

# INTERNAL BULLETIN

VOL. 15, No. 8

April, 1953

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Issued by:

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY  
116 University Place  
New York 3, N.Y.

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ORIGIN OF THE INTERNAL STRUGGLE

Every responsible party member must view with alarm the new eruption of factional conflict within the leadership and in the party as a whole. It is a grave matter for the party to be plunged into violent internal struggle in the midst of increasing reaction, isolation and preparations for war, and when the class struggle cannot provide the necessary tests and healthy correctives of differing positions. This is especially serious when the differences, although sharp, have not crystallized along clearly defined programmatic lines that lend themselves easily to an objective judgment by the party membership.

For our part, we take no responsibility for the outbreak of the conflict. We did not seek nor instigate this struggle. On the contrary we have favored every proposal, every compromise that would postpone its outbreak or allay its intensity. We do not deny that we have vigorously -- perhaps sometimes even over-vigorously -- presented our point of view in the PC and weekly paper staff on current political and organizational questions. How can that constitute a reason for a faction fight to the death, unless the price of peace for an opposition is complete silence?

This fight has been deliberately forced upon us and on the party. That is the real significance of the Dobbs-Stein-Hansen statement (Submitted to PC, Jan. 6, 1953). In reality, however, this is only the latest of a series of attempts to precipitate a showdown faction struggle that have been made for well over a year. In this time there has been an unceasing, and sometimes even frantic hunt for "fundamental" differences, for deviations and motives. The ground for the attack has at least twice been shifted, and it will undoubtedly be shifted again before this struggle is over. Each time the minority point of view was adopted (and that was the case in most of the political questions under discussion), the search for "fundamental" differences became more frantic. Compromises have been interpreted by the majority as a license to present a one-sided view, ignoring the essence of the agreement and making a solitary sentence or paragraph the basis of a line.

We intend by a full recitation of the record to demonstrate where the major responsibility for the present struggle in the party rests. Our aim is far more important than merely placing the blame on the guilty side that "fired the first shot" or committed the first act of "bad faith." For behind the attempt to aggravate incipient differences to the breaking point, to divide the party into irreconcilable factions over divergent views that can still be reconciled, we believe there are deeper causes than transient incidents or the conflict of personalities. Behind the present struggle is the shadow

of the Third World War which, even more than its two predecessors, is creating the deepest crisis in all social relations, in states, institutions, political movements. Our party, as is now obvious, has not escaped the effects of this crisis. To find the remedy -- a matter of life and death -- it is first necessary to seek the causes. A description of the conflict, which now follows, will lead us unerringly to both cause and solution.

### The First Differences

The first differences broke out in the PC and the weekly paper staff in the fall of 1951 soon after Clarke's return. They concerned our attitude to the Stalinist movement and our approach to it in the press. It had become clear to many of us that our position needed a sharp correction. The Stalinist movement, regardless of its desires, had been thrust into opposition to imperialism; it was persecuted and hounded as the chief target of the witch hunt. At the same time it was being shaken internally by the contradiction of a class-collaboration policy that could not be realized in practice, for lack of any important bourgeois allies. Our press, however, was operating as though the war-time collaboration between the Stalinists and the State Department had never ended. Every time we raised problems of this kind -- our attitude to the CP trials (the emphasis to be placed on them), the ALP, the Monthly Review and a series of others, our motives were called into question: Were we proposing a "soft" line, a line of "conciliation to Stalinism"? Was Stalinist work "Point One, Two or Three"? It was impossible for us to speak or make a proposal in the PC on some point relating to Stalinism without prefacing it with an earnest of our good intentions. There was clearly a hunt for "Stalinist dangers." This was in effect admitted by Comrade Cannon himself when he said in the now famous "split" meeting of the PC in March 1952 that "I do not now believe there is a tendency of conciliation to Stalinism in the leadership."

With this statement, the line of attack shifted, although the accusation of "conciliation" was never dropped and still is utilized today. Presumably we were then prepared to write a common document for the Plenum and the convention that would follow. A previous Plenum on Labor Day 1951 had failed to produce a single word on the changed world situation, on the trend of developments in the interim period before the outbreak of war, and on our tasks. This was particularly incumbent upon us, among other reasons, because the World Congress analysis attributed to the U.S. a key role so far as the war question was concerned: continuing social stability or a radicalization of the workers and great social struggles here being the determining consideration in the war plans of U.S. imperialism. Hence the added importance of the coming Plenum: it had to fulfill the task that the previous Plenum had left undone, and had not even initiated.

The original resolution drafted by a committee of Cannon and Wright turned out to be thoroughly inadequate. It failed to provide any over-all review of America's role in the developing war, of the social and economic factors that would precipitate the conflict, its analysis of the economic situation was wrong, even the facts were faulty. The Labor Party was mentioned in a brief sentence, almost as an afterthought. The Stalinists were roundly condemned in a paragraph or two, and that finished that question. The party tasks in the period ahead were very inadequately posed. The document was severely

criticized by Comrades Bartell, Clarke and Frankel, who made proposals for rewriting, changes and additions.

The very next meeting of the PC (March 1952), called to continue the discussion on the draft resolution, was blown up, and the possibility of an objective discussion wrecked by Comrade Cannon's threat of a split. It took the form of his reading a projected "personal" letter to Pablo which was also to be sent to all members of the NC. The letter concluded with a postscript saying that he (Cannon) was pessimistic about the internal party situation and that he believed we were heading into a split because of the existence of an "unprincipled combination" (meaning Clarke and Cochran) or an "incipient faction." Taxed with this ominous threat, Cannon innocently declared that he was merely making a prediction. This has been the alibi for the document ever since. The alibi is refuted by the letter itself. The body of the letter contained a pledge of support to Pablo, while making reservations on Eastern Europe and on Pablo's tactical qualifications. But the last line of the postscript was an admonition to Pablo to keep his hands off the internal situation. Unless words and politics have lost their meaning, how else could this letter be interpreted than as a threat to split? It was a quid pro quo offer to Pablo: support in return for non-interference in the drive for a split.

But if the split were inevitable and were going to occur despite anyone's desires or intentions -- as Comrade Cannon tried to maintain -- what were the fundamental differences, we asked, that were driving fatalistically to this disaster? He admitted, as we have already stated, that there was no danger of "Stalinist conciliationism" -- although this was the battle-cry against us in the committee for at least six months. There would be a split, he said, precisely because there were no fundamental differences, (!) and yet in their absence, the tone of discussion continued to be sharp and the atmosphere tense. Obviously this was reducing a big question to the barren searching for hidden motives. (It did not interest him that the atmosphere might have been charged by the fact that our many practical proposals had been met by him and others by a searching for our motives, by shameful innuendos or charges of "conciliation" to Stalinism.) Before the meeting was over, the letter was so clearly exposed as an irrational act or a wilfully malicious project that it was withdrawn. But let this be clear -- it was withdrawn at our urging! Although there was obviously factional advantage to be gained from the publication of such a scandalous, unprincipled document -- which would have shocked the party and the world movement -- we urged its withdrawal to avoid a factional struggle that would be harmful to the party because the differences were admittedly only in their incipient stages. The tactic to precipitate a sudden split situation had failed, but the determination to organize one remained unaltered.

### The May 1952 Plenum

Once again we returned to the Plenum resolution. Comrades Clarke and Frankel revised or rewrote at least one-third of the document in the form of amendments. Although these revisions embodied most of the points that had been so vehemently combatted in the previous six months, they were accepted with very little alteration by the PC subcommittee and later by the PC. Naturally complete clarity was not attained, and as was inevitable under the circumstances, the new docu-

ment took the form of a compromise resolution. Nevertheless it marked a great step forward.

The one important proposal rejected by Comrades Cannon and Stein -- and with particular obduracy by Comrade Cannon -- was a project for an organized propaganda campaign. In effect it was nothing else than a revival of Comrade Cannon's own project for an "Ideological Offensive" ("Proposals for a Propaganda Campaign," submitted by J.P.Cannon, November 1948.) which had been adopted in December 1948 but had never made much headway. We felt that the needs for such a campaign were even more decisive in 1952 than four years previously.

The proposal was bitterly fought at the PC meeting, a counter-motion by Comrade Cannon was finally adopted that if funds were available, a new session of the Trotsky School should have priority. The incident is of more than passing significance in view of the present fraudulent claim that the big dividing issue is the "independent party versus the propaganda group." The Trotsky School -- that is, a strictly internal educational activity -- was counterposed by those who presumably favor the "independent party" to a propaganda campaign -- that is, an external activity primarily directed outside the party -- advocated by those who are charged with wanting to liquidate the party into a propaganda group.

With this, once again Comrade Cannon came forward with a declaration of war. Now, he informed us, he knew what the "fundamental differences" were (although he failed to specify their exact nature); he insisted that the "situation in the committee" be placed as a special point on the Plenum agenda. We pointed out that in the absence of any written position on his part concerning these so-called differences, such a discussion could only be a brawl. We furthermore pointed out that we had just unanimously adopted the amended resolution, and therefore apparently were proceeding from a common line. Again Cannon withdrew his proposal, but not his determination to convert the Plenum into a brawl, and to again lay the basis for the split. On April 25, he dispatched a private letter to a selected group of NC members urging them to come to the Plenum without fail because a big fight was expected; he compared the Plenum to the one that preceded the split convention in 1940!

This deliberate attempt to repeat the pre-split 1939 Plenum -- despite the unanimity now on fundamental and tactical questions! -- quickly became apparent at the May 1952 Plenum. Cannon opened with a one-sided and provocative report on the resolution. It was as though the original resolution had not been altered from top to bottom.

The stage was now set for the provocative conclusion of his speech, a thinly veiled attack against us. It dealt with the dangers of degeneration in the leadership, and cited the cases of C. Charles, Manny Mills and. . . Max Shachtman. The danger of degeneration of individuals in the leadership, according to this theory, came not from the murderous pressure of anti-communist imperialism, from the failure to understand and draw confidence from the new world revolutionary reality, from succumbing to Stalinophobia in one form or another. No, strangely enough, it was attributed to the loss of faith in the independence of the party. This, despite the inescapable les-

sons of the splits in England and France where a majority of the leadership, and of the ranks, had marched out of the Trotskyist movement denouncing the International for "liquidating" the independence of the party.

Cannon's theory was to receive crushing refutation only a few weeks later from one of the participants at the Plenum, not from our ranks, however, but from one who had not the slightest doubt about "independence," not the slightest tendency toward "conciliating Stalinism" -- from Grace Carlson's desertion to Roman Catholicism.

But his speech had its intended effect. It was the signal for a sustained barrage on the part of his supporters against Clarke who had attempted to present the resolution in its rounded character and to set straight the theory of degeneration so that the leadership could recognize the real dangers and how to combat them. The hysterical tirade was redoubled after Comrade Cochran sharply characterized the irregularity of Comrade Cannon's launching a factional attack under cover of presenting, as the official PC reporter, a unanimously adopted political resolution.

Weiss' motion that Cannon's tendentious and factional report be adopted along with the resolution proved too much for a large part of the committee to stomach, and they demanded, in the absence of clearly revealed differences and because of political agreement on the resolution, that the struggle be suspended. We, for our part, associated ourselves with this point of view as we had already done on two previous occasions. Once again Cannon backed down in his attempt to aggravate the struggle and drive it to a crisis. Under pressure of the committee he withdrew the motion for the adoption of his factional report. But again, as in the two previous cases, his retreat was accompanied by the sullen warning that he had no confidence that the agreement would last, meaning of course, that to the best of his ability he would not permit it to last.

### The 1952 Convention and Its Aftermath

The agreement did last, however, through the convention, and with entirely salutary results for the party. There were, it is true, as the Stein-Dobbs-Hansen statement says, "divergent evaluations of the objective situation and of party tasks. . . (reflected) in reports and speeches." This was not unnatural in view of the compromise nature of the resolution, and, above all, because Comrade Cannon's convention report continued to have the same one-sided nature, although not nearly so marked as at the Plenum. The section of the membership aware of the previous disputes breathed a sigh of relief at the outcome of the convention. They were satisfied that we had avoided a bitter, frustrating factional struggle.

But not so Cannon. He began at once, no sooner was the convention over, to attempt to organize a personal faction. This attempt was openly made at the camp, and was witnessed by at least a score of comrades. The almost universal reaction was one of revulsion at this irresponsible and unprincipled action. A section of the National Committee, which had supported Comrade Cannon, now decided that something had to be done to halt this degeneration of the party situation. Comrade Dobbs drafted a resolution, an excerpt of which was subsequently sent to the membership, calling for a regularization of the

party situation during the campaign and for the opening of an objective political discussion after the campaign. Formally, the resolution was unanimously adopted by the PC. But the reality was quite different. Comrade Cannon absented himself without reason from this PC meeting, but sent word through Dobbs that he would go along with the agreement. At the next meeting of the PC, Comrade Cannon put in a request, again in absentia, to leave New York and go to Los Angeles. The reason was not ill health, or special party work. There were a few vague remarks about a "sabbatical leave," and that was that. Once again, unity was to be a strictly unilateral matter.

Thus, a new outbreak of the internal struggle was inevitable, the only question being when Cannon would deem it advisable from the point of view of his factional aims.

The promise in the Dobbs proposal to establish collaboration and make possible the re-opening of a political discussion free from factionalism has never been carried out, nor has any attempt been made to carry it out. It has remained, from the moment of its adoption a dead letter. Dobbs proved incapable, or unwilling, or both, of making good on his big promise to attempt to ameliorate the internal situation. He simply was responsible for a "holding operation" until Cannon and his supporters felt the time was propitious for re-opening their factional offensive.

We repeat: No attempt of any kind was made after the convention, and particularly after the election campaign to reestablish collaboration in the leadership. The weekly paper was being run in high-handed fashion by Comrade Hansen. When a controversy arose over some issue or method of handling a problem, he invariably assigned the writing of the article to someone sharing his views, and it was only seen by the others if specifically requested, in departure from the regular staff custom of passing around important articles. When the financial crisis broke on us after the campaign, no attempt was made to permit an inclusive representation of all points of view on the full-time staff.

In truth, how could there be genuine collaboration if two leading comrades, Clarke and Cochran, the representatives of a distinct tendency in the leadership and reflecting the views of a considerable section of the party, were not to have the possibility of fully participating in the propagandist and organizational work of the center? True, a number of other comrades were also removed from the full-time staff, but that begs the question because those that remained were exclusively supporters of Comrade Cannon. Thus, instead of collaboration, we were confronted with the last representative of our point of view being removed from the full-time party staff, and an increasing exclusion from possibilities of political leadership. At the same time, we witnessed the organization of a faction in the New York Local by Stevens and Ring, under the tutelage of the Cannon leaders, against the local organizer, Bartell, on the flimsiest and most artificial lines imaginable.

The New York Local has experienced one of its most successful years of activity since the onset of reaction; it has attracted many new friends to its public affairs and its work is now resulting in the recruitment of new members; the morale of the membership has been excellent and steady, free of the feverish ups and downs of exhilara-

tion and depression that comes from disorderly and falsely oriented activities; its finances have never been in better shape. All of this was made possible by a realistic appraisal of the objective situation, by an understanding of the peculiarities of the New York labor and radical movement, by emphasis on propaganda activities and opponents work. Comrade Bartell's report to the City Convention codified the premises, methods and practical steps of the year's work and proposed, in view of the unchanged objective situation, that the New York Local continue on the same road.

Instead of hailing the report as a model effort in adapting a national policy to the peculiarities and needs of a local situation, the majority of the Secretariat pounced on it for factional ends as one of the grounds to precipitate an internal struggle nationally. Once again they charged the atmosphere with suspicion, once again we saw the now familiar hunt for hidden motives and secret aims. "Is he (Bartell) not tending to modify our basic evaluation of the party's character, perspectives and tasks?" With this loaded question, they announced their support of one of the most infantile, miseducated and sectarian groups that the New York Local has ever known, a group that has been repudiated by the bulk of the experienced, responsible local activists and trade unionists. We will return to this question later. Suffice it to say here that this group is the first fruit of the year of effort by the Cannon-Weiss faction to precipitate a factional struggle to cover up their own confusion, their constant shifting of issues and their no less constant searching for hidden motives and deviations. It is a warning of what the party will look like nationally if they are not called to order and corrected in time.

We sat for months in the PC meetings and made no attempt to contest or struggle against these factional and war-like moves against us. We did not even fight over Clarke's removal from the full-time staff as we still hoped that the matter would be straightened out when the financial situation improved. We were waiting for the majority to present to the National Committee, with the conclusion of the election campaign, a practical program of action for 1953, on what practical tasks and projects we would concentrate our efforts. Nothing was ever submitted or proposed. But on December 30, 1952, the Los Angeles leaders proposed to involve the party in a series of new local election campaigns. The issue involved was not the need or merit of participating in election campaigns. The national party and the Los Angeles Local had just concluded a major electoral activity only two months previously. We believed, therefore, that the Los Angeles proposal was made in contemptuous disregard of the fact that we were still in a precarious financial condition, that Clarke had recently been removed from full-time work, that the project for improving the magazine, under consideration by the PC after the convention, was abandoned because of the financial crisis. When we protested against this preposterous proposal, this method, or lack of method of determining party activity for 1953, and when Comrade Cochran dared suggest that the personnel arrangements were being handled along factional and not party lines, the Cannon leaders decided the moment had arrived to renew the battle for the split.

