

INTERNAL BULLETIN

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Note: We are reprinting herewith from the Bulletin of the Workers Party some material on the question of unification of the SWP and the WP, for the information of the party membership. We are also reprinting an article from The Call, giving a Social Democratic evaluation of the unity negotiations.

Secretariat of the P.C.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
EXCERPT FROM MINUTES OF PC MEETING OF WORKERS PARTY, HELD APRIL 3, 1947	1
LETTER FROM GOLDMAN TO SHACHTMAN, April 8, 1947	3
THE WRONG ROAD, by Max Shachtman	4
A LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP, by J.R. Johnson and F. Forest	15
THE "DRAMA" OF TROTSKYITE UNITY (Reprinted from <u>The Call</u> , Official Organ of the Socialist Party, June 18, 1947)	25

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EXCERPT FROM MINUTES OF P.C. MEETING OF WORKERS PARTY

HELD APRIL 2, 1947

(Reprinted from Bulletin of the
Workers Party, Vol. II, No. 3, April 21, 1947)

SHACHTMAN: After our last meeting, Johnson made a few slight corrections in the letter, which is now incorporated in the PC minutes. The formal status of the letter is that it is presented to the Committee.

I would like to ask two questions on it. On page 1 of our copy of the letter sent by Johnson and Forest to Cannon, it reads in part: "Johnson's first remark to you (that is, Cannon) on entering the room (that is, where Johnson met with Cannon) was that he hoped this would be the beginning of a long collaboration in the struggle against revisionism of the type of the IKD and of the type of Shachtman and that a substantial part of our conversation proceeded along these lines." My question is this: Did Johnson in any of his reports to the PC on meetings he held with the Cannonites, the SWP, include in the reports that he had proposed a bloc to the SWP against the WP?

JOHNSON: The answer is no.

SHACHTMAN: My second question: In his circular to the SWP, X claims categorically that Johnson informed the SWP that in the event the WP did not accept the proposal of Smith on the unity question and the EPC, Johnson was prepared to leave the WP with his supporters and join the SWP. Since this is one of the main questions that all our members are interested in with regard to the X circular and since in my opinion it is not adequately or properly dealt with in Johnson's and Forest's letter to Cannon, I want to ask the following simple question: Did Johnson or Forest at any time make such a commitment to the SWP comrades or say anything that would warrant X in making that claim?

JOHNSON: The question is adequately dealt with in the letter and previous communications to the PC. That is all.

SHACHTMAN: I would like to put this in the record --

McKINNEY: I would like for that question to be asked Johnson precisely as X put it in the circular, without any decorations. X says deliberately and categorically in the circular that Johnson made certain statements to him. I would like Johnson to say, did he or did he not make that statement. I would like to insist on a "yes" or "no" answer to the statement in the X circular --

SHACHTMAN: Wait a minute - let me conclude first. Since this is a simple and direct question in which all members of the party are interested and in which the political honesty and integrity of Johnson and Forest are involved and since not only I but many other comrades feel that the question is not properly and adequately dealt with in Johnson's letter to Cannon, the refusal of Johnson to answer the question directly and honestly as represented by his

diplomatic reply to my question, casts doubt in my opinion for the first time directly on Johnson's loyalty to the Committee and the party and obscures the problem of unity which Johnson has professed to want to maintain in full clarity. I therefore ask the question again for a straightforward and not a diplomatic answer. Is there any warranty or basis for Cannon having made the claim that Johnson committed himself to splitting his group from the WP and joining the SWP under the circumstances indicated by Cannon?

JOHNSON: In the past, Johnson and Forest have always kept the PC and the party fully informed on all questions dealing with negotiations or discussions with the SWP or other representatives of the CIC concerning unity. In our opinion, however, the question in the Committee has now reached a stage where what is at issue is the discrediting of a political opponent and not the advancement of unification or the clarification of the membership of the parties concerned and of the Movement. To the same degree that consistent with political principle we did everything possible in the past to advance the political struggle for the unification of the two parties, so now we do not propose to assist the Committee in diverting the discussion. We would, however, remind the Committee that the relations of Johnson and the Minority as a whole to the Committee and the party have a long history. We are prepared to go into it only, however, when it will have been made plain to all concerned who forced the issue, what purposes it was intended to serve and those who forced it are prepared to bear the full responsibility of the consequences. We are not prepared at this stage to make any statements other than those we have made or protestations of loyalty to this committee. If the Committee is dissatisfied with our statements on the questions at issue, it is in command of a sufficient majority to take whatever steps it pleases. (The above statement, which was read by Johnson, was signed by both Johnson and Forest.)

