

Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

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FOR UNCONDITIONAL OPPOSITION TO STALINISM!
AGAINST THE SLOGAN OF AN "SP-CP-CGT GOVERNMENT"!

The statement on France of the majority of the national committee of the party marks a serious step backward in the political development of the party. At its founding, six years ago, the party rejected the slogan of the unconditional defense of Stalinist Russia. At its second national convention it took another step forward when it broke with Trotsky's conception of Russia as a degenerated workers' state, and adopted the view that Russia is a bureaucratic collectivist society. In this position, however, the party majority leadership still retained heavy carry-overs from Trotsky's theory; namely, in regard to the alleged progressive character of Stalinist nationalized property as compared to capitalist private property and thus in the political conclusion that under circumstances where the issue at stake was the defense of "nationalized property" against "capitalist private property" - in a war with an external or internal enemy - revolutionary socialists should urge the workers to cooperate with the Stalinist regime - give material support to the Russian army while maintaining political opposition.

This attitude of defense of Stalinist Russia "under given conditions", however, did not interfere with the party's clear cut opposition to both contending camps in the imperialist war which just ended. Neither in the popular propaganda articles and speeches of the party's spokesmen nor in the more theoretical writings on the war and Russia - from the time of the adoption of the resolution on Russia until today - has the party put forward its official view of conditional support of Stalinist Russia. Practically speaking, the party has revised its view on this matter without formal decision.

Further, at its last convention, the party decided unequivocally against the old slogan of our movement "The CP to Power" for the capitalist countries and warned against the dire consequences of a Stalinist victory. (See the resolution on the National Question in Europe.)

But now, with the second world war at an end, with Stalinist Russia the most powerful force on the European continent, with the Communist parties the strongest political forces in most of the non-Russian European countries, the National Committee majority proposes the slogan, "For an SP-CP-CGT Government" in France; that is to say, once again advocates a form of conditional support to Stalinism. Our French comrades are urged to support (or initiate) a movement for the CP to take power jointly with the SP and the CGT on a program of revolutionary transition demands (demands which lead from capitalism to a socialist regime).

The NC majority reiterates its opposition to an exclusively Stalinist regime. According to its statement, the Communist party is "not a democratic but a totalitarian party operating as an instrument of the Kremlin and the G.P.U. Hence, we oppose any slogan which means lifting this counter-revolutionary totalitarian instrument into the position of state power in any country..."

The statement also declared that since the Socialist and

Communist parties of France "represent a majority not only of the proletariat but of the people as a whole," the restoration of "the class independence of the proletariat" demands "first of all" a break with the bourgeoisie, a break with de Gaulle, and the formation of a "Government of the Socialist Party-Communist Party-CGT."

Such a coalition, we are assured, would not lead to a Stalinist regime because an examination of the concrete French situation today "indicates that the Stalinist party cannot and will not and does not seek to take power in France in any way comparable to its seizure of power in Poland and Yugoslavia." This is so since a Stalinist attempt at political power would precipitate civil war and bring closer the third world war which the Kremlin seeks to avoid, "at least in the next period."

However, the statement continues, if contrary to this view, "the Stalinists should now be on the verge of taking state power in France" and the Socialists, the French bourgeoisie and Anglo-American imperialism prove impotent to prevent a Stalinist "consolidation" of power - if this were the perspective - "then an altogether different conclusion would be dictated to the Fourth International." Then it would no longer merely be a question of the validity of the slogan under discussion (SP-CP-CGT Government) but our conception of the character of our epoch and our tasks would have to be revised. And in the same paragraph, as though repeating the same thought, the NC majority declares that such a revision would be imperative if we were "confronted by the reality of the consolidation of Stalinist power on the European Atlantic, which could mean nothing else but the complete domination of Europe and Asia, at least most of Asia, by Stalinism." (My emphasis. J.C.)

I have tried to summarize the essentials of the NC majority position as carefully as possible. Now let us see what it means.

1. Let us grant at the outset, that the CP of France does not propose to try to take power today. If then we are opposed to the CP coming to power, let us say, tomorrow, the question is posed: Would an SP-CP government facilitate or retard the movement of the Stalinists towards totalitarian power? Or, more generally, would it strengthen or weaken Stalinism?

The NC majority statement gives no explicit answer. It is so preoccupied with the "concrete," tactical problem - the "today" - that it does not even discuss what would be the practical consequences if its slogan became a reality - except to warn that the Stalinists in the government would be "a great danger" to democratic rights, workers' organizations, etc. What then does the NC majority expect would happen if such a government were formed? How would the CP and the SP leaders be exposed? This we are not told!

Presumably the slogan is so timely because the "Stalinists keep the proletariat tied to the bourgeoisie" due to the present interests of the Kremlin, the present unfavorable relation of

forces, and "an inability to oust de Gaulle from control by means of a coalition with the reluctant social democracy alone;" that is to say, because the Stalinists will not accept the slogan (My emphasis. J.C.)

At the very moment that this "objective" analysis was being adopted by the NC plenum the French Stalinists were already beginning "to oust de Gaulle from control" of the French state! The CP brought about the downfall of the de Gaulle government and called for an SP-CP government! The "reluctant social democracy" insisted on the inclusion of the Popular Republican Party, the de Gaullists (without deGaulle), in the new coalition. The Stalinists finally agreed and formed the present three party coalition government in which the SP and CP dominate.

Perhaps the CP proposal was a mere maneuver? Perhaps they really prefer the inclusion of the de Gaullists in the government? What does the NC majority think? How does it now appraise the ability of the CP to break de Gaulle's control?

If we turn to the files of LABOR ACTION and THE NEW INTERNATIONAL we will find some articles on the French situation but there is not a single mention of the not-irrelevant fact that the Stalinists have urged a coalition with the Socialists to the exclusion of the de Gaullists! Still worse: In the leading editorial of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL for February, 1948, "The Crisis in France," we read:

"Will such a government (SP-CP-CGT - JC) actually come into being? No one can say. Obviously the Socialist and Communist Party leaders are resisting it with all their might. They will be forced to do so only by a tidal wave of working class pressure which is still the music of the future." (My emphasis. J.C.)

It is highly disappointing that letters did not come to the office of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL asking the editors how the above could be written - even if true! - without mentioning and analyzing the actual proposal of the Stalinists for SP-CP government. Be that as it may, the question still remains: What is the meaning of the Stalinists' slogan of a coalition with the SP alone?

All the facts of the present situation indicate that the Stalinists do and should - even from their own tactical viewpoint - prefer a government jointly with the Socialists and to the exclusion of the M.R.P. The war is over, the old dominant sections of the capitalist class have been destroyed or seriously weakened, the country is in a social and political crisis, the CP and SP have the support of the majority of the French people, and Stalinist Russia requires the backing of a big West European power in the United Nations councils against Anglo-American imperialism - these facts indicate why the Stalinists do and should prefer (even on tactical grounds) the exclusion of the de Gaullists; precisely because the latter interfere with the internal and external tactical policy of the Stalinists. Under the cloak of a legal, parliamentary majority, the Stalinists, through an SP-CP-CGT government, would have more power within the country than they now enjoy;

and would be able to give France a pronounced "pro-Russian" orientation - even if, as we assume here, they are not able as yet to organize a full Stalinist regime. In the present world situation Anglo-American imperialism could not intervene militarily; though they might seek to starve France under such a government.

An SP-CP-EGT government in France today, then, would undoubtedly strengthen Stalinism. To think otherwise is to view the Communist Party in the light of the record of the reformist social democratic parties which had vested interests in capitalism and therefore exposed their impotence to the revolutionary workers once they came to power.

2. We see here that a tactical and empirical analysis of the aims and character of the CP is hardly sufficient. We must first understand the strategic fundamental aims of the Stalinists before we can comprehend their tactical, immediate policies. Without this general theoretical understanding we will flounder from day to day without adequate guiding ideas.

The NC majority declares that the Stalinists are "not a democratic but a totalitarian party operating as an instrument of the Kremlin and the G.P.U." Does this mean that the CP is merely a defense agency of Stalinist Russia? Apparently so, since this is today the official position of the party and the NC majority confines itself to repeating the old formula on the role of the CP.

Last summer I raised this question in the Political Committee and declared that our traditional view should be revised; that the strategic aim of Stalinism in all the capitalist countries, and whatever their immediate tactics, is to take power and establish bureaucratic collectivism. No one present agreed with me. However, several months later, the editor of the N.I. who had been absent from that PC meeting (on a speaking tour), wrote (August, 1945):

"However, it is increasingly clear that the Stalinists are not merely the agents of the bureaucratic ruling class of Russia. That conception is proving to be too narrow. The Stalinist bureaucracy in the capitalist countries has ambitions of its own. It dreams (sic!) of one day taking power, and establishing itself as ruler of substantially the same bureaucratic despotism that its Russian colleagues enjoy."

Despite the over-cautious formulation the essential thought here is clear and correct. The CPs seek state power; they aim to establish bureaucratic collectivist regimes in all countries.

If this is so - and it is - what is the practical meaning of the slogan for an SP-CP-EGT government in France today? It means aiding the Stalinists in their course towards state power. The NC majority, though not ready to adopt a position on the strategic aim of Stalinism - as shown by its disposition of Comrade Garrett's statement on the question (see N.I., April, 1946) - does adopt a slogan which presupposes our old view that the Stalinists do not aim at power.

3. And by implication, the NC majority also reiterates the old view that the CP is a working class, though totalitarian party. We are told in their declaration that, "Together, the Socialist Party and the Stalinist Party represent a majority not only of the proletariat but of the people as a whole." (My emphasis. J.C.) If this sentence were culled from a news article in LABOR ACTION one would take it to mean merely that the S.P. and C.P. have the support of the majority of the French workers and people - a statement of fact. But when the sentence appears in a statement of party policy and in connection with the slogan of an "SP-CP-CGT Government" it is then no longer only the recording of a fact but at the same time an interpretation of that fact, to wit, that both parties are working class parties - that is, represent the interests of the workers in some sense. If, however, the N.C. majority holds that the CP is a non-working class party - as I am told that it does in the international resolution - then the question is:

Does the NC majority hold that the formation of a coalition government of a counter-revolutionary, anti-working class party (the CP) with a reformist workers' party (the SP) would be, what it calls, "the first step" towards the "class independence of the French proletariat"? Assuming that the NC majority is logical in its position, it is clear that its premise is the working class character of Stalinism? Or, if this is not the premise then, at least, there must be the assumption that in the given French situation, the Stalinists - as restrained by the SP, the French bourgeoisie and Anglo-American imperialism from coming to full power - may be a progressive force against a common enemy whose interests temporarily coincide with those of the working class. Once again: if it is not such a progressive force how can we urge that it take governmental power jointly with the SP?

