

THE NEW

March 1940

INTERNATIONAL

A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

LEON TROTSKY

Two Articles:

- 1. A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition
in the Socialist Workers Party.**
- 2. From a Scratch—To the Danger
of Gangrene.**

MAX SHACHTMAN

The Crisis in the American Party

(An Open Letter in Reply to Comrade Leon Trotsky)

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At Home

Again this month we have reason to be deeply grateful to the loyal Fourth Internationalists of South Africa. Their more than generous contributions tipped the scales favorably and assured publication of a 32-page magazine for the month of March. The bulk of these remittances came from Capetown. While we do not feel it wise to mention the names of the comrades concerned, we want to assure them through this column of our heart-felt thanks.

* * *

We regret the totally unintentional slight to Philadelphia, last month, which should have been commended for performing the all too rare feat of clearing up a large outstanding bill. Thank you, comrades. You help vindicate the American Section of the charge of failure to give full support to our theoretical organ. To Lois Lowell, Philadelphia's conscientious literature agent, who is now undergoing an operation, our appreciation for a job well done and our hopes for a speedy recovery.

* * *

Writes J. P., Syracuse, of the February issue: "Glad to see 32 pages again". G. C., of St. Paul: "I don't believe we ever got out a better issue. We have

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(Section of the Fourth International)

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Inside front cover: At Home

sent out our entire order to local Stalinists and neo-Stalinists". John Boulds, of Plentywood, Montana: "The whole N. I. is good". Joe B., Baltimore, Maryland: "The popular-

ity of the NEW INTERNATIONAL seems to be increasing here. Please send us more copies!"

* * *

The February issue, as G. C. indicated, is of particular interest to Stalinist workers, as irrefutable evidence of the unswerving loyalty of Trotskyists to the Soviet Union. There is still a limited supply of the February issue on hand, and we shall be glad to mail sample copies out free to all your Stalinist contacts, if you send us their names and addresses.

There has been an increase of reader interest in the magazine, and yet subscription orders have dropped off sharply, because of obvious slackening of branch work in this direction.

This office could be flooded with subscription orders in the space of one week, if you'd bestir yourselves. Make it an adjunct of your *Appeal* RED SUNDAYS: Drop in at a friend or contact's house after your house-to-house selling and tell him (or her) how you spent your morning. Discuss your party's literature thoroughly—and we guarantee you'll come home

proudly with a subscription order. Good luck to you! (We need it!)

* * *

Bundles, bundles—more than ever before, what about your bundle payments? Although the February issue has been out for several weeks, and a new issue is now off the press, very few bundle payments have come in. Comrades, there is little more that we can say. The comrades at the center are doing all they can to assure the appearance of the magazine each month. Now what is needed is that extra effort from the field which will guarantee an early and regular publication date. It should not be difficult at all to maintain the NEW INTERNATIONAL if each branch would pull its own weight. Let the shekels flow!

—THE MANAGEMENT

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Correction

The following footnote to the Resolution on the Soviet Union printed in the last issue of the NEW INTERNATIONAL was inadvertently omitted:

"The resolution on Finland which appeared in the *Socialist Appeal*, December 9, 1939, is to be considered as a supplement to this resolution on the Soviet Union."

Editorial Note:

This issue of the NEW INTERNATIONAL is devoted exclusively to presenting to the readers of our journal the issues which the membership of the Fourth International have been discussing internally for the past five months. Inasmuch as the discussion has revealed profound differences over the most fundamental questions, we are at this time making the debated issues public. The National Convention of the party, called to decide the disputes, will convene in New York City on April 5.

The internal discussion, which has been completely free and unlimited in accordance with the democratic tradition of our organization—all articles submitted by any member being published in the *Internal Bulletin*—has produced rich contributions of Marxist thought. We regret that restrictions of space limit this issue of the NEW INTERNATIONAL to publication of only a few of the most important articles.

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THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

VOLUME 6

MARCH 1940

NO. 2

A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the Socialist Workers Party

IT IS NECESSARY to call things by their right names. Now that the positions of both factions in the struggle have become determined with complete clearness, it must be said that the minority of the National Committee are leading a typical petty-bourgeois tendency. Like any petty-bourgeois group inside the socialist movement, the present opposition is characterized by the following features: a disdainful attitude towards theory and an inclination towards eclecticism; disrespect for the tradition of their own organization; anxiety for personal "independence" at the expense of anxiety for objective truth; nervousness instead of consistency; readiness to jump from one position to another; lack of understanding of revolutionary centralism and hostility toward it; and finally, inclination to substitute clique ties and personal relationships for party discipline. Not all the members of the opposition of course manifest these features with identical strength. Nevertheless, as always in a variegated bloc the tinge is given by those who are most distant from Marxism and proletarian policy. A prolonged and serious struggle is obviously before us. I make no attempt to exhaust the problem in this article, but I will endeavor to outline its general features.

Theoretical Skepticism and Eclecticism

In the January 1939 issue of the *New International* a long article was published by Comrades Burnham and Shachtman, "Intellectuals in Retreat." The article, while containing many correct ideas and apt political characterizations, was marred by a fundamental defect if not flaw. While polemicising against opponents who consider themselves—without sufficient reason—above all as proponents of "theory," the article deliberately did not elevate the problem to a theoretical height. It was absolutely necessary to explain why the American "radical" intellectuals accept Marxism without the dialectic (a clock without a spring). The secret is simple. In no other country has there been such rejection of the class struggle as in the land of "unlimited opportunity." The denial of social contradictions as the moving force of development led to the denial of the dialectic as the logic of contradictions in the domain of theoretical thought. Just as in the sphere of politics it was thought possible everybody could be convinced of the correctness of a "just" program by means of clever syllogisms and society could be reconstructed through "rational" measures, so in the sphere of theory it was accepted as proved

that Aristotelian logic, lowered to the level of "common sense" was sufficient for the solution of all questions.

Pragmatism, a mixture of rationalism and empiricism, became the national philosophy of the United States. The theoretical methodology of Max Eastman is not fundamentally different from the methodology of Henry Ford—both regard living society from the point of view of an "engineer" (Eastman—Platonically). Historically the present disdainful attitude toward the dialectic is explained simply by the fact that the grandfathers and great-grandmothers of Max Eastman and others did not need the dialectic in order to conquer territory and enrich themselves. But times have changed and the philosophy of pragmatism has entered a period of bankruptcy just as has American capitalism.

The authors of the article did not show, could not and did not care to show, this internal connection between philosophy and the material development of society, and they frankly explained why.

"The two authors of the present article," they wrote of themselves, "differ thoroughly on their estimate of the general theory of dialectical materialism, one of them accepting it and the other rejecting it . . . There is nothing anomalous in such a situation. Though theory is doubtless always in one way or another related to practise, the relation is not invariably direct or immediate; and as we have before had occasion to remark, human beings often act inconsistently. From the point of view of each of the authors there is in the other a certain such inconsistency between 'philosophical theory' and political practise, which might on some occasion lead to decisive concrete political disagreement. But it does not now, nor has anyone yet demonstrated that agreement or disagreement on the more abstract doctrines of dialectical materialism necessarily affects today's and tomorrow's concrete political issues—and political parties, programs and struggles are based on such concrete issues. We all may hope that as we go along or when there is more leisure, agreement may also be reached on the more abstract questions. Meanwhile there is fascism and war and unemployment."

What is the meaning of this thoroughly astonishing reasoning? Inasmuch as *some* people through a bad method *sometimes* reach correct conclusions, and inasmuch as some people through a correct method *not infrequently* reach incorrect conclusions, therefore . . . the method is not of great importance. We shall meditate upon methods sometime when we have more leisure, but now we have other things

to do. Imagine how a worker would react upon complaining to his foreman that his tools were bad and receiving the reply: with bad tools it is possible to turn out a good job, and with good tools many people only waste material. I am afraid that such a worker, particularly if he is on piece-work, would respond to the foreman with an un-academic phrase. A worker is faced with refractory materials which show resistance and which because of that compel him to appreciate fine tools, whereas a petty-bourgeois intellectual—alas!—utilizes as his “tools” fugitive observations and superficial generalizations—until major events club him on the head.

To demand that every party member occupy himself with the philosophy of dialectics naturally would be lifeless pedantry. But a worker who has gone through the school of the class struggle gains from his own experience an inclination towards dialectical thinking. Even if unaware of this term, he readily accepts the method itself and its conclusions. With a petty-bourgeois it is worse. There are of course petty-bourgeois elements organically linked with the workers, who go over to the proletarian point of view without an internal revolution. But these constitute an insignificant minority. The matter is quite different with the academically trained petty-bourgeoisie. Their theoretical prejudices have already been given finished form at the school bench. Inasmuch as they succeeded in gaining a great deal of knowledge both useful and useless without the aid of the dialectic, they believe that they can continue excellently through life without it. In reality they dispense with the dialectic only to the extent they fail to check, to polish, and to sharpen theoretically their tools of thought, and to the extent that they fail to break practically from the narrow circle of their daily relationships. When thrown against great events they are easily lost and relapse again into petty-bourgeois ways of thinking.

Appealing to “inconsistency” as justification for an unprincipled theoretical bloc, signifies giving oneself bad credentials as a Marxist. Inconsistency is not accidental, and in politics it does not appear solely as an individual symptom. Inconsistency usually serves a social function. There are social groupings which cannot be consistent. Petty-bourgeois elements who have not rid themselves of hoary petty-bourgeois tendencies are systematically compelled within a workers’ party to make theoretical compromises with their own conscience.

Comrade Shachtman’s attitude toward the dialectic method, as manifested in the above-quoted argumentation, cannot be called anything but eclectic skepticism. It is clear that Shachtman became infected with this attitude not in the school of Marx but among the petty-bourgeois intellectuals to whom all forms of skepticism are proper.

Warning and Verification

The article astonished me to such an extent that I immediately wrote to Comrade Shachtman: “I have just read the article you and Burnham wrote on the intellectuals. Many parts are excellent. However, the section on the dialectic is the greatest blow that you, personally, as the editor of the *New International*, could have delivered to Marxist theory. Comrade Burnham says: ‘I don’t recognize the dialectic.’ It is clear and everybody has to acknowledge it.

But you say: ‘I recognize the dialectic, but no matter; it does not have the slightest importance.’ Re-read what you wrote. This section is terribly misleading for the readers of the *New International* and the best of gifts to the Eastmans of all kinds. Good! We will speak about it publicly.”

My letter was written January 20, some months before the present discussion. Shachtman did not reply until March 5, when he answered in effect that he couldn’t understand why I was making such a stir about the matter. On March 9 I answered Shachtman in the following words: “I did not reject in the slightest degree the possibility of collaboration with the anti-dialecticians, but only the advisability of writing an article together where the question of the dialectic plays, or should play, a very important role. The polemic develops on two planes: political and theoretical. Your political criticism is OK. Your theoretical criticism is insufficient; it stops at the point at which it should just become aggressive. Namely, the task consists of showing that their mistakes (insofar as they are *theoretical* mistakes) are products of their incapacity and unwillingness to think the things through dialectically. This task could be accomplished with a very serious pedagogical success. Instead of this you declare that dialectics is a private matter and that one can be a very good fellow without dialectic thinking.” By allying himself in *this* question with the anti-dialectician Burnham, Shachtman deprived himself of the possibility of showing why Eastman, Hook and many others began with a philosophical struggle against the dialectic but finished with a political struggle against the socialist revolution. That is, however, the essence of the question.

The present political discussion in the party has confirmed my apprehensions and warning in an incomparably sharper form than I could have expected, or, more correctly, feared. Shachtman’s methodological skepticism bore its deplorable fruits in the question of the nature of the Soviet state. Burnham began some time ago by constructing purely empirically, on the basis of his immediate impressions, a non-proletarian and non-bourgeois state, liquidating in passing the Marxist theory of the state as the organ of class rule. Shachtman unexpectedly took an evasive position: “The question, you see, is subject to further consideration;” moreover, the sociological definition of the U.S.S.R. does not possess any direct and immediate significance for our “political tasks” in which Shachtman agrees completely with Burnham. Let the reader again refer to what these comrades wrote concerning the dialectic. Burnham rejects the dialectic. Shachtman seems to accept, but . . . the divine gift of “inconsistency” permits them to meet on common political conclusions. *The attitude of each of them towards the nature of the Soviet state reproduces point for point their attitude towards the dialectic.*

In both cases Burnham takes the leading role. This is not surprising: he *possesses* a method — pragmatism. Shachtman has no method. He adapts himself to Burnham. Without assuming complete responsibility for the anti-Marxian conceptions of Burnham, he defends his bloc of aggression against the Marxian conceptions with Burnham in the sphere of philosophy as well as in the sphere of sociology. In both cases Burnham appears as a pragmatist and Shachtman as an eclectic. This example has this invaluable

able advantage that the complete parallelism between Burnham's and Shachtman's positions upon two different planes of thought and upon two questions of primary importance, will strike the eyes even of comrades who have had no experience in purely theoretical thinking. The method of thought can be dialectic or vulgar, conscious or unconscious, but it exists and makes itself known.

Last January we heard from our authors: "But it does not now, nor has anyone yet demonstrated that agreement on the more abstract doctrines of dialectical materialism necessarily affects today's and tomorrow's concrete political issues. . . ." Nor has anyone yet demonstrated! Not more than a few months passed before Burnham and Shachtman themselves demonstrated that their attitude toward such an "abstraction" as dialectical materialism found its precise manifestation in their attitude toward the Soviet state.

To be sure it is necessary to mention that the difference between the two instances is rather important, but it is of a political and not a theoretical character. In both cases Burnham and Shachtman formed a bloc on the basis of rejection and semi-rejection of the dialectic. But in the first instance that bloc was directed against the opponents of the proletarian party. In the second instance the bloc was concluded against the Marxist wing of their own party. The front of military operations, so to speak, has changed but the weapon remains the same.

True enough, people are often inconsistent. Human consciousness nevertheless tends toward a certain homogeneity. Philosophy and logic are compelled to rely upon this homogeneity of human consciousness and not upon what this homogeneity lacks, that is, inconsistency. Burnham does not recognize the dialectic, but the dialectic recognizes Burnham, that is, extends its sway over him. Shachtman thinks that the dialectic has no importance in political conclusions, but in the political conclusions of Shachtman himself we see the deplorable fruits of his disdainful attitude toward the dialectic. We should include this example in the textbooks on dialectical materialism.

Last year I was visited by a young British professor of political economy, a sympathizer of the Fourth International. During our conversation on the ways and means of realizing socialism, he suddenly expressed the tendencies of British utilitarianism in the spirit of Keynes and others: "It is necessary to determine a clear economic end, to choose the most reasonable means for its realization," etc. I remarked: "I see that you are an adversary of dialectics." He replied, somewhat astonished: "Yes, I don't see any use in it." "However," I replied to him, "the dialectic enabled me on the basis of a few of your observations upon economic problems to determine what category of philosophical thought you belong to—this alone shows that there is an appreciable value in the dialectic." Although I have received no word about my visitor since then, I have no doubt that this anti-dialectic professor maintains the opinion that the U.S.S.R. is not a workers' state, that unconditional defense of the U.S.S.R. is an "out-moded" opinion, that our organizational methods are bad, etc. If it is possible to place a given person's general type of thought on the basis of his relation to concrete practical problems, it is also possible to predict approximately, knowing his general type of thought, how a given individual will approach one

or another practical question. That is the incomparable educational value of the dialectical method of thought.

The ABC of Materialist Dialectics

Gangrenous skeptics like Souvarine believe that "nobody knows" what the dialectic is. And there are "Marxists" who kowtow reverently before Souvarine and hope to learn something from him. And these Marxists hide not only in the *Modern Monthly*. Unfortunately a current of Souvarinism exists in the present opposition of the S.W.P. And here it is necessary to warn young comrades: beware of this malignant infection!

The dialectic is neither fiction nor mysticism, but a science of the forms of our thinking insofar as it is not limited to the daily problems of life but attempts to arrive at an understanding of more complicated and drawn-out processes. The dialectic and formal logic bear a relationship similar to that between higher and lower mathematics.

I will here attempt to sketch the substance of the problem in a very concise form. The Aristotelian logic of the simple syllogism starts from the proposition that "A" is equal to "A." This postulate is accepted as an axiom for a multitude of practical human actions and elementary generalizations. But in reality "A" is not equal to "A." This is easy to prove if we observe these two letters under a lens—they are quite different from each other. But, one can object, the question is not of the size or the form of the letters, since they are only symbols for equal quantities, for instance a pound of sugar. The objection is beside the point; in reality a pound of sugar is never equal to a pound of sugar—a more delicate scale always discloses a difference. Again one can object: but a pound of sugar is equal to itself. Neither is this true—all bodies change uninterruptedly in size, weight, color, etc. They are never equal to themselves. A sophist will respond that a pound of sugar is equal to itself "at any given moment." Aside from the extremely dubious practical value of this "axiom," it does not withstand theoretical criticism either. How should we really conceive the word "moment"? If it is an infinitesimal interval of time, then a pound of sugar is subjected during the course of that "moment" to inevitable changes. Or is the "moment" a purely mathematical abstraction, that is, a zero of time? But everything exists in time; and existence itself is an uninterrupted process of transformation; time is consequently a fundamental element of existence. Thus the axiom that "A" is equal to "A" signifies that a thing is equal to itself if it does not change, that is, if it does not exist.

At first glance it could seem that these "subtleties" are useless. In reality they are of decisive significance. The axiom "A" is equal to "A," appears on one hand to be the point of departure for all our knowledge, on the other hand the point of departure for all the errors in our knowledge. To make use of the axiom, "A" is equal to "A" with impunity is possible only within certain *limits*. When quantitative changes in "A" are negligible for the task at hand then we can presume that "A" is equal to "A." This is, for example, the manner in which a buyer and a seller consider a pound of sugar. We consider the temperature of the sun likewise. Until recently we considered the buying power of the dollar in the same way. But quantitative changes beyond certain limits

become converted into qualitative. A pound of sugar subjected to the action of water or kerosene ceases to be a pound of sugar. A dollar in the embrace of a president ceases to be a dollar. To determine at the right moment the critical point where quantity changes into quality is one of the most important and difficult tasks in all the spheres of knowledge including sociology.

Every worker knows that it is impossible to make two completely equal objects. In the elaboration of bearing-brass into cone bearings, a certain deviation is allowed for the cones which should not, however, go beyond certain limits (this is called tolerance). By observing the norms of tolerance, the cones are considered as being equal. ("A" is equal to "A"). When the tolerance is exceeded the quantity goes over into quality; in other words, the cone bearings become inferior or completely worthless.

Our scientific thinking is only a part of our general practice including techniques. For concepts there also exists "tolerance" which is established not by formal logic issuing from the axiom, "A" is equal to "A," but by dialectical logic issuing from the axiom that everything is always changing. "Common sense" is characterized by the fact that it systematically exceeds dialectical "tolerance."

Vulgar thought operates with such concepts as capitalism, morals, freedom, workers' state, etc. as fixed abstractions, presuming that capitalism is equal to capitalism, morals are equal to morals, etc. Dialectical thinking analyzes all things and phenomena in their continuous change, while determining in the material conditions of those changes that critical limit beyond which "A" ceases to be "A," a workers' state ceases to be a workers' state.

The fundamental flaw of vulgar thought lies in the fact that it wishes to content itself with motionless imprints of a reality which consists of eternal motion. Dialectic thinking gives to concepts, by means of closer approximations, corrections, concretizations, a richness of content and flexibility; I would even say a succulence which to a certain extent brings them close to living phenomena. Not capitalism in general, but a given capitalism at a given stage of development. Not a workers' state in general but a given workers' state in a backward country in an imperialist encirclement, etc.

Dialectic thinking is related to vulgar thinking in the same way that a motion picture is related to a still photograph. The motion picture does not outlaw the still photograph but combines a series of them according to the laws of motion. Dialectics does not deny the syllogism, but teaches us to combine syllogisms in such a way as to bring our understanding closer to the eternally changing reality. Hegel in his *Logic* established a series of laws: change of quantity into quality, development through contradictions, conflict of content and form, interruption of continuity, change of possibility into inevitability, etc., which are just as important for theoretical thought as is the simple syllogism for more elementary tasks.

Hegel wrote before Darwin and before Marx. Thanks to the powerful impulse given to thought by the French Revolution, Hegel anticipated the general movement of science. But because it was only an *anticipation*, although by a genius, it received from Hegel an idealistic character. Hegel operated with ideological shadows as the ultimate reality.

Marx demonstrated that the movement of these ideological shadows reflected nothing but the movement of material bodies.

We call our dialectic materialist, since its roots are neither in heaven nor in the depths of our "free will," but in objective reality, in nature. Consciousness grew out of the unconscious, psychology out of physiology, the organic world out of the inorganic, the solar system out of nebulae. On all the rungs of this ladder of development, the quantitative changes were transformed into qualitative. Our thought, including dialectical thought, is only one of the forms of the expression of changing matter. There is place within this system for neither God, nor Devil, nor immortal soul, nor eternal norms of laws and morals. The dialectic of thinking, having grown out of the dialectic of nature, possesses consequently a thoroughly materialist character.

Darwinism, which explained the evolution of species through quantitative transformations passing into qualitative, was the highest triumph of the dialectic in the whole field of organic matter. Another great triumph was the discovery of the table of atomic weights of chemical elements and further the transformation of one element into another.

With these transformations (species, elements, etc.) is closely linked the question of classification, equally important in the natural as in the social sciences. Linnaeus' system (18th century) utilizing as its starting point the immutability of species, was limited to the description and classification of plants according to their external characteristics. The infantile period of botany is analogous to the infantile period of logic, since the forms of our thought develop like everything that lives. Only decisive repudiation of the idea of fixed species, only the study of the history of the evolution of plants and their anatomy prepared the basis for a really scientific classification.

Marx, who in distinction from Darwin was a conscious dialectician, discovered a basis for the scientific classification of human societies in the development of their productive forces and the structure of the relations of ownership which constitute the anatomy of society. Marxism substituted for the vulgar descriptive classification of societies and states, which even up to now still flourishes in the universities, a materialistic dialectical classification. Only through using the method of Marx is it possible correctly to determine both the concept of a workers' state and the moment of its downfall.

All this as we see, contains nothing "metaphysical" or "scholastic," as conceited ignorance affirms. Dialectic logic expresses the laws of motion in contemporary scientific thought. The struggle against materialist dialectics on the contrary expresses a distant past, conservatism of the petty-bourgeoisie, the self-conceit of university routinists and . . . a spark of hope for an after-life.

The Nature of the U.S.S.R.

The definition of the U.S.S.R. given by Comrade Burnham, "not a workers' and not a bourgeois state," is purely negative, wrenched from the chain of historical development, left dangling in mid-air, void of a single particle of sociology and represents simply a theoretical capitulation of pragmatism before a *contradictory* historical phenomenon.

If Burnham were a dialectical materialist, he would have

probed the following three questions: (1) What is the historical origin of the U.S.S.R.? (2) What changes has this state suffered during its existence? (3) Did these changes pass from the quantitative stage to the qualitative? that is, did they create an historically necessary domination by a new exploiting class? Answering these questions would have forced Burnham to draw the only possible conclusion—the U.S.S.R. is still a degenerated workers' state.

The dialectic is not a magic master key for all questions. It does not replace concrete scientific analysis. But it directs this analysis along the correct road, securing it against sterile wanderings in the desert of subjectivism and scholasticism.

Bruno R. places both the Soviet and fascist regimes under the category of "bureaucratic collectivism," because the U.S.S.R., Italy, and Germany are all ruled by bureaucracies; here and there are the principles of planning; in one case private property is liquidated, in another limited, etc. Thus on the basis of the *relative* similarity of *certain* external characteristics of *different* origin, of *different* specific weight, of *different* class significance, a fundamental *identity* of social regimes is constructed, completely in the spirit of bourgeois professors who construct categories of "controlled economy," "centralized state," without taking into consideration whatsoever the class nature of one or the other. Bruno R. and his followers, or semi-followers like Burnham, at best remain in the sphere of social classification on the level of Linnæus in whose justification it should be remarked however that he lived before Hegel, Darwin, and Marx.

Even worse and more dangerous, perhaps, are those eclectics who express the idea that the class character of the Soviet state "does not matter," and that the direction of our policy is determined by "the character of the war." As if the war were an independent super-social substance; as if the character of the war were not determined by the character of the ruling class, that is, by the same social factor that also determines the character of the state. Astonishing how easily some comrades forget the ABC's of Marxism under the blows of events!

It is not surprising that the theoreticians of the opposition who reject dialectic thought capitulate lamentably before the contradictory nature of the U.S.S.R. However the contradiction between the social basis laid down by the revolution, and the character of the caste which arose out of the degeneration of the revolution is not only an irrefutable historical fact but also a motor force. In our struggle for the overthrow of the bureaucracy we base ourselves on this contradiction. Meanwhile some ultra-lefts have already reached the ultimate absurdity by affirming that it is necessary to sacrifice the social structure of the U.S.S.R. in order to overthrow the Bonapartist oligarchy! They have no suspicion that the U.S.S.R. minus the social structure founded by the October revolution would be a fascist regime.