#### THE POLITICAL CAUSES OF THE CRISIS

The roots of this irresponsible behavior, this erratic method of dealing with orientation and tasks, this panic in the face of politi-



cal differences are primarily political. They grow out of a six-year old disorientation in the face of unexpected changes in the world and at home, out of disappointment over the collapse of exaggerated hopes out of an inability to cope soberly and analytically with the new reality created by the deepening reaction and the coming war.

It has taken the form of Stalinophobia and frustration. The nature of this tendency toward Stalinophobia -- let us make this unmistakably clear so there will be no confusion or misunderstanding -- is not capitulation to imperialism but a barren sectarianism that makes a doctrinaire panacea of "independence" and attempts to meet all problems of the moment and of perspectives by the mysticism of faith and hope and making a mystique of the party. In frustration at the impotence of such politics, they have turned against those whose approach and policy is more in tune with the reality with a ferocity out of all proportion to the magnitude of the questions involved. Despite its background, tradition and experience, this tendency bears many of the characteristics of all those groupings in revolutionary leadership who have proved unable to adjust themselves to great historic turns. We say this sadly because we had hoped for better in view of our common heritage. But facts are stubborn things; to ignore them is to court disaster.

Let us preface this documentation of the record by a word of caution. We do not cite the record because some or all of us were right on all questions while others were wrong, nor to demand any breast-beating for errors made. That to us would be a futile game of prestige politics. We cite the record because the same type of errors, and particularly the method of thought responsible for them, are still being repeated without any consciousness of their real cause or any genuine desire to correct them, and because they are the chief cause of the present internal struggle.

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The turning point in our party's recent history was the party's 1946 convention and its aftermath. The party's hopes had been greatly buoyed by the post-war rise in the class struggle and its consequent expansion numerically and in influence in the mass movement. We saw a curve of increasing and more rapid party expansion and influence. Our resolution spoke of transforming the party into one of "mass action." We believed the class struggle would move steadily forward, and with an oncoming depression, which we were predicting, would be transformed into a great social crisis that in turn would lead to the American Revolution in which the Trotskyists would play the leading role. In the process of these great events all the complex problems of world politics, of Stalinism and of reformism, would naturally be more or less speedily resolved. Not only had the axis of world power turned to the United States, but also the axis of the class struggle and of world Trotskyism. We had become the children of destiny -- at least in our own minds.

Unfortunately, this idyllic picture was to be quickly dispelled. Within four months, the cold war broke out between American imperialism and the Kremlin, and reaction began to mount the offensive against the labor and radical movement at home. Instead of the scene being dominated by pure class struggle in the United States between the corporations and the labor movement, increasingly led by Trotsky-

ists, we were to be again faced with the complicated problem of the more powerful anti-capitalist movement in other parts of the world being led and misled by the Stalinist bureaucracy. In the meanwhile, instead of the American workers engaged in mortal combat with capitalism, the gigantic red-baiting campaign to purge Stalinist influence out of the trade union movement began to occupy the center of the stage.

We were distinctly slow in reacting to these new developments. That in itself is not a fault, or if it was it was also a fault of the whole world movement. The human mind, even the Marxist mind, is slow in grasping a new reality particularly when it changes sharply and suddenly. Our fault, or rather the fault of a majority of the leadership, is that they have not to this day reoriented themselves to the new world situation.

### 1. The Auto Crisis

The leadership came to the August 1947 Plenum of the NC, the first gathering after the ill-fated 1946 Convention, without an analysis of the new situation. But if we could ignore or postpone an examination of the big questions, we could not avoid a discussion of their practical consequences as manifested in our most important field of activity, the trade union movement. A struggle broke out over the policy to be pursued in the auto union, where we had our biggest and most influential fraction.

The leading comrades, and the majority of the fraction, were proposing that we shift our support from Walter Reuther, who was fast becoming the center of reaction in the union and the open agent of the State Department, first to an intermediate position, and possibly later, if developments justified, to support of the Thomas-Addes group in which the Stalinists were involved. The proposal was violently opposed by Comrades Mills, Swabeck and Dunne, with Comrade Cannon giving them support until the very end of the discussion when it had become obvious that the majority of the Plenum was going to support the position of Comrade Cochran and the auto fraction.

Cannon then announced that he would go along with the decision but was greatly worried lest we cut ourselves off from the "main stream" and become contaminated by our association with the Stalinists. The self-same fears had in essence been the principal reason for the opposition of the others. The correct decision was taken but not before the committee had been inhibited by this fear of Stalinism which was to be thrust again and again into all serious questions of policy, ranging from tactics to theory.

Thus, if analogies are needed and are correctly applied, the present conflict like the conflict in 1940 began with a dispute over policy to be followed in the auto union and over the self-same issue. At that time, 1939, Burnham and Shachtman bitterly opposed the policy of Cochran, Dunne and Clarke in Detroit of joining with Reuther and the Stalinists against Homer Martin in the UAW split. (We had previously been supporting Homer Martin.) They said the new UAW-CIO, minus Martin, would be nothing but a rubber stamp for the CP. This is more than a coincidence; in both cases a section of the leadership oriented themselves from Stalinophobe considerations against the policy of the auto fraction.

Viewing the events of the 1939 auto crisis and the eruption of more virulent Stalinophobe tendencies that seized the party after the Russo-Finnish war, Trotsky issued his famous cry of alarm. The party he said, had to be proletarianized or it would succumb to overpowering and alien class pressures. We were to see the first test of his warning in the struggle over auto policy in 1947. It was thanks to the effective and successful proletarianization of the Michigan party, thanks to its flexible tactics over the years which had never made a fetish of alliances with reformist bureaucrats, that our movement was saved from the disgrace of a Shachtmanite trade union policy, from discreditment among the best militants in the UAW and the labor movement as a whole. When, because of old habit patterns or plain disorientation, a section of the party leadership became motivated by phobias of Stalinism rather than by Marxist understanding of class criteria, it was the worker-revolutionists of Michigan who brought them up sharply and kept the party on its true course.

If we insist on this point, it is because of the factional distortion of the real nature of the groups in the present party conflict. It is charged that our tendency, which is in the forefront of the struggle to correct the Stalinophobe tendencies now so manifest in a section of the party leadership, consists of despairing, pessimistic petty-bourgeois types. Were that true, the party's future would be grim indeed. It would be wrecked on the rocks of Third Campism. Past history and present facts, however, tell an absolutely different story.

It was important sections of rank and file militants in the UAW who were the first to resist the red-baiting witch hunt instigated in the union by the reformist labor bureaucracy at the behest of the State Department. They knew by class instinct that Reuther's program was aimed at smashing the traditional democracy and militancy of their union. It was the worker-revolutionists of our party in Michigan who first saw the class lines of this struggle in the auto union. They were determined to link up with and penetrate this movement regardless of Stalinist participation in it. But here they encountered the resistance of a section of the leadership which had become a transmission belt for alien class influences into the party. Fortunately the proletarian section of the party proved strong enough to counteract these pressures and save the Marxist integrity of the party. We are still fighting the same disease today, although it has become more malignant than in 1947.

Now as then, the drive to proletarianize the party goes hand in hand with the struggle against Stalinophobia. Even though countless workers are afflicted with it, Stalinophobia is essentially a petty-bourgeois poison. It destroyed Shachtman because he lacked the antidote of a proletarian base and a Marxist program. We have both -- that is why we are confident that the party will overcome the dangerous wavering of a section of its leadership.

The opposition to the auto fraction's policy was not simply an incidental difference over union tactics. In essence, although generally unrecognized at the time, it was resistance to making an important political turn required by a new world situation. Our trade union policy during the war had been a relatively easy problem to resolve: Stalinist and reformist union leaders were joined in a program of class peace; together with other militants we led the left-

wing opposition. Then ensued a very brief interlude which created no end of confusion. Under great pressure from below, the reformist bureaucrats shifted to more militant actions, while the Stalinists still bound by Moscow's remaining wartime alliances continued to preach class peace. This created a certain opposition between the Stalinists and reformists and threw us into a temporary alliance with the latter, one aspect of which was the bloc with Reuther. It appeared to some that there was a revival of the pre-war situation where our main tactic in the unions was that of blocs with more progressive reformist leaders against the Stalinists. This conception went so deep that it was codified politically in Comrade Cannon's pamphlet, American Stalinism and Anti-Stalinism, which appeared a few months before the August 1947 Plenum.

But the underlying reality after the war was the emergence of a powerful new labor bureaucracy, in avowed alliance with the State Department, and executors of its war preparations both at home and abroad. The underlying reality was the cold war, which was injected into the union movement by this bureaucracy and resulted in the destruction of Stalinist power in the CIO, and the isolation of all radicals and left-wingers in the process.

The outlived "anti-Stalinist" line of Cannon's pamphlet -- a product of our failure to make the necessary political reorientation -- was at the bottom of the resistance to the turn needed in the auto union. It became part of the vulgar "anti-Stalinism" which was to plague us repeatedly in one field after another.

## 2. The Debate on Eastern Europe

The second big dispute where "fears of Stalinism" were thrust into the debate and became the determining consideration occurred over the new developments in Eastern Europe. Some time in 1949, Comrade Cochran had come to the conclusion that because of economic, social and political transformations, the states in the Soviet orbit of Eastern Europe could no longer be considered capitalist but had to be characterized as deformed workers' states. He was joined in this view on the Political Committee by Comrades Hansen, Bartell, and, later on, by Wood. For a time, the discussion on the question, which was also proceeding abroad, was conducted objectively through an examination and debate as to the facts and events and their interpretation.

Suddenly Comrade Cannon entered the debate with the demand that an immediate Plenum be called to decide the question because the conception that deformed workers' states existed in Eastern Europe created the danger of conciliation with Stalinism and loss of faith in the Fourth International. Called to New York on short notice in February 1951, and without time to give sufficient thought to the question, the majority of the NC members voted not on the merits of the dispute but because of the fears Comrade Cannon had induced in them.

The method was a fatal one and was to create endless ideological damage and confusion. For if in fact, and according to Marxist analysis, the Eastern European States had become deformed workers' states, and if that signified that Trotskyism had lost its reason for existence, then it was beyond our power to reverse that situation. All

we could achieve by denying the facts and the Marxist analysis would be to cease being Marxists, or to retreat into an ivory tower, or both. The World Congress was to demonstrate later how the events of the countries of Eastern Europe, their transformation into deformed workers' states, was a vindication of Trotskyism, although not in the form we had predicted before the war.

This great work of Marxist analysis was to be of little aid to Comrade Cannon and a majority of the committee in arriving at a correct position. Motivated by subjective considerations, they shifted helplessly from one position to another, entirely too confused to be committed to paper or explained openly to the membership. They emerged from one of the most significant discussions in the history of world Trotskyism not with a political line but with a mental reservation.

Six months after the decision had been so definitively taken by the Plenum, uncertainty and the feeling that an error had been committed began to pervade a section of the leadership which had voted with the majority. To the Yugoslav developments, which had begun to shake our thinking out of traditionalist, routinist ruts was added the overwhelming demonstration of the facts that a social transformation had occurred in Eastern Europe. In September 1950, Comrade Clarke submitted a memorandum to the Secretariat. It said, in substance, that it was false to continue to characterize the buffer zone as capitalist, but that it was also wrong to say that workers' states had been established because there had been no proletarian revolutions as in Yugoslavia and because the countries had already been absorbed into the USSR, as the Baltic countries had been in 1940.

This hybrid position, although no longer supported by Clarke, was subsequently to become the position of the Political Committee. Unmotivated and unexplained, it was less a political position than a refuge against unanswerable facts and arguments, a safe haven, it seemed, against encroaching "dangers of Stalinism." Comrade Cannon, who had angrily insisted in February that a position had to be reached forthwith, now became the very paragon of patience: there was no need in probing the question once again, although he was now ready to accept the hybrid stand; we could expect important developments in the international situation which would throw a new light on the question; and, in any case, comrades were still in the process of thinking through their positions.

The consequence of this erratic behavior on the part of Comrade Cannon, and the lack of political self-confidence on the part of others, was the exclusion of the membership from the privilege of participating in the discussion on the new basis and from finally deciding the question as is their right. For those who were waiting for an answer from the leadership, the whole discussion was to end on a note of confusion and disorientation. No resolution formulating the new position was presented to the 1950 Convention for its consideration. Nor was a resolution, which would have reopened the discussion, presented after the convention. For nine months, the majority of the committee maintained an unbroken silence on the question. The IS resolution, to be submitted to the World Congress, characterizing the Eastern European countries as deformed workers' states (which together with the other theses and resolutions finally resolved the crisis of perspective faced by the Trotskyist movement), elicited no

comment from the leadership -- until September 1951.

At the very end of the Labor Day 1951 Plenum of the NC, without previous warning or discussion, an amendment to the IS resolution was suddenly presented by Comrade Cannon and others, and then adopted by the majority of the committee. It was the position of the previous year developed just prior to the 1950 Convention: the states of Eastern Europe could no longer be considered capitalist, and therefore they had to be defended from imperialist attack, but neither were they workers' states because they had already been absorbed into the USSR. No facts or political motivation were given to substantiate this position. What was involved was no simple factual dispute over the degree of Kremlin control in Eastern Europe but continuing fears over the dangers of Stalinist conciliationism and a continuing crisis of perspective. This was revealed by the motley bloc that voted for the resolution -- among them Comrades Wright and Stevens (Paul G.) who still opposed the designation of Yugoslavia as a workers' state. The amendment was never to officially see the light of day in the party.

The motion to accept the World Congress decision on Eastern Europe at the 1952 Convention was unanimously adopted without any opposition, abstention or reservation from anyone, although Comrade Cannon and others have repeated again and again that they have not changed their position. A more bankrupt, disoriented method of resolving political questions, which was to reappear again in the discussion of the World Congress, and to seriously distort the political thinking of many comrades, had not been known in the whole previous history of the Political Committee.

### 3. The Third World Congress

The Third World Congress was a landmark in the history of world Trotskyism. It was to inaugurate a reorientation in outlook and a change in tactics probably as significant as the turn toward the formation of a new international proposed by Trotsky in 1934 after Hitler had taken power in Germany. A crisis of perspective had begun to develop in our movement internationally with the close of the Second World War and particularly with the advent of the cold war. It manifested itself in the struggles and splits in England and France and in the form of the Morrow-Goldman tendency here. But neither the nature of the crisis nor its solution was immediately apparent.

It remained for the developments in Eastern Europe, the Yugoslav events and finally for the Third Chinese Revolution to pose the question in all its sharpness and clarity. That what was involved was not some abstract theoretical problem but the fate of our movement itself was demonstrated by the catastrophe that had overtaken our Chinese comrades. Mired by outdated slogans and conceptions, they failed to recognize the Third Chinese Revolution when it happened, viewing it as another betrayal of the 1925-27 variety, and were left completely on the sidelines in the midst of the greatest upheaval since the Russian October. (In answer to those who speak of the difficulties of participating in a Stalinist-led movement, we can only say with Trotsky that a correct policy does not guarantee victory, but without it defeat is inevitable.) These events precipitated an international discussion which lasted over two years and culminated in the Third World Congress.

The Third Congress refined and readjusted our conceptions of the role of Stalinist parties in the light of the Yugoslav and Chinese developments. It analyzed the course of events after the outbreak of the Korean war as being one of rapid drift to World War Three between two hostile class camps; it excluded the possibility of any lasting deal between the Kremlin and imperialism; it predicted that the new war -- which imperialism would have to unleash without first being able to smash the colonial revolutions and the revolutionary workers' movements -- would quickly take the form of an international civil war. In view of this irreversible trend and the effects it would have on the workers' movement, the Congress called for a re-orientation of outlook for the international as a whole and for a re-orientation of tactics for an important section of the world movement. Perhaps the chief significance of the Congress was that it had ceased to be the prisoner of outlived formulas, of "museum relics" and had readjusted itself, in true Leninist fashion, to the new world reality.

Unfortunately the Congress failed to make any deep impression on an important section of our leadership. A few among them who had a glimmer of its profound meaning drew back in fear at the dangers of "conciliation to Stalinism" they thought might arise as a result. To this day, two years after the discussion on the Congress began, important party leaders are still asking: "Why are the resolutions of the Third Congress more important than those of any other Congress?" "What is all this nonsense about reorientation and re-armament?" "What have these decisions to do with us in the U.S. anyway?"

The discussion and handling of the World Congress resolutions was a pathetic demonstration of political ineptitude and confusion. After two PC sessions in February and March 1951, devoted to the question, which were marked chiefly by doubts, hesitation, disagreement, the committee emerged neither for nor against but with a series of mental reservations. These were catalogued under the title, "Contributions to the Discussion on International Perspectives." Because of strong criticism of it by Clarke and Cochran, demonstrating its untenable position, this document, also, was never to see the light of day, although it was actually mimeographed and had been sent to the members of the NC. (We are appending to this article the sole statement of position to emerge from the majority, entitled, "Contributions to the Discussion on International Perspectives," and Clarke's reply.) Its authors never proposed its adoption by the PC, nor was it presented to the Labor Day 1951 Plenum of the NC which voted, without discussion to adopt the general line of the World Congress, together with the above-mentioned amendment on Eastern Europe. As in the discussion on Eastern Europe, the membership was again to suffer most from this fumbling, maneuverist method of the PC in handling big political questions. Deprived of the opinions of its leadership, and naturally unclear as to the actual significance of the World Congress orientation, there was to be no serious, organized discussion in the ranks as a whole until Comrade Clarke's tour, that is, one year after the main document for the World Congress had been issued in an internal bulletin.

