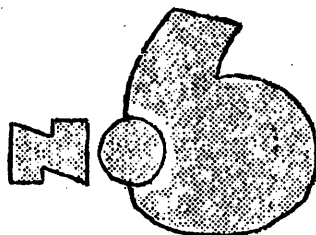


BULLETIN

WORKERS PARTY



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MILITARISM AND THE TASKS OF THE PARTY

1. The United States has entered a new and decisive stage in its development as a world-imperialist power. This new stage, which may be characterized as a Militaristic-War Stage promises to bring with it great changes in the modes of life of all the people. Its effects, however, will have meaning for the working class and for its revolutionary vanguard only insofar as it is understood that a new stage in American history has been reached and that new tasks are posed as a result. Of course, the revolutionary vanguard long ago predicted the coming of war and militarism. But its actual entry onto the historical stage has found us unprepared to greet it with the concrete analysis and program of action demanded by such an important development.

2. Since the World War of 1914-1918 the United States has occupied first place in the ranks of the world-imperialist powers. The exhaustion or pre-occupation with other tasks of all its serious rivals enabled the American capitalists to hold this position without supporting a huge military machine. In the past two decades, therefore, the United States has been content with a small standing army of a few hundred thousand plus an approximately similar number in the National Guard. In addition, a navy second only to that of England and based primarily in the Pacific has been maintained. Each of these arms of the service has had at its disposal an air-craft unit of not more than a few thousand planes, many of them not of fighting calibre.

3. Several factors contributed to this seeming unpreparedness of the United States. First, the exhaustion of the European countries as a result of the last World War prevented them from immediately challenging American Supremacy. Second, the antipathy of the masses for militarism prevented, in part, the building of large armed forces. Third, the tradition of American history dictated a small peace-time army. Fourth, the geographic isolation of the U.S. made it unnecessary to support great defense forces on land. Finally, the cost of militarizing when no apparent threat to the peace of the country was visible, was a deterrent. An exception in the case of the navy because the imperialist ambitions of Japan opposed those of the U.S. in the Far East must be noted. All in All, however, the U.S., up to the beginning of Hitler's marches into other countries, presented a picture of a different kind from what was to be found in Europe.

4. The imperialists of Europe, after 1918 found it necessary to maintain comparatively large armed forces of all varieties. With the exception of England and pre-Hitler Germany, the latter immobilized by the Versailles Treaty, all the important countries and almost all the smaller ones spent large percentages of their national incomes on armed forces in preparation for the next war, and, in addition enforced military training in one degree or another. With the advent to power of the Nazis who tore up the Versailles Treaty, Germany joined the others. Militarism and forced military

training have, therefore, been regular parts of the lives of the European masses. With the already noted exception of England, the European worker knew conscription and military life in contradistinction to his American brother. He did not always accept enforced military servitude placidly, but it was an inescapable part of his life just as factory servitude was.

5. The American bourgeoisie was shaken out of its complacency by the successful blitzkrieg of Hitler. Here was a real threat to its world domination. Finding themselves poorly prepared even to give help to England, the imperialists of this country saw that they must now move very quickly to catch up and to surpass the military might of Germany plus its partners.

The speed with which 15 billion dollars was appropriated for armaments and a conscripted military force provided for bears witness to the fact that the American capitalists have awakened to their need to enter the struggle with military means. Diplomatic devices, treaties, trade agreements and alike will not any longer postpone the solutions of the problems of a decaying social order which is ruled over by a few groups of bandits all seeking to expand at the expense of the others. Roosevelt, understanding this very clearly, is actively preparing to enter the war. Only the insignificant sects of John Haynes Holmes and Norman Thomas believe that entry into the war can be prevented. Thus, the question of the "Defense Program" and Conscription become vitally necessary parts of American Capitalism and not just the episodic desires of the ruling class. They are as necessary to the continued rule of the American Bourgeoisie as factory exploitation, the police force, the courts and any other repressive phenomena present in society today.

5. The beginning of American preparations to enter the war found the working class not only without military training but ideologically confused on what attitude to take towards "National Defense" and Conscription. The opposition voiced by some opponents of the Conscription Bill like Lewis and Green was based upon a difference with the government over a minor and indecisive matter. They said we should first give voluntary enlistment a chance and that peacetime conscription was not in the tradition of the country. The opposition of the various pacifist organizations including the Socialist Party and the Lovestonites was of a similar character. The Stalinists have a like position for obviously different reasons. They spend their time at present spreading pacifist hokum among the workers for the special reason that the master in the Kremlin is not allied to American Imperialism. Should such an alliance be made, they would over night become the loudest patriots, best recruiting sergeants and most efficient government police spies in the land.

In general, all these people were not opposed to the preparations or to the war itself from a class point of view but from a pacifist position. They were voicing the pacifist-abstentionist feelings of the blind who think any important problems, including the problem of

bringing peace to the world, in this epoch can be solved merely by an expression of negative opposition to the war. On the other hand, many, if not the majority, of the American workers take another attitude. They see the threat of Hitlerism from abroad and Fascism at home as things to actively struggle against. Their support of the government program must be understood in this light and not in the light of national chauvinism. They sum up their position by saying, "Hitler must be stopped". These workers, willing to take an active part in what they think is a progressive struggle against Fascism, have not yet learned that the imperialist government of the U.S. is not interested in the struggle which they want to wage, but in a war for world capitalist domination for the account of the Sixty Families. This does not detract, however, from the potentially progressive nature of the subjective feelings of the masses of American workers who are intensely anti-fascist and anxious to do something about it. The problem for the revolutionary vanguard, therefore, is the problem of how to steer the progressive sentiments of the masses, at present distorted into support of the imperialist plans of Roosevelt-Wilkie, into class-struggle, revolutionary channels.

6. We have characterized our epoch as that of the "Death Agony of Capitalism". Our times are featured by the struggle of competing groups of imperialist bandits for world domination. This struggle takes the form of "Total War." Everyone is involved in one measure or another, everything is subordinated to the military victory, everyone becomes a part of the military machine. The extent of capitalist decay on a world scale dictates the solution of all important questions by force, by military means only. Diplomatic agreements

and postponements, as we have noted, can no longer be relied upon by the Capitalists themselves except insofar as they serve to line up the opposing camps in the war. The working class understands this, although in a distorted form at present. The workers know that force must be met by force, that an efficient military machine can be stopped only by one more efficient. What the workers do not yet understand is that the bloody events cannot be concluded by the victory of democratic capitalism over fascist capitalism. They have yet to learn the lesson that only by the taking of power themselves and the transformation of capitalist society into socialist society can war be ended. Therefore, this, the taking of power by the proletariat, becomes the central problem of our epoch. Just as the bourgeoisie has subordinated everything to its military victory so as to insure its continued rule, so must we subordinate everything to our military victory over the Bourgeoisie in order to insure the workers rule.

7. The workers of Germany, Italy, and other totalitarian countries are not organized independently. Their defeats of the past led to the destruction of their trade union and political organizations. In the U.S., however, these organizations still exist. Of course, the trade unions and the non-revolutionary political parties, designed for reformist purposes and peaceful development, cannot be expected to provide the solutions for today's problems, which we have

said are of a military character. However, the possibilities of the proletarian seizure of power are greater in the U.S. than in the totalitarian countries precisely because of the existence of workers organizations which have not yet felt the blows of totalitarianism and are virtually intact. The American workers, militantly anti-fascist in their overwhelming majority, are in a better position to begin the struggle against their own capitalists than their less fortunate brothers ground down under the heel of totalitarianism.