Evolution and Dialectics

Comrade Burnham will probably protest that as an evolutionist he is interested in the development of society and state forms not less than we dialecticians. We will not dispute this. Every educated person since Darwin has labeled himself an "evolutionist." But a real evolutionist must apply

the idea of evolution to his own forms of thinking. Elementary logic, founded in the period when the idea of evolution itself did not yet exist, is evidently insufficient for the analysis of evolutionary processes. Hegel's logic is the logic of evolution. Only one must not forget that the concept of "evolution" itself has been completely corrupted and emasculated by university professors and liberal writers to mean peaceful "progress." Whoever has come to understand that evolution proceeds through the struggle of antagonistic forces; that a slow accumulation of changes at a certain moment explodes the old shell and brings about a catastrophe, revolution; whoever has learned finally to apply the general laws of evolution to thinking itself, he is a dialectician, as distinguished from vulgar evolutionists. Dialectic training of the mind, as necessary to a revolutionary fighter as finger exercises to a pianist, demands approaching all problems as *processes* and not as *motionless categories*. Whereas vulgar evolutionists, who limit themselves generally to recognizing evolution in only certain spheres, content themselves in all other questions with the banalities of "common sense."

The American liberal, who has reconciled himself to the existence of the U.S.S.R., more precisely to the Moscow bureaucracy, believes, or at least believed until the Soviet-German pact, that the Soviet regime on the whole is a "progressive thing," that the repugnant features of the bureaucracy ("well naturally they exist!") will progressively slough away and that peaceful and painless "progress" is thus assured.

A vulgar petty-bourgeois radical is similar to a liberal "progressive" in that he takes the U.S.S.R. as a whole, failing to understand its internal contradictions and dynamics. When Stalin concluded an alliance with Hitler, invaded Poland, and now Finland, the vulgar radicals triumphed; the identity of the methods of Stalinism and fascism was proved! They found themselves in difficulties however when the new authorities invited the population to expropriate the landowners and capitalists—they had not foreseen this possibility at all! Meanwhile the social revolutionary measures, carried out via bureaucratic military means, not only did not disturb *our*, dialectic, definition of the U.S.S.R. as a degenerated workers' state, but gave it the most incontrovertible corroboration. Instead of utilizing this triumph of Marxian analysis for persevering agitation, the petty-bourgeois oppositionists began to shout with criminal light-mindedness that the events have refuted our prognosis, that our old formulas are no longer applicable, that new words are necessary. What words? They haven't decided yet themselves.

Defense of the U.S.S.R.

We began with philosophy and then went to sociology. It became clear that in both spheres, of the two leading personalities of the opposition, one had taken an anti-Marxian, the other an eclectic position. If we now consider politics, particularly the question of the defense of the U.S.S.R., we will find that just as great surprises await us.

The opposition discovered that our formula of "unconditional defense of the U.S.S.R.," the formula of our program, is "vague, abstract, and outmoded (!?)." Unfortunately they do not explain under what future "condi-

tions" they are ready to defend the conquests of the revolution. In order to give at least an ounce of sense to their new formula, the opposition attempts to represent the matter as if up to now we had "unconditionally" defended the international policy of the Kremlin government with its Red Army and G.P.U. Everything is turned upside down! In reality for a long time we have not defended the Kremlin's international policy, not even conditionally, particularly since the time that we openly proclaimed the necessity of crushing the Kremlin oligarchy through insurrection! A wrong policy not only mutilates the current tasks but also compels one to represent his own past in a false light.

In the above-quoted article in the *New International*, Burnham and Shachtman cleverly labeled the group of disillusioned intellectuals "The League of Abandoned Hopes," and persistently asked what would be the position of this deplorable League in case of military conflict between a capitalistic country and the Soviet Union. "We take this occasion, therefore," they wrote, "to demand from Hook, Eastman and Lyons *unambiguous* declarations on the question of defense of the Soviet Union from attack by Hitler or Japan—or for that matter by England. . . ." Burnham and Shachtman did not lay down any "conditions," they did not specify any "concrete" circumstances, and at the same time they demanded an "unambiguous" reply. ". . . Would the League (of Abandoned Hopes) also refrain from taking a position or would it declare itself neutral?" they continued; "In a word, is it for the defense of the Soviet Union from imperialist attack, *regardless and in spite of the Stalinist regime?*" (My emphasis). A quotation to marvel at! And this is exactly what our program declares. Burnham and Shachtman in January 1939 stood in favor of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union and defined the significance of unconditional defense entirely correctly as "regardless and in spite of the Stalinist regime." And yet this article was written when the experience of the Spanish revolution had already been drained to completion. Comrade Cannon is absolutely right when he says that the role of Stalinism in Spain was incomparably more criminal than in Poland or Finland. In the first case the bureaucracy through hangman's methods strangled a socialist revolution. In the second case it gives an impulse to the socialist revolution through bureaucratic methods. Why did Burnham and Shachtman themselves so unexpectedly shift to the position of the "League of Abandoned Hopes"? Why? We cannot consider Shachtman's super-abstract references to the "concreteness of events" as an explanation. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to find an explanation. The Kremlin's participation in the Republican camp in Spain was supported by the bourgeois democrats all over the world. Stalin's work in Poland and Finland is met with frantic condemnation from the same democrats. In spite of all its noisy formulas the opposition happens to be a reflection inside the Socialist Workers Party of the moods of the "left" petty-bourgeoisie. This fact unfortunately is incontrovertible.

"Our subjects," wrote Burnham and Shachtman about the League of Abandoned Hopes, "take great pride in believing that they are contributing something 'fresh', that they are 're-evaluating in the light of new experiences', that they are 'not dogmatists' ('conservatives')?—L.T.) who refuse to re-examine their 'basic assumption', etc. What a

pathetic self-deception! None of them has brought to light any new facts, given any new understanding of the present or future." Astonishing quotation! Should we not add a new chapter to their article, "Intellectuals in Retreat"? I offer Comrade Shachtman my collaboration. . . .

How is it possible that outstanding individuals like Burnham and Shachtman, unconditionally devoted to the cause of the proletariat, could become so frightened of the not so frightening gentlemen of the League of Abandoned Hopes! On the purely theoretical plane the explanation in respect to Burnham rests in his incorrect method, in respect to Shachtman in his disregard for method. Correct method not only facilitates the attainment of a correct conclusion, but, connecting every new conclusion with the preceding conclusions in a consecutive chain, fixes the conclusions in one's memory. If political conclusions are made empirically, if inconsistency is proclaimed as a kind of advantage, then the Marxian system of politics is invariably replaced by impressionism—in so many ways characteristic of petty-bourgeois intellectuals. Every new turn of events catches the empiricist-impressionist unawares, compels him to forget what he himself wrote yesterday, and produces a consuming desire for new formulas before new ideas have appeared in his head.

The Soviet-Finnish War

The resolution of the opposition upon the question of the Soviet-Finnish war is a document which could be signed, perhaps with slight changes, by the Bordigists, Vereecken, Sneevliet, Fenner Brockway, Marceau Pivert and the like, but in no case by Bolsheviki-Leninists. Based exclusively on features of the Soviet bureaucracy and on the mere fact of the "invasion" the resolution is void of the slightest social content. It places Finland and the U.S.S.R. on the same level and unequivocally "condemns, rejects and opposes *both* governments and their armies." Having noticed, however, that something was not in order, the resolution unexpectedly and without any connection with the text adds: "In the application (!) of this perspective, the Fourth International will, of course, (how marvelous is this "of course") take into account (!) the differing economic relations in Finland and Russia." Every word is a pearl. By "concrete" circumstances our lovers of the "concrete" mean the military situation, the moods of the masses and in the third place the opposed economic regimes. As to just how these three "concrete" circumstances will be "taken into account," the resolution doesn't give the slightest inkling. If the opposition opposes equally "both governments and their armies" in relation to this war, how will it "take into account" the differences in the military situation and the social regimes? Definitely nothing of this is comprehensible.

In order to punish the Stalinists for their unquestionable crimes, the resolution, following the petty-bourgeois democrats of all shadings, does not mention by so much as a word that the Red Army in Finland expropriates large landowners and introduces workers' control while preparing for the expropriation of the capitalists.

Tomorrow the Stalinists will strangle the Finnish workers. But now they are giving—they are compelled to give—a tremendous impulse to the class struggle in its sharpest form. The leaders of the opposition construct their policy

not upon the "concrete" process that is taking place in Finland, but upon democratic abstractions and noble sentiments.

The Soviet-Finnish war is apparently beginning to be supplemented by a civil war in which the Red Army finds itself at the given stage in the same camp as the Finnish petty peasants and the workers, while the Finnish army enjoys the support of the owning classes, the conservative labor bureaucracy and the Anglo-Saxon imperialists. The hopes which the Red Army awakens among the Finnish poor will, unless international revolution intervenes, prove to be an illusion; the collaboration of the Red Army with the poor will only be temporary; the Kremlin will soon turn its weapons against the Finnish workers and peasants. We know all this now and we say it openly as a warning. But in this "concrete" civil war that is taking place on Finnish territory, what "concrete" position must the "concrete" partisans of the Fourth International take? If they fought in Spain in the Republican camp in spite of the fact that the Stalinists were strangling the socialist revolution, all the more must they participate in Finland in that camp where the Stalinists are compelled to support the expropriation of the capitalists.

Our innovators cover the holes in their position with violent phrases. They label the policy of the U.S.S.R. "imperialist." Vast enrichment of the sciences! Beginning from now on both the foreign policy of finance-capital and the policy of exterminating finance-capital will be called imperialism. This will help significantly in the clarification and class education of the workers! But simultaneously—will shout the, let us say, very hasty Stanley—the Kremlin supports the policy of finance-capital in Germany! This objection is based on the substitution of one problem for another, in the dissolving of the concrete into the abstract (the usual mistake of vulgar thought).

If Hitler tomorrow were forced to send arms to the insurrectionary Indians, must the revolutionary German workers oppose this concrete action by strikes or sabotage? On the contrary they must make sure that the insurrectionists receive the arms as soon as possible. We hope that *this* is clear to Stanley. But this example is purely hypothetical. We used it in order to show that even a fascist government of finance-capital can under certain conditions be forced to support a *national* revolutionary movement (in order to attempt to strangle it the next day). Hitler would never under any circumstances support a proletarian revolution for instance in France. As for the Kremlin it is at the present time forced—and this is not a hypothetical but a real situation—to provoke a social revolutionary movement in Finland (in order to attempt to strangle it politically tomorrow). To cover a given social revolutionary movement with the all-embracing term of imperialism only because it is provoked, mutilated, and at the same time strangled by the Kremlin merely testifies to one's theoretical and political poverty.

It is necessary to add that the stretching of the concept of "imperialism" lacks even the attraction of novelty. At present not only the "democrats" but also the bourgeoisie of the democratic countries describe Soviet policy as imperialist. The aim of the bourgeoisie is transparent—to erase the social contradictions between capitalistic and soviet expansion, to hide the problem of property, and in this way to

help genuine imperialism. What is the aim of Shachtman and the others? They don't know themselves. Their terminological novelty objectively leads them away from the Marxian terminology of the Fourth International and brings them close to the terminology of the "democrats." This circumstance, alas, again testifies to the opposition's extreme sensitivity to the pressure of petty-bourgeois public opinion.

"The Organizational Question"

From the ranks of the opposition one begins to hear more frequently: "The Russian question isn't of any decisive importance in and of itself; the most important task is to change the party regime." Change in regime, it is necessary to understand, means a change in leadership, or more precisely, the elimination of Cannon and his close collaborators from directing posts. These clamorous voices demonstrate that the tendency towards a struggle against "Cannon's faction" preceded that "concreteness of events" to which Shachtman and others refer in explaining their change of position. At the same time these voices remind us of a whole series of past oppositional groups who took up a struggle on different occasions; and who, when the principled basis began to crumble under their feet, shifted to the so-called "organizational question"—the case was identical with Molinier, Sneevliet, Vereecken, and many others. As disagreeable as these precedents may appear, it is impossible to pass over them.

It would be incorrect, however, to believe that the shifting of the struggle to the "organizational question" represents a simple "maneuver" in the factional struggle. No, the inner feelings of the opposition tell them, in truth, however confusedly, that the issue concerns not only the "Russian problem" but rather the entire approach to political problems in general, including also the methods of building the party. And this is in a certain sense correct.

We too have attempted above to prove that the issue concerns not only the Russian problem but even more the opposition's method of thought, which has its social roots. The opposition is under the sway of petty-bourgeois moods and tendencies. This is the essence of the whole matter.

We saw quite clearly the ideological influence of another class in the instances of Burnham (pragmatism) and Shachtman (eclecticism). We did not take into consideration other leaders such as Comrade Abern because he generally does not participate in principled discussions, limiting himself to the plane of the "organizational question." This does not mean, however, that Abern has no importance. On the contrary, it is possible to say that Burnham and Shachtman are the amateurs of the opposition, while Abern is the unquestionable professional. Abern, and only he, has his own traditional group which grew out of the old Communist Party and became bound together during the first period of the independent existence of the "Left Opposition." All the others who hold various reasons for criticism and discontent cling to this group.

Any serious factional fight in a party is always in the final analysis a reflection of the class struggle. The Majority faction established from the beginning the ideological dependence of the opposition upon petty-bourgeois democracy. The opposition, on the contrary, precisely because of

its petty-bourgeois character, does not even attempt to look for the social roots of the hostile camp.

The opposition opened up a severe factional fight which is now paralyzing the party at a very critical moment. That such a fight could be justified and not pitilessly condemned, very serious and deep foundations would be necessary. For a Marxist such foundations can have only a *class* character. Before they began their bitter struggle, the leaders of the opposition were obligated to ask themselves this question: What non-proletarian class influence is reflected in the Majority of the National Committee? Nevertheless, the opposition have not made the slightest attempt at such a class evaluation of the divergences. They see only "conservatism," "errors," "bad methods," and similar psychological intellectual, and technical deficiencies. The opposition are not interested in the class nature of the opposition faction; just as they are not interested in the class nature of the U.S.S.R. This fact alone is sufficient to demonstrate the petty-bourgeois character of the opposition, with its tinge of academic pedantry and journalistic impressionism.

In order to understand what class or strata are reflected in the factional fight, it is necessary to study the fight of both factions historically. Those members of the opposition who affirm that the present fight has "nothing in common" with the old factional struggles, demonstrate once again their superficial attitude toward the life of their own party. The fundamental core of the opposition is the same which three years ago grouped itself around Muste and Spector. The fundamental core of the Majority is the same which grouped itself around Cannon. Of the leading figures only Shachtman and Burnham have shifted from one camp to the other. But these personal shifts, important though they might be, do not change the general character of the two groups. I will not go into the historical sequence of the faction fight, referring the reader to the in every respect excellent article by Joseph Hansen, "Organizational Methods and Political Principles."

If we subtract everything accidental, personal, and epistemic, if we reduce the present groupings in struggle to their fundamental political types, then indubitably the struggle of Comrade Abern against Comrade Cannon has been the most consistent. In this struggle Abern represents a propagandistic group, petty-bourgeois in its social composition, united by old personal ties and having almost the character of a family. Cannon represents the proletarian party in process of formation. The historical right in this struggle—independent of what errors and mistakes might have been made—rests wholly on the side of Cannon.

When the representatives of the opposition raised the hue and cry that the "leadership is bankrupt," "the prognoses did not turn out to be correct," "the events caught us unawares," "it is necessary to change our slogans," all this without the slightest effort to think the questions through seriously, they appeared fundamentally as party defeatists. This deplorable attitude is explained by the irritation and fright of the old propagandistic circle before the new tasks and the new party relations. The sentimentality of personal ties does not want to yield to the sense of duty and discipline. The task that stands before the party is to break up the old clique ties and to dissolve the best elements of the

propagandistic past in the proletarian party. It is necessary to develop such a spirit of party patriotism that nobody dare say: "The reality of the matter is not the Russian question but that we feel more easy and comfortable under Abern's leadership than under Cannon's."

I personally did not arrive at this conclusion yesterday. I happened to have expressed it tens and hundreds of times in conversations with members of Abern's group. I invariably emphasized the petty-bourgeois composition of this group. I insistently and repeatedly proposed to transfer from membership to candidacy such petty-bourgeois fellow-travellers as proved incapable of recruiting workers for the party. Private letters, conversations, and admonitions as has been shown by subsequent events have not led to anything—people rarely learn from someone else's experience. The antagonism between the two party layers and the two periods of its development rose to the surface and took on the character of bitter factional struggle. Nothing remains but to give an opinion, clearly and definitely, to the American section and the whole International. "Friendship is friendship but duty is duty"—says a Russian proverb.

The following question can be posed: if the opposition is a petty-bourgeois tendency does that signify further unity is impossible? Then how reconcile the petty-bourgeois tendency with the proletarian? To pose the question like this means to judge one-sidedly, undialectically, and thus falsely. In the present discussion the opposition has clearly manifested its petty-bourgeois features. But this does not mean that the opposition has no other features. The majority of the members of the opposition are deeply devoted to the cause of the proletariat and are capable of learning. Tied today to a petty-bourgeois milieu they can tomorrow tie themselves to the proletariat. The inconsistent ones, under the influence of experience, can become more consistent. When the party embraces thousands of workers even the professional factionalists can re-educate themselves in the spirit of proletarian discipline. It is necessary to give them time for this. That is why Comrade Cannon's proposal to keep the discussion free from any threats of split, expulsions, etc., was absolutely correct and in place.

Nevertheless, it remains not less indubitable that if the party as a whole should take the road of the opposition it could suffer complete destruction. The present opposition is incapable of giving the party Marxian leadership. The Majority of the present National Committee expresses more consistently, seriously, and profoundly the proletarian tasks of the party than the Minority. Precisely because of this the Majority can have no interest in directing the struggle toward split—correct ideas will win. Nor can the healthy elements of the opposition wish a split—the experience of the past demonstrates very clearly that all the different kinds of improvised groups who split from the Fourth International condemned themselves to sterility and decomposition. That is why it is possible to envisage the next party convention without any fear. It will reject the anti-Marxian novelties of the opposition and guarantee party unity.

L. TROTSKY

December 15, 1939

The Crisis in the American Party

An Open Letter in Reply to Comrade Leon Trotsky

Dear Comrade Trotsky:

Your article of December 15, 1939 ("A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the Socialist Workers Party") raises a number of questions which enable me, in reply, to present and elaborate the standpoint of the Minority, in general, and of myself personally. The nature of the questions raised, and the manner in which you deal with them, impose a polemical form upon the present reply, not so much because your article was directly addressed to the party but primarily because I am compelled to disagree radically and uncompromisingly with the attacks you make upon the Minority and its political position, and with the solution you advance for resolving the party crisis.

This reply, supplementing the main documents already published by the Minority, will speak with the same welcome candor and even bluntness which you employ in your article, and will try to deal with all the essential points you raise, answering all and evading none.

Dialectics, Politics, Blocs

You have discovered the class struggle, or rather its reflection, in the ranks of the party. The Cannon faction represents the proletarian wing of the party; the Minority is "incapable of giving the party Marxian leadership" because it is "leading a typical petty-bourgeois tendency." As to whether it is permissible to speak of class tendencies and class struggle in the party, and the extent to which it is permissible—these questions will be dealt with further on in this document. Here let us examine the basis for your characterization of the Minority faction.

What is involved, of course, is not the pride or prestige or subjective feelings of this or that comrade in the Minority, or of the group as a whole, but the objective validity of the characterization.

At the beginning of the crisis in the party, the Cannonites characterized the Minority in various ways. Of them all, however, as is pointed out in our document on "War and Bureaucratic Conservatism," only one even pretended to be a political characterization, namely, the Minority is yielding to the pressure of bourgeois patriotism, or, as you now put it, the Minority represents a petty-bourgeois tendency.

To which we replied: Political tendencies, either inside or outside the party, do not arise overnight, nor are they the spontaneously full-fledged product of the whims or aberrations of a group of individuals. Here and there we find an individual who, unexpectedly and suddenly, "accidentally," turns into his political opposite. A man with a long record of radicalism may suddenly turn patriot at the outbreak of war; a man with a long record of opportunism may suddenly turn radical at the same time. But these are individual cases and do not represent tendencies. We speak of political tendencies precisely because it is possible to say of a group of people that over an appreciable period of time, as revealed in the record of its political words and deeds, it has tended in a certain political direction and has finally crystallized into a distinct political group, or faction, or party. An isolated instance or two does not establish a tendency (much less a "petty-bourgeois tendency" and one that is "typical," at that), but at most a mistake or a deviation. Even on this small scale, one can apply the dialectical method and inquire into whether or not a quantitative change has been transformed into a qualitative change!

Therefore—continued our reply to the Cannon faction—to maintain your characterization, it is incumbent upon you to indicate in our political record, which is available to you, wherein this tendency has manifested itself in the last year or two among the representative spokesmen of the Minority. That is, in attacking us, in characterizing us politically, please do no less than all of us together have done with reference to bourgeois political groups, to the Stalinists, to the Thomasites, to the Lovestoneites, and even to such grouplets as Oehler, etc.; or, in our own movement, than we did, for example, with the Sneevliet tendency—characterizing it politically on the basis of its established record over a period of years.

But that is just what the Cannonites did not do and have not done. Moreover, they did not even attempt to do it, for everybody

knows that the attempt would be fruitless and doomed in advance to failure. Not because the leading comrades of the Minority have no record to look into. Quite the contrary. They have one and, as said above, it is easily available. There are the records of the Political Committee, containing the views of all the comrades on every question; there are our articles in the press; there are our programs and manifestoes; there are our brochures and speeches. Let them be cited; There has been no lack of bourgeois-patriotic, anti-Soviet, reformist pressure upon our party in the past. Show us from the record when and where any of our leading comrades yielded to this pressure! I say confidently: It cannot be done. What the record will reveal is that we were not among the last—so far as Burnham and Shachtman in particular are concerned, I say without false modesty, that we were the first—of those who constantly defended the revolutionary-internationalist position on war against all species of reformists, patriots, People's Fronters, Stalinists, centrists, left-centrists, ultra-leftists, and who constantly sought to make the party more alert to the need of combatting the war danger and all it involved in the ranks of the working class.

By what political right, then, on the basis of what facts in our record, are we charged with being a petty-bourgeois tendency?

The Cannon faction never answered this question. Its silence implied that the only "right" it exercised was the right of necessity; it needed to give this political characterization of us, whether grounded in fact or not.

You ask in your article: "Why did Burnham and Shachtman themselves so unexpectedly (the word 'unexpectedly,' Comrade Trotsky, is itself a sufficient comment upon the unassailability of our political record) shift to the position of the 'League of Abandoned Hopes' "? (that is, of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals-in-retreat). And you answer: "It is not difficult to find an explanation. The Kremlin's participation in the Republican camp in Spain was supported by the bourgeois democrats all over the world. Stalin's work in Poland and Finland is met with frantic condemnation from the same democrats. In spite of all its noisy formulas the opposition appears to be a reflection inside the SWP of the mind of the 'left' petty-bourgeoisie. This fact unfortunately is incontrovertible."

In face of what "appears to be" an "incontrovertible fact," how are we to account for the fact that the pressure of the bourgeois-democrats throughout the Spanish civil war was not reflected among us in a tendency to yield to People's Frontism and the imperialist patriotism with which it was imbued? It is true that some ultra-leftists in the party at that time accused us and Cannon and Trotsky of precisely such a tendency; but the "fact" was just as "incontrovertible" then as now.

Although the Cannonites never even sought to find in our political record a justification for their characterization of our group, you have, it is true, presented one article out of that record calculated to establish a connection between our present position and our past, and thereby to warrant your political justification. It is the article "Intellectuals in Retreat" by Burnham and Shachtman, about which we exchanged some correspondence earlier in 1939. Quoting sections of what the two authors wrote about dialectical materialism, you declare that my allegedly unprincipled bloc with Burnham in the sphere of sociology (the question of the class nature of the Soviet state) and then in the sphere of politics ("unconditional defense of the Soviet Union") followed logically from and paralleled my unprincipled "bloc with Burnham in the sphere of philosophy"—all of which adds up, in your view, to the characteristics of a typical petty-bourgeois tendency.

Comrade Trotsky, I am, as I wrote you many months ago in reply to your letter of January 20, 1939, only a student in the field of philosophy. The exigencies of party work do not always permit one to extend his knowledge and understanding of dialectical materialism to the degree really demanded of a revolutionary Marxist. I have always been greatly impressed by the fact that a generation ago Lenin took time out from the daily political struggle, so to speak, in order to devote himself to special studies and a separate volume in defense of Marxian philosophy from its bourgeois and revisionist critics. Lack of time, and a more extensive knowledge which it would make possible, have prevented me and others from venturing, however modestly, into a systematic, rounded-out and

thoroughgoing defense of dialectical materialism from its modern (above all, American) critics in the public press. Whenever I can read and study what you and our great teachers have written on the subject, I do so with the greatest attention. Yet I must say:

Your accusations are entirely unwarranted and baseless. They form an arbitrary construction calculated to buttress a political conclusion which cannot be buttressed objectively. Let me indicate the grounds for this statement.

You quote from our article (*New International*, Jan. 1939) a section which explains how the authors, having different opinions on dialectical materialism, nevertheless write a joint article against the petty-bourgeois opponents of Bolshevism. You conclude that in the opinion of the two authors, "the method is not of great importance, we shall meditate upon methods sometime when we have more leisure, but now we have other things to do."