The confusion in the leadership was never to be cleared up in an organized way. The mental reservations, incorporated in "The Contributions, etc.," were never to be confronted directly by the PC or NC as a body, and have persisted to this day and these self-same false concepts are smuggled in repeatedly, even though its authors lacked

the courage to defend the position when it was under consideration. Clarke's report in October 1951 upon his return to the enlarged PC (including those attending the Trotsky School) was met with a round of objections of the same order as those which had been presented at the first discussion eight or nine months before, although in the meantime the NC had formally gone on record approving the general line. There was an outcry in the meeting on the part of Cannon and others when Clarke proposed that the committee should now strongly recommend the Congress decisions to the party in its own name as a decisive reorientation of the world movement, and urge the branches to make these decisions the central axis of discussion and education for the entire ensuing period. It was contended that this proposal would gag members of the committee from expressing their differences which they had a right to do until a convention passed a definitive decision. A bare motion was then adopted accepting the report and submitting the World Congress documents to membership discussion.

That the clamor for discussion in the committee at this late date was only a means of withholding the authority and wholehearted support of the committee from the World Congress decisions, was to be proved by the failure of any member of the committee to come forth with a single word of criticism, orally or in writing, in the ten subsequent months which included the party pre-convention discussion. The same silence prevailed when the NC and later the Convention were to be presented with a resolution which hailed the Congress Resolutions and accepted all of them unreservedly and without amendment.

The struggle over the unaltered mental reservations of the leading comrades on the NC was to continue in the form of uninterrupted conflicts and friction in the weekly paper staff and sometimes in the PC over the line and approach to be taken to events in our propaganda. Politics, not psychology, explains the atmosphere and the relationships on the Political Committee. How could it be any different when the party and the press are being directed by that group of comrades who consider it indispensable to present and defend their mental reservations to a line they have formally adopted against those who completely agree with and fully understand this line?

#### VULGAR "ANTI-STALINISM" IN PRACTICE

Trotsky long ago pointed out that a deficiency in theory would eventually corrode the entire political organism. Shachtman's evolution, and later Johnson's, proved his point to the hilt. What he meant was that without correct theory the basic guarantee for correctly orienting policy in sharp turns and resisting alien pressures would be lost. In that case, even if the leadership succeeded empirically and by instinct in arriving at the correct position, it would constantly face the danger of defections in the ranks and in the leadership among those left politically unprepared, or falsely prepared, and who do not find in these empirical motivations a strong enough shield to resist alien pressures.

It is undoubtedly true that the tradition of the 1940 struggle with the petty-bourgeois opposition acts as a powerful antidote to Stalinophobe degenerations, and has tended to prevent this disease from assuming malignant form. It is because of this tradition also that we are confident that the party will succeed in correcting these dangerous tendencies now manifest in a section of the leadership.



But it must not be forgotten that tradition is no permanent guarantee; an important section of the ranks entered the party after the split; and even more important is the fact that while the principles on which the 1940 struggle was waged remain essentially sound, the perspectives upon which it was based have since been altered by the unexpected turn of world events.

Two important instances, which we shall cite, demonstrate how imperfect a shield tradition is in warding off the Stalinophobe mode of thought in formulating party policy on big questions; and how confusion in theory spells disaster in formulating current policies.

1. The Korean War. The first reaction of the weekly paper, operating under the immediate direction of the PC, to the Korean war was a Third Camp position calling down a plague on both houses, the Kremlin and American imperialism. Our position was not dissimilar from that of the POUM and the Yugoslav CP, and not too far from that of the Shachtmanites. Now, the Korean war was the first big post-war crisis, testing all prior conceptions. It proved forthwith the complete fallacy of Cannon's basic contention that the main danger came from tendencies toward "conciliation with Stalinism." On the contrary, under the great pressures of the moment, the first inclination of the PC was a position that yielded in the opposite direction, toward Third Campism. It is true that the PC corrected its position in a relatively brief time under pressure of protests from leading comrades. But the fact remains that a semi-Shachtmanite position was taken. That should have been a warning signal, a cause for great concern in a leadership desirous of avoiding such pitfalls in the future. What was needed was not hollow "self-criticism," but a re-evaluation of the false criteria which had dominated the previous debates, and which was the principal source of the present error. That opportunity was to come in the most favorable way in the shape of the World Congress resolutions which were presented as a collective product reorienting strategic conceptions without passing judgment on previous positions or errors. But the opportunity was to go unheeded. A majority of the committee reacted to the World Congress just as they had to Eastern Europe, as though the mistake on Korea had never occurred, still worried about the main danger of "softness" to Stalinism.

2. The theory of the progressive character of the anti-Stalinism of the American workers. This theory pervades the thinking of a large number of comrades, it provides the leit-motif for the position and tone of the weekly paper, it is often the determining consideration for tactical conclusions. It is based on two essentially false conceptions: First, that the workers, or an important section of them, are not opposed to the Stalinists as Communists but because of their record of wartime betrayals and bureaucratic rule in the unions. Second, that the opposition of the workers to the Soviet Union is not necessarily an opposition to communism or socialism but to forced labor, concentration camps, purges, frame-up trials, etc. (We discount the opportunist notion as alien to all our conceptions that we should seek through anti-Stalinism to buy legality for ourselves). From these conceptions, there is derived the conclusion that if we are to maintain contact with the American worker, if we are to gain his ear for our propaganda, we must ever be preoccupied with avoiding being "tarred with the brush of Stalinism," that we must go out of our way to "differentiate" ourselves from it, that we must even pass

up opportunities in Stalinist circles if such a tactic could associate us in any way with Stalinism in the eyes of the so-called average militant worker.

It would take almost as many pages as we have already written to detail the incidents in which this conception of "anti-Stalinism" has been the deciding factor; in fact, most of the disputes in the PC for the last year or more revolved around this disputed question. We shall limit ourselves here to a few of these incidents. (We shall also publish the views of Comrade Trotsky on this question as he set them forth in his 1940 discussion on the question of granting critical support to Browder, then CP candidate for president.)

a. The prosecutions against the Stalinist leaders. The party and the press had taken a magnificent position in the first Foley Square trial, in which defense of the Stalinists was joined with a direct appeal to the CP for a united front. That action, culminating in the Bill of Rights conference in 1949, far from leading to any Stalinist conciliationism, constituted one of the most telling blows we had struck against the Stalinist bureaucrats in years, leading to a split between them and their entire intellectual periphery on the question of the principles of the struggle against the witch hunt. But by the time the second trial of the Stalinist leaders occurred, a new position, never formally adopted but apparently taken for granted as policy, had edged out the old one. The weekly paper practically buried the news of the arrests and trials, and this was deliberate policy -- not an oversight. When Comrade Clarke inquired at a PC meeting in the fall of 1951 for the reasons of this neglect, the reply was given by Comrade Hansen to the effect that the arrests had been deliberately underplayed in order to avoid antagonizing or frightening prospective readers of the weekly paper whom we were then approaching in a sub campaign.

b. The Rosenberg Case. For almost an entire year, the weekly paper remained completely silent on this case which has since become the cause celebre of the witch hunt. To our shame, the first recognition of the case appeared in the weekly paper (in the form of an editorial written by Comrade Clarke) after even the pro-war Jewish Daily Forward had registered its protest. This position, still to be handled gingerly later on, was taken after months of evasion, first of a proposal by Comrade Breitman to publicize the case, and much later of Comrade Clarke, and then only on a strong demand from the ranks. But before this stand was to be taken, a comrade in the New York Local who had raised the question in his branch was told by Comrade Hansen that the Rosenberg Case was a spy case and we didn't want to get mixed up in it. Others expressing the same point of view in the ranks declared it to be an issue involving GPU agents with whom we had nothing in common. Throughout the country, comrades remarked bitterly that the week the Supreme Court refused to hear the Rosenberg appeal, the weekly paper relegated that news to an editorial while splashing the story of Kutcher's threatened eviction all over the front page. Without any damage whatever to the Kutcher story, it could well have taken second place to the Rosenberg news that week. If the resistance of the weekly paper editors and a section of the leadership has finally been overcome, it is not because there was any change in their basic attitude, but partly because their position had become untenable (even Labor Action was protesting on the Rosenberg case) and partly because of the exigencies of the internal struggle.

c. Propaganda about Stalinism. Most of the time our propaganda about Stalinism is practically incoherent, lacking in the most elementary pedagogical qualities so necessary in these days of unabated witch hunt and threatening war when the entire press and all organs of bourgeois public opinion are screaming about Stalinism at the top of their lungs. Our only concern seems to be to attack the Stalinists wherever possible without second thought as to the new circumstances under which this attack has to be made and to the consequent methods to be employed. Our purpose seems to be to distinguish ourselves from the Stalinists -- period. The trouble with this method is that very often either the distinction cannot be understood, or the distinction between us and the bourgeois anti-Stalinists gets lost in a flood of invective, epithet and incomprehensible characterizations.

The tone for this blunderbuss approach was set in Comrade Cannon's pamphlet, The Road to Peace. Nobody can tell -- not even Cannon himself -- to whom that pamphlet is directed. If its main direction is toward "militant non-political workers," as he claims, that would require convincing them first of all that America's aims in the war are counter-revolutionary and imperialist, that U.S. "democracy" can in no sense be considered the "lesser evil" to Stalinist totalitarianism. On the contrary, one would think from the advanced concepts used ("The Road to Peace: According to Lenin and According to Stalin") that it is directed toward the rank and file Stalinists. If that were the case, it completely misses the mark. The attitude is so fierce and unfriendly to people who mistakenly consider their movement to be genuinely fighting imperialism, and being persecuted by it, as to cause them to drop the pamphlet before reading the second paragraph. The only conclusion one can come to is that it was written for the party membership -- another case of excessive preoccupation with mythical Stalinist "dangers" in our ranks.

Because of Stalinophobe considerations, the press fails completely to make itself intelligible precisely to the average non-political militant. Sometimes the weekly paper seems a throwback to the Thirties when we were arguing politics in a radical and pro-Marxist movement; other times it returns to the approach of the Peoples Front or World War II period of alliance of Stalinism with the State Department. But it is rarely adjusted to the present, i.e., to the cold war between the two class camps.

For some comrades the question boils down to one of a "hard" or "soft" tone on Stalinism. If only life or politics were that simple! Obviously, the intent is hard. It is to destroy Stalinism as a contender for leadership of the radical vanguard of the workers, to disintegrate that movement from within to our own advantage. But the method is determined by objective circumstances, nationally and internationally, by the level of political development of the workers, by the question of whether Stalinism or the pro-imperialist bureaucracy is the main enemy at the moment. Every season has its vegetable -- but for us that vegetable is never Stalinophobia!

#### ON THE "PROGRESSIVE ANTI-STALINISM" OF THE AMERICAN WORKERS

Let us return to the concept of the "progressive anti-Stalinism" of the workers, because all of the positions cited above, and many more, would be justified if such a sentiment actually existed among

the masses. The entire conception is a myth, a product of wishful thinking all too prevalent in the leadership of the party. The American workers in their vast majority, unfortunately, are anti-communist not anti-Stalinist. Stalinist crimes have simply made it easier for the rulers to inculcate the masses with hysterical antagonism to communism. If any sizeable section of the workers in the unions were basically motivated in their opposition to the Stalinists by the wartime betrayals of the CP and its bureaucratic methods primarily, then we or some other progressive anti-Stalinist grouping, would have replaced the Stalinists as the leadership of the left wing. On the contrary, the fact that a reformist bureaucracy, tarred with the brush of the same crimes, could eliminate the Stalinists and rise to unchallenged domination over the unions indicated that this type of progressive anti-Stalinism was not widespread. Moreover, in "left-wing" unions (such as the UE; the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers; the ILWU) or left-wing locals, notably Ford Local 600, the progressives have continued to work with the Stalinists, and primarily because they consider the main danger coming from the side of the State Department lackeys, and not the American agency of the Kremlin -- and they are correct!

The existence of "progressive anti-Stalinist" sentiments among broad masses is revealed to be an even greater myth in the realm of decisive class questions. This should be obvious to anyone with even the most general understanding of the political history of the American working class. It is embarrassing to have to repeat elementary truths to those who should know better. The American workers, outside a tiny segment, have no experience whatever with the struggle of working-class parties for leadership of the mass movement. They have not yet been confronted with this problem because they have not reached the stage of class consciousness of rejecting capitalist politics, let alone of rejecting capitalism in favor of socialism. Representatives of radical parties have at times been accepted in the leadership of the mass movement, but always on the basis of a superior minimum program, or because of their special qualities of leadership, but never because of support of their socialist ideology. This was also seen in Minneapolis during the time of the heyday of our influence in the union movement there.

"Progressive anti-Stalinism" does exist in England and is based on the anti-capitalist consciousness of the working class as a whole. It is demonstrated by the fact that the workers in their revolt against the right wing of the Labor Party have turned to the left Social Democrat Bevan and not to the Communist Party. It is further demonstrated by the relative absence of any witch hunting or red-baiting in the British labor movement. This does not mean that the "progressive anti-Stalinism" in England is free of all political backwardness, because the British workers are just beginning to experience the conflict between reformism and revolutionary politics. The British comrades understand this situation perfectly, and for that reason Socialist Outlook is the best product of revolutionary working-class journalism in the entire international workers' movement. The reason is not because they use smaller words or shorter sentences than we do in our paper, but because they understand their own working class, they know its problems and preoccupations and address their propaganda to that movement and not to some mythical conception of the proletariat concocted in an editorial office. We could do worse than to drop some of our false pride and hollow boasting and learn

something from the English experience.

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating." If this progressive anti-Stalinism really existed as a current, it would show up in the growth of the anti-Stalinist parties. The 1952 election returns were a remarkable demonstration of the contrary. The insignificant vote received by all the radical parties combined indicated that the masses, even in their confused opposition to the Korean war, remained anti-communist and made no distinction between treacherous Stalinism, the SP's state-department socialism, sectarian De Leonism and the revolutionary Marxism of the SWP. If they had made such distinctions on a mass basis, we would now be faced with the beginnings of great social struggles. The relatively stable social base upon which our ruling class rests, and which is its chief asset in its drive to war, is built upon anti-communism, not progressive anti-Stalinism.

Moreover, none of the pseudo-socialist groups, assuming that our revolutionary socialism is still too advanced for the masses, have benefitted from this so-called progressive anti-Stalinism. The SP and the Shachtmanites, who made this conception the focal point of their political orientation, are now recording the results in their own virtual liquidation. Basing themselves upon "progressive anti-Stalinism" signified for these tendencies an adaptation to the most backward prejudices of the masses and to the logical next step, conciliation or capitulation to the imperialist camp in the U.S. which now encompasses virtually all of the anti-Stalinists outside of the radical movement. The evolution of these groups should be a warning signal to us of the terrible consequences of adaptation to the political backwardness of the masses based on wishful thinking about the prevalence of "progressive anti-Stalinism." We have no magic protection that exempts us, when following a false course, from political degeneration, either in the direction of adaptation to imperialism or sectarian Third Campism. Our only armor is our revolutionary program and strategy based upon a realistic Marxist conception of the world as it is, not as we would like it to be.

#### PARTY OR PROPAGANDA GROUP

Stalinophobia has led the Shachtmanites and others to a conciliatory position toward imperialist public opinion. Our tradition and training against this type of conciliationism is still so powerful that it has effectively barred this path of development and produced instead an opposite tendency -- the tendency to petrification in the sphere of Marxist thought and to turning one's back on the real world and its struggles and line-ups, and finding refuge in a revolutionary ivory tower. That is why the question of the independence of the party was artificially pushed to the fore and is discussed in a vacuum, removed from time, place, circumstances, and converted into a mystique -- to which all the disoriented, confused and bewildered can cling.

Whence the big furore about this question today? With the formlessness and lack of precision with which they pose all questions, Cannon and the others first attempted to make the "independence of the party" the main axis of the discussion at the May 1952 Plenum, and it remained one of the main themes of his July convention speech. Originally, it was the corollary of the slanderous accusation that Clarke and others wanted to orient toward or liquidate into the

Stalinist movement. When this charge, made out of the whole cloth, wore itself pretty thin, it was discreetly shoved into the background. Today, Dobbs-Stein-Hansen trot out the second version of the "independent party." It is the question of the hour, we are informed, not because we are trying to liquidate into the Stalinist movement, but because we have "lost faith" in the party, and we want to convert it into a propaganda group. We propose to leave the vagaries of "faith" to the medicine men, and to get down to politics.

