

May 1940

# THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

*A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism*

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## *Blitzkrieg and Revolution*

*By The Editors*

1. IF HITLER WINS . . . What of the Social Revolution
2. IF HITLER WINS . . . Will the U.S.A. Go Totalitarian

**M. LEBRUN:** Mass and Class in Soviet Society

**J. R. JOHNSON:** *Native Son*, Novel of Negro Revolt

### *Archive Section:*

Reply to Trotsky's "From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene"

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## Manager's Column

The maintenance of the NEW INTERNATIONAL is now more necessary than ever. It is the only revolutionary Marxist theoretical magazine in existence which carries out a principled struggle against the war. While the war pressure and the growing patriotic hysteria gains support among economic and political organizations of the the workers. the NEW INTERNATIONAL remains true to its banner!

The present issue correctly concentrates on the question of the war, Hitler's forward march, the consequences of the war upon capitalism and the class struggle, and presents an analytical review of the prospects for the future. The editorial board is planning even more extensive studies on a series of problems relating to the war and growing out of the present struggle for the imperialist redivision of the earth. Special articles are now being prepared on the effects of the war on the United States, its economy and relations to the Western Hemisphere; a review of Russian and German economy; the fundamentals of Bolshevism; book reviews, and other special features.

The importance of the NEW INTERNATIONAL cannot be overestimated. It is a burning need and requires the support of every reader.

Despite the consequences of the war, the magazine maintains a large foreign circulation. No effort is spared to hold our international circulation despite the greatest difficulties. But it is precisely the difficulties of the war that creates a greater responsibility upon the American movement to make up for losses abroad, by an increase of our circulation in the United States.

The initial response has been good. Requests for over one thousand copies in bundle orders have been received. The New York local of the Workers Party took over six hundred copies of the April issue and has already paid for more than half. Chicago and Los Angeles with bundle orders of 250 and 200 respectively are next in line. Most cities have increased their bundle orders.

Within the last several weeks we have received sixty new subscriptions. New York is in first place, followed by St. Louis and Cleveland. But we haven't heard a peep out of such places as Chicago, Los Angeles, Akron, Youngstown and Newark!

The business office is now preparing a nation-wide subscription campaign for the NEW INTERNATIONAL, but it is not necessary to wait particulars thereon. Every branch of the Workers Party, every reader of the magazine, can go right ahead getting new readers.

A good start has been made. It is not enough. Everyone, into the campaign for increased sales of and subscriptions to the NEW INTERNATIONAL!

— The Manager

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**THE NEW INTERNATIONAL**

## THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

*A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism*

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*The lights are out in Europe*

*The darkness is drawing over America*

## THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

... is now more than ever a unique and irreplaceable magazine. It presents an uncompromisingly revolutionary approach to the war abroad and the war hysteria in this country. It uses the instrument of Marxist revolutionary thought to analyze and interpret the world-shaking events of our time. Its voice must not be stilled!

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# THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

*A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism*

VOLUME VI

MAY 1940

NUMBER 4

## Blitzkrieg and Revolution

An Editorial

### **I. If Hitler Wins—Perspective for Social Revolution**

The fundamentals of Marxism have not changed. But the German blitzkrieg has radically altered the political situation. For years all informed persons, from Roosevelt to Trotsky, believed that the Germans would be defeated in the second imperialist war. Revolutionaries looked forward to this defeat as initiating an era of socialist revolution. The imperialist perspective was not very different. The bourgeoisie dreaded the exhaustion of both sides, followed by the revolt of the millions in Central Europe against the long drawn out slaughter and privation. Today the world faces the possibility of a Germany victorious in a few months, unexhausted, possessed of enormous military force, with the morale and prestige of the most brilliant military victory in all history.

The American bourgeoisie is beside itself with fear and rage. And for those who consider the socialist revolution an idle illusion, an early Hitler victory makes real and immediate the threat—not of invasion; that is pure fakery—but of German world domination. Millions of workers everywhere see and see rightly that the unchecked victory of Hitler means: the abolition of collective bargaining, the regimentation of labor, the abrogation of every democratic right fought for during a century and a half.

For those who have no perspective except an endless continuation of capitalism, the prospect is dark and terrifying. Britain and France defeated, Hitler will be in a position to reorganize the whole of western Europe, in the image of Nazism and the interests of German economy. Fascist governments will rule in Britain and France, and bourgeois democracy will be wiped from the face of Europe. In the Near East; Egypt, Turkey and the Arab world will be dominated entirely by German influence with Italy as junior and hungry partner. In the Far East, Chiang Kai-shek or some successor will be forced into submission, and with the support of Germany, Japan will overrun Australia and reorganize Asia on the model of Hitler's Europe. Indian landlords and capitalists will desert Gandhi and Churchill for Hitler and the swastika. The hundred million Africans will exchange "democratic" slave-masters for fascist. In South Africa pro-British Smuts will be routed by pro-German Hertzog, whose opposition to the support of Britain in the war was defeated only with difficulty. Germany will carve out a great African empire for herself.

There remains the Soviet Union. Russia will be at the

mercy of Germany in Europe and Japan in Asia. The only hope of survival for Stalin would be complete capitulation, not only economically but also ideologically, to Hitler. Molotoff has already informed us that fascism is merely "a matter of taste," and between a question of taste and the blitzkrieg Stalin will not hesitate long. The Soviet has traveled a long way and will take the difference between National Socialism and socialism in a single country in its stride. The Third International will disappear, and prodigies of casuistry will be performed in redefining the workers' state. The stage will then be set for the conquest of the United States of America.

Such is the immediate perspective. And given the premises of all those bound to capitalism, the perspective is not only a probability. Without the socialist revolution, it is a certainty. Therefore from extreme right to extreme left in the capitalist world reinforced by millions of workers the cry arises: Stop Hitler.

American imperialism needs no stimulus from workers to organize for the defense of its profits and perspectives in Spanish-America and China. Its world domination is at stake. But the liberals and social-democrats, after drawing a terrifying and accurate picture of the consequences of Hitler's victory and the spread of fascism in Europe and Asia, stop short. Their prescience, analytical power and creative imagination, come to an abrupt end as soon as they approach America. They imagine, or pretend, that the great conflict will be a conflict between a "democratic" America and a fascist Europe and Asia. They live as always in a world of illusion, compounded of fear, hypocrisy, and lies. What we are witnessing in Europe is merely the acceleration of what is inherent in a rotting social order.

### **The End of Bourgeois Democracy**

Allied victory or Allied defeat, three months' war or three years' war, the age of bourgeois democracy is over. In Europe, in Asia, and in America as well. It is quite true that Hitler, if victorious, will mold the economies of all the smaller countries completely to the economy of Germany. Economically and politically he will dominate Norway and Sweden, Holland and Belgium, Switzerland and the Balkans. But a victorious Britain and France will have either to break up Germany into a group of small states and themselves dominate Europe or, if Germany is left with the merest possibility of becoming dangerous again, she will have to be encircled and kept in subjection far

more openly and nakedly than was attempted at Versailles. In either case no nation that emerges triumphant in the present struggle will again take the risk of allowing its enemy the possibility of doing what Germany has done to Norway, Sweden, Holland and Belgium. No one speaks today of a war to end war. Power will rule naked. The independence of small nations has disappeared from Europe. For the economic and military domination demands of necessity political and cultural domination as well. In the same way as the Catholic governments of medieval times could not tolerate religious heresy in their dominions, the modern imperialist nation will not tolerate outside its economic orbit any small nation likely to be of service to the enemy or allow any deviation from the previous ideological shibboleth.

### Will "Democracy" Exist After The War?

But will not Britain and France continue to be "democracies" after a victory? Another illusion in the mouths of some, and in the mouths of others, lies. The establishment of a dictatorship in Britain is an event of outstanding importance in the history of the country and the world. Yet, despite the passing of the emergency law, the British workers cannot be considered to have lost in one day what they struggled for during 150 years. The government has been given authority and it has the power, but that power has not yet been enforced. There will be desperate battles, even during war time, before the British working class is entirely subordinated to the will of the ruling class. But in the same way as the destruction of working class liberties is a process, so their restoration will be a process also. The idea that Parliament will meet in a post-war world and pass a bill that will automatically restore the lost rights to British labor, is a vicious stupidity. Britain has embarked upon a reorganization of its economic and social life from which it will be impossible to return to the old order. Should the war continue over a period of years, even though ending with an Allied victory, the economy of both Britain and France will have been developed into a system of huge government-controlled monopolies, great trusts, state-administered, with profits guaranteed for the largest firms, and the smaller producers subordinated or squeezed out. In such an economy the idea of collective bargaining is a myth. Labor will have been regimented and will remain regimented or fight for socialism. A quarter of a century ago, Lenin pointed out that bourgeois democracy was the political form that most closely served the necessities of free competitive capitalism, but that the age of monopoly capitalism would bring with it the political dictatorship. We are witnessing today the completion of that process on both sides of the Channel and of the North Sea. In such a world the antiquated economics of Roosevelt's antiquated Secretary of State, restoration of world trade, have as much prospect of realization as the restoration of chattel slavery in his native state of Tennessee. Autarchy in economics and fascism in politics: that is the future without socialism.

### The American Way Becomes Totalitarian

Is the American bourgeoisie aware of these inevitable developments? Most certainly it is. And the necessary ideological pointers have been appearing with remarkable speed.