Excuse me! Nowhere in the article is there a word that could justify such a conclusion. In your article, you quote one paragraph of our explanation for the joint authorship. You omit from the paragraph a key sentence which I underline here. We wrote:

"The two authors of the present article differ thoroughly on their estimate of the general theory of dialectical materialism, one of them accepting it and the other rejecting it. This has not prevented them from working for years within a single political organization toward mutually accepted objectives, nor has this required on the part of either of them any suppression of his theoretical opinions, in private or public."

But that is not all. The following paragraphs from our article are not less important.

"During 1907-08, Lenin was, as is well known, carrying on a philosophical dispute with the Machists and also a sharp political fight against the Mensheviks. Gorky inclined, on the philosophical questions, towards the Machists, and apparently considered that this might prevent him from making common political cause with Lenin against the Mensheviks on the concrete questions then at issue. On February 25, 1908, Lenin wrote to Gorky as follows:

"I believe I must tell you my view quite openly. A certain scrap among the Bolsheviki in the question of philosophy I now consider quite unavoidable. But to split up on that account would be stupid, in my opinion. We have formed a bloc for the carrying through of a certain tactic in the Social Democratic Labor party. This tactic we have been and are continuing to carry through without differences of opinion (the only difference of opinion occurred in connection with the boycott of the Third Duma), but firstly it never reached such a sharp point among us even to hint at a split; secondly, it did not correspond to the difference of opinion of the materialists and the Machists, for the Machist Bazarov, for example, was, like myself, against the boycott and wrote about it (a large feuilleton in the *Proletarii* [the journal then under Bolshevik direction]).

"To obstruct the cause of the carrying through of the tactic of the revolutionary social democracy in the Labor party because of disputes over materialism or Machism, would be, in my opinion, an inexcusable stupidity. We must be at loggerheads over philosophy in such a way that the *Proletarii* and the Bolsheviki, as a faction of the party, are not affected by it. And that is entirely possible."

"These wise, responsible and humane words are those, of course, of the real Lenin, not the sanctimonious Pope of the Stalinist fairy tales nor the one-party tyrant who is now being imaginatively constructed by Eastman, Hook and Harrison.

"Shortly after the time of the above letter, interestingly enough, one of the Mensheviks declared in the *Neue Zeit* that the philosophical dispute was identical with the political dispute. *Proletarii* made the following editorial statement:

"In this connection, the editorial board of *Proletarii*, as the ideological representative of the Bolshevik tendency, deems it necessary to present the following declaration: "In reality this philosophical dispute is not a factional dispute and, in the opinion of the editorial board, it should not be one; any attempt to represent these differences of opinion as factional is thoroughly erroneous. Among the members of both factions there are supporters of both philosophical tendencies." "

In the light of these remarks and quotations from Lenin, I still fail to see, as I wrote you months ago, wherein I was wrong in writing the joint article with Burnham and in taking, with him, the position on the dialectic quoted above. Quite the contrary. Under the same circumstances, I would do it again and again tomorrow.

You speak of my "bloc with Burnham in the sphere of phi-

osophy." But that is precisely the sphere in which we did not make a bloc! The sub-title of our article was: "A Political Analysis of Some of the Recent Critics of Bolshevism: Sidney Hook, Max Eastman, Eugene Lyons, Ben Stolberg, and Others." The article pursued exclusively political aims: the defense of Bolshevism, the Russian Revolution, the Fourth International, from the petty-bourgeois intellectual critics, and an attack upon their political program. I still consider that defense and that attack good—at least no one in our ranks has yet disagreed with it, not even Cannon (then or now).*

You say: "By allying himself in this question with the anti-dialectician Burnham, Shachtman deprived himself of the possibility of showing why Eastman, Hook, and many others began with a philosophical struggle against dialectics but finished with a political struggle against the socialist revolution." I can agree with this, more or less. On my part, it was a conscious and deliberate "self-deprivation." But it was more than compensated for, in my opinion, by the fact that I was able to defend our fundamental political principles and program from revisionist attack, and to defend it jointly with a comrade whose views on philosophy differ from mine in such a way that Eastman, Hook and Co. might be able to exploit it politically (should I attack Burnham at the same time). Burnham's opposition to dialectics is not consistent, in my view (as mine is not in his view), with his support of the revolutionary program of the Fourth International. I say about his philosophical views (as he does about mine) that, in the long run, they will or may have fatal effects upon his political position. Meanwhile, to the greatest possible extent, let us unite to defend that political position, which we hold in common with the rest of the Fourth International, against all its critics. If, in that connection, we have occasion to speak of philosophical questions, let us make it perfectly clear that on that subject we do not agree.

You consider that an unprincipled bloc. If it is a bloc at all, I think it is a good one. If Burnham and Shachtman were to write a joint article on philosophy, or specifically on Marxian dialectics, that would be unprincipled. To declare a temporary truce on philosophy, while the revolutionary political position is put forward—that is not unprincipled, rather it is a service to the party.

Rosa Luxemburg may have been able to write more thorough criticisms of Kautsky and Bernstein during the war if she had also attacked their revisionism in the sphere of philosophy. But in that case, Liebknecht would not have written or signed these criticisms with her, because of his well-known opposition to dialectical materialism. The philosophical front had to wait under the press of more urgent problems and disputes. My dispute with Burnham on the philosophical front will also have to wait—not because I believe, as you so unjustly write, that the dialectic does not matter, but because there are more urgent problems to settle and because Burnham is not making the dissemination of his philosophical views his main preoccupation in the party or even one of his preoccupations** and because—like virtually all the other leading members of the party who accept dialectical materialism—I do not yet feel sufficiently equipped to write the kind of defense of dialectical materialism which it deserves. Meanwhile, I repeat, I am ready to make a "bloc" with Burnham on the defense of the revolutionary program of the Fourth International, and to make it a hundred times over.

In the same letter to Gorky (Feb. 25, 1908), Lenin writes: "Plekhanov considered Bogdanov at that time as an ally in the struggle against revisionism, but as an ally who was wrong in so far as he went along with Ostwald and further with Mach." (That is, Bogdanov was a non-Marxist, a Machist, in the sphere of philosophy.) "In the spring and summer of 1904, Bogdanov and I finally joined together as Bolsheviki and constituted that tacit bloc, the bloc which tacitly excluded philosophy as a neutral field, which lasted throughout the whole period of the revolution and gave us the possibility of carrying through jointly in the revolution that tactic of the revolutionary social democracy which, in my deepest conviction, was the only correct one." (My emphasis.—M.S.)

*Immediately upon reading the article, Comrade Dunne sent the authors an air-mailed letter declaring that he was proud to be a member of the party that had them in it. Neither he nor any other member of the present Majority faction noticed the unprincipled bloc in the sphere of philosophy at that time. In fact, it was generally understood that this long article was not just a literary exercise against intellectuals of no account, but, through them, an exposition and defense of the Bolshevik program on the main political questions of the day.

**If Burnham will forgive me for the comparison, let me quote what Lenin wrote about priests in the party: "If a priest comes to cooperate with us in our work—if he consistently performs party work, and does not oppose the party program—we can accept him into the ranks of Social Democracy, for the contradictions between the spirit and principles of our program and the religious convictions of the priest could, in

Wherein does what you call my "bloc with Burnham in the sphere of philosophy" differ from Lenin's bloc with Bogdanov? Why was the latter principled and ours unprincipled? I should be very much interested to know the answer to this question.

How is it possible, some comrades ask, for Burnham, whose views on philosophy are not Marxian, to come to political conclusions which are Marxian? It would be quite sufficient to answer: It is possible, as may be demonstrated by facts. Burnham's position on the dialectics of nature, for example, did not prevent him from arriving at the political conclusions embodied in the program of the Fourth International, any more than the complete ignorance of dialectics on the part of some comrades prevents them from arriving at the same political conclusions.

Does this mean that the materialistic dialectic, the dialectical method, "are not important"? It means nothing of the kind. It does mean, however, that there is a contradiction, an inconsistency, in Burnham's position. This has not prevented the party as a whole from collaborating with Burnham on innumerable political questions, from presenting him as an authorized party spokesman, from appointing him an editor of its theoretical journal. By the same token, it does not and will not prevent me from collaborating with him on all those political questions wherein we agree.

The connection between a philosophical and a programmatic position, a philosophical and a political position, holds only "in the last analysis." The connection is not always direct and immediate. Political positions are not directly deduced from philosophical positions by means of concrete and scientific analysis. Lenin could speak of "our comrades in politics and opponents in philosophy" without revealing an inconsistency anywhere except in the comrades referred to. Both Engels and Lenin, furthermore, pointed out that the modern scientist, for all his "opposition" to dialectical materialism, is compelled to one degree or another to employ the dialectical-materialist method in his concrete scientific work. The materialist theory of knowledge, Lenin wrote, is one "which natural science instinctively holds." That is often true of the science of politics, too; and I have observed it more than once not only in the case of Comrade Burnham but of others as well.

These are, briefly, some of the reasons why I must reject not only your argument about the "unprincipled bloc" in philosophy, but also your reference to the Burnham-Shachtman article as a justification for characterizing our group as a petty-bourgeois tendency. As for the Cannon faction and the question of dialectical materialism, the less said on the subject the better for the faction. Following your article, its spokesmen may try their utmost to parade as the intransigent champions of Marxian philosophy, but the indifference to theoretical questions—to say nothing of philosophical questions—and even the contempt towards such questions which most of its representative leaders have fostered, is too notorious in the ranks of the party to require elaboration here.

The State and the Character of the War

The Burnham position on this, the second, question, is bad enough, you write, but "even worse and more dangerous, unfortunately, are those eclectics who express the idea that the class character of the Soviet state 'does not matter,' since the direction of our policy is determined by 'the character of the war.' As if the war were an independent super-social substance; as if the character of the war were not determined by the character of the ruling class, that is, by the same social factor that also determines the character of the state. Astonishing how easily some comrades forget the ABCs of Marxism under the blows of events!"

Who are the "eclectics who express the idea that the class character of the Soviet state 'does not matter' "? Who has said it? written it? and when and where? I know of no such comrade and no such document.

What then is our position? Simply this: It is impossible to deduce directly our policy towards a specific war from an abstract characterization of the class character of the state involved in the

these circumstances, be regarded as a matter in which he contradicts himself, as one which concerns him alone. A political party cannot examine its members to see if there are any contradictions between their philosophy and the party program. Of course, such a case would be a rare exception even in Western Europe; it is hardly possible in Russia. But if, for example, a priest joined the Social Democratic party, and made it his chief and almost exclusive business to propagate religious views, then, of course, the party would have to expel him." (May 26, 1909.) Lenin would not write a joint article with a priest on religion; but he would not hesitate, I am sure, to write one with a priest-party-member in defense of the party's political position, explaining therein that he finds "the religious convictions of the priest . . . a matter in which he contradicts himself." With due respect for the difference in proportions, and in the person involved, the same applies in the case I am discussing.

war, more particularly, from the property forms prevailing in that state. Our policy must flow from a concrete examination of the character of the war in relation to the interests of the international socialist revolution. Our fundamental position on this question has already been stated in the document on the Russian question presented by the Minority of the Political Committee. Let me elaborate some aspects of it here so that we may see how the different viewpoints are manifested in theory and in practice.

What is the position of the Cannon group, boiled down to its essentials? The nationalized property determines the class character of the Soviet Union as a workers' state. The Stalinist regime is based upon the forms of property created by the October Revolution, which are progressive and must be defended from imperialist attack. Consequently, in a war between the Soviet Union and a capitalist state, we are for the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union, for the victory of the Red Army and therefore for material and military support of the Red Army.

You add, Comrade Trotsky, that war is not "an independent super-social substance"! and its character is determined by the character of the ruling class, "that is, by the same social factor that also determines the character of the state"—the property forms, in this case, the nationalized property.

In spite of my recently-acquired bad philosophical reputation, I cannot accept the clear implication of this position because I do not consider it a dialectical view of the problem. That is, it is based upon abstractions and not upon material realities considered in their dialectical inter-relationships.

According to this standpoint, private property is the social factor that determines the character of the capitalist state, the same factor also determining the character of the capitalist ruling class, which in turn determines the character of the wars carried on by it. And what holds true of the capitalist state, holds true, with the necessary changes, of the workers' state.

In the first place, to speak of "capitalist state" and of "workers' state" is to speak in terms of abstractions which do not, by themselves, answer the question of the character of a given war.

The Germany of 1870 was not a feudal but a capitalist state, in which private property relations were predominant; this capitalist state conducted an historically progressive war (even under Bismarck and Wilhelm I) against Bonapartist France, its oppressor. The Germany of 1914, also a capitalist state in which private property relations were predominant, conducted a reactionary (imperialist) war against France. The same social class, based on the same property relations, was in power in the two countries both in 1870 and in 1914. If these factors alone, considered abstractly, determined the character of the war, it would be impossible for us to distinguish the progressive from the reactionary war.

The Italy of 1859 conducted a war against Austria and the Italy of 1915 conducted a war against Austria. The first war of these two wars has always been characterized as progressive by the Marxists; the second, as reactionary. What determined the characters of these wars? In the case of both countries, in both epochs, the ruling class was the same and was based on the same property relations.

The difference between the two epochs (and the two wars) lay in this: the young bourgeoisie was progressive because it fought for the establishment of national boundaries, for the establishment of the great national states of Europe, against feudal decay, particularism and atomization. The establishment of the great national (capitalist) states was progressive in its time not only because it broke down the feudal barriers to the development of the productive forces, but because it created the most favorable arena for the final struggle of an independent proletariat against the last exploiting class. With the development of imperialist decay of capitalism, the same social order with the same ruling class is capable of fighting only reactionary wars. Where it was once permissible for the Italian proletariat to support even King Victor-Emmanuel of the House of Savoy and the Italian bourgeoisie in their war for the national state (for freedom from Austrian oppression), it became impermissible for the proletariat to support the House of Savoy and the Italian bourgeoisie in their war "for the national state" against Austria in 1914. Moreover, it is impermissible for the proletariat to support the Italian ruling class today even in a war against a feudal state—Ethiopia.

If we go by abstractions alone, we cannot explain why the war of a capitalist state like Italy against a feudal (semi-feudal) monarchy like Austria was progressive in 1859 and a war of a capitalist state like Italy against a feudal monarchy like Spain was reactionary in 1935.

The ultra-leftists, you will remember, also proceeded from such abstract deductions—"capitalist state—capitalist war"—in the case of the Spanish civil war, and therefore denied the admissibility of defending the Loyalist forces against the Fascist forces.

The character of the war fought by Bismarck in 1870 could not be determined **exclusively or immanently** from the character of the ruling class and its property basis, but from the social and political aims of the ruling class at that time, i.e., from its concrete historic role. From above, by bureaucratic-military (as against Jacobin-plebeian) means, it is true, Bismarck and the Junkers had as their aim the national liberation and unification of Germany from French and Russian oppression. That was historically progressive. When, at the end of the war, they aimed at expansion and annexation (the seizure of Alsace and Lorraine), the war was transformed into a reactionary war which was mercilessly condemned by Marx and Engels. But war is not an "independent, super-social substance," you say; war and the aims of war are not divorced from the social (social-economic) basis on which it is fought. That is true, of course. But the connection is not **automatic**, not mechanical or one-directional; it is a dialectical connection in which, very often, the **political regime** is the **primary** or immediate determining force, and the economic "regime" determines only "in the last analysis."

A most instructive (and timely) exposition of the inter-relationship between the economic base and the political superstructure is contained in Lenin's famous polemical speech on the trade union question on December 30, 1920:

"Comrade Trotsky speaks of the 'workers' state.' Permit me, that is an abstraction. When we wrote on the workers' state in 1917, that was understandable; but when one says today: 'Why defend the working class, defend it against whom, there is no longer a bourgeoisie, we have a workers' state,' one commits an obvious mistake. The joke of it is precisely this, that it is not quite a workers' state. Therein lies one of the basic mistakes of Comrade Trotsky! . . . Our state is in reality not a workers' state, but a workers' and peasants' state. From that follows a great deal. . . . But still more. From our party program the following comes out—a document which is quite familiar to the author of the ABC of Communism—from this program it comes out that our state is a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations. We had to paste this—how shall we put it?—sorry label on it. That is the result of the transition. And now, do the trade unions have nothing to defend in such a practically-arisen state, can we even do without them for the protection of the material and spiritual interests of the universally organized proletariat? That is theoretically a perfectly false consideration. That leads us into the realm of abstraction or of the ideal which we shall have attained in 15-20 years, but I am not even convinced that we shall attain it in such a short period. . . . Our present state is such that the inclusively-organized proletariat must defend itself and we must utilize these labor organizations for the protection of the workers against their state and for the protection of our state by the workers."

And later, on the same subject (Jan. 25, 1921), in speaking of "Politics and Economics, Dialectics and Eclecticism," Lenin emphasized: "Politics is the concentrated expression of economics—I repeated in my speech, for I had already heard earlier the absurd reproach, inadmissible on the lips of a Marxist, that I treat the thing 'politically.' The primacy of politics over economics must serve as the unconditional rule. To argue otherwise means to forget the ABC of Marxism. . . . The question stands only thus (and, Marxistically, cannot stand otherwise): without the correct political attitude towards the thing, the class in question cannot maintain its rule and consequently cannot fulfill its productive tasks either."

I permit myself one further quotation, from Engels' letter to Comrade Schmidt (Oct. 27, 1890): "The new independent (political) power must, of course, submit to the movement of production as a whole. But it also **reacts**, by virtue of the strength of its immanent, i.e., its once borrowed but gradually developed relative independence, upon the conditions and course of production. There is a **reciprocity** between the two unequal forces; on the one side, the economic movement; on the other, the new political power which strives for the greatest possible independence and which having once arisen is endowed with its own movement."

Engels wrote the above with reference to a capitalist state. It applies with a hundred-fold multiplied force to the Soviet Union, where the political super-structure (the Stalinist state apparatus) has acquired a degree and type of independence from its social basis without parallel, at least in modern times.

Now, what importance have these quotations from Lenin and

Engels in our present dispute? The Cannonites deduce their policy in the following simple, undialectical way: The economy is progressive, consequently the wars fought against capitalist states by the Stalinist regime, which bases itself on this economy, are also progressive. The quotation from your article, cited above, to the effect that the character of the war is determined by the character of the economy, follows the same line of thought.

It may be replied that this charge is groundless and a distortion of the position held by you and by the Cannon group. It may be pointed out that we have all spoken for years of a degenerated workers' state; that we have advocated for some time a political revolution, basing ourselves on that very contradiction between the social basis and the political regime; and that in your latest article you write directly that "in our struggle for the overthrow of the bureaucracy we base ourselves on this contradiction."

This reply is obviously based on fact. I do not for a moment intend to create a different impression. All I contend, in this connection, is that this all-important contradiction is not consistently considered and applied in the case of the wars conducted by the Stalinist regime.

Just as it was possible 20 years ago to speak of the term "workers' state" as an abstraction, so it is possible today to speak of the term "degenerated workers' state" as an abstraction. Just as it was once necessary, in connection with the trade union problem, to speak concretely of what kind of workers' state exists in the Soviet Union, so it is necessary to establish, in connection with the present war, the degree of the degeneration of the Soviet state. The dialectical method of treating such questions makes this mandatory upon us. And the degree of the degeneration of the regime cannot be established by abstract reference to the existence of nationalized property, but only by observing the realities of living events.

The Fourth International established, years ago, the fact that the Stalinist regime (even though based upon nationalized property) had degenerated to the point where it was not only capable of conducting reactionary wars against the proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard, and even against colonial peoples, but did in fact conduct such wars. Now, in our opinion, on the basis of the actual course of Stalinist policy (again, even though based upon nationalized property), the Fourth International must establish the fact that the Soviet Union (i.e., the ruling bureaucracy and the armed forces serving it) has degenerated to the point where it is capable of conducting reactionary wars even against capitalist states (Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, now Finland, and tomorrow Rumania and elsewhere). This is the point which forms the nub of our difference with you and with the Cannon faction.

It is necessary to emphasize that there is a tremendous difference between the (relative) independence of the political regime in any given capitalist state and in the present Soviet state. Be it the democratic United States, constitutional-monarchical England, republican France or Fascist Germany, the political regime in each instance is the one best suited to preserve private property; in any case, that is its essential role. Even in Fascist Germany, where the bourgeoisie has been politically expropriated, we have said that the fascist regime is the only one under which capitalist private property can be preserved. In the Soviet Union, on the contrary, our program and theses point out that the political regime (the Stalinist bureaucracy) does not preserve but constantly **undermines** the social-economic basis of the Russian Revolution. It is not only, as Engels puts it, "endowed with its own movement," and that to an exceptionally high degree, but this movement conflicts violently with "the movement of production as a whole." Put in more plainly political terms, the interests of the bureaucracy conflict with the interests of maintaining nationalized economy as the basis for the transition to socialism—the nationalized economy which is all we can defend in the Soviet Union.

Now, it is not the nationalized economy that goes to war; it is not the economy that decides when the war should be declared or started, or against whom it should be directed, or how it should be conducted. Nor does the working class make these decisions—either directly or indirectly—for it is gagged and fettered and straitjacketed. The decisions and direction of the war are **entirely** in the hands of the bureaucracy, which "is endowed with its own movement," that is, with its own social, economic and political interests, which are reactionary through and through.

Here we need not confine ourselves to theoretical speculation and argument. The invasion of Poland, the conquest of the three other Baltic states, the invasion of Finland—these make up in fact

the reactionary war of the Stalinist bureaucracy. They are reactionary from a number of standpoints. They are reactionary because they drive the proletariat and peasantry into the arms of imperialist patriotism, that is, they do not accentuate the class struggle but facilitate the submission of the proletariat to its class enemy. They are reactionary because they are not conducted for the defense of the Soviet Union (i.e., the preservation of nationalized property from imperialist conquest and colonization), but are conducted in agreement with Hitlerite imperialism. They are reactionary because they are not conducted for the defense of the Soviet Union, but are conducted for the greater glory, prestige, power, and revenue of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy. They are reactionary because they are not defensive wars (I speak not in the military-technical or diplomatic sense, but in the historical-political sense), but wars of annexation—wars of what we call Stalinist-imperialism.

Once More: Defense of the Soviet Union

We advocated and urged support of a war to defend the Soviet Union from imperialist attack. In that case, we did not insist upon democratic formalities or even democratic realities as a condition for our defense. We said—the Minority continues to say it—that if the imperialists assail the Soviet Union with the aim of crushing the last conquest of the October Revolution and reducing Russia to a bunch of colonies, we will support the Soviet Union unconditionally. That would be a progressive war, even under Stalin's command and despite Stalin's command. We would fight for a democratic All-Soviet Congress to take over the helm, but we would not demand it as a preliminary condition for our support.

We did not advocate the invasion of Poland or the Baltic countries or Finland. We did not consider such actions necessary for the defense of the Soviet Union, conceived in a revolutionary-internationalist sense. On the contrary, we condemned the invasions; you even called the invasion of Poland "criminal and shameful." To this day, I do not understand by what right of formal or dialectical logic we should, in the light of this, call upon the workers to give material and military support to the invasion, which has as its clear-cut objective that very annexation which we condemn and oppose.

The Fourth International is now fettered by a dogmatic interpretation of the formula "Unconditional defense of the Soviet Union"—which means in practise (see the resolutions of the Cannon group! see our party press!) that our policies are determined for us by the reactionary interests (and the secret treaties, no doubt!) of the Stalinist bureaucracy. When it decides to launch a war, we say, in effect: We do not agree with the timing of the war, with the aims it pursues; but now that Stalin has launched it, we must give it unconditional support, material and military aid.

You will say that this is a distortion of the views of the Fourth International? Let us see.

In your article, you write: "In order to give at least an ounce of sense to their new formula, the opposition attempts to represent the matter as if up to now we had 'unconditionally' defended the international policy of the Kremlin government with its Red Army and G.P.U. Everything is turned upside down! In reality for a long time we have not defended the Kremlin's international policy, not even conditionally, particularly since the time that we openly proclaimed the necessity of crushing the Kremlin oligarchy through insurrection! A wrong policy not only mutilates the current tasks but also compels one to represent his own past in a false light."

And in your letter to me, dated Nov. 6, 1939, you write: "You interpret our past policy as unconditional support of the diplomatic and military activities of Stalin! Permit me to say that this is a horrible deformation of our whole position not only since the creation of the Fourth International but since the very beginning of the Left Opposition. Unconditional defense of the U.S.S.R. signifies, namely, that our policy is not determined by the deeds, maneuvers or crimes of the Kremlin bureaucracy but only by our conception of the interests of the Soviet state and world revolution."

I pass over my "horrible deformation" and my "representation of our own past in a false light," for I am conscious of no such crime. I have never said that our position was unconditional or any other kind of support of Stalin's international policy, and I must therefore set down this charge too as gratuitous and polemical.

Let me accept, then, your characterization of our traditional

position. We have never defended, not even conditionally, Stalin's international policy; we give no unconditional support to the Kremlin's diplomatic and military activities. Our policy is not determined by the Kremlin's deeds and crimes. Good!