Let us address ourselves to the fundamental problem. At the risk of shocking some, let us restate a few truths that have been generally accepted in our movement until recently. Are we a party? Yes and no. That is, we are not a party as Marxists have understood this term as a relationship to the two fundamental classes in society: neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat recognizes us as such; our positions on important political questions are either unknown or considered of little importance to either class; we are unable to mobilize or lead the class or any significant section of it except in accidental or isolated incidents, and then usually as one of the participants in a broader movement. In fact, despite our election campaigns, we still remain unknown to the class as a whole (and election campaigns alone are not the panacea to becoming a party, as 50 years of SLP election campaigning proves).

It is still necessary when introducing the SWP to a new contact to distinguish it at his request as a rule from the CP and the SP, indicating that while they have made a certain impression on him as political parties, we have not. We have no nationally known trade union leader with the popularity of Bill Haywood or even Harry Bridges, no well known political figure like a Debs or even a Norman Thomas, with whom the masses can easily identify the party. Like it or not, we are still the "Trotskyists" to that segment of the workers who know us, i.e., a political tendency distinguished from others primarily by our ideas. Through no fault of our own we are a party in the nature of our program, in our intentions and hopes, but not yet in fact.

Are we then a propaganda group? Yes and no. We are a propaganda group in that we must still recruit a sizeable section of the vanguard of the class without which we cannot become a party. Above all, we are still engaged in a struggle with other tendencies for influence over the workers' vanguard. It is pure self-deception to believe that the struggle has already been won. The chief factor in the decline or disappearance of this or that rival organization has been the impact of reaction-prosperity, not the triumph of our ideas in the workers' movement. The struggle of tendencies has not been settled in our favor or anyone else's, but merely postponed to the next onset of social crisis.

We are not a propaganda group because where possible, in accordance with the opportunities provided by the objective situation, and in keeping with a realistic appraisal and proper disposal of our own forces, we attempt and should attempt to act as a party. We are not a propaganda group in that we assert our right and our qualifications from the point of view of record, program and cadres to fulfilling the role of a party. This contradiction between our political aims and our physical and historical limitations, between our will to be a party and the reality of our present forces, is best demonstrated by

the tactic of "caution" we are obliged to follow in the unions.

Were we a full-fledged party, we would today follow a carefully planned course of defensive combat in the unions which would lead undoubtedly to certain victimizations but would at the same time be compensated by the class education of certain sections of the workers' vanguard, many of whom would be probably won over to the party. But because our numbers are so limited, i.e., because we are essentially a propaganda group, we cannot in the main pursue such a line because, for one, we lack the influence to carry it out, and, secondly, any important victimizations can lead to the total elimination of our forces from the unions.

Now, all of this is elementary, and has always been considered ABC in our movement. Even in the flush of our greatest progress, the watchword of the 1946 Convention was "From a Propaganda Group to a Party of Mass Action." We did not make the grade in real life -- through no fault of our own. But obviously we did make the grade in some people's dreams.

### "INDEPENDENCE" AND "LIQUIDATION"

Ordinarily, the question of the independence of the party arises when someone proposes to liquidate it as Stalin did in the case of the Chinese Communist Party in 1924 into the Kuomintang, or as Browder did into the Democratic Peoples Front coalition during the Second World War. Even the crazy Oehlerites rested on some concrete ground when they set up a howl about the "independence of the party" because Cannon-Shachtman proposed -- entirely correctly -- an orientation, and later, an entry into the Socialist Party. But no one has made any proposals in our party vaguely relevant to this subject. How is one to deal with this will-o'-the-wisp, unless we decide to completely abandon the ground of Marxism in favor of an unrestrained search for motives, and of psychoanalysis?

But Cannon's making the "independence of the party" one of the main planks of his faction platform has, nevertheless, a logic of its own. It tends to strengthen the tendencies toward sectarian ossification, especially observable in the changing attitude on the Labor Party question.

### THE QUESTION OF THE LABOR PARTY

The independence of the party is conditioned and limited by what has presumably been our common perspective of the rise of a Labor Party. The Labor Party is not just a good slogan for the day; it is a strategic orientation based upon the most probable course of development of the working class to independent politics through the unions, and not over the unions directly to a revolutionary party. In saying this, we are merely paraphrasing one of our own amendments now in the Political Resolution. No one can today foretell whether the SWP will have to "liquidate" into the Labor Party as our comrades were obliged to do in England, whether we will be able to enter the Labor Party as a recognized party, or whether we will retain formal independence while operating through a left wing from within the Labor Party. Speculation on this point should be left to arm-chair philosophers. Yet there has been a great deal of nervousness on this question. From some of the comments made, it almost seems as though the

party were doomed unless all shared a crystal ball conception of the future; a perspective isn't enough, it has to be a blue-print measured out with slide-rule specifications.

Because of the slow maturity of the American workers to political consciousness, the party leadership has not yet been put to the test of a concrete practical application of the Labor Party strategy. Different approaches to this question have remained mostly in embryonic form. The Labor Party has been the main emphasis for the trade unionists, for that part of the ranks and leadership most clearly linked to the working class. But for Comrade Cannon and others the Labor Party has in recent years been a minor theme, a temporary expedient, perhaps a good slogan for the moment but strictly subordinate to the doctrinaire pronouncement of the SWP as the coming leadership of the masses and of the revolution.

The years of reaction have demonstrated how false and sectarian this approach was, as it would have been equally demonstrated had the period of upsurge in labor struggles continued. The defensive actions of the labor movement against the Taft-Hartley Act put the question of independent labor politics back on the agenda. A split between the unions and the Democratic Party was narrowly averted by Truman turning the helm of his party sharply in the direction of "laborism." In that situation the PC correctly oriented its strategy and tactics not according to the conception of the coming primacy of the SWP in the workers' movement, but rather in line with its Labor Party position and on the slogan of the Congress of Labor as its vehicle.

As reaction deepened in the country, and domestic conflicts were overshadowed by the cold war, a sectarian approach to the Labor Party and its corollary of illusions about the SWP became more marked. It remained for Comrade Dobbs, in a letter to the PC from Chicago on November 29, 1951, to elaborate an election campaign strategy based upon a perspective which practically excluded the Labor Party from our program.

"I believe such wrong thinking arises in part from our one-sided treatment of the Labor Party question. We confine ourselves too exclusively to agitation for a Labor Party. We go off balance by failing to give sufficient explanation to the membership that, although one can argue the probability of a Labor Party development, it is not an indispensable step to the formation of a mass revolutionary party.

"We should explain that we advocate the building of a Labor Party at this stage because it would help speed mass radicalization. However, the absence of a Labor Party obviously does not prevent the sharpening of class antagonisms under the impact of the imperialist war program; instead it tends to create a political vacuum of which we should take full advantage.

"Class antagonisms are bound to grow sharper and sharper. The longer the union bureaucrats block the formation of a Labor Party, the greater the political vacuum will become, and the more opportunity we will have to recruit workers directly into our party.

"We will thus be so much the stronger for the task of entering the Labor Party, if it comes, and speeding its transition to a mass revolutionary party. And if the rise of a Labor Party should be long



delayed, it is not excluded that the American workers might leap over, very quickly if not entirely, that intermediate stage of their radicalization."

Comrade Cannon immediately seized upon this letter, proposed that the PC (December 11, 1951) adopt its general line and that he be instructed to write a series of articles in the weekly paper based upon them. The proposal was withdrawn, after objections by Clarke, who declared that such letters could not serve as the substitute for a political resolution giving our rounded views on American developments and party strategy in the light of the analysis of the Third World Congress and the new realities of the objective situation in the U.S. Cannon had withdrawn his motion, but not his support of the line in Dobbs' letter. He was to present it in his first version of the Political Resolution by the omission of all reference to the Labor Party. When we protested he said the point was of small moment and it could be added to the resolution if we insisted.

This omission was not an oversight, as is now explained, but part of a political line. Nor was it correct to say, in extenuation for this omission, that the Political Resolution was to serve merely as a guide for the elections. (Even there it was a vital question as our election campaign would have been reduced to a vacuous SLPism without the labor party conception and the labor party slogan.) Far from it. The document essayed a statement of the fundamental causes for labor's conservatism and a prognosis of the premises for a future radicalization, an analysis that had no necessary inherent connection with the coming elections. No. The labor party was omitted because it did not easily fit into the author's sectarian conceptions of the role of the SWP. This was made clear from Cannon's line in his Plenum and later convention report on the Political Resolution, in which the labor party orientation had now been incorporated as an amendment of Clarke's. The burden of his remarks on the point was a fear (always phobias!) that we might have to liquidate like the British into a labor party. We were not, he emphasized, "a holding operation for the labor party." We were to guard against this "danger" by telling ourselves that the SWP would become a party of some tens of thousands of members in the first period of the social crisis and thus be strong enough to dictate terms of participation in the labor party, or to tell its bureaucrats to go to hell.

This is a symptomatic manifestation of sectarianism which, growing essentially out of lack of confidence in program, shuts its eyes to the reality of the workers' movement and its complicated forms of evolution. In trying to construct another image of the reality more to its own liking, it creates a conception of the party as an end in itself instead of the catalyst within the mass. It discards Lenin's idea of the party as the fighting instrument which, because of its program, experience and cadres can successfully penetrate the mass movement, as it is, provide leadership to those currents among the workers farthest to the left, and thus create the force, integrally tied to the mass, that will become the party and leadership of the American revolution.

Dobbs-Stein-Hansen put the issue falsely when they speak of "independent party versus propaganda group." Correctly posed, the difference is between their developing conception of the party as an institutionalized sect against ours of a fighting instrument, using

propaganda or agitation, as required by the times, for the penetration and leadership of the real workers' movement.

We, for our part, are not frightened by the prospect of a Labor Party -- yes, even if it fails to assume the "pure" English class forms -- nor by the possibility that the Trotskyists may have to go through many complicated stages to establish their alliance with the left wing of the Labor Party, and ultimately their leadership of it. We believe that the Labor Party will constitute such a drastic break in the traditional American class pattern that it will become a tremendous revolutionizing force in this country regardless of who leads the Labor Party or even its left wing in the first stages. That is what is decisive, and that is what will provide us with our greatest opportunity if we know how to recognize the reality and take advantage of it. If Marxism is to serve as a guide to action, not as a sterile dogma, then it must not view history as a succession of optimum perspectives, as a repetition of the Russian "norm" (which was not at all a "norm" at the time), it must not nourish illusions about pure forms of working class evolution. Otherwise, we might as well throw dialectics out the window and write a copy-book of perfect formulas and maxims.

At the bottom of this tendency, already sprouting like bad weeds in the much-advertised Los Angeles sunshine, and being transplanted elsewhere, is a terrible pessimism about the future, and a lack of confidence that the Marxist program can sustain the party cadres in a period of reaction. Alongside the fear that the Fourth International will not survive its tactic of entry into Stalinist and Social Democratic movements, is the fear that the SWP will succumb if it takes the Labor Party perspective too seriously. The movement according to this conception has to be kidded, important truths have to be left unsaid or sweetened to make them palatable, illusions have to be encouraged while the analysis of the reality is discouraged or labeled "pessimism" lest the party membership becomes demoralized or falls by the wayside. We leave aside the fact that Carlson, Charles, Mills were not saved by this magic formula. We turn instead to Leon Trotsky for an accurate description of the method:

"It is difficult," he wrote, "to plumb the depths of the theoretical debacle of those who seek in a program not for a scientific basis for their class orientation but for moral consolation. Consoling theories which contradict facts pertain to the sphere of religion and not science, and religion is opium for the people."

Trotsky was writing in Third International After Lenin about Comintern leaders who considered the theory of socialism in one country "unfounded" but thought "it provides the Russian workers with a perspective in the difficult conditions under which they labor and thus gives them courage." What would he have thought of leaders who advance a perspective based on wishful thinking to maintain "morale," not even among the working class as a whole, but among the vanguard of the vanguard which, for almost a quarter of a century has been undauntedly cultivating the ideas of Marxism in the most inhospitable political soil in the entire world?

Seeing the record, some may say: "Dobbs and Cannon made a mistake, but they adopted your proposal and corrected it. Your Labor Party amendment was incorporated into the resolution and accepted, the

Labor Party slogan was one of the main propaganda themes of the election campaign, and the question as such was treated at length in one of Comrade Cannon's speeches in Los Angeles. The problem is therefore already resolved." Unfortunately, this does not exhaust the question. What this thinking fails to note, is that those who attempted to correct the Labor Party position were first roundly abused as "pessimists" and "liquidators." And after the correction was made, those who had been wrong have redoubled their attacks against those whose position they accepted. A line is guaranteed not merely by what is written down on paper, but by how the differences over it are resolved and by the relationships established among those who had been in disagreement. As an illustration: The "Troika" (Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev) accepted Trotsky's line on party democracy in 1924. But then they redoubled the offensive against him for other reasons, i.e., the defense of the "old guard" and "Bolshevism" against Trotsky's "Menshevism," etc. In the end there was no party democracy.

### STALINOPHOBE-SECTARIANISM IN PRACTICE

The "independence of the party" school has succeeded as its first accomplishment in blurring, if not actually disfiguring our broad political perspective as it relates to the Labor Party question. Their sectarian "achievements" in the field of practical day-to-day tactics have been even more immediate. According to the Dobbs-Stein-Hansen manifesto, we are guilty of "an exaggerated estimate of the possibilities of opponents work." Naturally, they disdain to demonstrate their accusation. Behind this charge, however, there appears again the cloven hoof of sectarianism, as we will demonstrate from the record.

As far back as December 1948, the Political Resolution adopted by the NC Plenum predicted that the poor showing made by Wallace in the national elections would create a crisis in the Progressive Party. The NC decided to "organize a planned campaign toward winning over the best elements in this movement." This campaign was to be "specifically directed to the Stalinist workers and students who had hoped for a return by the CP to an independent class and revolutionary policy after the Browder purge." Little was done to implement the resolution, partly because of Stalinophobe inhibitions and partly because of plain political lethargy.

By the fall of 1951, it became apparent that we had long been asleep while the crisis of Stalinism, predicted in 1948, had been steadily maturing all the time. The experiences of the 1951 Councilmanic Elections in New York brought this development into bold relief.

On January 8, 1952, Comrade Bartell proposed to the PC, therefore, that we direct special attention to this movement in New York; that a group of comrades be sent into the ALP to take advantage of the split between Marcantonio and the Stalinists; that our false characterization of the Progressive Party (the ALP in New York) as a capitalist party be changed (particularly now that Wallace and the bourgeois wing had left the party); that under certain circumstances, where ALP candidates ran independently, we grant them critical support; that we propose united-front actions against the war and the witch hunt.

At the same time it had been noted that the Stalinoid grouping around the Huberman-Sweezy magazine, the Monthly Review was showing

clear signs of conflict with the CP leadership, and a tendency toward independence from them. There had been a public controversy between Bittleman (the CP leader) and the Monthly Review editors over Yugoslavia and over economic problems in this country. They had published a letter (written on their invitation) of Comrade V. R. Dunne in memoriam to the writer Matthiessen. At a large open forum, attended by 300-400 persons, Comrade Clarke took the floor to attack the "co-existence" theory and was well received. It was proposed in the PC that more attention be paid this grouping and that we attempt to contribute articles in discussions conducted in their magazine.

All these attempts were met with suspicion, hostility, resistance. Bartell's proposals were flatly rejected in a subsequent PC meeting. But three months later, virtually all of the proposals made by Bartell were written as amendments by Comrade Clarke to the Political Resolution and then accepted by Comrades Cannon and Stein! Their acceptance, however, was a mere formality as is revealed by the present Dobbs-Stein-Hansen document which returns now, despite the Political Resolution, to the suspicion, hostility and resistance of the fall of 1951. Another example of what happens when the program of critics is adopted but the struggle against the critics is intensified.

Meanwhile, life provided a test of the differing conceptions. The approach of the 1952 elections brought on a new crisis in the Stalinist ranks, this time over the "lesser evil" theory. Marcantonio, far from capitulating to imperialism as Cannon had predicted led the fight in the ALP against the liberal protagonists of the "lesser evil" theory in the ALP and their secret allies in the CP leadership. We succeeded in participating in this controversy with articles stating our point of view and written by us as representatives of the SWP in the Compass and Monthly Review. Our comrades debated Stalinists and liberals in Compass Clubs, etc. The results of the work were good, already attracting people from that milieu to a prospering forum of New York Local.

However we have a grand total of two people active in the ALP to utilize this opportunity. Because of the haggling, backbiting, and Stalinophobe accusations the New York Local cannot take proper advantage today of the split inside of the ALP in the interests of our program and recruitment work. That is the end result of all sectarianism: to declaim majestically about the masses in the abstract, but to put obstacles in the path of the movement in winning masses in practice, even if it be one or two dozen as a starter, in this case.

The aftermath of the 1952 elections, which had practically decimated the Progressive Party's electoral following, brought with it a deepening of the internal crisis in the Stalinist movement. On the one side, Foster proposed in the Daily Worker that the party be dissolved and its members enter the Democratic Party to lay the basis for a new third party formation. On the other side, Huberman attributed its failure to the lack of a socialist program, saying that without such a program the party had no reason for existence. Marcantonio, on his side, began to rally the ALP against the Stalinist plans for dissolution, and a number of branches in New York and Chicago independently adopted resolutions to that effect. On top of this crisis of electoral policy, serious ferment in the Stalinist ranks was created by the Prague trial and the outbreak of official anti-Semitism in the Soviet orbit.