SHACHTMAN: I have nothing more to add at this time than two comments:

One: It requires a high degree of courage to accuse me, whose record on unity is so flawless that even Johnson has repeatedly acknowledged it, an acknowledgment which he is evidently preparing to withdraw for his own political purposes, of trying to utilize the situation for the purpose of a political attack on the Johnson group in view of the now established fact that Johnson, behind the back of the Committee, behind the back of the party and behind the back of his own faction, proposed an unprincipled bloc with the SWP for the purpose of combatting the WP.

Two: Precisely because Johnson so determinedly evades a simple and straightforward question to which the interests of the party as a whole require a simple and straightforward answer. I can come to only one conclusion: that Johnson, in flagrant repudiation of what he set forth as his principled position in opposing the idea of the Goldmanite comrades leaving the SWP to join the WP, did make a commitment to the SWP that under the circumstances described in the circular of X, Johnson would split from the WP and join the SWP. The prosecution of our course for unity between the two parties is not only not in conflict with the necessity of drawing the political conclusions from this in the WP as a whole but requires that the party as a whole draw these conclusions.

The suggestion in Johnson's last reply that the PC because it is dissatisfied with his declaration can take whatever organizational measures it wants against him is a contemptible suggestion because it shows that he has forgotten already what party he is a member of.

(At the Political Committee meeting of April 3, 1947, a motion was made by Gates to "inform the party membership of the situation which has arisen out of Johnson's refusal to answer the question directly whether or not he intends to split the party." This motion was laid on the table because the members of the PC desired more time in which to consider the whole question. Subsequent to that meeting, several New York Local branches adopted resolutions asking for information about or the publication of the letter of Johnson and Forest to Cannon in view of the importance of the subject and of the rumors current in the party about it. These letters were presented to the PC at its meeting of April 10, 1947, by the Secretariat without recommendation. After waiting for Johnson to take the initiative in proposing that his letter be made public to the party membership so that it would know exactly where he and Forest stand, and after seeing that neither Johnson nor Forest proposed to make their letter available to the membership, a motion to send the letter to the membership was made by Shachtman and adopted by the PC with Johnson abstaining on the motion.

(Following this a letter by Goldman to Shachtman, which had just been received, was read into the records of the PC. Because this letter is germane to the question, it is also being sent to the membership. It is set forth in full below.)

April 8, 1947

Dear Max:

With reference to Johnson:

By no means should you treat his failure to answer in a straightforward manner as something of great importance which should become the basis of a party discussion. That would play right into the hands of Cannon since there would be nothing better for him than a squabble in our party against a minority that apparently wants unity with him under all circumstances.

A statement is called for but the statement should make it clear that we are not attacking Johnson for his desire to unite with Cannon under all circumstances. He has that right and if he thinks it is essential for the revolutionary movement we must respect him for his attitude regardless of what we think of his sanity.

The center of our attack on him should be that in OUR PARTY it is disgraceful to act in a dishonest manner, for the simple reason that honesty is respected and no one would consider him a traitor to the party if he thinks he should join with Cannon. It is in Cannon's party where duplicity of that type has to be practiced. Even in that party I did not hesitate to state almost in so many words that I would join the WP if there is no unity. The howling

of the jackals followed our statements. In our party we would not howl at any one who believes that his place is with Cannon; we would regret it and try to dissuade him but we would not howl at him. In such a party therefore there was no necessity to dissimulate.

In fact we are building the kind of a party where even those who desire to split can say so openly.

Johnson insulted our party by his attempt to deceive. Johnson shows in fact that he does not belong to our party.

We must utilize his conduct to impress upon every young comrade that in our party, honesty need never be feared.

I do not like the kind of statements made by Al Gates, that is, that he is afraid to discuss unity in Johnson's presence. We have nothing to conceal. On this question we are absolutely honest and Cannon himself can be present at our meetings if he so desires. We permitted Smith to be present and everybody should have known that everything we said would be reported to Cannon.

Be sure to include in any statement you issue Johnson's statements to the PC if they are appropriate. Be sure also to emphasize Johnson's right to think as he does and to emphasize that our position on unity is not changed in the least. And do not make the statement too long.

