incapable of perpetuating itself. The monstrous purges in the USSR are most convincing testimony of the fact that Soviet society organically tends toward rejection of the bureaucracy.

It is an astonishing thing that Bruno R. sees precisely in the Stalinist purges proof of the fact that the bureaucracy has become a ruling class, for in his opinion only a ruling class is capable of measures on so large a scale.\* He forgets however that Czarism, which was not a "class", also permitted itself rather large-scale measures in purges and moreover precisely in the period when it was nearing its doom. Symptomatic of his oncoming death agony, by the sweep and monstrous fraudulence of his purge, Stalin testifies to nothing else but the incapacity of the bureaucracy to transform itself into a stable ruling class.

\* True enough, in the last section of his book, which consists of fantastic contradictions, Bruno R. quite consciously and articulately refutes his own theory of "bureaucratic collectivism" unfolded in the first section of the book and declares that Stalinism, Fascism, and Nazism are transitory and parasitic formations, historical penalties for the impotence of the proletariat. In other words, after having subjected the views of the Fourth International to the sharpest kind of criticism, Bruno R. unexpectedly returns to those views, but only in order to launch a new series of blind fumbings. We see no grounds for following in the footsteps of a writer who has obviously lost his balance. We are interested in those of his arguments by means of which he seeks to substantiate his views that the bureaucracy is a class.

Might we not place ourselves in a ludicrous position if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall? Posing this question clearly should alone in our opinion restrain the comrades from terminological experimentation and over-hasty generalizations.

The Orientation Towards World Revolution and the Regeneration  
of the U.S.S.R.

A quarter of a century proved too brief a span for the revolutionary re-arming of the world proletarian vanguard, and too long a period for preserving the Soviet system intact in an isolated backward country. Mankind is now paying for this with a new imperialist war; but the basic task of our epoch has not changed, for the simple reason that it has not been solved. A colossal asset in the last quarter of a century and a priceless pledge for the future is constituted by the fact that one of the detachments of the world proletariat was able to demonstrate in action how the task must be solved.

The second imperialist war poses the unsolved task on a higher historical stage. It tests anew not only the stability of the existing regimes but also the ability of the proletariat to replace them. The results of this test will undoubtedly have a decisive significance for our appraisal of the modern epoch as the epoch of proletarian revolution. If contrary to all probabilities the October Revolution fails during the course of the present war, or immediately thereafter, to find its continuation in any of the advanced countries; and if, on the contrary, the proletariat is thrown back everywhere and on all fronts -- then we should doubtlessly have to pose the question of revising our conception of the present epoch and its driving forces. In that case it would be a question not of slapping a copy-book label on the USSR or the Stalinist gang but of re-evaluating the world historical perspective for the next decades if not centuries: Have we entered the epoch of social revolution and socialist society, or on the contrary the epoch of the declining society of totalitarian bureaucracy?

The twofold error of schematists like Hugo Urbahns and Bruno R. consists, first, in that they proclaim this latter regime as having been already finally installed; secondly, in that they declare it a prolonged transitional state of society between capitalism and socialism. Yet it is absolutely self-evident that if the international proletariat, as a result of the experience of our entire epoch and the current new war proves incapable of becoming the master of society, this would signify the foundering of all hope for a socialist revolution, for it is impossible to expect any other more favorable conditions for it; in any case no one forsook them now, or is able to characterize them.

Marxists do not have the slightest right (if disillusionment and fatigue are not considered "rights") to draw the conclusion that the proletariat has forfeited its revolutionary possibilities and must renounce all aspirations to hegemony in an era immediately ahead. Twenty-five years in the scales of history, when it is a question of profoundest changes in economic and cultural systems, weigh less than an hour in the life of man. What good is the individual, who because of empirical failures in the course of an hour or a day renounces a goal that he set for himself on the basis of the experience and analysis of his entire previous lifetime? In the years of darkest Russian reaction (1907 to 1917) we took as our starting point those revolutionary possibilities which were revealed by the Russian proletariat in 1905. In the years of world reaction we must proceed from those possibilities which the Russian proletariat revealed in 1917. The Fourth International did not by accident call itself the world party of the socialist revolution. Our road is not to be changed. We steer our course toward the world revolution and by virtue of this very fact toward the regeneration of the USSR.

Foreign Policy is the Continuation of Domestic Policy. (as a worker's state.)

What do we defend in the USSR? Not that in which it resembles the capitalist countries but precisely that in which it differs from them. In Germany also we advocate an uprising against the ruling bureaucracy, but only in order immediately to overthrow capitalist property. In the USSR the overthrow of the bureaucracy is indispensable for the preservation of state property. Only in this sense do we stand for the defense of the USSR.

There is not one among us who doubts that the Soviet workers should defend the state property, not only against the parasitism of the bureaucracy, but also against the tendencies toward private ownership, for example, on the part of the Kolkhoz aristocracy. But after all, foreign policy is the continuation of policy at home. If in domestic policy we correlated defense of the conquests of the October Revolution with irreconcilable struggle against the bureaucracy, then we must do the same thing in foreign policy as well. To be sure, Bruno R. proceeding from the fact that "bureaucratic collectivism" has already been victorious all along the line assures us that no one threatens state property, because Hitler (and Chamberlain?) is as much interested, you see, in preserving it as Stalin. Sad to say, Bruno R's assurances are frivolous. In event of victory Hitler will in all probability begin by demanding the return to German capitalists of all the property expropriated from them; then he will secure a similar restoration of property for the English, the French, and the Belgians so as to reach an agreement with them at the expense of the USSR; finally, he will make Germany the contractor of the most important state enterprises in the USSR in the interests of the German military machine. Right now Hitler is the ally and friend of Stalin; but should Hitler, with the aid of Stalin, come out victorious on the Western Front, he would on the morrow turn his

guns against the USSR. Finally Chamberlain, too, in similar circumstances would act no differently from Hitler.