Let us take one, the most instinctive, and therefore all the more significant. Dorothy Thompson, the *N.Y. Herald-Tribune* columnist, is a hysterical woman whose writings have been distinguished by a fanatical hatred of Nazism. She has recently been to Europe and spent some days in Paris, where we can be sure she met the best people, including the best democrats. On her way home, on May 19, she wrote a column for her paper entitled "Awakening." In it she makes the following points: there is no such thing as purely defensive warfare; the independent small nation is a myth; neutrality is a myth. And most important of all, the totalitarian state alone is capable of effectively waging the totalitarian war. She concludes "What does this all mean? That we must all be Nazis or accept the Nazi rule?" And here we take the liberty of interpolating, "What else can it mean?" She knows that the answer is Yes. In reply to her own question she writes, "No." But here her reasoning makes a great jump from politics to mythology and from earth to heaven. "Not unless Lucifer won the war against God." We can refer the authenticity of Lucifer's victory to the same category as the miracle Reynaud announced as necessary for the salvation of France. But Reynaud reorganized the high command and warned the French that there would be death for anyone who did not obey orders. We can be certain that the American bourgeoisie will take only an academic if any interest at all in the question of the war between Lucifer and God, but will act with no less vigor than Reynaud in the establishment of its own dictatorship in America. Others beside Dorothy Thompson know that the independence of small nations is a myth. A Hitler victory will create immediate pro-Nazi movements in Spanish America, and the American bourgeoisie will impose its will on Spanish American countries as ruthlessly as Hitler imposed his on Norway and Holland.

### From 1905 to 1940

The downfall of bourgeois democracy in Europe did not begin with Hitler. Hitler is a result not a cause. The crisis of Europe first showed itself in the Russian revolution of 1905. That it was a world crisis and not a European crisis was proved by the course of the war in 1914. That war neither ended nor made the world safe for democracy. The characteristic feature of the period 1918-39 was the destruction of democracy in country after country, with or without the violent defeat of the socialist movement, and the steady preparation for the second imperialist war. Without socialism, the war of 1939, Hitler victory or no Hitler victory, must inevitably mean the complete destruction of democracy all over Europe, the development of the totalitarian state in America, and still further battles for the re-division of the world.

The question that faces us, therefore, as Marxian socialists, is to estimate soberly, at this critical moment, what are the possibilities for the socialist revolution, the only force that can check the descent into the abyss and reverse the process of disintegration. The possibility of an early Hitler victory, the tremendous power displayed by the German military machine, the inevitable demoralization of the anti-Hitler forces in Germany by his uninterrupted march of success—these things undoubtedly have altered the former perspective of a long drawn-out war ending in immediate revolution. Let us, however, before we speculate on the future, examine the past.

## British Labor: The Most Powerful in Europe

The most powerful labor movement in Europe today is the British labor movement led by the British social-democracy. These bureaucrats are patriots all, ready to die for it in practice. But in 1933 the Labor Party, at its conference in Hastings, unanimously passed a resolution to resist any imperialist war, even to the extent of a general strike. Immediately after the resolution was passed, the labor leaders showed great energy and ingenuity in their efforts to prove that the resolution did not mean what it so clearly and precisely said. Anti-war sentiment was very strong in Britain and the students of Oxford University, the stronghold of the British bourgeoisie, took the famous Oxford oath. The British bourgeoisie replied by a wave of enthusiasm for fascism. The *Daily Mail* and the *Evening News*, one with a circulation of a million and a half, and the other the largest evening paper in Britain, day after day published not pro-fascist but actually fascist articles, many signed by Mosley himself.

Then the Soviet Union joined the League in May, 1934, and the Hitler purge followed in June of the same year. These events caused a retreat in both camps. The Hitler purge discredited fascism in Britain. Lord Rothermere dropped Sir Oswald Mosley and refused to allow him to write any longer in his papers. The labor leaders seized the opportunity of Soviet entry into the League to reverse the anti-war policy they hated, and in October, 1934, at the Southport conference, they endorsed a League of Nations war. This policy, however, was opposed by the powerful Miners Federation, 700,000 strong. In 1935 came the rumblings of the Ethiopian crisis. Eleven million people voted in a popular plebiscite for action by the League of Nations. By this time the British government was quite aware of the German threat, the necessity for a tremendous rearmament program, and all the sacrifices for the workers that this involved. But, as Baldwin told the House of Commons quite frankly afterwards, such was the temper of the British people that if he had made any such proposal at the election, his party would have been defeated. So set were the British people on what they believed to be "the collective organization of peace" that the Hoare-Laval pact in December, 1935, nearly caused the fall of the Baldwin government. The labor party leaders continued to be torn between the pressure of the bourgeoisie on the one side and of the workers on the other. In 1936, at the Edinburgh conference, a resolution was carried, which within a few hours was interpreted by two sections of the leadership in two, exactly opposite ways. It took nearly four years before the social-democracy could feel sure enough of itself to support the government arms program.

Today the proletariat of Britain, which constitutes 70% of the British population, is still intact. The British ruling class dared not take any steps against it until fortified by the threat of actual invasion and the inclusion of labor ministers in every important post in the government. Labor has an influence and power in the Cabinet today out of all proportion to its parliamentary strength. There are no more important ministers today in Britain than Bevin, Minister of Labor; Morrison, Minister of Supply; Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty; and Dalton, Minister of Economic Warfare. This is no question of superior personnel. Morrison is a very brilliant organizer, and Dalton is a man of great ability. But labor's two representatives on the five-man war council are of very low quality. Attlee is a

notorious nincompoop, whose leadership has been repeatedly challenged within his own party, Arthur Greenwood is a notorious drunkard. They owe their dominance in the Cabinet to one fact and to one fact only: it was the only way to mobilize the British working class, even in the hour of obvious peril, and compel the sacrifices necessary for the preservation of capitalism. If even we grant an early victory by Hitler, there is no room for pessimism when the British working class, undefeated, still remains to settle accounts with an impoverished, defeated, and discredited ruling class. The British king, aristocracy, and ruling class, to maintain their position at all, will have to associate themselves openly with German fascism, whereupon the class struggle will reach a pitch of intensity unequalled in British history. George V believed that he would be the last king of England, and Neville Chamberlain, that the second world war would result not only in the destruction of the British empire but of world capitalism. These gentlemen had every opportunity to know the strength and weakness of what meant so much to them.

## The Dynamics of Revolution

The French workingclass movement has carried on heroic struggles during the last four years. It is cowed, but not yet defeated. Some believe that Hitler, by means of flame-throwing tanks and thousands of airplanes, will be able to hold in subjection Poles, Czechs, Dutch, Belgians, Austrians, and at the same time crush powerful revolutionary movements in Britain and France. Such a conception of the superiority of military force to the dynamics of revolution has been proved false again and again.

Besides the workers of Britain and France, there is the great colonial revolution. Gandhi, his industrialists and landlords, have managed to hold the Indian revolution in check by the material force of the British government and the ideological threat of victorious fascism. The defeat of Britain in Europe would strike down both of these at one blow. The British government in India will be crippled, and the breakdown of authority will supply one of the indispensable elements to a revolutionary situation. The victory of fascism will then become not a danger against but an urge towards the struggle for national independence.

In French Africa there are at the very least a quarter of a million highly trained Negro soldiers. And the breakdown of French authority in Africa by defeat in Europe makes an African revolution in the French colonies a real possibility. Should the British or French workers take the road of revolution an African revolution particularly in French Africa is on the order of the day.

Only charlatans and profession optimists can prophesy success or speak lightly of vast revolutionary movements overcoming Hitler's victorious legions by revolutionary ardor and enthusiasm. Such is not our intention. But we point to the fact these immense revolutionary forces exist. They are undefeated, untested even. Their revolution is the alternative, the only alternative to the domination of Europe and Asia by fascist totalitarianism. Over and above all these remains the militant and virile workingclass movement of America. For those who have in their bones and in the texture of their minds, the enormous capacity for sacrifice, cohesion and achievement which have been shown by revolutionary masses in the past, there is to-day but one road—speed the revolutionary process!

## II. Will a Hitler Victory Mean a Totalitarian United States?

The first three weeks of the Nazi blitzkrieg in the Low Countries have changed the face of Europe—and of American politics. Last fall the overwhelming anti-interventionist sentiment of the American masses plus the failure of large-scale hostilities to materialize, forced the Roosevelt Administration to slow down its war drive. But the outbreak of heavy fighting on the Western Front has given Roosevelt a chance to take up where he left off in October. This time the tempo is much faster, and the obstacles on the road much fewer.

### The End of Isolationism

The isolationist groups, once so large and so vocal, have melted away like spring snows under the hot sun of war. What has become of that imposing paper creation, the Keep America Out of War Committee, with its claimed membership of over a million? Where are the snows of yesteryear?

Since practically all the isolationists accepted the idea of a capitalist America, their political base has been removed. For it is now clear to all that the United States is an integral unit in world capitalism, and that a Hitler victory threatens its very existence as a capitalist power. The bubble of isolationism was pricked by such unmistakable signs of our economic interdependence with Europe as the chaos on the N.Y. Stock Exchange in the opening days of the Nazi invasion, the increasingly unfavorable position of American farm production as the spread of the war removed one export market after another, the feverish boom in such "war baby" industries as steel, airplanes, shipbuilding, and machine tools, and, most significant of all, the sudden realization that a Nazi victory will probably mean the demonetization of gold as a medium of international exchange, with devastating effects both on our own financial structure and on the nineteen billions in gold bars (three-fourths of the world supply) now held by the U.S. Treasury.