Bartell catalogued these developments in his Organizer's Report and proposed that the New York Local continue its attempts to intervene in this Stalinist crisis, for which, moreover clear provision had been made in the Political Resolution of the 1952 National Convention. The comrades are now familiar, through reading the New York bulletins, of the infantile and sectarian opposition raised by Stevens Ring against Bartell's proposals. Theorized by Stevens with the vulgar Shachtmanesque formula that "Stalinism is counter-revolutionary through and through," an opposition program was concocted to keep the party "acting like the revolutionary leadership of the masses."

When Stevens ran into trouble with his line in the New York membership, Dobbs-Stein-Hansen stepped into the picture to come to his aid. "Bartell," -- they say in their document without proof but with clear intent of arousing suspicion among the innocent -- "places such heavy emphasis on opponent's work that one must ask: Is he not tending to modify our basic evaluation of the party's character, perspectives and tasks?" A model of diplomatic protocol, but really sectarian "through and through."

### The Lessons of American Trotskyism

Is it "an exaggerated estimate of opponents work" to view this crisis of Stalinism as the most important in many years? Is there a modification of our basic evaluation of the party's "character, perspectives and tasks" to desire to intervene in this crisis and to reap whatever harvest there is for our views and our party, and thus to strike a heavier blow against Stalinism than can be done by literary assaults from afar? No, the "exaggeration" is all the other way -- an exaggerated sectarianism. We recall the same type of arguments from Oehler and Abern against our approach to the Musteites and later the SP. They too railed at "exaggerated estimates," sneered at the size of these organizations in comparison to the mass movement in general and predicted that there were no mass gains to be made -- and from the point of view of numbers, they proved right. But had we followed their criteria, the Trotskyist movement would have perished, a hopeless sect.

There is a revision of "the evaluation of the party," but on the side of those who, like the De Leonists, seem now to believe that we need have no further truck with other radical currents and have only to wait until the masses start to move, and naturally come to us as the most undefiled tendency of all. Meantime our swelling corps of "leaders," for whom Capital classes have become a substitute for an understanding of the real workers' movement, will have been readied to meet the masses in the milennial moment. Speaking of the organizational fetishism which makes a principle of independence, Comrade Cannon says to the Oehlerites in his History of American Trotskyism, "You set up the principle in such a way as to make it a barrier against the tactical moves necessary to make the creation of a real party possible."

The minds of the sectarians were too rigid to understand the many detours it was necessary to take in order to travel the road of establishing our party as the independent force directly influencing the mass of the American workers. They could not begin to understand that our fusion with the Musteite American Workers Party or our entry into the Socialist Party were not in violation of our main orientation

but were necessary tactical moves in order the more effectively to apply it later.

The living reality, as it will be expressed in the coming upsurge of the American workers will be far richer, more varied, complex and unexpected than our thought can now conceive. In that moment least of all will it suffice to be guided by the ultimatist expectation that because we alone have the correct program that, therefore, the masses will naturally come to us. Our "independent" orientation will seemingly be contradicted by the many new formations that will inevitably arise on the arena of the working class mass movement, and by the tactical turns we will have to make to avoid being left on the sidelines as a perfect but isolated sect. In the end, however, these tactical turns will prove to be the means of finding our way and of influencing the broad stream of the mass movement, and thus of effectuating our main orientation.

The aspect of the struggle in the party today over the attitude to be taken to Stalinist formations highlights a vast difference in method and approach. It is not, and never could be a conflict between those who want to keep an independent orientation to the workers against those who want to convert the party into a propaganda group oriented toward Stalinist circles. That is either a deliberate fabrication of the issues or a wish-projection on the part of those seeking simplistic formulas to clear up their own confusion. The real issue is between the ultimatism of doctrinaire and sectarian rigidity on the one side and the dialectic flexibility of Leninist thought on the other.

There are no entries or fusions in prospect and none proposed, but there are clearly certain "tactical moves," as Cannon puts it, to drive a wedge into the opening created by the crisis in the ranks of our main rival, the Stalinists. We say to the majority of the PC: Stop placing the barrier of "principle" in the way of these "tactical moves," and in the way of the policy clearly defined on this question in the Political Resolution unanimously adopted by the National Convention.

### Centrism -- Big and Small

In their search for the secret plans for dissolution into the Stalinist movement, Dobbs-Stein-Hansen leave the realm of political analysis for the speculations of a detective bureau. They smell these plans in Clarke's "equation" of Huberman to John L. Lewis. Now in the first place, Clarke doesn't equate Huberman to Bevan or John L. Lewis, as any objective reading of the sentence in question will show. He tries to establish the principle of our attitude to centrists moving to the left. This principle is as old as our movement itself. It is to be seen again and again in all of Trotsky's activities in founding the FI and in his attitude and ours toward leftward-moving centrists, many of them less significant than Huberman. But perhaps Oehler was right in condemning us for "softness" to A.J. Muste or Herbert Zam and Gus Tyler of the SP, who did not represent very big movements either? Perhaps the sectarians were right in condemning Trotsky, to take an example at random, for trying to persuade a not very significant figure like Marceau Pivert in France? Or perhaps now, we are powerful enough to pick and choose among centrist developments according to size?

The party learns how to deal with the big movements, with the Bevans and Lewises by its experience in handling small ones, like those of Muste, Tyler or Huberman. Bolshevism is not some immutable principle that provides a timeless wisdom for a few chosen paragons. It is above all the art of communist politics in the concrete. It is no accident that Haston in England, who sneered at the size of the centrist Independent Labor Party in 1943-1944, and who could see only its decomposition -- in response to those who were proposing a fusion maneuver to the ILP to take advantage of a deep internal crisis -- later could see only "exaggerated estimates" behind the proposal to enter the bigger Labor Party, a proposal he fought to the point of a split. (Oh, yes, the ILP went out of business and Haston glowed with satisfaction that "another rival had been eliminated." But meanwhile, scores if not hundreds of working-class elements who might have served as precious Trotskyist cadres in the Labor Party today, were lost forever.) It is no accident that Oehler transferred the sectarian attitude he had adopted to Muste and Tyler onto the broader arena of the class struggle to Lewis, Dubinsky and Hillman.

### Stalinism -- Petty Bourgeois and Proletarian

Naturally, any real movement among the workers is more important than a tendency of the Huberman kind. And if such existed in New York, where we are faced with the problem, we would not hesitate to subordinate or even abandon any tactic in the Huberman grouping if we did not have the forces to carry on both forms of work. But our "proletarian" critics haven't demonstrated the existence of any such development among the workers; all they do is prattle about abstractions and hopes.

Let us grant, however, that this Huberman-Progressive Party movement is "petty bourgeois through and through" (a statement as false factually as the assertion is false politically that Stalinism is "counter-revolutionary through and through.") What have these contemptuous sneerers to say of the Stalinist workers in the labor movement? For all the blows the CP has suffered it still wields an influence in the unions far surpassing our own. It still controls an independent union movement that is upward of half a million members, still possesses important trade union groups in the major CIO unions.

How shall we deal with these workers when they are engaged in a struggle against the imperialist-minded union officialdom, when they are left confused and bewildered by the policies of their party. Shall we turn our backs on them in lofty sectarianism because there are many less workers involved than in a movement led by a Bevan? Shall we spew out a Stalinophobe hatred at them because of the war-time betrayals of their leadership? Shall we abstain from struggles initiated by them or in which they participate in the unions so as not to besmirch our historic "independence"?

Or shall we design a policy based on their present line of opposition of war and the witch hunt, based on the difficulties they encounter in applying their official party policy of entry into Democratic Party circles? Even if we succeeded in throwing the Huberman problem out the door because it is "petty bourgeois through and through," it would come back through the window in the form of proletarian Stalinists in the factories, shops and unions toward whom the working class base of our party will demand the adoption of a serious

policy. Toward this problem it is clear today, as it was first in the 1947 Auto Crisis, that the attitude of Dobbs, Stein and Cannon is motivated not by considerations of social composition but its own tendencies toward Stalinophobia and sectarianism.

In fighting a mythical "conciliationism" -- or the Third World Congress, which some of them believe to be the root cause of this "conciliationism" -- they are saving Stalinism from the heaviest blows from the left it would be receiving in years. By this method, they are storing up new sectarian inhibitions toward future leftward movements in the unions which may very well include Stalinists, as did the last one against Reuther in 1947, and as does the far smaller version of the same phenomenon in the Ford Local today. They will undoubtedly succeed, unless they are corrected, in keeping the party pure from the danger of "liquidation." But the existence of our main rival, the CP, will also be ensured on a far more favorable basis for the Stalinists during the anticipated social crisis and the competition for the advanced workers of a radicalized labor movement.

### HOW TO DECIDE WHAT IS TO BE DONE

It is when we come to the question of tactics, that is, what is to be done now, that we see how barren and sterile the formula of "independent party" is when used as a panacea. It is easy enough to establish the two major tasks of the party today as the struggle against the war and the witch hunt. But even if the party were ten times its present size it would still have to decide how to wage this struggle: by an offensive or defensive strategy, by propaganda, agitation or action. Naturally, there would be elements of all in any policy, but it is still the duty of leadership to determine which is uppermost, primary. That in turn depends on an analysis of the objective situation, economic and political, on the relationship of class forces at the moment and on a prognosis for the foreseeable future. Presumably there was agreement on this analysis in the 1952 Political Resolution. There was agreement that the present reaction would continue and deepen until a social crisis, produced by the war or a depression, would undermine the living standards of the workers and lead to a new radicalization.

Events transpiring since the convention have confirmed the analysis made in the resolution. The two major trends noted before have become more marked with the coming to power of the Eisenhower administration: (1) an accelerated drive to war, and (2) the first symptoms of beginnings of downturn in the economic cycle. The resolution stated that the "present equilibrium of American capitalism is based upon a breakneck race between crisis and war economy" and concluded that "the capitalist class will move heaven and earth to plunge the nation into war before the explosion of the American economy" (meaning a full-scale economic crisis).

In view of continuing widespread confusion and illusions, it is important that there be utmost clarity on this point. Prior to the September 1951 Plenum, Comrades Swabeck and Dobbs wrote in a document, submitted to the National Committee, that war preparations and continuing inflation would create such pressure on the workers' living standards as to lead to the eruption of great class battles, and even to a change in the objective situation. That point of view was incorporated in the first draft of the Political Resolution, but then



rejected by the PC. Events have now completely invalidated that conception. But it is now being replaced with new illusions that the trend toward the oncoming depression will produce the same effects which will occur in advance of the war and probably stop its outbreak. The question here is not of quantitative changes which are bound to occur, and to which the leadership must pay careful attention, but of qualitative ones, of the main trends upon which it must base its orientation. The optimum variant is never to be excluded theoretically, but it also can never be the basis for a line, which must always flow from what is most probable not what is most desired.

The corollary of the optimum variant is the theory that the new radicalization has already begun with Eisenhower's assumption to office. Stevens-Ring in New York already see the molecular process of "preparation for impending class battles" where "new layers of militants are emerging and together with old militants are searching. . . for new ways of struggle." Clara Kaye in Seattle sees "the contradictions of the war economy. . . spurring millions of industrial workers, Negroes, women and youth to intense economic struggles and a new radicalization." If all this were true, we should be preparing right now to shift rapidly from propaganda to agitation, we should be actively seeking the forces to create a new left wing in the unions. We should "be in the struggle now," as Clara Kaye says with emphasis, "to earn our right to guide the radicalization when it comes. . ."

That would be the direct road to disaster for our remaining forces in the unions, and leading to an enervation of the party membership which would be whirling in space with an undirected agitational policy. The victory of Eisenhower strengthened reaction, it didn't weaken it, and Eisenhower himself will deepen it still further. That does not mean that contradictory forces will not be set into motion, such as a certain greater spread of economic struggles, a greater resistance to government anti-labor moves and greater coolness to the openly Big Business administration as contrasted with friendship for Truman's "Fair Deal." Undoubtedly there will also be a greater receptivity to radical ideas, although still limited to small groups rather than being a generalized phenomena. But the increasing government repression and witch hunt will also tend to inhibit open display of this new radicalism. The question, however, is: Will these new developments qualitatively alter the objective situation and therefore become the point of departure for a reorientation of party policy?

In his speech in Los Angeles, Comrade Cannon following the line of the Convention Resolution, correctly tips his hat to the possibility of a depression setting off the social crisis, and then proceeds to put his major stress on the war as the major detonator of the social crisis. What does this mean except that for the foreseeable period ahead we must prepare for a deepening of the reaction in which the forces of social crisis continue to gather but remain beneath the surface, in which the prevailing overall conservatism of the workers, although assailed now by doubts and uneasiness, remains in general unchanged? What does it mean except that while the possibilities of recruitment of individuals may increase somewhat, the dangers of more sweeping reaction will also increase? If this shows "pessimism" about the American workers of "lack of faith" in the party, then the Political Resolution and Comrade Cannon himself must stand accused of the same charge.

FALSE CONCEPTS THAT DISORIENT PARTY ACTIVITY

The conclusions that follow from this analysis so far as party tasks are concerned would seem so obvious to mature revolutionists as to make their restatement almost superfluous. But it turns out to be not superfluous at all, because there are those in the party who draw their conclusions not from the objective reality but from the abstraction "independent party." Stevens-Ring are shouting for a "trade union orientation" in New York, not particularly because they want to build a left wing now in New York, nor because they want the New York Local to set a course of leading impending economic struggles, nor even because they have serious complaints with the way Bartell has been handling trade union work. No, their reason for presenting an "orientation" that cannot be implemented tactically is to affirm "the independent party" against the menace of "liquidationism." This kind of thinking is bankrupt from top to bottom. The party is left with no conception of its tasks because it is not confronted with a concrete alternative program to that of the "liquidators" but with an abstraction. If permitted to go unchallenged, it would provide a field-day for sectarians and ultra-leftists who would quickly invent the concrete implementation to the abstraction, proposals that would naturally be in direct opposition to the concrete program of the "liquidators."

One can understand the disorientation of local comrades under conditions of reaction, isolation and great pressures on the party from alien class forces. But it is a cause for alarm when Stein, Hansen and Dobbs lend aid and encouragement to this disoriented group and even seem to share its conceptions, instead of rapping it sharply over the knuckles and calling it to order. Dobbs-Stein-Hansen reproach Comrade Bartell for "tending to de-emphasize the work of the local which comes under the general heading of rounded party activity. The meaning of the authors is so obscure even in their own minds that they could not find a word in the English language to describe it; they had to invent one: "de-emphasize." But if Bartell "de-emphasizes" something, what do they emphasize? Strangely enough something "round," just the opposite of emphasis which conveys the conception of sharp, concise, directed. The party's activities are, perforce, always "round," i.e., propaganda, agitation, action, but they always have to be emphasized to determine in accordance with the objective situation and the relationship of class forces, on which of the three facets of activity the stress shall be put and on what layers of the class to direct this emphasis.

Seattle's Alice-in-Wonderland

The absence of such a determination can be disastrous for the party's work and morale, particularly at the present time when sphere of activity are decidedly limited. The Seattle branch provides a horrible example of this kind of "round" thinking, which derives the party's task from an abstraction and not from an examination of the concrete reality.

The Organizer, in her report, agrees to the dangerous "liquidationist" heresy that with the coming of reaction, the party has been (or should have been) "emphasizing propaganda rather than agitation work." (Our emphasis.) But not understanding the significance of this correct proposition, she sees "no basic turn to new milieus."

The branch "concentrated" on all milieus: class conscious workers, Negroes, students, housewives and women, Stalinists and Social Democrats. The result: the branch can "concentrate" on nothing. It tries to engage, in addition, in election campaigns and civil rights work. On top of stepped-up literature work, which the organizer complains is "underpar for a second year," she puts forward the goal: "Every comrade constantly in a class." What happens in a branch of two dozen members under the inspiration of this "round" thinking?

"Sometimes," the organizer says dreamily, "we find ourselves in a situation somewhat akin to that of the Red Queen in Alice-in-Wonderland who had to keep running just to stay in the same place -- and while this demands a lot of energy. . . ." This method, the report reveals, produced a revolt among the worker comrades in the branch who could think of much more productive ways to use their energy. There has been, says the organizer, "too much slackening and slowdown in the quantity of work in some fields of regular branch activity." Her explanation: "The executive committee. . . failed to maintain a consistently aggressive attitude," and also, crime of crimes!, there were "sections of the membership who displayed passivity or increased resistance to an aggressive approach." Can these problems be concretely and objectively discussed? No, says Organizer Kaye, not until there is "agreement on the role of the party and the type of the party. . . ." Raise the magic shibboleths and anything goes.

But far from considering the revolt a warning signal, the organizer proposes to drive ahead undaunted even at the price of losing worker members and trade unionists who cannot see this irrational pace, this wild, incoherent activity or proposed activity. In advance she accepts such losses as "splinters off the rock" and her tone even betrays some satisfaction at the prospect. Her "philosophy" deserves to be quoted in full:

"Does this policy of persistent marching against the bourgeoisie as well as the Stalinist leadership hurt certain members, tire them and drive them away to escape the pressure? Of course. It is the price we pay to maintain our own conscious direction and motion as a group in this period, when the sweep of class struggles alone is not broad enough to sustain enthusiasm, hope and activism.

