

# FORUM

*A Discussion and Information  
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Independent Socialist League*

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STATEMENT OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE  
ON THE RESIGNATION OF IRVING HOWE  
AND HENRY JUDD.

It is never a happy circumstance when individuals resign from the ISL and announce their intention to leave the socialist movement; this is particularly true when, as in the case of Irving Howe and Henry Judd, they were prominently associated with the organization.

But when two people like Howe and Judd quit the organization, the act is a measure of the fierce pressures exerted upon individuals and movement alike by the objective circumstances of the present world situation. These unremitting pressures should be clear to everyone. They are anit-socialist, anti-Marxist, anti-internationalist and anti-social world opinion (all of it equated with pure and simple anti-Stalinism), more severe in the United States, because of its unique world position, than in any other country outside the Stalinist orbit. It is abundantly clear from the Howe-Judd statement of resignation, that their motivation is the most obvious refelction of objective pressures.

The statement presented to us by Howe and Judd is exceedingly brief. It could have been briefer still, for the significant motivation given for their step is clearly stated in several sentences announcing their intention to support the "West" in the impending war between the two imperialist camps. All else in their document is gratuitous and of no great moment. What else is the meaning in their mouths of the words "our place is in the Western world," and the stricture that socialists cannot "retire to some isle of rectitude more or less equidistant from both sides"? Whose formula is this, by the way? It was first expressed by Howe. If the ISL never questioned him about the meaning of this statement, it was because it gave him the benefit of the doubt. Yet, only a few weeks passed before this formula made its meaning clear to him. It was inevitable therefore that the "third camp" position should become to them "meaningless, a fetish." Their talk about opposing the war and urging resistance "to those who accept or desire a Third World War," then becomes a violation of the political logic of the newly-stated views which they have taken over from the chauvinists and is a hesitant accommodation to the "vicious" influence of "tradition".

So far as the war is concerned, Howe and Judd have adopted a vulgar, "practical" estimate of the world struggle, based upon the relative strength of the two main contenders. In the course of this evolution they have had to cast aside those few remaining principles which have kept them in the movement in the past few years.

Neither Howe nor Judd have ever communicated their "new view of American socialism" to us. At the most, they have posed "problems," to which neither of them have contributed the slightest clarity, nor even an intelligent statement of what the "problems" were. Of lamentations we have had plenty. The difference between us is that we have tried and continue to try to solve our problems on the basis of our principled views and organizational existence, while they have solved what they consider their problems by abandoning socialist principle and the socialist future.

Let no one make any mistake about it: the act of resignation by Howe and Judd is the result of their current "theories" and politics, or more specifically, the evolution of these. The difficulties and weaknesses of the ISL, conditions which effect all socialist organizations today, have only served as one of the "excuses" for their resignation.

All else in the statement are merely unthought-out and undeveloped hints, rather than boldly stated, clear-out views. Hasn't this been characteristic of both Howe and Judd? How did their present decision to leave the ISL come about without discussing a single question with the responsible bodies of the organization? The membership ought to know that in a sense the resignations came as a surprise to the League. It was never a secret that Howe and Judd had "differences", entertained "opposing views" or disagreed with the ISL on this, that or another question

In the case of Howe, it was known that he had "misgivings" on the anti-war position of the ISL and that he had "defensist" leanings. But what was never known to the ISL, and what Howe could never make clear was a coherent and explicit declaration of his views, new or old, so that we could understand and discuss them with him. His doubts about Marxism (to the extent that he knew and understood it) were expressed, to be sure, in other journals; he had "feelings" about the movement in general, its theories and programs, and its history. But they were never based on solid knowledge. Indirectly, and sometimes directly, the organization grieved to assist and correct Howe in his more heady and ridiculous flights in the world of theory, history and politics. That it didn't do enough of this, may be true, but here also, it should always be borne in mind the organization was dealing with an "independent spirit", whose own "feelings" about the organization and its leadership precluded that kind of intellectual relationship.

Not many weeks ago, Howe wrote a long defense of Marxism, socialism and the "tendency" represented by the New International in the magazine, answering the Princeton volumes on American socialism. He spoke at a large forum of the New York ISL developing some of the views of the article. True, not all of the comrades were satisfied with the manner of this defense, the errors of omission and the somewhat primitive understanding of Marxism in America. But the fact that Howe made this defense seemed satisfying to most. He has spoken a great deal for the SYL in recent months and more or less reflected the general views of the ISL. His present step, therefore, does come as a slight surprise to those who interpreted the above actions as indications that Howe was being drawn closer to the movement, or rather, driven closer to it by the stupidities of its critics. But Howe's political instability is not a new thing and his present action is an expression of it, not in contradiction to it.

Judd's case is somewhat different. Since the end of the war, we have observed his evolution from the most hide-bound and terrifyingly "orthodox" Marxist to a political chameleon. The first public sign of this evolution came with his article "The Relevance of Trotskyism". The views of this article, carelessly joined and half-developed, were never followed up in an orderly manner so that the organization might know what it was exactly that Judd stood for, or even what he was trying to say. Since then, Judd has followed so completely a zig-zag political course that it has been difficult to know on what day he would unceremoniously cast aside "views" "thoughtfully" arrived at the week before.

We have observed the presentation of his "orthodox" position on Yugoslavia prior to his departure to Europe. Within a few weeks thereafter, he adopted a violently opposed but obscure view. A vigorous demand for support of the Bevan movement inside the Labor Party (a view conforming in general with the position of the ISL) was followed by attacks on Labor Action for alleged failure to advocate this position, and ended finally, with a warning that we must be careful about Bevan because he was dangerous (gratuitous advice, as every member knows); A demand that we get out of the political rut by adopting "a new and fresh approach" to the presidential election, was followed by Judd's adoption of the very old position of abstention. By itself, abstention in the present election was not horrendous.

What is horrendous was the way Judd attacked the leadership for the decision which was adopted, and his failure to present any view on the elections, distinguished or otherwise that might have been discussed as a serious and fundamental difference with the League. A vigorous anti-war position detailed in the NI of a year ago, is now followed by a shallow and even chauvinistic support of American imperialism.

And finally, the promise to present the ISL in September with a full-dress discussion of "new views on all the main political questions of the day, is capped by a sudden resignation from the ISL without the presentation of a single idea in any form, unless the proposed position of abstention in the elections is assumed to cover everything.

The <sup>b</sup>membership of the ISL should know that since his return from Europe, Judd has attended few meetings and in the last two months, none at all. The long-promised presentation of a document or documents containing his views came to nothing, for now we learn that no fruitful discussion can be held in the ISL, and anyway, it would be a waste of time, since neither he nor Howe, are certain that, in this period of social or political development, an organization like ours or any other "small" socialist organization, should exist.

A discussion of organization with Howe and Judd would indeed be vain. Had they presented and fought for their views, or sought to win support for them, a fruitful, educational discussion would certainly have resulted. But they chose not to do this. They insinuate that such an attempt was made. But that is simply not true. What we have been presented with is a spectacle of intellectual and political irresponsibility by two individuals who have never been able to formulate their views, let alone to state clearly and unambiguously what they considered the "new" and "startling" grave problems of the socialist movement to be

For us, the ideal of the greatest importance to our generation, is the maintenance against all odds of a socialist organization, a movement to keep alive the great socialist traditions of the past and present for the coming generations, to carry on an unceasing, continuous struggle for democracy, internationalism, socialism. Anyone who abandons this task, with a slick slogan like "we support the west", identifies himself with one of the imperialist powers or camps, and ceases to be, in the real sense of the word, a socialist. In the case of Howe and Judd, it has been done by a desertion of socialist ideals and principles and there is a moral, as well as political, lesson to be learned from their action.

-THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE  
OF THE ISL

Nov. 4, 1952

STATEMENT OF RESIGNATION OF IRVING  
HOWE AND HENRY JUDD FROM THE ISL

Oct. 12, 1952

Independent Socialist League,

Dear Comrades:

With this letter, we formally resign from the Independent Socialist League.

Our long membership in the ISL, our participation in its work, and our respect for its members, require that we explain this setp which, of course, has been taken only after long and painful reflection.

We are and intend to remain democratic socialists. Our motive in leaving the ISL is a conviction that it has ceased to be useful for advancing the cause of democratic socialism or for providing a lively center in which its problems can be discussed.

The chronic crisis in which the ISL finds itself is due, primarily, of course, to the hostile atmosphere in which we live, the general break-down of world socialism. It is possible that the decline of all the small groups of the non-Stalinist left indicates simply that there is no longer any place or need for such groups. But these facts do not quite explain the inner collapse of the ISL, its loss of vitality and intellectual resilience. The intellectual incompetence of the ISL seems to us primarily responsible for its much-mooted "organizational crisis."

The one major role the ISL could have played in the past period - that of a center for free socialist discussion - it has rejected. The organization has always been characterized by a political split personality; between its ties with the heritage of Trotskyism and its healthy fumbings toward a new view of American socialism, between its need for "orthodoxy" and its need for reassessment. It has repeatedly struck out toward new ideas and then retreated to familiar formulas, sometimes simply in order "to keep the group together". At one time, in the early 1940's, it seemed as if it had not only abandoned the errors of Trotsky on the Russian question but also the now largely irrelevant tradition and tone of American Trotskyism. But in the past few years there has been a hardening of ideological arteries. The shell of isolation has begun to seem almost comfortable, and what was once felt to be the tragedy of sect life has now covertly become glorified in the psychology of the "saving remnant".

Marx's definition of a sect applies to the ISL of today with embarrassing accuracy: "The sect finds its reason for existence in its point of honor; it does not look for it in what it has in common with the labor movement, but in some particular sign which sets it off from this movement." The ideological baggage, the pretentious organizational structure and the aura of moralistic self-justification have now become its "point of honor".

That the ISL is a sect need not, in itself, have been fatal; at the present moment no socialist group in America can be anything but a sect. What is fatal is that the bad habits and outlooks of sect life have been accepted with increasing pride. Labor Action speaks in tones that are strident, dogmatic and often lifeless; it reflects the desperate intransigence of its contributors rather than any effort to think about the present world in terms that have some relation to people outside the sect. The New International, which should have been the focus for a serious study of both Marxism in crisis and of current intellectual and political life, is dead. Neglected by the ISL leadership, seldom containing an article that is more than a ritualistic rehearsal of familiar platitudes. Its influence in American

intellectual life is nil; its value is hardly greater. At a time when the major need is for serious study - for the writing of books, for self-education, for the reestimation of accepted doctrines - there is only the steady stream of flat "propaganda" which is equally boring to the handful who read it and the handful who write it. "Die-hardism", particularly as reflected in the editorial policy and tone of Labor Action, has become the dominant force in the ISL. Its press consists of a monologue devoted to ferocious self-convincing.

It is the condition of the ISL, even more than the disagreements we have with it, which prompts our resignation. Each time during the past years that a step had been taken by its political and theoretical spokesman to develop a more realistic and relevant position - on the Marshall Plan, the Korean War, the British Labor Government, the role of labor in the democratic primaries, the problem of the national elections, etc. - the same dreary pattern has resulted. The ISL chairman advances a necessary modification or change of program; the "die-hards", primed by intellectual frustration to seek factional struggles, pounce on this latest "deviation"; and the ISL chairman, to keep peace in his house, retreats behind a smokescreen of diplomacy and maneuver. Things are "fixed up" while the intellectual muddle thickens steadily. The most important and depressing example of this occurred recently when the ISL chairman wrote an article on the war question which, in effect, involved a sharp change of position. Then, under pressure from the "die-hards", he maneuvered his way into a cloud of ambiguity. This is an atmosphere the very opposite of frank controversy and open disagreement. It makes all ideas impossible because none are taken seriously and as a result there is no clear understanding of which ideas are held and which rejected. The political condition of the ISL is at present little more than a state of floating anxiety covered up by doctrinaire rigidity.

This, in summary form, is the way we see the ISL at present. Were it an organization of liveliness and viability, we would consider remaining in it to persuade, or attempt to persuade, its members to our point of view. As it is, such an effort could only lead to frustration and pointless bitterness on both sides.

We have a number of political disagreements with the ISL, but we shall here mention only one: the war question. The "third Camp" concept seems now to us meaningless, a fetish. There are not available, at the present juncture, those historical energies which alone could activate a Third Camp - and as the slogan drags alone in ISL propaganda it has no particular relation to the shift of events. It takes on a life of its own detached from the realities of European or American politics.

We are opposed to war, and urge resistance to those who accept or desire a Third World War. We believe in the need to cooperate with whatever forces resist this tendency while also resisting the advances of Stalinism. But, as democratic socialists, our place is in the Western World, the democratic world, no matter how sharp our criticisms of its bourgeois leadership. The struggle between Stalinism and the West is not merely a struggle for the imperialist division of the world, but also, and in terms of consequences, more fundamentally a struggle between two ways of living: between democracy, however marred, and the most bestial totalitarianism ever known. Consequently, we do not believe socialists can retire to some isle of rectitude more or less equidistant from both sides; we must be the socialist wing of the west which propounds the idea that the defeat of Stalinism can best be achieved through political means, but recognizes simultaneously that the survival of democracy as we know it is indispensable for socialism, for the working class, for humanity. We retain every right to criticize the bourgeois leadership for its policy vis-a-vis Stalinism, but we do so from a frank recognition that we are aligned with the West in its struggle against the Stalinist world. We do not accept the notion that the struggle of the West is merely for the retention of

capitalist power; it is one in which the people of the world are vitally involved, in which the whole heritage of civilization is at stake. That this should be so shows how desperate our political situation is, but the truth must be recognized.

We have not tried here to elaborate our description of the ISL or argue in behalf of our position on the war question. We have merely sketched our conclusions in the hope that the members of the ISL, agree or not, will recognize the premises and evidence from which they follow.

We believe that the major task of socialist today is to engage in sustained intellectual activity, mainly with the end of reorientating and educating themselves. Were this possible in a sect atmosphere, we would have remained in the ISL despite our differences of opinion. As it is, we must face the necessity of doing what we can as individual socialists, left to our own resources and responsibilities. We are eager to discuss with all who face the same problems we do, but we do not believe that at the present moment there is any useful role for hard-and-fast "parties" or "leagues".

We regard the ISL as a socialist tendency, among others, with which we presently disagree. Toward it we feel no hostility. If there will be a coming to gether of American socialists in the next few years, we hope that the ISL, or elements of it, will play a part. In the meantime, we are ready to maintain those friendly relations which should always exist among democratic socialists of all persuasion, as well as whatever mutually acceptable collaboration may seem desirable. But we cannot, in honesty, believe that our further membership can have any value.

Fraternally,

Irving Howe,  
Henry Judd.