### The Defense of the USSR and the Class Struggle.

Mistakes on the question of Defense of the USSR must frequently flow from an incorrect understanding of the methods of "defense". Defense of the USSR does not at all mean rapprochement with the Kromlin bureaucracy, the acceptance of its politics, or a conciliation with the politics of her allies. In this question, as in all others, we remain completely on the ground of the world class struggle.

In the tiny French periodical, Quo Faire, it was recently stated that inasmuch as the "Trotskyites" are defeatists in relation to France and England they are therefore defeatists also in relation to the USSR. In other words: If you want to defend the USSR you must stop being defeatists in relation to her imperialist allies. Quo Faire calculated that the "democracies" would be the allies of the USSR. What these sages will say now we don't know. But that is hardly important, for their very method is rotten. To renounce defeatism in relation to that imperialist camp to which the USSR adores today or might adore tomorrow is to push the workers of the enemy camp to the side of their government; it means to renounce defeatism in general. The renunciation of defeatism under the conditions of imperialist war which is tantamount to the rejection of the socialist revolution - rejection of revolution in the name of "defense of the USSR" -- would sentence the USSR to final decomposition and doom.

"Defense of the USSR", as interpreted by the Comintern, like yesterday's "struggle against fascism" is based on renunciation of

independent class politics. The proletariat is transformed -- for various reasons in varying circumstances, but always and invariably -- into an auxiliary force of one bourgeois camp against another. In contradistinction to this, some of our comrades say: Since we do not want to become tools of Stalin and his allies we therefore renounce the defense of the USSR. But by this they only demonstrate that their understanding of "defense" coincides essentially with the understanding of the opportunists; they do not think in terms of the independent politics of the proletariat. As a matter of fact, we defend the USSR as we defend the colonies, as we solve all our problems, not by supporting some imperialist governments against others, but by the method of international class struggle in the colonies as well as in the metropolitan centers.

We are not a government party; we are the party of irreconcilable opposition, not only in capitalist countries but also in the U.S.S.R. Our tasks, among them the "defense of the U.S.S.R.", we realize not through the medium of bourgeois governments and not even through the government of the U.S.S.R., but exclusively through the education of the masses through agitation, through explaining to the workers what they should defend and what they should overthrow. Such a "defense" cannot give immediate miraculous results. But we

do not even pretend to be miracle workers. As things stand, we are a revolutionary minority. Our work must be directed so that the workers on whom we have influence should correctly appraise events, not permit themselves to be caught unawares, and prepare the general sentiment of their own class for the revolutionary solution of the tasks confronting us.

The defense of the U.S.S.R. coincides for us with the preparation of world revolution. Only those methods are permissible which do not conflict with the interests of the revolution. The defense of the U.S.S.R. is related to the world socialist revolution as a tactical task is related to a strategic one. A tactic is subordinated to a strategic goal and in no case can it be in contradiction to it.

### The Question of Occupied Territories

As these lines are written the question of the fate of the territories occupied by the Red Army is still not clear. The telegraphic dispatches are contradictory, since both sides lie a great deal; but the actual relationships on the scene are still undoubtedly extremely indeterminate. A certain section of the occupied territories will doubtlessly become part of the U.S.S.R. In what form? Let us for a moment conceive that in accordance with the treaty with Hitler, the Moscow government leaves untouched the rights of private property in the occupied areas and limits itself to "control" after the fascist pattern. Such a concession would have a deep-going principled character and could become the starting point for a new chapter in the Soviet regime and consequently for a new evaluation on our part of the nature of the Soviet state.

However, it is more probable that in the territories scheduled to become a part of the U.S.S.R. the Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large land owners and statify the means of production. This variant is most probable, not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist program but because it neither desires nor is able to share the power, and the privileges connected with it, with the old ruling classes in the occupied territory. Here an analogy presents itself. The first Bonapart halted the revolution by means of a military dictatorship. However, when the French troops invaded Poland, Napoleon signed a decree: "Serfdom is abolished." This measure was dictated not by Napoleon's sympathies for the peasants and not by democratic principles, but rather by the fact that the Bonapartist dictatorship based itself not on feudal, but on bourgeois property relations. Inasmuch as Stalin's Bonapartist dictatorship bases itself not on private, but on state property, the invasion of Poland by the Red Army should, in the nature of the case, result in the liquidation of private capitalist property, so as to bring in this manner the regime of the occupied territories into accord with the regime of the U.S.S.R.

This measure, revolutionary in character -- "the expropriation of the expropriators" -- is in this case realized in a military-bureaucratic fashion. The appeal to independent activity on the part of the masses in the new territories -- and without this

appeal, extremely cautious as it may be, it is impossible to constitute a new regime -- will on the morrow undoubtedly be suppressed by ruthless police measures in order to assure the preponderance of the bureaucracy over the awakened revolutionary masses. This is one side of the matter. But there is also another side. In order to make possible the occupation of Poland by means of a military alliance with Hitler, the Kremlin for a long time deceived and continues to deceive the masses in the U.S.S.R. and in the whole world, and has thereby brought about the complete disorganization of the ranks of its own Comintern. The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another section of the territory, no matter how important these may be by themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and the organization of the world proletariat, the raising of its capacity for defending old conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive, standpoint the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, preserve completely their reactionary character and remain the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution.

Our general appraisal of the Kremlin and the Comintern does not, however, alter the particular fact that the statification of property in the occupied territories is in itself a progressive measure. It is necessary to recognize this openly. Were Hitler on the morrow to throw his armies against the East, in order to restore "law and order" in Eastern Poland, the advanced workers would defend against Hitler those new forms of property established by the Bonapartist Soviet bureaucracy.

### We Do Not Change Our Course!

The statification of the means of production is, as we stated above a progressive measure. But its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum-total of all the other factors. Thus, we must first and foremost establish that the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism, cloaked by "socialist" measures, can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the proletarian revolution by bureaucratic maneuvers and so on. This evil by far outweighs the progressive content of Stalinist reforms in Poland. In order that nationalized property in the occupied areas, as well as in the USSR, become a basis for genuinely progressive, that is to say socialist development, it is necessary to overthrow the Moscow bureaucracy. Our program retains, consequently, all its validity. The events did not catch us unaware. It is necessary only to interpret them correctly. It is necessary to understand clearly that sharp contradictions are contained in the character of the USSR and in her international position. It is impossible to free oneself from these contradictions with the help of terminological sleight-of-hand ("Workers State" - "Not Workers State".) We must take the facts as they are.