We have never supported the Kremlin's international policy, I repeat with you. Concretely, for example, we did not support the Kremlin's policy toward bourgeois Finland (or Poland, etc.). But what is war? War is the continuation of politics by other means. Then why should we support the war which is the continuation of the international policy which we did not and do not support? The Fourth International also told the Russian proletariat not to support the Kremlin's foreign policy. Then why should we now tell the Soviet workers to support a war which is the continuation of that policy? According to the resolution on Finland of the Cannon faction (which you support), the Fourth International tells the Russian workers not only to be Soviet patriots in general, but to give material and military support to Stalin's army in Stalin's war (what attitude the Finnish proletariat should take toward the Red Army—our fearless "unconditional defenders" do not indicate by a single syllable). On what conceivable basis can we advocate such a policy to the Russian working class? How can we defend it before the American working class, or even its vanguard elements?

Perhaps the Red Army should be supported on the grounds that in Poland, for example, "the new authorities invited the population to expropriate the landowners and capitalists," as you put it in your new article. I have heard the Cannon group spokesmen, following your line, argue that this demonstrates the essentially progressive character of Stalin's war and that it is a significant reflection of the fundamental fact that the Kremlin is based upon state property, which determines the character of its wars.

This argument, in my opinion, is wrong on two counts.

In so far as it is calculated to prove that the wars of the bureaucracy are automatically determined by the existence of state property in the Soviet Union, the calculation runs directly counter to our previous political analysis, yours in particular, and to the recently established facts.

1. Two years ago you wrote in a polemic against Burnham and Carter: "Hitler defends the bourgeois forms of property. Stalin adapts the interests of the bureaucracy to the proletarian forms of property. The same Stalin in Spain, i.e., on the soil of a bourgeois regime, executes the function of Hitler (in their political methods they generally differ little from one another). The juxtaposition of the different social roles of the one and the same Stalin in the U.S.S.R. and in Spain equally well demonstrate that the bureaucracy is not an independent class but the tool of classes. . . ." (*Internal Bulletin*, Dec. 1937, p. 5). In other words, there is no automatism of state property in the Soviet Union that forces the Kremlin bureaucracy to establish or even seek to establish similar property forms outside the Soviet Union. Quite the contrary, outside the Soviet Union, it follows in most cases the policy of preserving capitalist private property and massacring those who seek to abolish it (Spain!).

2. How account for the fact that in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania capitalist private property has remained intact under the rule of the Red Army? If the automatism of state property is so direct that it not only determines the character of Stalin's wars but also its own extension to the capitalist countries invaded by Stalin (i.e., "social-revolutionary measures, carried out via bureaucratic-military means," as you call it), why hasn't this been the case in the three Baltic countries? Also, why does the program of the Kuusinen "government" insist so explicitly not only on its non-Soviet, bourgeois-democratic political character, but on the fact that it does not propose to expropriate and nationalize property? You wrote in "U.S.S.R. in War" the following words: "Let us for a moment conceive that in accordance with the treaty with Hitler, the Moscow government leaves untouched the rights of private property in the occupied areas and limits itself to 'control' after the fascist pattern. Such a concession would have a deep-going principled character and could become the starting point for a new chapter in the Soviet regime and consequently for a new evaluation on our part of the nature of the Soviet state." The Kuusinen program, I repeat, proposes only such a "control" over the banks and industries of Finland. Would you consider this "new chapter in the Soviet regime" a basis for revising our slogan of unconditional defense?

The second count deals with the "progressive aspect" of the Stalinist invasion. In the article "U.S.S.R. in War" you said: "The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of

property relations in this or another section of the territory, no matter how important these may be by themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and the organization of the world proletariat, the raising of its capacity for defending the old conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive, standpoint the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, preserve completely their reactionary character and remain the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution." (My emphasis—M.S.)

War is a continuation of politics, and if Stalinist policy, even in the occupied territory where property has been statified, preserves completely its reactionary character, then the war it is conducting is reactionary. In that case, the revolutionary proletariat must refuse to give the Kremlin and its army material and military aid. It must concentrate all efforts on overturning the Stalinist regime. That is not our war! Our war is against the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy at the present time!

In other words, I propose, in the present war, a policy of revolutionary defeatism in the Soviet Union, as explained in the statement of the Minority on the Russian question—and in making this proposal I do not feel myself one whit less a revolutionary class patriot than I have always been.

You find our resolution on Finland ridiculous because it says that in applying the strategy of revolutionary defeatism on both sides, "the Fourth International will, of course, take into account concrete circumstances—the military situation, the moods of the masses and also the differing economic relations in Finland and Russia." Your comment is: "Definitely, nothing of this is comprehensible." Let me try to make it somewhat more comprehensible and less ridiculous.

In any country, whether we are defeatists or defensists, the application in the concrete of our strategical perspectives or slogans must take many things into consideration. For example, even under Kerensky, Lenin stood for the slogan of "transforming the imperialist war into a civil war." At one time, in the middle of 1917, he proposed the withdrawal of the slogan in that form. Why? Because of the military situation in the country and because of the moods of the masses. Moreover, taking into account precisely these moods—the fact that the masses were tired of the war and of fighting "in general"—the Bolsheviks concretized their perspective of civil war in the slogan of "peace." Again, taking into account the "military situation" during the Kornilov attack, the Bolsheviks again adapted their "civil war" perspective to the concrete situation. The sentence in our resolution which you ridicule so much was included mainly for the purpose of guarding against the vulgar misinterpretation of our position to mean that from now on, day in and day out, all we propose to do in Finland and in the Soviet Union is to repeat the phrase "revolutionary defeatism." As for taking into account the "differing economic relations"—this really speaks for itself. In Russia we tell the workers that they must establish their control over already nationalized property. In Finland we tell the workers that they must first nationalize property after seizing power. When I write a resolution not about war but about the world socialist revolution, I shall take care, there too, to point out that in China and in the United States the Fourth International must take into account the differing economic relations, even though it is for the proletarian-socialist revolution in both lands. By the same token I will agitate for a political revolution throughout the Soviet Union, but in the Ukraine I will take into account the differing national element and there I will advocate, particularly, separation from the Kremlin.

The whole point seems to me to be quite self-evident.

The Bureaucratic Revolution

I cannot leave unmentioned your references to the "revolutionary" role of Stalinism in its recent invasions. "In the first case (Spain), the bureaucracy through hangman's methods strangled a socialist revolution. In the second case (Poland) it gave an impulse to the socialist revolution through bureaucratic methods."

Here again, I find myself compelled to disagree with you. The bureaucratic bourgeois revolution—that I know of. I know of Napoleon's "revolution from above" in Poland over a hundred years ago. I know of Alexander's emancipation of the serfs "from above"—out of fear of peasant uprisings. I know of Bismarck's "revolution from above." I know that Hitler and Mussolini play with the idea of an Arab "national revolution" in Palestine out of purely imperialist and military reasons—directed against their

rival, England. But the bureaucratic proletarian revolution—that I do not know of and I do not believe in it. I do not believe that it took place in Poland even for a day—or that it is taking place or is about to take place in Finland.

If Stalin "established" state property in the conquered territory in Poland, it was not at all because, as you imply elsewhere, he was "compelled" to do so on account of the irresistible force of state property in the Soviet Union. Stalin was perfectly willing to "share the power" with the Polish bourgeoisie, as he is doing it with the bourgeoisie of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and on this basis: I will preserve intact your private property and you will turn over to me your political power, which I will assure with my army. This is what the Kremlin proposed during the negotiations with Anglo-French imperialism. The Polish bourgeoisie and landlords refused this "generous" offer for a division of power. The three Baltic countries had the offer imposed upon them by force.

When the regime of the Polish Colonels collapsed under the blows of the German army, the bourgeoisie fled in every direction. In the Polish Ukraine and White Russia, where class exploitation was intensified by national oppression (the bourgeoisie of those territories was predominantly Polish), the peasants began to take over the land themselves, to drive off the landlords who were already half-in-flight. Even the garbled and censored reports of those days permit us to see that the workers were beginning to act similarly. In Vilna, a spontaneously formed "Soviet" was reported. The Red Army, entering Poland, encountered no resistance from the Polish bourgeoisie and its Army because there wasn't any to speak of. The Red Army came in as a counter-revolutionary force. Far from "giving an impulse to the socialist revolution," it strangled it (the Vilna "Soviet" was of course violently suppressed). Just what has since then been "nationalized," how it has been "nationalized"—I do not know and no one has yet been able to say exactly. In any case, I repeat with you that the nationalization, real or alleged, cannot be the decisive criterion for us. The Stalinist bureaucracy is capable only of strangling revolutions, not making them or giving an impulsion to them. To prove the contrary, some evidence must be produced, and I find none in your article.

I find even less for your—how shall I put it?—astonishing remarks about Finland. You say that we do not "mention by so much as a word that the Red Army in Finland expropriates large landowners and introduces workers' control while preparing for the expropriation of the capitalists."

True, not by so much as a word. Why? Because the first anyone has heard in our party—anyone!—of the expropriation of the large landowners and the introduction of workers' control in Finland by the Red Army, is in your article. Where is this taking place? On what reports do you base yourself? There is no trace of workers' control in the Soviet Union today; there is even less than that in Finland. That at least so far as my knowledge goes, and on this point I have questioned unavailingly many Cannonites.

You continue: "Tomorrow the Stalinists will strangle the Finnish workers. But now they are giving—they are compelled to give (why? why in Finland and not in Spain or Estonia?—M.S.)—a tremendous impulse to the class struggle in its sharpest form. The leaders of the opposition construct their policy not upon the 'concrete' process that is taking place in Finland, but upon democratic abstractions and noble sentiments."

Where is this "tremendous impulse to the class struggle" in Finland—and "in its sharpest form," to boot? We base our policy on "abstractions." Let us grant that. On what do you base your statement about the tremendous impulse to the class struggle? No one—no one, I repeat—in our party has seen the slightest sign of it as yet. Perhaps you have seen credible reports about it; in which case such important news should appear in our press.

Again, you write: "The Soviet-Finnish war is evidently (?) already beginning to be completed with a civil war in which the Red Army finds itself at the given stage in the same camp as the Finnish petty peasants and the workers." You write a little further that the Stalinist policy is "the policy of exterminating finance-capital." And finally, you write: "As for the Kremlin it is at the present time forced—and this is not a hypothetical but a real situation—to provoke a social revolutionary movement in Finland (in order to attempt to strangle it politically tomorrow)."

Where is the civil war in Finland which is "evidently already beginning"? Unless you refer to the government of the idiotic scoundrel Kuusinen, we have not yet seen the first traces of that civil war—regardless of how much we should like to see it, no matter how anxious we are to develop a policy that will promote

it, no matter how firmly we count upon its eventual materialization. Do you deduce this "civil war" from an abstract and false theoretical estimation of the role of the Kremlin bureaucracy, or is there some objective evidence that this "concrete" process is taking place in Finland?"

Where is the "social revolutionary movement in Finland" that the Kremlin is "forced to provoke"? Is it perhaps the program of the Kuusinen "Democratic People's" government that is provoking it? That program is, formally, the program of a bourgeois "democracy." Since the beginning of the war, one of the reasons why we condemned the Finnish invasion as reactionary was precisely the fact that by it Stalin was driving the Finnish workers and peasants into a bourgeois-patriotic frenzy, into the arms of the Mannerheims, into the "sacred union" and "national unity." What evidence is there that this has changed? We repeat: we know of none, not a scintilla! It is possible and even likely that, as the Finnish bourgeois regime begins to crumble, the workers and peasants will separate from it and take the first steps on the road to independent class action. But there is every reason to believe that they will not take the road to the Stalinist camp, that they will not, as Cannon tells the Russian workers to do, give "material and military support" to the annexationist invaders. If they did, their tragedy would be no less than that which they are suffering today as the pawns of bourgeois-patriotism.

You speak of the Stalinists representing "the policy of exterminating finance-capital." I find it difficult to believe that you mean this literally. No, the role the Stalinists have played, above all outside the borders of the Soviet Union, has been that of conservative prop of the rule of finance-capital. The Kremlin agency of finance-capital has not become overnight the latter's exterminator. It does not play a revolutionary role—any more than the Chinese national bourgeoisie played a revolutionary role, any more than Gutchkov played a revolutionary role in March, 1917 in Russia; the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy is counter-revolutionary.

Would I tell the Finnish workers to accept arms and ammunition from Stalin? Would I tell the Hindu workers and peasants to accept arms and ammunition from Hitler? That is how you pose the question. My answer is: Of course I would! I would take arms for the revolution from Hitler, or Mussolini, or Stalin, or Daladier, or from a Caucasian mountain bandit! If I get them free of charge, so much the better. But it would not follow for me that just because I welcome arms smuggled in to me in Palestine by Hitler, that I would welcome Hitler if he sent his army to Palestine, or that I would urge anybody to give that army "material and military support." The "character" of Hitler's intervention in Palestine would have changed. By the same token, when Stalin is conducting a reactionary, annexationist war in Finland, I would readily accept arms from him if I were a revolutionist in Finland (although, in that case, nine chances out of ten I would receive his "armed aid" in the form of a bullet in the heart or a bayonet in the throat); and under certain conditions, given a favorable relationship of forces between his army and the Finnish revolutionary movement, I would even seek a practical military working agreement with him; but it does not follow from this that I call upon anyone now to give him "material and military support" in his reactionary war.

I repeat, I do not believe in the bureaucratic proletarian (socialist) revolution. I do not mean by this merely that I "have no faith" in it—no one in our movement has. I mean that I do not consider it possible. I reject the concept not out of "sentimental" reasons or a Tolstoyan "faith in the people" but because I believe it to be scientifically correct to repeat with Marx that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself. The bourgeois revolution, for a series of historical and social reasons, could be made and was made by other classes and social strata; the bourgeoisie could be liberated from feudal rule and establish its social dictatorship under the aegis of other social groups. But the proletarian revolution cannot be made by others than the proletariat acting as a mass; therein, among other things, it is distinguished from all preceding revolutions. No one else can free it—not even for a day.

The Factions in the Party

You support the Cannon faction as the proletarian, Marxist group; you condemn the Minority as the petty-bourgeois group, and propose that it be disposed of accordingly. Reading your arguments, I involuntarily ask myself: How can the theoretical, po-

litical and practical leader of the struggle against the "troika" in Russia and then against Stalinism, come to such conclusions?

Comrade Trotsky, I have always been as close a student of the history of the revolutionary movement as possible. I have never considered such a study to be a substitute for active participation in the making of revolutionary history, but rather as a guide for such participation. My interest in this history is not so much for its own sake, but above all in order to learn how to avoid mistakes of the past and to emulate that which was worthy. In my own way, I have tried to keep unforgotten and to live up to the best traditions of a hundred years of revolutionary Marxism. So little do I ignore the traditions of our movement that I am sometimes perhaps rightly accused of "archivistic" extremes. In extenuation for this sin I have always pleaded the need of keeping alive in this generation of revolutionists—my generation—the best traditions of the past generations, to establish the idea and spirit of revolutionary continuity. If my comrades sometimes jokingly chide me for my predilection for "precedents"—they have some reason for it. In good and tested precedents, I often seek and find a "short-cut" in revolutionary politics. A "short-cut" in this sense, that I do not believe every single problem must be approached from the very beginning, as something brand new, as something which past experience of the movement cannot guide us in solving.

If, therefore, I refer in this section of my letter to experiences of the past, you will understand that it is not done in a brittle polemical sense, but rather in the sense of helping myself and the movement find the right road with the help of illumination from that past.

Burnham says it is not a workers' state; Abern says it is; Shachtman represents, as Hansen* so tellingly puts it, the Doubtist faction. Their bloc on the question of "defense" and on the "organizational" question is therefore unprincipled, and typically petty-bourgeois. Let us grant for the moment that the "bloc" is as described. How many times have you been attacked by the Stalinists on the same grounds?

You made a bloc with the Zinovievist (Leningrad) Opposition in 1926. The Platform of the Opposition Bloc "evaded" the fundamental question of the theory of the permanent revolution. Why? The Stalinists insisted that the basic principled differences between Leninism (their "Leninism"!) and "Trotskyism" (revolutionary Marxism) revolved around the theory of the permanent revolution. The Zinovievists, who agreed basically with the Stalinist conception of the theory, agreed with you (that is, the Moscow, 1923, Opposition) to say that the theory was not at issue, and this was written into the documents of the Bloc. Was it unprincipled? I do not think so. The Bloc was united on the main political tasks before the Soviet Union and the International.

In the Bloc, at least for a considerable period of time, were not only you and the Zinovievists, who of course considered the Soviet Union a workers' state, but also the Democratic Centralists, who considered that it was not a workers' state. Yet, though you were formally closer to the Stalin-Bukharin group on that question, the Democratic Centralists supported the Opposition platform. Was that unprincipled? Again, I do not think so. In reply to one of the D.C. group comrades, Borodai, who asked you why steps should not be taken to reconsolidate the "forces of the Bolshevik guard," you wrote in 1928: "Unfortunately the question is not rightly posed by you. It was not I who separated myself from the D.C., but the D.C. group, which belonged to the general Opposition, separated itself from us. . . . The initiative for the unification (into the Bloc) came from the D.C. The first conferences with the Zinoviev people took place under the chairmanship of Comrade Saprnov (D.C. leader). I say this absolutely not as a reproach. For the Bloc was necessary and was a step forward."

You made a bloc—rather, you were in one faction—with Radek, who characterized the famous Canton bourgeois government as a "peasants and workers government." The Zinovievists were for the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" in China; you were for the proletarian revolution supported by the peasantry. The United Opposition, by the way, adopted the essential Zinovievist formula. The Stalinists sought to exploit these differences to the full. Yet the Bloc there too, except for mistakes that cannot be characterized as fundamental in my opinion, was principled; all its members agreed (more or less) on the basic and immediate political tasks in China. Suppose one were to say: on the fundamental principled question of the class nature of the Chinese revolution, Zinoviev had the Stalinist (i.e., petty-bourgeois) position (democratic dictatorship), while Trotsky said "it

*The questions raised by Hansen's article, and referred to by you, will be dealt with amply in another document.

does not matter." Wherein would such a reproach differ from the one you direct at us today?

We say in our resolution that we, the Minority, are united on the basic and immediate tasks of the Fourth International in the Soviet Union and the other belligerents. To the extent that we differ among ourselves on the "terminological" or "sociological" question—the class nature of the Soviet state—each comrade will vote on this question, if it is put, as he has voted in the past, according to conviction. Do you find that unprincipled? You wrote me on December 10, 1930 (the letter is to be found in my introduction to your book, "Problems of the Chinese Revolution") that though Radek was always with Zinoviev on the question of the Chinese Communist Party withdrawing from the Kuomintang, "up to 1926, I always voted independently in the Political Bureau on this question, against all the others." When the Bloc was formed, the majority was against you on this point. "But since it was a question of splitting with the Zinovievists, it was the general decision that I must submit publicly in this question and acquaint the Opposition in writing with my standpoint. . . . Now I can say with certainty that I made a mistake by submitting formally in this question." Let me then ask if that made the Opposition Bloc unprincipled or that an error was merely made.

You make a number of additional and minor points against us which are hardly meritorious. You say our resolution "could be signed, perhaps with slight changes, by the Bordigists, Ver-ecken, Sneevliet, Fenner Brockway, Marceau Pivert and the like. . . ." I assure you that also "perhaps with slight changes," Cannon's resolution would be signed by Oehler, Stamm, Marlen, and to the best of my knowledge, Molinier. You say that our criticisms, our "terminology" in particular, is copied from the bourgeois press. With as much reason, I could reply, that such terms as "Thermidor," "Bonapartism" and "totalitarian"—applied by us to the Stalinist regime, were used much earlier by the bourgeois and Menshevik press. With different connotations? Different aims? Yes, but that is true in both cases.

You raise the question of Comrade Abern. It would have been preferable if that were dealt with by Cannon. You write: "Abern, and only he, has his own traditional group which grew out of the old Communist Party and became bound together during the first period of the independent existence of the Left Opposition." On what do you base this—permit me to say it—fantastic charge? Of the comrades in our party today who "grew out of the old Communist Party" and who have been associated more or less consistently on the same side as Comrade Abern, and are with the Minority today, I can think of only one name. I would be interested in hearing at least a couple of more names! What is the basis of your information, Comrade Trotsky?

I have no intention of evading the famous "Abern question." I have had in the past many sharp disputes with the old Weber-Abern group in general, and with Comrade Abern in particular. Indeed, I once wrote a very harsh and bitter polemical document against that group which Cannon flatteringly calls a "Marxist classic." If a historical study-circle were to be formed tomorrow to consider that period in our party history, there is much in that document I would repeat, much I would moderate, much I would discard. Abern, I suppose, would act in kind. But we are not discussing that period, and I find it impossible to shape my politics on the basis of outlived disputes.

You know that before the fight against the Weber-Abern faction, there had been a sharp dispute between Cannon's faction and one led by me, a dispute lasting several years. One of the reasons I broke with many of the members of my then faction was because I insisted against them that the issues in the fight against Cannon had either lost their urgency or had the possibility of becoming moderated. Consequently, it was necessary to collaborate fraternally with the Cannon group on a new basis, and not continue a die-hard struggle on outlived or vague issues, or reminiscences.

I am against political feuds which go on endlessly like Kentucky feuds. I was against them when directed at Cannon. I am against them when directed at Abern.

Cannon knows how spurious it is to inject into the present dispute the "Abern question." He knows what every informed party leader, and many members, know, namely, that for the past several years at least there has been no such thing as an "Abern group." So true is this that at the Chicago convention of the party, two years ago, the slate for the Political Committee presented by Cannon and me had on it four ex-"Aberniters" out of a total of seven members, i.e., a majority! So true is this that since that time Comrade Abern has been entrusted with some of the

most responsible and even confidential tasks that the Political Committee could assign to him (a party-public document prevents me from going into detail on this point). At the last convention, in July, 1939, when the dispute arose over the "organization document" and later over the composition of the National Committee, Comrade Abern was in neither of the two contending groups, for which Cannon, in the debate, went out of his way to praise the "objectivity" and "organizational intelligence" of Abern!

I know what the Cannonites mean with their campaign against Abern. Abern is all right so long as he "comes along." However, the minute Abern expresses a different view from the Cannon leadership on an important question, then the campaign is launched against him not on the basis of any views he now defends but on the basis of a fight which is I-don't-know-how-many years old. Here, too, I must remind you that you too joined with groups or "remnants" of groups against which you had fought vigorously in earlier years, which you and Lenin had even severely condemned—Workers Oppositionists, Democratic Centralists, to say nothing of the Zinovievists. You will surely recall how the bureaucracy sought to concentrate the discussion not on the platform of the Opposition Bloc, but on what Zinoviev had written about Trotsky at one time, and vice versa, and about the "unprincipled mutual amnesty" they had extended each other.

You say that you and the Cannon group give a class characterization of the Minority, whereas "the opposition, on the contrary, precisely because of its petty-bourgeois character does not even attempt to look for the social roots of the hostile camp." I could answer this, in the first place, by emphasizing part of the preceding sentence: "Any serious factional fight in a party is always in the final analysis a reflection of the class struggle." Yes, generally and in the final analysis, but not at every given moment or with every factional grouping. I have no doubt of my ability to give many examples from the history of the Russian party after the revolution in which sharp factional fights took place; I think that it is doubtful if a clear class characterization could be given of all the factions involved. I could say, in the second and more important place, it is first necessary to prove (a) that the Minority represents a deviation from the proletarian Marxian line, (b) that this deviation is typically petty-bourgeois, and (c) that it is more than an isolated deviation—it is a tendency. That is precisely what has not been proved.

But is it true that the Minority gives no political characterization of the Cannon faction? It is somewhat surprising to read your article, to see in it reference to the allegedly long-lived Abern group, and to see not a single word about the only permanent faction in the party—the Cannon clique, the group of comrades you refer to euphemistically as "Cannon and his collaborators." When we speak of it as a permanent faction we do not confine ourselves to mere assertion. We are able to prove it from the records of the party, and we do prove it in our document on "The War and Bureaucratic Conservatism." How do you explain the existence of this faction-in-permanence, in season and out, during political disputes and during peace-times in the party?

We characterize this faction with the political designation: "bureaucratic conservatism." Your comment on this is that we "see only 'conservatism', 'errors', 'bad methods' and similar psychological, intellectual and technical deficiencies." You consider our characterization of the Cannon faction to be "psychological." Excuse me, but I fail to understand. Let me quote from your polemic against the bureaucracy in the Russian party in 1923: "The heterogeneous political ideology that now rises against bureaucratism can be controlled all the better, and it can be cleansed of all alien and harmful elements, if we take more seriously the road of the 'new course'. But that is impossible without a serious turn-about in the mentality and the intentions of the party apparatus. But on the contrary, we are now witnessing a new offensive of the latter, which eliminates all criticism of the 'old course', formally condemned but not yet liquidated, by treating it as a manifestation of factional spirit. If factions are dangerous—and they are—it is criminal to close one's eyes to the danger represented by the **bureaucratic conservative faction.**" (The New Course, p. 43.) Was that characterization of the then leadership of the party "psychological," "technical," "intellectual" and devoid of political or class significance? No more so than our present characterization of the Cannon faction!