The collapse of the isolationists under the pressure of actual war is something we long ago predicted, on the basis of the conflict between their vague "anti-war" sentiments and their not at all vague support of a social system which breeds wars. Also easily predictable have been the reactions of the labor bureaucrats. The warmongering of Hillman and Dubinsky, the leaders of hundreds of thousands of advanced workers in the needle trades, has become more violent than ever. John L. Lewis, in his speech before the Amalgamated Clothing Workers convention, seemed to be preparing a road into the war camp and away from the anti-Roosevelt isolationist position he has held up to now.

The pressure of events has been so great as to force the Communist Party to throw a few epithets in the direction of the Hitler war camp—though the great bulk of its journalistic venom is still reserved for the Allies. The Social Democratic Federation reached something of a record low even in the shameful history of post-war social democracy by advocating the immediate entry of the United States into the war. Its paper, the *New Leader*, had the distinction of sharing this editorial viewpoint with the reactionary *N.Y. Herald-Tribune*.

### "National Defense"

The reason for this change in the political climate is simply that, until the Nazi war machine went into action against the Allies, the matter of American participation in the war was usually posed in terms of aiding the Allies, of "saving the world for democracy". To this, the answer of some 98% of the American people was a flat "No!" But now the question has come much closer to home, now it is coming to be considered a matter of saving, not the world, but the United States itself from Hitler. For the first time since the war began, the actual defense of the United States itself seems to be the main question.

We write "seems" advisedly. For what the Administration is preparing to defend is not the United States but rather American imperialist interests everywhere from Greenland to the Dutch East Indies. The war machine now being hastily created will be used overseas, in a struggle with Germany for world empire. When the war moved into its present crucial phase, the American battle fleet, scheduled to return to the Pacific coast from war games off Hawaii, received new orders to remain in mid-Pacific. Roosevelt, most far-sighted of imperialists, is using evidently the fleet to protect against Japan not the shores of the United States but of the Dutch East Indies.

### Can A Democracy Wage Total War?

The \$3,300,000,000 which the Administration plans to spend in the next year on "national defense" is only a small beginning. Already the press is full of reports of the inadequacy of the army and air force to cope with the Nazi war machine. To bring them up equal will cost perhaps as much as fifty billions, more than the entire national debt. The chief of the air force, General Arnold, estimates that it will cost \$3,500,000 to build the 50,000 war planes Roosevelt has asked for, and another couple of billions a year to keep them going.

There seems little doubt but that, if Hitler wins the war this summer, American capitalism will be forced to transform itself into a totalitarian system to prepare for the ultimate battle for world mastery. Already industrialists, backed up by high army and navy officials, are pressing for the repeal of the Walsh-Healey Act and similar laws protecting labor's interests. General Marshall, chief of staff of the army, has publicly stated that, because of higher wages in this country, the U.S. Army must spend \$21 for every \$1 spent by European nations to keep the same forces in the field. The *N.Y. Times*, in a recent series of editorials on "A National Defense Program" put the case very plainly: "To compensate for defense spending, we must make drastic economies elsewhere." It is not hard to imagine where the *Times* locates this "elsewhere".

Already, as one disaster after another overtakes the Allied armies, the more far-sighted American bourgeois are beginning to draw the moral: "total" war cannot be effectively waged by old-fashioned democratic capitalism. Congressmen are already beginning to draw ominous parallels between the reformist phases of the New Deal and the Popular Front in France. Much attention is being paid to a current Department of Commerce report on Germany, which shows that in the month before the war began, the German governmental apparatus was absorbing 47% of the national income, and that production of some branches of consumption goods was cut 50% in favor of war materials. "Under

these circumstances," concludes the report, "Germany's entry into the war meant, from an economic and financial viewpoint, rather an accentuation of existing trends . . . than the beginning of an entirely new period in the country's economic life."

### The Politicians Hesitate

In the terrible shock of the first few days of the Nazi blitzkrieg in the Low Countries, Roosevelt and his Republican opponents reacted violently, even rashly. It was clear that American as well as British imperialism was directly threatened by this ruthless new competitor. Hoover, Dewey, Vandenberg and other Republican isolationists hastened to purge themselves of this now treasonable doctrine and to publicly endorse the President's "national defense" program. As for Roosevelt, he at once began to take the first steps towards totalitarian mobilization. From the White House came daily rumors and news reports of a coalition cabinet of both Republicans and Democrats, with a third term for Roosevelt; of a pending Administration campaign to get Congress to lift the Walsh-Healey Act restrictions on all war orders of a new War Resources Board, to be made up of the usual industrialists and bankers and to have M-Day powers over national production.

But after the first few days, the politicians began to think more calmly and, above all, to remember there is a presidential election this fall. The Republicans began to criticize—though much more discreetly—Roosevelt's foreign policy, while giving him complete support in all "defense" measures. Congress is hurriedly voting all the war funds asked for by the Administration, plus a few ideas of its own. But no action will be taken on how to raise these billions—whether by income taxes, sales taxes, bond issues, or relief

cuts—until *after* the fall elections. As for the White House, the atmosphere has changed completely in the last week. Roosevelt now denies he ever had any intention of inviting Republicans to form a coalition cabinet. He has come out clearly for *retention* of all New Deal reformist measures, even in war industries. He has insisted that the new "defense board" he is creating will have labor as well as business represented and will be definitely "advisory" and subordinate to the regular Government departments.

Both Congress and the President hesitate to take the first steps towards that lowering of mass living standards, regimenting of the trade union movement, and delivering complete control of the national economy to the big bourgeoisie, which they know will be necessary in order to build up a war machine able to meet the Reichswehr. This hesitation will probably last until the fall elections are over.

The politicians don't dare, as yet, advance along the grim road that must be travelled. What this road will be like it is not hard to forecast. The Daladier dictatorship in France, the newborn Labor-Conservative totalitarian regime in England—these are sufficiently clear signposts. As are, over here, the anti-alien laws now being passed by Congress, the "Fifth Column" hysteria, the increasing pressure for the lifting of all restrictions on business together with the crippling of the organized labor movement.

The only way Hitler can be stopped by any capitalist American government is by the introduction of what will amount to Hitlerism over here. The main enemy is still at home. The workers and farmers and unemployed millions of America must take over the government if the defense of the United States against the enemy across the Atlantic is not to mean simply the quick—and permanent—victory of the enemy within, the totalitarian class rule of the great banks and corporations of American monopoly capitalism.

## Mass and Class in Soviet Society

The definition of the U.S.S.R. as a "degenerated workers' state" does not free us of the necessity of examining in each concrete case the role that it must play in this war. From its definition as a "workers' state" cannot be deduced the absolute necessity for its defense, no matter under what conditions the war is made. History knows cases where the bourgeoisie or other ruling classes were defeatists in their own country (in Russia in the Russo-Japanese war, in the United States the northern bourgeoisie in the war against Mexico that was led by the slave-holding South, etc.).

In the case of Soviet Russia a defeatist attitude on the part of its own proletariat would be even more justifiable. For, although theoretically the ruling class, it does not exercise any control nor take any responsibility for the policy of its state. According to Trotsky, the dominant trait of this state is its dual character; he even insists on the fact that this duality instead of tending to disappear is growing from day to day. Bourgeois social law, which at first only dominated the field of distribution, tends to invade further and further the decisive field of production.

The social "fruits" of statified property themselves demand, in order to be grabbed, both the violence and the coercion of the bourgeois law of distribution, *against* . . . toiling masses. But *it is already no longer against—properly*

*speaking—bourgeois tendencies* that statified property is defended. It is above all defended against the *petit bourgeois* tendencies of misery, or the miserable tendencies of the individual left to himself—that is to say, the *petit bourgeois*; for Soviet society of the Stalinist epoch is, like every totalitarian society, an atomized society. The suppression of classes is not the same thing as the disappearance of classes. As by a sort of retreat into the far-distant past, before the organized class struggle had come into existence, the U.S.S.R. is the field of a general, and blind, struggle of individuals, and of all against the state.

### An Atomized Society

A society cannot live long under such conditions. Individuals, citizens, divided and separated, tend to re-group themselves again, on the basis of their common interests. The victorious proletariat organized its State in order to beat down the hereditary enemy, the bourgeoisie. Having exterminated it, the proletariat however did not enjoy the fruits of its victory. Its State was turned against it, expropriating the proletariat in its turn from the benefits of its victory over the bourgeoisie. It has lost its immediate means of defense (the union), it has lost its means of political

representation (the Soviet), it has lost its means of conscious expression (the Party). It has seen itself atomized like the other classes, the peasants and the bourgeoisie. In the State that it itself created, all its own means of defense, of representation and of expression are as scattered, as indirect and oblique, as improvised or spontaneous, as underground or illegal as those of the other social groupings. In the general misery the only thing which can distinguish the proletariat by any sign whatsoever of superiority, from all the other social groupings, and this includes the totalitarian bureaucracy, *is that it alone can find in the still existing social relationship of property, in the statified property, a road towards progress and the future.*

But in the given economic and political situation, national as well international, that is rather a theoretical advantage. For in the totalitarian impasse of Soviet society under Stalin, development tends to follow the line of least resistance. And in the present conditions in Russia no one can hold that the *easiest* way out is that of the integral maintenance of collectivized property and centralized economy. The road of the proletariat, being the only progressive one, is perhaps here too the most difficult and the most radical. (We must never forget that unlike capitalism, the process of building socialism is a conscious one, that is to say, a voluntary, political task.) In any case, the road of the political restoration of the proletariat is not a "dry" road but a revolutionary one. On the other hand, the road of counter-revolution, which has been followed for a long time, marked from time to time by violent explosions, by a sort of spasmodic civil war, can, *with the war*, be finished the "dry" way. The war, without a victorious revolution, will be fatal to the Russian proletariat, even though it ends in the military victory of the ruling Bonapartist clique. The most important channel of the counter-revolution is the bureaucracy itself.