LETTER TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE BY  
GARRETT and BRAD

Dear Comrades:

In the Committee's reply to their letter of resignation, Howe and Judd are charged with having deserted socialist ideals and principles. We consider this so serious an accusation, and the making of it so serious an error, as to require protest. The accusation is insupportable in fact, and indefensible in theory. It has never been our way. We have never held membership in our movement to be the sine qua non of socialist ideals and principles. Nor have we lightly equated these ideals and principles with any given opinion on a particular political issue, or political tendency.

This is not, in our view, a matter of harshness or softness. It is rather a matter that deeply involved the integrity of the ISL - and the methods it employs in dealing with problems, in this case the problem of a resignation. We can be as harsh or as soft as we feel obliged to be, but to reduce the issue to one of "toughness" is indeed the saddest kind of soft-headedness - namely irresponsibility. Are Howe and Judd less socialist than our erstwhile presidential candidate, Darlington Hoopes, or any one of a number of unaffiliated socialists? We can argue that this or that position is not in our opinion socialist; we can answer Howe and Judd with a severity that equals or exceeds that of their statement of resignation. We have no authority to decree ex-communication. To pretend that we do is to exceed the limits of practical and theoretical propriety. Already the representative of the Committee at the New York meeting felt it necessary (to his credit) to "interpret" the meaning of desertion in the Committee statement in a sense different from its dictionary meaning.

We therefore propose that the Committee rectify its error by striking the accusation from its statement - as well for its own record, as in consideration of possible future collaboration (as speakers, writers, etc.) with the comrades who have resigned. Howe and Judd are, after all, still socialists.

Comradely yours,

Jack Brad  
Manny Garrett



STATEMENT OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE  
ON THE LETTER OF GARRETT-BRAD

1. The Political Committee regrets that comrades Garrett and Brad saw no necessity of saying anything about the statement of resignation submitted by Howe and Judd. It seems to us that they would have felt it desirable to do so in view of the very close political relations they had with the two who quit the ISL. The PC also regrets that these two comrades did find it necessary, however, to make a complaint about the PC statement which is neither valid nor pertinent, since whatever they have to say bears little or no resemblance to the many things that the statement of the Committee did say.

2. Our organization has never held that a man who does not belong to the ISL, or is a member of some other socialist organization with which we disagree is not a socialist. We have never held, as Garrett and Brad know well, that there is only one socialist organization in this country and that is the ISL. There is no reference of the kind in the statement of the PC.

Many people have left our ranks for one reason or another. Some joined other organizations; some remained sympathetic to us; while others felt they could best function in other ways. We have never treated these people as deserters from the fight for socialism simply because they quite the ISL and believed they were working for the socialist principles and ideals we hold high, in another way. In turn, they never made any demands on us to give up our ideas and activities. We just parted company and went our respective ways.

3. The PC statement dealt with the resignation of Howe and Judd with all the restraint permitted by the content and tone of their document, about which Garrett and Brad have nothing to say. In the case of Howe and Judd we experience for the first time a demand from two people prominently associated with the organization, that we ought to dissolve altogether; that there is no way open for us and no room and prospects for our ideas, or of any small socialist organization. The reason which they have given for leaving, and the proposals they make - and not some abstract notions which they might hold - constitute a desertion from the fight for socialism. This is what the PC statement did say, and not what Garrett-Brad suggest that it said.

Dec. 15, 1952.

## THE NEW YORK MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Several weeks ago, the New York City Committee invited Irving Howe and Henry Judd to speak at a membership meeting of the local organization and to present their written resignation from the ISL in oral form. Some comrades believed the invitation to be unwarranted in the nature of the case, because neither Howe nor Judd thought it fit and proper to present their views and reasons for resignation prior to their decision to leave. Those of us who thought the City Committee in error, felt that the invitation was undeserved. The City Committee, however, believed that such a membership would redound to the benefit of the ISL, and it must be admitted that they were correct.

The membership meeting, open in character, was well attended. Howe was given forty-five minutes to do what he should have done before his resignation, namely, to present whatever views he held. Judd did not receive any time because he had rejected the invitation of the City Committee on the ground that no useful purpose would be served by such a meeting. It would appear that the statement of the PC on their resignation produced an angry response in both Howe and Judd, and the latter also appeared on the night of the meeting asking for special time. Since the meeting was already organized, he was given the same time as other speakers in the discussion period.

Undoubtedly, the large meeting resulted from an interest in the views which Howe and Judd might present as the reason for their action, i.e., political views. What they were treated to was a spectacle best described in psychological terms, not political. In the 45 minutes which Howe took to present the reasons for the joint resignation, not one was used to refer to or explain its political basis or motivation. In view of the statement which they submitted, this was indeed a surprise. As a result, comrade Smith, speaking in behalf of the PC at this meeting, found it impossible to come to grips with any of their political views, except in the extremely shadowy form in which they were presented in their statement.

The performance of Howe was, in a sense, a sad thing to watch. How it was possible for him to speak for 45 minutes on his resignation from the movement with which he has been associated for 12 years without alluding once to the political reasons for the action is difficult to understand. But he did it by a studied evasion of politics in his speech. Instead, he devoted himself to a long list of criticisms of the ISL and its leading personnel. Let us assume that much of the criticism was correct (some of it was quite ludicrous). But resignation from a political organization is a serious business and criticism of a variety of failures, or the shortcomings of this or that individual, cannot serve as the motivating force for what Howe and Judd did. In fact, it was not. And the type of speech Howe made was obviously calculated to avoid debating politics with us, the politics of his statement.

Therefore, anything said about his speech could hardly touch upon politics in a serious way. Howe gave a performance, an act. It began with a purported search for the author of the PC statement, which the speaker discovered to be....Canon. It didn't bring the house down. But it was an indication of the kind of speech that was to follow. Howe did not disappoint. He described his disappointments, his problems, his desires. The organization was an impediment to literary activity; no books were produced. His articles were critically received; LA did not refer to his articles in the public press; the ISL had nothing to offer him. He had learned nothing in all the years he spent in the ISL. And so on, ad nauseum. That is why I referred to his speech, in a letter to the NC, as undignified, ungraceful, and above all, ungrateful.

The New York Membership Meeting

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Undignified in its utterly subjective character, ungraceful in the material used, ungrateful in the failure of appreciation for what our movement has given him in the more than a decade's membership. Only an unwarranted snobbery could have produced this speech.

It was the combination of these attitudes struck-off by Howe which repelled so many. If Howe had any sympathy for his action prior to the meeting, he had little or none after it. My conversations with members of the League and the SYL verify this. Some of the comrades described his conduct as infantile; Judd's as clownish. The latter, who rejected the invitation to speak, became quite affable at the meeting and declared that if he knew the meeting was going to be such a good one, he would not have refused to speak. He requested that he be invited to speak at some future meeting of the League and he would be glad to present his political views! After his resignation; not before!

Any number of comrades of the New York organization spoke and their remarks were of a high order. Not one of them missed the degrading character of Howe's presentation, and from one plane to another, they took him quite to task.

The League was given a lesson in political bankruptcy. Let us hope it learns this lesson well.

AG

12/15/52

## SOME REMARKS ON THE WAR QUESTION

The political position and practical activity of the international socialist and Marxist movement in the face of the Third Imperialist World War will be the touchstone of international politics in the years to come. The independent socialists in America, and those of similar views in the rest of the world, have the duty to be especially clear-cut concerning a problem of such life and death importance for the continued existence of the free labor movement and the future possibilities of socialism. Atomic war is the most extreme expression of the bankruptcy of the present civilization. The life and death struggle between capitalist and Stalinist imperialism which has given birth to its more and more proximate development, demands more than ever before the active, independent intervention of the international working class. The problem facing the movement is the exact form which this intervention is to take.