It is obvious that the grave and complex situation in France and throughout Europe poses far more difficult problems than revolutionary socialists have ever faced. The problem of how to defeat Stalinism is the most acute and hardest one of all. There are no ready-made, simple formulae for any of these problems, least of all, that of Stalinism. That is all the more reason why the party must adopt a fundamental position on the aims of Stalinism and its relation to the working class and socialist movement.

Is then the CP of France a working class party? The answer is: No! A working class party is one that represents the interests of the whole working class or a section of it. The reformist socialist parties, as a rule, represent the immediate interests of the labor aristocracy, a section of the working class. The Stalinists represent the interests of the Russian bureaucracy and those social groupings in the capitalist countries, declassed intellectuals, Stalinist "professional revolutionists," sections of the so-called new middle class who are attracted by the successes of Stalinist Russia in planning economy, etc., who seek to establish a social and political regime similar to that which exists in Russia. The mass basis of Stalinism in the capitalist countries, however, is the working class. That is, Stalinism seeks to utilize the working class as an instrument to defend the existing Russian

regime and to destroy capitalism by taking power in the other countries and establishing anti-working class, anti-socialist states, that is, bureaucratic collectivism.

The mass support of the French Communist Party comes from the working class. Similarly the mass support of the German National Socialist Labor Party, the Nazis, came from the middle class. To achieve its aims in France the CP requires the aid of the workers, just as the Fascists in Germany required the aid of the middle class to put them into power. In neither case is there a harmony between the class interests which the respective parties serve and the class which forms their bases. Once in power the Fascists crush the middle class demands against big business and hasten the process of wiping out the middle class through increased, large-scale state-directed capitalism. Once in power the Stalinists crush independent working class organizations and try to organize a new form of class exploitation.

In their struggle for power the Fascists attracted the middle class masses by championing their demands; and in the process gained many adherents who sought to build what they considered a "genuine" middle class, anti-big business party, the so-called Left wing of the Fascist party. However, the Nazis were not a middle class party.

Similarly, the Stalinists have and will attract millions of workers because with the aid of Russia and despite their tactical turns and twists, they do present an aggressive anti-capitalist strategy and seem to champion working class demands. So too they attract genuine working class militants who believe that the CP is fighting for socialism. This does not change the fact that the CP is not a working class party; that is to say, not a party which represents the interests of either the entire working class or a section of it.

It does not follow that once we state that the CP is not a working class party we have solved the problem of how to defeat Stalinism - that is, how to win the workers from the CP for revolutionary socialism. An easy solution does not exist. However, it does indicate a fundamental strategic approach which goes beyond what our movement has had until now.

One must agree with the NC majority that we cannot base our politics today on the probability of a complete victory of Stalinism in the next period. However, the facts today indicate increasing moves in that direction. The real possibility of further Stalinist victories - that is, greater blows at the revolutionary working class - tomorrow and the next day in Europe must be a serious consideration in our politics. The NC majority poses the question of the probability of Stalinist consolidation of state power in Europe and declares that there is insufficient evidence for such a prospect. It then confuses the prospect of such a development with the "reality" of Stalinist consolidation, as both mean the same thing! Because we may have to reevaluate our program if and when we are confronted by the "reality" of a completely Stalinized Europe does not contradict the view that such a

Europe is a real possibility. The important and decisive consideration against the proposed slogan is that it would bring Europe closer to the "reality" of totalitarian, Stalinist rule; it would help transform a possibility into a high probability.

For these reasons the party convention should reject this new proposal for a form of conditional support to Stalinism, must reject the slogan of an SP-CP-CGT government for France or any country in the world. With a correct fundamental attitude towards Stalinism as a starting point, the incoming NC can formulate appropriate policies and slogans as advice to our European comrades.

Joseph Carter

WHAT IS MEANT BY A "SMALL EDITION OF A MASS PARTY"

By Ernest Erber

The formula of "a small edition of a mass party" has been opposed by the NC majority on the grounds that it gives rise to confusion and can disorient the membership. Unfortunately, this is true of almost any designation of a stage of the party's development if there is no attempt to exactly indicate what the term means. This is true of Johnson's use of the term "propaganda group". Comrade Johnson is continually complaining that he is being misunderstood, that he does not mean to go back to the CL@ type of a movement, that he does not mean a socialist propaganda group like the SLP or the Proletarian Party, etc. Nor has Comrade Shachtman's term of "agitational group" fared any better. Shachtman is continually taking pains to describe that he does not mean that our only task is agitation, that we have and will continue to have a need for propaganda, that his position is not a concession to my "small mass party" concept, etc. Unless a term means exactly the same thing to all people it is always necessary that one go beyond the term in a painstaking effort to determine just what is meant by it. One cannot vote for or against the mere words "small edition of a mass party". One must vote for or against the concept and emphasis which those words stand for. Words, however, do have a relationship to meaning and we choose those words which best describe what we mean.

All three positions represented in the discussion on this question proceed from the understanding that a party goes through different stages in its development. Johnson says that we have outgrown our existence as a "propaganda circle" and that we are now a "propaganda group". He identifies these as stages one and two in our development. Shachtman says that we have outgrown our existence as a "propaganda group" and are now becoming an "agitational group". The latter he sees as the second stage in our development. I also say we have outgrown our past as a "propaganda group". I designate the second stage of our development as being that of a "small edition of a mass party." All three positions, therefore, state that we are now in a stage of development that differs from the past. More, they all agree that we are now in the second stage of our development. But what does this mean for the party in terms of what we are supposed to do in this second stage? In short, what are our main tasks? It is the answer to this question that gives meaning to the dispute over "propaganda group" vs. "agitational group" vs. "small edition of a mass party".

Our tasks are indicated by the following four basic factors:

- (1) The Transitional Program: The adoption of the transitional program flowed from our political analysis of the American scene. However, its adoption likewise signaled the fact that we had turned from concentrating upon the radicals of various kinds and were directing our attention to the broad strata of militants in the labor movement.

(2) Our Mass, Agitational Paper - Labor Action: The transitional program would have remained meaningless as a bridge to the labor militants without a mass agitational paper with which to reach them. The character of our paper is determined by our transitional program and our need to find a point of contact with the labor militants at their present level of consciousness.

(3) The Shop and the Union as our Main Field of Work: We do not exist merely to agitate. We exist in order to build a revolutionary party. Our transitional program and our mass paper indicate where we must concentrate to build that party - among the industrial workers. This means that we must participate in the class struggle. This means that we must be in industry and in the labor movement.

(4) Recruitment of Industrial Workers: Our agitational paper and our activity in the class struggle attracts to us the best of the labor militants. They join our party. The success of our agitation and activity in the labor movement is largely measured by the number of industrial workers recruited to our ranks. If our agitation and general activity in the labor movement is successful we will become a party composed overwhelmingly of industrial workers.

With these four basic factors which form the framework of our tasks (and have for the last several years) the entire NC majority is in agreement. Only Johnson differs basically with this approach to our tasks in this period. That is why Johnson stands upon a separate resolution as against the NC majority. It is because I am in agreement with the basic approach of the NC majority to our tasks that I can present my differences in the form of amendments to the majority resolution.

My difference with the majority stems from the fact that, in my opinion, the majority has not drawn the full conclusions from the above posing of our tasks. They are not aware of what follows from the approach they have undertaken. Because of this, the party has not shown the necessary consistency and concentration in aiming at achieving the kind of organization which is indicated by these tasks. The full conclusion of these four tasks is to understand that any measure of success in achieving them immediately confronts us with a fifth (inevitable) task - that of giving leadership to groups of workers in the labor movement and the class struggle generally.

Let us approach it from the angle of the worker who is attracted to our paper and our activities in a union. What attracts him is our line on current questions with which he and his fellow workers are concerned. What are these current questions today? They are the issues which came to the fore in the recent strike wave: relation of wages to prices and profits, political policy of the labor movement, etc. We have a program for the labor movement on these questions. It is our interpretation of the full meaning of the GM strike program. If our members in a union are successful and if our paper makes an impression upon the more advanced unionists, we will be in a position to win the progressive wing of the

local to our program for the labor movement. What follows?* The best of the progressives are drawn to them and into the party. Inside the party we continue their education in revolutionary socialism. But is it one of our aims (or one of the results of such education) to diminish the new party member's interest in his union, the progressive group and our fight for the GM strike program? No. On the contrary, we teach him its full implications, we train him how to more skillfully work in the labor movement, how to raise the understanding of other workers and bring them into the party, etc. We do not, therefore, merely agitate. We do not therefore, merely present a platform to the labor movement. Because as soon as such agitation is successful, as soon as our platform wins adherents, we are faced with the need to give leadership to groups of workers. What does the progressive group do with our platform? It fights for its adoption by the local and it runs its own slate of candidates on the platform for local union offices. What if it succeeds in winning the elections? The progressives take responsibility for the local administration. Who takes responsibility for the progressives who have adopted our platform, and who are led by our members? Obviously, the party fraction and the party branch, i.e., the party. Those who pose as their task agitation for a platform to be adopted by the labor movement cannot avoid this inevitable next task that comes with each success of their agitation and activity.

We already have worked out an excellent platform based upon our transitional program. We have proven our ability to adapt it to the changing currents in the labor (during the war, the no-strike pledge - today, the GM strike program) movement. We have developed an excellent mass, agitational paper which we are about to expand to 8 pages. We shall immediately after the convention, if the NC proposals are adopted, shift the overwhelming bulk of our members into basic industries and industrial unions. Is it excluded that a year's activity based on our excellent program and with our excellent paper and with our greatly augmented skill in trade union work and recruiting will give us 200 new recruits from the shops? Not only is it not excluded, but this should be set as our most minimum and modest goal. Would not the bulk of these 200 be labor militants with a serious influence in their unions. Would we not exercise a considerable influence in a whole series of union situations? Would not our party have to assume an enormous (i.e. relative to now) responsibility for the role it plays in the labor movement, perhaps in the direction of a number of locals? How would such a party have to act? What would its role be? That of an "agitational group"? No. It would be immersed in politics (i.e., the day-to-day reaction to events in the labor movement and in the nation). A "propaganda group" need not concern itself with politics in this sense, except to make side-line comments upon what is taking place as a springboard for propaganda. However, our party, in the above situation, would be forced to act like a political party, i.e. one with forces and influence even if modest ones. Our agitation would be limited, not merely with what we tell the working class in general to do, but with what we direct our forces to do. This I refer to as being the stage of a "small edition of a mass party". Why does this formula best describe this stage? Because in our own restricted sphere

* Our members must take a leading role in the progressive group.

(restricted by our small numbers) we must play a role that approximates more closely that of a mass party than that of a propaganda group.