Why then cannot the proletariat of Russia, even if it be considered the ruling class, be defeatist in "its" State? After all, a defeatist attitude is the natural consequence of the lack of national cohesion of a given social or political regime. Can you conceive of a solid national cohesion in an atomized, totalitarian society?

### The Necessity for Defeatism

But here we have to do not with a theoretical question but rather with a practical policy that must be determined according to immediate perspectives. Which is the best tactic in the given conditions—defensism or defeatism?

Under the tension and in the atmosphere of war, the rhythm of historical processes becomes increasingly accelerated. In the U.S.S.R. the danger comes from the fact that counter-revolution may advance faster than revolution. The policy of unconditional defense can slow up even more a process that is already lagging behind. Lacking conscious or semi-conscious organs of expression, the social groupings in the atomized society manifest themselves through whatever channels or accidental means they happen to find along their road. Or by improvising. In a totalitarian society, all roads lead to the State. Once war comes, all those groups or individuals who see security for themselves in the partial or complete enlarging of private property and individualistic accumulation will find themselves together, in a broad united front. The proletariat, already in retreat all along the line, may find itself isolated in the bargain. The revolutionary vanguard must not tie its hands in advance, a

priori, by a defensist tactic, that is to say a legitimist loyalist attitude towards the bureaucracy. This policy in a certain sense a passive one, will not help us prepare in time those subjective factors necessary for action when the chance comes.

We must not lose sight of the inner nature of the struggle of the Russian proletariat: it wants to defend the statified property against all its enemies, both external and internal. But it is precisely the war that is the shortest and surest means for the destruction of this property. We do not mean that the most immediate and most dangerous threat comes from an invasion by a foreign army, but, at least in the present phase of the war, that the main danger is from within.

The construction of socialism is above all a conscious process. This means that the economic relationships by themselves do not decide: there is no automatic organic evolution from statified property towards socialism. For this is required the political domination of the proletariat, which must exercise active control through its specific organs, parties, unions, soviets, etc. It is therefore necessary that the proletariat be in a position to direct, to use effectively and in actuality, the economic process based upon collectivized property. This collectivized economy in itself, above all in an isolated and backward country, given the general retreat of the world proletariat, given the fact that a usurping bureaucracy has robbed the national proletariat of the fruits of its victory over the bourgeoisie—given all this, and the collectivized economy is only a secondary factor with relation to the subjective, conscious factor of political power. If, in order to give to the statified property all the possibilities of a socialist development, the proletariat ought to defend it against the bureaucracy, ought to snatch it out of the hands of the bureaucracy, then we cannot exclude by any affirmation of a principle (i.e., "Russia is a degenerated workers' state") the necessity in certain concrete cases, according to the character or historic role of the war into which the bureaucracy wants to drag the entire country, of a defeatist tactic on the part of the working class.

### The "Free State"

The Soviet State, like its economy, is torn apart by the same irreducible antagonisms. The inherent tendency of every State, if left to itself, to elevate itself above classes, above society, has been able in Russia, thanks to exceptional historical circumstances, and perhaps for the first time in history, to work itself out to the end. This development of the process has been possible because the proletariat, the dominant class, has been too weak to exercise its control over the bureaucracy, the incarnation of the State. The bureaucracy has identified itself with the State. In so identifying itself, it has attained an absolute development, as far as it can go as a bureaucracy. This means that the bureaucracy, too, has come to the end of its process of development and now cannot but cease to be itself—that is, it must transform itself or die. Now that the State is its private property, the end of the process of introversion is reached: from being a servant of the State, the bureaucracy has become its master.

By the same process of evolution, of realization of its absolute nature, the State, completely bureaucratized, places itself above society, becoming in the process social or anti-social. In order not to recognize its master, the ruling class (the proletariat), it proclaims the classless society, it becomes the whole society, the totalitarian providence, so-



cialism. At this stage of hypertrophy, it puts itself in opposition to all of society, suffocates and crushes all the class groupings in society—classes whose very existence it disowns, by proclaiming their disappearance. The life of society is menaced by this excrescence, by this unceasing and ever-growing invasion by a State which has reached a kind of social elephantiasis.

In order to restore the equilibrium that society has lost, war breaks out between the Frankenstein State and society as a whole. But the organized class struggle (violence which is not arbitrary and unilateral, but rather, organized and counter-balanced by other forces)—the motive power of history—is not present to re-establish the vital equilibrium of society and its dynamism—a process which must go on until classes die a natural death as the true socialist society is achieved. And so the bureaucratized State continues to rot and dry out the vital life-springs of the social organism. The bureaucratized State must therefore be overthrown so that the *normal* process of class struggle may resume its natural place, its organic limits, its true functions as servant of the ruling class, the instrument par excellence of history. Then the State will be constrained within these limits, and its innate asocial tendencies will be repressed, by the play of the class struggle, by the defensive action of other, non-ruling classes. This will be the task of the restored workingclass democracy, that is to say, of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Basing itself on the statification and planning of the economy, extending its discretionary power over the entire economic life of society, the State has secured complete freedom. It has become what Engels, in a letter to Bebel criticizing the draft of the Gotha Program, defined as the "Free State": "a State which is free in relation to its citizens, hence a State with a despotic government." The U.S.S.R. today might give us a rough idea of this bureaucratized "Free State." But such a State has no future and no possibility of surviving.

At any rate, it would seem we are not going outside of Marxist tradition if we call into question the theoretical correctness of the formula of the "degenerated workers' state" in order to admit the hypothesis, under exceptional and transitory conditions, as a temporary phenomenon, of a certain monstrous deformation of the Marxist concept of the State, such as that of a *Bureaucratized Free State*.

In any case no theoretical analysis can exhaust the question of the nature of the Soviet State. Yesterday's analysis no longer suffices for today's situation. Engels spoke of a "Free State in relation to its citizens." Marx, speaking of the bureaucracy of Louis Bonaparte, called it an "artificial class." Lenin, speaking of the Soviet State itself, criticized the expression "workers' state" as inexact, because, according to him, the Russian State was "worker . . . and peasant," or rather, as he defined it, a bureaucratic State dominated by the proletariat. And finally, Trotsky, in characterizing the Stalinist bureaucracy, recognized that it is "something more than a simple bureaucracy." And more recently, he affirmed: "The Soviet bureaucracy at present has united within itself in a sense the characteristics of all the old classes, but without either their social roots, or their traditions" ("The Totalitarian Defeatists," *La Quatrième Internationale*, Nov.-Dec., 1938.). A new and unique phenomenon in history, the degenerated Soviet State, or Free State, is an extremely transitory process. Enclosing it in a formula which lacks any great scientific precision—"degen-

erated workers' state"—does not resolve our practical problem.

But, on the other hand, to know whether we should refuse to defend it in a concrete case in the present war, we do not have to proclaim that a *new ruling class* has taken the place of the proletariat in the U.S.S.R. Historical perspectives and the development of events alone can decide the question. What we can and must do is to weigh the perspectives in an effort to analyze and foresee the meaning and tendencies of the development. It is these tendencies that can give us the best answer to the question of the social nature of the bureaucracy. For our part, we believe that the bureaucracy has no future; that its immediate future does not point in the same direction as the historical current, but quite the contrary, in the reverse direction, towards certain decline. (Our basis for this belief, we shall try to explain below.)

Now of all the instruments of production, said the young Marx, the most important is a new social class. At least from this angle, it is difficult to reconcile Marx's concept with the reality of the Stalinist bureaucracy. According to the vital and dialectical standards of the young Marx, the Soviet bureaucracy as a class does not pass the test of history. This class that exhausts itself in less than a generation, guiding the society that it leads straight towards a blind alley and ruin, is rather an abortion of a class.

## Stalin Seeks A New Economic Base

Let us now leave aside, for the moment, the purely theoretical dispute over the nature of the Soviet State. Let us limit ourselves to an analysis of practical perspectives. There lies the answer. This is all the truer because the foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. does not necessarily flow from what remains for us to defend in Russia: the statified property and planned economy. In fact, it is quite the contrary.

Just as the foreign policy takes on a character more and more consciously hostile to the interests of the world revolution, so the internal policy of the bureaucratic party in power takes on a character more and more antagonistic towards the collectivized economic structure.