We must build our policy by taking as our starting point the real relations and contradictions.

We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historical mission. We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin. We are for the independence of Soviet Ukraine, and if the Byelo Russians themselves wish - of Soviet Byelo Russia. At the same time in the sections of Poland occupied by the Red Army, partisans of the Fourth International must play the most decisive part in expropriating the landlords and capitalists, in dividing the land among the peasants, in erecting Soviets and Workers' Committees, etc. While so doing, they must preserve their political independence, they must fight during elections to the Soviets and factory committees for the complete independence of the latter from the bureaucracy, and they must conduct revolutionary propaganda in the spirit of distrust towards the Kremlin and its local agencies.

But let us suppose that Hitler turns his weapons against the East and invades territories occupied by the Red Army. Under these conditions, partisans of the Fourth International, without changing in any way their attitude toward the Kremlin oligarchy, will advance to the forefront of the most urgent task of the hour, the military resistance against Hitler. The workers will say, "We cannot vote to Hitler the overthrowing of Stalin; that is our own task". During the military struggle against Hitler the revolutionary workers will strive to enter into the closest possible comradely relations with the rank and file fighters of the Red Army. While arms in hand they deal blows to Hitler, the Bolshevick-Leninists will at the same time conduct revolutionary propaganda against Stalin, preparing his overthrow at the next and perhaps very near stage.

This kind of "defense of the USSR" will naturally differ, as heaven does from earth, from the official defense which is now being conducted under the slogan: "For the Fatherland! For Stalin!" Our defense of the USSR is carried on under the slogan: "For Socialism! For the world revolution! Against Stalin!" In order that these two varieties of "Defense of the USSR" do not become confused in

the consciousness of the masses it is necessary to know clearly and precisely how to formulate slogans which correspond to the concrete situation. But above all it is necessary to establish clearly just what we are defending, just how we are defending it, against whom we are defending it. Our slogans will create confusion among the masses only if we ourselves do not have a clear conception of our tasks.

#### Conclusion:

We have no reasons whatsoever at the present time for changing our principled position in relation to the USSR.



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. For this reason it is indispensable that we follow painstakingly and without prejudice those modifications which war introduces into the internal life of the USSR so that we may give ourselves a timely accounting of them.

Our tasks in the occupied territories remain basically the same as in the USSR itself; but inasmuch as they are posed by events in an extremely sharp form, they enable us all the better to clarify our general tasks in relation to the USSR.

We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR, (state property and planned economy), and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and their Gomintorn). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production of the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution.

Trotsky

September 25, 1939.

THE DEFENSE OF THE USSR AND THE PRESENT IMPERIALIST WAR

by J.R. Johnson

1. The Use of the Term State

By state in this document is meant the government of a country, bureaucracy, parliament, army, prisons, police, etc.

2. The bureaucratic Regime

For the purposes of this discussion we accept:

- (a) The bureaucracy as a caste and not a class.
- (b) The bureaucratic regime as transitional.
- (c) Soviet economy as progressive and therefore to be defended against imperialism.

3. Unconditional Defense against Imperialist Attack

The policy of the Fourth International calls for unconditional defense of the U.S.S.R. against imperialist attack. By this, we mean taking all possible steps to ensure the victory of the Red Army in the field (military sabotage, espionage, etc.); material supplies to the Soviet Government; and propaganda and agitation on its behalf.

This policy is seen in its most clearly defined form in a war between a revolutionary State on the one side and one or more imperialisms on the other. The revolutionary workers in any country, imperialist or colonial, without hesitation assist the Red Army even to a military occupation of new territory, for every victory of the Red Army is a victory of the revolution. This is demonstrated to the workers and peasants by the declarations of the revolutionary government; more concretely, by the arming of the workers and peasants by the Red Army, and the close liaison between the commanding staff of the Red Army and the revolutionary forces in the occupied country. Such is a revolutionary policy in collaboration with an army such as the Red Army which marched into Georgia or into Poland under the direction of the government of Lenin and the revolutionary Communist International.

4. The Revolutionary State in Alliance with a Bourgeois State

If the revolutionary state is allied to a capitalist state, the collaboration of the revolutionary army and the revolutionary forces of a capitalist country at once present certain tactical difficulties. For example, the revolutionaries in a state like Czechoslovakia, allied to the USSR, would have had to insure the victory of the Red Army and at the same time prepare the political defeat of their own capitalist masters, including the undermining of army morale. The revolutionaries in an opposing German army had to work for the victory of the Red Army even while the Red Army worked in close collaboration with the Czechoslovakian capitalist army both perhaps directed by a capitalist generalissimo. This complication would naturally place a heavy strain on the initiative, coordination, and revolutionary clarity of the international revolutionary movement, the Red Army commanders included.

Tactical compromises would be demanded of the revolutionary forces, compromises which might lead to the temporary disorientation of the revolutionary movement in the capitalist countries involved. But these tactical dangers would be subordinate to and could be overcome by the dominant strategic fact that the victory of the Red Army was the victory of the international proletariat, the victory of the army of liberation. The Lenin State, the Lenin Red Army, the Communist International under Lenin, were all agents of the revolution, and the victory of such a Red Army was the victory of the most powerful instrument of the revolution in the given circumstances. Through its victory the road of the socialist revolution was opened wider, despite coincident successes of any bourgeois army operating in alliance with it.

5. The circumstances have changed

Today we have a fundamentally different situation. In Russia rules a counter-revolutionary government, directing a counter-revolutionary army. This army has been purged and repurged and created in the image of the bureaucracy. The red of the Red Army has been drained away by Stalin.