How would such a role affect our party? If we had even 200 new proletarians in our ranks, if we had a serious influence in a series of progressive groups and union locals, we would have to gear both our thinking and our functioning to the need of "what do we propose" - not in general - but specifically. By specifically I mean that it is not enough under such circumstances to give a line for the labor movement at large in our paper. It then becomes our responsibility to propose specifically what to do in each of the situations where we have forces. It would not be enough for us to raise the general slogan of "Turn the PAC into a Labor Party". We would have to deal with a dozen situations where the PAC would exist in the flesh for our fractions and not merely as the subject for a denunciatory article in our press. It would not be enough for us to propose the "general strike council" for the labor movement as a whole. We would have to direct a dozen fractions as to how to proceed in fighting for this concept in their local situations. It would not be possible for us to offer the GM strike program in general to fractions operating in situations on different levels of development and faced with all sorts of variations. We would have to break down the program to fit it into a specific, given framework. This is not agitation, at least, not general agitation. This is the leadership which a serious party with serious forces must provide.

Is this the function of a good trade union director who will answer letters? This concept reveals what is wrong with much of our thinking on the problem of our role. With 85% of the party immersed in the labor movement, the direction of our forces is the top political job of our leading committees and branches. It is not a specialized function of a trade union director. The latter can only coordinate and assist in the execution of our directives. The concept that "trade union work" is a special field assigned to the direction of a trade union director is one native to our petty-bourgeois composition. It was born in our pre-war past when the overwhelming majority of the party worked in non-industrial occupations and considered the problems of a sprinkling of trade unionists a special field. With some 85% of our members in industrial occupations, a considerable change would take place. With 200 new members from the shops, a revolution would take place in our habits of work and methods of operation.

Would not our leadership understand this situation and react to it correctly regardless of whether it was referred to as the stage of a "small edition of a mass party" or the stage of an "agitational group"? It is not a question of whether they would react to the actual situation in a correct manner. The real problem is: will we achieve any progress in this stage if we do not fully and consciously comprehend what it implies for us? Before we will have 200 new recruits from the shops and a dozen serious local situations in the labor movement, we will have 10 new recruits from the shops and one or two serious local situations. If we muff the 10 new recruits by not knowing what to do with them or what is expected of them and if we muff the one or two

local union situations by not understanding our responsibility for them, we can be sure that we will not proceed beyond them. That is why it is necessary that we have a clear understanding at the outset as to just what follows from the tasks we have set ourselves with our transitional program, mass paper, and trade union concentrations. I am concerned about our muffing them, because in my opinion the real lessons of the Philadelphia experience have not been understood by our party. As local organizer in Philadelphia I felt a tremendous responsibility precisely because the Political Committee did not understand what the Philadelphia development meant for the party. It is true, the PC regarded the Philadelphia development as unique, as a freak that resulted from some exceptionally favorable breaks, etc. As a result, they felt that they could not lead the whole party as if it was composed of local Philadelphia developments, i.e., half the membership composed of new industrial workers with a leading role in the union movement. But our leadership of the party must proceed from an understanding of what we want to be, not only what we are. If a "Philadelphia" development is not nourished and cared for with exceptional measures so that it survives until the party as a whole achieves the same stage, then the exceptional development will die like a fish on dry land.

Except for the special visits of Comrade Coolidge or Comrade Shachtman or a visit to New York by the local comrades, the normal routine of the party gave no direction for our local situation. By this I mean that our PC passed motions on the PAC, on the "compulsory labor bill", reconversion lay-offs, etc. which were good as a line for our writers in Labor Action. But what was expected of us in a local where we could pass almost anything we proposed within the limits of a general progressive labor program? We could do more than pass resolutions. We could lead actions. We could either set up a PAC in the local or kill it. Which should we do? We could go beyond condemning the "compulsory labor bill" or the reconversion lay-offs. We could call upon the CIO industrial council (where our progressive bloc was a strong factor) to call a one-day general protest strike or a mass demonstration. Or we might undertake these through the local alone. I am not saying that our party leadership would oppose these measures or remain indifferent to them when initiated locally. However, today our thinking is still geared to propaganda and agitation. "What do we say in our press?" is our sole concern. With a few hundred of our members playing leading roles in local situations it will be necessary to gear our thinking to what should they propose specifically. This is the beginning of leadership in the class struggle. This is the inevitable result of successful agitation, activity in the labor movement and recruitment on the basis of it. That is why I say there is no special "agitational stage" that follows the "propaganda stage". Once we have left the "propaganda stage" behind us and have made "agitation" our main emphasis it immediately becomes linked up with influence in the labor movement, recruitment of labor militants and the assumption of leadership by our fractions in local labor situations. If we are to carry through what these tasks pose for us, we must thoroughly and consciously understand what is required of us. We must understand that the stage we are in is one in which we must begin to act like a party, even though we obviously are not a party in the

sense of being able to call upon the masses to follow our lead in our own name. (This latter stage requires a party of the tens of thousands with hundreds of thousands of supporters.) For us the break from a propaganda group stage to that we are in now was encompassed in a few short years marked by the development of our transitional program, our mass paper and the transition of our members into industry. Our further development may see us going through mergers and fusions with other groups in the building of the mass revolutionary party of the future. However, unless objective conditions impose a retreat upon us, we will continue to progressively develop forward toward a mass party. However, a party of only several hundred members operating on the basis of a transitional program, a mass paper, an overwhelming bulk of its membership in the labor movement and giving leadership to workers in dozens of local situations - such a party plays a role closer to that of the mass party of the future than to the propaganda group of the past. That is why the term "small edition of a mass party" is an appropriate one if its contents are thoroughly understood. (It could also be referred to as a "small mass-work party" if it is understood that its arena of activity is mainly confined to the labor movement.)

An additional understanding of our tasks in this stage is to be gained from counter-posing the type of composition which our work will give us to that of the past when we spoke about a "cadre party". Comrade Findley, in an article written for our Active Workers Conference, stated that he was against Shachtman's concept of the cadre because the entire party should be a cadre, that we should be a "cadre-party". To oppose Shachtman's cadre concept from this point of view is to betray a lack of understanding of the tasks that confront us in the present stage. A "cadre party" is associated to the "propaganda" stage of development. During the latter stage recruitment takes place on the basis of program and theory, rather than agitation and activity in the class struggle. Those recruited in the "propaganda group" are expected to place themselves at the disposal of the movement, to make the movement their highest interest in life. This is quite possible with the type of member recruited to a propaganda group, i.e., mostly youth, students, white collar workers who join out of intellectual conviction, radicals from other political currents, etc. However, when agitation becomes the main emphasis, when activity in the labor movement predominates, then the recruits come from the shops on the basis of such agitation and activity. Our educated members must train the new worker-recruit in Marxist ideas and disciplined party activity. But if one out of ten worker-militants from the shops "becomes like us", i.e., is integrated in the sense of devoting himself entirely to the movement, places it above all his personal considerations and obligations, such as family, income, etc. we shall be most fortunate. But the nine out of ten will remain in normal periods, "worker-Bolsheviks" of the kind who form nine-tenths of the membership of every mass, revolutionary party. They are the flesh and muscle with which we surround the lean, hard bones of our "party cadre". They are the types that Lenin added on to his original "Iskra" cadre in 1905-06 and 1911-14. What do we expect of such a "worker-Bolshevik" in our ranks? We expect attendance at his branch meeting, promotion of our press and literature in the shop, adherence to our party line in his

union work, and generally spreading the party's ideas among his fellow workers. Those who seek to integrate the worker recruit beyond this by shot-gun methods will only succeed in "integrating" him out of the party. With our influence he will advance in due time in his understanding and his readiness to make additional sacrifices for the movement. In time of crisis, when the class as a whole is in motion, such a worker-member will prove capable of tremendous feats of self-sacrifice and outstanding examples of leadership in struggle. Because we no longer aim to remain a "cadre-party", but a party composed overwhelmingly of such "worker-Bolsheviks" as are found in a mass revolutionary party, the term "a small edition of a mass party" is most appropriate.

(A further elaboration of the views here expressed will be found in the bulletin of July 1945 issued before the Detroit Active Workers Conference which contained two articles under the signature of E. Lund.)

One last point remains which I add not only by way of polemical exchange with Comrade Shachtman, but because my answer will help to better illustrate my concept. Comrade Shachtman asked, at one of the New York discussion meetings, why I had not proposed motions in the PC during the period of my membership which proved unacceptable to the majority. It was Shachtman's aim to prove that in actuality all talk of different concepts, when reduced to practical proposals, reduced themselves to nothing. There is one important factor that must be borne in mind in connection with Shachtman's point. That is that my coming to New York and serving on the PC coincided with the lay-offs that followed V-J day and uprooted our party from its concentrations in industry. The period between last September and the beginning of the pre-convention discussion was one of retreat and crisis in our work. We rolled backward. The danger which faced us, and still does, was a retreat to a petty bourgeois composition reduced to propaganda. This posed as our first task that of recovering lost ground. What is the use of disputing how our PC should act tomorrow when 85% of our members are in industry and we are recruiting labor militants and developing a serious influence in the labor movement, when today the most imposing task that confronts us is precisely that of getting 85% of our members into industry? On this latter task we are all agreed. My differences begin with what follows when we do get 85% of our members into industry. Perhaps, when we have begun to achieve this goal we shall also see eye to eye on the practical proposals. Nothing would please me more. The specific proposals attached to the majority resolution are a most promising indication in this direction. The spirit which pervades them augurs well for our future.

By Jesse

Dear Max:

As a result of discussions I have had with many comrades regarding the National Committee Resolution on the Party, especially those sections dealing with the cadre; and as a result of asking questions of you at the PC, the answers to which were too brief to be either clear or satisfactory; and as a result of re-reading the Resolution as per Dave's rather blunt suggestion I have decided to address certain questions to you with the view in mind of clarifying various problems raised in my mind by the Resolution.

These problems and questions that I am raising, are, I would say, similar to those existing in the minds of many party members. The lack of complete clarity on these matters seems to be disturbing the party membership deeply, and ought to be cleared up. Unless something is done in that direction both the pre-convention discussion as well as the discussion at the convention itself will suffer in that it will deal with many extraneous issues at the expense of discussing some of the very important and knotty matters included in the resolution. It goes without saying that such an eventuality should be avoided at all costs.

It is my observation that many fears have arisen in the minds of many comrades as to the cadre becoming "The seed of bureaucracy" etc., etc. To allay these fears, and restore to the comrades an attitude of confidence in the NC, also seems worth considerable effort.

It is with this in mind that I address the following questions to you, and ask that the questions, FOLLOWED BY YOUR ANSWERS be inserted in the internal bulletin as "discussion material".

1 - What is the Cadre:

It is referred to in the resolution as the "Party's spinal column", "its leadership in the truest sense; it is said that the cadre provides the party with "shape", "firmness", "its driving force". The resolution states further that the cadre "consists of the ardent Party Patriots who defend the party and its program against its opponents and make it their first concern to inculcate in the new party recruits a like feeling of loyalty and devotion to the party and an understanding of all its ideas and programmatic concepts." Further it is stated that "the cadre is crystallized around the activist core, but is not simply another name for an activist core". Then later the resolution states that the program of the cadre, the programmatic base of the cadre consists of Marxism in general and the specific contributions, amplifications of Marxism that the party has made in its own name. All of these quotes describe various attributes, qualities and 'duties' of a

member of the cadre. However, it is not made clear in the resolution that being considered part of the cadre, or a cadre-member, that one joins nothing for there is nothing to join.