8. The feelings of the American workers towards forced military training before the passage of the bill in Congress supplies all those who want to learn with a valuable lesson. Practically nowhere among the workers was there any serious organized opposition to the bill. It was generally looked upon as a necessary step of preparation against Fascism. Those unions which passed pacifist resolutions against the bill were in a small minority. Nowhere did a movement of any size based upon opposition to the bill make itself evident. The experience of our comrades in parts of the country where they tried to organize pacifist anti-conscription movements is illuminating. There was no mass response of any kind. It is worth noting that in one of these efforts our comrades, in order to make their propaganda palatable to the pacifist sentiment it tried to organize, adopted a pacifist, semi-defensist line. There is a conception in some places that pacifist opposition to the government war plans is reactionary. This is formal thinking of the worst kind. In reality, one must say that pacifist opposition to the government war plans today is an opposition of a confusing sort and does not lend itself towards class opposition to the government. On the other hand, the support of the government war plans by the workers, at this time, is based primarily upon their anti-fascist sentiments, potentially progressive feelings. It is upon this latter feeling that we must base ourselves for action now. Not on the do-nothing, stay-at-home, leave-me-alone pacifist but on the militant fighters who are ready to give up their lives in the struggle against fascism. This is not to say that pacifist tendencies in the ranks of the workers cannot be drawn towards militant class action. They can be, but only under the condition that a broad section of the working class shows how in action. Had the anti-fascist sentiments of the French workers been roused towards an independent proletarian course of distrust of democratic capitalists to stop fascism (Peoples Front), the capitulation to Hitler-Petain would have been impossible. The American worker understands that fascism cannot be stopped by ignoring it. He understands that it is a task that comes closer to him with each passing day and that it can be accomplished only by military means. So far, so good. Today, however, he is fooled by the patriotic propaganda into believing that the democratic capitalist government of this country can do the job. This is where we must step in to explain that it cannot.

9. The revolutionary party must lead the workers, not follow or abstain from the struggle. It must at every stage present a positive program of action based upon the day's reality. It must always show the way towards class struggle in every field, the armed forces as well as the factory. In this period which is characterized by total

war and universal militarization in Europe and its beginnings in the U.S. it is necessary for us to make clear to the working class above all what is its historic role. The seizure of power is the basis from which we build all our tactical positions. Thus, at this time, when the Bourgeoisie is taking millions of men for military training we cannot tell the workers that "Against Conscription" will solve any problems. It can only sow pacifist illusions. We must tell the workers that conscription is just as necessary in present day life as factory production. But whose conscription? Whose factory production? The slogan of "Conscription under the Control of the Trade Unions" is just as valid as are the slogans for workers' control of production. The one is a corollary of the other. We realize that Hitler cannot be defeated by an inefficient army and we see the necessity of military training for the workers. BUT NOT UNDER THE BOSS-OFFICERS! We realize the necessity of government-owned defense industries. BUT NOT UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE BOSS-GOVERNMENT! Conscription? Yes, but only under the control of the workers, under trade union control. We oppose ALL army and govern-

ment controlled conscription. This slogan corresponds to the realities of the day. The slogan of Peoples Army or Workers Army does not at this time. It does not conform to today's reality. It is a slogan for a later period. The slogan for "Conscription under the Control of the Trade Unions" is directed against the Bourgeois government and its control of the army. It can impel the workers to take the road of struggle against the ruling class precisely in the place where the Bourgeoisie must keep ALL control in its own hands. Today, when the armed forces of the American Bourgeoisie are in the process of formation, we must strive to put the working class who will form the bulk of these armed forces on the road to independent class action. The Program of the Fourth International, adopted at its founding conference states, "Light must be shed upon the problem of war from all angles, hinging upon the side from which it will confront the masses at a given moment". It also states, "....We demand: Military training and arming of workers and farmers under direct control of workers and farmers committees; Creation of military schools for the training of commanders among the toilers, chosen by workers' organizations;". These demands retain their full validity today. We must put them into effect at once.

Milton Arvin

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ON SHACHTMAN'S ANSWER TO THE POSITION OF THE S.W.P.
ON CONSCRIPTION, WAR, AND MILITARISM.

In the issue of Labor Action dated November 4th, 1940, there appears the answer of our leadership to the position taken on War and Militarism by the S. W.P. It would be well for us to study this answer most carefully -- first, to compare Shachtman's estimate of the S.W.P. program with what it really is and, second, to check the authenticity of his historical analogies, explicit and implicit.

I

The important point that Shachtman tries to make in his article is that Cannon has opened the door to social-patriotism by advocating that the workers overthrow their own bourgeoisie and repel the invader at the same time. What is really involved here? In the years since the Russian Revolution we always hoped that the workers of this or that country, depending upon the given situation, would overthrow their own bourgeoisie. But as the years rolled on this did not take place. We must now record, and that has been done, that the workers are late in accomplishing this task. Now we are faced with a new and more extensive imperialist war. This war, like the last, poses more than just the question of the overthrow of one's own bourgeoisie. In the last war, the Bolsheviks succeeded in leading the workers in Russia in a successful insurrection against their own bourgeoisie. This even took place DURING THE WAR. What was the first task that confronted the victorious workers of Russia? It was the task of repelling the invader, Germany. Thus, twenty-three years ago, the telescoping of the two tasks, overthrow of the imperialist government and repelling of the invader was the actual fact.

Let us take another example. Hitler invaded France and defeated the bourgeois army. A revolutionary situation opened up. The army of French imperialism disintegrated; the various branches of the state ceased to function. The government itself toppled on the brink and fell, only to be replaced with the insecure and temporary military dictatorship of Petain-Laval. Let us suppose that a revolutionary party of some strength had been in existence and had succeeded in getting the French workers to seize control of a part of the army. What would have been the first task to confront them. Obviously, the struggle against Hitler. Does this mean that this army, a workers army, would be fighting for imperialism? No! It would mean that, as we have advocated for years "we are taking charge of the struggle against Hitler ourselves." Moreover, this workers army would be forced to struggle AT THE SAME TIME against its own bourgeoisie who would, as they did even in less rigorous circumstances make an alliance with Hitler against the workers. Thus, the two tasks, the struggle against the invader and against one's own bourgeoisie are, in fact, telescoped. A third example. During the period of the Paris Commune of 1871 the Commune was forced to struggle against their own bourgeoisie plus the victorious armies of Bismark. History does not always oblige us with opportunities to accomplish

first one task, take a rest and then proceed to the next. Sometimes we will be forced to accomplish one task at the same time as another equally important.

II

How can we, however, one may ask, be sure that in the performance of the two tasks simultaneously the workers do not fall into social-patriotism by supporting national defence and not the overthrow of their bourgeois government? This is a reasonable and important question and has concerned the movement in the past. The revolutionary party advocates the class independence of the proletariat and its unremitting struggle against the bourgeoisie at all times. This struggle during war-time is the continuation and sharpening of its struggle during "peace-time." It takes different forms at different times depending upon circumstances. During "peace-times" we advocated a wide series of actions by the workers against the ruling class: strikes, demonstrations, independent labor candidates for various offices, etc.. At all times we stressed to the workers that they must be independent of the ruling class no matter what the situation and the problem to be solved. During war-time we extend the same general policy. We urge the workers to act independently and as a class against the war-makers and their government; to strike whenever necessary, to raise concrete demands, etc. During war-time these can take the form of our anti-war struggle at given stages. Now, what is social-patriotism within the working-class? The failure to use the strike weapon in the interests of "national unity," i.e., unity under the bosses; failure to maintain the independence of the proletariat and its organizations on the political field, i.e., coalition governments such as in England; support of the government imperialist plans, etc.. In general, social-patriotism is characterized by the failure to fight for the independence of the proletariat and its organizations for the bourgeoisie. This is the general law and in its concrete application one can see that wherever workers political parties, trade unions, etc., under the impact of the crisis, become social-patriotic they give up to one extent or another, their class independence.