The only "fresh thinking" that has been done on this problem since the discussion on the war broke out in our ranks, appears in the two N.I. articles by M. Shachtman on Socialists and the War. Three recent articles appearing in Forum from comrades who feel uneasy about Shachtman's position, and attack it from various points of view, have provoked me into making some additional remarks on the general perspective summed up in the phrase: Transform the Imperialist War into a Democratic War! It is hoped that these remarks will advance the discussion to a more appropriate stage.

1) This coming war will be an imperialist war. This proposition, filled in by Shachtman (and by our press) with its concrete, present-day content, means, I take it, exactly what it says. It means that those who support this war (the Atom Bomb "socialists"), who support it "critically", with or without reservations, have given up the title of socialists and have gone over to the camp of imperialism. These people, and they are myriad, indicate in advance, for all the world to see, that if given power they would carry out substantially the same war, with the same ends, aims and methods. They have no need of transforming the character of the war (it is to them already a war for "democracy" against "totalitarianism") but must concentrate on cementing national unity, defending government policy and mobilizing the populations of the world behind one or the other war bloc.

Socialists, on the contrary, basing themselves upon a concrete study of the imperialist war, must confront the program of frightened social-chauvinism with a program of class struggle suited to the needs, the strength, and the actual development of the labor movement all over the world. For this program to be effective and efficient, for it to express, that is, the actual forward movement inherent in the present relation of forces, the present consciousness and the present state of activity of the labor-socialist-Marxist movement, it must take its point of departure from a concrete and continuing examination of the unfolding of the class struggle.

Thus, at present, socialists (as opposed to the present brand of frightened and cowardly social chauvinists) must be the sharpest

and most clear-cut opponents of the political, social and military preparations for the coming war, and must, in general, carry on a struggle against all trends leading to the transformation of the Korean war into a full-scale, inter-imperialist military conflict. Socialists cannot subordinate their social-political struggle to the "solution" of this imperialist conflict by a war whose ends, methods and objective results can only succeed in (1) debilitating the international strength of the working class and reducing its powers of recuperation; (2) threatening the various nations (including the big two) with annihilation and subjugation; (3) destroying the productive forces, and thus the possibilities of socialism on an unheard of scale; (4) resulting in the useless slaughter of millions of human beings, most of them civilians; (5) directly threatening the independence of all the small nations of the earth (Korea, Indo-China, etc.).

In other words, our opposition to the present rotten imperialist "peace", not only does not preclude, but demands, the most principled and persistent struggle against the continuation of the Korean war or its deepening in the direction of a full-scale showdown. Although Truman's intervention in Greece and Korea "saved" these countries from military subjection to Stalinism, although the American airlift "saved" Berlin from the hands of totalitarian Stalinism, and although other interventions of Western imperialism may in the future prove to be the only effective military effort standing in the way of Stalinist invasion, socialists neither propose nor applaud this imperialist intervention, for its general political purpose and objective result is to transform the "saved" area into an advance-post of Western imperialism in the coming world war. A political program based on, and limited to, U. S. military intervention, is the program of American imperialism; the political problem for the socialist movement is how to propose and carry out a positive alternative to this type of intervention, or, if this is impossible, to transform the character -- the means, the results, the objectives -- of this intervention.

In short, although we are opposed to the continuation of the present imperialist peace (or twilight war), we are even more opposed to its resolution by an all-out imperialist war which would shut off the possibilities for socialist intervention and lay the basis for another, and even more destructive, imperialist "peace". Thus follows our active anti-war struggle.

2) How Not to Discuss the Problem: Some comrades, taking their point of departure from the indubitably imperialist (reactionary) character of the coming Russian-American military war of attrition, and from our general program of socialist opposition to both Stalinism and capitalism, seem to prefer the certainty of the "finished program" of "defeatism" to the working out of a positive socialist program in the face of the gigantic events of the day. They argue against Shachtman's articles making use of the following series of disconnected propositions: (1) "...what the working class wants is a democratic peace not a democratic war.." (Berg); (2) "...a factor in sharpening the class struggle at home is the rise of war weariness.." (Berg); (3) "...the basic strategy of internationalist socialism relies not on the weakening of the class struggle (or the pursuit of the class struggle 'in other ways', as some delicately put it) but on active solidarity between the forces

of the exploited in each camp." (Berg); (4) "Have we not always asserted, and does not the historical experience of reactionary wars prove, that defeats help the cause of the revolutionary class?" (Lenin, quoted by Thompson); (5) "...Shachtman...does, in fact, exclude the possibility of socialist revolution in war time.." (Thompson); (6) "...there are important differences..(between the two blocs)..but..they are not those qualitative differences which would warrant the abandonment of the struggle for socialism in the course of the coming war.." (Thompson), etc., etc. It is possible to go through these "axioms" one by one, demonstrating their one-sidedness, their false emphasis, their lack of correspondence to present problems. It is possible to demonstrate, for example, that the defeat of the American air-lift to Berlin (part of a reactionary war), resulting from the wrong kind of socialist struggle against American imperialism, could have resulted in the enslavement of the active socialist workers of West Berlin -- a severe and terrible defeat for the revolutionary class; that "war weariness" (treated as an undifferentiated malaise by Berg), if it takes the form of capitulation to Stalinism, does not "sharpen the class struggle", but, on the contrary, leads to the annihilation of the working class movement as a factor in modern society; that it is possible (delicately or not, Comrade Berg) to pursue the class struggle in as many different ways as there are different political situations; that what excludes socialist revolution in war time (or any time) is the actual balance of forces, degree of organization, strength and readiness of the international working class and not at all... Shachtman. But all this would be useless, for the comrades present no thoroughly thought out alternative to Shachtman's position. They present, instead, a series of disconnected phrases culled from Lenin's works, or short, choppy (and very modest) truisms served up off-the-cuff.

### 3) Is There Only One Socialist Position on Imperialist War?

The general aim of socialist anti-war activity is not to "stop" an imperialist war and "institute" a democratic peace; nor must socialists content themselves with venting their moral indignation at war in general. Marxists (not utopians) understand that it is a question of the process of struggle before, during and after a war, and that for socialists the most important element in this process is the consciousness of the revolutionary class as expressed through its organization, political intervention and active struggle. Especially today, Marxists must "live with" imperialist war, i.e., they must face its ugly complexities and cope with the problems it raises. In this situation abstentionism has the most fatal consequences.

Thus, any talk about there being only one "established" manner of intervening is thoroughly mistaken; any talk about "continuing the socialist struggle.." when it is a problem of how (with what perspectives, strategy, demands, methods, limitations, etc.) to continue that struggle, is more than slightly ludicrous and represents a refusal to face the problem, a capitulation to the disease of socialist conservatism or traditionalism. Any tendency to lapse into a rigid "revolutionary defeatism" (in the present, a synonym for political irresponsibility) in the face of this coming war, instead of solving the new problem of how to continue and extend the class struggle in the most correct and effective manner is sectarian blindness and not Marxism; in short, anything but a

serious, persistent effort to solve this problem in a socialist manner will result in a small-scale disaster for our movement.

4) "Transform the Imperialist War into a Democratic War"?