For years the bureaucracy has been conducting a systematic offensive against the Soviet proletariat. A consideration of the past few years from the angle of the present Stalinist policy (in the light of the pact with Hitler) clarifies the meaning of the struggle to exterminate the old generation of Bolsheviks and the revolutionary or independent representatives of the Youth. As our transitional program puts it, this general extermination "has destroyed even more the political equilibrium, in favor of the bourgeois right wing of the bureaucracy and of its allies in the country." It was in this sense, moreover, that Comrade Trotsky interpreted the hypothesis of an alliance between Russia and Germany. In fact, trying to weigh the possibilities of such an alliance before the "Commission of Inquiry," he believed that if it should take place it would be against the will of Stalin himself. He thought that it would be rather the work of a section of the bureaucracy seeking "to assure its position at any price, even at the price of an alliance or friendship with Hitler." Trotsky supposed that Stalin was not at all inclined to travel in this direction. His interpretation seemed to be that such an alliance would be the result of a victorious struggle of one section of the bureaucracy against the wish of the "father of the peoples." This

faction would be composed "of a large layer of the upper and middle bureaucracy." The removal of Litvinov, we can clearly see now, is in line with that view. Finally, this whole struggle within the bureaucracy has resulted in the current triumph of the policy of the Fascist "right wing," the Boutenko wing; the alliance with Hitler is the expression of this triumph. Stalin has gone over to the program of the right wing.

Why? Because Stalin seeks a new basis of support for his tottering regime. The country of socialism is floundering in a general crisis of under-production. The crisis of under-production is chronic in light industry and consumers' goods. The terrible exhaustion of basic capital has become acute since 1937. The impossibility of its renewal by national resources alone is aggravated by the increased necessities of the military machine, on a war footing. Stalin is tempted to seek in the industrial power and high technical level of Germany the means of renewing this basic capital, or, above all, of reducing the ever more alarming unbalances in the fundamental branches of Soviet economy. In compensation, he promises to re-vitalize Germany with raw materials, with food products, even perhaps at the risk of re-introducing famine in the U.S.S.R., unless he prefers to start out with Hitler on a policy of brigandage and the conquest of colonies. (Let no one raise loud cries of pious indignation because we dare to suppose that the "degenerated workers' state" is capable of imperialist brigandage. Let it be remembered that it was Comrade Crux himself who was the first to believe the bureaucracy capable of "every imaginable crime," including the capacity of "carrying out an imperialist policy," that is, by taking a piece of China for its services to Chiang Kai-shek.—See "Discussion on the Chinese Question," August 11, 1937.)

Stalinism is obliged to get more and more involved in policies which seek a way out of the blind alley, no longer within the country, but outside its borders. Within the country, the national resources no longer suffice or are no longer as available as they were in 1928-29. This time he can no longer skin the peasantry as he did then; he can no longer set afoot the same campaign of primitive accumulation at the expense of the peasantry as he did in the years of the first Five-Year Plan. He can no longer count on the support of the workers, whose enthusiasm, devotion and confidence have since fallen catastrophically. Rakovsky foresaw this general crisis of under-production in a masterful fashion in his study of the problems of Soviet economy, in 1930 ("Problèmes de l'Economie de l'U.S.S.R." in *La Lutte des Classes*, May 15, 1932).

### Economic Effects of The Pact With Hitler

The Russo-German agreement is the most convincing expression of the necessity in which Stalin finds himself of seeking a way out of the general crisis by going outside of Russia. Under the pressure of necessity, a "liaison" is being formed between the peasant economy (the Kolkhoz aristocracy) and German industry, that is to say, in the old, more precise language, between "the kulak and world capitalism." As Trotsky said, "It was not worth while to make the October revolution for that." (*The Revolution Betrayed*.)

The intensive exploitation of the national resources and of the Soviet masses' capacity for work—the corner-stones of the first industrialization—saved, for a time, the economic

basis of the October revolution by assuring the development of the productive forces of Soviet economy. But we are now faced with a new cycle of reproduction. The promissory notes of the first industrialization have fallen due. Thus, all the accumulated capital must be renewed. At bottom, it is a question of finding the bases for a new accumulation. On the basis of the first two Five-Year Plans, the bureaucracy has exhausted its progressive role, that is, its role as a *working class* bureaucracy. It has thus succeeded in "saving" the economic foundations of the workers' state, but by definitively dethroning the proletariat. By means of the planned economy it has made the means of production and the national income its exclusive monopoly. It therefore is in the same relation to the entire economic process as the great imperialist magnates are to the monopolized branches of capitalism; they also need not be the nominal proprietors of the majority of the stocks and bonds of the large corporations in order to dispose of them at their wish and according to their convenience. By controlling production and credit they dispose of the property of others, the little stockholders, the little coupon-clippers, the little savings of the little people, as if they were their own.

The bureaucracy begins to understand that it cannot repeat the history of the first industrialization. It now has much more to lose. It wants to get the country out of the crisis, but to its own exclusive profit, and no longer as a simple working class bureaucracy such as it was essentially in 1928 and '29. It is here that the difference of historical perspective between the two periods is most clearly marked.

To solve the crisis, consolidating its position once for all, the bureaucracy hesitates between two methods: peace and war. Stalin is now half in the war and half out. But he has no choice. He would much prefer peace, a peace dictated by Hitler, for he would hope not only to hold what he has already taken, but also to get a share of the booty without risking a real war. Also, with peace, the Russo-German economic "collaboration" would be able to reach its full development. The latter, however, would really mean the "peaceful" colonization of Russia by Germany. But even this perspective of peace is more and more problematic. Stalin fears war, but he is tempted. He already plays at war, and after all in reality his game can only lead to war. This can prove fatal to the bureaucracy, or at the very least for the ruling oligarchy. Economically, however, it would not have consequences very different from those of an immediate peace, with the triumph of Hitler. War would put an end to the monopoly of foreign trade as a barrier to foreign, that is to say German, industry. *The economic plan, already breached by the sudden needs of mobilization and the annexation of new territories, would be definitely put aside in order that the entire national economy might be adapted to the necessities of the war and co-operation with German economy.* The accelerated movement of the centrifugal forces of the economy and of individualistic accumulation in some of the most fundamental sectors of the economic life of the country (agriculture, light industry and consumers' goods, artisan production which is already in the process of legal decentralization, etc.) will break down all the juridical barriers and end up by being sanctioned by the State. *This will not only be in line with the "historical" interests of the bureaucracy itself.* It is also the path of least resistance. For the bureaucracy to act otherwise would mean to return to the proletariat, to the revolution, to its own self-destruction.

### Towards The Restoration of Private Property

The bureaucracy, especially the top bureaucracy, hopes to increase the productive forces of the country by more and more thoroughgoing concessions in the way of the denationalization of the land and of light industry and artisan production. (It seems that this is the policy that has been adopted in the newly-annexed territories.) It would then find in this (temporary!) growth of the productive forces a more solid and *autonomous* base upon which to support itself and survive.

On such a base, it would be easier for the bureaucracy to develop fully every tendency within itself that might lead to its transformation into a new independent social formation. It is as restless as a hen that is looking for a safe place to lay her egg. It wants to get itself a proper, stable, economic and social base on which it can spread itself at ease and assure itself a permanent place in history as a *true social class*. It is precisely this that it seeks by its policy of foreign adventures!

If it succeeds, that is to say, if its policy of conquest is successful or if it goes through this entire war period without set-back or bankruptcy, then the old question of whether or not it is already a new social class will have been decided in the affirmative. The theses on the U.S.S.R. in the transitional program predicted the political unfolding on the basis of the economic policy that we have just indicated. Here is what they said:

"It is from that direction, that is, from the right, that we can expect in the next period increasingly determined attempts to reconstruct the social regime of the U.S.S.R. by reconciling it with 'Western civilization,' particularly in its Fascist form."

It is this process of restoration that we have now before our eyes—seen no longer as a perspective but as something already in process.

Since the road back to the revolution is definitely blocked to the bureaucracy, we must not let ourselves be deceived by the "left" phrases and twists of the agents of Stalin.

Thanks to a momentarily favorable historical situation, the Stalinist bureaucracy has adopted a tone much more independent of the outside world than it has permitted itself for some time past. This is due to the surprising and unpredictable fact that the inter-imperialist war has broken out without Russia being drawn in at the first shot on the first day. Sheltered behind Germany, the adversary it feared most, the bureaucracy has plucked up a little courage, and Moscow now apes Berlin in its manner of treating small neighbors and hurling thunderbolts. Once more it is able to radicalize its vocabulary and to paint over its hideous visage with a little rouge. None of this is of the slightest real significance. It is simply a matter of frightening others, on one hand, and on the other, of salvaging the remnants of the Comintern in the democracies who are either at war with Germany or hostile to the Russo-German entente, so as to exploit it against Anglo-French and American imperialism. By this maneuver the bureaucracy disembarasses itself of the ambiguous ideology of anti-Fascism, while at the same time, under cover of its leftist phrases, it turns decisively towards an alliance with Nazi imperialism, which has already been whitewashed by Molotov as the camp of peace forced to defend itself. As for the manifesto of the Communist International, that is merely an irresponsible

echo of Molotov's voice, a holiday speech delivered on an anniversary.

### Hitler's Flag is Also "Red"

Internally as well as externally, the progressive role of the Stalin bureaucracy was exhausted a long time ago. Internally, the bureaucracy "from [being] the guardian of Socialist property has become its principal destroyer" (Theses of the First International Conference in 1936). Externally, it has long been the most powerful brake on the world revolution. Stalin's continuing in power, in war or in peace, means either the colonization and dismemberment of the U.S.S.R. or Fascism. His victory in the war means Fascism in Russia as well as in the world. The flag of the *swastika* is "red" also. The victory of Stalin allied to Hitler *would transform the bureaucracy into a new class, after a certain process of rationalization with the bureaucracy itself as object*. We have no reason to help directly or indirectly the victory of any imperialist camp. The victory of any bandit whatsoever would mean the triumph of the Fascist counter-revolution, if it were possible to conceive that this war could end without revolutionary intervention by the masses.

