

Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

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**A BRIEF REPORT ON THE FRENCH, BELGIAN,
AND GERMAN SECTIONS OF THE FOURTH IN-
TERNATIONAL**

By James M. Fenwick

The major portion of the following report deals with the International Communist Party of France, the French section of the Fourth International. The information it contains was derived through fairly constant contact with leading members of the minority of the French organization between mid-July and late September, 1945.

It will be apparent upon reading that there are important gaps in the information. This is due to a number of factors: the semi-legal existence of the French comrades, which militated against my seeing as many of them as might be desired; my inability to spend exhaustive sessions with them; the fact that I was not a member of the "official" American section; the relative newness of many comrades, which limited their experience to very recent years; the occupation, which necessitated a conspiratorial existence and likewise limited the knowledge of even leading comrades as to what was occurring in the organization; a certain organizational slackness within the French party, which hindered the securing of information and literature; etc.

Nevertheless, this report can be assumed to be reasonably complete and accurate. It has been possible to check some of the data with other comrades of our party, with foreign comrades, and with information contained in the French Trotskyist press. Substantial factual concurrence has been found.

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The French party consists of around 450 members. About 125 are located in the Paris area; the remainder are distributed throughout the provinces in such cities as Grenoble, Lyon, Marseille, etc. There is no separate youth section. The party did not grow significantly during the occupation. Despite the severity of the nazi and Vichy terror, however, the party did recruit, maintaining the number of members at a constant level despite defections, deportations, imprisonment, and executions.†

According to Albert Demazière, the secretary of the French organization, the party finds itself, for the moment,

†For a summary of the courageous activity of the French party since 1940, comrades are referred to the review of the pamphlet La Lutte des Trotskytes sous la Terreur Nazi (The Trotskyist Struggle under the Nazi Terror) published in the January, 1946, issue of The New International.

somewhat in a blind alley. Generally speaking, it feels the absence of qualified political leaders; it feels the necessity for a clear perspective; it came out of illegality tired and now must chafe under the burden of semi-legality; it suffers from organizational looseness and is, in general, somewhat taken aback by the magnitude of the problems confronting it, especially when they are viewed alongside the small size of the organization and its isolation.

It is unquestionable that the basic, though not the absolute, reason for their present isolation, their smallness, and the consequent ebbing of their morale derives from the false estimation of the resistance movement made by the majority of the French party. Behind the resistance movement the majority saw only Anglo-American and French imperialism and the Russian bureaucracy. For proposing to exploit the progressive aspects of the resistance the minority was characterized as "nationalists", and "agents of De Gaulle".

In isolated instances, where comrades were assigned to work within the resistance, or where they entered on their own initiative, the results were excellent. Whole combat sections of the F.T.P., a stalinist resistance group, for example, were won over to Trotskyism or made sympathetic to it and brought under the party's discipline.

It would be foolish to contend that a correct position on the national question would have automatically been an open sesame to a large mass movement of the Fourth International in France. The Communist party was too large, its resources were too great, and its brutal, chauvinist line was too easily acceptable to have left a clear field for our comrades. Nevertheless, a correct position on the national question would have greatly augmented our forces and forestalled the present relative isolation of the French party.

The attitude toward the resistance flowed from a general misapprehension of the historic stage in which Europe, and in particular, France, found itself. In the latter stages of the war the comrades were persistently expecting revolutionary rather than nationalist uprisings. At the time of the Normandy invasion, for example, they expected risings to take place not only in France but in the German army and in German factories as well.

This outlook led to minor but costly tactical blunders which contributed to the circumscribing of the party's influence. At the time of the liberation of Paris, for instance, armed militia of the various currents of the resistance movement took over the editorial offices and printing plants of the big Paris dailies (which had been, of course, collaborationist under the occupation) and began to publish and distribute their newspapers to a news-starved

public. Our comrades failed to do so, since the majority felt that the democratic interlude was going to last only a few days, when it would be abruptly terminated by the allied repression. To take over a printing plant, they felt, would only be to expose our comrades. Life, alas, often rudely takes hold of political schema, especially "orthodox" Fourth Internationalist schema. The repression did not come; the interlude extended itself. The French comrades finally sent a representative to see the chairman of the resistance press committee. "Where the hell have you been?" he said. "We've been looking all over for you! We've been wanting to give you L'Oeuvre!" The comrade stammered around a bit-- L'Oeuvre was formerly one of the big Paris dailies---and reported back to the party. In the interim, Bogomolov, the Russian ambassador to France, arrived in France. His first act, after hanging up his hat, was, of course, to see that the French Trotskyists did not receive the printing plant. It was then too late for anything to be done.

There are many comrades in France who feel that a similar failure to establish the legal existence of the party by boldly assuming it in the initial days of the liberation resulted in the semi-legal life it is now forced to lead. The party is legal, but La Verité (Truth), the official party organ, is not. It is published as an internal bulletin. The comrades are also subjected to periodic harrying by the police. That a public headquarters for the Paris organization was not secured until a full year after the liberation is another example of the pernicious effect of their wrong analysis of the course of development of European events.

There are a number of reasons for the adoption of the false line. Basic, of course, was a failure to recognize the significance of the new events in Europe, and a cleaving to old concepts. This was a common failure in important sections of the Fourth International, as the position of the Revolutionary Communist Party in England and the Socialist Workers Party in the United States attests. The presence of inexperienced leaders aggravated the failure in France, where, if anywhere, a correct position should have been worked out because of the development of a "classic" resistance movement.