Yours,

Al

* * *

THE WRONG ROAD

By Max Shachtman

I agree entirely with Goldman's letter and, I think, so will every thinking comrade in the party. Johnson's conduct, which only muddies up the waters of unity, compels a change in our attitude toward him. But precisely because of that, it is worthwhile underlining, at the very outset, the point made by Goldman: it does not and it should not change our attitude toward the question of unity with the SWP. That policy was decided upon by us a long time ago after objective consideration of the problem. It was we who initiated it to begin with, and not Johnson; it was we who worked out every stage of its development, and not Johnson; it was we who did all that was proper and necessary to bring it about, and not Johnson; and at all times Johnson played a positive role in the fight for unity only to the extent that he supported our point of view. And up to recently, it was precisely our policy that Johnson supported all the way through. It would be utterly absurd for us to be swayed from our unity policy by such things as Johnson's recent conduct. As in the case of the circular letter of X, we need only expose it to the light of day. That is our method

and everyone in the movement would be well-advised to emulate it. That Johnson, with even less reason than X, preferred that his letter remain unknown to our party membership is understandable from more than one viewpoint; some political documents, like certain flowers, do better in the dark than they do in sunlight. As in the case of X, Johnson's letter merits a few comments. The following will be enough for the time being.

I. Johnson is preparing a political capitulation to the SWP. This is clear not only from the undignified humility -- it is more accurate to say obsequiousness of his letter but by what is much more important, its political content. This political capitulation, as I tried to point out some time ago, has been in preparation for more than a year. The only difference now is that we have brought it into the open where everyone can see it and judge it.

Where two groups or tendencies, regardless of their political origins, approach each other politically after a period of time (in which events, reflection and mutual influence play their parts), and eventually find a more or less common political line, there can be no talk of capitulation on either side. That is not the case here. What is lacking in Johnson's bloc with the SWP against the WP is a basis in principle, and that means everything is lacking. Hence, we are dealing with a capitulation. That Johnson has much in common with the line of the SWP is not to be denied. But what is decisive in this case is that Johnson has in the past period been steadily and, from a political point of view, unjustifiably bent his own line in order to make the capitulation possible. The SWP has done its share, too, but the truth is that the share of the SWP does not begin to be as great as the share of Johnson.

The share of the SWP in easing Johnson into a capitulation is represented by two obvious facts. The first was the statement of the SWP Political Committee to its last convention ("Revolutionary Marxism vs. Petty Bourgeois Revisionism"). Nowhere in that statement was any reference made to Johnson or his political position or his group. The statement called upon the international Trotskyist movement to reject categorically our party's position on Russia and, so to speak, to outlaw the theory of bureaucratic collectivism from the realm of Marxist thought, if not from the Marxist movement itself. No such harsh treatment was proposed for the theory that Russia is a fascist-capitalist state. That theory of Johnson was not even mentioned.

The second is more recent. It is the dissemination by word of mouth in the SWP of the view that in our party Johnson represents the "left wing." It is true that those responsible for disseminating this joke do not themselves take it seriously. Anyone who knows anything about the SWP leadership is aware that it has no use whatsoever for the political tendency represented by Johnson because, at bottom, Johnson's variety of sectarianism and revolutionary phrasemongering may have a "ceremonial" value in the eyes of the SWP but no practical value. This novel characterization of Johnson, however, does have a practical value or at least a practical purpose.

Johnson's contribution to the bloc is far more substantial and represents a real capitulation. He is not proud of it, because in his ostensibly candid reports to our PC of his conversations with the SWP leadership, he avoided any reference to it; and, as all the members of the Johnson faction know, he did not inform them of his proposal or get their authorization for it. A very unpromising bloc indeed which has to be cooked up in this dark way!

However that may be, we know about it now. We learn from Johnson's letter that his "first remark" to the SWP leadership when he met with it "was that he hoped this would be the beginning of a long collaboration in the struggle against revisionism of the type of the IKD and of the type of Shachtman." What the SWP leadership said about this humble proposal for a bloc against it, has not yet been revealed. As recently as our last party convention, Johnson indignantly and vehemently denounced as slanderous the charge made by some of us that he was preparing a political capitulation to the SWP, that he was in increasingly substantial political agreement with the SWP or, more accurately, that he was bending his line to the point where it would be closer to the SWP than to us. Comrades in whose memory Johnson's outraged denials are still fresh can judge for themselves whether Johnson's proposal today for a "long collaboration" with the SWP against us is a capitulation or not.