Thus I come to the specific question: Is the cadre a concept, an idea, which is put forward by the NC in an endeavor to educate the party membership in the nature of the party; how to build the party at this stage, or, is it something one joins, holds membership in and receives emoluments from?

(YOUR ANSWER)

2 - What is the difference between the Cadre, as conceived in the NC resolution and the leading activists of a disbanded majority caucus or faction of a party, in the post-convention period?

(YOUR ANSWER)

3 - The NC resolution says, "While those in complete agreement with the party will find it easiest to play a role as part of the party cadre, the party demands of those in disagreement with the party on one or several questions to undertake responsibilities and play a role in accordance with their training and development as revolutionists."

Does it follow from this quotation that if those who agree completely with the party find it easy to play a role in the party that those who are not in complete agreement will find it hard?

If not, that is if they (those not in agreement) will not find it hard to play a role, then why is the matter of the ease with which those having agreement with the party may play a role, placed in apposition to the idea "the party demands....(those having differences) play a role and undertake responsibilities...?"

(YOUR ANSWER)

4 - The document says, "Being part of the cadre does not bring any one immunity from failure to discharge party responsibilities, or special rewards for discharging them. It does not mean being either a 'stooge of the leadership' or a 'protege of the leadership'. Further on the resolution states that the cadre is not "an aristocratic elite..." Later on the resolution says, "The cadre cannot permit itself to be smug about its own or the party's development. It engages in the work of educating the party as a whole; but it also must educate itself. To take the position that all is for the best in the best of all possible parties, that the party's position is not only flawless and all sufficient but applicable, as it stands, for now and evermore, means automatically to transform a living party cadre into a priesthood. The party membership - and especially the party cadre, cannot act as the passive recipient of party policy elaborated at the top...(the cadre especially)... must constantly and consciously participate in the necessary modification of party policy, in the elaboration of party policy..."

All of the above selections emphasize and make clear that

those considered part of a cadre are not mere Yes-men; furthermore the above emphasizes the critical and independently creative function the cadre performs in connection with formulation of party policy.

It is clear that not every member who is devoted to the ideas of the movement, who is active, capable, responsible, etc. AND who has political differences fall into the cadre. Yet a specific criteria is not available, not indicated in the resolution. Some who have differences would fall within the characterization, cadre material. Who?

Certain kinds of differences would mean that all holding them, irrespective of their activity and ability, fall outside of the cadre concept. Would you give a few examples of this and explain why?

To be even more specific would you consider someone like Ruth Leonard who advocates many of the ideas in the Johnson resolution cadre material or non-cadre material? If the answer is yes, then why? If the answer is no, then, why? Would you consider Johnson cadre material? If yes, then why; if no then, why?

Would you consider the Goldman-Morrow Minority of the SWP in case they were members of the party, without a change in their attitude on the Russian question, cadre material or non-cadre material? In either case, would you explain your answer.

(YOUR ANSWER)

5 - It is my impression that the section in the resolution dealing with the cadre, was in part, a sort of "call to arms" to the cadre to act like a cadre and preserve the party, which some months ago was rapidly approaching a deep crisis. The character and description of this crisis is to be found in the resolution beginning with the paragraph, "The cadre works systematically to develop local initiative and a local responsible, collective leadership. By and large...etc, etc." The entire paragraph is too long to quote but it states, to put it briefly, that many members (leading members included) were bemoaning their fate, the fate and the future of the party; they were sitting around wailing, crying and wringing their hands.

If this impression of mine is true, and this document was in large part an effort to rally the party militants for a struggle against this despairing negativism, then I would like to say that, although the party appears to be moving away from this condition, that this document does not solve, and did not solve the problem in the real sense for it has not and does not go to the roots of the matter. All that has been done is that in a burst of real, and fruitful, activity (\$15,000 campaign, LA Sub drive) the worst manifestations of the crisis, as indicated in the resolution are glossed over; the wailing and the crying tend to be drowned out in the hustle and bustle of these two activities. The success of the campaigns, and the successful diminishing of the woeful wails by the returning veterans, have created a vastly improved internal situation.

However, we still have the problem of convincing, re-enthusiasing, diminishing the influence and importance of, or weeding out of, those despairing Jeremiahs in our midst whose croaking and hysteria disrupt the party and the party members.

Is my impression correct, namely, that the section on the cadre was meant as "call to arms" to, so to speak, solve the internal problem?

If not, then would you comment on why this special emphasis has been placed on this matter, at this time.

(YOUR ANSWER)

Fraternally,

JESSE

1225

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON THE CADRE

By Max Shachtman

Dear Jesse:

Your letter is cogent and welcome. It is cogent and appropriate not only because it deals with what I consider the most vital question in the party right now, but because in one form or another it expresses the doubts and apprehensions about our document on the cadre which are shared by some of the best and most responsible comrades in the party. These include members of the National Committee and leading comrades in the branches; and also some of the leading comrades of the Minority of the SWP who have interested themselves in our discussion, as is their very good right. It is welcome because it asks questions bluntly and gives me an opportunity to elaborate a number of points which are contained in our resolution and to answer some of the arguments that have been made against the resolution.

In that connection I must say that it is a long time since I have seen such a discussion as we have had up to now on the question of the cadre. We have put forward here a concept which is a conclusion that derives inescapably, in my opinion, from a whole series of closely related and closely reasoned arguments, and which is so carefully specified and qualified as to leave very little room for misunderstanding. In the discussion so far the opponents of the cadre concept have, by and large, simply not bothered to deal with all of the arguments. They speak against it as though it were an isolated and accidental phrase contained in a document which had no relation to it. The whole concept and the whole motivation are simply ignored and an absolutely sterile dispute over the word "cadre" is about all we have had up to date. The opportunity your letter affords me to recapitulate our views makes it doubly welcome, not because it means one or more additional comrades casting their vote for the resolution (this is not the kind of question that will be decided by vote) but precisely because, by additional clarification, it will help in achieving the task itself. The task itself is the building of the cadre.

I cannot do this best by answering your questions one by one. However, the answers to your questions will be contained, and very specifically and unambiguously, in the restatement of our views which follows.

The concept of the cadre which we now put forward is not the same as the concept of the cadre which has prevailed in the movement heretofore, or, more accurately, not exactly the same. Let us understand that from the very beginning.

What was the concept of the cadre in the revolutionary movement in the past? It was regarded as the steel framework of the movement. It was composed of the comrades who best understood or sought to understand the program of the party, who stood firmly on it and who were at the same time the most devoted and active party

members. There could be and there were many political and organizational differences within the cadre. But regardless of the position that a comrade took on these differences, he could consider himself and was considered part of the cadre. That is substantially how it was in the Russian Bolshevik party, in the American Communist Party, and in the original Trotskyist movement of the United States (CLA), to give three typical examples.

How was it possible for comrades who had political differences in these parties to be considered, nevertheless, part of a common cadre? Why shouldn't the same thing hold for our party? How was it possible for the cadre in those parties to be "all-inclusive", whereas it is not possible in our party? Why could militants of contending factions in those parties nevertheless be in the same party cadre, whereas, according to Shachtman, it now appears that if you are in a faction against the leadership and its policies you cannot be regarded as part of the cadre? These are typical questions that comrades now ask. At first blush it looks pretty bad for our concept of the cadre, but only at first blush. The trouble with the questions is that they represent reasoning by rough analogy, that they are general and not concrete. Hence, they can only befuddle the comrades. Let me try to dispel some of the befuddlement by putting the problem concretely.

The Bolshevik Party, for example, was an exclusive party. For a long time it did not even call itself an independent party but regarded itself only as a faction which, with another faction, the Mensheviks, made up the united Social-Democratic Labor Party. As an exclusive party its standards for membership were very strictly defined politically. By and large it took in only Bolsheviks or Leninists, if you wish. The differences of opinion that arose continuously in the Bolshevik faction or party did not go beyond the distinctive program and theories of Bolshevism, that is, the program and theories which distinguished Bolshevism as a political current in the Marxist movement from Menshevism or even Trotskyism. Where they did go beyond these theories and program, it was as a rule only in isolated questions - for instance: Pyatakov on the national question, Rykov on the boycott of the Duma, Bukharin on the state, this or that comrade on one or another political question. For all these isolated differences - and some of them, mind you, were very serious differences - these "deviationists" nevertheless were regarded and regarded themselves as solid Bolsheviks. They were an integral part of the Bolshevik cadre. They did not constitute a clear-cut and continuous political tendency inside of Bolshevism. The Party, in a word, was exclusive. Therefore, the cadre was inclusive. (I am dealing here with the Bolshevik party up to the time it took power. It changed in character to a considerable extent after it took power and the problem of the cadre presented itself then in a different form. I do not have space to go into that now and I don't think I need to anyhow, at least not at this time.)

Substantially the same thing was true of the American Communist Party - I mean when it was really a communist party. You always had two or three contending factions in it, to be sure, but all of them stood on the same fundamental program and all of them adhered to those theories and programmatic concepts which distin-

guished the Communist Party not only from the Social Democracy but even from the ultra-leftist "super-Communist" grouplets. All of the factions were therefore considered part of the party cadre, regardless of their differences on such questions as the labor party, trade union work, party regime, etc. That party was exclusive, and its cadre was inclusive.

Similarly with our old Communist League of America. We had violent factional fights in it. But what did we dispute about? Party regime; the tactic in this or that trade union situation; entry or non-entry in the Socialist Party, etc. Apart from these tactical or organizational disputes, everybody stood upon the very rigidly defined principles and theories that distinguished the Trotskyist movement from all other groups. The CLA was exclusive, and the cadre in it was "all-inclusive."

So the first thing you have to ask yourself is this: Is our party, or is the situation in our party, the same as in the three cases listed above? If it were the same, I would hold no less firmly than anyone else to the old concept of the party cadre unchanged in the slightest respect. But you have to be blind as a bat not to see that we have a different party, that we have a different party situation, and that we are functioning in a different situation. Once I know this, and if I knew nothing else about the problem, I would have to say right off the reel: the concept of the cadre must at the very least be reconsidered, if not changed.

What kind of party are we? What is the situation in our party? In what situation do we find ourselves? Once these questions are answered concretely, then the opposition to our concept of the cadre collapses completely. Johnson's opposition is then disclosed for what it is, namely, a purely factional opposition which is devoid of principle. And the opposition of Erber and many other responsible and serious comrades is shown to be a failure to think things out concretely, at the best, and a sad state of muddle-headedness, at the worst.