For one poor reason or another, many of the old leaders broke under the stress of the war and the occupation and withdrew from party work. Rous is now the political editor of Cité-Soir, a sheet which only by an all-encompassing love and charity for everything that lives could be qualified as socialist. It is chiefly remarkable for its excellent coverage of bicycle racing. Nadeau's contribution to the emancipation of mankind has been the publication of a long history of surrealism. Zeller, the former youth

leader, runs an art store. Pierre Naville took Hitler's propaganda seriously to the extent that he believed that the nazi empire was destined to straddle Europe, if not for the next thousand years, then for the next historical epoch. (His position has been described as similar to Burnham's.) His conclusion was that the party should dissolve and work within the Hitler organizations. The party did not choose to follow this wisdom. Naville also could not stay away from the typewriter. He has published two books in recent years, one a biography of d'Holbach, and the other a study of Watson's behaviorism. Naville, along with other former Trotskyists and persons sympathetic to former Trotskyists, has published one issue of a magazine called La Crise Francaise (The French Crisis). The crisis, needless to say, is not within such persons as Naville. Bettelheim has published what is said to be an excellent work, called Planification Sovietique (Soviet Planning). Rousset was deported during the occupation and upon his return could not find his way to rejoining the party, feeling that the new and younger leadership "was not responsible." #

In addition, twenty-seven experienced leaders and militants died at the hands of the nazis or the Vichyites during the occupation. Paramount among them was Marcel Hic, whose death in deportation is keenly felt in a political and personal sense. Had Hic and the others lived, it is entirely possible that the evolution of the French Trotskyist movement would have been entirely different. For Hic is reported to have held the correct position on the national question. His political authority would no doubt have gone a long way toward making his position prevail.

In addition to the foregoing, many of the present leaders such as Albert Demaziere and Maurice Laval spent many months in jail and deportation. The exigencies of an illegal existence likewise militated against the establishment of a real collective opinion.

As a consequence of all this, the leadership was of necessity assumed by younger and less experienced comrades. Fearing to fall into "opportunism," the tendency among them was to play safe by adhering to the older tenets of the movement. This tendency was reinforced by the admission to the party of the former Molinier group, who were intransigently opposed to participation in the resistance movement.

#So acutely felt is the need for qualified political leadership that in October, 1945, negotiations were being opened up with certain of these men in an attempt to bring them back into the organization. A bad error.

It was thus that the French party arrived at its present situation.

The current minority distinguishes itself from the majority chiefly on the basis of the national question. They, like the majority, conceive of Russia as a degenerated workers' state and were for its defense during the war.

It is my impression that the minority, however, is doing the major portion of the work of the organization. Members of the minority, Démaiziere and Laval, are the open functionaries of the party. Louis D. is active in the publication of Front Ouvrière (Workers' Front), a popularly written revolutionary paper but not published in the name of the organization. He was also the prime mover in the preparation of La Lutte des Trotskyistes sous la Terreur Nazi (The Trotskyist Struggle under the Nazi Terror), an excellently done pamphlet publicizing the activity of our movement during the occupation, and the only pamphlet published since the liberation. Members of the minority were, of course, the most active in the resistance movement. One of them, Andre Calvés, is well known for having, along with several comrades of the F.T.P., killed the notorious mayor of Puteaux. The minority seems to be active in other phases of party life as well. Who compose the majority I cannot say. Nor could I ascertain the relative sizes of the minority and the majority, since a convention had not been held where heads could be counted.

As the first step in the rearming of the party, a convention was planned for October, 1945. It should go far toward clearing the air. I am not informed as to what the minority intended to place upon the agenda. "Everything!" said one of the minority comrades. A certain stabilization in the French organization, to be achieved by assessing the past and drawing up perspective for the immediate future, is a necessary prerequisite for the basic study and adoption of the political orientation developed by the Workers Party over the past five years. We should soon know how far the convention went toward establishing this stabilization.

Politically, the French organization supports the traditional Trotskyist position as put forward in the United States by the Socialist Workers Party. Fortunately, the benevolent despotism exercised by Cannon does not find its counterpart in the French organization. It seems to be content with old-fashioned, unadorned democratic centralism. The French comrades whom I met impressed me very favorably.

Politically, the minority is closest to us. They are in agreement with us on the national question, at least insofar as it relates to the resistance movement in France in the past. Cannon's estimation of the revolutionary tempo

of events in Europe they dismiss with a puzzled smile and a shrug of the shoulders. That Cannon is a bureaucrat is virtually accepted as an established fact. They are friendly to the point of view of the minority in the S.W.P. They are for unity of the W.P. and the S.W.P., seeing no reason why the diverse political opinions cannot co-exist in the same organization. They are very willing to discuss all other questions. The French comrades recognize that during the past five years they have remained outside the stream of much Fourth Internationalist thought. When I saw them they knew nothing of our organization except for what they could gather from the raging against us in the Cannon press. They asked questions like: "And do you publish a paper?" When told we published a weekly paper, as well as a monthly theoretical organ, they were very surprised. They desire very much to receive our literature and to study and discuss it.