The problems arising from this situation have been posed sharply, first by the request of Moscow to be allowed to "guarantee" the Baltic states as a condition of an alliance with Britain and France; secondly, by the war; and, thirdly, by the Hitler-Stalin partition of Poland and the occupation of Esthonia. It is no reply to these problems to reiterate: "collectivized economy = workers' state = unconditional defense of the USSR against imperialism. Also all arguments as to why a change now and not before are irrelevant. To the Stalinist mobile "The circumstances have changed" some of us now counter with a sterile "The circumstances have not changed." This type of approach does not clarify a political situation. Faced with Lenin's rapid change in April 1917, the Old Bolsheviks could only repeat that the Party had made its decisions and now Lenin wanted to change them. And it is particularly important to note that the revolution had been in progress many weeks before Lenin finally changed his mind. According to Comrade Trotsky he did so on the last stages of the journey from Switzerland, between Finland and Petrograd.

Collective economy = workers' state is an abstract formula, and in a complicated situation abstract formulae can mislead as well as elucidate. We have to judge the situation as a whole.

It has been pointed out before that from October 1917 to July 1918 The Soviet Government was a workers' state on the basis of a capitalist economy. Yet no one ever questioned its unconditional defense.

We supported the Negrin government against Franco. But in an imperialist war in which the Negrin government had allied itself with Britain and France and was collaborating with their armies, we would have changed our policy from critical support of Negrin to revolutionary defeatism.

In all these changing circumstances we orient ourselves by one guiding line, the mobilization of the international proletariat for the proletarian revolution against imperialism and the mobilization of the colonial peoples for the wars of national independence. For us the decisive question is the development of all the possibili-

ties of the world socialist revolution. All other considerations are subordinate.

6. How does the general character of the present war affect our policy of unconditional defense?

A policy is tested in its concrete application. We cannot pretend to have an answer for every problem. The war will present us with many which we cannot now foresee. But it is a poor defense of any policy to refuse to consider specific cases on the ground that a policy cannot be expected to cover every case.

Let us test our present policy in concrete circumstances.

(1) The Soviet Union will shortly have an army of occupation in Estonia. The Estonian army is pledged by treaty to fight with the Red Army in case of invasion by a foreign power through Latvia. If Britain does break into the Baltic and launches an attack on Germany and Russia, what must the policy of the revolutionary forces in Estonia be--in other words, what is the policy of the Fourth International? At present it is (a) do everything possible for the victory of the Red Army, (b) all material aid to the Soviet Union, (c) at the same time prepare for the victory over the Estonian bourgeoisie. The Estonian working class, on behalf of the collectivized economy of the USSR, is being asked to support with all its might an army of occupation and to give all aid to a government which as a result of the victory will (a) "sovietize" Estonia and make the Estonians as impotent as the workers and peasants of Russia, (b) maintain the army of occupation, i.e., the armed counter-revolution, or (c) hand Estonia or part of it over to imperialism at any stage in the proceedings that may seem convenient. In other words, we are asking them concretely to use every effort to install themselves in the prison of the counter-revolution.

Similar situations will present themselves on every border state of the USSR, and further afield, according to the fortunes of war. By our policy we are committed to urging the revolutionary proletariat, on the battlefield and off it, to assist in the victory of the Red Army, i.e., reduce itself to the condition of the Russian proletariat, as the Polish Ukrainians are now reduced, and to send material aid to the Soviet Union, i.e., to send material that will be used indiscriminately by the USSR and Germany, for the pursuance of "aggressive imperialist" aims and the merciless crushing of any proletarian revolution.

With the Red Army of Lenin our policy is revolutionary socialism. With the Red Army of Stalin it is revolutionary suicide. For every extension of Stalin's power, whether in the form of collectivized economy or simple occupation, is a blow at the world revolution.

An alliance may well develop between Japan, the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy for the plunder of the British and French empires and the domination of the Balkans, the Baltic states, and China. We are asking the proletariat to assist the Red Army, which will function as an indistinguishable component of this bloc. We give all possible assistance to the Stalinist bureaucracy and the Stalinist army from Vladivostock to Lisbon, in order to prepare Stalin's overthrow "as soon as possible in the next stage." Italian fascists and British revolutionaries sail up the Dardanelles side by side carrying material aid to the Soviet bureaucracy, who use it to extend the counter-revolutionary regime in Rumania and to help Germany on the western front. All this to prepare for the next stage. And what is this next stage? In

the "Case of Leon Trotsky", page 287, Trotsky gives us some indication, "Then, at a good moment, when victory is assured, I would say, 'Now we must finish with the bureaucracy.'" So that in practice the whole strategy of the world proletarian revolution, in a war in which the Soviet Army is merely one counter-revolutionary section of a counter-revolutionary bloc, is subordinated to the necessity of giving aid to the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy and working for the victory of the counter-revolutionary Red Army. How does this square with Comrade Trotsky's statement in his most recent document that "the question of the safekeeping of the state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the international proletarian revolution"? How does it square with this statement in the same document:

"The most important political criterion for us is not the transformations of property in any respective territory, serious as they may be by themselves, but the changes in the consciousness and the organization of the world proletariat, the raising (or lowering) of its capacity for defending old conquests and attaining new ones. From this one decisive point of view the policy of Moscow taken in the whole, completely preserves its reactionary character and remains the basic obstacle on the road to the international revolution."

For us too the "raising (or lowering) of its capacity for defending old conquests and attaining new ones is decisive" for the proletariat. For us too the defense of the collectivized economy is a tactic. The international proletarian revolution, sole possibility for Russia's regeneration, is the basic task. And until the revolution is regenerated in Russia, to work for the victory of the Red Army in a war of the present type means not to raise but to lower and ultimately to crush into the dust the revolutionary consciousness and organization of the proletariat. For us the main question is assisting the possibilities of revolutionary development. With the victory of the Red Army and the GPU you destroy them.