Socialist war strategy must be based on two "factors" (aspects) of an interdependent situation: the overriding character of the war and the state of the international class struggle. No one in our movement has seriously opposed the characterization of the Russian-American struggle as a reactionary, imperialist struggle for world domination with its peculiar intermixture of social and national aspects; few have any illusions about the present state of the revolutionary movement (the necessity to enter the mass movement as a loyal left wing, etc.); fewer yet can refuse to recognize the threat to socialism and the free labor movement of a victory of the totalitarian Russian bureaucracy. Yet we get rumblings of opposition when someone draws the inevitable conclusions for socialist war strategy from this analysis shared by all! Even Shachtman is influenced by the sectarianism still prevalent in the I.S.L., for he bases his present position (partially) on an analogy with revolutionary Russia of February to October 1917 -- an analogy which can only lead to unwarranted conclusions about the state of the international class struggle and the political consciousness of the international working class.

The February revolution gave birth to the dual power. Lenin's abrupt transition to "patient explanation", fortification of the Soviets, opposition to the imperialist war led by the "revolutionary democracy" (a war in the interests of the Entente), his strategy of the transformation of the imperialist war into a democratic war via a series of measures which "will not yet be socialism, but ... will no longer be capitalism" rested upon his analysis of the growth of the revolutionary movement in Russia and Europe. The Kerensky government "ruled" through a combination of "revolutionary" demagoguery, deceit, inertia, lack of a correct political opposition, etc., and was at constant loggerheads with the dual power in every field. It did not, and could not, rule by mere force against the will of the population. Thus to transform the imperialist war into a democratic war (and later a democratic peace), the proletariat had only to come to power peacefully through the Soviets. This, in turn, involved the predominance of the revolutionary party in the Soviets, i.e., the transformation of organs of struggle into organs of state power. This was correct; this was what happened. Where does a similar dynamic present itself today?

Lenin saw everything through the prism of the immediate growth of the revolutionary faction, the political fight-to-the-death against the strangle-hold of reformism and the dual-power rise to the workers' state; Marxists today, living in the midst of the blackest reaction in the history of the movement, see the class struggle through the long-term transformation of social democracy, the defense of the existence of the labor movement from Stalinism and the re-integration of Marxism with the working class. Different conditions, different strategy, different transitional demands, different methods. Not being utopians, the Independent socialists take their point of departure from the state of consciousness of the working class and the possibilities of its transformation through the living experiences of its ever-renewed struggle against the conditions of its existence in modern society, both capitalist and Stalinist. This point of

departure, this method of thinking, demands the discipline of scientific-methodical analysis for every turn of the historical wheel. This is why any strict comparison with Lenin's very concrete strategy (before or after February) is misleading; this is why the problem of socialist intervention must be faced in its own terms.

Those who are not interested in quibbling over words, slogans or summary formulations will recognize in Shachtman's articles a general orientation extending and concretizing past positions of the League; no one but the blind will be able to read Lenin's strategy and tactics out of Shachtman's position; only a few are rash enough to identify it with reformism; no one, so far, has attacked it as chauvinist.

It is well to remember something more. The idea: continue the class struggle in war time, posed sharply by Lenin against the reformists and social chauvinists (and made especially sharp by the call for a new international), did not even solve, for him, what form the class struggle was to take in each and every tactical situation. The manner in which he opposed Kerensky's continued participation in the war was based on a specific examination of: (1) the consequences of Bolshevik "defeatism" in the already hopelessly-disintegrated Kerensky-Tsarist Army; (2) the immediate ripening of political opposition leading to revolution in Europe and its effects on the imperialist powers; (3) the balance of forces in revolutionary Russia and the danger of German imperialist intervention; etc., etc. It is only necessary, to show the flexibility of Lenin within his own strategy, to mention the interesting episode of the defense of revolutionary Petrograd from a possible German invasion and, of course, the well-known "defense" of Kerensky against Kornilov. Strategy is subordinate to orientation, tactics to strategy; but this does not mean that strategy has no independent significance. Lenin worked out his strategy in practice keeping always in mind his general orientation, his perspective. Let us hope that Shachtman's summary formulation is not answered by another formula (slightly changed as in the case of Haskell), but that the general idea, the fundamental orientation leading up to this formula is grasped and applied by the League. In order to aid this process, I would like to introduce and begin to discuss how this general orientation should be applied in a few key situations; this is the best manner of arming the League and getting beyond the barren dispute represented by the articles in the last two issues of Forum.

5) The Dynamic of American Imperialism: Possibilities and Limitations. Ultra-leftism in the I.S.L. has especially betrayed itself in the question of American imperialism -- its prospects, its strategy, its limitations. The political influence of frightened defensism (Susan Green, Coloman, etc.) in our organization had, and continues to have, its opposite face: the abstract, un-Marxist appreciation of U.S. imperialism. This idea takes many forms. The abstraction "Capitalist Imperialism" is posed against the abstraction "Stalinist Imperialism" and the contradiction is "solved" with the abstraction "Third Camp". Nothing here has blood and bones, and the Third Camp is transformed into a savior rather than expressed as a political goal. This is fortified by the idea that "yes, differences exist between the blocs, but they are not fundamental, and besides American imperialism is moving in the direction of Fascism, etc." which is nothing but a sheepish bridge back to the previous idea.



The truth must be told: everybody voted for the last War resolution; very few understand and actually apply it.

It is possible to restate this idea: while our political opposition to both war camps is based on the similarity of their goals (imperialist domination of the world), our anti-war strategy and intervention is based squarely on the differences between the two blocs and what these differences mean for the socialist struggle. The Third Camp is not an abstraction equidistant between two points; it is a political goal for the international socialist movement. One can reach this goal in real life only via the class struggle but never by riding the back of a potential force expressed as an abstraction.

A refusal to see and understand the exact character of American bourgeois-democratic imperialism, the forces on which it depends, the limitations imposed by its allies, the contradictions in its war bloc, and the strategy of its struggle with Stalinism, will have the two-fold result of separating us from the advanced socialist workers of Europe and the militants of America while at the same time reinforcing defensist tendencies in our own ranks. We will be torn between an abstract sectarianism unfit to participate in the mass workers organizations and a frightened defensism unable to meet the threat of Stalinism with political methods. The answer to these twin devils is a correct Marxist approach.

The great, universally recognized problem of U.S. imperialism in the world today is how to gain fighting allies in its coming war with international Stalinism. Its basically, if not exclusively, military approach to this problem and its overriding fear of a Russian world victory set the more or less rigid limits to its world strategy and force it to cooperate with or at least tolerate any significant anti-Russian force, even Titoism! The fundamental strategy is obvious: the enemy of my enemy is my friend -- for the time being. Tito's divisions add to the "free world's" military power while Titoism by itself is no threat to the world power of American imperialism. When faced with alternative social forces or political groupings, of course, U.S. foreign policy chooses the "less-er evil", the political force closest to its heart -- Churchill, the Vatican, the Christian democratic parties, Chiang Kai Shek, Bao Dai, Syngman Rhee, etc. This does not mean that it is the aim of U.S. policy to implant fascist or ultra-reactionary regimes in all countries under its influence or direct control; nor does it wish to make a colony of the rest of the capitalist world. It does mean that the fundamental aim -- American domination over a capitalistic world -- forces it to choose, in this epoch of the world-wide disintegration of capitalism, those methods and those groups which can succeed.