The French comrades work closely with the German comrades in Paris. There are five Germans in Paris, with other emigrés scattered all over France, England, Belgium, and Switzerland. They seem to maintain a closely-knit and active life. Only a few of the Germans have returned to work in Germany. It is very difficult to secure permission from allied authorities to return. Work in Germany is made exceptionally rigorous, in addition, by the desperate lack of food, shelter, heat and clothing. Further, communication with even nearby towns within Germany is made almost impossible by the absence of almost any type of transportation or postal service. In addition, as in France, Marxist literature, which once existed in such profusion, has almost totally disappeared. So atomized, so disoriented, so far backward has working class thinking been thrown that the German comrades have taken as their initial task the re-dressing of German radical thinking through the establishment of a journal to which former social-democrats, Brandlerites, Stalinists, and other radicals would be invited to contribute as the first step in clarification of German political thought. Excellent work is also being done among German prisoners in France.

It is interesting to note that while none of the five Germans in Paris have identical positions on the character of the Russian state and its defense, they are able to work harmoniously on other tasks, since they feel that the character of Russia, and its defense, do not emerge as practical questions for them. They state, a little ingenuously, "The job of deciding whether Russia is worth defending is first of all a question to be decided by the Russian comrades. They are in the best position to develop a correct line."

The Germans I talked to were very much interested in knowing what we and the German emigrés in the U.S. were think-

ing. They would welcome any literature sent them.

While in France I was able to visit Belgium briefly and obtain a synoptic but accurate picture of the Belgian party. As formerly, the Revolutionary Communist Party, the Belgian section of the Fourth International, is well grounded in the working class, particularly among the miners. It was very active during the war. Agitation was conducted among German soldiers and Belgian workers, raising the slogan of international working class solidarity. Fifty issues of La Voie de Lénine (The Path of Lenin) were issued in clandestinity. Fifteen underground papers were published in Flemish. Five pamphlets were printed in illegality, and dozens of leaflets in French, German, Flemish, and Polish were distributed. The party gained in membership during the occupation. I am not acquainted with its relations to the resistance movement.

The party paid a heavy price for its activity. Twenty members of the party, including the outstanding and beloved figure of Léon Leppil, died at the hands of the nazis. The only defection during the occupation was that of Walter Dauge. He did not, as previously reported, join the fascists. Had he done so, he could have informed upon almost the whole organization. But he did "collaborate" to the extent of engaging in black market operations on a grand scale. His renegacy dealt a severe blow to the influence the organization formerly wielded in the important Borinage coal mining area, a loss which the organization has not yet been able to recoup. Dauge was killed by Stalinists in 1944.

Following the liberation, our comrades were the leaders in pressing the demands of the miners, in fighting against the dissolution of the resistance organizations, in agitating against the monarchy and for the republic, in leading demonstrations against the return of Leopold, and in initiating a policy of fraternization with the German slave laborers in the Belgian mines. As a result of maladroitness at the time of the Buchenwald revelations, when La Voie de Lénine came out for solidarity with the German workers, the paper was suppressed. They now publish La Lutte Ouvrière (Workers' Struggle).

Like the French, the Belgians feel the lack of a qualified political leadership. They possess an excellent proletarian base. The Belgian party would unquestionably favor the unity of the W.P. and the S.W.P. They are eager to receive our literature.

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To meet and talk with the French, German, and Belgian

comrades was to reinforce one's conviction in the dignity of man and in his ultimate socialist destiny. In spite of the unspeakable horrors of the war, a ferocious police repression unprecedented in modern times, a tidal wave of chauvinism which engulfed all other organizations, in spite of privations of which Americans can have no real understanding, they kept alive the spirit of revolutionary socialism in western Europe at a time when the conscience of mankind reached its lowest ebb. They made political errors, yes-- even bad ones. But we and they, working together, can correct them. They were only human beings, but they lived like heroes. It made one proud and humble to be able to call them comrade.

December 19, 1945.

COMMUNICATION TO LOCAL NEW YORK

January 10, 1946.

LOCAL NEW YORK

Dear Comrades:

It has come to the attention of the Political Committee that the by-laws of local New York, adopted at last Sunday's convention, provide for the election of the city organizer by the convention. This action followed the reading of a section in the proposed by-laws providing for the election of the city organizer by the city committee.

The convention perhaps felt that such a procedure was thoroughly democratic: that it would bring the city organizer closer to the membership, make him more responsible to the membership and give the membership greater authority in conducting the affairs of local New York. There is nothing wrong with these desires. It is understandable that delegates were disturbed over the actual or alleged difficulties in the local organization and wanted to take steps to improve the situation. It is necessary to point out and discuss in some detail, that what the convention did will not accomplish the purpose the delegates had in mind, but will accomplish exactly the opposite.

The recommendation of the outgoing city committee that the organizer be elected by the city committee would make the organizer responsible to the city committee. The city committee is elected by the convention. It functions between conventions, in the name of the convention by virtue of authority vested in it by the convention. It is the highest body in the city between conventions. The convention is composed of delegates elected by the branches. This procedure, as you know, is based on the fundamental organizational principle of a Bolshevik party, namely the principle of democratic centralism.

New York has a city organizer with a city committee. This committee is in charge of and directs all the activities of the local. It elects or appoints all city functionaries. Aside from the purely formal aspects of the question it is necessary for the city committee to deliberate on the election of functionaries and elect the best people for particular posts from among those comrades available.