There are two contradictory tendencies in the participation of the Stalinist army and the Stalinist bureaucracy in this war. In one sense the victory of the Red Army is progressive in that it defends the collectivized economy. But in another and very concrete sense its victory is a deadly menace to the proletarian revolution. And the general character of this war, the nature of the Soviet government, of the Soviet army, and the character of their participation in the war, impose upon the proletariat the necessity of an unremitting struggle against the counter-revolution in all its concrete forms, the Red Army included.

The Red Army is a counter-revolutionary army. It has revolutionary possibilities. But so has Hitler's army. G.P.U. teachers and Stalinist text-books are now the educators of the Stalinist Army. The men of October and the heroes of the Civil War today are only bones. We cannot base the strategy of the world proletariat on the ghosts of the October revolution. It is the Stalinist Army that goes to war and not the collectivized economy. In this war the progressive aspect of the victory of the Red Army will be entirely overshadowed by the role it has already begun to play and will play with increasingly devastating effect as the war develops.

"We must construct a policy which takes its point of departure from the real relations and contradictions." So says Comrade Trotsky.

We agree. But such a policy can only be that in a war of the kind we face, we do not subordinate the proletariat wherever the Red Army meets it, to a policy of self-destruction. We call upon it to oppose the counter-revolution, the Red Army included, and such a policy demands the unity in revolutionary defeatism of the international proletariat, the Russian proletariat included.

This conclusion is in no way subject to the type of imperialism, "democratic" or fascist allied to the U.S.S.R., and it is regrettable to have to spend time on such an interpretation. We can take a hypothetical case which will finally expose the insoluble contradictions of "unconditional defense of the USSR against imperialist attack" in a mixed war of the present kind.

Suppose the Soviet Union allied to Britain and a joint Soviet and British expedition is operating in the East against German and Turkish troops. A democratic revolution breaks out in India. We support this wholeheartedly. Indian princes, British troops and Stalin's Cossack divisions are diverted to the crushing of this revolution. (Who thinks that the Stalinist regime will not take any necessary part in such a counter-revolutionary venture does not understand the Stalinist regime.) Just so long as a decisive German force does not land in Indian territory, we continue to support the Indian revolution. But do we ask Indian sailors to carry material aid to the Soviet Union for the unconditional defense of the collectivized economy, to strengthen the Soviet State in its struggle against imperialism, while at the same time they fight against Stalin's counter-revolutionary army in India? Revolutionaries can give material aid to a Negrin government carrying on a campaign against a Franco despite Negrin's persecution of revolutionaries. But how can we ask revolutionaries to give support to a government whose troops are carrying on a military campaign against the revolution to support the Red Army allied with Franco? Must the Indian revolutionaries carry material aid to help Stalin against a Japanese attack and at the same time struggle against Stalin's cossacks crushing their revolution? A lot of time and trouble would be saved by a spot-transaction, by merely handing over the material aid to the Red Army in front of them.

Do we refrain from asking Indian sailors to carry material aid to the Soviet Union but ask the American proletariat and American sailors to break a strike in order to send the same aid to Stalin? The very question shows the inescapable confusion which is thrown into the working class by such reasoning as collectivized economy = workers' state = unconditional defense against imperialism. With a bureaucracy like the Stalinist bureaucracy and an army like the Stalinist Red Army participating in an imperialist war by imperialist methods and with imperialist aims, we must follow Comrade L.T.'s advice to take the situation "in the whole". We must recognize that any assistance the world proletariat, including the Russian, gives to the Red Army and to the bureaucracy, is impeding and not assisting the world proletarian revolution. The proletariat is being asked to place itself in pawn to a broker who permits of no redemption.

#### 7. When we can defend the Soviet Union

In a struggle between the isolated Soviet State and imperialism, the counter-revolutionary character of the Stalin state and the Stalin army are overwhelmingly outweighed by its progressive character in defense of the collectivized economy. Should such a struggle develop

in any stage of the imperialist war, then the revolutionary international, viewing the situation "taken in the whole", would summon the workers to the defense of the collectivized economy. In such a case we assist the possibilities of development of the world proletarian revolution, which in the last analysis is the only defense of the Soviet Union.

8. From the above it follows that the policy of unconditional defense of the collectivized economy against imperialist attack is no longer tenable. Circumstances have already arisen which show that this policy of defending the collectivized economy can be a brake on the revolutionary development of the proletariat. It must therefore be subjected to modification according to the predominating character of any war in which the Soviet Union is engaged, and the nature of Soviet participation. In this present war at the present stage we call for a policy of defeatism against both camps of imperialist partitioners, Soviet Russia included.

Note: At the party convention in July Comrade Johnson spoke as follows: Negotiations were going on between the Soviet Union and Britain and France. Stalin was demanding the right to "guarantee" the Baltic countries against others. The nature of this "guarantee" raised questions of great importance for our estimate of the Soviet Union and our practical policy in the coming war. Johnson asked the N.C. to consider a discussion on this important question. Comrade Carter spoke in a similar strain. Not only from the arguments, therefore, but also from the evidence it is clear that the Hitler-Stalin pact and the war did not "stampede" those opposing the party policy, and do not represent the pressure of bourgeois public opinion on certain sections of the party, etc. etc.

SHALL WE REVISE THE SLOGAN OF UNCONDITIONAL DEFENSE?

By Albert Goldman

If Comrade Shachtman's resolution presented before the last plenum has any real value, it is only in so far as it proposes a discussion in the party for the purpose of having the party determine whether or not a revision should be made in the policy of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union.

It is perfectly legitimate for any comrade or group of comrades to attempt a revision of that policy. The National Committee, however, and the party itself are under an obligation to demand a clear presentation of the problem, to require of the proponents of revision a clear and succinct statement of what they want to revise and exactly what is the new policy and the new formulation proposed.

Otherwise a discussion in the party will inevitably degenerate into a futile argument on what meanings we gave to the slogan of unconditional defense in the past and what will be the meaning that we shall possibly or probably give to that slogan in the future.