We are like the parties I cited above not only in that we are revolutionary Marxists - that goes without saying - but in that we have a firm and clear program and principles and theories which distinguish us as a political current in the working class movement. Johnson's attempt to present our party position on the main questions as "oscillating" between one "clear line" and another are, of course, ridiculous and childish, that is, they are meant literally to appeal to little children. His point of view is a perfect supplement to that made notorious by E.R. Frank in the phrase "We have a finished program" - the sectarian's delight. In that sense, we do not, thank God, have "a finished program", although our theories and program and political concepts are not less than five times more "finished" than those of the Bolsheviks before 1917, the Communist Party of this country at any time in its history, or the CLA at any time in its history.

We are unlike these previous movements in that our composition is much broader than was theirs at any time. Our program and theories are not less clearly and strictly defined than were theirs. Our party, however, takes in, makes room for, and allows

the free functioning of people who have such differences with our party's theories and policies as were never tolerated or possible in the movement before. Have you ever thought of this point? Do you have any doubts about it? If so, tell me of one revolutionary Marxist party which allowed for such a wide range of differences in its ranks as we allow in our party. If you go through the histories with a glass you will not find one, because there never was one. Such a wide range of differences in an international party? Yes, in the First International, but not in any of the parties of the First International. Such a wide range of differences in a reformist party? Yes, and even a wider range at one time or another. But never before in a revolutionary Marxist party!

I am not sure of this but I think it was Erber who coined the phrase that our party is an all-inclusive revolutionary party (the underlined word sufficiently distinguishes us from Norman Thomas' once all-inclusive reformist party). Properly understood I am ready and proud to refer to ourselves by this formula. But Erber's formula, which is a good one, fits his conclusions on the cadre, which are bad ones, like a sock in the eye. I will take the risk of being misunderstood and say: it is precisely the inclusive revolutionary party that cannot have an inclusive cadre, just as it was precisely the exclusive Bolshevik party that could and did have an inclusive cadre.

Why? Let me continue to try to be concrete. What exactly is this "wide range" of political and theoretical differences that are referred to in our party? Is it just that one comradessays, "I am for a labor party", and another comrade, at the other extreme of the party, says, "I am against a labor party"? That one comrade says that Russia is a bureaucratic collectivist state and that another comrade, at the other extreme of the party, says that it is a fascist capitalist state? That one comrade says, "Let's concentrate on the unions", and another comrade, at the other extreme of the party, says, "Let's concentrate somewhere else"? That one comrade advocates the Socialist United States of Europe as one kind of slogan or as one conception and another comrade, at the other extreme of the party advocates another? And so on down the line of all the other differences which exist in our party and are repeatedly discussed?

If that were all that was involved, then anyone who said that this comrade "belongs" to the party cadre and the other one does not, would be a hopeless idiot beyond the remedy of science or human understanding. I urge you to believe that I am not in that category. If you do believe me, I hope that will be sufficient answer to the question in your mind or in the minds of others about whether Temple, Garrett, and Shacthman, and Goldman, and Morrow, and Smith, and Jones, and Robinson, all of whom have their differences on this or that point or on several points, compose the party cadre or not. But it is not these differences that are involved in this question. Above all it is not this or that individual that is involved. How can anybody debase the discussion of such an important conception as the party cadre to such questions as: "Does comrade so and so, of the Detroit branch, who is a very fine and devoted comrade, but who differs with the official party position on three questions, has doubts on two questions, and is unclear on

one question, belong: in the cadre or not - answer me that." I know this method is very popular and is even reputed to be effective in high school debates. If that is so, that is where it should be confined.

The problem is not this very excellent comrade so and so and that very devoted comrade this and thus. The problem is the building and consolidation of our party. And it cannot be solved unless we take into account the phenomenon which has developed and the stage of decisive importance it has reached in the recent period. Which brings me to the second important point, the situation inside our party.

In our party there are now two more or less clearly defined basic tendencies. Are they both revolutionary? I think so. They both stand on the general foundations of Marxism, or, if you wish, Trotskyism. Are they compatible with membership in a single revolutionary party? I think so. They may not be compatible with membership in a revolutionary party as the Cannonites conceive of it, but they can be reconciled with membership in a revolutionary party as we conceive of it, that is, as the "all-inclusive revolutionary party". By the same token I also believe that membership in one revolutionary party is possible both for those who hold the Cannonite political views and for those who hold ours. The only trouble is that Cannon does not agree with this; hence, unity has not taken place. Are the views of the two tendencies in our party politically reconcilable? I no longer think so. Did I think they were irreconcilable six years ago, four years ago or two years ago? No. In those days there were differences between us that could be considered more or less normal and not radically different, in significance or weight, from any number of other differences in the party. But this is 1946, and not 1940 when we founded the party. A lot of things have happened in these six years. On the one side, the party has worked out its conceptions in a whole series of important and fundamental questions and worked them out with the greatest clarity and distinctiveness (I must always underline that word "distinctiveness" so as to hammer it home to all comrades). On the other side, Johnson has worked out his conceptions. Now, in 1946, we come into irreconcilable clash with him on all these important and fundamental questions. "Blame" anyone or anything you want, but the fact, nevertheless remains. We now represent one tendency, and he represents another. These tendencies are not confined or unique to our party. The same division into two basic tendencies is taking place throughout the Fourth International. Within each of these tendencies there are still many differences of opinion, differences in emphasis, nuances, etc., but they all occur within the framework of the given tendency. Between the two tendencies, however, there is a politically unbridgeable gulf. In my view, our party most clearly and consistently represents one tendency; the Cannonites most clearly and consistently represent another, at least by and large. On virtually all of the disputed questions between the two tendencies, Johnson, step by step, has developed a full-fledged program which has no other political significance than a capitulation to Cannonism.

How Johnson developed this program is another matter. Throughout his curious career in the revolutionary movement he has re-

vealed an organic urge to surround himself with a personal clique. He had one long, long before our sins were discovered; long, long before bureaucratic collectivism was heard of; long, long before even "retrogressionism" was heard of; and if he remains what he is, he will have one long, long after our sins have been forgotten. But it has been noted that the political movement has its logic, and it even affects Bohemian circles, mutual admiration societies, literary dilettantes and cliques, provided they are inside the political movement. And the clique which has no political program either finds one in the end or in the end a program "finds" it. By and large the program which finds it or which it finds - fits it. That is how the Johnson clique disappeared to give way to the Johnson faction and the Johnson faction developed itself into the Johnson tendency - the tendency of literary radicalism, of hoodless sectarianism, of opportunism in practice, of monolithism. The origins of the Johnson tendency are only of secondary or tenth rate interest and importance. What is important politically is precisely the political program of the tendency. And our tendency is in irreconcilable opposition to Johnson precisely to the extent that the latter represents a capitulation to Cannonism.

Once this is clearly understood, the concrete questions of the relationship of the party cadre and the Johnson tendency is not difficult to grasp. But in order to set it forth in detail, I must wait, due to space limitations, for the next Bulletin.

Fraternally,

MAX SHACHTMAN

PRE-REVOLUTION AND FANTASY

By Abe Victor

It may seem rather strange that after four decades of revolutionary upsurge and decline in such countries as Germany, France, Spain, Austria and England, Comrade Johnson's resolutions should create so much confusion as to the nature of a pre-revolutionary situation. The difficulty is created, however, because Johnson's resolution states that there is a pre-revolutionary situation without elaborating his concept.

It is possible for students of the revolution to repeat Trotsky's phrases by the page without learning his method, just as it was possible for Polonius to arrive at the brilliant conclusion that "Brevity is the soul of wit" without at the same time learning to be brief. I resist the temptation at this point to make the obvious reference to Comrade Johnson's brevity.

In November 1931 Trotsky analyzed the political and economic crisis in England as follows:

"The situation in England can likewise be termed with a certain degree of justification, as pre-revolutionary provided it is strictly agreed, that a period covering several years of partial ebbs and tides can elapse between the pre-revolutionary and the immediately revolutionary situation. The economic situation in England has reached extreme acuteness. Still, the political superstructure of this arch-conservative country lags behind the changes in the economic basis. Before taking recourse to new political forms and methods, all the classes of the English nation are attempting time and again to ransack the cold-store-rooms, to turn the old clothes of their grandfathers and grandmothers inside out. The fact remains that despite the dreadful national decline there does not exist in England as yet, either a revolutionary party of any significance or its anti-pods, the Fascist party. Thanks to these circumstances, the bourgeoisie has had the opportunity of mobilizing the majority of the people under the "national" banner, that is, under the most hollow of all possible slogans. In the pre-revolutionary situation, the most dull witted of conservatism has acquired tremendous political predominance." (Trotsky - "Germany Key to the International Situation" p. 2)

Notice how carefully Trotsky qualifies his assertion that "The situation...can...be termed...pre-revolutionary."

Qualification #1. "with a certain degree of justification."

Qualification #2. "provided it is strictly agreed, that a period covering several years of partial ebbs and tides can elapse between the pre-revolutionary and the immediately revolutionary situation."

This is the written idea of a precise and careful thinker who, in spite of his great ability and his meticulous use of words occasionally made an error in prediction or in judgment.

Compare then, the method of Johnson who, like an amateur gambler tossing a pair of dice, carelessly flings out the statements:

"...propaganda (for the transitional program) is based upon the analysis of the situation in the U.S. as pre-revolutionary, for without this, the idea of a transitional program becomes ridiculous." (Johnson, "Task of Building the Bolshevik Party" p.12)

"For the transitional program which is based on the objectively pre-revolutionary situation." (The Program of the Minority p.36)

"No revolutionary can deny the possibility that two years from today the American proletariat could cover the nation with soviets (or their equivalent) in a nationwide strike against the bourgeoisie, or more serious still, against the intervention of the government in the struggles of the proletariat with capital." (Johnson, "Resolution on the American Question" p. 14)

Without elaborating upon his own concept of the nature of a pre-revolutionary situation, without any attempt to apply to the American scene, Trotsky's judgment of 1938 (Founding Conference) Johnson concludes that "the analysis of the situation in the United States as pre-revolutionary" holds as equally true for today as it did in 1938. Not only doesn't it strike him that Trotsky may have made an erroneous judgment then, but he insists upon continuing over a period of eight years the judgment of the man who would have tested his own judgment very carefully before again repeating it.

It appears now, from the hasty and embarrassed retreat of many of Johnson's followers that what they really mean is that our epoch is objectively the epoch of pre-revolutionary situations.

"The economic prerequisite for the proletarian revolution has already in general achieved the highest point of fruition that can be reached under capitalism. Mankind's productive forces stagnate." By itself this statement which was formulated by Trotsky in 1938 is absolutely incontestable, and is of decisive importance for the policies of the proletariat in our epoch. But Johnson fails utterly to understand the thesis on capitalism in its death agony which he mechanically adopted. This lack of comprehension stands revealed with especial clarity in respect to what is to us the most immediate question, "Will the productive forces in the United States reach such a level of stagnation within the next few years that capitalism is no longer capable either of solving its own problems or of making concessions to the proletariat, but is forced even to withdraw some of the concessions it has already made?"