III

What is the situation where a workers political party or any independent workers organization advocates policies during war-time which seek to take away bourgeois control of the government or of any of its institutions such as the army? This can hardly be called social-patriotism. If it is anything at all, it is the continuation of the struggle against the bourgeois state and its bourgeois institutions. Thus, the struggle to place conscription under the control of the trade unions which are independent class organizations of the proletariat is, in reality, a means of anti-war struggle at this stage. It is futile to say that the slogan of "Conscription Under Trade Union Control" has class collaboration overtones because the leadership of the trade unions is social-patriotic and corrupt in other ways. When, before the actual overthrow of the bourgeois state, did the trade unions have any better leadership? Never! Why did Lenin and Trotsky advocate "All Power to the Soviets" even when the Soviets were under the leadership of social-patriots and

labor fakers in not one measure worse than those we have today? Why did our movement call for a government of Blum-Cachin, two well developed social-patriots, in France some years back? The reasons in both cases is found in a cardinal principle of Marxism. Marxists have always said that the independent proletariat in control of the state changes the class nature of the state, the independent proletariat in control of an army changes the class nature of the army. The company union, in the control of the bosses, is not to us the same as the trade union in control of the workers. There is a qualitative difference.

Of course, we know that the corrupt leadership of the trade union movement does not make serious efforts to keep its class independence. When the crisis deepens the labor-fakers, far from making some efforts to keep the independence of the unions, will capitulate and hand them over to government control. This has happened in France recently. Therefore, we do not expect them to realize for the workers the slogan of "Trade Union Control of Conscription" or "Workers Control of Production" or, for that matter in this epoch of war and militarism, any really important gains. But in the course of the development of the struggle within the trade unions between us and the present leadership, we, the revolutionists, in the trade union movement,

can be lifted to leadership. In fact, this is the only way we can displace the labor-fakers, by a struggle for the independence of the workers organizations and the struggle for their control over the state (Workers and Farmers Government), the army, at this stage (Control of Production), and the factories (Workers Control of Production). Thus, the fear that the workers can be trapped into social-patriotism by telling them to accomplish two tasks simultaneously, the overthrow of their bourgeoisie and the repelling of the invader, can be overcome in only one way, that is, by maintaining at all times the class independence of the workers.

V

Here, also, we must re-state the great Marxist axiom: the proletariat in control of the state cannot use it in the same way and for the same purpose as the bourgeoisie, it must construct its own state form and use state power for the ultimate socialist ends or it cannot survive. Similarly, the proletariat in control of the factories, mines, farms, etc. must transform the mode of production or fail to survive. Similarly, the proletariat in control of the army, must construct an army of social liberation or fail to survive. The formulation of Comrade Shachtman, trade union control of an imperialist army, is a contradiction in terms, to say the least. If trade union control of an army is possible under the bourgeois state the two are brought into a life and death struggle against each other. Example? Spain. In 1936 at the outbreak of the Civil War, the trade unions formed an army under their control to fight the fascist, France. Immediately, a struggle broke out between the Loyalist Government (a bourgeois government) and the trade union army which was army of social emancipation. The one or the other had to triumph, their co-existence was impossible, even though, in this case,

they were fighting a common enemy. The bourgeois Loyalist government immediately set out to form an army of its own, as a state without an army is not state at all. When it was sufficiently developed and strengthened by the supplies of Stalin it crushed the trade union army. Unfortunately, the workers of Spain shed much blood to learn the lesson which should not be lost on us now. No bourgeois state at any time will permit the formation of an independent army under the control of independent workers organizations. To do so would be suicidal for the bourgeoisie.

EXCERPT FROM VOLUME III, CHAPTER III, "THE HISTORY OF
THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION" BY LEON TROTSKY

Every additional day of war was disintegrating the front, weakening the government, damaging the international position of the country. At the beginning of October the German fleets, both naval and air, developed active operations in the Gulf of Finland. The Baltic sailors fought courageously trying to protect the road to Petrograd. But they, more clearly and profoundly than any other unit of the front, understood the deep contradiction in their positions as vanguards of a revolution and involuntary participants in an imperialist war, and through the radio stations on their ships they sent out a cry to the four corners of the horizon for international revolutionary help. "Attacked by superior German forces our fleet will go down in unequal battle. Not one of our ships will decline the fight. The slandered and maligned fleet will do its duty... but not at the command of a miserable Russian Bonaparte, ruling by the long-suffering patience of the revolution...not in the name of the treaties of our rulers with the Allies, binding in chains the hands of Russian freedom..." No, but in the name of the defense of the approaches to the hearth-fire of the revolution, Petrograd.

"In the hour when the waves of the Baltic are stained with the blood of our brothers, while the waters are closing over their bodies, we raise our voice: ...Oppressed people of the whole world! Lift the banner of revolt!"

MILTON ALVIN

COMRADE ALVIN ON TWO FRONTS

Comrade Alvin invites us to "compare Shachtman's estimate of the SWP program with what it really is." I begin by quoting the nub of Cannon's new pronouncement:

"Well, we answered in a general way, the workers will FIRST overthrow the bourgeoisie at home and then they will take care of invaders. That WAS a good program, but the workers did not make the revolution in time. NOW two tasks must be telescoped and CARRIED OUT SIMULTANEOUSLY." (My emphasis.)

In justification of this new line, Alvin offers a number of historical analogies. His analogies show that he does not know what Cannon is talking about.

The "Simultaneous Carrying Out" of the Two Tasks

"The workers will first overthrow the bourgeoisie at home and then they will take care of invaders."--This is the "outmoded" policy, according to Cannon, who however admits that it has been the Bolshevik policy at least up to now. In the latter respect he is perfectly correct. It is his new theory about the "simultaneous carrying out" of the two tasks which is new. And he counterposes the one formulation to the other.

While Cannon admits the newness of his policy, Comrade Alvin seeks to represent it as the traditional policy of the movement. He does it by an elaborate PUN on the word "telescoping," forming the first section of his article.

Historical analogy No. 1:--"The first task that confronted the victorious workers of Russia...was the task of repelling the invader, Germany." Is not this case a precise illustration of the Bolshevik policy of FIRST overthrowing the bourgeoisie at home and then taking care of invaders? The Bolsheviks did not become defensists until they had seized power. Yet Alvin calls this an example of "telescoping and simultaneous carrying out" of the two tasks. Why?

Historical analogy No. 2 and 3:-- The Paris Commune of 1871, having first seized power, THEN had to defend its power against the German invaders in league with the French counter-revolution. A new Paris Commune of 1940 would have had to struggle against Hitler as its first task. -- These are two more examples of defensism AFTER the seizure of power, along the lines of our "outmoded" policy. But to Alvin they are also cases of "telescoping." How does he get that way?

As far as I can gather from his article, Alvin considers the two tasks "telescoped" if one follows IMMEDIATELY upon the other. That seems to explain why he writes such a thing as: "History does not always oblige us with opportunities to accomplish first one task, take a rest and then proceed to the next." (My emphasis.)

As if the principle we are defending is that there must be a "rest" between the seizure of power and the task of defending that power! As if Cannon's new contribution is his discovery that this "rest" concept is not a necessary part of Leninism! Alvin simply attributes a bit of nonsense to Shachtman and then exposes it as absurd.

Since Alvin presents his "analogies" with the Russian Revolution and the Paris Commune so seriously, a more homely illustration may be useful. If Alvin desires to touch both his nose and his knee with his right hand, he would have to follow the formula: FIRST, touch your nose, and THEN touch your knee. "No," says Cannon, "we must carry out both tasks simultaneously." And Alvin proceeds to defend this position by arguing that you DO in effect "carry out simultaneously" both tasks if you touch your knee IMMEDIATELY after touching your nose, with no "rest" in-between.