The resolution states: "The bitter realities of the recent events, most particularly of the events in Poland, dictate a revision of our previous concept of the 'unconditional defense of the Soviet Union.' As understood by our movement, this concept meant not only that we call for the defense of the Soviet Union even if it is directed by the Stalinist bureaucracy, but also that we support the Red Army in any military struggle in which it engages, that we are for its victory under all circumstances, be it a so-called 'defensive' or 'aggressive' war."

In a sense this statement is the key statement of the resolution because it constitutes the fundamental premise upon which the demand for a revision of our slogan of unconditional defense is based. It assumes that the slogan was used to include even a defense of the Soviet Union (or, as the proponents of the resolution would have it, of the Red Army) even if that army were engaged in crushing a revolutionary movement.

It would undoubtedly be interesting to go through all of our party documents and articles of leading comrades, published within the last few years, in order to ascertain the exact meaning given to the phrase "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" everytime it was used. This of course would be a task of questionable value because after such an examination we would still be arguing whether the slogan was used in one sense or another.

Among the many things that Marxism teaches is the principle that every policy and every slogan must be judged in the light of the circumstances under which it was proposed or used. It is as certain as anything can be that when we discussed and adopted the policy embodied in the slogan of "Defense of the Soviet Union" all of us thought in terms of defending the Soviet Union unconditionally against any imperialist attack. No one to my knowledge, prior to the outbreak of the war, raised the question: does the slogan mean defending the Red Army if it should be involved in any attempt to crush a revolution. Everyone seemed to take it for granted that the slogan was applicable only in a situation where the Soviet Union was at war against any imperialist



state.

One important fact to bear out the above statement is the activity of a section of the Red Army, that is of the G.P.U., in the civil war in Spain. We took it for granted that Stalin sent cadres of the red army and the G.P.U. to Spain for the purpose of crushing the revolutionary movement? Did anyone propose to defend the Stalinists at that time? Did anyone propose to revise the slogan of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union at that time? Not to my knowledge.

When Comrade Trotsky raised the question of an independent Soviet Ukraine it was accepted by the vast majority of the party even though it would necessarily follow that if the Ukrainian workers and peasants would take up arms for the independence of their Soviets they would have to fight Stalin's red army. Was there any objection raised because of that?

I repeat. It was taken for granted that the slogan of defending the Soviet Union applied only in case of a war by a capitalist nation against the Soviet Union.

But let us, for the sake of avoiding an argument, admit that in the past, in many cases, the use of the slogan was such as to justifiably lead to the conclusion that it included a defense of the red army in any attempt to crush a revolutionary movement. What follows? Simply the necessity of a more careful use of the slogan or better, the use of such concrete slogans under different circumstances as to make it absolutely clear to the workers exactly what we mean by defense of the Soviet Union.

Not the dropping of a slogan which presents our fundamental line but seeing that the slogan be used in a manner which cannot possibly be misinterpreted should be our aim if we do not want to revise a fundamental policy. To make certain that the use of the slogan "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" applies only in case of a war against the Soviet Union by a capitalist nation the last plenum specifically attached the phrase "against imperialist attack" to the slogan.

But the proponents of the Shachtman resolution were not satisfied: they wanted a revision of the slogan but they refused to indicate how and in what manner. They simply referred to the resolution intimating that the resolution specifies the nature of the revision. I defy anybody to indicate where in the resolution there is any definite suggestion for a substitute.

Shall we abandon the slogan of the defense of the Soviet Union meaning thereby its unconditional defense against imperialist attack? The resolution itself says that this "does not necessarily follow."

Shall we revise the slogan? Yes, says the resolution but does not tell us how. It seems to me that responsible comrades introducing a resolution at a plenum proposing a revision of a fundamental slogan are under an obligation to indicate in what way it should be revised, to formulate a substitute for the old slogan.

The motion passed by the majority is clear and unambiguous. If there was any question before as to whether or not the slogan of defense of the Soviet Union applies only in case of an imperialist attack there

can be no question now.

No one claims that any general slogan will serve as a solution for all possible problems under all possible situations. But a general slogan should indicate a fundamental policy and our fundamental policy is and should be "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" when it is at war against any imperialist power.

Every general slogan needs explanation and concretization. Certainly the advocates of "conditional defense of the Soviet Union" will have to do a good deal of explaining without having the advantage of having a slogan indicating a fundamental policy.

Between the slogan "unconditional defense against imperialist attack", which may possibly need explanation and the slogan of "conditional defense" which will always require interpretation, the party should unhesitatingly choose the former.

Naturally the whole concept of the defense of the Soviet Union is a general political concept, indicating the political task of the proletariat in its attitude to the Soviet Union as a workers' state. To attempt to reduce the concept to a defense of the red army or its individual units in every case of its participation in any struggle is absolutely futile.

To find the proper slogans for the purpose of making clear to the workers what it is that we are defending is one thing; to drop the general slogan for the purpose of revising a fundamental policy is quite another thing.

Either to drop the slogan or to change it to "conditional defense" would be a grave political error especially at the present time when the liberal democrats are shouting their heads off that the Soviet Union is in the same category as Germany, that there is no difference between "red" and "brown" fascism.

When the question agitates the minds of many as to what our policy will be if the British and French imperialists declare war on the Soviet Union because of the invasion of Poland our attitude should be definite and without ambiguity. We may condemn the invasion itself but we are for the defense of the Soviet Union against any imperialists at any time.

Immediately after asserting the necessity for a revision of our present slogan Comrade Shachtman, in his resolution, advocates a certain policy with reference to the attitude of the Polish workers and peasants towards Hitler and Stalin. Leaving aside the question whether the particular policy he advocates, that is the policy of an armed struggle both against Stalin and Hitler is correct under the present situation, it is clear that he thinks that such a policy requires a revision of the slogan of unconditional defense. In fact the wording of the resolution indicates that we should revise the slogan of unconditional defense in order to be able to work for a Soviet Poland.

Absurd! The advocates of unconditional defense against imperialist attack would have no difficulty whatsoever in coming out for an armed struggle against Stalin and Hitler if that was what the situation called for.