Thus if Rhee were somehow overthrown tomorrow by a more democratic but anti-Stalinist force, the U.S. would be hard put to return him to the throne by open military force; if Franco were overthrown tomorrow by some kind of popular revolution, the U.S. could not intervene militarily to impose Fascism once more; if Bonapartism takes power tomorrow in England, no matter how radical its program, American capitalism must grit its teeth and watch the steady destruction of the British bourgeoisie; if the social democracy comes to power in Germany, U.S. imperialism must compromise with its demands; if the colonial world is erupting against British and French

imperialism, the U.S. must tread its way in a circumspect manner; in short, and this is a conclusion born out by five years of a "cold war" and two years of the Korean war, strategy determines tactics, the primary consideration of defeating Russian-Stalinist power limits the possibilities of U.S. imperialist aggression.

If this is the present state of affairs what is the direction of development? This cannot be charted in detail but the general outlines can be sketched in, at least in a negative manner.

The domestic situation is of fundamental importance to the world strategy of the American bourgeoisie. If Marxists were incorrect in predicting the transformation of America into a fascist country during the course of the Second World War such a mistake is doubly incorrect today. Fascism is not the mere resultant of the "will" of the bourgeoisie, but, on the contrary, is the consequence of a complex of factors. Is it possible to imagine the U.S. transforming England or France or Italy or Germany into a Fascist country while preserving bourgeois-democracy at home? The U.S. occupation of Japan resulted in a flowering of the native labor movement; the U.S. occupation of Germany permitted the rise to prominence of the new, aggressive German social democracy; where the possibility of choice exists in the rest of the world, the U.S. "prefers" the ordinary system of bourgeois democracy. In this matter little choice exists; a precondition to an aggressively fascist foreign policy is the imposition of fascism at home. Given the present (and foreseeable future) condition of the domestic class struggle, the power of the American labor movement, the "strength" of the domestic economy, etc., such a thing is "unlikely" and should not enter into socialist calculations.

The muted character of domestic contradictions is the result of the richness of the economy and the aristocratic American world position. The permanent war economy (lots of guns and some butter), the development toward the garrison state, the undermining and sapping of democracy, the attacks on Stalinism and the radical movement, the hysteria of McCarthyism, the increasing intervention of the state -- none of these factors add up to fascism, that is, the annihilation of the labor movement and the complete destruction of bourgeois democracy. It is well to keep this perspective in mind.

Since the political direction of the U.S. war camp is determined by the overwhelming weight of the policies of the American bourgeoisie, the limitations, hesitations, semi-contradictions, "opposition", lack of determination, etc., in its war camp thus far affect only the tempo, the forms and the methods of the U.S. world mobilization, rather than its fundamental imperialist-reactionary direction. Europe fears war and resists American domination but the farthest it has gone in the direction of a political alternative is... neutralism, an essentially negative and transitory phenomenon. The incident of the Yalu bombings is an excellent case in point. So long as the world is polarized into the Russian-American alternative, so long as the Third Camp is a goal and not a visible, realistic alternative, war is inevitable, and its fundamental objectives (in the Western camp) will surely gravitate in the direction of the needs and aspirations of the American imperialist bourgeoisie.

This entire perspective -- a restatement of the Independent

socialist view -- opens a path to socialist intervention, provides an understanding of the tempo of events and determines the character of the socialist struggle.

It is well to repeat the lessons for socialism: (1) The theory of "containment" (division of the world) backed up by the military strategy of "negotiation through strength" and reinforced by the military-political mobilization of the peoples into the U.S. camp is the surest and quickest road to an all-out, world-wide, imperialist war of attrition; (2) American military intervention (Greece, Turkey, Berlin, Korea, Indo-China) subordinate, as it is, to American imperialist politics is no real solution; it is an essential tactical maneuver, a jockeying for military position, a search for military strong-points in the coming war; although its incidental benefits cannot be denied (West Berlin!) and should be taken advantage of by socialism without the slightest hesitation, it cannot replace, become a part of, or become identified with, a positive, practical, socialist alternative; it must be seen (as with the Marshall Plan) as part and parcel of the American imperialist world-wide intervention; (3) in the socialist, anti-war struggle, the slightest concession to pacifism (either of the genuine or Stalinist variety) would be disastrous. We recognize Stalinism as the greatest, immediate military-political threat to the existence and continued functioning of a free labor movement. We declare our own socialist war-to-the-death against this threat and will countenance no perspective which underrates the danger or disarms the working class in the face of this danger. If universal disarmament was a petty-bourgeois utopia between the two wars, today it is a positively reactionary and capitulatory trend, and is the sum and substance of Stalinist politics in the West. We do not propose disarmament in West Berlin; we do not propose a type of struggle against American imperialism which if successful would inevitably result in Stalinist victory; we do not propose the unilateral removal of U.S. troops; we propose a socialist (perhaps trade union) defense of the working class and an aggressive, socialist foreign policy against Stalinism combined with a declaration of political independence from U.S. imperialist war aims; that is, we propose the transformation of the imperialist war into a democratic war!

Within this overall, socialist, strategy and perspective, based as it should be, on the dominant U.S. objectives in the Western camp, and recognizing the full dangers of the totalitarian threat, socialists must attune their continued prosecution of the class struggle to the modalities of the domestic situation. It is precisely here that Shachtman's formula must be amended, reviewed and constantly enriched.

6) Franco Spain: An Example. There is no reason to apply the military elements of Shachtman's formula to Franco Spain. Neither American nor Spanish fascist policy envision the use of Franco's paper divisions as a major military force in the coming battles with Stalinism; nor is Stalinism a really dangerous contender for domestic power. Both its geographical position and its internal situation fate Franco Spain to play the role of a subordinate vassal, a military base and a completely undefendable country from any major military invasion. Large scale Franco military intervention under U.S. auspices would intolerably increase internal contradictions, tear the country into bleeding shreds and hasten the inevitable

demise of the bloody and unpopular dictatorship. The present "wise" policy of limited military aid and political commitment thus has the absolutely criminal result of prolonging for a time the Franco dictatorship, continuing the country's strangulation and rapid degeneration, and thus making it prey to any and every imperialist pressure.

Must the Spanish resistance movement make a primary consideration of Stalinist military intervention in Spain in its struggle to overthrow Franco? Obviously not! A revolutionary overthrow of the Franco regime, no matter in what chaotic conditions it resulted, would first of all meet with the hostility, if not the open sabotage, of U.S. imperialism. It is, nevertheless, also unreal to see the Western powers poised on the brink of "settling" Spain's internal problems by re-imposing a defeated Franco by pressure or force of arms. Such a thing is literally impossible with the present worldwide balance of forces.

From every point of view the solution is inescapable; only an all-sided, unlimited class struggle whose sole consideration is the complete annihilation of the main (and only immediate) enemy of the working class -- the Franco regime -- need be considered. The main idea here is: "complete opposition to any participation in the war, to any armaments, to any American military aid, to any mobilization of troops, or any strengthening of the army whose sole function is to oppress the people. Death to the Franco regime and defeat for its external adventures or maneuvers. Transform Franco's limited participation in the imperialist war into a civil war for the overthrow of the regime."

Thus, within the general (and flexible) international orientation, there is a substantially different strategy for the Spanish working class. Marxism, here as always, must be concrete.

7) England, the Labor Party and Bevanism. While Spain is of little account in the preparations for the coming war, Britain represents at present the main junior partner in the U.S. bloc, the key to American military strategy in Europe, and is thus of crucial importance to any socialist war strategy.