"The building of the revolutionary party is a process of qualitative selection over the years. We refuse to be held back by the hesitant and we do everything in our power to convince them to come along with us. There have been and might continue to be locally, personal defections, and these can demoralize others, especially if they had stature in the branch. It is futile to endlessly bewail these losses and hold a few individuals 'responsible.' 'Splinters off the rock; individuals are not always equal to the ideas they represent,' stated Comrade Cannon to the convention. People capitulate in one way or another, for one reason or another, with one excuse or another often against their own will and understanding." (Our emphasis.)

This is the second stage of the "struggle against degeneration." The first was directed by Cannon against those with differing political views. The second is directed by his supporters against those who refuse to be spun dizzy on a pinwheel of Yipsel activity and strung up on the rack of self-styled "cadre leadership" that doesn't know how to lead.

What is the meaning of this debilitating ailment that has afflicted the Seattle branch (although we are glad to hear it has encountered a healthy, proletarian resistance)? An ancient disease in the radical movement, Marxists have always classified it scientifically as "ultimatism," i.e., the attempt to substitute the action of the party for the movement of the class. The malady is not localized in Seattle. It has long affected Los Angeles, it has now spread to infect a faction in New York and it is observable in Chicago. Given a little more encouragement from the national champions of the panaces of "independent party," a little more blindness to the concrete problems of the class struggle, modest though they may be, in favor of synthetic activity, it will invalid the party as a whole, undermining morale and activity more than a dozen blows of reaction.

### THE ONLY SOUND TACTIC FOR TODAY

The conclusions for party tasks which must be derived from an appraisal of the objective reality are obviously that they are primarily of a propagandist nature at the present time. If the workers as a whole remain conservative, hostile or apathetic to radical ideas, fearful of association with revolutionary politics, then it clearly follows that the circumstances are not propitious for mass agitation around a few simple slogans and to methods of party work suited to such agitation. It follows that the party's main orientation in the present period must be toward those advanced layers of the class who have retained their radical ideas despite the reaction, to those who have been awakened to political consciousness by the world crisis, and to members or followers of opponent political organizations like the Stalinists, who have been jolted somewhat loose from old prejudices by the bankruptcy of their leadership in a rapidly changing world. The best of these elements are in the shops and unions, and it is to them that our main attention must be directed, but to a lesser extent they are also on campuses and in opponent political organizations which therefore also deserve serious attention.

Obviously our approach to these elements must be a primarily propagandistic one as it is superfluous to convince them of simple slogans they already agree with; they want to discuss program, analysis, perspectives. The level of the discussion which thus far has proved most effective is indicated in Clarke's debate with the NYU professors, Cannon's speeches to the Los Angeles forum, Frankel's series in the weekly paper on the present economic situation and its trends. Even more serious projects (a work on the UAW which the Michigan comrades are clamoring for, etc.) are necessary and possible through organized and collective effort. Our instruments in this work are primarily literary: the press, pamphlets, etc. supplemented by lectures, forums and classes. We have proposed that this propaganda work be directed by the leadership which would provide the material for the activities of the branches and the unionists. If there is any doubt that this orientation is correct, it is merely necessary to examine the circulation of the weekly paper which is now at the lowest it has been in ten years, in which time the leadership has been firmly exercised by the opponents of "liquidationism," and after our second presidential campaign in which we again approached the masses as a whole in the most effective technical manner available. No amount of hullabaloo, no magic formulas will restore the large subscription lists of previous years so long as the present witch hunt and conservative moods of the workers remain. For that reason, it is

doubly important, if any real gains are to be made at all, that our press be adapted to the needs and interests of those layers of the working class who are most susceptible to our propaganda today.

It is interesting to note also that no one objected when the "liquidator" Clarke, in his capacity as Campaign Manager, laid the main stress for branch activities in the election campaign on propaganda directed to individuals not on "the rounded activities of the independent party," the membership enthusiastically accepted this campaign orientation and the branches who applied it effectively made modest but real gains. In those areas there was none of the letdown, none of the disappointment witnessed after the 1948 campaign when illusions had been widespread because of the absence of any clearly stated orientation.

The need for such ideological weapons is as great or even greater in approaching the movement of the Negro people. They are not at this time looking for new leadership or for those with a better prescription for daily struggles. But, to the same degree and probably more than in other sections of the workers' movement there is a searching among more advanced elements for fundamental answers. Stevens-Ring have the very laudable desire to build a Negro cadre for the party, but here as elsewhere they haven't the faintest idea of how it is to be done. In their state of sectarian exhilaration they cannot see the main road to the solution of this task in the present period: we must enter the ideological struggle in the Negro movement.

One must blush for shame to think that our party, which boasts of being the only Marxist grouping in the United States, does not begin to approach the Stalinists in literature dealing with the historical and fundamental problems of the Negro's struggle for liberation (i.e., an analysis and interpretation of the civil war and reconstruction periods on the one side, and the question of assimilation and self-determination on the other).

Participate in struggle against Jim Crow? Yes, emphatically. But what shall we do when we contact advanced workers or intellectuals in that movement and as a result of our activities? What material shall we give them on the Negro question that distinguishes our party as the genuine Marxists and proves it superior to all other political formations competing for support? It is the duty of the party leadership to fill that need.

Naturally this main emphasis on propaganda work does not exclude agitation, defense work, participation in election campaigns, etc. But this type of activity does not automatically result from the nature of the SWP as an "independent party." It is based on an estimate of the party's needs, on the proper disposition of its limited forces and on the gains that can be expected. The Left Opposition, an avowedly propaganda group trying to reform the CP, carried on a certain amount of general agitation, participated in defense movements and even ran a candidate in the elections from time to time. On the other hand, for at least eleven years after our proclamation as an independent party, first as the Workers Party and then as the Socialist Workers Party, few thought it obligatory that we participate in all campaigns, and no one considered the failure to do so a sign of a "liquidationist" tendency. Even the 1948 presidential campaign, at a time when we had a considerably larger membership than now and even

greater influence in the mass movement, found no immediate acceptance in the NC because of an arbitrary relationship between "independent party" and election campaigns. It was decided only after long hesitation, deliberation and debate and then on the basis of the political needs of the day and of possible gains to be made by participation, or losses to be incurred by abstention.

We propose to continue this general approach traditional in the Trotskyist movement, now challenged for the first time by the emergence of the present now-or-never sectarian nervousness: To tie election campaigns to the party's needs and main line of activities; to stop making the party a tail to the kite of election campaigns because of arbitrary formulas needed to combat mythical dangers within the party.

There is no need even to discuss the question of defense work as it is a must activity for the party at all times, particularly during a witch hunt both in its own defense and in solidarity with other victims of political persecution.

### "INDEPENDENCE" -- FROM PRINCIPLED POLITICS

The history of the party in the last few years proves that at least one section of the "independent party" coalition has hoisted this sectarian banner for factional purposes. As stated above, it was Comrade Cannon himself who proposed a propagandist orientation after the 1948 elections. We still await some real explanation, not hair-splitting, of the essential difference between his "ideological offensive" and our "propaganda campaign," and wherein the one represents the "independent party" and the other "liquidationism" and "pessimism." Perhaps the difference arises from our so-called present "Stalinist orientation?" Not so. The 1948 resolution of the NC, which also adopted the "ideological offensive" proposal, indicates explicitly that in good part, although not in the main, this propaganda activity was to be directed toward Stalinist circles. "The press, the resolution instructed, "must be more widely distributed to the Stalinists and their periphery. Our general propagandist offensive against the anti-Marxists, the revisionists and the renegades will serve to demonstrate to Stalinist workers that the Trotskyists are the most capable, the most loyal, and in fact, the only defenders of Marxism and Leninism."

How could such a proposal have been accepted unanimously -- without debate! -- four years ago, yet today, when Stalinists are far more susceptible to our propaganda, be denounced as a proposal to undermine the "independence of the party"? How, moreover, can it be so labeled in view of the fact that the present propaganda campaign proposal does not even mention the Stalinists as a target for its activity, so far removed from its authors' minds was the possibility that there could be any question on this point? Let those who make the charges today and who voted for the resolution in 1948 look into themselves for the answer, not to the objective situation.

After the first beginnings of the "ideological offensive" (which took the form mostly of an improvement in the contents of the magazine it began to slowly expire and then disappeared completely. We attribute part of the reasons to organizational causes, but mainly to the process of restatement and reevaluation of our political conceptions

that was then beginning in the discussion on Eastern Europe, and was to reach its conclusion in the Third World Congress some two and a half years later. It was necessary to clarify our own ideas before we could clarify others.

Confronted by the failure of the project, Comrade Cannon did not turn pell-mell to "rounded" activities, as one would assume from the nature of the present debate. No, he shifted his sights even further inward -- to internal educational work. The Trotsky School, and the numerous Capital classes to which it gave rise, have been his chief contribution to the orientation of party activities in the last few years. We have no objection to internal education -- far from it! -- although we are far from satisfied with the lifeless, scholastic manner in which it has been conducted. But we repeat again: how does this main line of Cannon's make him any less of a "liquidationist" than we? In fact, the contrary is true.

Internal education without an outside arm, that is without propagandist activities directed to advanced workers, trade unionists, students and members of opponent organizations, may insure a certain kind of "independence" but as a stagnant, constantly constricted, turned-inward group. Without propaganda, without contact and conflict with bourgeois and radical doctrines and their proponents, internal education tends to become warped, to feed on an academic diet, and to see life from the textbooks instead of permitting life to clarify the texts. Leaders fail to grow and the membership cannot advance except with the greatest difficulty.

### The Real Differences on Trade Union Policy

The same type of difference was manifested in the trade union sphere, although hardly one of for and against a "trade union orientation." (This by the way has been the central axis of our activity as far back as 1934 -- and even in a somewhat different way in the days of the Left Opposition -- long before anyone but Hugo Oehler was shouting about the "independence of the party" as an immutable principle.) Shortly before the last convention, Comrade Cannon proposed in the PC -- as the long and short of his trade union program -- more and greater caution: virtual abstention from internal struggles and internal groupings in unions, great wariness in accepting posts and in taking the lead in grievance procedure. What we would then do in the unions was far from clear. It remained for Comrade Cochran to provide the answer: Our unionists had the task primarily of becoming active propagandists among the more advanced, radical workers; it was the duty of the party leadership to provide them with ammunition in the form of substantial, if popularly written pamphlets and articles on the American working class and its peculiar form of development and its perspectives, on the history of the CIO and its future, on political action, the Labor Party, etc. In addition, he opposed the blanket opposition to participation in internal union struggles, having in mind such developments as the movement of Ford Local 600, etc. we needed a cautious tactic but not an abstentionist one.

Although beginning from the same premise of objective analysis, the one proposal is static in method which would make it difficult to retain the trade unionists now in the party; the other, is dynamic in character giving our militants a function to perform, in a period of reaction, in the unions and shops and enabling them to expand our

numbers as much as possible. Let the experts in psychoanalysis decide which program was more "pessimistic about the American workers." But if Cochran's proposal was a "liquidationist" one, then the entire convention, without a murmur of protest from anyone, voted for its own liquidation by unanimously accepting his report.

The chief aspect for our trade union work today continues to be the need of proletarianization; it is still a life and death matter for a revolutionary Marxist party, particularly in the U.S. There was an automatic tendency toward proletarianization in our ranks under the impetus of the upsurge that began during the last war. In the full tilt of great struggles, the unions looked bright and alluring to new recruits, to students and petty-bourgeois types we had attracted. But with the onset of reaction and the bureaucratization of the CIO unions, our newer elements resisted the proletarianization policy, believing that they would be burying themselves in a stagnant situation. Meanwhile recruiting fell off sharply among the workers themselves. Obviously a new impulsion was needed, but one that came directly from within us, since it was lacking in the form of pressure from without.

Suddenly, realizing the gravity of the situation, Comrade Cannon began to insist on proletarianization as a very vital need -- but without any seriously thought-out policy to implement this project for those who would enter the unions or for those already there. His wisdom can be abbreviated as follows: Get in the unions and stay there -- work and wait and hope. On the other side from the Dobbs-Stevens school came the more bumptious shouting that things were stewing, in fact they were cooking, yes, they were even already boiling over in the union movement. You had to get proletarianized in a hurry start forming the left wing right now lest the big "boil-up" pass us by.

The first policy is not likely to get us many people into the unions (nor will it result in building solid groups that will last); the second will get them out again in a hurry. We need a proletarianization policy that is primarily political in character, not emotional or administrative. That means a policy that is stimulated by the deepest consciousness of the nature of the present period -- what it is and how it will be turned into its opposite. With this understanding, and with the aid of ideological weapons fashioned by the party leadership, our newer, and even our older members in the unions will see a purposefulness in their activity. They will be able to effectively approach the newer and more radical elements in the union movement, no matter how few, who are seeking answers to their problems even in these difficult times.

That requires more than admonitions, hullabaloo, wish-projections or organization charts. It requires thinking, planning and doing on the part of the party leadership -- above all it requires their pre-occupation with ideological and political problems that face the American working class far more than with the question of trade union tactics or getting a resolution passed in this or that local union. If workers are interested in us at all today, it is not for our leadership but for our ideas. Unless that conception is Point Number One of trade union policy today, there will be plenty of empty phrasemongering but very little real proletarianization.



One final point on this matter: According to the Nervous Nellies of the "independence" school, the party faces great dangers of enfeeblement, if not destruction, if even one of the prongs of its propagandist activities is directed to the Stalinists. Let them try to reconcile this nightmarish notion from the facts of party recruitment in the last year or two. The record shows that a decisive section, if not a majority of new members came from Stalinist circles. Let them demonstrate this "disaster" from the record of the New York Local which has moved slowly, soundly forward and is now beginning to recruit from its year or more of well organized propaganda activities, directed in part to the Stalinists -- that is, until the signal was given to the "independent party faction" that propaganda work was more important inside than outside the party. Let them demonstrate their contention from the record of the Buffalo branch, again and again accused of Stalinist "conciliationism" (the chief hallmark, they tell us, of "liquidationism") which has built a strong proletarian group under greater fire than any other branch in the country, a large part of their recruits coming from Stalinist circles. Let them demonstrate it from the record of the Seattle branch where Clara Kaye now yells against seeking "new milieus," but where the majority of new recruits also come from politicalized and Stalinist circles. Let them deny that, far from interfering with our primary orientation to the trade union movement, this work has given us new forces which we have proletarianized, sent into the shops and factories thus augmenting our trade union fractions.

Finally, it should be as clear as day -- and only hurt pride can deny it -- that our party's less than impressive performance in the three-year discussion which made up the complex of the Third World Congress decisions makes it mandatory that we concentrate on a propaganda effort which will enrich our own Marxist understanding of our country, our tasks and problems, and our understanding of the era in which we live.

#### THE LARGER MEANING OF THE PRESENT CONFLICT

Again and again, since the differences became sharper a year ago, we have heard certain expressions that indicate the political gravity of the conflict. The opponents of the Third World Congress declared that implicit in this orientation was a recognition of Stalinism as "a wave of the future" and a negation of the role of the Fourth International. Later on, in view of the enthusiastic approval of the Third Congress decisions in the party, it became more discreet to attribute such views to the staunchest supporters of the Third Congress in the U.S. But diplomatic forms, adapted for factional requirements, do not alter the nature of things. Since then, we have been characterized as "pessimists" and lacking "faith in the American proletariat."

The charges tell more about their makers than they do about the accused. In the first place, they are identical with the reaction to the Third Congress by all the centrifugal forces in the International headed by the French splitters, and by all the "Third Camp" opponents of Trotskyism from Shachtman and Johnson to the POUM and the Titoites. Without exception, they quickly and unanimously came to the conclusion that the Fourth International was "capitulating to Stalinism" -- all of them, of course, themselves moving at varying rates of speed into the camp of imperialism. A warning signal in the present conflict is the appearance of two remaining Johnsonites, one in Chicago, and the

other in Detroit, as leaders of the factional struggle against us, and supporting "Cannonism against Pabloism" -- and thus far, despite presumably fundamental political differences, they have been warmly accepted as members of the Cannon-Weiss caucus.

Parallel to the danger of Third Campism, and even more acute among those who wail about "the surrender of the role of the Fourth International," is the danger of demoralization among them. They have no line, no orientation of their own to counterpose to that of the Third World Congress. They see only equal and unmitigated evil in the two major class forces in the world today, in the camp of imperialism and in the largest section of the revolutionary camp headed by the treacherous Stalinist bureaucrats. They cling to straws, hope miracles that will alter the trend in time; a deal between the Kremlin and Washington that will bring the splits needed to create big Trotskyist parties; revolutions in Western Europe independent of the Kremlin in time to create a new relationship of forces; a "Titoite" split of Mao Tse-tung from the Kremlin. One by one these illusions are shattered and meanwhile the war and the world showdown come closer.