What is the situation created by the by-law which the convention adopted? The city organizer is not responsible to anybody. He is elected by the convention. The convention is

not a continuing body. It passes out of existence at adjournment. A convention cannot be reconvened. A new convention must be called and delegates for such a convention must be elected by the branches. The new convention must be: (a) a regular convention called according to the party statutes and the local by-laws, or (b) a special convention called under the same authority.

According to the present by-laws of New York the city organizer, in his capacity as city organizer, is responsible only to the convention which elected him, but which does not exist today. Therefore the present city organizer is responsible to no committee and to no body of the party - except the Political Committee of which the present city organizer is a member. Technically, this places the present city organizer of New York directly responsible only to the Political Committee and not to the city committee. He cannot be removed by the city committee. He cannot be removed by the New York membership.

Formally what the convention did was to abrogate the democratic centralist principles of the party and establish a sort of bureaucratic post. The convention did not intend this, of course, but this is in fact what it did.

To say that the present city organizer is responsible to the city committee because the by-laws provide that he be a member of the city committee or to say that that was the intention of the action of the convention does not provide a solution. The fact is that if the city organizer so desires, under the present by-law he could function or attempt to function as a sort of autocrat. In this case a struggle between the city organizer and the city committee would ensue, which struggle, of course, would be taken to the membership. It would be a case of which was the stronger or which could muster greater forces. This, of course, in the classic language of the movement is the procedure attendant on the establishment of a Benapartist regime.

To be sure, this is not the real situation in local New York, and such a situation will not in fact develop. But it is necessary to emphasize that formally such a contingency is inherent in the procedure adopted by the convention.

What happened in this instance only underscores the necessity for the party as a whole to understand what kind of organization we are, what organizational principles and procedure we follow. It would be well if each branch would consider this question from the standpoint of the meaning of democratic centralism and hold discussions around this fundamental organizational concept making the discussion revolve concretely around this instance.

This communication is sent to the party for educational purposes. It is not intended to be taken in any legislative sense despite the fact that the Political Committee must express its disapproval of the action taken by the convention. Other aspects of the question will be formulated for the coming convention of the Party when revision of the Party statutes is under consideration.

With comradely greetings,

David Coolidge
Organizational Secretary

EDUCATION FOR OUR RETURNING VETERANS!

By Arthur Stein

Education is one of those terms which have varying meanings to different people. To many in our society, it is nothing but a means of achieving conventional successes, well-paying jobs, and a "good time" (whatever that might mean) while being "educated". These are the people who go to schools in order to emerge as professionals, with all the conveniences and comforts which the status of a professional involves in our world. This kind of education, naturally, is not for us. Not that I am opposed to this type of thing merely because it interrupts current party activities (which is, to be sure, an important consideration), but it is a fact that our comrades want more from life than the mere satisfaction of being one of the people who "count", of always being able to know where tomorrow's meal comes from, and of living a life free from manual labor. All these conditions are highly desirable, but they are, at best, of secondary importance. Our comrades want, more than these things, the satisfaction of being involved in the only really significant activity of our time. To be a revolutionist is so much more satisfying than the occupation of any other profession mainly because it deals with the most fundamental of all human problems. Unless we first solve those problems with which we deal as revolutionary socialists, anything else we might do must be futile. A scientist chained to capitalism can only be a scientist of death. An engineer in a world of wars and exploitation can only be an engineer of destruction. But a revolutionist is a professional who deals with building life, and with those things which will make the work of all the other professions assume a real meaning for humanity. For those reasons we have chosen the party instead of a literary or scientific career.

Thus, education for us has a different meaning than it has for those who make their peace with stagnation for the sake of comfort. But, and let us not forget this, while the content and direction of our education is radically different from the education of the capitalist professionals, many of the forms must be similar. In much the same manner that many of the technical weapons in a revolutionary war are the same on the side of the revolution as they are on the side of the oppressors, some of the tools we use in educating ourselves legitimately can, and properly should, be similar to the tools used by our opponents. The most important of these tools which we should utilize whenever possible is the practice of devoting the greater part of our time for a limited period to the assimilation of significant fundamentals of the results of human research in the various fields of learning. Concretely, I believe it essential that every young

revolutionist, where at all possible, spend a year or more doing nothing but learning the basic principles of the natural sciences, learning about the main trends in the history of human development, and learning about the ideology of our capitalist enemy. If we are serious about our long-term perspectives, we cannot afford to ignore the necessity of building a core of people capable of making distinctions between the various cures that are proposed from all sides for the ailments of humanity. If we are thinking of our movement not only in terms of the immediate needs of the party, if we are thinking of our movement as the science of transforming the world from a place of misery into a place where man as such will use the powers of nature to his real interests, we must have people who are well educated, people who are capable of giving long-term direction to the confused movements of contemporary humanity.

Some comrades might object that all a revolutionist needs to know can be learned in the factory and on the trade-union floor. Some comrades might think that learning about history and philosophy and science is nothing but idle intellectualism. But let these comrades consider their answer, to give an example, to the Catholic construction of the world. Let them think about the claim that only humans can reason, and that there is nothing approaching reason anywhere else in the animal world, and that the power to reason can in no way be traced in any of the usual scientific explanations of human development. --Or how will they answer, to give another example, the claim that human nature is static, and that nothing can ever be done about it? How will they answer the claim that humanity logically implies monogamy? Or what will they say about the denial of logic, the claim that logic is but one way of reasoning, not necessarily superior to "emotion"? And (I could go on with this forever) what will these comrades have to say about the place of emotions in human life?