At this point, Alvin seems to use the word "telescoping" to mean "immediate succession." Cannon speaks of "telescoping" and "carrying out simultaneously" "now." The difference here is the difference between national defensism and revolutionary defeatism. And as I shall show, Alvin also takes steps toward Cannon's view.

The Example of the Russian Revolution

Without any comment of his own, as a parting shot, Alvin appends to his article an excerpt from Trotsky's History, which puts his views in a quite different light. The excerpt tells us that the revolutionary sailors wanted to defend Petrograd against the Germans before October, and that Trotsky approved of this.

Now why does Alvin select this passage and cite it as if it were documentary proof of his position? Is it to tell us that even Trotsky was willing to accept the idea of defensism before the seizure of power? And that when Cannon also advocates this he is only following in Lenin's footsteps? For this seems to be the implication. But if the quoted passage is understood, it does not at all serve Alvin's argument.

The views of the Baltic sailors on the defense of Petrograd were based on the existence of the dual power at that hour. Dual power means that a WORKERS' POWER EXISTS, not as the official state but side by side with the official state power of the bourgeoisie and contending for complete domination. In such case, while striving for complete power, the workers will fight to defend their own "half" of the dual power, not only against internal bourgeois counter-revolution, but naturally also (in given circumstances where the problem arises in this form) against foreign counter-revolutionary forces. In defending revolutionary Petrograd ("the hearth-fire of the revolution"), the sailors were DEFENSISTS ON THE BASIS OF A WORKERS' POWER which was still dual to that of the bourgeoisie.

The question would have been illuminated for Alvin if he read the page immediately following the one from which he quotes. Trotsky cites the bourgeois Duma President, Rodzianko, as publicly admitting that he hoped that the Germans would succeed in crushing Petrograd and destroying the Baltic Fleet because they were "depraved" (i.e. revolutionary).

A paradox for Alvin. Before October, and at this moment, the Bolsheviks were against defensism--the Rodziankos were for defensism. In this specific action, the threatened attack on red Petrograd, the Rodziankos became defeatists (without thereby impairing their general defensist position) and the Bolshevik sailors became defensists (while the party continued to denounce defensism in the war between Kerenskyist Russia and Germany). According to the implications of Alvin's article, the Bolsheviks either were or should have been Russian defensists.

The action around Petrograd can be seen in its true light only as a special case of our basic position that DEFENSISM IS PERMISSIBLE ONLY ON THE BASIS OF WORKERS' POWER. (We are speaking here of defensism in imperialist wars.) In a specific action in a period of dual power, the workers defended the power they had attained, not only against Rodzianko, but against German allies of Rodzianko. The red sailors saw it this way, and the bourgeois ministers saw it just as clearly.

Although Alvin himself ventures no explicit interpretation himself, we are supposed to draw the conclusion that we too can NOW be defensists--even though no workers power exists, not even in dual form. What else can be the meaning of his appending the quotation from Trotsky? All right: if a London soviet arises and controls its own army and fleet, and Hitler with the blessing of Churchill marches in to crush it, we want the London soviet to defend itself against Hitler. But to insinuate therefore that NOW the revolutionary party should tell the London workers to support the military struggle against Hitler, is to provide a left cover for social-patriotism.

The Line of "the Fight on Two Fronts"

FIRST, seizure of power--THEN defense against invaders: this is our policy. NO NATIONAL DEFENSE EXCEPT ON THE BASIS OF WORKERS' POWER.

Cannon rejects posing the question as "First--and then," and tells us to seek to carry out these two tasks simultaneously, "NOW."

What does Cannon's new formula mean in practice in a concrete situation--say, in England right now? -- It tells them: "You must of course work NOW for your own seizure of power; but simultaneously you must also work NOW for the defense against the German invader."

Here you have a formulation which REALLY "telescopes" (carries out simultaneously) the two tasks, and not by a play on words. That is why it is also the REAL FORMULATION OF "REVOLUTIONARY" DEFENSISM -- the left variety of social-patriotism in the imperialist war. It is indeed the present position of the leftsocial-patriots in England, the "Tribune" group (Laski, Postgate, Cole, etc.). This position may be summed up as the line of "THE FIGHT ON TWO FRONTS": that is, attempting to support the struggle against the bourgeoisie at home at the same time that one supports the bourgeoisie's military struggle against the imperialist foe.

Note: I do not seek to impute this conclusion to Alvin or to Cannon. It is enough to state that this is the only concrete meaning that can be assigned to Cannon's formula, which Alvin defends, even though both may recoil from the objective consequences of their slogan.

The "Fight on Two Fronts" and Revolutionary Defeatism

Alvin would certainly have a right to protest if I did make such an imputation. Does he not devote his second section to emphasizing that the class struggle and class independence of the workers must be maintained? He does, and thereby touches upon the heart of the question of the "fight on two fronts."

If (in an imperialist war) one REALLY wants to fight for military victory over the foreign invader NOW (at the same time that one also talks about seizing power), then all verbiage about "complete class independence" and "unremitting struggle against the bourgeoisie under any circumstances" is a purely literary gesture. These two aims can be posed coordinately only on paper; in practice they are in contradiction. That is precisely why the social-patriots, no matter how left, are (by the logic of their position--wishing above all to insure defeat of the foreign invader) compelled to make concessions on the class interests and class independence of the workers. The right social-patriots make more concessions, the left social-patriots gag at some.

The question boils down to this: the military apparatus for carrying on the fight against Hitler is now in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The workers will have such a military apparatus only when they have power. To advocate support of the military struggle against Hitler now (whether or not at the same time one advocates a non-bourgeois army) means to push the workers to supporting the existing military apparatus--for the simple reason that that is the only instrument available to them for fighting against Hitler's army directly. Ordinary people will draw this practical conclusion from such a position even if Cannon or Alvin stops with its literary expression. And any support of the government's military steps (direct or indirect, partial or complete, conditional or unconditional) is a blow against the unremitting prosecution of the class struggle. Revolutionary defeatism means the intensification of the class struggle regardless of its effect on the military front, regardless of whether or not it means the defeat of one's "own" country by the foreign invader.

There is expressed the inescapable contradiction between the two tasks which Cannon wants to take care of simultaneously: (1) concern for military victory over the fascist foe, and (2) unremitting intensification of the class struggle. One has to be subordinated to the other. The left social-patriots who "fight on two fronts" sacrifice the latter and precisely in a crisis have to abandon it completely. The revolutionary Marxist sacrifices the former. The attempt to perform both "simultaneously" is a straddle which in the given circumstances of the pressure of the capitalist war machine, flops over to the pro-war camp. This contradiction can be resolved only through the revolutionary overturn of the capitalist state and its replacement by a workers' power.

And in this eventuality, just imagine the capitalists saying: "We want to fight against the foreign invader but we also want to struggle against this workers' state, so we will do both simultaneously"! The capitalists will have no illusions about such a "fight on two fronts". As in the Russian civil war, their line is counter-revolutionary defeatism. It would be a good thing if all Marxists were half as realistic as the class-conscious bourgeoisie.

The "Fight on Two Fronts" in Spain

We do not reject the line of "the fight on two fronts" in every case. We reject it only in a reactionary war. For this was precisely our line in Spain.

In Spain we were for the "simultaneous carrying out" of the two tasks: military struggle against Franco, and struggle for seizure of power from the People's Front government. We expressed it as: military support, but no political support, to the Loyalist government in its struggle against Franco.

We were able to hold this line because we were for the war, because we were defensists, because we rejected defeatism, and frankly said so. How this illuminates Cannon's position! We were consistent; Cannon would also be consistent if he openly avowed himself a variety of defensist.