The last straw is that the American working class will turn to radicalism in time to alter all present trends. Eyes are turned away from the great revolutionary upheavals which have altered the social structure of the world, and from which alone today American revolutionists can draw confidence in their program and hope for future victory. They are turned back to the U.S. where counter-revolutionary reaction rules supreme today, and will only be jolted from its present stability by the contradictions of its world position and its clash with the revolutionary forces in the world. They do not know how to distinguish between the inevitable social upheavals that lie ahead and the dominant reaction that exists today; between, as Trotsky said on another occasion, "the face of the revolution and its other extremity."

Irreparable harm and disillusionment awaits those with high expectations of great deeds from the American proletariat today. To believe that a working class can do anything at any time, that it can turn to radicalism, class politics and a revolutionary party in the midst of prosperity, witch hunt and preparations for war, is to have "faith in the proletariat" all right -- but a mystical semi-religious faith, not a scientific, Marxist conviction. The danger to the party is that such views are too widely held in the ranks and even in some sections of the leadership, and are encouraged by others fearful of taking firm positions or out of factional motives.

The significance of this phenomenon is that the crisis of world Trotskyism which began after the conclusion of the last war (and was recognized as such only some years later), still remains to be resolved in our country. Our party contributed the first measure of solution of this crisis in the form of Comrade Cochran's struggle on the question of the nature of the Eastern European states. But the forces of resistance, the pressure of our environment and of outlived formulas upon which the movement had been reared, the fear of facing the new reality proved too strong for us to complete that contribution to the world reorientation. That is not unnatural. The social soil of America, sprouting the weeds of regressive ideas and anti-Marxism, spawning more renegades from Marxism than the rest of the world combined, has not been fertile for the germination of revolu-

tionary conceptions. The task was picked up in Europe and carried to its conclusion. And that conclusion vindicated world Trotskyism.

It saw in the world revolutionary developments -- even where the Kremlin had expanded its influence or Stalinist parties had taken power -- not the beginning of Kremlin domination of the world but the beginning of its downfall. It saw in the international civil war that will be generated by the next world conflict the eruption of the contradictions -- predicted by Trotsky -- that will finally undermine and eliminate this treacherous force. It clearly faced the contingency that Trotskyist parties might not lead the revolutionary struggles that will overthrow capitalism in many countries. To those who entered this movement thinking they were ordained for leadership, and will accept no other role, that undoubtedly is a breach of promise. For Marxists, however, what counts first of all is the victory of ideas, and the fusion of those ideas with the mass through participation in revolutionary struggles, regardless of the leadership at the moment. Such a conviction, reinforced by a realistic strategy, will insure the physical participation of the Trotskyists in the leadership of the great mass movement at one stage or another of the revolutionary struggle.

Far from creating pessimism, the orientation of the Third World Congress has reinvigorated the international Trotskyist movement. Its cadres everywhere have grown in stature and maturity and operate with greater effectiveness in the workers' movements of their countries. And this applies not only to countries where the Stalinists are dominant, but to the magnificent work being carried on in the British Labor Party and the genuine progress being made in the German Social Democracy. One has only to read the reports from our comrades operating in the crucible of the Bolivian Revolution, or in the teeth of the Odría dictatorship in Peru -- in countries where Stalinism is not a major factor -- to see how greatly they appreciate the reorientation provided by the Third World Congress and to which they attribute their enhanced effectiveness in their own countries. In learning from the Third World Congress how to face the world as it is, they have learned too how to face their own workers' movement with the same realism, which is the key to revolutionary progress.

We yield to none in our conviction that the revolutionary world process will come to the U.S. in the years ahead, that the Trotskyist will have great opportunities in the class struggle. But the elemental process will not solve our problems automatically. And if we wait for it to come before we make our own reorientation, counter-revolutionary reaction can overwhelm and destroy us. Clarity on world perspectives is the pre-condition for survival today, and the guarantee for victory tomorrow.

#### HOW THE STRUGGLE CAN BE RESOLVED

Serious as the differences are, we firmly believe that they can be resolved within the framework of the party and without a split. Despite constant provocations, we have constantly worked for such a solution and we will continue to do so. Trotsky believed that it was possible for us to live together with Shachtman and Burnham despite the bitterness of the struggle that preceded the 1940 split. The differences today, as we have said at the outset, are far less clearly defined than those of 1940. The present tendency of Stalinophobia-

sectarianism has not yet hardened into a political formation with a full-fledged program and impervious to the pressure of the Marxist and proletarian sections of the party. Believing that events would have a benign influence on the internal situation, either by correcting the tendencies of this group, or in posing such issues that would clarify the struggle, we sought always to attenuate the conflict so as to avoid it coming to a showdown.

We tried to learn from the debilitating three-year Cannon-Shachtman struggle beginning in 1929-30 at the inception of the Trotskyist movement in this country. All the tendencies were then manifest which finally came to full bloom in 1940, but they were obviously only in their incipient stages, and an irreconcilable struggle was being waged in the absence of a single important political difference. We have Comrade Trotsky to thank for saving us from a disastrous split at that time (1933-34), and for gaining some six years for productive work in which were made some of the most significant gains in the history of American Trotskyism: the Minneapolis strikes, the fusion with the Musteites, the entry into the SP, the movement for the defense of Trotsky and the formation of the Dewey Commission, the establishment of a proletarian base in the party which permitted the survival and victory of our tendency in the struggle against the petty-bourgeois opposition. But all our attempts to follow Trotsky's injunction -- i.e., not to anticipate differences, not to fight about them as though they were in finished forms when they are still only embryonic -- have been considered signs of weakness on our part and have met with rebuffs. Our responsible efforts to avoid the full controversy prematurely have been characterized as an attempt to conceal our position, as betraying secret plans and sinister motives.

Meanwhile, it has been impossible to discuss the real political questions because of the maneuverist methods of the majority: They stopped the discussion on Eastern Europe by adopting a position at the October 1951 Plenum which they concealed from the party, and then by reversing themselves completely, but again without explanation, and voted for the position of the minority at the July 1952 Convention. They stopped the discussion on the Third World Congress by again adopting a position which was concealed from the party, and then again without explanation, voted for the position of the minority at the National Convention. They stopped the discussion on innumerable tactical questions regarding Stalinism, the Labor Party, an analysis of the present situation in the U.S. and perspectives by presenting a position they still fight for, but not in documentary form any longer, and instead accepted a contrary line submitted by the minority, voting for it at the Plenum (May 1952) and at the National Convention.

After each political retreat they have intensified their struggle against the minority on an organizational basis. The crudest and most demagogic appeals are being made: "We are the party, and they are fighting it." And then the even cruder corollary: "Anyone who fights the party (i.e., us) is preparing to leave the party and desert to the class enemy." This is the bankrupt method of all leaderships who have no political line of their own, who cannot meet the arguments of critics on a political level, but who are motivated primarily by considerations of prestige.

This is a new theory and method for our party. All the oppositions in the past were fought and defeated on a political basis; if

they left the party in the end it was because irreconcilable political differences made it impossible for them to remain. But now, a leadership disoriented by world events it does not understand, unable to cope with the political positions of the minority, impelled by considerations of prestige, is borrowing the alien methods our movement has relentlessly fought for a quarter of a century.

This is what constitutes the fearful danger for the party in the present discussion. It signifies that powerful alien class pressures far greater than in 1940, are impelling a faction of the party to exaggerate and sharpen differences, far less developed than in 1940, to the point of a split. They are acting like Haston in England or the Bleibtreu faction in France, both of whom had a majority of their parties, both of whom claimed agreement on fundamental program, but who could not reconcile themselves to living with a strong Marxist minority within their ranks. To some extent, the situation is worse here because the majority is not confronted with any big tactical moves (such as entry, etc.) which give razor-edge sharpness to political differences on strategy and orientation. They want to stifle or get rid of an opposition whose line they have accepted, some motivated by a desire to abandon this line and get back to old conceptions, others because they have grown too brittle to bear the free play of debate and criticism.

We firmly believe that they will not succeed in delivering this terrible blow to American and World Trotskyism. The healthy elements in the party, who constitute its main proletarian section and its most responsible, experienced party builders, will stop them in this wild, irrational course. They will establish the atmosphere where political differences can be discussed objectively in the leadership and in the ranks, and the leadership can work harmoniously in collaboration on the daily tasks of the party without splits or threats of split. They will enforce the unity of the party against anyone who tries to disrupt it.

The program for party unity has already been clearly established over the past year. Despite the gossip, the lies and slander hurled at us by confused and demoralized people, everything we stand for is already on record in the form of resolutions, documents, concrete proposals. We have no magic key to success, no easy road to lead us out of isolation. Above all, we have no illusions about the present reality which we understand as well or better than anyone else in the party. The party must know how to function in the present and deepening reaction, how to withstand the terrible blows that are still to come if it is to play its historic role in the social crisis and in the gigantic class battles that will be precipitated by the sufferings, tensions and defeats of the war.

Let us summarize this program once again:

1. A recognition of the Third World Congress decisions as a basic reorientation of world Trotskyism, and the systematic effort on the part of the leadership to use these documents for the fundamental education and maintenance of morale of the party membership, as well as the basic guide for the orientation of our propaganda and press. This means the Third World Congress, and the collateral documents of subsequent plenums, taken as a whole as they apply to the evolution of the present world situation, to the character of the com-

ing war, to the role and contradictions of the Kremlin bureaucracies and the Stalinist parties, to the character of the states in the Soviet orbit -- and not merely an isolated sentence or paragraph which reaffirms the independent role of American Trotskyism. The formula of "independence" requires not incessant repetition as an abstraction, not self-congratulation in sectarian smugness. It requires specific implementation to the concrete objective conditions in the United States, adjusted then to our primary tasks and to the forces at our disposal.

2. A recognition of the line and analysis of the Political Resolution of 1952, brought up to date by an analysis of the trends set into motion by and since Eisenhower's assumption of office. Again this means the resolution taken as a whole, and not some one isolated ambiguous paragraph. It means further that our main orientation continues to be toward winning the leadership of the mass of non-political trade union and Negro militants, and that our main strategical line for this end continues to be the Labor Party perspective. But at the same time, it means addressing ourselves to all groupings which at the present offer us concrete possibilities of work and achievement, which includes a positive and effective intervention into the deep crisis now prevailing in the Stalinist movement, to be carried out by united front actions and fraction work as well as by literary polemics. Above all, it means extending and deepening the proletarianization of the party as the best means of assuring our participation in future struggles, the best means of counteracting the tendencies to Stalinophobia and sectarianism.

3. A recognition of the danger of Stalinophobia. The means for this are also clearly defined in the Third World Congress as in the Political Resolution. The attitude of the press should be determined first, by the real attitude of the American workers toward Stalinism and communism and not by the myth of a widespread "progressive anti-Stalinism;" and second, by a recognition of the anti-imperialist position into which the Stalinist rank and file has been thrust, i.e., into the same class camp with us. This obviously provides for the sharpest attacks on Stalinism on fundamental questions, as well as on its crimes and betrayals.

4. The principal tactical direction of party work today must be propagandist in character, that is, it should be directed toward advanced and thinking workers and students in the unions and shops, in organizations like the NAACP, as well as in opponent political parties and groups. The party leadership should organize to provide the literary and propaganda material (polemics against the anti-Marxists, studies of American capitalism and the American working class, histories and expositions of the labor movement and its problems). The magazine should be made a more effective instrument to suit the needs of this activity by changing its name and improving its form and content. Party finances should be so allocated as to provide the necessary fulltime personnel for this work. Naturally, this orientation of party work does not mean that we cease agitation around such slogans as withdrawal from Korea, etc., and obviously it means no slackening in our defense activities. Nor does it mean the cessation of election campaigns which should be continued on a rational basis and where genuine gains can be expected. What this proposal does is to establish the main orientation and order of priority which is indispensable for the building of the party today in a period of reac-

tion when the methods of surviving and overcoming isolation are decisive.

5. Collaboration in the leadership. This must and can be attained first by a clear appreciation not only of the existing political differences but of their still embryonic stage, and of a conscious attempt to create harmonious, working relationships on that basis. It means also that serious efforts be made, even in view of limited finances, to have all sides represented on the professional national staff. It means further that the weekly paper shall be edited again as a collective project with both sides consulted and participating in the writing of articles on disputed questions.

6. Unity of the party. All moves for split, all talk in the party about "inevitable splits" must be mercilessly fought. All attempts to start premature struggles by anticipating differences or predicting "desertions" must be rigidly controlled and curbed. The unity of the party, its best protection against the terrible storms now on the political horizon, must be preserved!

For our part, we pledge to work loyally and responsibly for this program. We sincerely believe it can re-unite the leadership and re-consolidate the party ranks. The decision, however, rests with the majority.

March 26, 1953

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Appendix: The Discussion on the Third World Congress.

(Please turn to next page.)

DISCUSSION DRAFT - (Submitted by PC subcommittee to NC members)

CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ON INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The main propositions in the "Theses on International Perspectives" are as follows:

1. Since the Korean conflict, imperialism has plunged into accelerated military and political preparations for a new world war.
2. These preparations will inevitably encounter resistance from the masses suffering from the effects of militarization (lowered living and working standards, attacks on their rights, etc.).
3. The imperialist drive toward global war is taking place in an international situation which is unfavorable to capitalism and threatens to become still worse.
4. The growing strength of the anti-capitalist forces and the undermining of imperialism can just as readily hasten the outbreak of war as delay it. In either event, the final decision rests with U.S. imperialism. The American imperialists may plunge into a general war precisely in order to keep the disadvantageous relationship of class forces from getting worse.
5. A Third World War unleashed under such conditions would from the start acquire the character of an international civil war, especially in Europe and Asia. It would be a war waged by the imperialist bloc against the USSR, the People's Democracies, China, the colonial revolutions and the revolutionary labor movement in the capitalist countries. It will be a war of capitalist counter-revolution for the restoration of private property, colonialism, and other forms of servitude against the international revolutionary movement in all its diverse forms.
6. Such a war would differ from the previous two world wars in important respects. First, it will not be a struggle for world domination between rival imperialist blocs but primarily a class war. Second, it would not come about as the culmination of a series of defeats of the proletariat and its political prostration. It would come rather as a result of serious setbacks to imperialism -- not at a time when the workers and colonial peoples are crushed and weakest but when imperialism itself is being dealt hard blows. Consequently, the immediate effect of another world war will be not the blunting and suppression of the class struggle but its extreme sharpening to the point of social paroxysms.
7. This analysis of the world situation makes necessary the following orientation and holds out the following perspectives for the revolutionary movement:
  - a. The preparations and even the outbreak of world war are no occasion for despair or defeatism in the ranks of the vanguard. On the contrary, it must be viewed as opening up considerable revolutionary possibilities on the international arena, provided the vanguard pursues a correct line and takes full advantage of its opportunities.



b. Marxists cannot take a "neutralist" or abstentionist attitude toward the contending forces in the impending war. They must be intransigently opposed to the imperialists and their agents and unambiguously align themselves with the antagonists of imperialism which have a different social nature, tendencies and aims. This class position which clearly differentiates between the contending camps should be made manifest in all political activity and the press.

c. In the movements, countries and forces headed by Moscow and the Stalinists or by the reformists, Marxists must clearly distinguish between social regimes, forces and movements of an anti-capitalist kind and their bureaucratic and opportunist leaderships.

d. Wherever the masses are acting against the capitalist regimes, the Marxists must participate, with their own program by the side of the workers, peasants and colonial peoples in their struggles with the aim of deepening and widening the movements along revolutionary lines. Under certain conditions this may require entry into the Stalinist-controlled movements and even critical support to regimes under their auspices, as in China.

e. This necessarily involves at the same time a struggle against the Soviet bureaucracy and the exploitation of the world crisis of Stalinism for the building of a new revolutionary leadership. It requires systematic efforts to get closer to the working masses in Europe and Asia now under the influence or domination of Stalinism.

f. In countries where Stalinism is weak and the reformists are the dominant force as in England and India today, it means work among the masses and within the parties now following the reformist leaders. In countries where both Stalinism and Social Democracy are weak, as in the United States, it means contending directly with the union bureaucracy and capitalist representatives for leadership of the workers.

With the above propositions we are wholly in agreement.

At the same time, in our opinion it is necessary to expand and strengthen the theses along the following lines:

8. The necessity to oppose the imperialist bloc and to defend the conquests of October against imperialism does not mean support to the diplomatic moves or military strategy of the Kremlin, as the Theses themselves indicate. The unfoldment of the class struggle and the lines of class interest in the course of war would not in all instances and all places necessarily coincide with the official governmental or military line-ups. The case of Yugoslavia illustrates such a condition today. Similar cases may arise in course of the war itself. In the period ahead Marxists confront a twofold problem: On the one side, that of defending the conquests of October against imperialism and on the other, of defending the revolutionary struggles and their conquests (as in Yugoslavia today) against the Kremlin.

9. The direct counter-revolutionary role which Moscow has played and continues to play will not fade into the background in the event

of war. On the contrary, it will come to the fore whenever and wherever independent mass movements threaten to pass beyond the control of the Kremlin or the parties it dominates. Regardless of the effects upon the defense of the Soviet Union, the Stalinist bureaucracy will not countenance independent mass movements, and, least of all, oppositional ones. If the Kremlin feels that such independent movements jeopardize its interests it will not hesitate to repress them.