If they have answers to all these problems, it is sure that they did not learn the necessary scientific facts needed to substantiate their answers in the factory or on the union floor. If they are sure that they will not be taken in by the intelligent-sounding phrases of the renegades from our movement, they did not receive their training for this ability in Todd's shipyard. (This is not a slur at our shipyard comrades, who learned much about workers and unions and organizational procedures in Todd--not to mention Federal. But one thing they did not learn in either of these places was the structure of the ape's nervous system, or the fact that there have been societies in the history of humanity where it was quite moral to have more than one wife.)

Our young comrades who are returning from their nightmare experiences in the military machine of American imperialism have a very healthy desire to find out as much as possible

about the world in which they live. They want to test their socialist convictions in the light of all man knows about his own history and the history of those things that are around him and that affect his life. Their socialism and their desire to learn are one and the same thing. The party must encourage one by facilitating the other. Those of us who want to go to college should not be made to feel guilty, should not be made to feel as if we were deserting the movement.

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It is true, of course, that the party has very important immediate tasks which are impossible to carry out without the presence of a substantial number of veterans in the factories. But while we are attending to our immediate needs, can we afford to forget our more long-term necessities? The party has a right to allocate a sufficient number of people to the factories--it has no right to outlaw formal education permanently.

I believe that we can take care of both needs without fatal impairments to our present potential fighting efficiency.

I do not here attempt to give any blueprints for the details of what I have in mind. I merely offer the principle of allowing and urging all those who are eligible to make full use of the opportunities presented in the GI bill of rights under the guidance of the party. Instead of discouraging education, the party should assist it. The best qualified comrades in the organization should be used to give advice to the veterans on how to go to school and learn something. In order to pay sufficient attention to the educational needs of our veterans, the party should establish a well-functioning educational committee, which, in close collaboration with the labor committee, should allocate comrades to the colleges in the same manner that we now allocate comrades to the various concentrations. Every comrade who desires to go to school should be given an opportunity to go sooner or later. If there are more such comrades than the party can spare at the moment, half should be allowed to go to school the first year, the other half the next.

I believe that there is quite a bit to be learned in the capitalist colleges, provided we go about it intelligently, and provided that we will not be hindered by having to work full time while trying to learn. The government wants to give us the money needed for educating ourselves. We need education.-- Why not take both?

December 15, 1945.

(This document was also endorsed by B. Donaldson and Bert Ryan.)

THE PARTY CADRE AND UNITY

By Scopa and David Corbin

Foreword

Part I of "The Party Cadre and Unity" was written by Scopa. Part II was written by David Corbin. After reading Comrade Scopa's article before it was submitted, I thought it was excellent, but did not treat the subject fully enough. Comrade Scopa turned his article over to me so that I could delay submitting it until mine, which is written as a direct continuation of his, could be completed. Opinions or formulations expressed in Part II are not necessarily those of Scopa. Circumstances of time and place have made closer collaboration impossible.

David Corbin

Part I

The exchange of letters with the S.W.P. on the subject of unity signifies that our own party, at least, is serious about the unity of all Trotskyist forces in the U.S.A. The W.P. has indicated that a firm basis for unity exists.

It has been outlined both in our letters to the S.W.P. and on other occasions. Substantially it can be stated as follows: "The whole of Trotsky for the new generation of Marxists that must be trained and organized does not lie in his contradictory theory of the class character of Russia; it is not even a decisively important part of the whole. Trotskyism is all of Marx, Engels and Lenin that has withstood the test of time and struggle--and that is a good deal!" (Shachtman- "The Struggle for a New Course"- p. 245)

The obstacles which the S.W.P. put in the way of unity does not alter the fact that there is a sound basis for it. What is logical cannot forever be prevented by a narrow factional and bureaucratic approach. Sooner or later the S.W.P. leadership will have to reckon with this logic providing we hold firmly to what we consider to be correct perspective.

It is clear that if unity is desirable and progressive we will continue to work for it without lessening, of course, in the slightest our own independent and party building activity. The anti-unity attitude of the S.W.P. leadership cannot and should not affect our own perspective.

But in the light of this perspective we must reconsider

our attitude toward the party cadre as presented and adopted by the Active Workers Conference last August. For, if we hold to the perspective of unity, we must be prepared for the time when there will be a united party with the S.W.P. whose foundation will be Trotskyism. When the members of the W.P. and S.W.P. take their place side by side as party builders of a united party, any claim by either those coming from the W.P. or the S.W.P. to being the cadre of the party can only be disruptive of the newly achieved unity. Obviously, the cadre of the united party will have to be composed of both the members of the W.P. and the S.W.P.

But suppose the S.W.P.'ers in the united party say to us: "Not you but we represent the cadre of the united party. It is true that we are all Trotskyists but on important political questions you represent the political opposition. Consequently, you cannot constitute the core or the cadre of the united party." Such an attitude would astonish all of us, but would we have the right to complain? Not if we hold to our present conception of a party cadre. Let us see why this is so.