In every concrete case it will always be a question to be determined by an analysis of all the circumstances as to what particular policy will best further the interests of the proletarian revolution everywhere. All that the majority motion says is that we cling to a policy of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack. Whether there is an imperialist attack and what policy to advocate when there is no imperialist attack will always be a question which can be solved only by an analysis of the actual situation.

The support the resolution receives from those comrades who are definitely opposed to our conception of the nature of the Soviet Union as a workers' state and some formulations in the resolution itself are clear indications that the resolution definitely tends towards a re-evaluation of our present conception of the Soviet Union. This of course is no argument against the resolution. There is nothing wrong about re-evaluating any of our present conceptions but it is necessary to be aware of the fact that the resolution tends in a certain direction.

Immediately after the Hitler-Stalin pact the comrades opposed to our conception of the Soviet state proposed to raise that question for a discussion in the party. Comrade Burnham introduced a resolution to that effect but withdrew it at the plenum and recorded himself in support of the Shachtman resolution. All of which he and other comrades have a perfect right to do but all of which also indicates that the minority resolution must be recognized by the party as a first and serious step in the direction of changing our position on the question of the nature of the Soviet Union.

The minority resolution carefully avoids the raising of the problem of the nature of the Soviet Union. To say the least there is something peculiar about a resolution which deals with such a fundamental point as unconditional defense of the Soviet Union, stating specifically that it does not want to raise the problem of the nature of the Soviet state. We are justified in asking the following questions: Is that done because of a desire to obtain the support of those comrades who are definitely opposed to considering the Soviet Union a workers' state? Is the careful avoidance of the problem due to the fact that the proponents of the resolution want to change the party's policy, on the question of the Soviet Union, one step at a time.

Again we must say that there is nothing wrong in that method; nevertheless the party members should be clear as to all the implications of the resolution.

The resolution refers to the Polish invasion by Stalin as an act "of imperialist policy" and contends that "produced by the same cause, German fascism and Stalinist bureaucratism are now engaged in a joint campaign of imperialist expansion."

To use words loosely helps solve no problems and can only create tremendous confusion. I can see no serious objection in using, in a journalistic article, the word "imperialist" in its widest connotation when referring to Stalin's actions. But in a resolution which attempts to put the party on record on some important problem the use of terms, which have been invested with a definite meaning to indicate something entirely different, is to be seriously condemned. If Stalin is engaged in a campaign of imperialist expansion can it not be deduced from that,

that the Soviet Union is now a capitalist-imperialist state? If the author of the resolution does not mean that why use that term?

It is significant that no attempt is made in the resolution to distinguish between the "imperialism" of Stalin and that of Hitler. The theory is that they have already entered into an agreement to divide the world between them. Aside from the fact that there is by no means sufficient evidence to draw the conclusion that Stalin has joined Hitler in an active military alliance against France and Great Britain (it is exceedingly improbable that he has) an attempt should at least be made to differentiate between Hitler's and Stalin's actions if one still believes that the Soviet Union is a workers' state.

Only they who see no difference between Germany and the Soviet Union can speak of a joint imperialist venture between them without carefully distinguishing between the two. Especially at this moment when the bourgeois democrats are carrying on such a vigorous campaign to place "red and brown fascism" in the same category. Should the minority resolution be adopted by the party there would be great rejoicing in the camp of these democrats.

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The resolution states almost in so many words that the Hitler-Stalin pact and the subsequent Polish invasion by the red army should lead the party to change its policy. It must be remembered that quite a few comrades, for some inexplicable reason, came to the conclusion that after Stalin made a pact with Hitler the nature of the Soviet Union thereby was altered. The obvious conclusion from such reasoning was: support of Stalin's alliance with the "democratic" imperialists. It was clear that the comrades who advocated a change of our attitude on the question of the nature of the Soviet Union because Stalin decided to play on the side of Hitler, impliedly, favored his tie-up with the "democracies." It was pointed out that our position on the nature of the Soviet state was based on arguments dealing with its economic structure and not with Stalin's alliances. At any rate the attempt to convince the party members that due to Stalin's shift of position we should change our attitude on the problem of the Soviet state was quickly abandoned.

The minority resolution insists however that the Hitler-Stalin pact contains a profound meaning other than the simple fact that Stalin has decided that he can best save his bureaucratic clique by staying out of war and that he can best stay out of war by changing his "friends." The minority still wants the party to change some policy (exactly how is not stated) because of the Hitler-Stalin pact and for the following reasons. The resolution says:

"(1) Stalin gave Hitler the signal for opening up the Second Imperialist World War -- and linked his fortunes with those of the Nazi war machine."

The first part of the statement is obviously correct but what of it? Is there anyone who will contend with certainty that Hitler would not have gone to war if Stalin had not made the pact with him? That is exactly what the C.P. used to say and what the "democrats" say now. Let us suppose that Stalin had decided to remain neutral without entering into any pact with Hitler. Would that not, as far as Hitler's attacking Poland is concerned, leave the matter just as it was with

the pact, that is, would it not have taken the red army out of possible consideration by Hitler? It would have meant that Hitler could attack Poland without fear of any intervention by Stalin and thus the mere attitude of neutrality by Stalin without any pact would have been the signal for Hitler to go ahead. It is utterly absurd to ask us to change a fundamental policy because a certain action of Stalin caused the war to break out on September 3, 1939 instead of some other date.

Stalin, says the resolution, linked his fortunes with the Nazi war machine. Even if true, would it be any different if he had linked his fortune with the war machine of the "democratic imperialists"? But the statement is not true by a long shot. At least at the present moment it is so uncertain as to the actual intentions of Stalin as to make it impossible to come to any definite conclusion. Stalin is in all likelihood taking one step at a time and will determine his future course on the basis of future developments. The statement that Stalin has linked his fortune with the Nazi war machine is on a par with the statement that he is now jointly engaged with Hitler in an imperialist adventure. I have no objection to anybody speculating. He may turn out to be right. But there is a serious objection to having the party change a fundamental policy on the basis of mere speculation.

"Stalin", says the resolution, "not only facilitated this imperialist invasion politically and militarily but jointly divided the spoils with the triumphant Nazis."