M. LEBRUN

EDITORS' NOTE: *The above article is an extract from a contribution by M. Lebrun to the recently concluded discussion on the "Russian Question" within the Socialist Workers Party. This contribution was titled, "The Defense of the U.S.S.R. in the Present War", and was dated November 9, 1939.*

*M. Lebrun is now working on two more articles, one on the kind of exploitation of the masses now developing in the Soviet Union; the second on the tendencies and the interrelation of the German and the Russian economies. These will be published in early issues of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL.*

How can Hitler be stopped without fascism over here?  
Why is the American fleet kept in mid-Pacific?  
In what direction is Soviet foreign policy developing?  
What was the real—and suppressed—issue at the steel workers convention in Chicago?  
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# Native Son and Revolution

Black Bigger Thomas, native son, stifled by and inwardly rebellious against white America's treatment of him, by accident murders a white girl. For him this murder is the beginning of a new life. In striking such a blow against his hated enemies, in the struggle to outwit them and evade capture, his stunted personality finds scope to expand. Before he is sentenced to death, the sincere efforts of two white Communists to save him teach him that all whites are not his enemies, that he is not alone, that there is a solidarity of all the oppressed.

Such, finely audacious and magnificently simple, is the theme, sprung from such a wealth of emotional vitality and presented with such power of literary realization that it forces discussion and unwilling reconsideration of the world's No. 1 minority problem, the Negro question in America. The book therefore is not only a literary but also a political event. Here we are concerned with a revolutionary interpretation of Bigger Thomas, an aspect, not unnaturally, neglected or misunderstood by all reviewers, "Marxist" or otherwise. The career of Bigger Thomas is a symbol and prototype of the Negro masses in the proletarian revolution.

Bigger hates white people with a consuming hatred. So do the great masses of Negroes. Quite often the hate is hidden, sometimes it is buried deep out of sight, sometimes it is twisted into its opposite, a passionate religiosity. But it is there, and speakers, particularly Negro speakers, can always elicit it from any Negro gathering. It represents ten generations' experience of injustice, of humiliation, of suppressed resentment and bitterness. But if Negroes hate whites, they also fear them, their knowledge, their power, their ruthlessness—also the accumulated experience of the generations.

## The Sleeping Volcano

This hate will be one of the most powerful forces in the Negro revolution. In the South an iron system holds the Negroes down. But Southern whites know quite well what fires smoulder behind the deference and the humility. "If you let a nigger forget himself, you have to kill him," is one of their commonest expressions. As long as society in the South maintains its integrity, the Negroes will continue to be docile. But if the solid South does not remain solid, if that society ever goes to pieces, then, wherever the Negroes outnumber the whites, we shall see some of the bloodiest massacres that this continent has known. Whoever doubts this should study the slave revolt of Spartacus, and the black revolt in San Domingo: the end of the San Domingo revolt was the complete annihilation of the white population.

America differs from San Domingo in one important respect: the Negroes are a minority and in a proletarian revolution the white proletariat of the North will be dominant. Its aim will be to tear the poor whites of the South from the leadership of the Southern landlords and capitalists, by precept and example to make them aware of their solidarity with the Negroes. The strength and organization

of the Northern proletarians; the extent of the social disintegration in the South driving blacks and poor whites closer together, will shape the course of the struggle.

In a profound sense Bigger Thomas is a "typical" Negro. His hatred of whites, his sense of his wrongs and his forcibly limited life, his passionate desire to strike at his enemies, all this is racial. He is different from other Negroes only in the fact that his nature is such that he cannot contain himself.

Bigger, having killed by accident, now has to save himself. He must match his wits against this whole powerful white world, which has hitherto held him chained, and in this conflict he finds himself. The murder of Mary is an accident, rooted though it is in the social order. But his acceptance of full responsibility for it is a revolutionary act. To scheme, to plan, to fight—this is to be free. In this bold stroke, the central theme of his book, Wright has distilled the very essence of what is the Negro's future. The great masses of Negroes carry in their hearts the heavy heritage of slavery, and their present degradation. Such has been their past, it is their present, and, as far as they can see, it is their future. It is the revolution which will lift these millions from their knees. Nobody can do it for them. Men, personalities, will be freed from the centuries of chains and shame, as Bigger's personality was freed, by violent action against their tyrants. It is on the evening after the battle, with smoking rifle and dripping bayonet, that the Negro will be able to look all white men in the face, will be able to respect himself and be respected. Wright notes that Bigger had no confidence in other Negroes; they were too afraid and too conscious of fear to trust one another. That confidence in himself which Bigger earned by the unwitting murder of Mary, millions of Negroes will gain only by the revolution. There is no other way for them.

## Bigger's Fight

The finest passages in the book describe Bigger's fight against capture, and it is curious how blind all have been to the overwhelming significance of this. What hero in what literature ever fought his fight with such courage and such determination? As he reads in the paper that the crime has been pinned on him, "his right hand twitched. He wanted a gun in that hand. He got his gun from his pocket and held it. He read again." Thenceforward he fights. The murder of Bessie, his girl friend, is subordinate to his great purpose, to fight against these tyrants and torturers. He couldn't leave Bessie behind, and he couldn't take her. Therefore he had to destroy her. In the abstract it is a revolting crime. But whoever has entered into the spirit of the new Bigger must see it as he saw it. Eight thousand white men with guns and gas were out looking for him. Without bravado, without self-pity, he fought.

A small black object fell near his head in the snow, hissing, shooting forth a white vapor, like a blowing plume, which was carried away from him by the wind. Tear gas! With a movement of his hand he knocked it off the tank. Another came and he knocked it off. Two more came and

he shoved them off. The wind blew strong, from the lake. It carried the gas away from his eyes and nose. He heard a man yell,

"Stop it! The wind's blowing it this way! He's throwing 'em back!"

The bedlam in the street rose higher; more men climbed through trapdoors to the roof. He wanted to shoot, but remembered that he had three bullets left. He would shoot when they were closer and he would save one bullet for himself. They would not take him alive.

"Come on down, boy!"

He did not move; he lay with gun in hand, waiting. Then, directly under his eyes, four white fingers caught hold of the icy edge of the water tank. He gritted his teeth and struck the white fingers with the butt of his gun. They vanished and he heard a thud as a body landed on the snow-covered roof. He lay waiting for more attempts to climb up, but none came.

"It's no use fighting, boy! You're caught! Come on down!"

He knew that they were afraid, and yet he knew that it would soon be over, one way or another; they would either capture or kill him. He was surprised that he was not afraid. Under it all some part of his mind was beginning to stand aside; he was going behind his curtain his wall, looking out with sullen stares of contempt. He was outside of himself now, looking out, he lay under a winter sky lit with tall gleams of whirling light, hearing thirsty screams and hungry shouts. He clutched his gun, defiant, unafraid.

More than the mere desire to live was at stake. It was the bursting pride of a spirit long cramped and oppressed that found itself free at last. All students of revolutionary history know it: the legions of Spartacus, Cromwell's Ironsides, the Paris enragés, the Russian workers defending Petrograd against Udenitch, the Spanish workers defending Madrid, the march of the Chinese Communists across China in 1936. That was the spirit of defiance and determination in which Bigger fought.

In prison, fighting for a clear realization of what has happened to him, Bigger attains the highest stage of his development: he learns that the two white Communists are his friends. They prove it in action. Here again Bigger's

experience typifies another important revolutionary truth. Masses learn by experience, not by propaganda, and the Negro masses in particular will have to be shown solidarity in action and not in logic. There will be many Negroes in the revolutionary party, but the vast majority will in all probability learn the lesson of class solidarity as Bigger learned it.

### Wright as A Revolutionary Novelist

Did Wright consciously epitomize Negro revolutionary struggle in the career of Bigger Thomas? The question is irrelevant. The artist, by methods compounded of conscious logic and his own intuition, observes society and experiences life. He comes to his conclusions and embodies them in character, scene, and dramatic situation. According to the depth of his penetration and the sweep of his net, his capacity to integrate and reproduce, he writes his novel, paints his picture, or composes his symphony. Psychologist, historian, politician, or revolutionary, drawing on his own experience, see symbols, parallelism, depth and perspective unsuspected by the creator. The artist can see the truth and nothing but the truth, but no one can expect him to see the whole truth.

In our age literature, especially literature of this kind, cannot be divorced from politics. Wright is a Stalinist. In this novel a scrupulous artistic integrity enables him to draw white Communists, if not with the same success as Negroes, yet without bias or subservience to the Stalinist conception of the party and the party "line." But he treads a dangerous road. Stalinism has destroyed the literary and artistic life of Russia, it has ruined Malraux, one of the most gifted of contemporary writers. In that evil garden nothing creative flourishes. The artist in uniform soon ceases to be an artist. The Stalinists are past masters in the art of enveloping, suborning, corrupting. It will be a pity if they succeed in perverting and blighting this splendid talent.