Unfolding revolutionary movements may in certain circumstances sweep the agents of the Kremlin along and they will seek to head them in order to control them. It is necessary to warn that the more such movements tend to sweep over their heads, the more openly will the Stalinist bureaucracy tend to collide with them and seek to crush them.

10. While the greatly aggravated and steadily worsening international situation considerably reduces the chances for a deal between the Kremlin and the imperialists, the possibility of such a deal still remains. The conservative Stalinist bureaucracy has far from rejected its perspective of living peacefully with imperialism, if only it is permitted to do so. To this end it is prepared, as it always has been, to sacrifice the interests of the workers everywhere. Such moves as Togliatti's bid to the Italian bourgeoisie demonstrate that the Kremlin has far from lost hope for a deal. While any such deal, if concluded, can only prove temporary and partial, it would nevertheless modify the international situation and our own perspectives in the period immediately ahead and therefore should not be completely left out of our analysis.

11. Instead of attempting to provide a general redefinition of Stalinist parties, it would be more advisable to recommend following their concrete evolution in each given case, in their specific relations with the Kremlin on the one side and with the mass movement in their own country, on the other. At the same time, it is imperative to reaffirm our previous characterization of Stalinism as a counter-revolutionary force. Stalinism remains what it has been -- before, during and following the last war. It is a national reformist bureaucracy and an agency of imperialism in the world labor movement. What is new in the situation are not any changes in the nature and role of Stalinism but the new conditions in which these parties, including the Kremlin, now find themselves and as a result of which they have been plunged into crises.

The possibility and the probability that the mass movements in some countries may sweep over the heads of the Stalinist parties opens up two variants of development. If such parties go along with the masses and begin to follow a revolutionary road this will inescapably lead to their break with the Kremlin and to their independent evolution. Such parties can then no longer be considered as Stalinist, but will rather tend to be centrist in character, as has been the case with the Yugoslav C.P. Those parties, however, which in conditions of mass upsurge remain totally tied to the Kremlin will unfold their counter-revolutionary role to the full.

The characterization of Stalinist parties as "not exactly reformist" parties is both vague and misleading and should be eliminated.

12. The analysis of how the Stalinist parties may conduct themselves during wartime in capitalist countries, tends to be one-sided in the theses. It is stated that in certain circumstances such parties may be compelled to outline a revolutionary orientation. This is not excluded. But the contrary is likewise not excluded. In certain circumstances the Stalinists could and would even in the midst of war work to strangle revolutions. This variant ought to be emphasized no less than the other. In addition it ought to be stressed that with the outbreak of war all these Stalinist parties will not escape from the conditions of crisis now convulsing them but rather will find this crisis intensified many fold.

13. In harmony with what has been said it is further necessary to emphasize that the tactical orientation does not imply any conciliation with Stalinism. On the contrary, these tactics are designed to enable us to merge with the living movement of the masses and to combat Stalinism all the more effectively.

14. While the immense revolutionary upheavals which the outbreak of global war would provoke in the imperialist sectors is correctly emphasized, it should be pointed out that such a war would likewise aggravate the latent conflicts and arouse independent mass movements against the Kremlin's dictatorship in the areas it dominates. This will very likely come about in the East European countries where the CPs have already had to be purged of their native leaderships and among the Soviet nationalities which have directly experienced the evils of Stalinist oppression. The task of the Marxists will be to link themselves with these anti-Stalinist movements of the people, give them a clear and consistent anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist expression, and guide them in a revolutionary socialist direction.

15. The perspective of "deformed workers' states" as the line of historical development for an indefinite period ahead should not be recognized in the theses implicitly or explicitly. Backward countries, whether in Eastern Europe or in Asia, constitute only one of the main channels of revolutionary development. The extension of the proletarian revolution to one or more advanced countries would radically alter the entire world picture. This aspect ought to be put forward in the theses. The retardation of the socialist revolution and its resulting confinement to a backward European country was a historical condition that largely determined the course of world history since 1924. But today we are on the threshold of an entirely new situation. The unparalleled sweep of the colonial revolutions may seem to reinforce this previous trend. Its end result, however, will be to reverse it. For these colonial revolutions, now beginning to engulf the Near East as well, are shaking asunder the entire imperialist world structure and thereby providing a tremendous spur to the socialist revolution in all the advanced countries, including the United States.

The outbreak of general war will not alter this trend but, on the contrary, greatly reinforce revolutionary developments in both the backward and the advanced countries. The sweep of the colonial revolutions should be directly connected in this sense with the perspectives in the advanced countries. At the same time, it should be noted that this interaction between the evolution of backward and advanced countries will aggravate in the extreme the unfolding crisis not only of imperialism but of Stalinism as well.

16. The central political feature of the world situation today is the crisis of the proletarian leadership. It is imperative to reaffirm this proposition of our Foundation Theses. Everything hinges on the resolution of this historic task. The objective conditions for its fulfillment are now ripe but the task will not be resolved automatically or mechanically or independently of our intervention and policies. The proposed tactical moves derive their fullest meaning and importance in connection with the solution of this problem.

June 5, 1951

SOME COMMENTS ON THE "CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION"

By George Clarke

The basic motivation of the "Theses" is to rearm the world movement for the decisive struggles impending on the national and on the international arena. The need of this reorientation arises from many reasons but for the purposes at hand it can be reduced to the existence of two essentially new factors: 1. Imperialism is forced to launch its war without first being able to defeat and demoralize the revolutionary proletariat of the capitalist countries and the colonial peoples. 2. Stalinist parties are now at the helm of important mass movements, and it is unlikely that in these countries a genuine revolutionary leadership will successfully challenge and supplant them in the workers' movement before the outbreak of the war.

The question involved is not what is to be done in the event that the crisis of Stalinism takes the form of a split within an important CP or the rupture of an important CP from Moscow. Our movement has been prepared by its whole past for such a development. And whatever weaknesses it had in this sphere were largely corrected during the Yugoslav experience.

The question is what to do if the crisis of Stalinism remains and deepens in its present form: i.e. a growing dissatisfaction of the revolutionary workers in the ranks of the CP with the conservative and treacherous policy of their leadership, but a desire to remain within the party and to transform it by pressure and action into a vehicle for the realization of their revolutionary aspirations. After the dismal failure of the Cucci-Magnani affair and the fiasco which a similar attempt has met in France, there can be no doubt that this is the real situation, and one which will tend to become more fixed in the next period precisely because of the imminence of the war. Hence flows the need for a sharp reorientation in these countries, where the question of understanding the contradictions of Stalinism and of finding the approach to the workers under their influence is a matter of life and death for Trotskyism. The tragic experience in China is the first great warning. But this orientation must obviously clash with the past of our movement, with its different perspectives and with the accumulated conservatism which has resulted from that past.

The turn is an audacious one, but for that reason it must be made with the greatest boldness and with the most complete confidence in the basic soundness and loyalty of our movement to its fundamental principles. If the turn is hedged by exaggerated concern for deviations, by overemphasized warnings about dangers, by insistence on alternate and opposite variants, then the whole effect of the reorientation can be lost, and the conservative elements will find shelter for their opposition in reservations, refinements and amendments. In any case, if our movement is not sufficiently mature for such a bold turn, then not all the admonitions in the world will safeguard it from the dangers involved.

It is from this point of view, because I believe that while you begin in agreement with the general line, many of your suggestions will have the effect of weakening and not strengthening the position of the "Theses." Hence the following comments and proposals. In the instances involved your corrections appear to me to be based in some

points on a bad reading of the "Theses," in others from drawing unwarranted inferences from the text; in other cases I cannot find myself in agreement because of ambiguity, incompleteness of thought, unnecessary emphasis on points that should not be especially stressed. For the sake of convenience I'll follow the numerical order of your suggestions.

8. "The unfoldment of the class struggle and the lines of class interests in the course of the war would not in all instances and all places necessarily coincide with the official governmental or military lineups. The case of Yugoslavia illustrates such a condition today." Unless further amplified and explained this statement can lead to serious confusion and even error. Does it mean for instance that the slogan of defense for Yugoslavia against the Kremlin would still be applicable if it were lined up with imperialism and served as a base of military operations for it in the war against the SU? That may not be your meaning, but it can easily be deduced from the above statement, and in fact it happens to be one of the unspoken considerations which the Yugoslavs use as a justification for their line of adaptation and capitulation to imperialism. The statement must either be corrected and amplified or eliminated. (Although for my part I cannot see the advisability or the need of trying to foresee the multitude of complicated forms that the war will assume or to proscribe at this date the tactics that should be pursued.) Otherwise I should like to point out that your point No. 8 is merely a restatement (i.e. without the above) of the point in the "Theses" at the bottom of page 8 that the "tactical applications" of the line of the defense of the USSR "remain subordinate to the free development of the movement of the masses against all attempts of the Soviet bureaucracy, the Russian army and the Stalinist leaders to strangle and to smash it."

9. While the intent of this section, emphasizing the counter-revolutionary role of the Soviet bureaucracy is correct, it is entirely too one-sided. It is based primarily on the subjective desires and needs of the Kremlin and not enough on the objective situation which will develop. It is not only a question of what the Kremlin wants to do but of what it is capable under the given conditions of doing. The Kremlin didn't want the Warsaw insurrection; it permitted it to be smashed by the Nazis. The Kremlin didn't want the Yugoslav revolution and later the Chinese revolution. But it proved totally incapable of preventing or smashing them. It is good to alert revolutionists to the counter-revolutionary character of the Kremlin, but it is also important to indicate the limitations of the counter-revolutionary power of the Kremlin based on a real analysis of the class war which will ensue.

10. This point should be eliminated. The "Theses" says: "Despite the now reinforced orientation of imperialism toward war, the perspective of temporary compromises between the USSR and the USA continues to remain open." (p.1) And then on page 2, discussing the question from the standpoint of the Kremlin it says: ". . . the Soviet bureaucracy also anxious for its own reasons to avert the outbreak of a general war, will lend itself to the conclusion of limited or even more general partial compromises. . ." In view of this very clear statement, what is the need for further emphasis on this point? Allowance for temporary zig-zags and for tactics that derive

from such turns belong in a political resolution on the immediate situation and not in the Thesis which provides a basic long-term prognosis and which expressly rejects the possibility of a new overall deal such as that of Yalta-Potsdam.

11. Here objection is taken to the description in the Theses of the Communist Parties as "not exactly reformist parties." To be sure this is not a rigorously scientific definition. Nor was it so intended. But it is far more correct, far more descriptive of the reality than that which you offer in its stead: "it is a national reformist bureaucracy and an agency of imperialism in the world labor movement." This is untenable theoretically. Unlike all other reformist parties in history, the Communist Parties do not rest on a bureaucracy and a labor aristocracy deriving its privileges from the super profits of imperialism and from its function as the labor agency of the capitalist state. The supreme test here is in the sphere of foreign policy and war where with rare exceptions the reformist parties slavishly follow the policy of their ruling class. In this sense it must be admitted that events proved the Old Man in error when he predicted that as a result of the lush development of the Peoples' Front period there would grow up sizable "national-communist" wings in the CPs possibly encompassing the major portion of their leaderships. No such thing has occurred, despite many defections but not of a decisive character, either during the Hitler-Stalin pact or more recently since the beginning of the "cold war" when CPs like those of France and Italy had far more to lose in privileges by going into opposition on foreign policy. One must ask why despite obvious self-interest the Stalinist leaderships have not taken that course. It is ridiculous to say that the GPU holds them in line. Fundamentally it is because they know that they cannot take their mass following with them in a policy of opposition to the Soviet Union. For these masses, whatever their distrust, the Soviet Union remains the revolution, and it is because of the revolution that they follow the CP and not the social-democracy. Stalinism is counter-revolutionary to be sure, but it is impossible after analyzing the relationship of their leaderships to the Soviet bureaucracy, their base and their relationship with the working class to deny the patent truth that they are "not exactly reformist parties."

The importance of this definition resides in the fact that it permits us to better grasp the contradictory character of Stalinism and thus to be able to participate with our own line in the revolutionary struggles they can head under "certain favorable conditions." Now the same cannot be said for the classical reformist, i.e. social-democratic parties. They cannot "outline a revolutionary orientation" without a major split, if not in the party itself then at least in the apparatus. And, finally, is it not strange that you should conclude your remarks on this point, which grow out of a fear that the formulation in question may open the door to some change in our fundamental characterization of Stalinism, by what appears to me to be an unconscious paraphrase of what is said in the "Theses"? Let me quote: ". . . it is not excluded that certain Communist Parties with the bulk of their forces can be pushed out of the strict orbit of the Soviet bureaucracy and can outline a revolutionary orientation. From that moment on, they would cease to be strictly Stalinist parties, mere instruments of the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy, and will

lend themselves to a differentiation and to a politically autonomous course."

I do not deny that improvements can be made in the formulation in question, although the lengthy explanations involved would probably be more fitting in an article than in a resolution. But those which you offer as substitutes fall far short of the goal and are, moreover, incorrect.

12. This is one of those "on-the-one-hand-and-on-the-other-hand" points which nullifies the whole idea on this question contained in the "Theses." In the first place, the "Theses" does not lay down an iron law. It speaks of "certain Communist Parties" and "certain conditions." It uses the word "may" not "will." It says that the CPs "cannot allow themselves to being, in all conditions, reduced to mere agencies for the transmission and execution of the orders of the Soviet bureaucracy." But it is false to emphasize "no less than the other" the point that the "Stalinists could and would even in the midst of war work to strangle revolutions." That is not our problem. Can it be honestly said in face of the whole history and tradition and training of our movement that it would fail to recognize a counter-revolutionary and class collaborationist course on the part of the Stalinists and to then not find a policy befitting such a situation? As a matter of fact, our movement knew this so well in China that it couldn't tell the difference between a party that was collaborating with the Kuomintang and one that was fighting it to the death. But even in the variant you mention, the point is by no means as simple as you put it. The Greek experience shows that had the Trotskyists there understood the possibility of a CP to "outline a revolutionary orientation" they would have been deeply involved in the resistance movement and thus in a far better position to cope with the betrayal when it actually came. The only effect of your amendment here will be to give conservative elements a cover to hide behind because they actually exclude the first variant. It will deflect and hinder the real education and reorientation of the movement.

13. I am entirely in agreement with this point. The Theses should be strengthened as much as possible in this sense. Though I should point out that in XVI, XVII and XVIII a considerable contribution is made precisely on this question in the Theses itself.

14. In view of what is written on this question in the first two paragraphs of page 9 of the Theses, I cannot exactly follow this point. Much rests of course on exactly what is meant by "anti-Stalinist movements of the people." The ideas of the Theses are further elaborated in the resolution on the Eastern European countries

15. This is the most baffling point of all. You insist that the Theses should not recognize "implicitly or explicitly" the "perspective of 'deformed workers' states' as the line of development for an indefinite period ahead." Why the insistence when there is no such perspective outlined in the Theses and when there is no demand from anyone, not even the author of the phrase in question, that it should be included in any way in the Theses. You want the Theses to stress the aspect that "the extension of the proletarian revolution to one or more advanced country would radically alter the world



picture." It would be an entirely legitimate request provided the Theses did not itself make the same point, viz: "On the other hand the proletariat . . . will completely avoid the bureaucratic deformation of its institutions and especially of its power, only to the degree that the revolutionary camp is broadened in the world and the revolution conquers more and more of the important domains of world economy. 'Socialism in one country' is not only a petty bourgeois utopia; it also implies an eventual bureaucratic and inevitable opportunist degeneration of the proletarian power."

There is the essence of the question and that is all the Theses need concern itself with from the point of view of perspectives. It is ridiculous and to my mind somewhat childish to demand a guarantee in the Theses against the development of other "deformed workers' states" through the projection of the most optimistic line of development. Of course, we all hope that history will take that line. But we already have a certain experience in this matter. At one time, we were all convinced that after Russia there would be no further phenomena of degeneration. While a few in our ranks have proved more perspicacious -- and correct -- the majority among us is only now recognizing that such deformations of the workers' power have also occurred throughout Eastern Europe. Tomorrow, we shall have to recognize the existence of the same phenomena in China, that is my opinion. It seems to me a flight of unwarranted audacity at this point to predict the precise course of the war and of the convulsions it will carry with it. Will it last five years, or ten years or thirty years? And what colossal destruction will it bring in its wake? Korea may very well be considered a prelude and a prototype for what is ahead. I notice that Walter Lippman consigns Europe to the fate of Korea. And who can speak of the revolution in the USA in the same terms as October 1917 in Petrograd? It will be one of the bloodiest and most violent events in history. Suffice it to say that the war for the bourgeoisie will be the war for survival, and that means a sanguinary conflict unprecedented in form and in scale. Is it possible to say that in such a period, or in its early aftermath that such a flowering of the productive forces will occur as to prevent the "deformation of workers' states?" I do not pretend to exhaust the question. Obviously a discussion on this question will prove interesting and educational for our movement. But it is not the problem at hand to resolve this question, and it would be utterly false for the Theses to commit the movement to one position or the other.

16. The point is obvious. No comment is necessary.

July 9, 1951