You ask us to support this faction, or at least to subordinate ourselves to it. You declare that this is necessary because we are the petty-bourgeois revisionist tendency—Cannon the proletarian Marxist tendency. If your class characterizations of the two

groups were correct, your proposed solution of the party crisis might have validity. In that case, and in accordance with our class doctrine, the petty-bourgeoisie must follow the proletariat, and not lead it or even be joint leader of the party with it. The petty-bourgeoisie, if it is admitted into the party as an organized group, should properly be given a "second-class" status. If it threatens to take over the leadership of the party, the proletarian wing has no other choice before it save to declare its organizational independence immediately, or in any case to have a split perspective precisely in view of the war situation. That is the political meaning I get from the concluding paragraphs of your article.

This solution we cannot and will not accept, Comrade Trotsky. We do not believe Cannon represents the proletarian, Marxist tendency—he represents the tendency of bureaucratic conservatism. And against this tendency, and particularly against its position on the Russian question (which represents an increasingly clear political capitulation to Stalinism), we must continue our struggle until our views triumph.

Your support of the Cannon faction is very firm, Comrade Trotsky; but it is very wrong. This time, I am unable to support your standpoint, a fact I establish with regret and even reluctance. I can only hope that the divergences narrow down in the period to come. But to expect me or my associates to support the Cannon faction and its position, is to expect what we cannot and will not give. Several years ago, you stood insistently, even against widespread opposition, in support of the Molinier group in France. It, too, you represented as the revolutionary proletarian Marxist tendency. I do not hold that the opponents of Molinier represented—all of them, or on all questions—the best elements in the French or European movement. But in the end you declared openly that Molinier had nothing in common with the Fourth International or with the working class movement.

It goes without saying that Cannon is not Molinier, and it would be useless to try to make me appear to say so. But I believe

that just as you were mistaken in your judgment of Molinier, so you are mistaken in our present dispute in your judgment of Cannon and his clique. Just as you later acknowledged your wrong estimate of Molinier, I am firmly convinced that you will be obliged to make a similar acknowledgement about the Cannon faction in time to come. Some six years ago, if my memory serves me rightly, you wrote a comment on the factional fight in the American section between the Cannon and Shachtman groups. In it you said that the party leadership (Cannon faction) represented a tendency toward Stalinist bureaucratism. You will be obliged, I am convinced, to reiterate that characterization in more elaborate, up-to-date form in the future.

In your personal letter to me, dated Dec. 20, 1939, which I permit myself to quote from, you write: "I believe that you are on the wrong side of the barricade, my dear friend." I should like to believe that this is a polemical metaphor. You add: "I don't hope to convince you with these lines, but I do express the prognosis that if you refuse now to find a way towards collaboration with the Marxist wing against the petty-bourgeois revisionists, you will inevitably deplore for years and years the greatest error of your life."

From all that I have said in this document you will understand why I find it impossible to accept your recommendation. For my part, I can only hope that your prognosis is wrong. In return, I can only say in a spirit which I believe you will understand to be animated by the objective interests of the cause and with a due sense of proportion: The support you are now giving to the Cannon faction leadership and its political position, you will have occasion in the not distant future to consider as one of the most serious mistakes in the history of the Bolshevik-Leninist movement.

With revolutionary greetings,

Max Shachtman

January 1, 1940.

From a Scratch—To the Danger of Gangrene

The Meaning of the Present Discussion

The discussion is developing in accordance with its own internal logic. Each camp, corresponding to its social character and political physiognomy, seeks to strike at those points where its opponent is weakest and most vulnerable. It is precisely this that determines the course of the discussion and not a priori plans of the leaders of the opposition. It is belated and sterile to lament now over the flaring up of the discussion. It is necessary only to keep a sharp eye on the role played by Stalinist provocateurs who are unquestionably in the party and who are under orders to poison the atmosphere of the discussion and to head the ideological struggle towards split. It is not so very difficult to recognize these gentlemen; their zeal is excessive and of course artificial; they replace ideas and arguments with gossip and slander. They must be exposed and thrown out through the joint efforts of both factions. But the principled struggle must be carried through to the end, that is, to serious clarification of the more important questions that have been posed. It is necessary to so utilize the discussion that it raises the theoretical level of the party.

A considerable proportion of the membership of the American section as well as our entire young International, came to us either from the Comintern in its period of decline or from the Second International. These are bad schools. The discussion has revealed that wide circles of the party lack a sound theoretical education. It is sufficient, for instance, to refer to the circumstance that the New York local of the party did not respond with a vigorous defensive reflex to the attempts at lightminded revision of Marxist doctrine and program but on the contrary gave support in the majority to the revisionists. This is unfortunate but remediable to the degree that our American section and the entire International consists of honest individuals sincerely seeking their way to the revolutionary road. They have the desire and the will to learn. But there is no time to lose. It is precisely the party's penetration into the trade unions, and into the workers' milieu in general that demands heightening the theoretical qualification of our cadres. I do not mean by cadres the "apparatus" but the party as a whole. Every party member should and must consider himself an officer in the proletarian army.

"Since when have you become specialists in the question of philosophy?" the oppositionists now ironically ask the majority representatives. Irony here is completely out of place. Scientific socialism is the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process; namely, the instinctive and elemental drive of the proletariat to reconstruct society on communist beginnings. These organic tendencies in the psychology of workers spring to life with utmost rapidity today in the epoch of crises and wars. The discussion has revealed beyond all question a clash in the party between a petty-bourgeois tendency and a proletarian tendency. The petty-bourgeois tendency reveals its confusion in its attempt to reduce the program of the party to the small coin of "concrete" questions. The proletarian tendency on the contrary strives to correlate all the partial questions into theoretical unity. At stake at the present time is not the extent to which individual members of the majority consciously apply the dialectic method. What is important is the fact that the majority as a whole pushes toward the proletarian posing of the questions and by very reason of this tends to assimilate the dialectic which is the "algebra of the revolution." The oppositionists, I am informed, greet with bursts of laughter the very mention of "dialectics." In vain. This unworthy method will not help. The dialectic of the historic process has more than once cruelly punished those who tried to jeer at it.

Comrade Shachtman's latest article, "An Open Letter to Leon Trotsky," is an alarming symptom. It reveals that Shachtman refuses to learn from the discussion and persists instead in deepening his mistakes, exploiting thereby not only the inadequate theoretical level of the party, but also the specific prejudices of its petty-bourgeois wing. Everybody is aware of the facility with which Shachtman is able to weave various historical episodes around one or another axis. This ability makes Shachtman a talented journalist. Unfortunately, this by itself is not enough. The main question is what axis to select. Shachtman is absorbed always by the reflection of politics in literature and in the press. He lacks interest in the actual processes of the class struggle, the life of the masses, the inter-relationships between the different layers within the working class itself, etc. I have read not a few excellent and even brilliant articles by Shachtman but I have never seen a single com-

mentary of his which actually probed into the life of the American working class or its vanguard.

A qualification must be made to this extent—that not only Shachtman's personal failing is embodied therein, but the fate of a whole revolutionary generation which because of a special conjuncture of historical conditions grew up outside the labor movement. More than once in the past I have had occasion to speak and write about the danger of these valuable elements degenerating despite their devotion to the revolution. What was an inescapable characteristic of adolescence in its day has become a weakness. Weakness invites disease. If neglected, the disease can become fatal. To escape this danger it is necessary to open a new chapter consciously in the development of the party. The propagandists and journalists of the Fourth International must begin a new chapter in their own consciousness. It is necessary to re-arm. It is necessary to make an about-face on one's own axis: to turn one's back to the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, and to face towards the workers.

To view as the cause of the present party crisis—the conservatism of its worker section; to seek a solution to the crisis through the victory of the petty-bourgeois bloc—it would be difficult to conceive a mistake more dangerous to the party. As a matter of fact, the gist of the present crisis consists in the conservatism of the petty-bourgeois elements who have passed through a purely propagandistic school and who have not yet found a pathway to the road of the class struggle. The present crisis is the final battle of these elements for self-preservation. Every oppositionist as an individual can, if he firmly desires, find a worthy place for himself in the revolutionary movement. As a faction they are doomed. In the struggle that is developing, Shachtman is not in the camp where he ought to be. As always in such cases, his strong sides have receded into the background while his weak traits on the other hand have assumed an especially finished expression. His "Open Letter" represents, so to speak, a crystallization of his weak traits.

Shachtman has left out a trifle: his class position. Hence his extraordinary zigzags, his improvisations and leaps. He replaces class analysis with disconnected historical anecdotes for the sole purpose of covering up his own shift, for camouflaging the contradiction between his yesterday and today. This is Shachtman's procedure with the history of Marxism, the history of his own party, and the history of the Russian Opposition. In carrying this out, he heaps mistakes upon mistakes. All the historical analogies to which he resorts, speak, as we shall see, against him.

It is much more difficult to correct mistakes than to commit them. I must ask patience from the reader in following with me step by step all the zigzags of Shachtman's mental operations. For my part I promise not to confine myself merely to exposing mistakes and contradictions, but to counterpose from beginning to end the proletarian position against the petty-bourgeois, the Marxist position against the eclectic. In this way all of us perhaps may learn something from the discussion.

"Precedents"

"How did we, irreconcilable revolutionists, so suddenly become a petty-bourgeois tendency?" Shachtman demands indignantly. Where are the proofs? "Wherein (has) this tendency manifested itself in the last year (!) or two among the representative spokesmen of the Minority?" (*Internal Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 7, Jan. 1940, p. 11.) Why didn't we yield in the past to the influence of the petty-bourgeois democracy? Why during the Spanish Civil War did we . . . and so forth and so on. This is Shachtman's trump argument in beginning his polemic against me and the one on which he plays variations in all keys, apparently investing it with exceptional importance. It does not so much as enter Shachtman's mind that I can turn this very argument against him.

The opposition document, "War and Bureaucratic Conservatism," concedes that Trotsky is right nine times out of ten, perhaps ninety-nine times out of a hundred. I understand only too well the qualified and extremely magnanimous character of this concession. The proportion of my mistakes is in reality considerably greater. How explain then the fact that two or three weeks after this document was written, Shachtman suddenly decided that Trotsky:

(a) Is incapable of a critical attitude towards information supplied him although one of his informants for ten years has been Shachtman himself.

(b) Is incapable of distinguishing a proletarian tendency from

a petty-bourgeois tendency—a Bolshevik tendency from a Menshevik tendency.

(c) Is champion of the absurd conception of "bureaucratic revolution" in place of revolution by the masses.

(d) Is incapable of working out a correct answer to concrete questions in Poland, Finland, etc.

(e) Is manifesting a tendency to capitulate to Stalinism.

(f) Is unable to comprehend the meaning of democratic centralism—and so on *ad infinitum*.

In a word, during the space of two or three weeks Shachtman has discovered that I make mistakes ninety-nine times out of a hundred, especially where Shachtman himself happens to become involved. It occurs to me that the latest percentage also suffers from slight exaggeration—but this time in the opposite direction. In any event Shachtman discovered my tendency to replace revolution by the masses with "bureaucratic revolution" far more abruptly than I discovered his petty-bourgeois deviation.

Comrade Shachtman invites me to present proof of the existence of a "petty-bourgeois tendency" in the party during the past year; or even two-three years. Shachtman is completely justified in not wishing to refer to the more distant past. But in accordance with Shachtman's invitation, I shall confine myself to the last three years. Please pay attention. To the rhetorical questions of my unsparing critic I shall reply with a few exact documents.

I.

On May 25, 1937, I wrote to New York concerning the policy of the Bolshevik-Leninist faction in the Socialist party:

" . . . I must cite two recent documents: (a) the private letter of 'Max' about the convention, and (b) Shachtman's article, 'Towards a Revolutionary Socialist Party.' The title of this article alone characterizes a false perspective. It seems to me established by the developments, including the last convention, that the party is evolving, not into a 'revolutionary' party, but into a kind of I.L.P., that is, a miserable centrist political abortion without any perspective.

"The affirmation that the American Socialist Party is now 'closer to the position of revolutionary Marxism than any party of the Second or Third Internationals' is an absolutely unmerited compliment: the American Socialist Party is only more backward than the analogous formations in Europe—the P.O.U.M., I.L.P., S.A.P., etc., . . . Our duty is to unmask this negative advantage of Norman Thomas and Co., and not to speak about the 'superiority (of the war resolution) over any resolution ever adopted before by the party . . .' This is a purely literary appreciation, because every resolution must be taken in connection with historical events, with the political situation and its imperative needs . . ."

In both of the documents mentioned in the above letter, Shachtman revealed excessive adaptability towards the left wing of the petty-bourgeois democrats—political mimicry—a very dangerous symptom in a revolutionary politician! It is extremely important to take note of his high appraisal of the "radical" position of Norman Thomas in relation to war . . . in Europe. Opportunists, as is well known, tend to all the greater radicalism the further removed they are from events. With this law in mind it is not difficult to appraise at its true value the fact that Shachtman and his allies accuse us of a tendency to "capitulate to Stalinism." Alas, sitting in the Bronx, it is much easier to display irreconcilability towards the Kremlin than towards the American petty-bourgeoisie.

II.

To believe Comrade Shachtman, I dragged the question of the class composition of the factions into the dispute by the hair. Here too, let us refer to the recent past.

On October 3, 1937, I wrote to New York:

"I have remarked hundreds of times that the worker who remains unnoticed in the 'normal' conditions of party life reveals remarkable qualities in a change of the situation when general formulas and fluent pens are not sufficient, where acquaintance with the life of workers and practical capacities are necessary. Under such conditions a gifted worker reveals a sureness of himself and reveals also his general political capabilities.

"Predominance in the organization of intellectuals is inevitable in the first period of the development of the organization. It is at the same time a big handicap to the political education of the more gifted workers. . . . It is absolutely necessary at the next convention to introduce in the local and central committees as many workers as possible. To a worker, activity in the leading party body is at the same time a high political school. . . .

"The difficulty is that in every organization there are traditional committee members and that different secondary, factional, and

personal considerations play a too great role in the composition of the list of candidates."

I have never met either attention or interest from Comrade Shachtman in questions of this kind.

III.

To believe Comrade Shachtman, I injected the question of Comrade Abern's faction as a concentration of petty-bourgeois individuals artificially and without any basis in fact. Yet on October 10, 1937, at a time when Shachtman marched shoulder to shoulder with Cannon and it was considered officially that Abern had no faction, I wrote to Cannon:

"The party has only a minority of genuine factory workers. . . . The non-proletarian elements represent a very necessary yeast, and I believe that we can be proud of the good quality of these elements. . . . But. . . . Our party can be inundated by non-proletarian elements and can even lose its revolutionary character. The task is naturally not to prevent the influx of intellectuals by artificial methods, . . . but to orientate practically all the organization towards the factories, the strikes, the unions. . . .

"A concrete example: we cannot devote enough or equal forces to all the factories. Our local organization can choose for its activity in the next period one, two, or three factories in its area and concentrate all its forces upon these factories. If we have in one of them two or three workers we can create a special help commission of five non-workers with the purpose of enlarging our influence in these factories.

"The same can be done among the trade unions. We cannot introduce non-worker members in workers' unions. But we can with success build up help commissions for oral and literary action in connection with our comrades in the union. The unbreakable conditions should be: **not to command the workers but only to help them**, to give them suggestions, to arm them with the facts, ideas, factory papers, special leaflets, and so on.

"Such collaboration would have a tremendous educational importance from one side for the worker comrades, from the other side for the non-workers who need a solid re-education.

"You have for example an important number of Jewish non-worker elements in your ranks. They can be a very valuable yeast if the party succeeds by and by in extracting them from a closed milieu and ties them to the factory workers by daily activity. I believe such an orientation would also assure a more healthy atmosphere inside the party. . . .

"One general rule we can establish immediately: a party member who doesn't win during three or six months a new worker for the party is not a good party member.

"If we established seriously such a general orientation and if we verified every week the practical results, we will avoid a great danger; namely, that the intellectuals and white collar workers might suppress the worker minority, condemn it to silence, **transform the party into a very intelligent discussion club but absolutely not habitable for workers.**

"The same rules should be in a corresponding form elaborated for the working and recruiting of the youth organization, otherwise we run the danger of educating good young elements into revolutionary dilettantes and not revolutionary fighters."

From this letter it is obvious I trust that I did not mention the danger of a petty-bourgeois deviation the day following the Stalin-Hitler pact or the day following the dismemberment of Poland, but brought it forward persistently two years ago and more. Furthermore, as I then pointed out, bearing in mind primarily the "non-existent" Abern faction, it was absolutely requisite in order to cleanse the atmosphere of the party, that the Jewish petty-bourgeois elements of the New York local be shifted from their habitual conservative milieu and dissolved in the real labor movement. It is precisely because of this that the above letter (not the first of its kind), written more than two years before the present discussion began is of far greater weight as evidence than all the writings of the opposition leaders on the motives which impelled me to come out in defense of the "Cannon clique."

IV.

Shachtman's inclination to yield to petty-bourgeois influence, especially the academic and literary, has never been a secret to me. During the time of the Dewey Commission I wrote, on October 14, 1937, to Cannon, Shachtman, and Novack:

" . . . I insisted upon the necessity to surround the Committee by delegates of workers' groups in order to create channels from the Committee in the masses. . . . Comrades Novack, Shachtman and others declared themselves in agreement with me on this point. Together we analyzed the practical possibilities to realize this

plan. . . . But later, in spite of repeated questions from me, I never could have information about the matter and only accidentally I heard that Comrade Shachtman was opposed to it. Why? I don't know."

Shachtman never did divulge his reasons to me. In my letter I expressed myself with the utmost diplomacy but I did not have the slightest doubt that while agreeing with me in words Shachtman in reality was afraid of wounding the excessive political sensibilities of our temporary liberal allies: in this direction Shachtman demonstrates exceptional "delicacy."

V.

On April 15, 1938, I wrote to New York:

"I am a bit astonished about the kind of publicity given to Eastman's letter in the *New International*. The publication of the letter is all right, but the prominence given it on the cover, combined with the silence about Eastman's article in Harpers seems to me a bit compromising for the *New International*. Many people will interpret this fact as our willingness to close our eyes on principles when friendship is concerned."

VI.

On June 1, 1938 I wrote Comrade Shachtman:

"It is difficult to understand here why you are so tolerant and even friendly towards Mr. Eugene Lyons. He speaks it seems at your banquets; at the same time he speaks at the banquets of the White Guards."

This letter continued the struggle for a more independent and resolute policy towards the so-called "liberals," who, while waging a struggle against the revolution, wish to maintain "friendly relations" with the proletariat, for this doubles their market value in the eyes of bourgeois public opinion.

VII.

On October 6, 1938, almost a year before the discussion began I wrote about the necessity of our party press turning its face decisively toward the workers:

"Very important in this respect is the attitude of the *Socialist Appeal*. It is undoubtedly a very good Marxist paper, but it is not a genuine instrument of political action. . . . I tried to interest the editorial board of the *Socialist Appeal* in this question, but without success."

A note of complaint is evident in these words. And it is not accidental. Comrade Shachtman as has been mentioned already displays far more interest in isolated literary episodes of long-ago-concluded struggles than in the social composition of his own party or the readers of his own paper.

VIII.

On January 20, 1939, in a letter which I have already cited in connection with dialectic materialism, I once again touched on the question of Comrade Shachtman's gravitation towards the milieu of the petty-bourgeois literary fraternity.

"I cannot understand why the *Socialist Appeal* is almost neglecting the Stalinist Party. This party now represents a mass of contradictions. Splits are inevitable. The next important acquisitions will surely come from the Stalinist Party. Our political attention should be concentrated on it. We should follow the development of its contradictions day by day and hour by hour. Someone on the staff ought to devote the bulk of his time to the Stalinists' ideas and actions. We could provoke a discussion, and if possible, publish the letters of hesitating Stalinists.

"It would be a thousand times more important than inviting Eastman, Lyons and the others to present their individual sweatings. I was wondering a bit at why you gave place to Eastman's last insignificant and arrogant article. . . . But I am absolutely perplexed that, you, personally, invite these people to besmirch the not so numerous pages of the *New International*. The perpetuation of this polemic can interest some petty bourgeois intellectuals, but not the revolutionary elements.

"It is my firm conviction that a certain reorganization of the *New International* and the *Socialist Appeal* is necessary: more distance from Eastman, Lyons and so on; and nearer the workers, and in this sense, to the Stalinist Party."

Recent events have demonstrated, sad to say, that Shachtman did not turn away from Eastman and Co. but on the contrary drew closer to them.

IX.

On May 27, 1939, I again wrote concerning the character of the *Socialist Appeal* in connection with the social composition of the party:

"From the minutes I see that you are having difficulty with the *Socialist Appeal*. The paper is very well done from the journalistic point of view; but it is a paper for the workers and not a workers' paper. . . .

"As it is, the paper is divided among various writers, each of whom is very good, but collectively they do not permit the workers to penetrate to the pages of the *Appeal*. Each of them speaks for the workers (and speaks very well) but nobody will hear the workers. In spite of its literary brilliance, to a certain degree the paper becomes a victim of journalistic routine. You do not hear at all how the workers live, fight, clash with the police or drink whiskey. It is very dangerous for the paper as a revolutionary instrument of the party. The task is not to make a paper through the joint forces of a skilled editorial board but to encourage the workers to speak for themselves.

"A radical and courageous change is necessary as a condition of success. . . .

"Of course it is not only a question of the paper, but of the whole course of policy. I continue to be of the opinion that you have too many petty-bourgeois boys and girls who are very good and devoted to the party, but who do not fully realize that their duty is not to discuss among themselves, but to penetrate into the fresh milieu of workers. I repeat my proposition: Every petty-bourgeois member of the party who, during a certain time, let us say three or six months, does not win a worker for the party, should be demoted to the rank of candidate and after another three months expelled from the party. In some cases it might be unjust, but the party as a whole would receive a salutary shock which it needs very much. A very radical change is necessary."

In proposing such Draconian measures as the expulsion of those petty-bourgeois elements incapable of linking themselves to the workers, I had in mind not the "defense" of Cannon's faction but the rescue of the party from degeneration.

X.

Commenting on skeptical voices from the Socialist Workers Party which had reached my ears, I wrote Comrade Cannon on June 16, 1939:

"The pre-war situation, the aggravation of nationalism and so on is a natural hindrance to our development and the profound cause of the depression in our ranks. But it must now be underlined that the more the party is petty-bourgeois in its composition, the more it is dependent upon the changes in the official public opinion. It is a supplementary argument for the necessity for a courageous and active reorientation toward the masses.

"The pessimistic reasonings you mention in your article are, of course, a reflection of the patriotic, nationalistic pressure of the official public opinion. 'If Fascism is victorious in France. . . ' 'If Fascism is victorious in England. . . ' And so on. The victories of Fascism are important, but the death agony of capitalism is more important."

The question of the dependence of the petty-bourgeois wing of the party upon official public opinion consequently was posed several months before the present discussion began and was not at all dragged in artificially in order to discredit the opposition.

* * *

Comrade Shachtman demanded that I furnish "precedents" of petty-bourgeois tendencies among the leaders of the opposition during the past period. I went so far in answering this demand as to single out from the leaders of the opposition Comrade Shachtman himself. I am far from having exhausted the material at my disposal. Two letters—one of Shachtman's, the other mine—which are perhaps still more interesting as "precedents," I shall cite presently in another connection. Let Shachtman not object that the lapses and mistakes in which the correspondence is concerned likewise can be brought against other comrades, including representatives of the present majority. Possibly. Probably. But Shachtman's name is not repeated in this correspondence accidentally. Where others have committed episodic mistakes, Shachtman has evinced a tendency.

In any event, completely opposite to what Shachtman now claims concerning my alleged "sudden" and "unexpected" appraisals, I am able, documents in hand, to prove—and I believe have proved—that my article on the "Petty-Bourgeois Opposition" did no more than summarize my correspondence with New York during the last three years. (In reality the past ten.) Shachtman has very demonstratively asked for "precedents." I have given him "precedents." They speak entirely against Shachtman.

The Philosophic Bloc Against Marxism

The opposition circles consider it possible to assert that the question of dialectic materialism was introduced by me only because I lacked an answer to the "concrete" questions of Finland, Latvia, India, Afghanistan, Beluchistan, and so on. This argument, void of all merit in itself, is of interest however in that it characterizes the level of certain individuals in the opposition, their attitude toward theory, and toward elementary ideological loyalty. It would not be amiss, therefore, to refer to the fact that my first serious conversation with Comrades Shachtman and Novack, in the train immediately after my arrival in Mexico in January 1937, was devoted to the necessity of persistently propagating dialectic materialism. After our American section split from the Socialist Party I insisted most strongly on the earliest possible publication of a theoretical organ, having again in mind the need to educate the party, first and foremost its new members, in the spirit of dialectic materialism. In the United States, I wrote at that time, where the bourgeoisie systematically instills vulgar empiricism in the workers, more than anywhere else is it necessary to speed the elevation of the movement to a proper theoretical level. On January 20, 1939, I wrote to Comrade Shachtman concerning his joint article with Comrade Burnham, "Intellectuals in Retreat":

"The section on the dialectic is the greatest blow that, you personally, as the editor of the *New International* could have delivered to Marxist theory. . . . Good! We will speak about it publicly."