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## Archives of the Revolutionary Movement

### Where Is the Petty Bourgeois Opposition?

#### *A Repeated Challenge Remains Unanswered*

EDITORS NOTE: We present below the first instalment of a document issued by the Minority members of the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party during the internal discussions of last winter. This article, dated March 9, 1940, was written in partial reply to Leon Trotsky's article, "From a Scratch to The Danger of Gangrene." The concluding instalment will be published in the next issue.

In his open letter to Comrade Trotsky, Comrade Shachtman, repeating the challenge issued by the Minority since the moment it was accused of representing a petty-bourgeois tendency in the party, declared: ". . . it is first necessary to *prove* (a) that the Minority repre-

sents a deviation from the proletarian Marxian line, (b) that this deviation is typically petty-bourgeois, and (c) that it is more than an isolated deviation—it is a *tendency*. That is precisely what has not been proved."

Comrade Trotsky has been the only

one thus far to take up this challenge and to attempt to answer it. Before we deal with his answer, a preliminary observation is necessary.

Our challenge was addressed in the first place to the Cannonites. If there were a petty-bourgeois *tendency* which

had been *developing* gradually but unmistakably in the party for the past year or two or three (time enough for any *tendency* to manifest itself), the ones who would be in an excellent, if not the best, position to discern and describe it would be the Cannonites. They know the records of the party directly and intimately. They know, in particular, the political records of the representative spokesmen of the Minority. Shachtman wrote of the record of these comrades: "They have one and, as said above, it is easily available. There are the records of the Political Committee, containing the views of all the comrades on every question; there are our articles in the press, there are our programs and manifestoes; there are our brochures and speeches. Let them be cited! There has been no lack of bourgeois-patriotic, anti-Soviet, reformist pressure upon our party in the past. Show us from the record when and where any of our leading comrades yielded to this pressure! I say confidently: It cannot be done."

Indeed, it was not done. What is more, Cannon, Goldman and the other Majorityites replied that it *need not* be done—because they knew it could not be done. Hundreds of comrades who heard him at membership meeting debates recall Cannon's statement that he did not charge the Minority with having or representing a petty-bourgeois tendency prior to the outbreak of the present dispute. In fact, Cannon gave the following "analogy" with the present fight: Zinoviev and Kamenev had been flawless Bolsheviks, the closest collaborators of Lenin, up to April 1917, and suddenly, overnight, so to speak, they broke from Leninism and became "strike-breakers." We leave aside here the question of Cannon's ignorance of the historic basis for the petty-bourgeois tendency represented in 1917 by Zinoviev and Kamenev (Trotsky devoted most of his "Lessons of October" to explaining the political roots of what Cannon thinks had no roots in the past), and emphasize merely the fact that in Cannon's view the "petty-bourgeois tendency" had no roots in the past, that it was a sudden, so to speak, an accidental (or episodic) phenomenon—as sudden and accidental (in his presentation of the analogy) as the 1917 action of Zinoviev and Kamenev. In other words, it was not a tendency at all. In other words, again, Cannon met our challenge up to recently by denying its validity, by declaring in effect that until the present Minority adopted its position on the Russian question there was no petty-bourgeois tendency in the party. He was compelled to put forth this view because he KNOWS that the records of the party and of the Min-

ority spokesmen cannot possibly substantiate any other view.

The merit of Trotsky's reply lies, first in his recognition of the validity of our challenge, and, second, in his attempt to substantiate the political characterization of the Minority in the only possible and permissible way, namely, by producing documentary material dealing with political questions of the past period and the political position taken by various comrades on these questions. In doing so, he adduces eleven pieces of evidence aimed to prove his point. Before we take up the evidence, it is well to bear in mind what it is that has to be proved:

To establish that, as against the Majority, the political tendency of the Minority is petty-bourgeois, it is necessary to show, concretely and not by mere assertion, that in a whole series of political questions in the past period the representative spokesmen of the Minority tended to take or did take a petty-bourgeois position, while the representative spokesmen of the Cannon faction tended to take or did take the contrary position, that of revolutionary Marxism.

With this important point in mind, it will be easier to judge the value of the evidence Trotsky adduces against the Minority. We will take it all up, point by point, in the order in which it is presented.

## I. The Policy in The Socialist Party

Trotsky quotes a letter to our faction center in the Socialist Party criticizing the estimate of the situation represented by "(a) the private letter of 'Max' about the convention, and (b) Shachtman's article 'Towards a Revolutionary Socialist Party.'" At best, this is calculated to prove that Shachtman made an opportunist mistake in 1937. But let us see what this has to do with the political position of the present Minority and that of the Majority.

The "private letter" signed "Max" was a circular letter sent out to all the Trotskyist groups in the Socialist Party under instructions and with the approval of the entire Political Committee of our tendency at that time. The same is true of the article by Shachtman in the S.P. monthly magazine. Let us grant for the moment that the line of these two documents was erroneous and opportunistic. But this line represented the *unanimous* opinion of the *entire* faction leadership, with the exception of Burnham. More important, it was the line *initiated* by Cannon. Here are the facts:

On the eve of the Chicago convention of the S.P., a violent campaign was

launched by the right wing to expel us from the party. Cannon was then in California. He hastened to New York to confer with the Political Committee. He advanced the policy that it was necessary to retreat before the right wing offensive in order to avoid expulsion, to moderate our tempo and our line. Rightly or wrongly, our Political Committee agreed with this line, except, we repeat, Burnham, who advocated what may be described as a more aggressive policy. In the P.C., and on the basis of of P.C. discipline, Burnham was not granted his request to present his own view to the New York membership meeting of the faction. Cannon's main slogan, reporting for the P.C. at that meeting, was: "We must make a 'second entry' into the S.P." Every New York comrade who belonged to our group at that time will remember the meeting and the slogan very vividly. Shachtman and the others bore the same responsibility as Cannon for this line, not less, but not more. It was Cannon who initiated the conversations with Norman Thomas at that time, with the aim of establishing a sort of "truce" which would prevent the right wing from carrying through its drive against us. At the Chicago convention itself, our delegates' fraction was directed mainly by Cannon and Shachtman, for the Political Committee. Still following the line initiated by Cannon, our delegates were constantly held in check. This was true especially of some of the "natives," who wanted to make a stiff political fight against the right wing and the Clarityites. The P.C. line was to *evade* the political fight. Our delegates were even instructed to vote for the Clarityite war resolution if our own failed of adoption, as it did. Our delegates were instructed not even to raise the question of the Moscow Trials or the endorsement of the American Committee's work. Our delegates were instructed not to make a serious fight for representation on the National Committee of the S.P. And so on.

Wherein did the spokesman of the "proletarian Marxist wing" differ from the spokesman of the "petty-bourgeois tendency"? Only in that the former *initiated* the policy pursued, was its principal and most vigorous protagonist, while the latter supported the policy. Using Trotsky's method of proof and criterion, a much better case could be made out to "prove" that Burnham represented the intransigent Marxist line while Cannon and Shachtman "revealed excessive adaptability towards the left wing of the petty-bourgeois democrats."

The letter and article of Shachtman were only a continuation of the official policy of the Political Committee. Trotsky, who opposed it, sought to have it

changed, as indicated by the letter of May, 1937, which he quotes. Although he does not quote them, his letters to Cannon, who returned to California after the Chicago convention, also pursued this aim. Cannon subsequently proposed a change in the policy—his own policy!—and a new line was finally adopted by the whole Political Committee, which finally led to the split in the S.P.

These are the facts. If Trotsky was unaware of them, it was his duty to acquaint himself with them. Cannon, who was aware of them, has taken good care to make no reference in the present dispute to the question of our S.P. policy in 1937. The same is true of Goldman, who also knows the facts cited above, as well as a number of other facts. Like every other informed comrade, they *know* that Point 1 in Trotsky's evidence does not even begin to prove his contention about the Minority. For, remember, Trotsky's task is to prove the existence of a certain tendency in the Minority which *distinguishes* it from the "Marxist" wing of Cannon.

## 2. The Question of Workers in The Leadership

Trotsky's second point deals with the question of introducing workers into the local and national leadership. "To believe Comrade Shachtman, I dragged the question of the class composition of the factions into the dispute by the hair." To prove that he did not, he quotes a letter to New York dated October 3, 1937. Read the letter: by what single word does it deal with the "class composition of the factions?" It does speak of the need of electing more workers to leadership and points out that "in every organization there are traditional committee members" and that "different secondary, factional and personal considerations play a too great role in the composition of the list of candidates." Quite correct. Conclusion: "I have never met either attention or interest from Comrade Shachtman in questions of this kind."

From whom has Comrade Trotsky met with attention and interest in questions of this kind? If not from Shachtman or the Minority, then perhaps from Cannon? Let us see.

At the Chicago founding convention of the S.W.P., the list of candidates for the National Committee was prepared mainly by Shachtman, with the knowledge and approval of most of the other leading comrades. At the July, 1939, convention, two lists were presented, Shachtman's for one group of comrades, and Dunne's for the Cannon faction. Which one was oriented towards the conception of "traditional committee

members"? In which one did "secondary, factional and personal considerations play a too great role"? An examination of the list can give only one answer: Dunne's slate. Shachtman's slate proposed to introduce new and fresh elements into the National Committee—worker-militants like Breitman and qualified youth comrades like Gould and Erber. There being no important or visible political differences in the party, the slate did not aim at any faction majority. Dunne's slate aimed first and foremost at a majority for the Cannon clique, and, towards that end, of retaining some of the "traditional committee members." Dunne and Lewit were the two spokesmen of the Cannon group for their slate. Who were the only four individuals on their slate for whom they spoke by name? Clarke, Cochran, Morrow and Stevens—not a single one of them a proletarian, and one of them, in particular, distinguished by his petty-bourgeois intellectualism, rudeness and snobbery which repelled any workers' milieu into which he was placed.