The Party Cadre and Political Agreement

The document, "The Task before the Party", presented by Comrade Shachtman to the Active Workers Conference, states: The cadre "is based firmly on the fundamental program of the party, not merely on those parts of it which are held in common by another or any number of other organizations but above all on the fundamental program and traditions of our movement and on those contributions to Marxian theory and revolutionary Socialist politics which have been made by us collectively in the past five years of our party's existence. Only a common program can give a cadre the solidity without which it does not deserve the name, without which it cannot fulfill its task."

After reading the above we would like to say that it means something else. However, it is too clear a statement. It says plainly: full political agreement is an essential prerequisite for the party cadre. If we concede that in practice the party leadership does admit to the cadre individuals with this or that political difference (Draper, Lund) it is no less true that a serious political opposition is by definition excluded from the cadre. At best, under this formulation, it is the party leadership which decides what degree of political opposition, aggressiveness, etc., excludes comrades from consideration for the party cadre.

Dialectics and the Party Cadre

What is wrong here? Politically, the conception of a party cadre which does not or may not allow room for serious

political opposition is static and conservative. We take for granted that a party cadre must be imbued with party loyalty, must be an active, devoted and educated core but it is nothing if there is erased from it the quality of critical thought.

We are a revolutionary party because, more than any other, we associate change with life. Our party is constructed to keep in touch with living reality in thought and in action. Our device is democratic-centralism. Inner party democracy enables the party and, particularly, the party cadre, properly understood, to react freely and correctly to the complex living reality. Therefore, differences in political outlook must be expected. Viewed this way, the party cadre has, within the framework of its common outlook, a contradictory and not a monolithic character. It is only centralism which unites the contradictory elements of the party cadre, subordinating the minority to the majority for united striking power outside the party. In political ideas the elements of the cadre shift constantly, minorities become majorities and majorities become minorities. The number of questions that one disagrees on is not decisive. Generally this test can be applied to a political opposition; its willingness to accept the discipline of the party and to participate in its building. It does not matter what stage the party is in: whether it is a propaganda group, agitation party or something in between. In our opinion, this dialectical conception of the party cadre is fundamental and valid to any stage of the party's development.

Only if we believe that we have so superlative a political and theoretical position for all and aye in the same way that Hegel's brilliance came to an end with his belief in the perfection of the German state of his time can we speak of a cadre without political opposition.

Inner Party Democracy and the Party Cadre

In a united party with the S.W.P.'ers we will not only want to form with them the party cadre but we will want to win over to our specific political views the maximum number of old and new comrades. In short, we will want to transform ourselves from a minority to a majority. Here again, we are met with a self-imposed barrier. The Active Workers Conference, with misgivings, it is true, did nevertheless subscribe to the following: "The cadre is the educator, as well as the propagandist and defender of the party program, within the ranks of the party itself."

We will, of course, have to abandon this idea in practice. At the same time that we will resist any attempts to put us outside of the party cadre, we will insist on our democratic right to promote our specific political ideas within the ranks of the party. We have adopted a view of the party cadre and

its functions that, at best, brings us to an absurd and awkward position because we will certainly do our best in a united party to win recruits to our special political ideas. Our present conception of the party cadre must be revised. The possibility of a united party is a test of the idea and an illumination of its incorrectness.

Trotsky and the Party Cadre

We don't have to go too far back to understand what a party cadre is, to understand its common basis, its contradictory character, its limitations, and its rights. Before the split in 1940, Comrade Shachtman was with other comrades of the opposition a part of the cadre of the Socialist Workers Party. Despite the fact that he had the most serious differences with the majority which he espoused within the party with characteristic vigor, he together with his active political co-thinkers considered themselves an integral part of the party cadre. No one ever challenged this status nor did anyone attempt to deny the then minority the right to defend its special point of view within the party itself. In a letter to the S.W.P. dated February 21, 1940, Trotsky made this absolutely clear. He wrote: "The Fourth International is the only honest revolutionary organization in the world. We don't have any professional bureaucracy. Our 'apparatus' has no means of coercion. Every question is decided and every member is appreciated through methods of the most complete party democracy. If the majority of the party members are mistaken, the minority can, by and by, educate them. If not before the next convention, then after it. The minority can attract new members to the party and transform itself into a majority. It is only necessary to have a bit of confidence in the workers and a bit of hope that the workers can be imbued with confidence in the leaders of the opposition."

It is not always possible to prevent a split in a party. The 1940 split signifies the division of the original party cadre and the formation of the cadres of two parties. Unification of the two parties will do just the opposite. Within the American Trotskyist movement a significant split has been exceptional. For years, political oppositions, majorities and minorities, which composed the Trotskyist cadre managed to live together in the same party and guided themselves more or less by Trotsky's prescription. It is still the best formula for a party cadre. The perspective of unity only emphasizes that fact.

November 1, 1945.

Scopa

Part II

We have just attempted to show that a party cadre should be composed of those willing to build the party and to accept discipline. Conversely, we have shown that the conception of a party cadre which excludes those with important differences is static, unworkable and harmful.

A comrade might be inclined to agree with us and then ask: Do you mean to say that a party cadre should or can be composed of all, regardless of the degree of political differences? For example, it is conceivable that there may be a minority reformist (social-democratic) tendency within a Marxist party. Would we then wish to include it in the cadre of the party?