Anti-War Pacifism and Anti-Fascist Patriotism

In section 8 of his Thesis, Comrade Alvin inveighs against the notion that pacifist opposition to the war is progressive. On the contrary, he implies, it is reactionary because it is "confusing" and "does not lend itself towards class opposition to the government." The pro-war spirit of the workers, on the other hand, is based on anti-fascist, potentially progressive feelings, and "it is upon the latter feeling that we must base ourselves for action now."

This, as Alvin would say, is "formal thinking of the worst kind."

Is not "anti-fascist" patriotism also "confusing"? Of course. Does it lend itself to class opposition to the government? It may or may not. The same thing is true of the pacifism of the pacifist worker. (I am not speaking here of the professional pacifist, any more than Alvin has in mind the professional "anti-fascist" patrioteer.)

The fact is, there are many kinds of pacifists and many kinds of "anti-fascists," Alvin repeats, in his own way, some of the cruder expressions of derogation thrown at pacifist sentiments by the bourgeoisie. The naive pacifism of the worker is not at all necessarily "do-nothing, stay-at-home, leave-me-alone." It is often a distorted expression of the worker's realization that this is not his war and that there is therefore no reason for him to put himself out for it. Such pacifist-minded workers are not "militant fighters who are ready to give up their lives in the struggle against fascism"? Nonsense. Such pacifism may indeed denote a stage of political awareness miles nearer our revolutionary position than the worker who is doped up for the war by the "anti-fascist" propaganda of the press.

Yes, there are many kinds of pacifists and many kinds of anti-fascists. By lumping one group together as a reactionary mass, and pinning a progressive medal on the other agglomeration, Alvin does not contribute toward an understanding of the revolutionary approach toward these currents.

To the pacifist worker we say: "You are against the war? Good. But your program, analysis, methods, etc. are at best futile and, worse, disarming. The way to fight the war is by fighting for a workers' government." -- To the anti-fascist pro-war worker we say: "You want to fight Hitlerism? Good. So do we. But you are not really fighting Hitlerism when you support the government in this war" etc.

Of course, it is possible to take another line with regard to the latter: "You are for this war? Well, that's progressive insofar as it shows that you are anxious to fight fascism. But while you support the war against Germany, don't neglect to carry on the struggle against your own bosses and boss government." This is the line of the fight on two fronts. It is already to make a big concession to social-patriotism.

Within both ideologies, in given cases, there is a potentially progressive kernel--that is true. Our job is to develop this potentiality into a class program of workers' revolution. Unsparing criticism of the futility and capitulationist character of pacifism; unsparing criticism of the social-patriotism of the pro-war worker who accepts the war under an anti-fascist label: AND NO YIELDING BEFORE THE PRESSURE OF EITHER.

Insofar as we must "base ourselves" on the progressive kernel of the pro-war ideology of the workers, it is because this is the prevailing ideology of the majority of workers TODAY, and it is our practice to find an approach to the workers AS THEY ARE. Tomorrow, with increasing privations and disillusionment with the "anti-fascist" war, we shall see a swing in the workers' ranks toward a pacifist anti-war sentiment--pacifist insofar as it is not channeled into a revolutionary course.

But the catch lies in that phrase "basing ourselves on anti-fascist social-patriotism for action now." To Cannon this means: ADAPTING ourselves to social-patriotic pressure and prejudices. Hence, his posing of the military struggle against Hitler simultaneously with the class struggle for the seizure of power. Such an approach to the social-patriots serves only to reinforce their social-patriotism. -- What does the phrase mean concretely to Alvin?

This is as good a place as any to mention the emphasis which Alvin (end of section 8), like Cannon, places on "military means only" to stop fascism. To be sure, in the last analysis, fascism will be stopped only by military means. It is necessary for us to add, however: military means in the hands of the revolutionary workers, directed against their own bourgeoisie in the first instance. The working class will not have the military means to fight against Hitler except after it has power--that is, it requires not only the "military means" but the political precondition, workers' power. Any propoganda which slides over this political precondition and presents the fight against Hitler as a matter of "military means only" runs the risk of thereby convincing the workers that he should support the present available military means, pending the acquirement of different ones. The exaggerated formulations of Cannon and the context in which he places them invite this risk.

Cannon's "New Military Policy"

Cannon's "new military policy for the proeltarait", summed up in the slogan for "Conscription Under Trade Union Control," is the inevitable counterpart of his theory of "the fight on two fronts." For in order to imponent this perspective, he is obliged to find a slogan which seems to provide for independent working-class military forces while the workers do not yet have power.

Let it be understood: We are for an army under the complete control of independent working-class organizations. THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT OUR SLOGAN FOR A PEOPLE'S ARMY MEANS. A People's Army means an army which is completely under workers' control, completely independent of the capitalist state machinery (and therefore necessarily opposed to it). It thereby assumes the existence of a workers' state or, transitionally, of dual power. This we make explicit by linking the slogan of a People's Army with that of a Workers' Government. The slogan is correct if understood in this sense.

But Alvin very obviously does not understand it in t-is sense. He specifically informs us that "the slogan of a People's Army or Workers' Army does not...conform to today's reality. It is a slogan for a later period." He rejects it, and prefers Cannon's formula, for this stage. Since Alvin distinguishes between the two, we must ask: How does Cannon's slogan differ from the slogan for a People's Army?

The Necessary Ambiguity of Cannon's Slogan

The answer is fairly clear. If an army under completely independent workers' control means exactly the same as a People's Army, then Cannon's slogan must mean: the sharing of control of the army between the workers' organizations and the bourgeois state. This is the class-collaborationist logic of his slogan.

Conscription Under Trade Union Control, as a slogan, is false because it is dangerously ambiguous. Its ambiguity plays a necessary role in Cannon's position. The slogan may be interpreted to imply two different positions:

1) The demand for a People's Army: We have seen what short shrift Alvin gives to this interpretation. (Typically, Cannon has not committed himself to an explicit rejection of the People's Army slogan. Alvin asserts what Cannon implies.)

The workers militias ("trade union army") created in Spain at the outbreak of the civil war were the beginnings of a People's Army. Alvin apparently does not understand this when he refers to Spain at the end of his article. The workers' militias were completely independent of the Loyalist government. Its autonomy was not like the formal, fictional "trade union control" such as Bevan and Morrison exercise; and this was precisely why its existence was the manifestation of the dual power that existed.

Is this what Cannon's slogan demands? Then why reject the slogan of the People's Army, which expresses it most clearly and without ambiguity? And what is new about this policy?

The slogan for a People's Army must be linked with our slogan for a Workers' Government. The resolution of the last N.C. plenum emphasized this: "Our duty, however, is to try to direct this (anti-fascist) sentiment into truly proletarian and revolutionary channels. It is for that reason that among other slogans, we raise the slogan of a People's Army, trained, directed and controlled by the working class and its responsible organizations. But this propagandist slogan--and that is what it is at the present stage--would under present conditions lead us directly to national defensism, unless our press and spokesmen constantly coupled it with the slogan of a workers' government... A "People's Army" subject to capitalism is a myth or a snare. To speak of a people's army without a workers' government is to prepare objectively for defensism under capitalist rule."

This is exactly the objective role of the second, and actual, meaning of the Cannonite slogan.

(2) Sharing control of the army between the workers' organizations, specifically the trade union leaders, and the government.

Doesn't Trade Union Leader Hillman, who basks in the workers'

confidence, "share control" of the war mobilization with Knudsen and others? Of course, he does not always have the last word to say on all matters pertaining to labor...but then, to demand as much as that would not "conform to today's reality."

Do not the labor leaders in England (Bevan, Morrison, et al.) "share control" of the war effort, together with Beaverbrook and Churchill? May not the trade-union "controllers" in the cabinet be given even more "control" to "share" especially if the workers show signs of escaping from the state's control?