Such a contraction would undoubtedly precipitate a severe economic and political crisis, the objective prerequisites for a pre-revolutionary situation in the United States. When Comrade Norman argues against the concept that a pre-revolutionary situation cannot exist without a mass revolutionary party he is dueling with some fantasy of his imagination, not with any argument of the

THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION: ENGLAND

What was the issue which precipitated the General Strike in England?

A drop in profits for the year 1925 was claimed by the British mine industry and the mine-owners proposed to renegotiate the mine contracts for the purpose of effecting a wage cut and a longer working day. It was apparent to the working class that the post-war "boom" was over and that the mine-owners were leading the other corporations in a series of attempts to withdraw all the concessions made by British industry to the unions in the immediate post-war period. The General Council of the British trade union movement advised the leaders of the Miners Federation that they would have to be prepared to consider a reduction in wages! Until the miners union proposed strike action and the remaining unions agreed to support the miners, the General Council refused to plan an offensive against the proposed wage cuts of the industrialists. The General Council was forced against its will to lead and organize the General Strike!

THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION: FRANCE

Between 1934 and 1936 there developed in France a pre-revolutionary period which was, as in England characterized by a general strike.

In his "Resolution on the American Question", Comrade Johnson quoted or paraphrased rather copiously from Trotsky's "Whither France" without somehow or other managing to include those quotations in which Trotsky characterizes the pre-revolutionary character of the French situation. The obvious reason for the omission is that the criteria mentioned by Trotsky in no way indicate a similar situation here.

"Capitalism has brought the means of production to such a level that they are paralyzed by the misery of the popular masses ruined by the selfish capitalism...Capitalism not only cannot give the toilers new social reforms, nor even petty alms. It is forced TO TAKE BACK WHAT IT ONCE GAVE (Emphasis mine A.V.) All of Europe has entered an era of economic and political counter-reforms." (Trotsky, "Whither France" p.13)

As in England, so in France the economic crisis manifested itself to the working class as an attempt on the part of the bourgeoisie to withdraw concessions which it had made in the past to the organized proletariat. There were other manifestations to be sure. But this one provoked an immediate class struggle action.

Once set in motion by the contraction of the economy the crisis in France took a political form which Trotsky described as follows:

"The political crisis of the country is above all a collapse

of the confidence of the petty-bourgeois masses in their traditional parties and leaders. The discontent, the nervousness, the instability, the fluidity of the petty-bourgeoisie are extremely important characteristics of a pre-revolutionary situation. As a sick man, burning with fever tosses from right side to left, so the feverish petty-bourgeoisie can turn to the Right or to the Left. In the coming period, the side towards which millions of French peasants artisans, small merchants and minor officials turn will determine whether the present pre-revolutionary situation will develop into a revolutionary or a counter-revolutionary situation." (Trotsky, "Whither France" p.58)

It is also interesting to note that the General Strike which occurred in France, was centered around demands of a political nature, primarily, although sectarians might insist that every economic demand leads the proletariat into political conflict with the bourgeoisie. That may be true in the long run. In the instance of France, however, Trotsky clearly states:

"...Millions of workers and wage earners participated in the general strike of February 12, which did not make any "immediate demands". (Trotsky, "Whither France" p.63)

"Why is it that millions of workers risked participation in a general strike, in violent demonstrations in the streets, in battles with the Fascist gangs, but refuse to participate in strikes of a purely economic character?" (Trotsky, "Whither France" p.65)

"Whoever goes to workers' meetings knows as well as we that general talk about immediate demands usually leaves the audience in a state of complete indifference; on the other hand, clear and precise revolutionary slogans get a sympathetic response. This difference in the reaction of the masses characterizes the political situation in the country in the clearest possible manner." (Trotsky, "Whither France" p. 63)

THE BRITISH GENERAL STRIKE

The British General Strike began as an offensive of the British working class against the proposal of the British bourgeoisie for a wage cut and a longer working day. The working class in Britain was conscious enough of its problems to understand that these counter-reforms were directed not merely at the miners but at the entire working class. The general strike unleashed tremendous revolutionary energies and by virtue of the fact that all transportation, all electric, fuel, and communication services were paralyzed without the services of the workers, the strike committees had control of every strikebound town. No food could enter or leave a town without the committee's permission. Every worker on electric power or gas supply worked under a permit of the strike committee. What had formerly been simply trade union committees were forced to take over entirely new functions, the functions of town councils, and of governmental assemblies. In the nine days of this strike, union committeemen became administrators of state power. The experience educated them and transformed them in a way in which no reading of a Marxist classic could, by and of itself, do.

After several days of the strike the workers would listen with impatience to any speech based upon the simple economic issues which provoked the strike; but they cheered for several minutes a miner who made the political speech "If the British Constitution makes a miner work underground for less than two pounds a week, it is about time that Constitution was challenged."

Perhaps one of the most revolutionary methods of struggle, the general strike is forced to overstep the limits of simple craft union demands, of demands which concern only one union local, or one international. When the economic crisis forces the labor movement to disregard divisions between industries and between federations, between faction lines and party lines, between the practices permitted by law and practices forbidden by law, the general strike can become a reality. And its effect, like the effect of the armed insurrection is a tonic to the working class; it creates a consciousness of power in the minds of the workers which few historical experiences can equal.

Yet, to revert back to the quotation by Trotsky which introduced this article, after seeing the British working class experience this historical venture into the realm of workers power, Trotsky was not completely certain that a pre-revolutionary situation existed. Why? Because in spite of the fact that "The economic situation in England has reached extreme acuteness. Still, the political superstructure of this arch-conservative country lags behind the changes in the economic basis."

CAPITALIST EQUILIBRIUM, CRISIS AND PRE-REVOLUTION

The ability of the bourgeois economic system to retain balance and equilibrium is much more complex than, for example, a gyroscope which may stand upright as long as it is able to spin with a certain number of revolutions per minute. Yet a similarity exists in the sense that the balance of the American capitalist system, like that of the gyroscope is affected by forces outside of it (i.e. in the world) and the internal forces (class relations, etc.). War, or weaker forms of international conflict (economic war, blockade, etc.) may upset the equilibrium. Strikes, lockouts, class wars may disrupt the motion from the inside, so to speak.

But this balance even after it is disrupted may, in the absence of factors like a revolutionary party, be restored. That this equilibrium resists rather well the forces which would topple it, is indicated by the fact that after a six year world war which followed 25 years of revolutionary situations in most of the major countries of the world, and a victorious proletarian revolution in one country, it exists today, shaky, threatened to be sure; but the equilibrium exists.

The balance of various capitalist economies depends upon several factors; the world division of labor, the international equilibrium (ability to control imperialist rivalry by methods short of war), and the survival and utilization, and replacement of productive capital inside each capitalist country.

* strike is made possible only under conditions in which the class

The majority resolution on the American question attempts to analyze and relate these problems. Johnson's resolution disregards them almost completely. For him it is enough that Trotsky said something in 1938 which Johnson finds it simple to repeat.

An amazingly different picture presents itself when one looks at Europe's part in the world economy and at America's. If the United States was the quartermaster of the world in World War I it was doubly true in World War II. If America was in a position to enforce her domination of world markets after the first world war, she is also in as strong or stronger position to do so today. If American productive capital was in far better condition than Europe's after the first World War, it is likewise true today.

This situation, it is true, may be altered by some factor which threatens the equilibrium from the outside, a successful revolution in Europe, the sudden loss of some of America's present markets, the outbreak of a third world war. But for the next few years that is only a possibility and not a probability.

In the United States resides approximately 7 or 8 per cent of the world's population; some seven or eight per cent of the earth's surface falls to the United States. Yet of the world's supply of steel, coal, oil, tin, zinc, aluminum, copper, cotton, corn, wheat, automobiles, machinery for everything from making shoes to printing newspapers, and many other vital items the United States extracts, processes or produces from 50 percent to 90 per cent.

The United States has the largest railroad system in the world the most extensive system of highways. Before the first world war the United States had about 30 per cent of the world's tonnage in her merchant fleet. England had 35 per cent. After the second world war, the United States has a greater merchant marine than England. The American economy, therefore, can easily outstrip England in reaching the world market, even if it depended primarily on shipping space which of course it does not.

This is the position of American economy after two world wars for world domination. Partly this is due to the war market which existed in Europe during both wars, a market with practically no limits and which could hardly afford to haggle at prices. Through its lend lease agreements, the United States prevented its ally England from manufacturing for the South American market, assuming that England could have done so had there been no agreement preventing it. Only the tremendous requirements for forging the means of destruction with existing productive forces prevented free play for the fullest development of the American economy. During the six years of the second world war Europe's productive forces were subjected to every kind of destruction which the American bourgeoisie could only consider with a slightly vicarious fear, easily alleviated at the thought of unfettered supremacy. And yet with this supreme superiority in productive ability comes the mockery of a Europe so impoverished that a market for American goods it has vanished and can only be partly restored if a tremendous amount of aid is poured in from the overflowing coffers of American capitalism. Thus is the American economy hoist by its own petard.

The world therefore faces a period of extreme crisis, violent shudders in the economic apparatus. There will be and there are crises in Europe; there will be a crisis, several crises in America. But these crises will be of a different kind. The productive forces in the United States are still in relatively good condition. The American factories are in supremely superior condition to those over the rest of the world. Materials and necessary equipment are in abundance compared to the condition in any other country. Without any doubt, the quality of merchandise is inferior to that which sold before the war; the means of transportation are sadly in need of replacements and repairs since every last piece of rolling stock was strained to meet the burden of war. On the whole, however, the American economy has developed its productive forces and not merely maintained them intact throughout the war.

Anyone who maintains that this kind of "exceptionalism" is false; that this is an epoch of pre-revolutionary situations and that whatever the degree of difference between Europe and the United States, the latter is subject to the same kind of pre-revolutionary situation, at the same time and with the same degree of intensity and with the same frequency of recurrence, is an infant, a rank amateur, a sheer incompetent in the field of revolutionary politics. The developing economic and political situation in the United States will surely repudiate the kind of idiocy which shouts pre-revolution every day until the pre-revolution finally occurs and then claims to have been right all the time.

And those who perpetrate this kind of infantile politics in the name of Trotsky do the latter a great injustice. It is unfortunate that Comrade Johnson can only find time and space to quote or to paraphrase from The Death Agony of Capitalism and from Whither France. There is an interesting quotation in The First Five Years of the C.I. from a speech which Trotsky made at the Third Congress of the Comintern.

"If we grant--and let us grant it for the moment--that the working class fails to rise in revolutionary struggle, but allows the bourgeoisie the opportunity to rule the world's destiny for a long number of years, say, two or three decades, then assuredly some sort of new equilibrium will be established. Europe will be thrown violently into reverse gear. Millions of European workers will die from unemployment and malnutrition. The United States will be compelled to reorient itself on the world market, reconvert its industry, and suffer curtailment for a considerable period. (Emphasis Trotsky's-AV) Afterwards, after a new world division of labor is thus established in agony for 15 or 20 or 25 years, a new epoch of capitalist upswing might perhaps ensue.