Thus a year ago I gave open notice in advance to Shachtman that I intended to wage a public struggle against his eclectic tendencies. At that time there was no talk whatever of the coming opposition; in any case furthest from my mind was the supposition that the philosophic bloc against Marxism prepared the ground for a political bloc against the program of the Fourth International.

The character of the differences which have risen to the surface has only confirmed my former fears both in regard to the social composition of the party and in regard to the theoretical education of the cadres. There was nothing that required a change of mind or "artificial" introduction. This is how matters stand in actuality. Let me also add that I feel somewhat abashed over the fact that it is almost necessary to justify coming out in defense of Marxism within one of the sections of the Fourth International!

In his "Open Letter," Shachtman refers particularly to the fact that Comrade Vincent Dunne expressed satisfaction over the article on the intellectuals. But I too praised it: "Many parts are excellent." However, as the Russian proverb puts it, a spoonful of tar can spoil a barrel of honey. It is precisely this spoonful of tar that is involved. The section devoted to dialectic materialism expresses a number of conceptions monstrous from the Marxist standpoint, whose aim, it is now clear, was to prepare the ground for a political bloc. In view of the stubbornness with which Shachtman persists that I seized upon the article as a pretext, let me once again quote the central passage in the section of interest to us:

" . . . nor has anyone yet demonstrated that agreement or disagreement on the more abstract doctrines of dialectic materialism necessarily affects (!) today's and tomorrow's concrete political issues—and political parties, programs and struggles are based on such concrete issues." (The *New International*, January 1939, p. 7.) Isn't this alone sufficient? What is above all astonishing is this formula, unworthy of revolutionists: "Political parties, programs and struggles . . . are based on such concrete issues." What parties? What programs? What struggles? All parties and all programs are here lumped together. The party of the proletariat is a party unlike all the rest. It is not at all based upon "such concrete issues." In its very foundation it is diametrically opposed to the parties of bourgeois horse-traders and petty-bourgeois rag patchers. Its task is the preparation of a social revolution and the regeneration of mankind on new material and moral foundations. In order not to give way under the pressure of bourgeois public opinion and police repression, the proletarian revolutionist, a leader all the more, requires a clear, far-sighted, completely thought-out world outlook. Only upon the basis of a unified Marxist conception is it possible to correctly approach "concrete" questions.

Precisely here begins Shachtman's betrayal—not a mere mistake as I wished to believe last year; but it is now clear an outright theoretical betrayal. Following in the footsteps of Burnham,

Shachtman teaches the young revolutionary party that "no one has yet demonstrated" presumably that dialectic materialism affects the political activity of the party. "No one has yet demonstrated" in other words, that Marxism is of any use in the struggle of the proletariat. The party consequently does not have the least motive for acquiring and defending dialectic materialism. This is nothing else than renunciation of Marxism, of scientific method in general, a wretched capitulation to empiricism. Precisely this constitutes the philosophic bloc of Shachtman with Burnham and through Burnham with the priests of bourgeois "Science." It is precisely this and only this to which I referred in my January 20 letter of last year.

On March 5, Shachtman replied: "I have reread the January article of Burnham and Shachtman to which you referred, and while in the light of which you have written I might have proposed a different formulation here (!) and there (!) if the article were to be done over again, I cannot agree with the substance of your criticism."

This reply as is always the case with Shachtman in a serious situation, in reality expresses nothing whatsoever; but it still gives the impression that Shachtman has left a bridge open for retreat. Today, seized with factional frenzy, he promises to "do it again and again tomorrow." Do what? Capitulate to bourgeois "Science"? Renounce Marxism?

Shachtman explains at length to me (we shall see presently with what foundation) the utility of this or that political bloc. I am speaking about the deadliness of theoretical betrayal. A bloc can be justified or not depending upon its content and the circumstances. Theoretical betrayal cannot be justified by any bloc. Shachtman refers to the fact that his article is of purely political character. I do not speak of the article but of that section which renounces Marxism. If a text book on physics contained only two lines on God as the first cause it would be my right to conclude that the author is an obscurantist.

Shachtman does not reply to the accusation but tries to distract attention by turning to irrelevant matters. "Wherein does what you call my 'bloc with Burnham in the sphere of philosophy' differ," he asks, "from Lenin's bloc with Bogdanov? Why was the latter principled and ours unprincipled? I should be very much interested to know the answer to this question." I shall deal presently with the political difference, or rather the political polar opposite between the two blocs. We are here interested in the question of Marxist method. Wherein is the difference you ask? In this, that Lenin never declared for Bogdanov's profit that dialectic materialism is superfluous in solving "concrete political questions." In this, that Lenin never theoretically confounded the Bolshevik party with parties in general. He was organically incapable of uttering such abominations. And not he alone but not a single one of the serious Bolsheviks. That is the difference. Do you understand? Shachtman sarcastically promised me that he would be "interested" in a clear answer. The answer I trust has been given. I don't demand the "interest."

The Abstract and the Concrete; Economics and Politics

The most lamentable section of Shachtman's lamentable opus is the chapter, "The State and the Character of the War." "What then is our position?" asks the author. "Simply this: It is impossible to deduce directly our policy towards a specific war from an abstract characterization of the class character of the state involved in the war, more particularly, from the property forms prevailing in that state. Our policy must flow from a concrete examination of the character of the war in relation to the interests of the international socialist revolution." (Loc. Cit. p. 13. My emphasis.) What a muddle! What a tangle of sophistry! If it is impossible to deduce our policy directly from the class character of a state, then why can't this be done non-directly? Why must the analysis of the character of the state be abstract whereas the analysis of the character of the war is concrete? Formally speaking, one can say with equal, in fact with much more right, that our policy in relation to the U.S.S.R. can be deduced not from an abstract characterization of war as "imperialist," but only from a concrete analysis of the character of the state in the given historical situation. The fundamental sophistry upon which Shachtman constructs everything else is simple enough: Inasmuch as the economic basis determines events in the super-structure not immediately; inasmuch as the mere class characterization of the state is not enough to solve the practical tasks, therefore . . . therefore we can get along without examining economics

and the class nature of the state; by replacing them, as Shachtman phrases it in his journalistic jargon with the "realities of living events" (Loc. Cit. p. 14).

The very same artifice circulated by Shachtman to justify his philosophic bloc with Burnham (dialectic materialism determines our politics not immediately, consequently . . . it does not in general affect the "concrete political tasks"), is repeated here word for word in relation to Marxist sociology: Inasmuch as property forms determine the policy of a state not immediately it is possible therefore to throw Marxist sociology overboard in general in determining "concrete political tasks."

But why stop there? Since the law of labor value determines prices not "directly" and not "immediately"; since the laws of natural selection determine not "directly" and not "immediately" the birth of a suckling pig; since the laws of gravity determine not "directly" and not "immediately" the tumble of a drunken policeman down a flight of stairs, therefore . . . therefore let us leave Marx, Darwin, Newton, and all the other lovers of "abstractions" to collect dust on a shelf. This is nothing less than the solemn burial of science, for after all, the entire course of the development of science proceeds from "direct" and "immediate" causes to the more remote and profound ones, from multiple varieties and kaleidoscopic events—to the unity of the driving forces.

The law of labor value determines prices not "immediately," but it nevertheless does determine them. Such "concrete" phenomena as the bankruptcy of the New Deal find their explanation in the final analysis in the "abstract" law of value. Roosevelt does not know this, but a Marxist dare not proceed without knowing it. Not immediately but through a whole series of intermediate factors and their reciprocal interaction, property forms determine not only politics but also morality. A proletarian politician seeking to ignore the class nature of the state would invariably end up like the policeman who ignores the laws of gravitation; that is, by smashing his nose.

Shachtman obviously does not take into account the distinction between the abstract and the concrete. Striving toward concreteness, our mind operates with abstractions. Even "this," "given," "concrete," dog is an abstraction because it proceeds to change, for example, by dropping its tail the "moment" we point a finger at it. Concreteness is a relative concept and not an absolute one: What is concrete in one case turns out to be abstract in another: that is, insufficiently defined for a given purpose. In order to obtain a concept "concrete" enough for a given need it is necessary to correlate several abstractions into one—just as in reproducing a segment of life upon the screen, which is a picture in movement, it is necessary to combine a number of still photographs.

The concrete is a combination of abstractions—not an arbitrary or subjective combination but one that corresponds to the laws of the movement of a given phenomenon.

"The interests of the international socialist revolution," to which Shachtman appeals against the class nature of the state, represent in this given instance the vaguest of all abstractions. After all, the question which occupies us is precisely this, in what concrete way can we further the interests of the revolution? Nor would it be amiss to remember, too, that the task of the socialist revolution is to create a workers' state. Before talking about the socialist revolution it is necessary consequently to learn how to distinguish between such "abstractions" as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the capitalist state and the workers' state.

Shachtman indeed squanders his own time and that of others in proving that nationalized property does not determine "in and of itself," "automatically," "directly," "immediately" the policies of the Kremlin. On the question as to how the economic "base" determines the political, juridical, philosophical, artistic, and so on "super-structure" there exists a rich Marxist literature. The opinion that economics presumably determines directly and immediately the creativeness of a composer or even the verdict of a judge, represents a hoary caricature of Marxism which the bourgeois professordom of all countries has circulated time out of end to mask their intellectual impotence.*

As for the question which immediately concerns us: The inter-relationship between the social foundations of the Soviet state and the policy of the Kremlin, let me remind the absent-minded Shachtman that for seventeen years we have already been establishing, publicly, the growing contradiction between the foundation laid down by the October Revolution and the tendencies of the state "super-structure." We have followed step by step the increasing independence of the bureaucracy from the Soviet pro-

*To young comrades I recommend that they study on this question the works of Engels (*Anti-Dühring*), Plekhanov, and Antonio Labriola.

letariat and the growth of its dependence upon other classes and groups both inside and outside the country. Just what does Shachtman wish to add in this sphere to the analysis already made?

However, although economics determines politics not directly or immediately, but only in the last analysis, nevertheless economics does determine politics. The Marxists affirm precisely this in contrast to the bourgeois professors and their disciples. While analyzing and exposing the growing political independence of the bureaucracy from the proletariat, we have never lost sight of the objective social boundaries of this "independence"; namely, nationalized property supplemented by the monopoly of foreign trade.

It is astonishing! Shachtman continues to support the slogan for a political revolution against the Soviet bureaucracy. Has he ever seriously thought out the meaning of this slogan? If we hold that the social foundations laid down by the October Revolution were "automatically" reflected in the policy of the state, then why would a revolution against the bureaucracy be necessary? If the U.S.S.R., on the other hand, has completely ceased being a workers' state, not a political revolution would be required but a social revolution. Shachtman consequently continues to defend the slogan which follows: (1) from the character of the U.S.S.R. as a workers' state; and (2) from the irreconcilable antagonism between the social foundations of the state and the bureaucracy. But as he repeats this slogan, he tries to undermine its theoretical foundation. Is it perhaps in order to demonstrate once again the independence of his politics from scientific "abstractions"?

Under the guise of waging a struggle against the bourgeois caricature of dialectic materialism, Shachtman throws the doors wide open to historical idealism. Property forms and the class character of the state are a matter of indifference to him in analyzing the policy of a government. The state itself appears to him an animal of indiscriminate sex. Both feet planted firmly on this bed of chicken feathers, Shachtman pompously explains to us—today in the year 1940!—that in addition to the nationalized property there is also the Bonapartist filth and their reactionary politics. How new! Did Shachtman perchance think that he was speaking in a nursery?

Shachtman Makes a Bloc—Also With Lenin

To camouflage his failure to understand the essence of the problem of the nature of the Soviet state, Shachtman leaped upon the words of Lenin directed against me on December 30, 1920, during the so-called Trade Union Discussion. "Comrade Trotsky speaks of the workers' state. Permit me, this is an abstraction. . . . Our state is in reality not a workers' state but a workers' and peasants' state. . . . Our present state is such that the inclusively-organized proletariat must defend itself, and we must utilize these workers' organizations for the defense of the workers against their state and for the defense of our state by the workers." Pointing to this quotation and hastening to proclaim that I have repeated my "mistake" of 1920, Shachtman in his precipitance failed to notice a major error in the quotation concerning the definition of the nature of the Soviet state. On January 19, Lenin himself wrote the following about his speech of December 30: "I stated, 'our state is in reality not a workers' state but a workers' and peasants' state'. . . . On reading the report of the discussion, I now see that I was wrong. . . . I should have said: 'The workers' state is an abstraction. In reality we have a workers' state with the following peculiar features, (1) it is the peasants and not the workers who predominate in the population and (2) it is a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations.'" From this episode two conclusions follow: Lenin placed such great importance upon the precise sociological definition of the state that he considered it necessary to correct himself in the very heat of a polemic! But Shachtman is so little interested in the class nature of the Soviet state that twenty years later he noticed neither Lenin's mistake nor Lenin's correction!

I shall not dwell here on the question as to just how correctly Lenin aimed his argument against me. I believe he did so incorrectly—there was no difference of opinion between us on the definition of the state. But that is not the question now. The theoretical formulation on the question of the state, made by Lenin in the above-cited quotation—in conjunction with the major correction which he himself introduced a few days later—is absolutely correct. But let us hear what incredible use Shachtman makes of Lenin's definition: "Just as it was possible twenty years ago," he writes, "to speak of the term 'workers' state' as an ab-

straction, so it is possible to speak of the term 'degenerated workers' state' as an abstraction." (Loc. Cit. p. 14) It is self-evident that Shachtman fails completely to understand Lenin. Twenty years ago the term "workers' state" could not be considered in any way an abstraction in general: that is, something not real or not existing. The definition "workers' state," while correct in and of itself, was inadequate in relation to the particular task; namely, the defense of the workers through their trade unions, and only in this sense was it abstract. However, in relation to the defense of the U.S.S.R. against imperialism this self-same definition was in 1920, just as it still is today, unshakably concrete, making it obligatory for workers to defend the given state.

Shachtman does not agree. He writes: "Just as it was once necessary in connection with the trade union problem to speak concretely of what kind of workers' state exists in the Soviet Union, so it is necessary to establish in connection with the present war, the degree of degeneration of the Soviet state. . . . And the degree of the degeneration of the regime cannot be established by abstract reference to the existence of nationalized property, but only by observing the realities (!) of living (!) events (!)." From this it is completely incomprehensible why in 1920 the question of the character of the U.S.S.R. was brought up in connection with the trade unions, i.e., particular internal questions of the regime, while today it is brought up in connection with the defense of the U.S.S.R., that is, in connection with the entire fate of the state. In the former case the workers' state was counterposed to the workers, in the latter case—to the imperialists. Small wonder that the analogy limps on both legs; what Lenin counterposed, Shachtman identifies.

Nevertheless even if we take Shachtman's words at face value, it follows that the question over which he is concerned is only the degree of the degeneration (of what? a workers' state?); that is, of quantitative differences in the evaluation. Let us grant that Shachtman has worked out (where?) the "degree" more precisely than we have. But in what way can purely quantitative differences in the evaluation of the degeneration of the workers' state affect our decision as to the defense of the U.S.S.R.? It is impossible to make head or tail out of this. As a matter of fact, Shachtman, remaining true to eclecticism; that is, to himself, dragged in the question of "degree" only in an effort to maintain his equilibrium between Abern and Burnham. What is in dispute actually is not at all the degree determined by "the realities of living events" (what a precise, "scientific," "concrete," "experimental" terminology!) but whether these quantitative changes have been transformed into qualitative changes; i.e., whether the U.S.S.R. is still a workers' state, even though degenerated, or whether it has been transformed into a new type of exploitive state.

To this basic question Shachtman has no answer; feels no need for an answer. His argument is merely verbal mimicry of Lenin's words which were spoken in a different connection, which had a different content and included an outright error. Lenin in his corrected version declares: "The given state is not merely a workers' state but a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations." Shachtman declares: "The given state is not merely a degenerated workers' state but. . . ." . . . but? Shachtman has nothing further to say. Both the orator and the audience stare at each other, mouths wide open.

What does "degenerated workers' state" signify in our program? To this question our program responds with a degree of concreteness which is wholly adequate for solving the question of the defense of the U.S.S.R.; namely: (1) Those traits which in 1920 were a "bureaucratic deformation" of the Soviet system have now become an independent bureaucratic regime which has devoured the Soviets; (2) the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, incompatible with the internal and international tasks of socialism, has introduced and continues to introduce profound deformations in the economic life of the country as well; (3) basically, however, the system of planned economy, on the foundation of state ownership of the means of production, has been preserved and continues to remain a colossal conquest of mankind. The defeat of the U.S.S.R. in a war with imperialism would signify not solely the liquidation of the bureaucratic dictatorship, but of the planned state economy; and the dismemberment of the country into spheres of influence; and a new stabilization of imperialism; and a new weakening of the world proletariat.

From the circumstance that the "bureaucratic" deformation has grown into a regime of bureaucratic autocracy we draw the conclusion that the defense of the workers through their trade unions (which have undergone the self-same degeneration as the

state) is today in contrast to 1920 completely unrealistic; it is necessary to overthrow the bureaucracy; this task can be carried out only by creating an illegal Bolshevik party in the U.S.S.R.

From the circumstance that the degeneration of the political system has not yet led to the destruction of planned state economy, we draw the conclusion that it is still the duty of the world proletariat to defend the U.S.S.R. against imperialism and to aid the Soviet proletariat in its struggle against the bureaucracy.

Just what in our definition of the U.S.S.R. does Shachtman find abstract? What concrete amendments does he propose? If the dialectic teaches us that "truth is always concrete" then this law applies with equal force to criticism. It is not enough to label a definition abstract. It is necessary to point out exactly what it lacks. Otherwise criticism itself becomes sterile. Instead of concretizing or changing the definition which he claims is abstract, Shachtman replaces it with a vacuum. That's not enough. A vacuum, even the most pretentious vacuum, must be recognized as the worst of all abstractions—it can be filled with any content. Small wonder that the theoretical vacuum, in displacing the class analysis has sucked in the politics of impressionism and adventurism.

"Concentrated Economics"

Shachtman goes on to quote Lenin's words that "politics is concentrated economics" and that in this sense "politics cannot but take primacy over economics." From Lenin's words Shachtman directs at me the moral that I, if you please, am interested only in "economics" (nationalized means of production) and skip over "politics." This second effort to exploit Lenin is not superior to the first. Shachtman's mistake here assumes truly vast proportions! Lenin meant: When economic processes, tasks, and interests acquire a conscious and generalized ("concentrated") character, they enter the sphere of politics by virtue of this very fact, and constitute the essence of politics. In this sense politics as concentrated economics rises above the day to day atomized, unconscious, and ungeneralized economic activity.

The correctness of politics from the Marxist standpoint is determined precisely to the extent that it profoundly and all-sidedly "concentrates" economics; that is, expresses the progressive tendencies of its development. That is why we base our politics first and foremost upon our analysis of property forms and class relationships. A more detailed and concrete analysis of the factors in the "super-structure" is possible for us only on this theoretical basis. Thus, for example, were we to accuse an opposing faction of "bureaucratic conservatism" we would immediately seek the social, i.e., class roots of this phenomenon. Any other procedure would brand us as "Platonic" Marxists, if not simply noisy mimics.

"Politics is concentrated economics." This proposition one should think applies to the Kremlin too. Or, in exception to the general law, is the policy of the Moscow government not "concentrated economics" but a manifestation of the bureaucracy's free will? Our attempt to reduce the politics of the Kremlin to nationalized economy, refracted through the interests of the bureaucracy, provokes frantic resistance from Shachtman. He takes his guidance in relation to the U.S.S.R. not from the conscious generalization of economics but from "observing the realities of living events"; i.e., from rule of thumb, improvisations, sympathies and antipathies. He counterposes this impressionistic policy to our sociologically grounded policy and accuses us at the same time of . . . ignoring politics. Incredible but true! To be sure, in the final analysis Shachtman's weak-kneed and capricious politics is likewise the "concentrated" expression of economics but, alas, it is the economics of the declassed petty-bourgeoisie.

Comparison with Bourgeois Wars

Shachtman reminds us that bourgeois wars were at one time progressive and that in another period they became reactionary and that therefore it is not enough to give the class definition of a state engaged in war. This proposition does not clarify the question but muddles it. Bourgeois wars could be progressive only at a time when the entire bourgeois regime was progressive; in other words, at a time when bourgeois property in contradistinction to feudal property was a progressive and constructive factor. Bourgeois wars became reactionary when bourgeois property became a brake on development. Does Shachtman wish to say in relation to the U.S.S.R. that the state ownership of the means of production has become a brake upon development and that the extension of this form of property to other countries

constitutes economic reaction? Shachtman obviously does not want to say this. He simply does not draw the logical conclusion to his own thoughts.

The example of national bourgeois wars does indeed offer a very instructive lesson, but Shachtman passes it by unconcernedly. Marx and Engels were striving for a unified German republic. In the war of 1870-71 they stood on the side of the Germans despite the fact that the struggle for unification was exploited and distorted by the dynastic parasites.

Shachtman refers to the fact that Marx and Engels immediately turned against Prussia upon the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. But this turn only illustrates our standpoint all the more lucidly. It is impermissible to forget for a moment that what was in question was a war between two bourgeois states. Thus both camps had a common class denominator. To decide which of the two sides was the "lesser evil"—insofar as history generally left any room for choice—was possible only on the basis of supplementary factors. On the German side it was a question of creating a national bourgeois state as an economic and cultural arena. The national state during that period was a progressive historical factor. To that extent Marx and Engels stood on the side of the Germans despite Hohenzollern and his junkers. The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine violated the principle of the national state in regard to France as well as Germany and laid the basis for a war of revenge. Marx and Engels, naturally, turned sharply against Prussia. They did not thereby at all incur the risk of rendering service to an inferior system of economy as against a superior one since in both camps, we repeat, bourgeois relations prevailed. If France had been a workers' state in 1870, then Marx and Engels would have been for France from the very beginning, inasmuch as they—one feels abashed again that this must be mentioned—guided themselves in all their activity by the class criterion.

Today in the old capitalist countries the solving of national tasks is no longer at stake at all. On the contrary mankind is suffering from the contradiction between the productive forces and the too-narrow framework of the national state. Planned economy on the basis of socialized property freed from national boundaries is the task of the international proletariat above all—in Europe. It is precisely this task which is expressed in our slogan, "For the Socialist United States of Europe!" The expropriation of the property owners in Poland as in Finland is a progressive factor in and of itself. The bureaucratic methods of the Kremlin occupy the very same place in this process as did the dynastic methods of Hohenzollern—in the unification of Germany. Whenever we are confronted with the necessity of choosing between the defense of reactionary property forms through reactionary measures and the introduction of progressive property forms through bureaucratic measures, we do not at all place both sides on the same plane, but choose the lesser evil. In this there is no more "capitulation" to Stalinism than there was capitulation to Hohenzollern in the policy of Marx and Engels. It is scarcely necessary to add that the role of Hohenzollern in the war of 1870-71 justified neither the general historical role of the dynasty nor so much as its existence.

Conjunctural Defeatism or Columbus and the Egg

Let us now check up on how Shachtman, aided by a theoretical vacuum, operates with the "realities of living events" in an especially vital question. He writes, "We have never supported the Kremlin's international policy . . . but what is war? War is the continuation of politics by other means. Then why should we support the war which is the continuation of the international policy which we did not and do not support?" (Loc. Cit. p. 15) The completeness of this argument cannot be denied; in the shape of a naked syllogism we are presented here with a rounded-out theory of defeatism. It is as simple as Columbus and the egg! Since we have never supported the Kremlin's international policy, therefore we ought never to support the U.S.S.R. Then why not say it?

We rejected the internal and international policy of the Kremlin prior to the German-Soviet Pact and prior to the invasion of Poland by the Red Army. This means that the "realities of living events" of last year do not have the slightest bearing on the case. If we were defensists in the past in connection with the U.S.S.R., it was only out of inconsistency. Shachtman revises not only the present policy of the Fourth International but also the past. Since we are against Stalin we must therefore be against the U.S.S.R. too. Stalin has long held this opinion. Shachtman has arrived at it

only recently. From his rejection of the Kremlin's politics flows complete and indivisible defeatism. Then why not say so!

But Shachtman can't bring himself to say so. In a previous passage he writes: "We said—the Minority continues to say it—that if the imperialists assail the Soviet Union with the aim of crushing the last conquest of the October Revolution and reducing Russia to a bunch of colonies we will support the Soviet Union unconditionally." (Loc. Cit. p. 15) Permit me, permit me, permit me! The Kremlin's international policy is reactionary; the war is the continuation of its reactionary politics; we cannot support a reactionary war. How then does it unexpectedly turn out that if the pernicious imperialists "assail" the U.S.S.R. and if the pernicious imperialists pursue the uncommendable aim of transforming it into a colony, that under these exceptional "conditions," Shachtman will defend the U.S.S.R. . . . "unconditionally"? How does this make sense? Where is the logic? Or has Shachtman, following Burnham's example, also relegated logic to the sphere of religion and other museum exhibits?