Whether in or out of power at the time of the approach of full-scale war in Europe, the British Labor Party, at the head of the aroused socialist workers of England, will be of even more significance in the politics and aims, the methods, timing and strategy of this war, than it was in World War II. The significance of the Party has already been shown by the "sensitivity" of the U.S. brass and high political circles to the cries of rage which come from the opposition benches in Parliament, and by the vicious attacks on Bevanism.

It is impossible to assume, in the face of post-war developments, that the Labor Party will be either unable or unwilling to take full power and full responsibility for the fate of the nation either before or during the war. The temper of England is not such that the Labor Party will hide behind the skirts of Toryism, or turn the fate of the country and its foreign policy over to Churchill once again. It may even be possible that Bevan will be the main force in Britain during the war. What then will be the policy of the left wing of the Bevan movement?

Taking our point of departure from "Bevanism", the continuous leftward, socialistic developments in the B.L.P., the temper of the workers and the decisive (if unstable) role of England as half-hearted junior partner in the American bloc, what should be the left socialist attitude toward the class struggle, the military budget, the political struggle against Toryism, foreign policy, etc., etc., in England? Is there any comrade in the I.S.L. who would suggest carrying on the class struggle in England regardless of military consequences? Are we "defeatist" or even indifferent to a war carried on by our party (a party to which we are loyal) against Stalinism? If we oppose the present war aims of Britain, determined as they are by the decisive weight of American imperialism in the alliance, in what manner are we to go about transforming these war aims? Those who refuse to face squarely these real and immediate problems are burying their heads in the sand.

Neither the B.L.P. as a whole, nor its Bevanite wing, need be idealized by Marxists. To speak, in questions of Labor Party foreign policy, of "the tragically mistaken policies in Iran, Egypt and elsewhere..."<sup>1</sup> is to assume an idealistic-romantic view of the matter and thus make it more difficult for Marxists to take a clear-cut stand against the definite social-imperialist tendency in the B.L.P. This tendency cannot be denied; it must be studied, fought and finally destroyed within the B.L.P. and its supporters and spokesmen exposed as the carriers of the Tory-imperialist virus in the ranks of labor. Not to see and understand this tendency is to be disarmed in the face of a possible future "national coalition" of right laborites with the Tory imperialists, or a repetition of the policy of "class peace" in England in the face of a world-wide imperialist war. It is the task of the Marxist left wing of the Bevan tendency to propose a practical, socialist policy of positive intervention into world politics in opposition to the negative, conservative, national-limited, Empire-oriented and social imperialistic attitude of the right wing.

It is the lack of such a positive world intervention (repeatedly pointed out by Independent socialists) which will help grease the skids for a Bevanite capitulation to the right laborite subjection to the essential elements of Tory foreign policy: defend empire interests in a world dominated by U.S. imperialism. The undoubted connection between foreign and domestic policy in the face of such a rightist downsliding in the direction of U.S. imperialist war policy could help mightily to destroy the great and positive contributions of Bevanism on the internal front.

Despite Bevan's "opposition" to the war trends, there is no reason to believe that he will not, for the great part, continue in the "national" traditions of British laborism. That is, Bevanism will carry out, no matter with what misgivings and reluctance, the role of junior partner in the U.S. war bloc. A world-wide imperialist war poses problems in the sharpest and bloodiest form, makes hesitation or ambiguity intolerable, and punishes mistakes and confusions

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Judd, "How Great the Tory Victory", New International, Nov.-Dec., 1951, p. 324.

with a mighty hand. To withstand this enormous capitulationist pressure the Bevan movement must be armed with a clearly formulated socialist foreign policy; to be effective this policy must be pushed by an organized left wing; this left wing must be guided by the perspective of transforming the present subordination of England to U.S. imperialism not merely in the direction of a "democratic" war, but more precisely, toward a powerful, socialist England at the head of an independent, international Third Camp. Transform the imperialist war into a democratic socialist war!

Is this perspective illusory? Does it overestimate the positive, socialist tendencies in the B.L.P. and the British working class? Since it obviously involves something far different from Trotsky's first World War view that "In war as in peace, we are a party of opposition, not a party of power..."<sup>1</sup> it faces the Marxist movement with new problems. In England the B.L.P. may (and probably will) be a party of power not a party of opposition! We vote for its candidates in peace time; we must also vote for them in war time. We play a positive, Marxist role in its internal evolution in peace time; we cannot abstain from this task in war time. In short, we demand that the B.L.P. actually take power and transform the character of the war, not merely continue as a party of opposition. We are neither "abstentionist" nor "defeatist" toward a war carried on by the B.L.P. against Stalinism even though it is mobilized in and subordinated to the American war bloc. And finally -- the conclusion seems inescapable to me -- we would under certain conditions vote war credits for a clear-cut, labor government during the war.

Given the undoubted tendency of social imperialism in the B.L.P. -- a tendency which predisposes it to capitulate in front of the aggressive world-wide American program -- what program should the Marxists press upon the left wing? To propose merely a repudiation of U.S. war aims, or a negative, abstentionist "refusal" to join either bloc, etc., is illusory and utopian. It is a repetition of the national-abstentionist position played by the B.L.P. in the Schumann Plan proposals, except on a grander and thus more disastrous scale. The Marxists must press for a positive, aggressive, international-socialist intervention into world politics. The British Labor Party, or better, its left wing, is capable of playing this role today, as is proved by the great, positive effects of Bevanism on the international socialist and Marxist movement. The political effects of a truly socialist foreign policy would be nothing less than astounding.

Such a policy could be composed of the following general points: (1) No capitulation, subordination or compromise with Toryism; against the policy of coalitionism, class peace or collaborationism; the Labor Party must take the fate of the nation in its hands! (2) No reactionary commitments to U.S. imperialism; opposition to American domination of the world; an end to the policy of supporting reactionary regimes all over the world; for political and military support to socialist and democratic movements fighting against Stalinism and for freedom; (3) Strengthen Britain's war power by pushing forward the democratic-socialist program; for trade union or workers' control of the Army (only a free, workers' army can defeat Stalinism and defend socialism); an extension of democracy in

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Shachtman.

all spheres of domestic life -- in industry, in the trade unions, in the B.L.P., etc.; nationalization and workers' control of all war industry; (4) An end to the remnants of British imperialism; freedom for all peoples fighting for national independence; active aid and support to all colonial peoples fighting for freedom. (5) For an international, Third Camp of British Labor, European Social Democracy and the Colonial Peoples; an end to the grisly war of attrition between U.S. and Russian imperialism for world power; for a democratic and progressive peace.

This program defines the war aims of a truly working class government. It includes a series of transitional measures which would lead toward such an all-sided, anti-imperialist policy. There is no objective reason why the Bevan movement could not begin to carry out some of them today -- there is no reason why the Marxist left should not begin to immediately popularize such measures in the labor movement.

8) The Need for Concrete Thinking: Spain and England have been chosen because they are good examples of opposites within the "Western" bloc. The need for an extremely flexible and realistic war strategy is the result of the heterogeneous and contradictory reality which is known as the "Western camp". The "neutralist" or "independent" nations (India, Indonesia, some Arabian and South American countries, etc.,) are another problem somewhat less complicated. The great Stalinist area is yet another problem which will be discussed shortly.

The two strategies developed here for the most progressive and most reactionary countries of major importance to American imperialism, merely indicate the general direction, the general orientation of socialist war strategy in the West. It is this type of discussion which should take up our time; it is this type of problem which should be faced. Summary formulations are helpful, of course, but they should stand no higher than the reality for which they were designed.