Let us examine the issues that this question raises. It is possible, though not very likely, to have in a Marxist party a minority reformist tendency. We would not consider this tendency as a part of the party cadre, and it is not likely that they would consider themselves as such. Should the reformist tendency continue to remain in the minority, it would, sooner or later, find the discipline of the party intolerable. The non-acceptance of reformists in the cadre of a Marxist party is even more clearly seen if we assume, for a moment, that it is the reformists and not the Marxists who are in the leadership of a party. In that case we would be speaking not of a Marxist but of a reformist party. The discipline of such a party and its unity would have a completely subordinate character for the Marxist tendency nor could the latter consider itself a part of the reformist cadre. While even in these cases it might be possible to maintain unity for a while, any joint acceptance of party-building and discipline could only be due to the fluid and undetermined state of the party and its program, or miscalculation or lack of understanding on the part of at least one tendency.

It is easy to see the problem when one considers so obvious a current as reformism. But it is substantially such an extreme evaluation of the situation that one must make before one is prepared to exclude a tendency from the cadre of a Marxist party and logically, even, from the party itself. In other words, before one can correctly wish to exclude a tendency from the party cadre, he would first have to conclude that the dominance of his own tendency was even more important than the unity of the party. What is involved, therefore, is the question of unity. To exclude from the cadre those who disagree politically is to establish a condition of merely tolerating them in the party so long as they remain in the minority.

The party program must, of course, be the basis for

agitation and propaganda. And, of course, it is sometimes a genuine problem for the party leadership to see that the party position dominates in personnel as well as line. However, what do we mean by building the party on the basis of the party program?

To have a one-faction cadre means to take organizational steps to insure that the party in the future can be built only on the party (majority) positions, as distinct from those of the minority. It means to build the party around only those who do not belong to minority tendencies. It means to barely utilize the party-building capabilities of the minority. It means to deprive the minority of the opportunity of simultaneously building the party effectively and growing into a majority. The unity of such a party has a most precarious character.

In answering the question of whether a party cadre "should or can be composed of all, regardless of the degree of political differences", we say, therefore, no - not if a tendency's estimate of the importance of the political differences is such as to make unity subordinate to its hegemony over the party. But let us be very clear that it is unity that is involved. Revolutionists should not themselves take steps jeopardizing unity without first being willing to sacrifice it.

It is conceivable that insistence on domination is preferable to unity, but, in that case, what is required is a concrete evaluation which will indubitably demonstrate its necessity. The question is: what factors go into the making of a correct evaluation.

Just as there are misconceptions on the "cadre question", so are there misconceptions on this question. Lest one regret the cadre document, but rush to accept its practical conclusions, this article will consider some aspects of this evaluation.

Some Misconceptions of the Problem

The question of the party cadre, regime and attitude toward minority tendencies in the party can never be dissociated from one's attitude toward the various tendencies in the revolutionary socialist movement as a whole.

It has been all too common and disastrous an assumption to view a struggle between Marxist tendencies where there are serious differences, as leading necessarily to a bitter-end struggle for factional domination, and a split. It is as though these laws of struggle were immutable and inevitable.

They are indeed inevitable once the hypothesis is taken for granted, more precisely, because it is taken for granted.

This general assumption is not an immutable law but rather, at best, a conscious political attitude. Unfortunately it is seldom expressed or given justification as such.

Often the differences between tendencies cover more than just a wide range of practical problems. They may arise from a different application of general Marxist principles to an analysis of an historical period or phenomenon.

Then the concept of bitter-end factionalism is lent even more weight. A tendency may mechanically identify its existence as an organizationally independent force with the independence of the vanguard of the working class and its party. A motive force behind the actions of any tendency must of course be the attempt to have its ideas and program become that of a party. If this were the sole consideration where two or more tendencies exist for a period of time, we necessarily would end up with the same number of parties. Each tendency would succeed in its objective of establishing a party with what it considers a correct analysis and program. We would end up with a correct program - from any point of view - and a divided and sub-divided movement. Thus the task of successfully making and carrying through the Socialist revolution is not completed or even necessarily advanced by establishing, once and for all (even assuming this were possible), the organizational and political hegemony of even a correct line in the party. If this were the case we'd have had socialism long ago. That there are other considerations involved is shown by the willingness of the W.P. to merge with the S.W.P. and become a minority tendency and also by the W.P. statement that the political differences are compatible in one party.

Considerations of "pure" politics - that is, of one political point of view versus another in a vacuum - can seldom offer criteria for unity.

It is the task of those in the W.P. and all other sections of the Fourth Internationalist movement to examine other tendencies in relation to the period we are living in, and its requirements, with a view towards establishing the greatest possible striking power in a revolutionary direction.

The Present Period and our Need for Unity

Before we go on to examine the present period in relation to this problem let us make this observation: The Marxist movement has often been afflicted with severe conflicts with a political line winning out after severe and protracted struggles within and without the framework of one party. A well balanced and correct evaluation (or hindsight) has often given a different and more favorable attitude toward the possibility and desirability of unity.

Appraising the Present and the Future

The following important and compelling factors make for one cadre and one party:

(1) The degeneration of the Russian Revolution has created new instruments of exploitation and new problems for the working class and its party. Discussion in the Marxist movement has been going on practically since the revolution itself. No early end can be seen to these differences of opinion. Some believe that the final place in history of the Russian question is yet to be determined.