I shall deal with the question of our attitude on the invasion of Poland by the red army later on. Here I simply ask: what difference does it make if Stalin invades some country as a result of an agreement with Hitler or with the "democratic" imperialists. Would there be any difference if Stalin divided the spoils with the "democratic" imperialists?

Every attempt to base a change of policy on the Stalin-Hitler pact must inevitably lead to the conclusion that there is some essential difference between "democratic" imperialism and fascist imperialism. And we have been and I hope that the party will remain against any such distinction.

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The invasion of Poland by the red army has brought a greater emotional shock to our comrades than any single event in the past fifteen years of Stalin's betrayals. Some comrades almost completely lost their equilibrium and, instead of considering the invasion as a link in the chain of the Stalinist policy of betrayal, tended to isolate it and emphasize it to a point where almost no distinction could be made between them and the social patriots.

Personally, on the basis of the theory that Stalin, fearful of Hitler's precipitous advance into Poland, decided to strengthen himself militarily by marching into Poland, I was in favor of approving the invasion but pointing out that it is part of the general policy of Stalin which can only bring confusion to the workers. When events showed that the invasion was actually the result of an agreement between Stalin and Hitler I recognized my error but I still contend that it would be a serious error to keep on shouting against the invasion rather than emphasizing the betrayal of Stalin in making an agreement with Hitler. Had Stalin marched into Poland not as a result of an agreement with Hitler but because of a desire to strengthen himself militarily against Hitler I still would support the move at the same

time that I would point out how Stalin confuses workers even when he does the right thing. I was the only one on the committee advocating such a point of view.

But the invasion of Poland is now a thing of the past and responsible comrades do not quarrel on a difference of interpretation of some past event unless it is connected with an important problem confronting us in the present or which will probably confront us in the immediate future.

There is no formulation that I know of that can possibly settle all problems that will arise in the future. Not even our formulation of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack can solve all future problems. There will always occur some events where comrades differ in interpretation of their nature and then a general formula cannot automatically decide the question.

There will be no quarrel where everyone agrees that the red army is invading a country to suppress a revolutionary movement. We shall all be against that. There will be no quarrel, except with those who place the Soviet Union in the same category as imperialist states, if the Soviet Union is attacked by an imperialist power. But there is always the possibility of a difference of opinion as to the nature of a particular invasion or attack and no one has succeeded and no one can succeed in formulating a proposition which will avoid all differences in the future.

With the occupation by Stalin of that section of what was formerly Poland and which was inhabited mainly by Ukrainians, Jews and White Russians, new problems have arisen. The more limited question of our attitude to the actual invasion recedes into the background. It is highly interesting and significant that the minority resolution does not attempt to raise the present actual problems confronting us with reference to the occupied territory but confines itself to what the party position should be (or better should have been) with reference to the invasion and offers the policy of advocating an armed struggle by the Polish workers and peasants against Hitler's army and the red army.

Is there an attempt to analyze the character of the population with reference to the different nationalities under control of Hitler and of Stalin? No! Is there an attempt to analyze the probable changes in property relations in the territory occupied by Stalin? Not in the least! Is there any suggestion as to what our attitude should be in case of an attack by Hitler against Stalin in the occupied territories? Not at all!

The very repetition of the lament about Stalin's invasion of Poland indicates the lack of proportion and balance in the resolution. The resolution speaks mainly about Polish workers and peasants fighting against the Reichswehr and the red army even though it is fairly evident that Stalin has occupied territory almost exclusively inhabited by Jews, Ukrainians and White Russians formerly under the heel of the Polish landlords. An air of unreality, of loose thinking, of lack of clarity pervades the whole resolution.

Comrade Shachtman even works himself up to a pitch where the crime of Stalin committed in Poland dwarfs in its heinousness Stalin's

betrayal in Spain. He even digs up a possible October revolution in Poland. Consider the lack of proportion! In Spain the workers practically had power in their hands -- many of the factories were taken over by them. Stalin came, crushed the actual not the possible revolution, murdered thousands of revolutionists and by bringing on the defeat in Spain dealt a terrific blow to the whole revolutionary movement. Compare that with the maximum damage that Stalin did by invading Poland, where, it seems, he is compelled to invade capitalist property relations, and one gets an idea of the fantastic nature of an analysis which suggests that Stalin's actions in Poland were more detrimental to the world proletariat than his activities in Spain. This fantastic analysis is necessary because neither Shachtman nor any one else supporting the resolution advocated a change in our policy because of Stalin's treachery in Spain.

### Conclusions

1. The minority resolution advocates revision of the slogan of unconditional defense but suggests no formulation as a substitute. If anything it suggests the adoption of the slogan conditional defense.
2. The motion of the majority is absolutely clear -- unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack. It thus excludes support of the red army whenever it should be engaged in any attempt to crush a revolutionary movement. It affords the party an opportunity, on the basis of a fundamental policy, to decide its position in any future instance where the Soviet Union will be involved in a military action.
3. Under present conditions, when the "democrats" are savagely attacking the Soviet Union, claiming that there is no difference between it and fascist Germany it would create tremendous confusion and be a serious political error to change our slogan of unconditional defense. If any explanation is necessary we should explain the policy of unconditional defense rather than that of conditional defense.
4. The minority resolution in using vague expressions such as "imperialist policy" and "joint imperialist venture" muddies the waters and plays into the hands of those who shout "red and brown fascism!" Without expressly saying so it constitutes a first and serious step in the direction of denying the nature of the Soviet Union as a workers' state.
5. The minority resolution, in basing its desire for a change in party policy on the Hitler-Stalin pact, by implication, condones an alliance of the Soviet Union with the "democratic" imperialists. At least as a lesser evil. The opponents of the minority resolution firmly cling to the theory that the nature of the Soviet Union is determined by the property relations existing there and not by the temporary alliances of Stalin. The Hitler-Stalin pact and the invasion of Poland by the red army has not brought about any changes of such a nature as to justify any revision in fundamental policy.