9) Stalinism and the War: Some comrades have criticized Shachtman's articles on the grounds that they are not internationalist. I am inclined to agree with this criticism but for entirely different reasons. To all intents and purposes, say the critics, he has developed a political orientation for Marxists operating in the bosom of the Western labor movement. What should be done, however, with the vast populations groaning under the yoke of totalitarian Stalinism?

This question is legitimate, and the criticism partly true. In general, these populations appear in Shachtman's articles as the completely passive object, rather than a subject, of world politics. To a certain extent this perspective is justified, unless one holds the rosy, romantic view that the abstract existence of slaves can be somehow automatically translated into effective political action. Without trade unions, political parties, cooperatives, newspapers, etc., the proletariat is disarmed and helpless. Under a regime of total police terror, its struggles must be primitive, disorganized, ineffective. The failure of the Ukrainian resistance in the face of the G.P.U. machine does not augur well for the development, in the near future, of any effective underground, no matter how small.

Although we know of persistent underground activity under Fascism, the new collectivist bureaucracy has thus far been successful in stamping it out. Conditions differ, of course, in the different nations, and in many respects Western Germany appears as a temporary exception to the rule. Nevertheless, it is utopian and suicidal to base socialist war strategy on any effective help from the Stalinist-terrorized proletariats. Berg's dictum that "...the basic strategy of internationalist socialism relies...on active solidarity between the forces of the exploited in each camp..." does not solve the problem but merely poses it. It enjoins socialists to build their strategy on a romantic-utopian vision ("exploited") instead of a recognition that there are only potential "forces" in the Stalinist camp. The problem of socialists is to aid the emergence of such forces and this can only be done by beginning with the present bitter reality.

The class "struggle" continues of course. There is resistance of a kind. The accumulating hatred and atomized, primitive opposition spreads and eats its way through the fabric of society. The police regime reacts, manages, organizes, transforms; its human victims multiply. The labor camps grow. The regime, in the long run, is digging its own grave. But in the long run, someone has said, we are all dead. The problem is what to do now, in the conditions of the approach of imperialist war, and without any aid from this long-suffering mass?

One thing is certain. Whatever the views of American imperialism on the problem of the real, social and political emancipation of the toilers under Stalinism, socialists are unwilling to accept any arrangement which leaves them in their present condition. Any negotiated deal for the division of the world and the "non-interference" in Russian "domestic" problems is unacceptable. Socialists declare a war-to-the-death on the Stalinist system and all its satellites and political institutions. Only its utter destruction can open the way toward a socialist future. Our anti-imperialist, anti-war struggle cannot be allowed to hide this fact; it must be communicated to workers under Stalinism, by propaganda, but more importantly, by the political-social struggle of the Western labor movement. Yes, we stand for the liberation, the real liberation, of the workers under Stalinism. We will not rely on the "organic forces" alone to do the job. We offer aid, advice, military help, and finally, we offer a socialist war against Stalinism. This is the only real, effective solidarity "between the forces of the exploited in each camp..."

There is one thing more however. Whether the peoples under Stalinism actually now look toward the "West" for their real emancipation, whether they hold and are willing to exercise an actively "defeatist" attitude towards the regimes which so violently oppress them, Lenin's concept holds doubly true today: the defeat of the Stalinist armies by the armies of Western imperialism, brought about (or aided in any way) by the native, blind and disorganized resistance of the working masses, would definitely be the lesser evil to their acquiescence in the imposition of Stalinist totalitarianism on the remaining free working class of the West. Since they cannot transform the character of the war short of a complete and ruthless destruction of the regime, this is their only path.



The one greatest obstacle to the unravelling of such an unlimited and all-sided opposition is the reactionary face of Western imperialism; the most certain way in which to inhibit such a development is for the Western labor movement to solidarize itself with the aims, the strategy, the world position of the U.S. war camp. An openly defeatist attitude on the part of the slaves of the Stalinist empire can be expected precisely to the extent that the Western socialist and labor movements change the face of Western imperialism, that is, transform, in fact, the imperialist war into a democratic war.

Someone will surely shout: but this is not an internationalist position! It assumes a double standard; one for the Western workers, another for those under Stalinism. Perhaps no one will notice the illicit transformation of the word "internationalist" into the word "identical". In any case, I plead guilty to asking a different strategy and policy for the two proletariats. It is the duty of the slaves of Stalin to continue their "struggle" regardless of the military consequences, for they have nothing to gain and everything to lose by a victory of Stalinism. It is the duty of the Western working class to take power into its hands (or to struggle in this direction) and to use what power it has to actually liberate the workers under Stalin's domination by the most effective means possible including, if necessary, a democratic, a socialist war. If someone wishes to answer this by quoting the old maxim about it being impossible to impose democracy via the bayonet, let them go on to prove that the workers under Stalinism would not seek and welcome a socialist military intervention on their behalf.

This perspective does not envision the transformation of socialists into a "war party". Quite the contrary; it presumes an unrelenting struggle against imperialist war. Nor is it an attempt to give a radical coloration to the "liberation" proposed by Eisenhower and his irresponsible friends. It is merely the recognition that "war" between Stalinism and socialism is absolutely inevitable; that the aim of the socialist struggle is not any kind of peaceful cohabitation with the Stalinist empire but the struggle for the liberation of the workers under Stalinism. This is the only real solidarity which can be spoken of today.

10) Against Sectarianism on the War Question. The I.S.L. 1949 International Resolution on "Capitalism, Stalinism and the War", still the basic document of the League on this matter, calls boldly for the "adaptation of Marxism to the problems of our day in at least as sweeping a fashion as the adaptation accomplished by Leninism in its time on the basis of a recognition of the new stage of imperialism."<sup>1</sup> This the League has done, as witness the 1951 International Resolution. A thorough and careful reading of these two basic documents will show that the articles of Shachtman and the remarks made here are nothing unprecedentedly new; they have their roots in our analysis of the evolution of capitalism and Stalinism in the modern world, the struggle between them and the fight for an international socialist third camp. It is merely that the problem has advanced to a more specific stage -- not whether to continue the fight for socialism in the specific conditions of the approaching Third World

<sup>1</sup> New Internationalist, April, 1949, p. 116.

War, but how to continue that struggle; not "the struggle for a third camp" but "how, in such and such conditions, in such and such countries, with this and that balance of forces, etc., -- how to fight for socialism." It is a more specific and fruitful problem.

Yet some comrades feel that any specification of circumstances, any differentiation of methods and strategy, any statement of the differences between the blocs and how socialists can utilize these differences to their advantage, any attempt to approach the thinking of the workers on this problem, that is, an attempt to apply our previous analyses, is a kind of betrayal, a kind of reformism (or centrism), or a "watering-down" of the socialist struggle.

This attitude, in my eyes, is a reflection of the sectarian existence of large sections of the organization. Our isolation from the political life of the country is to a great extent beyond our control. But what is within our control is the internal educational life of the League which has recently dropped to a dangerously low level. The greatest danger to our organization today is not "reformism" or "watering-down" (whatever that means) but its continued existence as a socialist propaganda league in the difficult conditions of today.

Abstract ultra-leftist attitudes are a concomitant of political abstentionism, skittishness, "moralizing", lack of flexibility, etc. The recent articles in Forum are good examples of the theoretical level of this tendency. Let us open the question of Marxist inter-vention into the war; we have had enough of the attitude of abstract abstentionism.

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