(2) The war not only accentuated the acuteness of the Russian and other questions but the impact of the war caused sections of the Fourth Internationalist movement to change their positions. Simultaneously, the war disrupted most of our parties and their opportunities for organized discussion. We emerge from the war with the movement just regathering its strength, and the instructive lessons of the war not yet assimilated.

(3) Essentially, differences arising in the Marxist movement in the coming period are a result of different reactions to the ever greater crises of the capitalist system. As the crises become more acute and prolonged, the revolutionists attempt to properly adjust strategy and tactics to achieve the urgently needed socialist revolution. While important differences are not to be welcomed for themselves, we must be prepared to tolerate them in the future.

(4) Prospects for the expansion of the movement, in America especially, are greater than ever before. The International movement is more dependent on America than ever before.

(5) While the instinctive desire of the working class for unity of all working class parties is incorrect in face of the betrayal of the non-Marxist parties, the disunity of the Marxist wings in this country cannot be explained away. In fact, it is destined to become an ever greater stumbling block to the growth of the revolutionary parties. It is only the comparative isolation of both wings that has made the field seem broad enough for both.

(6) The advanced sections of the working class share with the Fourth Internationalist movement many of the differences that exist within it. Building a mass or semi-mass party will not automatically relegate these differences to the background but will tend to perpetuate them.

The need for one party and international is emphasized by each of these factors, and a Trotskyist movement which is

both united and "homogeneous", in the sense of not having an opposition tendency, is not a likely possibility in the foreseeable future.

Facing the Problem

What to do in a possible situation where individuals or leaders of one tendency wish to exclude another tendency from the party cadre or wish to establish one from which the other will be excluded? The extent of disagreement must be balanced against: (a) the value of a united organization, (b) the programs must be examined to see if they include the possibility of a juncture at a later date with a change in circumstances, (c) the crises of the capitalist system which gave rise to the differences also tends to eliminate them by bringing incorrect strategy and tactics into line when they diverge too much from a correct program. - Bolshevik traditions and fundamentals make the adjustment easier, (d) the groups having the differences must be examined and the trends within the groups analyzed (this is a risky business), and lastly, (e) the state of the party itself (education, numerical strength, influence, etc.) must be considered. (It would be absurd to limit considerations to these or others which might be added. We are satisfied to show the fallacy of excluding a group from a cadre or party merely because they have serious differences.)

Thus before a cadre-exclusionist perspective is adopted, its validity must be demonstrated after giving due weight to the factors and forces involved. It is precisely such a demonstration before the whole party which each member must demand to his own satisfaction before accepting such a policy. It cannot be excluded that an incorrect estimate may lead a political tendency (or parts of it) to incorrect actions in discipline or party building. Naturally, the party must be protected. However, even in this case, while retaliation is necessary, there is no substitute for an estimate of the possibility of maintaining one cadre and one party, considering the objective needs of the situation. Without such an estimate it is too easy to embark on a vicious and moot circle of action, retaliation and counter-retaliation, skirting the basic issue of unity completely.

Of course there are no absolute guarantees against the degeneration of a party or groupings but, failing such a demonstration, an educated membership must remember that a leader cannot lead where he is not followed.

S.W.P. and Unity

The W.P. is correct in saying that there is sufficient political agreement with the S.W.P. for unity. This does not alter the fact that there exists political disagreement on the

Russian question which has led to support of different camps in a war. The more obviously reactionary nature of the Stalinist regime during the war and in the post-war period may tend more and more to eliminate these differences. However, so long as these differences are not fully resolved, there remains the possibility of opposite practical conclusions on Russia in the future.

Special Problems Sometimes Demand Special Solutions

Because of the unique character and relation of the Russian question to the life of the Fourth International, steps are necessary beyond the limits of a narrow concept of democratic centralism. Full internal democracy must, of course, be insured.

To establish unity on a firm and sound basis: (a) Discussion on the Russian question should not be limited to pre-convention discussion; (b) The theoretical magazine of the united party should be open to discussion on the question, both before and after conventions, if a section of the party desires it. Naturally, the official position should predominate.

It cannot be excluded that the Russian question might again "advance into the foreground" to the extent that a tendency might feel unwilling to be mute before the advanced workers. That we are an international movement and that we want those close to the party to know not only our position but how we arrived at it, modify or change it, are added reasons for keeping the magazine open.

In the face of the S.W.P. leadership's indefinite postponement of unity should we cease to press for it or consider it a practical problem? The objective need for unity is as great as before. Actually only a few short months have gone by. We have no direct control over the S.W.P. leadership, but logic is on our side. Events will more and more bring home to the S.W.P. membership the need, by making dis-unity a still greater obstacle to progress. Collisions in practical party work will increase. The fields in which the parties can work without conflict will become fewer and narrower.

Cannon's delaying-action - probing the differences "to the depths" - seems an obvious evasion of the issue to us. Apparently it is not so with the S.W.P. membership. Our only weapon (aside from building the W.P. itself) is education. We must give them a correct conception of the way a Bolshevik party works. We must point out the factors making unity in

the coming period a necessity. We must show them examples of how the Bolshevik movement worked in its best days. We must show the need for unity even to those who agree 100% with the official position of the S.W.P. on political questions.

To do this we will have to do a little studying ourselves - all of us - and we'll have to keep our own house in order.

David Corbin

January 11, 1946.

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