The question of who now acknowledges political solidarity with whom is clearly enough answered, in spite of the distasteful diplomatic language that belongs anywhere but in our movement. Johnson corrects X for writing that Johnson affirmed his "complete political solidarity" with the SWP on all questions except the Russian question. Johnson did not affirm this -- at the particular meeting referred to by X. A most important correction: he affirmed it at another meeting. Therefore, he writes, "We take your statements that we are in complete solidarity with you on all political questions to mean what any person in a non-factional situation would take them to mean." (Non-factional situation or factional situation, an elementary knowledge of the English language enables anyone who hears that "we are in complete solidarity with you on all political questions" to take that to mean that. . . there is complete solidarity on all political questions.) ". . . we would like to reiterate that we find ourselves in complete solidarity with you in the main question, the strategic approach to the American question especially as outlined in your (Cannon's) speech delivered to the 12th National Convention of the SWP and printed in the Fourth International of February 1947."

So, barring the Russian question, Johnson is in complete solidarity with the SWP on all political questions and especially on the analysis of the situation and the tasks in the U.S. Whoever may welcome this conversion, must at the same time acknowledge that it is so recent as to fall into the category of overnight changes. The SWP position on the situation in the U.S. was known at the time of its last convention, November, 1946. Cannon's speech, outlining this position, was made public in the Fourth International at the very beginning of the year shortly after the miners strike. We have the right to assume that Johnson was acquainted with the "strategic approach to the American question" of the SWP "especially as outlined in your speech." But in spite of this fact, Johnson was able to

write practically yesterday, that is, on January 11, 1947, the following stern judgment, not only about us but about the SWP as well: "Neither the WP nor the SWP has the faintest conception (My emphasis, M.S.) of what is propoganda for a social program today in the U.S." (WP BULLETIN, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 22).

That is not all that Johnson wrote about the SWP in January 1947 for publication in February 1947. That is all that he allowed to appear in the party BULLETIN, but it is not all that he originally wrote. Between the writing about the SWP and the mimeographing of the writing, there intervened the new prospect for unity. It is now plain that for Johnson this meant the new prospect for a bloc with the SWP against us. How? By a capitulation to the SWP. That is why Johnson's article on the General Strike, in the party BULLETIN referred to, finally appeared as a severe assault upon our point of view, even though in the original writing there was an equally severe assault upon the SWP point of view. Upon his insistence, he was allowed to delete a page (p. 21) from his original article. The deletion was necessary not on the ground dishonestly claimed. The real ground was obvious. To have made public his criticism of the SWP at that time would have made it impossible even for so agile a man of principle as Johnson to claim, a very few days later, that he was in complete political solidarity with the SWP position on the American question, "especially as outlined" in the speech of Cannon. Which Cannon? The one he attacked with his superb relentlessness on Monday but which a quality quite different from relentlessness impelled him to suppress on Tuesday.

Principle? Principle? What is principle to a hungry man? Johnson has been hungry for the bloc with the SWP for a long time. At last the bloc is in sight! For fear that a heavy load would impede him in the rush for the bloc, he promptly unloaded a little political baggage and buried it in the sand. Disinterred, here is what he wrote in his original article:

"Let us now look at the other section of the vanguard, the SWP. On December 7, an editorial of the Militant on the front page reiterated the following idea. 'In every city and country the labor unions must form their own united labor conferences, mobilize actions on behalf of the miners and demand that the union leaders call a similar conference on a nation-wide scale.' I take this opportunity to say that the Johnson Minority is vastly pleased to see the role which propoganda for committees plays in the life of the Fourth International in the U.S. It is not yet understood either in the WP or the SWP, some of it is ridiculous, some of it pure adventurism, but at any rate we are all more advanced here than we were last year. The SWP also seemed to understand the role of the bureaucrats: 'But the top leaders of the CIO and AFL are too narrowminded, too blinded by their own bureaucratic interests to take this imperative step on their own initiative.' This is not too good. The bureaucrats fail because they are afraid of any mass action which even faintly challenges the state power. But at any rate it is a beginning. And what next? Nothing. We said it. Campaign? Education? not a line.