"But their control is fictional: the real control still resides safely in the hands of the bourgeoisie." -- Of course. There cannot be any real workers' control of the army unless state power is taken away from the bourgeoisie. But that is also a matter of the future and it does not conform to today's reality. Meanwhile let the workers be satisfied with the measure of control that is possible right now, and not neglect their duty to support the military struggle against Hitler...

Cannon puts it forward in this light. He emphasizes (Soc. Appeal, Nov. 30) that the slogan is realizable right at present and polemizes against people who doubt that fact. "It is up to us then to convince these workers that our demands are reasonable and practical in the present situation..." And indeed Cannon is compelled to put it forward in this way, in order to demonstrate how very "realistic" the SWP is being, in proposing a program which can serve to fight Hitler's troops "right at present" without first gaining workers' power.

This meaning of the slogan is again illuminated in the emphasis which Alvin gives to "ALL" in his remark: "It can impel the workers to take the road of struggle against the ruling class precisely in the place where the bourgeoisie must keep ALL control in its own hands." (Alvin's emphasis.) -- Again, does the British bourgeoisie concentrate ALL control in its own hands? In order to demonstrate that to a labor supporter of Bevan, Morrison & Co., Alvin would find himself explaining his slogan in terms of a People's or Workers' Army and a workers' government. That is what our program does, instead of encouraging and reinforcing social-patriotic illusions.

But most important, whatever may be Cannon's intention, the ordinary worker understands the slogan in this way. To him, there is trade-union control if his union president is put on the draft board, or given a responsible post in the war machine. To him, the slogan is not ambiguous. He understands it in a class-collaborationist sense.

A slogan gains its real meaning from the concrete context into which it is launched. The very same slogan may be right, wrong or meaningless, depending on that context. The slogan of "Peace"

may be pacifist or revolutionary, depending on the context in which it is given forth. The slogan for a minimum of \$30 for a maximum 30-hour week is meaningless to an auto worker who is already working only 30 hours (because of spread work) and getting over \$30. Cannon's slogan must be judged, as a slogan, by what it means to the workers at this time.

This is also why the objective meaning of Cannon's slogan, issued in the midst of the national debate on the draft bill, was FOR CONSCRIPTION, the abandonment of any fight against the bill. Cannon drew the implications himself: he denounces "the pacifist muddle-heads who proclaim the necessity of socialism and yet oppose compulsory military training," and he assures the workers that the change from a small standing army to a conscript army "will be all for the better"--without any qualifications whatsoever. (Same issue of Socialist Appeal.)

A final word on the question of "the fight on two fronts" and its accompanying military policy. On the one hand, opportunism is the objective result of this kind of propaganda, because opportunism is the only road by which a show of realizing it can be made. And from the other direction, the fact is that opportunism and social-patriots have used precisely these slogans to cloak their betrayal.

Even Scheidemann, in a Reichstag speech in 1914, proclaimed: "We will defend our Fatherland in order to conquer it." This is a right-wingish statement of the "simultaneous carrying out" of the two tasks. More on the leftish side was the temporary position taken by the Communist Party of France for a brief period immediately after the Franco-Soviet Pact when they were traveling from their anti-war position to their complete social-patriotic position. In their transition from one to the other, they passed through the stage of the "fight on two fronts" and demands for workers' control of the French army. I well remember articles written by one T. Repard defending the new pro-war line of the Stalinists with phrases about "Jacobin defensism."

In fact, the Cannonite slogan is perfectly fitted for a revolutionary who wants to adapt himself to the social-patriotic current. To the pro-war workers (and above all, to the trade-union bureaucrats with whom the Minnesota Cannonites have to collaborate!) it chimes in with their defensism. (It goes without saying that the trade-union bureaucrats are more eager for a bit of "trade union control" than Cannon is!) On holiday occasions and in journalistic declamations, it can be trimmed with all the revolutionary phrases of which one is master.

The line of "the fight on two fronts" has its counterpart in the slogan with two faces.

"Trade Union Control" and the Labor-Lieutenant Controllers

In the third section of his article, the inner logic of his position drives Alvin into a really extraordinary argument. Shachtman

had written against Cannon: "The second--'trade union control' of the conscript army--is a slogan of class-collaboration, especially in view of the present trade-union leadership (for in this slogan, the reformist character of the officialdom is involved). This slogan stands on the same social feet as a call for 'trade union control' of the Roosevelt government."

To this Alvin replies with two more historical naalogies, as unfortunate as his others. "Why did Lenin and Trotsky advocate 'All Power to the Soviets' even when the Soviets were under the leadership of social-patriots and labor-fakers...? Why did our movement call for a government of Blum-Cachin, two well-developed social-patriots, in France some years back?"

Good questions. His answers to them make the most revealing paragraph of his document. "The reasons in both cases are found in a cardinal principle of Marxism. Marxists have always said that the independent proletariat in control of the state changes the class nature of the state, the independent proletariat in control of an army changes the class nature of the army."

So! The Bolsheviks challenged the Mensheviks and S.R.'s to break with the Cadets and take power into their own hands because this step would have meant the establishment of a workers' state! (Alvin says it would have changed the class nature of the state!)

The actual reason is given in the Program of the Fourth International (page 37 of the pamphlet) orecisely in order to educate historians like Alvin:

"From April to September, 1917 [Why not after September also, if Alvin's reason is the correct one?--P.T.] the Bolsheviks demanded that the S.R.'s and Mensheviks break with the liberal bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands...categorically refusing, however, either to enter into the government of the Mensheviks and S.R.'s [Now why on earth didn't they want to enter the government of a workers' state, Comrade Alvin?--P.T.] or to carry political responsibility for it. If the Mensheviks and S.R.'s had actually broken with the Cadets (liberals) and with foreign imperialism, then the 'workers and peasants government' created by them [Trotsky puts quotes around this term because on the preceding page he had explained why such a government is not a qorkers and peasants government but a bourgeois-democratic caricature--P.T.] could only have hastened and facilitated the establishmenr of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it was precisely because of this that the leadership of petty bourgeois democracy resisted with all possible strength the establishment of its own government... Nevertheless, the demand of the Bolsheviks...had for the masses tremendous educational significance. The obstinate unwillingness of the Mensheviks and S.R.'s to take power, so dramatically exposed during the July days, definitely doomed them before mass opinion and prepared the victory of the Bolsheviks... Under these conditions the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership: 'Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!' is an ex-

tremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character of the parties and organizations of the Second, Third and Amsterdam Internationals."

The purpose of exposing the trade union leadership is not the purpose of the slogan, Conscription Under Trade Union Control. (This purpose is fulfilled by the slogan for a People's Army based on the trade unions and workers organizations, because this is the slogan for a complete break with the bourgeois state.) On the contrary, Alvin gives us to understand that the purpose of his slogan is to change the class nature of the army by putting it under the "independent" control of the labor lieutenants of capitalism!

Alvin is driven to take this position. For he desires to carry on an independent workers' military struggle against Hitler before seizing power, and he is therefore compelled to look to the trade-union labor fakers as the leaders of such a struggle (they are the only ones ready to hand), and to represent their control as changing the class nature of the army.

The same is true of the Blum-Cachin analogy, except that this is cruder. To imagine that a Blum-Cachin government would have changed the class nature of the French state or army is... well, it is to say that the all-Social-Democratic government of Germany in 1919 (based on the German soviets!--the cabinet ministers called themselves People's Commissars!) was a workers' state too. For in Germany, the Social-Democrats did accede to the demand that they take "all power" into their own hands, and gave lip service to the principle of All Power to the Soviets--for a while.

Workers Control of the Army and Workers Control of Production

"But we advocate workers' control of production--why not trade-union control of the army?"

First, our slogan for a People's Army and a Workers Government is the slogan for complete workers' control of the army.