The key to this tangle of confusion rests in the fact that the statement, "We have never supported the Kremlin's international policy" is an abstraction. It must be dissected and concretized. In its present foreign as well as domestic policy, the bureaucracy places first and foremost for defense its own parasitic interests. To that extent we wage mortal struggle against it, but in the final analysis, through the interests of the bureaucracy, in a very distorted form the interests of the workers' state are reflected. These interests we defend—with our own methods. Thus we do not at all wage a struggle against the fact that the bureaucracy safeguards (in its own way!) state property, the monopoly of foreign trade, or refuses to pay Czarist debts. Yet in a war between the U.S.S.R. and the capitalist world—independently of the incidents leading up to that war or the "aims" of this or that government—what is involved is the fate of precisely those historical conquests which we defend unconditionally, i.e., despite the reactionary policy of the bureaucracy. The question consequently boils down—in the last and decisive instance—to the class nature of the U.S.S.R.

Lenin deduced the policy of defeatism from the imperialist character of the war; but he did not stop there. He deduced the imperialist character of the war from a specific stage in the development of the capitalist regime and its ruling class. Since the character of the war is determined precisely by the class character of society and the state, Lenin recommended that in determining our policy in regard to imperialist war we abstract ourselves from such "concrete" circumstances as democracy and monarchy, as aggression and national defense. In opposition to this Shachtman proposes that we deduce defeatism from conjunctural conditions. This defeatism is indifferent to the class character of the U.S.S.R. and of Finland. Enough for it are the reactionary features of the bureaucracy and the "aggression." If France, England or the United States sends airplanes and guns to Finland, this has no bearing in the determination of Shachtman's politics. But if British troops land in Finland, then Shachtman will place a thermometer under Chamberlain's tongue and determine Chamberlain's intentions—whether he aims only to save Finland from the Kremlin's imperialist politics or whether in addition he aims to overthrow the "last conquest of the October Revolution." Strictly in accordance with the readings of the thermometer, Shachtman, the defeatist, is ready to change himself into a defensist. This is what it means to replace abstract principles with the "realities of living events."

Shachtman, as we have already seen, persistently demands the citation of precedents: When and where in the past have the leaders of the opposition manifested petty-bourgeois opportunism? The reply which I have already given him on this score must be supplemented here with two letters which we sent each other on the question of defensism and methods of defensism in connection with the events of the Spanish Revolution. On September 18, 1937, Shachtman wrote me:

" . . . You say, 'If we would have a member in the Cortes he would vote against the military budget of Negrin.' Unless this is a typographical error it seems to us to be a non-sequitur. If, as we all contend, the element of an Imperialist war is not dominant at the present time in the Spanish struggle, and if instead the decisive element is still the struggle between the decaying bourgeois democracy, with all that it involves, on the one side, and Fascism on the other, and further if we are obliged to give military assistance to the struggle against Fascism, we don't see how it would be possible to vote in the Cortes against the military budget. . . . If a Bolshevik-Leninist on the Huesca front were asked by a Socialist comrade why his representative in the Cortes voted

against the proposal by Negrin to devote a million pesetas to the purchase of rifles for the front, what would this Bolshevik-Leninist reply? It doesn't seem to us that he would have an effective answer. . . ." (My emphasis).

This letter astounded me. Shachtman was willing to express confidence in the perfidious Negrin government on the purely negative basis that the "element of an imperialist war" was not dominant in Spain.

On September 20, 1937, I replied to Shachtman:

"To vote the military budget of the Negrin government signifies to vote him political confidence. . . . To do it would be a crime. How we explain our vote to the anarchist workers? Very simply: we have not the slightest confidence in the capacity of this government to conduct the war and assure victory. We accuse this government of protecting the rich and starving the poor. This government must be smashed. So long as we are not strong enough to replace it, we are fighting under its command. But on every occasion we express openly our non-confidence in it: it is the only one possibility to mobilize the masses politically against this government and to prepare its overthrow. Any other politics would be a betrayal of the revolution."

The tone of my reply only feebly reflects the . . . amazement which Shachtman's opportunist position produced in me. Isolated mistakes are of course unavoidable but today, two and a half years later, this correspondence is illuminated with new light. Since we defend bourgeois democracy against fascism—Shachtman reasons, we therefore cannot refuse confidence to the bourgeois government. In applying this very theorem to the U.S.S.R. it is transformed into its converse—since we place no confidence in the Kremlin government, we cannot, therefore defend the workers' state. Pseudo-radicalism in this instance too, is only the obverse side of opportunism.

Renunciation of the Class Criterion

Let us return once more to the ABC's. In Marxist sociology the initial point of analysis is the class definition of a given phenomenon, e. g., state, party, philosophic trend, literary school, etc. In most cases, however, the mere class definition is inadequate, for a class consists of different strata, passes through different stages of development, comes under different conditions, is subjected to the influence of other classes. It becomes necessary to bring up these second and third rate factors in order to round out the analysis, and they are taken either partially or completely, depending upon the specific aim. But for a Marxist, analysis is impossible without a class characterization of the phenomenon under consideration.

The skeletal and muscular systems do not exhaust the anatomy of an animal; nevertheless an anatomical treatise which attempted to "abstract" itself from bones and muscles would dangle in midair. War is not an organ but a function of society, i.e., its ruling class. It is impossible to define and study a function without understanding the organ, i.e., the state; it is impossible to gain scientific understanding of the organ without understanding the general structure of the organism, i.e., society. The bones and muscles of society consist of the productive forces and the class (property) relations. Shachtman holds it possible that a function, namely, war, can be studied "concretely" independently of the organ to which it pertains, i.e., the state. Isn't this monstrous?

This fundamental error is supplemented by another equally glaring. After splitting function away from organ, Shachtman in studying the function itself, contrary to all his promises, proceeds not from the abstract to the concrete but on the contrary dissolves the concrete in the abstract. Imperialist war is one of the functions of finance capital, i.e., the bourgeoisie at a certain stage of development resting upon capitalism of a specific structure, namely, monopoly capital. This definition is sufficiently concrete for our basic political conclusions. But by extending the term imperialist war to cover the Soviet state too, Shachtman cuts the ground away from under his own feet. In order to reach even a superficial justification for applying one and the same designation to the expansion of finance capital and the expansion of the workers' state, Shachtman is compelled to detach himself from the social structure of both states altogether by proclaiming it to be—an abstraction. Thus playing hide and seek with Marxism, Shachtman labels the concrete as abstract and palms off the abstract as concrete!

This outrageous toying with theory is not accidental. Every petty-bourgeois in the United States without exception is ready to call every seizure of territory "imperialist," especially today

when the United States does not happen to be occupied with acquiring territories. But if this very same petty-bourgeois is told that the entire foreign policy of finance capital is imperialist regardless of whether it be occupied at the given moment in carrying out an annexation or in "defending" Finland against annexation—then our petty-bourgeois jumps back in pious indignation. Naturally the leaders of the opposition differ considerably from an average petty-bourgeois in their aim and in their political level. But alas they have common roots of thought. A petty-bourgeois invariably seeks to tear political events away from their social foundation, since there is an organic conflict between a class approach to facts and the social position and education of the petty-bourgeoisie.

Once Again: Poland

My remark that the Kremlin with its bureaucratic methods gave an impulse to the socialist revolution in Poland, is converted by Shachtman into an assertion that in my opinion a "bureaucratic revolution" of the proletariat is presumably possible. This is not only incorrect but disloyal. My expression was rigidly limited. It is not the question of "bureaucratic revolution" but only of a bureaucratic impulse. To deny this impulse is to deny reality. The popular masses in Western Ukraine and Byelo Russia, in any event, felt this impulse, understood its meaning, and used it to accomplish a drastic overturn in property relations. A revolutionary party which failed to notice this impulse in time and refused to utilize it would be fit for nothing but the ash can.

This impulse in the direction of socialist revolution was possible only because the bureaucracy of the U.S.S.R. straddles and has its roots in the economy of a workers' state. The revolutionary utilization of this "impulse" by the Ukrainian Byelo-Russians was possible only through the class struggle in the occupied territories and through the power of the example of the October Revolution. Finally, the swift strangulation or semi-strangulation of this revolutionary mass movement was made possible through the isolation of this movement and the might of the Moscow bureaucracy. Whoever failed to understand the dialectic interaction of these three factors: the workers' state, the oppressed masses, and the Bonapartist bureaucracy had best restrain himself from idle talk about events in Poland.

At the elections for the National Assembly of Western Ukraine and Western Byelo-Russia the electoral program, dictated of course by the Kremlin, included three extremely important points: inclusion of both provinces in the Federation of the U.S.S.R.; confiscation of landlords' estates in favor of the peasants; nationalization of large industry and the banks. The Ukrainian democrats, judging from their conduct, deem it a lesser evil to be unified under the rule of a single state. And from the standpoint of the future struggle for independence, they are correct. As for the other two points in the program one would think that there could be no doubt in our midst as to their progressiveness. Seeking to get around reality, namely that nothing else but the social foundations of the U.S.S.R. forced a social revolutionary program upon the Kremlin, Shachtman refers to Lithuania, Esthonia and Latvia where everything has remained as of old. An incredible argument! No one has said that the Soviet bureaucracy always and everywhere either wishes or is able to accomplish the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. We only say that no other government could have accomplished that social overturn which the Kremlin bureaucracy notwithstanding its alliance with Hitler found itself compelled to sanction in Eastern Poland. Failing this, it could not include the territory in the Federation of the U.S.S.R.

Shachtman is aware of the overturn itself. He cannot deny it. He is incapable of explaining it. But he nevertheless attempts to save face. He writes: "In the Polish Ukraine and White Russia, where class exploitation was intensified by national oppression . . . the peasants began to take over the land themselves, to drive off the landlords who were already half-in-flight." etc. (Loc. Cit. p. 16) The Red Army it turns out had no connection whatever with all this. It came into Poland only as a "a counter-revolutionary force" in order to suppress the movement. But why didn't the workers and peasants in Western Poland seized by Hitler arrange a revolution? Why was it chiefly revolutionists, "democrats," and Jews who fled from there, while in Eastern Poland—it was chiefly the landlords and capitalists who fled? Shachtman lacks the time to think this out—he is in a hurry to explain to me that the conception of "bureaucratic revolution" is absurd, for the emancipation of the workers can only be carried out by the workers themselves. Am I not justified in repeating that Shachtman obviously feels he is standing in a nursery?

In the Parisian organ of the Mensheviks—who, if that is possible, are even more "irreconcilable" in their attitude toward the Kremlin's foreign policy than Shachtman—it is reported that "in the villages—very frequently at the very approach of the Soviet troops (i.e., even prior to their entering a given district, L.T.)—peasant committees sprang up everywhere, the elementary organs of revolutionary peasant self-rule. . . ." The military authorities hastened of course to subordinate these committees to the bureaucratic organs established by them in the urban centers. Nevertheless they were compelled to rest upon the peasant committees since without them it was impossible to carry out the agrarian revolution.

The leader of the Mensheviks, Dan, wrote on October 19: "According to the unanimous testimony of all observers the appearance of the Soviet army and the Soviet bureaucracy provides not only in the territory occupied by them but beyond its confines—an impulse (!!!) to social turmoil and social transformations." The "impulse," it will be observed, was invented not by me but by "the unanimous testimony of all observers" who possessed eyes and ears. Dan goes even further and expresses the supposition that "the waves engendered by this impulse will not only hit Germany powerfully in a comparatively short period of time but also to one degree or another roll on to other states."

Another Menshevik author writes: "However they may have attempted in the Kremlin to avoid anything which might smack of the great revolution, the very fact of the entry of Soviet troops into the territories of Eastern Poland with its long outlived semi-feudal agrarian relations, had to provoke a stormy agrarian movement. With the approach of Soviet troops the peasants began to seize landlords' estates and to form peasant committees." You will observe: With the approach of Soviet troops and not at all with their withdrawal as should follow in accordance with Shachtman's words. I cite the testimony of the Mensheviks because they are very well informed, their sources of information coming through Polish and Jewish emigres friendly to them who have gathered in France, and also because having capitulated to the French bourgeoisie, these gentlemen cannot possibly be suspected of capitulation to Stalinism.

The testimony of the Mensheviks furthermore is confirmed by the reports of the bourgeois press.

"The agrarian revolution in Soviet Poland has had the force of a spontaneous movement. As soon as the report spread that the Red Army had crossed the river Zbrucz the peasants began to share out amongst themselves the landlords' acres. Land was given first to small holders and in this way about thirty percent of agricultural land was expropriated." (N. Y. Times, January 17, 1940.)

Under the guise of a new argument Shachtman hands me my own words to the effect that the expropriation of property owners in Eastern Poland cannot alter our appraisal of the general policies of the Kremlin. Of course it cannot! No one has proposed this. With the aid of the Comintern the Kremlin has disoriented and demoralized the working class so that it has not only facilitated the outbreak of a new imperialist war but has also made extremely difficult the utilization of this war for revolution. Compared with those crimes the social overturn in the two provinces, which was paid for moreover by the enslavement of Poland, is of course of secondary importance and does not alter the general reactionary character of the Kremlin's policy. But upon the initiative of the opposition itself, the question now posed is not one of general policy but of its concrete refraction under specific conditions of time and place. To the peasants of Galicia and Western Byelo-Russia the agrarian overturn was of highest importance. The Fourth International could not have boycotted this overturn on the ground that the initiative was taken by the reactionary bureaucracy. Our outright duty was to participate in the overturn on the side of the workers and peasants and to that extent on the side of the Red Army. At the same time it was indispensable to warn the masses tirelessly of the generally reactionary character of the Kremlin's policy and of those dangers it bears for the occupied territories. To know how to combine these two tasks or more precisely two sides of one and the same task—just this is Bolshevik politics.

Once Again: Finland

Having revealed such odd perspicacity in understanding the events in Poland, Shachtman descends upon me with redoubled authority in connection with events in Finland. In my article "A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition," I wrote that "the Soviet-Finnish War is apparently beginning to be supplemented by a civil war in which the Red Army finds itself at a given stage in the same camp as the Finnish petty peasants and the workers. . . ." This extremely cau-

tious formula did not meet with the approval of my unsparing judge. My evaluation of events in Poland had already taken him off balance. "I find even less (proof) for your—how shall I put it?—astonishing remarks about Finland," writes Shachtman on page 16 of his "Letter." I am very sorry that Shachtman chooses to become astonished rather than think things out.

In the Baltic states the Kremlin confined its tasks to making strategical gains with the unquestionable calculation that in the future these strategic military bases will permit the sovietization of these former sections of the Czarist empire too. These successes in the Baltic, achieved by diplomatic threat, met with resistance, however, from Finland. To reconcile itself to this resistance would have meant that the Kremlin placed in jeopardy its "prestige" and thereby its successes in Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Thus contrary to its initial plans the Kremlin felt compelled to resort to armed force. From this fact every thinking person posed to himself the following question: Does the Kremlin wish only to frighten the Finnish bourgeoisie and force them to make concessions or must it now go further? To this question naturally there could be no "automatic" answer. It was necessary—in the light of general tendencies—to orient oneself upon concrete symptoms. The leaders of the opposition are incapable of this.

Military operations began on November 30. That very same day the Central Committee of the Finnish Communist Party, undoubtedly located in either Leningrad or Moscow, issued a radio manifesto to the toiling people of Finland. This manifesto proclaimed: "For the second time in the history of Finland the Finnish working class is beginning a struggle against the yoke of the plutocracy. The first experience of the workers and peasants in 1918 terminated in the victory of the capitalists and the landlords. But this time . . . the toiling people must win!" This manifesto alone clearly indicated that not an attempt to scare the bourgeois government of Finland was involved, but a plan to provoke insurrection in the country and to supplement the invasion of the Red Army with civil war.

The declaration of the so-called Peoples' Government published on December 2 states: "In different parts of the country the people have already risen and proclaimed the creation of a democratic republic." This assertion is obviously a fabrication, otherwise the manifesto would have mentioned the places where the attempts at insurrection took place. It is possible, however, that isolated attempts, prepared from without, ended in failure and that precisely because of this it was deemed best not to go into details. In any case, the news concerning "insurrections" constituted a call to insurrection. Moreover, the declaration carried information concerning the formation of "the first Finnish corps which in the course of coming battles will be enlarged by volunteers from the ranks of revolutionary workers and peasants." Whether there were one thousand men in this "corps" or only one hundred, the meaning of the "corps" in determining the policies of the Kremlin was incontestable. At the same time cable dispatches reported the expropriation of large landholders in the border regions. There is not the slightest ground to doubt that this is just what took place during the first advance of the Red Army. But even if these dispatches are considered fabrications, they completely preserve their meaning as a call for an agrarian revolution. Thus I had every justification to declare that "The Soviet-Finnish War is apparently beginning to be supplemented by a civil war." At the beginning of December, true enough, I had at my disposal only a part of these facts. But against the background of the general situation, and I take the liberty to add, with the aid of an understanding of its internal logic, the isolated symptoms enabled me to draw the necessary conclusions concerning the direction of the entire struggle. Without such semi-apriori conclusions one can be a rationalising observer but in no case an active participant in events. But why did the appeal of the "People's Government" fail to bring immediate mass response? For three reasons: First, Finland is dominated completely by a reactionary military machine which is supported not only by the bourgeoisie but by the top layers of the peasantry and the labor bureaucracy; secondly, the policy of the Kremlin succeeded in transforming the Finnish Communist Party into an insignificant factor; thirdly, the regime of the U.S.S.R. is in no way capable of arousing enthusiasm among the Finnish toiling masses. Even in the Ukraine from 1918 to 1920 the peasants responded very slowly to appeals to seize the estates of the landlords because the local Soviet power was still weak and every success of the Whites brought about ruthless punitive expeditions. All the less reason is there for surprise that the Finnish poor peasants delay in responding to an appeal for an agrarian revolution. To set the

peasants in motion, serious successes of the Red Army are required. But during the first badly prepared advance the Red Army suffered only failures. Under such conditions there could not even be talk of the peasants rising. It was impossible to expect an independent civil war in Finland at the given stage: My calculations spoke quite precisely of supplementing military operations by measures of civil war. I have in mind—at least until the Finnish army is annihilated—only the occupied territory and the nearby regions. Today on January 17 as I write these lines dispatches from a Finnish source report that one of the border provinces has been invaded by detachments of Finnish emigres and that brother is literally killing brother there. What is this if not an episode in a civil war? In any case there can be no doubt that a new advance of the Red Army into Finland will confirm at every step our general appraisal of the war. Shachtman has neither an analysis of the events nor the hint of a prognosis. He confines himself to noble indignation and for this reason at every step he sinks deeper into the mire.

The appeal of the "Peoples' Government" calls for workers' control. What can this mean! exclaims Shachtman. There is no workers' control in the U.S.S.R.; whence will it come in Finland? Sad to say, Shachtman reveals complete lack of understanding of the situation. In the U.S.S.R. workers' control is a stage long ago completed. From control over the bourgeoisie there they passed to management of nationalized production. From the management of workers—to the command of the bureaucracy. New workers' control would now signify control over the bureaucracy. This cannot be established except as the result of a successful uprising against the bureaucracy. In Finland, workers' control still signifies nothing more than crowding out the native bourgeoisie, whose place the bureaucracy proposes to take. Furthermore one should not think that the Kremlin is so stupid as to attempt ruling Eastern Poland or Finland by means of imported Commissars. Of greatest urgency to the Kremlin is the extraction of a new administrative apparatus from among the toiling population of the occupied areas. This task can be solved only in several stages. The first stage is the peasant committees and the committees of workers' control.*

Shachtman clutches eagerly even at the fact that Kuusinen's program "is, formally, the program of a bourgeois 'democracy'." Does he mean to say by this that the Kremlin is more interested in establishing bourgeois democracy in Finland than in drawing Finland into the framework of the U.S.S.R.? Shachtman himself doesn't know what he wants to say. In Spain, which Moscow did not prepare for union with the U.S.S.R., it was actually a question of demonstrating the ability of the Kremlin to safeguard bourgeois democracy against proletarian revolution. This task flowed from the interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy in that particular international situation. Today the situation is a different one. The Kremlin is not preparing to demonstrate its usefulness to France, England, and the United States. As its actions have proved, it has firmly decided to sovietize Finland—at once or in two stages. The program of the Kuusinen government, even if approached from a "formal" point of view does not differ from the program of the Bolsheviks in November 1917. True enough, Shachtman makes much of the fact that I generally place significance on the manifesto of the "idiot" Kuusinen. However, I shall take the liberty of considering that the "idiot" Kuusinen acting on the ukase of the Kremlin and with the support of the Red Army represents a far more serious political factor than scores of superficial wise-acres who refuse to think through the internal logic (dialectics) of events.

As a result of his remarkable analysis, Shachtman this time openly proposes a defeatist policy in relation to the U.S.S.R., adding (for emergency use) that he does not at all cease to be a "patriot of his class." We are happy to get the information. But the trouble is that Dan, the leader of the Mensheviks, as far back as November 12 wrote that in the event the Soviet Union invaded Finland the world proletariat "must take a definitive defeatist

*This article was already written when I read in the New York Times of January 17 the following lines relating to former Eastern Poland: "In industry, drastic acts of expropriation have not yet been carried out on a large scale. The main centers of the banking system, the railway system and a number of large industrial undertakings were State-owned for years before the Russian occupation. In small and medium-sized industries workmen now exercise control over production."

"The industrialists nominally retain a full right of ownership in their own establishments, but they are compelled to submit statements of costs of production, and so on, for the consideration of the workmen's delegates. The latter, jointly, with the employers, fix wages, conditions of work, and a 'just rate of profit' for the industrialist."

Thus we see that "the realities of living events" do not at all submit themselves to the pedantic and lifeless patterns of the leaders of the opposition. Meanwhile our "abstractions" are becoming transformed into flesh and blood.

position in relation to this violation." (*Sozialisticheski Vestnik*, No. 19-20, p. 43). It is necessary to add that throughout the Kerensky regime, Dan was a rabid defensist; he failed to be a defeatist even under the Czar. Only the invasion of Finland by the Red Army has turned Dan into a defeatist. Naturally he does not thereby cease to be "a patriot of his class." What class? This question is not an uninteresting one. So far as the analysis of events is concerned Shachtman disagrees with Dan who is closer to the theater of action and cannot replace facts with fiction; by way of compensation, where the "concrete political conclusions" are concerned, Shachtman has turned out to be a "patriot" of the very same class as Dan. In Marxist sociology this class, if the opposition will permit me, this class is called the petty-bourgeoisie.

The Theory of "Blocs"

To justify his bloc with Burnham and Abern—against the proletarian wing of the party, against the program of the Fourth International, and against the Marxist method—Shachtman has not spared the history of the revolutionary movement which he—according to his own words—studied especially in order to transmit great traditions to the younger generation. The goal itself is of course excellent. But it demands a scientific method. Meanwhile, Shachtman has begun by sacrificing scientific method for the sake of a bloc. His historical examples are arbitrary, not thought out, and downright false.

Not every collaboration is a bloc in the proper sense of the term. By no means infrequent are episodic agreements which are not at all transformed and do not seek to be transformed into a protracted bloc. On the other hand membership in one and the same party can hardly be called a bloc. We together with Comrade Burnham have belonged (and I hope will continue to belong to the end) to one and the same international party; but this is still not a bloc. Two parties can conclude a long term bloc with each other against a common enemy: Such was the policy of the "People's Front." Within one and the same party close but not congruent tendencies can conclude a bloc against a third faction.

For the evaluation of inner-party blocs two questions are of decisive significance:—(1) First and foremost, against whom or what is the bloc directed? (2) What is the relationship of forces within the bloc? Thus for a struggle against chauvinism within ones' own party a bloc between internationalists and centrists is wholly permissible. The result of the bloc would in this case depend upon the clarity of the program of the internationalists, upon their cohesiveness and discipline, for these traits are not infrequently more important in determining the relationship of forces than their numerical strength.

Shachtman as we said before appeals to Lenin's bloc with Bogdanov. I have already stated that Lenin did not make the slightest theoretical concessions to Bogdanov. Now we shall examine the political side of the "bloc." It is first of all necessary to state that what was actually in question was not a bloc but a collaboration in a common organization. The Bolshevik faction led an independent existence. Lenin did not form a "bloc" with Bogdanov against other tendencies within his own organization. On the contrary he formed a bloc even with the Bolshevik-conciliators (Dubrovinsky, Rykov, and others) against the theoretical heresies of Bogdanov. In essence, the question so far as Lenin was concerned was whether it was possible to remain with Bogdanov in one and the same organization which although called a "faction" bore all the traits of a party. If Shachtman does not look upon the opposition as an independent organization then his reference to the Lenin-Bogdanov "bloc" falls to pieces.

But the mistake in the analogy is not restricted to this. The Bolshevik faction-party carried on a struggle against Menshevism which at that time had already revealed itself completely as a petty-bourgeois agency of the liberal bourgeoisie. This was far more serious than the accusation of so-called "bureaucratic conservatism," the class roots of which Shachtman does not even attempt to define. Lenin's collaboration with Bogdanov was collaboration between a proletarian tendency and a sectarian centrist tendency against petty-bourgeois opportunism. The class lines are clear. The "bloc" (if one uses this term in the given instance) was justified.