"Cannon, however, is much sharper than Shachtman. By December 14th (the next issue of the Militant), the necessity for the general strike was crying to the heavens. The Detroit workers had decided to call one, Reuther or no Reuther. So in the December 14 issue, on page 1 of the Militant, there is a two-inch box informing the Militant readers that on the day after the decision of the Federal Court to fine the miners, James P. Cannon 'issued a statement' urging the leaders of all unions to call a nationwide 24 hour general protest strike. 'Only such an action will give pause to the big business government conspirators who have launched the attack on the miners as part of a scheme to crush the labor movement.' Isn't this marvelous? Shachtman, the leader of the WP, and Cannon, the leader of the SWP, both of them constituting the vanguard of the vanguard of the vanguard, both decide, one on the 14th and the other on the 16th that the real thing which would have helped to save the miners was a general strike. Cannon says his in five lines and thus is able at any time to show that he proposed it. Shachtman says the same in 5,000 words which enable him to say that he didn't propose it. In theory the difference is great. In practice there is none. It is this feebleness which determines all aspects of the political life of the Fourth International in the United States."

Isn't the rigidly principled basis for the bloc, for the "long collaboration," perfectly clear? The SWP convention took place in November, 1946. That is where the resolution was adopted which came out categorically and unambiguously in favor of a socialist revolution in the United States, that is, for that "strategic approach to the American question" which had such a convulsing effect upon Johnson. But evidently that "strategic approach" was so dumbfounding that it required quite a while before it penetrated Johnson to the point where he found himself in complete solidarity with it. A good two months after the SWP convention, Johnson still attacked the SWP and the WP on the "main question." The unsparing critic found that both are pretty much alike and that neither one of them has the "faintest conception of what is propaganda for a social program today in the United States." In theory, he generously acknowledged, there is a difference. In practice he sternly insisted "there is none" between Cannon and Shachtman. However, "Cannon is much sharper than Shachtman." Sharper! Or better yet, much sharper! There is a real difference for you!

So, I am in complete political solidarity with a man who is much sharper against the man who is nowhere near as sharp. He is the indicated man for me to establish collaboration -- a long one. God help anyone who raises his voice against this Great Principled Bloc! Upon him I will turn the full force of all my water pistols.

There still remains the important Russian question. Perhaps we ought to say the question that used to be important. Here are some examples of how important this question used to be:

"Central to the development of the Fourth International is the position of Trotsky on the Russian Question. This position was held by the majority of the International all through the war.

It resulted in the shocking misleadership of the working class as to the motives and objective results of Stalinist intervention in Europe. The climax came when the Fourth International sowed the most criminal illusions in the minds of the masses in Eastern Europe at the approach of the Red Army. This policy flows neither from the sterility nor the confusion of the Fourth International, in Europe or in America, but is the direct and inescapable result of the attempt to apply an untenable political line based upon the theories of Trotsky.

"Today, when the imperialist aims of Stalinist Russia are patent to the whole world, the Fourth International continues to preach and base policy upon the theory that Stalinist Russia is a degenerated workers state to be defended by the working class. In an effort to defend its indefensible stand that the Stalinist bureaucracy could not survive the rigors of war, the Socialist Workers Party has been driven to the ridiculous position that the imperialist war is not yet at an end. For the same reasons, it disorients the working class and confuses its own position with that of the Stalinists by emphasizing that the expansion of Soviet Russia is due to the necessities of self-defense. By this means, it can do nothing else but strengthen Stalinism in Russia, weaken the critical elements in the Stalinist and other working class parties, handicap itself in its attacks upon Stalinism, grievously disorient the concept of a workers state and associate the Marxist doctrine with the defense of totalitarianism. The persistence in this indefensible doctrine has undermined and will continue to undermine the political and organization strength of the Fourth International.

"By its stand against the defense of Russia in the imperialist war, the Workers Party distinguished itself as the only party in the Fourth International which clearly and consistently warned the masses well in advance against the dangers of Stalinism and the Red Army."

This judgment is severe, but as can be seen, it is both accurate and restrained. I have quoted it, with my own emphasis, from the official Johnsonite resolution (WP BULLETIN, Vol. I, No. 11, April 27, 1946, p. 26), presented to our last convention only a year ago.

Has Johnson changed his mind on this? In a sense, no. In his letter he still speaks of the "entirely false position on the Russian question" of the Fourth International. In another sense, however, Johnson has made a "little" change. In his letter to Cannon he says that he told the SWP that the differences between them on the Russian question were "serious enough." To this, they agreed. Then follows the sentence which absolutely deserves to be rescued from oblivion. It shows how wonderful is the English language and how delicately the words in it can be strung together by a literary person. (That is only one of the things it shows.) Johnson writes: "But we both considered that our respective points of view represent Marxist analyses." Joking apart, isn't this priceless? Isn't this a pearl, in fact, a whole string of pearls? Think of all the winged phrases in the literature of Marxism and tell me of one you can compare this with. You couldn't find one if you spent a month looking for it.