"But we're willing to accept a good deal less than complete workers' control in the case of production, mere inspection of books, for example." -- Yes, we make such a distinction. For that matter, we are willing to permit a member of the party to enter a wages-and-hours commission with representatives of the bosses, but not willing to let him enter a cabinet with representatives of the bosses.

The question is: What does the step commit us to? -- The demand for the right to inspect books (partial control of production) does not commit us to defend private property! In contrast, a demand for (partial) control of the army's fight against Hitler com-

mits its sponsor to support of that fight, or at best encourages support of the war among the slogan's audience.

In general, demand for control of an action commits one to the position that that action is itself worthy of support. We demand complete control of the fight against Hitler, because the fight against Hitler is worthy of support, if our demand is gained. Cannon demands a measure of control of the fight against Hitler, but even if this demand is gained--the capitalist state still remaining in decisive control--the army's fight against Hitler is still not worthy of our support. The line between the two still remains the workers' seizure of power, and Cannon's new policy consists in that he now does not think it necessary to cross that line, before advocating defense against Hitler.

Cannon's slogan is: Workers control of the armed forces (under capitalism, before the seizure of power). It corresponds to Alvin's theory of workers control of the state (under Blum-Cachin, before the seizure of power). One flows from the other, because after all, the state is merely "a special body of armed men." These slogans, which refer to the state, have "class-collaborationist overtones" because of the character of the trade-union bureaucracy which would do the controlling, given the class character of the present army.

The "Military Transitional Program"--Transitional to What?

Comrade Alvin may object to the interpretation of the Cannon position which I have here given. I have tried to emphasize that in no case does the question depend on what he says is his meaning. At best, this testifies to his good intentions. Others before this have recoiled before the logical implications of their own position. The decisive point of consideration is: the objective consequences of the position formulated by the Cannonites.

But if Alvin does object to my interpretation, he is in duty bound to explain his own--not merely by general formulation but by concrete application. Specifically: How would revolutionists "simultaneously carry out" the two tasks (defense against the invader, and struggle for the seizure of power) in England right now? To what new political conclusions does it lead him? Does it lead him to any political conclusions that differ from those of the party?

I have discussed Alvin's contribution at length, not only because Alvin holds this position, and not only because Cannon holds it, but because in this position we have the only construction, so far, of a bridge by which a revolutionary Marxist can pass over to social-patriotism without consciously making a break with his past. The theories of Thomas, Lovestone, etc. are not useful for this purpose, for people who have been educated in our movement. The theory of Cannon and Alvin does provide this convenience. Again, this does not mean that either the SWP or Alvin will take advantage of their own constructive work. But if the bridge is left standing, someone is likely to make use of it.

Cannon has "given a finger to social-patriotism," said Shachtman. An opportunist deviation in peace-time is bad enough, not only in itself, but because like a sleeve caught in a revolving gear it draws the rest of the program along with it. In war-time and on the war question, the revolving gear rotates far more rapidly, and with more inexorable insistency, and tends to draw all other politics behind the opportunist slip and into its meshes.

PAUL TEMPLE

ON THE SLOGAN "CONSCRIPT WAR INDUSTRY"

Dear Slim:

...In this letter, I want to take up your comments on our slogan "Conscript War Industry under Workers Control".

I cannot agree with your objections to our putting forward and using this slogan. We had a thoroughgoing discussion of it before we decided to adopt it. We treated all conceivable aspects of the slogan and took up in advance all possible objections, including those you raise. The slogan "Conscript War Industries Under Workers Control" is a transitional slogan. From the standpoint of the concrete situation in the United States, it is preferable by far to the slogan "Nationalize War Industry". Why?

The government decides to conscript the masses for service in the army and the imperialist war. In the very nature of the case, the government does not consult the masses as to whether or not they want to be conscripted. Everybody knows, including the Cannonites who pretend not to know, that the majority of the people and of the workers in particular, are against conscription. To one degree or another, they resent it. They seek to evade it; at best, they do it without enthusiasm. Now that it has been adopted as the law of the land, they feel that it is pointless to try to conduct a frontal offensive against Conscription. In reply to any questions we would, continuing our basic position, declare that we are for the repeal of the conscription act. But it is ludicrous to imagine that it is possible to launch now a serious progressive movement to repeal the act. Or to convince anybody that such a movement is possible. Hence, those comrades in Los Angeles who want to continue placing our major emphasis on the flat slogan "against Conscription" are quite unrealistic and wrong.

The problem now is: With the adoption of the act, and its enforcement already under way, how direct the potentially progressive anti-fascist patriotism of the masses and their opposition to the war, and their resentment at conscription, into class channels, into an increasing mass movement against the bourgeois government? Under what slogans can this best be effected? It is in replying to those questions that your objections to our slogan are revealed as invalid. We go to a worker and we say: We were opposed to conscription because it is conscription for imperialist war. Whether or not you were opposed to it, that is still our opinion. They, the bourgeoisie and its government, they say conscription is for democracy that the war would be for democracy, that is why they conscript you - you the workers. While you are dying, the bosses will make fabulous profits coined out of your blood. All right then, why aren't the war industries conscripted? No war profits while workers are dying! And let the workers be in control of those industries because they are the only ones we should trust to see to it that things are done right.

Now, in our view, this is an excellent presentation of our basic revolutionary position. We take the worker as he is and as he is thinking. We speak to him in precisely those terms that he is thinking in, that the very conscription act compells him to think in; we speak to him in terms which make our basic slogans accessible to his present state of mind and the terms in which that mind is operating. What does that mean concretely? He is thinking over and over again - they are conscripting me, they are conscripting me, they are conscripting me. We pick up right from there and say over and over again, in the same terms: conscript them, conscript their war industries, put them under your control! And you comrades? The worker is thinking in terms of "Conscription". You break violently into his trend of thought with a different language, and speak of nationalization or expropriation. What do you gain by that? If you gain anything, it is only in so far as you take his mind of "Conscription" and seek to bring it to such terms as nationalization and expropriation. Your gain is a loss. It is as if the workers were thinking in terms of councils, and we insisted on their thinking in terms of soviets. You argue furthermore, that the use of the term "Conscript War Industries" is calculated to make our position "more palatable because the workers want to carry on the war against Hitler and are misled into social patriotism". In a sense that is quite correct, but your objection to it is not any the more valid because of it. Yes, many or most workers will interpret that slogan (and many more of our slogans!) as being in harmony with a patriotic, bourgeois defense position. But that in itself is not decisive. The same objection could be made to our slogan "let the people vote on war". The same objection could be made to our slogan, which Labor Action has carried from its very first issue "Government ownership and workers control of all war industries". You should be more consistent and more thorough-going. The purpose of transitional demands is to take the workers as they are, with all their bourgeois and petty bourgeois prejudices, and to direct them as a class against the bourgeoisie and its government at an increasingly revolutionary tempo. To set an appreciable mass of workers in motion under the slogan "Conscript War Industry Under Workers Control" would mean in reality (regardless of what this or that group of workers might think of it) setting the masses in motion against the bourgeois government and consequently against its war. This applies without any change to the slogan of "Let the People Vote on War", to the slogan of "Government Ownership of War Industries", and to any number of our other transitional demands.

Will the Government conscript or nationalize war industry? I would not say that it is theoretically excluded, but as a concrete, real possibility it is ridiculous to believe in it. It has not been done in England, it has not been done in any of the Fascist countries. It was not done anywhere in the last war, and most certainly it will not be done "Under Workers Control". And what have we to lose if we can set workers in motion against the bourgeois government and its war, even if they may think, at the beginning, that they are acting as good patriots? The bourgeoisie is not so dogmatic. It has no objection to using slogans which set the workers in motion

against the working class and its best interests, even though these same workers think they are acting in the interests of the working class. But are not we deceiving the workers then? Not at all. Just because we don't, in each slogan, unfold our full position in all its logical and political consequences. Just because our partial transitional slogans are calculated to leave room for the workers to develop the full logic of the slogans in the course of their actual experience (for which our experience and our knowledge are no substitute) does not for a minute mean that we are deceiving the workers.