The subsequent history of the "bloc" is not lacking in significance. In the letter to Gorky cited by Shachtman, Lenin expressed the hope that it would be possible to separate the political questions from the purely philosophic ones. Shachtman forgets to add that Lenin's hope did not at all materialize. Differences developed from the heights of philosophy down the line of all the other questions, including the most current ones. If the "bloc" did not dis-

credit Bolshevism it was only because Lenin had a finished program, a correct method, a firmly welded faction in which Bogdanov's group composed a small unstable minority.

Shachtman concluded a bloc with Burnham and Abern against the proletarian wing of his own party. It is impossible to evade this. The relationship of forces within the bloc is completely against Shachtman. Abern has his own faction. Burnham with Shachtman's assistance can create the semblance of a faction constituting intellectuals disillusioned with Bolshevism. Shachtman has no independent program, no independent method, no independent faction. The eclectic character of the opposition "program" is determined by the contradictory tendencies within the bloc. In the event the bloc collapses—and the collapse is inevitable—Shachtman will emerge from the struggle with nothing but injury to the party and to himself.

Shachtman further appeals to the fact that in 1917 Lenin and Trotsky united after a long struggle and it would therefore be incorrect to remind them of their past differences. This example is slightly compromised by the fact that Shachtman has already utilized it once before to explain his bloc with Cannon against Abern. But aside from this unpleasant circumstance the historical analogy is false to the core. Upon joining the Bolshevik party, Trotsky recognized completely and whole-heartedly the correctness of the Leninist methods of building the party. At the same time the irreconcilable class tendency of Bolshevism had corrected an incorrect prognosis. If I did not again raise the question of "permanent revolution" in 1917 it was because it had already been decided for both sides by the march of events. The basis for joint work was constituted not by subjective or episodic combinations but by the proletarian revolution. This is a solid basis. Furthermore in question here was not a "bloc" but unification in a single party—against the bourgeoisie and its petty-bourgeois agents. Inside the party the October bloc of Lenin and Trotsky was directed against petty-bourgeois vacillations on the question of insurrection.

Equally superficial is Shachtman's reference to Trotsky's bloc with Zinoviev in 1926. The struggle at that time was conducted not against "bureaucratic conservatism" as the psychologic trait of a few unsympathetic individuals but against the mightiest bureaucracy in the world, its privileges, its arbitrary rule and its reactionary policy. The scope of permissible differences in a bloc is determined by the character of the adversary.

The relationship of elements within the bloc was likewise altogether different. The opposition of 1923 had its own program and its own cadres composed not at all of intellectuals as Shachtman asserts, echoing the Stalinists, but primarily workers. The Zinoviev-Kamenev opposition on our demand acknowledged in a special document that the 1923 opposition was correct on all fundamental questions. Nevertheless since we had different traditions and since we were far from agreeing in everything, the merger never did take place; both groups remained independent factions. In certain important questions, it is true, the 1923 opposition made principled concessions to the opposition in 1926—against my vote—concessions which I considered and still consider impermissible. The circumstance that I did not protest openly against these concessions was rather a mistake. But there was generally not much room for open protests—we were working illegally. In any event, both sides were very well acquainted with my views on the controversial questions. Within the 1923 opposition, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand if not more stood on my point of view and not on the point of view of Zinoviev or Radek. With such a relation between the two groups in the bloc there might have been these or other partial mistakes but there was not so much as a semblance of adventurism.

With Shachtman the case is completely different. Who was right in the past and just when and where? Why did Shachtman stand first with Abern, then with Cannon and now back again with Abern? Shachtman's own explanation concerning the past bitter factional struggles is worthy not of a responsible political figure but of a nurse-maid:—Johnny was a little wrong, Max a little, all were a little wrong, and now we are all a little right. Who was in the wrong and in what, not a word of this. There is no tradition. Yesterday is expunged from the calculations—and what is the reason for all this? Because in the organism of the party Comrade Shachtman plays the role of a floating kidney.

Seeking historical analogies, Shachtman avoids one example to which his present bloc does actually bear a resemblance. I have in mind the so-called August bloc of 1912. I participated actively in this bloc. In a certain sense I created it. Politically I differed with the Mensheviks on all fundamental questions. I also differed with

the ultra-left Bolsheviks, the **Vperyodists**. In the general tendency of politics I stood far more closely to the Bolsheviks. But I was against the Leninist "regime" because I had not yet learned to understand that in order to realize the revolutionary goal a firmly welded centralized party is indispensable. And so I formed this episodic bloc consisting of heterogeneous elements which was directed against the proletarian wing of the party.

In the August bloc the liquidators had their own faction, the **Vperyodists** also had something resembling a faction. I stood isolated, having co-thinkers but no faction. Most of the documents were written by me and through avoiding principled differences had as their aim the creation of a semblance of unanimity upon "concrete political questions." Not a word about the past! Lenin subjected the August bloc to merciless criticism and the harshest blows fell to my lot. Lenin proved that inasmuch as I did not agree politically with either the Mensheviks or the **Vperyodists** my policy was adventurism. This was severe but it was true.

As "mitigating circumstances" let me mention the fact that I had set as my task not to support the right or ultra-left faction against the Bolsheviks but to unite the party as a whole. The Bolsheviks too were invited to the August conference. But since Lenin flatly refused to unite with the Mensheviks (in which he was completely correct) I was left in an unnatural bloc with the Mensheviks and the **Vperyodists**. The second mitigating circumstance is this, that the very phenomenon of Bolshevism as the genuine revolutionary party was then developing for the first time—in the practice of the Second International there were no precedents. But I do not thereby seek in the least to absolve myself from guilt. Notwithstanding the conception of permanent revolution which undoubtedly disclosed the correct perspective, I had not freed myself at that period especially in the organizational sphere from the traits of a petty-bourgeois revolutionist. I was sick with the disease of conciliationism towards Menshevism and with a distrustful attitude towards Leninist centralism. Immediately after the August conference the bloc began to disintegrate into its component parts. Within a few months I was not only in principle but organizationally outside the bloc.

I address Shachtman today with the very same rebuke which Lenin addressed to me 27 years ago: "Your bloc is unprincipled." "Your policy is adventurism." With all my heart I express the hope that from these accusations Shachtman will draw the same conclusions which I once drew.

The Factions in the Struggle

Shachtman expresses surprise over the fact that Trotsky "the leader of the 1923 opposition" is capable of supporting the bureaucratic faction of Cannon. In this as in the question of workers' control Shachtman again reveals his lack of feeling for historical perspective. True, in justifying their dictatorship the Soviet bureaucracy exploited the principles of Bolshevik centralism but in the very process it transformed them into their exact opposite. But this does not discredit in the least the methods of Bolshevism. Over a period of many years Lenin educated the party in the spirit of proletarian discipline and severe centralism. In so doing he suffered scores of times the attack of petty-bourgeois factions and cliques. Bolshevik centralism was a profoundly progressive factor and in the end secured the triumph of the revolution. It is not difficult to understand that the struggle of the present opposition in the Socialist Workers Party has nothing in common with the struggle of the Russian opposition of 1923 against the privileged bureaucratic caste but it does instead bear great resemblance to the struggle of the Mensheviks against Bolshevik centralism.

Cannon and his group are according to the opposition "an expression of a type of politics which can be best described as bureaucratic conservatism." What does this mean? The domination of a conservative labor bureaucracy, share-holder in the profits of the national bourgeoisie, would be unthinkable without direct or indirect support of the capitalist state. The rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy would be unthinkable without the G.P.U., the army, the courts, etc. The Soviet bureaucracy supports Stalin precisely because he is the bureaucrat who defends their interests better than anybody else. The trade union bureaucracy supports Green and Lewis precisely because their vices, as able and dexterous bureaucrats, safeguard the material interests of the labor aristocracy. But upon what base does "bureaucratic conservatism" rest in the S.W.P.? Obviously not on material interests but on a selection of bureaucratic types in contrast to another camp where innovators, initiators and dynamic spirits have been gathered together. The opposition does not point to any objective, i.e., social

basis for "bureaucratic conservatism." Everything is reduced to pure psychology. Under such conditions every thinking worker will say: It is possible that Comrade Cannon actually does sin in the line of bureaucratic tendencies—it is hard for me to judge at a distance—but if the majority of the National Committee and of the entire party who are not at all interested in bureaucratic "privileges" support Cannon they do so not because of his bureaucratic tendencies but in spite of them. This means that he has some other virtues which far outweigh his personal failing. That is what a serious party member will say. And in my opinion he would be correct.

To substantiate their complaints and accusations the leaders of the opposition bring up disjointed episodes and anecdotes which can be counted by the hundred and the thousand in every party and which moreover are impossible to verify objectively in most instances. Furthest from my mind is indulgence in a criticism of the story-telling section of the opposition documents. But there is one episode about which I wish to express myself as a participant and a witness. The leaders of the opposition very superciliously relate how easily, presumably without criticism and without deliberation, Cannon and his group accepted the program of Transitional Demands. Here is what I wrote on April 15, 1938 to Comrade Cannon concerning the elaboration of this program:

"We have sent you the transitional program draft and a short statement about the labor party. Without your visit to Mexico I could never have written the program draft because I learned during the discussions many important things which permitted me to be more explicit and concrete. . . ." Shachtman is thoroughly acquainted with these circumstances since he was one of those who took part in the discussion.

Rumors, personal speculations and simple gossip cannot help but occupy an important place in petty-bourgeois circles where people are bound together not by party ties but by personal relationships and where no habit has been acquired of a class approach to events. It is passed from ear to ear that I have been visited exclusively by representatives of the majority and that I have been led astray from the path of truth. Dear comrades, don't believe this nonsense! I collect political information through the very same methods that I use in my work generally. A critical attitude towards information is an organic part of the political physiognomy of every politician. If I were incapable of distinguishing false communications from true ones what value could my judgments have in general?

I am personally acquainted with no less than twenty members of Abern's faction. To several of them I am obligated for their friendly help in my work and I consider all of them, or almost all, as valuable party members. But at the same time I must say that what distinguishes each of them to one degree or another is the aura of a petty-bourgeois milieu, lack of experience in the class struggle and to a certain extent lack of the requisite connection with the proletarian movement. Their positive features link them to the Fourth International. Their negative features bind them to the most conservative of all factions.

"An 'anti-intellectual' and 'anti-intellectuals' attitude is drummed into the minds of party members," complains the document on "Bureaucratic Conservatism" (*Internal Bulletin*, Vol. 2 No. 6, January 1940, p. 12). This argument is dragged in by the hair. It is not those intellectuals who have completely gone over to the side of the proletariat who are in question, but those elements who are seeking to shift our party to the position of petty-bourgeois eclecticism. This same document declares: "An anti-New York propaganda is spread which is at bottom a catering to prejudices that are not always healthy" (idem). What prejudices are referred to here? Apparently anti-Semitism. If anti-Semitic or other race prejudices exist in our party, it is necessary to wage a ruthless struggle against them through open blows and not through vague insinuations. But the question of the Jewish intellectuals and semi-intellectuals of New York is a social not a national question. In New York there are a great many Jewish proletarians, but Abern's faction is not built up of them. The petty-bourgeois elements of this faction have proved incapable to this day of finding a road to the Jewish workers. They are contented with their own milieu.

There has been more than one instance in history—more precisely it does not happen otherwise in history—that with the transition of the party from one period to the next those elements which played a progressive role in the past but who proved incapable of adapting themselves with timeliness to new tasks have drawn closer together in the face of danger and revealed not

their positive but almost exclusively their negative traits. That is precisely the role today of Abern's faction in which Shachtman plays the role of journalist and Burnham the role of theoretical brain trust. "Cannon knows," persists Shachtman, "how spurious it is to inject in the present discussion the 'Abern question.' He knows what every informed party leader, and many members know, namely, that for the past several years at least there has been no such thing as an 'Abern Group.'" I take the liberty of remarking that if anybody is here distorting reality it is none other than Shachtman himself. I have been following the development of the internal relations in the American section for about ten years. The specific composition and the special role played by the New York organization became clear to me before anything else. Shachtman will perhaps recall that while I was still in Prinkipo I advised the National Committee to move away from New York and its atmosphere of petty-bourgeois squabbles for a while to some industrial center in the provinces. Upon arriving in Mexico I gained the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with the English language and thanks to many visits from my northern friends, of arriving at a more vivid picture of the social composition and the political psychology of the various groupings. On the basis of my own personal and immediate observations during the past three years I assert that the Abern faction has existed uninterruptedly, statically if not "dynamically."

The members of the Abern faction, given a modicum of political experience, are easily recognizable not only by their social traits but by their approach to all questions. These comrades have always formally denied the existence of their faction. There was a period when some of them actually did try to dissolve themselves into the party. But they attempted this by doing violence to themselves, and on all critical questions they came out in relation to the party as a group. They were far less interested in principled questions, in particular the question of changing the social composition of the party, than in combinations at the top, personal conflicts, and generally occurrences in the "general staff." This is the Abern school. I persistently warned many of these comrades that soaking in this artificial existence would unfailingly bring them sooner or later to a new factional explosion.

The leaders of the opposition speak ironically and disparagingly of the proletarian composition of the Cannon faction; in their eyes this incidental "detail" carries no importance. What is this if not petty-bourgeois disdain combined with blindness? At the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democrats in 1903 where the spit took place between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks there were only three workers among several scores of delegates. All three of them turned up with the majority. The Mensheviks jeered at Lenin for investing this fact with great symptomatic significance. The Mensheviks themselves explained the position the three workers took by their lack of "maturity." But as is well known it was Lenin who proved correct.

If the proletarian section of our American party is "politically backward," then the first task of those who are "advanced" should have consisted in raising the workers to a higher level. But why have the present opposition failed to find its way to these workers? Why did they leave this work to the "Cannon clique"? What is involved here? Aren't the workers good enough for the opposition? Or is the opposition unsuitable for workers?

It would be asinine to think that the workers' section of the party is perfect. The workers are only gradually reaching clear class consciousness. The trade unions always create a culture medium for opportunist deviations. Inevitably we will run up against this question in one of the next stages. More than once the party will have to remind its own trade unionists that a pedagogical adaptation to the more backward layers of the proletariat must not become transformed into a political adaptation to the conservative bureaucracy of the trade unions. Every new stage of development, every increase in the party ranks and the complication of the methods of its work open up not only new possibilities but also new dangers. Workers in the trade unions, even those trained in the most revolutionary school, often display a tendency to free themselves from party control. At the present time, however, this is not at all in question. At the present time the non-proletarian opposition, dragging behind it the majority of the non-proletarian youth, is attempting to revise our theory, our program, our tradition,—and it does all this light-mindedly, in passing, for greater convenience in the struggle against the "Cannon clique." At the present time disrespect for the party is shown not by the trade unionists but by the petty-bourgeois oppositionists. It is precisely in order to prevent the trade unionists

from turning their backs to the party in the future that it is necessary to decisively repulse these petty-bourgeois oppositionists.

It is moreover impermissible to forget that the actual or possible mistakes of those comrades working in the trade unions reflect the pressure of the American proletariat as it is today. This is our class. We are not preparing to capitulate to its pressure. But this pressure at the same time shows us our main historic road. The mistakes of the opposition on the other hand reflect the pressure of another and alien class. An ideological break with that class is the elementary condition for our future successes.

The reasonings of the opposition in regard to the youth are false in the extreme. Assuredly, without the conquest of the proletarian youth the revolutionary party cannot develop. But the trouble is that we have almost an entirely petty-bourgeois youth, to a considerable degree with a social-democratic, i.e., opportunist past. The leaders of this youth have indubitable virtues and ability but, alas, they have been educated in the spirit of petty-bourgeois combinationism and if they are not wrenched out of their habitual milieu, if they are not sent without high-sounding titles into working class districts for day-to-day dirty work among the proletariat, they can forever perish for the revolutionary movement. In relation to the youth as in all the other questions, Shachtman unfortunately has taken a position that is false to the core.

It Is Time to Halt!

To what extent Shachtman's thought from a false starting point has become debased is to be seen from the fact that he depicts my position as a defense of the "Cannon clique" and harps several times on the fact that in France I supported just as mistakenly the "Molinier clique." Everything is reduced to my supporting isolated individuals or groups entirely independently of their program. The example of Molinier only thickens the fog. I shall attempt to dispel it. Molinier was accused not of retreating from our program but of being undisciplined, arbitrary, and of venturing into all sorts of financial adventures to support the party and his faction. Since Molinier is a very energetic man and has unquestionable practical capacities I found it necessary—not only in the interests of Molinier but above all in the interests of the organization itself—to exhaust all the possibilities of convincing and reeducating him in the spirit of proletarian discipline. Since many of his adversaries possessed all of his failings but none of his virtues I did everything to convince them not to hasten a split but to test Molinier over and over again. It was this that constituted my "defense" of Molinier in the adolescent period of the existence of our French section.

Considering a patient attitude towards blundering or undisciplined comrades and repeated efforts to reeducate them in the revolutionary spirit as absolutely compulsory I applied these methods by no means solely to Molinier. I made attempts to draw closer into the party and save Kurt Landau, Field, Weisbord, the Austrian, Frey, the Frenchman, Treint, and a number of others. In many cases my efforts proved fruitless; in a few cases it was possible to rescue valuable comrades.

In any case I did not make the slightest principled concession to Molinier. When he decided to found a paper on the basis of "four slogans" instead of our program, and set out independently to execute this plan, I was among those who insisted upon his immediate expulsion. But I will not hide the fact that at the Founding Congress of the Fourth International I was in favor of once again testing Molinier and his group within the framework of the International to see if they had become convinced of the erroneousness of their policy. This time, too, the attempt led to nothing. But I do not renounce repeating it under suitable conditions once again. It is most curious that among the bitterest opponents of Molinier there were people like Vereecken and Sneevliet, who after they had broken with the Fourth International, successfully united with him.

A number of comrades upon acquainting themselves with my archives have reproached me in a friendly way with having wasted and still continuing to waste so much time on convincing "hopeless people." I replied that many times I have had the occasion to observe how people change with circumstances and that I am therefore not ready to pronounce people as "hopeless" on the basis of a few even though serious mistakes.

When it became clear to me that Shachtman was driving himself and a certain section of the party into a blind alley I wrote him that if the opportunity were mine I would immediately take an airplane and fly to New York in order to discuss with him for

seventy-two hour stretches at a time. I asked him if he didn't wish to make it possible somehow for us to get together. Shachtman did not reply. This is wholly within his right. It is quite possible that those comrades who may become acquainted with my archives in the future will say in this case too that my letter to Shachtman was a false step on my part and they will cite this "mistake" of mine in connection with my over-persistent "defense" of Molinier. They will not convince me. It is an extremely difficult task to form an international proletarian vanguard under present conditions. To chase after individuals at the expense of principles would of course be a crime. But to do everything possible to bring back outstanding yet mistaken comrades to our program I have considered and still consider my duty.

From that very Trade Union Discussion which Shachtman util-

ized with such glaring irrelevance, I quote the words of Lenin which Shachtman should engrave on his mind: "A mistake always begins by being small and growing greater. Differences always begin with trifles. Everyone has at times suffered a tiny wound but should this tiny wound become infected, a mortal disease may follow." Thus spoke Lenin on January 23, 1921. It is impossible not to make mistakes; some err more frequently, others less frequently. The duty of a proletarian revolutionist is not to persist in mistakes, not to place ambition above the interests of the cause but to call a halt in time. It is time for Comrade Shachtman to call a halt! Otherwise the scratch which has already developed into an ulcer can lead to gangrene.

January 24, 1940.

Coyoacan, D.F.

L. TROTSKY

Second World War and the Soviet Union

(Submitted March 1, 1940 by the Minority of the Political Committee)

1. The present war, which began with the invasion of Poland by the German army on September 1st of last year, is a new struggle among the great powers for a re-division of the earth; for the hegemony on the European continent, and in particular for rule over the majority of oppressed mankind, living in the colonies and semi-colonies of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Latin America. Thus, in its decisive aspects, the present war is of the same general character as the war of 1914-18, this time occurring on a foundation of far more acute and desperate conflict and social degeneration. All attempts to describe the war, from the point of view of any of the participants, as being fought for the rights of national self-determination (Poland, Finland), for the sake of "democracy against fascism" (Britain, France), to "break the hold of capitalist plutocracy" (Germany), for "socialist liberation" or "defense of the Russian proletarian revolution" (Soviet Union) are only social-patriotic devices for hiding the true character of the war from the masses, and enlisting the support of the masses for one or another participant or group of participants.

2. From the socially reactionary character of the war there follows the strategy which revolutionary socialists are obligated to adopt with respect to it. The revolutionary orientation may be summed up as **THE STRATEGY OF THE THIRD CAMP**. This strategy envisages the struggle on a world scale against the war, against all the belligerent governments and belligerent armies, and for the international socialist revolution. The troops of the potential army of the third camp are to be found in the ranks of the workers and poor farmers, the women and the youth, in all countries, in the enslaved populations of the colonies, semi-colonies, subject-nations, throughout the world, all of whom have only sorrow, starvation and death in prospect from the war, and for whom socialist revolt against the war alone can offer solution. The ranks of the army of the third camp will be forged by the rejection of any support of any of the warring governments or armies, the resolute pursuance of the class struggle in all countries, irrespective of its influence upon the fortunes at the military fronts, and the fight for liberation by the peoples of the colonies and semi-colonies. The guiding slogans of the third camp are summarized by: **AGAINST THE WAR! PEACE THROUGH SOCIALISM! FOR THE NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE OPPRESSED PEOPLES THROUGH THE SOCIALIST UNITED STATES OF EUROPE! FOR A SOCIALIST UNITED STATES OF THE AMERICAS! FOR A FREE AFRICA! FOR A FREE ASIA! FOR A WORLD FEDERATION OF SOCIALIST REPUBLICS!**

3. The Soviet Union is participating integrally in the world imperialist war for the re-division of the earth. The Russian revolutionists and the Russian masses generally neither desired nor welcomed Stalin's war. The Soviet workers and peasants and the nationally oppressed peoples of the U.S.S.R. will express their discontent and hatred of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy and its predatory war as an anti-war opposition movement—the only real basis for the revolutionary overthrow of Stalin in the present war. The reactionary character of its participation is demonstrated equally by: the policy and aims of the Soviet government and army—bureaucratic expansionism—which in no way advance or defend the interests of the Russian or the world proletariat, but on the contrary are solely in the interests of the preservation and extension of the power, privileges and revenues of the bureaucracy; the character of the alliance with Germany; and by the effects of its participation, which are in no way to advance the prerequisites of the socialist revolution—above all the independent struggle of the proletariat and the colonial peoples for power,

freedom, and socialism—but on the contrary to wipe out those prerequisites. Stalin's present war is no more a "war in defense of nationalized property" than Daladier's is a "defense of democracy."

4. Revolutionary socialists are obligated therefore to revise the former conception of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union," which, under the circumstances of the present war, leads to a strategy which is in direct opposition to the interests of the world socialist revolution. The general strategy of the third camp applies to the Soviet government and armies as to the other belligerent powers. In certain concrete cases, as, for example, in the invasion of Finland, we raise such slogans as, "Withdraw the Red Army from Finland!" "Stop the war!", etc. The slogans **FOR A FREE SOVIET UKRAINE!** and for freedom of the other non-Russian nationalities within the Soviet Union who may wish it, **FOR WORKERS' CONTROL OF INDUSTRY! FOR WORKERS' DEMOCRACY! DOWN WITH PRIVILEGE! FOR THE OVERTHROW OF THE BUREAUCRACY!** and the struggle for these and for the other economic and social demands of the workers and peasants, irrespective of the effect of this struggle upon the military front, together with the international orientation proposed in the general slogans applicable to the war, these alone answer the needs of the Russian masses, including the genuine defense of nationalized property and its utilization for socialist development, and will fuse their struggle with that of the masses of the entire world for **PEACE THROUGH SOCIALISM**.

5. It is not possible to give in advance a detailed reply to all hypothetical variants of future developments of the war. But, for example, if the present enemies of Germany were to engage the Red Army on Russian or non-Russian soil, as an extension of their opposition to Russian aid to Germany and conflict with Stalinist bureaucratic expansion—that is, if the character of Russia's participation in the war would remain the same (as described in point 3), our present position would remain unchanged. However, if the character of the war changes from one of inter-imperialist conflict, in which the Red Army acts as a pawn of one imperialist power and as an instrument of bureaucratic expansion, into a war determined by the capitalist imperialist politics of destruction of Soviet state property and the reduction of Russia to a colony—that is, is determined by the world antagonism of capitalist imperialism and Soviet nationalized economy—our position would change corresponding to the change in the character of the war. In such a war, the Stalinist bureaucracy, despite the fact that it continues to defend, in its own way, its power and revenue, would be conducting a progressive war. The revolutionary working class would in this case adopt the position of defense of the Soviet Union. Our position would be dictated by the interests of the world proletariat which coincide with the struggle to defend Soviet nationalized property from liquidation by any imperialist power or powers. The defense of the Soviet Union would be conducted by us independently, without for a moment abandoning the political struggle against the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy.

6. In the United States, our main enemy remains at home. The special task of the Socialist Workers Party is resistance to all attempts of the bourgeoisie and its government, and of the labor bureaucracy and social-patriots, to exploit the crimes of Stalinism for the purpose of identifying it with revolutionary socialism, and for the purpose of whipping up an imperialist pro-war spirit among the masses and of dragging the country into war.