The July convention dispute was not without significance. The Cannonites *talk* a good deal about "proletarians in the leadership," especially on ceremonial occasions or for what they consider are good factional ends. The reality is quite different. The *actual*, functioning leadership of the Cannon faction, even though it does not live in the Bronx but in Greenwich Village, does not show any special "interest or attention" in introducing proletarians into its ranks—unless (we except such comrades as Lewit and Breitman) Gordon, Cochran, Clarke, Morrow, Wright, Hansen, Goldman, etc., are to be written down as workers.

## 3. The Social Composition of The Party

In Point 3, Trotsky quotes a letter in 1937 to Cannon concerning the poor social composition of the party. He stresses the need of orienting the party membership towards the factories, having each branch, or groups in each branch, concentrate all its forces on one, two or three factories in its area. In this way, it would be possible to alter the composition of the party in favor of the proletarian instead of the non-proletarian elements. Good.

This letter was addressed to Cannon. Why does not Trotsky conclude on this point, as he did on point 2, that "I have never met either attention or interest from Comrade Cannon in questions of this kind"? What single proposal did Cannon make in the past two-and-a-half years with reference to orienting the party and its membership towards

the factories? Wherein was the leader of the "proletarian Marxist wing" distinguished in this respect from other comrades? When Trotsky wrote to the Political Committee, some time back, that a rule should be adopted providing that any non-worker who does not bring a proletarian into the party within six months shall himself be reduced to the rank of probationer, McKinney supported the proposal, but no one else, not even Cannon. The latter proposed to send a copy of the letter to the branches without a word of comment, and that is all that was ever heard of the letter, of the proposal, or of Cannon's position on it.

Where does the letter quoted by Trotsky indicate that there was in the party, in his opinion, a petty-bourgeois tendency peculiar to the present Minority? That is what he has set out to prove, but the letter does it in no wise. The social composition of the party as a whole is very poor from the standpoint of a proletarian organization. That is incontestable. But *both* factions in the present dispute represent, to a somewhat greater or lesser extent, *cross-sections* of the party as a whole. The contention that the Cannon faction represents all the proletarian elements in the party, or the bulk of them, and the Minority all or most of the non-proletarian elements, will not stand the test of investigation for a single minute. An objective examination of the social composition of the two factions will not show any class preponderance in the ranks or the leadership of either one of them—especially if the party is taken not in an isolated city but as a whole, nationally. A similar examination of the social compositions of the New York organization, which is indeed far from what it should be, would help to dispel many of the consciously and unconsciously fostered exaggerations and even myths, many of which are so "cleverly" disseminated by the Cannonites in order to arouse unhealthy prejudices especially among the newer comrades in the outlying branches.

It is true that the Cannonites *now* show both "attention and interest" in the question of the social composition of the party. But only because they believe that by falsifying the relative composition of the two groups and by demagogical speeches this "issue" can be utilized for their factional advantage, especially since they, who show an interest in theoretical questions about once every two years, have been qualified, so unexpectedly to themselves, as the "Marxist" wing of the party. Their "attention and interest" have been displayed before in this question, and in the same way. If it seems to suit them as a factional football, they make very solemn speeches about it. As soon as it no

longer has a value as a factional issue, it is forgotten by them . . . until the next time.

#### 4. The Dewey Commission

Shachtman's failure to "surround the (Dewey) Committee by delegates of workers' groups" is cited as another piece of "evidence" that the Minority represents a petty-bourgeois tendency. This proposal by Trotsky two years ago was supported in the Political Committee by one comrade, McKinney. No other member did, neither Shachtman, nor Burnham, nor Cannon, nor Lewit. Under the circumstances, the Committee considered it from the standpoint of practical possibilities and effectiveness, and decided that it was not feasible to undertake the formation of such workers' groups. Wherein was the Minority distinguished in this question from the Majority, or from Cannon in particular? Trotsky does not say, and that for the good reason that he cannot say. The letter from which he quotes was addressed to Cannon, Shachtman and Novack. What was Cannon's answer to the proposal?

The work of the party, and especially of the party leadership, in connection with the Moscow Trials and the Dewey Commission, was not, to be sure, flawless. There are many lessons to be learned from our experience in this campaign, especially with respect to the liberal democrats with whom we cooperated. We did not always take advantage of the revolutionary possibilities offered us by the situation. At the same time, let it be borne in mind that the problem of the Dewey Commission was not a simple one, and only special reasons which every comrade will understand prevent us from going into the details of the problem. Yet, with all its defects, the campaign we launched around the Moscow Trials (at a time when we were half-tied and half-gagged in the Socialist Party!) was the most successful we ever undertook—a real triumph for the party and the International. Comrade Trotsky played an invaluable part in working out the campaign, and in its success; that goes without saying. But the daily work—elaborating the not always simple policy, directing the work in general, the writing, speaking and organizing—that had to be done on the spot under the leadership of the Political Committee. We have no hesitation in saying that a good eighty per cent of that work was done by comrades of the present Minority. They feel no reason to be ashamed of or apologetic for that work—quite the contrary—either organizationally or politically. To ignore all that was accomplished, especially the political gains for our move-

ment, and to reduce everything to the comparatively trifling question of whether or not we carried through the organization of the workers' groups, is to abandon all sense of proportion.

Here, as in all the other cases mentioned in Trotsky's "evidence," we are prepared, without exempting ourselves from responsibility for mistakes, to match the main line against the incidental error, the great achievement against the episodic shortcoming, the record of political line and activity of our comrades which is known to the party as a whole, and even to the radical public, against the obscure trifles which constitute most of Comrade Trotsky's "proofs" of our "tendency."

#### 5. Eastman in The New International

Point 5 is also supposed to prove that the Minority represents a petty-bourgeois tendency whereas the Majority represents revolutionary Marxism. What is this proof? Not the publication of Eastman's open letter to Corliss Lamont on the Moscow Trials, for that "is all right, but the prominence given it on the cover, combined with the silence about Eastman's article in Harper's."

The "proofs" for Trotsky's contention must be scarce indeed to mention this one among them. The size of type used to announce Eastman's article on the cover of the New International was too large; presumably the Cannonites proposed to use a smaller type, or would have proposed it if they could ever be gotten to display any interest in the theoretical organ of the party. But perhaps the prominence given the article on the cover is not the most important point; it is the "silence about Eastman's article in Harper's." In that case would it not have been better, if only in order to complete the point, to indicate that a reply *was* written to Eastman's article? Who wrote the article? Burnham. On whose direct personal request? Trotsky's. Trotsky knows then, as well as he knows now, Burnham's position towards Marxian dialectics. He knew then that Eastman's Harper article on "The End of Socialism in Russia" had as its point of departure Eastman's particular criticism of Marxian dialectics. In his article on "A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the S.W.P." Trotsky declares that without a Marxian criticism of the opponents of dialectics, it is impossible to expose the essence of the false political position of Eastman, Hook and others. If that is so, why did Trotsky propose to Burnham, in 1938, that he write a polemical reply to Eastman's Harper article? Why did he not propose that Cannon or Weber or

Wright or Gordon or Cochran or Morrow write the reply? And why was there no criticism of the reply (and the counter-reply to Eastman's rebuttal) after Burnham had written it? If it was a satisfactory reply from the standpoint of the party program, should not Trotsky have mentioned this fact in his Point 5? If it was unsatisfactory, why was nothing heard about it, either from Trotsky or anyone else in the party? And above all, where were the spokesmen of the Majority in all this, of the Cannonites who represent themselves today as the exclusive defenders of Marxism and dialectics?

#### 6. Eugene Lyons and The Banquet

Another point to prove that the Minority represents a petty-bourgeois tendency is made by Trotsky when he refers to the fact that "you are so tolerant even friendly towards Mr. Eugene Lyons. He speaks it seems at your banquets; at the same time he speaks at the banquets of the White Guards." To whom does the "you" refer? To the Minority perhaps? To Shachtman?

What are the facts in this case? The Pioneer Publishers organized a banquet to which a number of people were invited as speakers in a symposium on the Russian Revolution and Marxism. Lyons, Tresca, Hook and others were among them. The Political Committee knew nothing about the details of the affair. When the advertisement for the banquet appeared in the Socialist Appeal, Cannon and Shachtman discussed the question and took a critical attitude towards the speakers' list; the other leading comrades did likewise. The main objection was to the fact that the list was "weighted" heavily against representatives of revolutionary Marxism. It was decided that Shachtman be designated to take the floor at the banquet for the party point of view and, after the brief speeches of the critics of the Russian Revolution, to present the views of the Marxists. This is exactly what he did, to the satisfaction, politically, of every one present, except, of course, the Lyonses and the Hooks. The composition of the speakers' list at the banquet was a mistake, for which no member and no group of members of the Political Committee was responsible.

To adduce this miserable incident, not for its actual worth, but in order to demonstrate that the Minority represents a petty-bourgeois tendency, only shows with striking force the weakness, or more accurately, the baselessness of the case which Trotsky is trying to make against us.

(To be concluded)