"But this entire conception is exceedingly abstract and one-sided. Matters are pictured here as if the proletariat had ceased to struggle. Meanwhile, there cannot even be talk of this if only for the reason that the class contradictions have become aggravated in the extreme precisely during the recent years." (Emphasis Trotsky's-AV) (p. 311)

Firstly, Comrade Johnson should take notice in the above quotation of the dangerous trend toward what he calls "retrogressional thinking". This gloomy possibility was posed by Trotsky in the year 1921, shortly after the victorious revolution in Russia, and with revolutionary situations arising everywhere, in almost every major country in Europe. Is it any wonder that Trotsky halted himself with the statement "this entire concept is exceedingly abstract and one-sided. Matters are pictured here as if the proletariat had ceased to struggle."

But several decades later it turned out that the entire conception was not quite so abstract. The world situation DID "allow the bourgeoisie the opportunity to rule the world's destiny for a long number of years, say, two or three decades..." Europe WAS "thrown violently into reverse gear". Millions of European workers ARE dying from unemployment and malnutrition." And these few lines Trotsky, in a moment of shrewd foresight, included as a qualification to his report, for political amateurs who believe that events are decided by wishes.

if anything, let us not fool ourselves about the nature of the next immediate period in the development of the American economy. We are witnessing a temporary stabilization of capitalism here on the basis of the domestic market, the South American outlets which were wrested from England and from Germany and those South American markets which have been starved for American products as a result of the intensive production for war purposes. During this period, there will be only several million unemployed which for the United States does not create an economic crisis and which to the bourgeoisie and to the American economy is an accepted state of affairs necessary to a competitive labor market.

The bulk of the American working class, particularly the organized working class will have a relatively long period of steady employment during which the trade union bureaucracy will have the opportunity to stabilize itself, and uninhibited by the necessity for a social patriotic abstention from all and every form of class struggle, as was true during the war, will utilize strikes, picket lines, organizing drives and other forms to build and expand the unions.

During this brief period of stability American capitalism can make concessions to the working class--no real concessions, of course. On the other hand, capitalism will not be forced to institute counter-reforms. It will not be forced in the next few years to propose wage cuts or a longer working day.

It would be very dangerous to conclude that a brief stabilization of ^{American} capitalism means an end to class struggle activity on the part of the American workingclass. Not at all! But it does tend to effect the form and the content of all clashes between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Strikes for economic demands are a likely variant during the next few years. A general strike is not the most likely variant. It is not simply a matter of how sharp the class conflicts will be; it is a matter of their relation to the revolutionary mood of the masses.

An upswing which will be neither of great duration nor profoundly strengthening to American capitalism cannot basically check the class consciousness of the American workingclass. Previous industrial booms have checked revolutionary developments only because they expanded the horizon of capitalist growth. The events of 1939-1946 have limited the expansion of the world market so that the trend of capitalist development must, in the long run, move toward another crisis. A temporary boom under these conditions will strengthen the confidence of the American workers, unify their ranks not only in the factories but also in their strike struggles.

Favorable situations will develop for us, in the next period; but these situations will also be rather complex. We will not grow by the automatic repetition of certain slogans. The American bourgeoisie stands on ground which has been undermined by a powerful union movement; but the bourgeoisie remains strong, keenly discovers the weak spots in the strategy of the labor lieutenants who lead the unions. The bourgeoisie tacks from side to side, maneuvers and always with cold reasoning, with a vision that is not blurred by hysteria; enthusiasm on our part must also be tempered with cold reasoning.

The world remains in an objectively pre-revolutionary situation--that is, WORLD CAPITALISM IS ON THE DECLINE. It does not mechanically follow that in every country there exists the prerequisites for an immediate struggle for workers power. To raise the political level of the American workingclass to a higher level "in this arch-conservative country" as Trotsky said of England in 1931, to educate the workingclass so that it is prepared to utilize class struggle weapons of a more political and less purely economic character, that is the basic task of the next few years. And here I do not use "educate" in the Menshevik sense (to allay the fears of a few of the Old Bolsheviks among the followers of Comrade Johnson) but in the revolutionary sense--to educate the workers in the heat of the class struggle, in the midst of strikes, on picket lines, to educate them to the fact, THAT THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT REPRESENTS THE CLASS WHICH WORKERS FIGHT ON THE PICKET LINE, but which they have not yet learned to fight by class POLITICS.

When a deep and thoroughgoing crisis of American Capitalism occurs, as it undoubtedly will when this temporary boom has expanded itself, the workingclass will reply, if it learns now how to transform economic demands into political action; the workingclass will reply to the American bourgeoisie with class struggle methods which must inevitably precipitate/pre-revolutionary situation.

by John Barnes

Comrade Jones has, in his document, levelled the most serious charges against a number of comrades in the Buffalo branch.

What was posed as a political declaration deteriorated, beginning with the second paragraph, into a jumbo of garbled distortions, half-truths and outright lies, concerning not the politics but the personalities of the branch. This is evident by the fact that although the document speaks pompously of political positions, political programs and political training and integration it does not contain, does not even vaguely refer to, a single, genuine political reference other than Jones' announcement that he, as an individual, adheres to the minority position on the American and Negro questions and that he holds the majority position on these questions to be responsible for the lack of outstanding progress of the party. Even this announcement, for the sake of strict organizational and political form, is misleading. Let me assure the comrades throughout the country (the local comrades are well aware of it) that Jones has never once taken the floor to advocate on a political basis, the minority position on the aforementioned questions; has never before made the branch, assembled in formal meeting, aware of his position; was not even in attendance at the meeting wherein the American question was discussed and has not at this writing asked for a reopening of the discussion.

Assuredly, Jones is entitled to openly advocate either position, nationally or locally, at a moment's notice; although since he is a confirmed Marxist I cannot understand why he should wish to keep it a closely guarded secret in his own branch--unless it is that he fears the "bureaucracy" will have his head in reprisal.

My objection to the form in which Jones brings his position to the fore is based on the clumsy attempt to link his position to the past and present condition of the Buffalo branch. It is here that his total lack of political understanding is revealed.

Jones maintains that the "older comrades" in Buffalo were "sectarian" and "seemingly" formed a bureaucratic clique, exercising a stranglehold on the branch which did not allow the Negro (and white) workers freedom of expression and action and forced onto these workers assignments and tasks which they, the "bureaucrats", refused to accept themselves. Further, and this is perhaps the most damning accusation of all, he charges these comrades of anti-Negro prejudice. He concludes that the condition of "bureaucracy", plus the incorrectness of the majority position on the American and Negro questions and its application by the "bureaucracy" caused the virtual decomposition of the Buffalo branch, as a functioning body, from November, 1945 to March, 1946, and made it impossible to integrate new comrades and to recruit workers in significant numbers.

These are serious charges and, if true, constitute an indictment of not only the "older comrades" of the Buffalo branch but of the National Committee as well; for if the conditions that Jones describes prevailed then the national leadership, which has

been in constant contact with the branch and representatives of which have visited the branch, are either guilty of condoning and supporting a "bureaucracy", and its practices and results or of extreme negligence in allowing the condition to flourish unnoticed and unhindered. In fact, one must wonder why Jones, who is so vehement and positive, waited until now to air nationally so important an issue. Since Jones, by his own admission, has learned to apply Marxian theory in his shop, one would assume that such knowledge would lead him immediately to publish, in the internal bulletin, a statement at the first sign of bureaucratic strangulation of the branch. Or, if he preferred to oppose the "bureaucrats" without recourse to the internal bulletin one might expect him to contact the center through minority reports on various questions. Certainly, in some way, Jones, a professed revolutionary socialist, could have made known to the party the organizational and political situation which was making for the decay and sterility of so strategic a branch as Buffalo. But, with the exception of some personal communications to Comrade Coolidge, who, I am sure, will bring them into this discussion at the proper time, Jones, as far as I know, took none of these steps.

The answer to Jones' past inactivity on this issue is to be found in the true picture of conditions in the Buffalo branch during the past year, and particularly in Jones' role in the branch during this time.

In his statement Jones offers himself as a virtual outsider as regards branch leadership. The inference is that he is of the newer comrades, always in the opposition, always leading the "real" workers against the evil "bureaucrats". The truth is that Jones has been in the party almost five years and until the most recent branch election, when he declined nomination, has been on the E.C. of the branch for over a year. He had, in fact, been branch organizer for a time. In all this time on the E.C. Jones did not make a single minority report. Jones was a branch delegate at the last convention, again a delegate at the last Active Workers Conference. The "bureaucracy" shows its "power" in strange ways! Jones made no public mention of any such charges at either of these meetings.

The E.C. of the Buffalo branch has never numbered more than 3. Branch by-laws specifically state that 60% of the EC must be shop workers. While Jones was serving his terms on the EC all 3 of the EC members were working in plants; 2 in the shop, the other in the office. Who then were these non-worker elements that "seemingly" formed the "bureaucracy"?

In a branch meeting held some six months ago Jones made one attempt at formal specification. He accused the other 2 members of the EC and one rank and file comrade of constituting this "clique". What political or organizational differences did he have with these comrades? He did not (could not) mention one. He accused them only of refusing assignments and one, in particular, of anti-Negro prejudice. In his reference to assignments Jones specified LA distribution and the amount of work done on the cleaning and revamping of branch headquarters.

At this time Jones was LA director! He made all distribution assignments. In my year in the branch I heard only one comrade refuse a distribution assignment. This was the branch organizer who Jones saw fit to assign to distribution--in a branch of approximately a dozen people. The organizer refused on the basis that there were, in the branch, other comrades available for this work, but said that he would accept the assignment if Jones (who to my knowledge has never been on an L.A. distribution) would join him. Jones refused; and this is the incident he highlights. He does not mention that the organizer did indeed, later on, accompany this writer on several distributions; that the rank and file comrade he mentioned as part of the "clique" had a standing assignment for distribution each week; that the third EC member also accompanied this writer on several distributions until he went to work at the plant where the distributions took place. I repeat: never, to my knowledge, has Jones been on a distribution--even when the branch was taking 5,000 papers a week. He may explain that he could not distribute at his own shop, which is correct, but he cannot explain why he, as L.A. director could not find assignments for himself at other shops. He may answer that he is too "well known", which to my mind is not a valid claim.

The matter of clean-up and repair work on the branch headquarters is another example of distortion and exaggeration. Every comrade helped to some extent; some, naturally, did more than others. It is not worth the space to enumerate who worked what or how many coats of paint this one or that one applied--it is all below the level of even trade union bickering... Jones, however, was in no position to choose straws. He had to advance some reasons for his own behavior and attitude in the branch and in the matters of assignments and clean-up work he showed clearly the instability and worth of his arguments.