You say that Jack declares the slogan of conscription to be identical with the slogan of expropriation. I don't believe this is correct. Conscription (nationalization) is not identical with expropriation. I believe expropriation implies the seizure of property without compensation to its former owners. Nationalization does not necessarily imply the exclusion of indemnification to the former owners. In the given case it is not necessary to be quite so "radical". In this connection I call your attention to Lenin's slogans in 1917, which, if your objections hold valid, could be denounced as sheer social patriotism. He said in effect, you want to defend the country from the Germans? Well, nationalization of the key industries would enormously increase the efficiency of the country and consequently its military efficiency. But nationalization by itself or even under workers control does not signify the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. I think a re-reading of Lenin's writings of that period and on this score would prove fruitful.

You know, the adoption of the transitional program about two years ago did not fully solve that big problem of ours which is to popularize our basic revolutionary slogans in terms accessible to the masses, and calculated to set them in motion as a class. Our transitional program is not a dogma, but like our program in general, a guide to action. To repeat on every occasion, expropriation, nationalization, when we are in a position to say the same thing in simpler more pertinent more timely terms would lead us to pedantry. I was kind of proud of the fact that we adopted such a good slogan as "Conscript War Industries under Workers Control". I regret that you do not see eye to eye with us on it. I hope that this already too long letter will help to clarify our position and to bring you closer to it.

With warmest personal regards.

Max Shachtman

Dec. 3, 1940

A PROTEST FROM COMRADES IN ST. LOUIS

(We print below two letters - one from the comrades in St. Louis, and the other from comrade Wilson on the subject matter dealt with in the letter from St. Louis. The letter of comrade Wilson from which some private matters are omitted, is addressed to one of the comrades in St. Louis. The Political Committee has decided, in connection with these matters, that a further discussion in the Bulletin on the question first raised by comrade Macdonald in the last Bulletin would not prove fruitful at the present time, but would rather serve to limit unnecessarily the discussion of political questions before the party of far more vital importance. So far as the points raised by the St. Louis comrades are concerned, they are dealt with adequately by comrade Wilson's letters. The Political Committee has every interest and desire to stimulate an organized discussion in the party on important problems facing us. It has no desire to engage in either "withh-hunting" or in suppressing opinions - jobs which we can safely leave to the capable hands of the Cannonites. At the same time, however, the P.C. is determined that any discussion shall be properly organized, that the discipline and integrity of the party shall be firmly maintained, and that the program and principles of the party continue to rest on solid Marxist foundations. In this, the P.C. has no doubt that it expresses the equal determination of the party as a whole. - Editor.)

It is with the keenest regret that we are compelled to omit from this issue of the Bulletin the letter of the St. Louis comrades which is announced on the title-page and commented on by comrade Jack Wilson. The reasons for the omission are as follows:

The original of the letter from St. Louis sent to the National Office went astray in an unaccountable manner. All attempts to locate it proved vain. The St. Louis branch secretary, comrade Coleman, happened to be in New York for a few days last week, and it was agreed with him that upon his return to St. Louis he would immediately air-mail the National Office a copy of the letter for incorporation into the Bulletin, all the rest of which had meanwhile been stencilled and mimeographed. This morning, we received word from St. Louis that no copy of the letter is available, and therefore it cannot be sent. The National Office does not feel that it can any longer delay the publication of the Bulletin on this account, and in view of the fact that everything else in this issue is already prepared, it has decided to publish it as it now stands and without waiting any longer for the missing letter.

Should a copy be found later on, or should the St. Louis comrades wish to summarize the views they expressed in it in another letter, it will of course, be published in the next Bulletin.

National Office

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ON "TOLERANCE" FOR MARXISM

Dear

.... In regard to your letter on the Macdonald question I must say I disagree entirely with its views, although I understand what motivates your letter: All the provocation in this particular discussion came from Macdonald, and not Johnson. Dwight rode a snotty article in an outside publication, not merely disagreeing with the official views but sort of laughing at the orthodox Marxists and hinting they were sterile. In his internal document he goes further. Since some of us disagree with his views, it proves that the intellectual atmosphere is sterile, our people ignorant, etc., etc..

If for Macdonald studying and raising any question he wants. So is everyone else. There is no witch-hunt atmosphere anywhere. What is demanded, and what is indispensable to a party, is that comrades utilize the proper channels for the discussion. Your letter recognizes this, and then places the blame not on Macdonald. Suppose Johnson does get a little sharp in his reply. That doesn't prove that the whole leadership and the Party is trying to get up a lynch-spirit. In your letter, incidentally, you tend to do precisely what you polemicize against, namely create a sharper feeling. Your choice of descriptive words is very unfortunate, "lynch spirit, lynch-mob, witch-hunting, etc.". Only in its worst days did this occur in the bankrupt SWP. It is unjust exaggeration to apply these terms to our Party. It is a polemical approach entirely out of order.

After reading Dwight's stuff and after many conversations with him in the past, frankly I wish he would quit threatening to revise Marx always and start doing it. By that I mean I wish he would put his views on paper so we could examine them. He is not the only one who has done some thinking or reading in the last few years. I'm for an exchange of ideas on the past, the present and the future. But pardon me if I have some distaste for a discussion which begins on the part of one individual with the self-assumed superiority which condemns me to intellectual sterility in advance unless I come around to his point of view. How about a little tolerance for the orthodox thinkers too?

Which brings me to my chief objection to your letter. Part of my objection in this instance is to your formulation. I refer to that section of the letter where you state that comrades should not only be permitted to question the fundamentals of Marxism but should be encouraged to do so in a serious theoretical fashion, in the interests of the political education of the membership.

Here is how I would put the whole matter. The primary duty of the leadership in this field is to first educate the ranks in the fundamentals of Marxism. To teach the ranks to think about them, to have classes on them. And the freest atmosphere is necessary in this discussion.

But then you ask the impossible. Seriously. You ask us to encourage the ranks to question our basic philosophy. Now, speaking as an individual, I have spent ten years of my life, in college, in the labor movement and as a full time political functionary during which time I studied and through long personal experience assimilated certain ideas, verified their correctness, believe in them as a way of life, not only for myself but for every worker. I spend my whole time trying to convince people they are correct. That we have the best answer. Yet, you propose that I devote myself to asking the ranks to doubt these principles. It is like asking a union organizer to urge workers to doubt the fundamentals of unionism.

Perhaps, as I said at the beginning, it is partly a matter of your formulation. To continue the analogy I mentioned in the previous paragraph, I not only believe but I have constantly urged workers to think about ways of improving the unions, of changing them so they can meet the changing conditions better, of doing this in an atmosphere where one isn't called a scab because he develops an original point of view on this or that aspect of unionism. But that kind of thinking is miles apart from encouraging doubt in unionism. Our movement needs constant thought and careful examination of all world events, it needs change in strategy and tactics, (and sometimes these are decisive) but there is absolutely no need for rehashing the theory of the class struggle, the theory of the state, and the theory of the proletarian revolution. How to apply these theories? That's the question. Here is where fruitful thought and discussion are vital.

Scientists discover many new facts about light, heat, ect.. It is necessary to study them, to assimilate the knowledge from these new phenomenon, to use them, but because of this I don't have to doubt that fire burns my hand if I put it in the flame. That is how I feel about the theory of the class struggle. I feel it too much to doubt it. I see it too often to doubt it. Likewise on the theory of the state. And on the need for the proletarian revolution. These are the fundamentals to me. More people should believe in them, that's the problem.....

Jack Wilson

Dec. 10, 1940