The accusation of race prejudice is something more. It cannot be taken lightly, cannot be easily explained away as a defensive stab in the dark. And it is here that Jones is guilty of the greatest lie and the most shameful deceit.

I must preface this explanation by noting that Jones, as a Negro and as a militant trade union leader of long standing, knows very well that the accusation of race prejudice, particularly in a revolutionary socialist party, is a grave matter. He should, therefore, be sure, doubly sure, of his ground before making such a statement or even casting the slightest innuendo. What is his proof? At the same branch meeting at which he made the charges of "bureaucratism" and the rest he resurrected the prejudice theme on the very same note which had been explained and disproven before: that the shop worker on the EC had, at a social, come between a Negro and a white girl comrade in an effort to separate the two. The first time this issue had arisen it had been referred to the center where Comrade Coolidge had suggested that an NC member be sent to Buffalo to hear the case and the local comrade judged wrong should be expelled. The accused readily agreed to this plan--Jones retracted his statement.

When confronted with the charge a second time, the accused comrade repeated what he had said before: he had merely "poked his head in on the conversation" and meant absolutely nothing by it but had, obviously, committed a social blunder. He then demanded that he be brought up on charges or that Jones retract the statement. Jones again declined and after much shouting implied that he was withdrawing the charge. He said he was informing Comrade Coolidge, by letter, of all the aspects of the situation but showed no desire for a trial. The comrades may judge for themselves the reason for the second retreat. If Jones states further that he was not confident of a fair trial he had best be prepared to prove the dishonesty and incompetence of the NC and Comrade Coolidge. In this latest mention of prejudice in the branch Jones takes some pains to show that it evolves because of the lack of social intercourse between the comrades. That there is room for better understanding and social relationships between all branch members, black and white, cannot be denied. But it is entirely another thing to follow through on such a conclusion by saying that because of this the Negroes have been discriminated against politically (or in any way) in branch affairs. He still cannot offer any evidence of this prejudice but feels he can make his way with it at this time because the members of the "bureaucracy" are no longer in the city, two of them having left the party entirely. The writer, however, is determined that this issue shall, once and for all, be settled, and will in the near future bring a resolution to the branch calling for the hearing of the entire case by a representative designated by the NC and asking appropriate punishment for the guilty. The party must not be allowed to suffer chauvinism, black or white.

Jones qualified his terming of the "older comrades" as a "bureaucratic clique" because of their alleged failure to observe discipline, their suppression of worker thought and their refusal to accept the experiences of the "worker-element" in conducting branch affairs. Unfortunately Jones, despite his length of time in the party, has not yet mastered the acknowledged definition of the term; a failing which the writer believes he carries through into his Marxian theory. If this is not so than Jones does not believe his own statements for he knows too much (utterly too much) of trade union politics to explain what follows: An outstanding characteristic of any bureaucrat is his unwillingness to be relieved of his post in favor of his opposition. When, at the branch meeting, Jones brought forth his claim of bureaucracy in the branch, the organizer (obviously the head of the "bureaucracy") arose and announced he was resigning his post on the EC. The writer can testify that this was not a tactical maneuver in any sense of the term. The organizer, tired of Jones' allegations and disruptionist policies and actually in the minority in the branch as regards the "politics of personalities" (a "bureaucracy" of three in a branch of about twelve) felt he was no longer able to lead the branch as it should be lead and that not having the support of the majority of the comrades realized it was to the best interests of the branch that he resign. He said just that. He had, incidentally, been unanimously elected to the EC only a few months before Jones caught in the act of voting for a "bureaucrat."

After his announcement the organizer left his chair as the head of the meeting. Jones, and others, immediately protested that he had no right to resign! Surely a queer way of ridding the branch of the "bureaucracy"! Jones then said that as the most capable man the organizer should continue to serve! he explained he thought it best for the welfare of the branch!....Imagine - an experienced trade unionist, a Marxian socialist actually insisting that the leader of a "bureaucracy" (that he bitterly "opposed") continue to serve for the welfare of the branch! Jones would not dare give such a performance at his union meeting but feels, for some unexplainable reason, that he can insult the intelligence of the party.

This brings us to Jones' actual role in the branch. As has been said, Jones has been a party member for almost five years; he has held responsible positions in the branch leadership and has represented the branch at conventions and conferences. Having been president of the branch at conventions and conferences. Having been president of the largest steel local in this area he is well aware of the responsibilities of leadership. Having been a member for so long a period he is (or must certainly should be) well aware of party procedure, party tradition, party aims. Yet, it is the opinion of the writer, as outlined above, that Jones, in the period of branch disintegration that he mentions, conducted, with the aid of the most backward elements in the branch, a policy of disruptionism based on petty, personal factionalism. Not once did he base his actions on a political plane. Not once did he specify a difference of a clearly political or organizational nature. Not once did he offer a constructive criticism or program of any kind. Now, because he aligns himself with the minority on the American and Negro questions he feels confident that he has at last found a political basis for his past actions.

This writer is also of the opinion that Jones today does not even understand the positions he proclaims himself to support and that his turning to them, in reflection of his past performance locally, is without doubt raw, crude opportunism.

It is anything but a credit to the Buffalo branch, and this pertains to each member, that Jones has been allowed to prolong his activities, along the lines described, until now. The writer hopes that the publication of the various documents connected to the affair will speed the branch into correcting the condition and strengthening the branch in a formal, straightforward manner.

TWO ERRORS - ONE OF COMMISSION AND ONE OF OMISSION

By Susan Green

I consider the majority resolution on the international question a document of realistic analysis of which a Marxist can be proud. Not only are the objective aspects so excellent. The document also turns a serious and critical eye inward, underlining the misconceptions and mistakes of the past period within the Fourth International, in such a way as to further the reconstitution of the cadres of the Fourth. All this is to the good.

The purpose of this contribution to the Internal Bulletin is not to go into my points of agreement with the majority's document, nor into the many errors of the Johnson document. I support the majority document except on two points, as indicated in the title, one of commission and one of omission.

The act of commission is the support of slogans for the CP to power.

The document itself gives the best possible reasons for not supporting such a slogan. The resolution very convincingly describes the CP's as agencies of bureaucratic collectivism, aiming to establish bureaucratic collectivism internationally; as counter-revolutionary parties whose danger for the workers lies in being anti-capitalist as well as still the symbols of 1917. The resolution also states, or at least implies, that there could not be support of the slogan of the CP to power by itself.

Can we, then, rely on the SP and the CGT to restrain the CP, so to speak? The political content of the CGT is SP and CP, so that the contest would resolve itself as between the SP and CP. There is plenty of ground for the belief that the SP would become putty in the hands of the CP - and Russia! Furthermore, the SP would serve as an excellent scapegoat on whom to blame the misdeeds of the CP itself. The idea of hedging the CP around with the SP and CGT seems very childish indeed.

Fencing the SP-CP-CGT slogan in with our democratic demands also is unrealistic. I do not argue, of course, against the demands but against the notion that they would function in time to discredit the CP. The Stalinists are no political slouches. They are politicians of infinite flexibility and unprincipledness. It is inconceivable that they would not make some show of democracy and benefits to the masses. It would take time for the gap between our demands and the CP brand to become apparent. By then the damage would have been done - at least in the sense of the CP having quietly liquidated the revolutionists and best rank and file elements.

In the majority document on the slogan itself much is made of the prediction that the CP will not take power, and would thus expose itself to the masses as a phoney. This prediction is

based on two factors. First, the CP in power would immediately herald the third world war because Stalin in France would bring him to the Atlantic and too near the sphere of the western powers. This argument holds no water. The slogan is for the immediate period. During this period - now - Stalin shows no fear of war for the simple reason that war cannot now be fought. Stalin acts on this knowledge in all his international grabs. Or does anyone think that the United States will drop a few atom bombs on Paris? Dropping atom bombs on Paris is not like dropping them on Japanese cities during the war, and especially would this be cut of the question if the CP has come to power as the result of mass demand. Why, then, is it not possible for the CP to utilize the era of peace to entrench itself wherever it can - especially by popular demand?

The second reason given by the majority in the CP-SP-CGT document that the CP will not take power is that such a move will mean civil war. Why necessarily civil war? Here the majority thinks in too straight a line, whereas the manipulations of the Stalinists are crooked and devious. Could it not be argued with equal weight - or lack of weight - that the possibility of a deal with the bourgeoisie exactly to crush civil war is not out of the question? And could not the Stalinists do this while putting into force certain anti-capitalist measures to delude the masses?

The majority resolution on the international question admits, and rightly so, our mistake in underestimating the ability of the Russian bureaucratic class both to wage war and to maintain its independent national existence. The comrades who support the SP-CP-CGT slogan today underestimate the political flexibility of the Stalinists to further their counter-revolutionary aims - and, above all, maintain their power.

My second point of criticism of the majority resolution on the international question is the omission of a section on the necessity to struggle against preparations for World War III. I, therefore, propose the following addition to the majority resolution, or something along these lines:

Necessity to Struggle Against Preparations for World War III

It is not sufficient to analyze the imperialist alignments for World War III and point to the open and concealed preparations for it by both imperialist camps. World War III must be regarded by the Fourth International as a human catastrophe to be struggled against right now while it is in preparation. To state merely, as the minority resolution does, that atomic energy has awakened in the masses the desire for world organization, has weakened capitalist society, etc., etc., is to indulge in the usual misleading generalities. One of the major tasks of all sections of the Fourth is to agitate the masses to fight for a series of anti-war demands. Depending on the country, such demands are: end conscription; no peace-time military training; bring the boys home; against military appropriations; stop manufacturing atom bombs; for workers control of food distribution and assignment; against all mass-enslaving militarism.

However, we must understand that unless this anti-war program is furthered for the international working class, it will fall upon barren soil. More particularly, the American workers are concerned with how the Russian workers react to the war program of the Kremlin. Unless they can be made to see that the iron wall of isolation that Stalinism has erected around the Russian masses can be pierced, the American workers will, willy nilly, think with the bourgeoisie in terms of national defense and of being the firstest with the mostest. The difficulty of this task must not result in our closing our eyes to it.

The CIO-Stalinists who return from Russia and write roseate reports of how democratic are the Russian unions - those police agencies of the dictatorship - must be exposed as propagandists for Russian imperialism. The task of the Fourth International is to permeate the workers with the understanding that the working classes, by common international actions, can actually prevent the annihilation of what is left of civilization in atomic warfare. The American workers must be made to see that as workers of the greatest nation on earth, their actions will be known throughout the world and carry immeasurable weight among the workers of the world. However, this is not enough. Specific measures, of whatever kind possible, must be formulated to break through to the Russian masses. Access to the Russian soldiers on occupation duty, must be utilized for what it is worth. Labor pressure to open radio and press communication with Russia must be so tremendous as to bring results.

The crux of the question is to make the American workers realize that salvation from World War III lies in their own ability to break through to the international workers, including above all the Russian workers. This idea must be hammered home when we expose the futility of the peace conferences and the United Nations, as the one alternative.