I say Russia is a fascist state, the most fascist of all fascist states, the most highly developed, that is, the most degenerated of all capitalist states, the ultimate outcome of capitalist barbarism. You say Russia is a workers' state, somewhat degenerated, to be sure, but a workers' state just the same. Come, let us be honest because we are honest people. There is a difference between us and it is "serious enough." A fact is a fact. But what the hell, shall we make a mountain out of a molehill, when it is so much more convenient to make a molehill out of a mountain? We are not only honest people, but, damn it all, we are Marxists. And what is important to a Marxist? The important thing is that an analysis should be a Marxist analysis. Let someone deny that! And I say that "our respective points of view represent Marxist analyses." Let somebody deny that!

I say this fascist state must be defeated in peace or in war. You say Russia must be defended. I am for unconditional defeatism. You are for unconditional defensism. The difference is "serious enough." There are some people who say that this difference puts us on opposite sides of the barricades. Bah, malicious people! Not Marxists! They don't understand what is important. The important thing is that our respective viewpoints represent Marxist analyses. It is true, and more than a little embarrassing: I shoot in one direction and you shoot in another direction. But what does that matter? No one is going to get hurt because, you see, after all, at bottom, in the last analysis, and looked at objectively, both of us have Marxist analyses.

And what is the red color you see on my face now? The blush of shame? No, the blush of shamelessness. Or perhaps it is nothing but the flush of excited eagerness to achieve a bloc which, by the old standards, used to be called unprincipled. That is what it is still called. And a capitulation is still called a capitulation.

II. Johnson's maneuvers for a bloc against us -- for a political success which he was unable to achieve in our party after years of free, open, democratic and continuous discussion -- have their importance, but they are secondary. Of primary importance is the question of unity between the two parties and of how the unity is to be achieved.

We are for a solid unity, a lasting unity, a healthy unity that will build up a healthy party. To allay the apprehensions of the SWP, we have told their representatives repeatedly, for two years, that we would be the biggest political idiots, and would stamp ourselves as such ineradicably, if we had in mind the idea of uniting on Monday and splitting on Tuesday -- or the next day or the next year. Such an utterly irresponsible plan would compromise the movement terribly, and us along with it. We are not just for unity "in general." We are for this unity, we are for unity now, not only because we think it is necessary in the abstract but because we are convinced that it will work -- to the benefit of the working class, to the benefit of the Trotskyist movement, and to the benefit of our tendency within it. But it will work only if the foundation of the unity is sound, only if we go about it the right way. The right way means: an irreducible minimum of diplomacy and maneuvering, and a high maximum of frankness and mutual

understanding. We have followed the policy of saying to our membership exactly what we say among ourselves in the leadership; and of saying to the SWP exactly what we say to our membership. We have not concealed the differences between us; we have not artificially magnified them or artificially minimized them. We have said openly why unity was impossible or impractical at one time, and why it is necessary and practical today. Among the results of this course was not only the overwhelming approval of all the comrades who support the party leadership politically, but the approval of every single step we took and every single document we wrote in the unity by the political opponents of the leadership inside the party, the Johnson group.

We have consistently taken the position that we know what the differences are between the two parties, and that these differences are significant and deep. We added, the only cement strong enough to hold together in fruitful union comrades holding these different views, is a full and genuine party democracy which assures any minority an unrestricted ideological life and the necessary possibilities of becoming a majority in a normal way. We take this occasion to say for the hundredth time: without this cement, a real unity cannot take place or, if it does take place, will not be solid. And we may add further, anyone who denies this, may be talking for unity in the most sincere way, but he is not really working to make the unity effective.

Party democracy, Trotsky pointed out more than once, is meaningless unless the membership is kept continuously informed of all the facts relevant to the problem before it. A decision taken without a knowledge of the facts is sure to be a wrong decision. So also with a decision taken on the basis of falsified facts, regardless of whether the falsifications are deliberate or unwitting.

These considerations, too, have decided our policy on the unity question. From the very beginning to the present day, we kept all the comrades informed of the facts, both in circulars and in oral reports delivered to the membership by the representatives of the National Committee. We made public every single document; even the "confidential" letters sent to the comrades of the Minority while they were still in the SWP were published in our party BULLETIN, which is available not only to our party members but also to the SWP. How good could a unity be if a membership entered into it without an understanding of all of the relevant facts?

That is one of the considerations which caused us to insist so much upon the need of a collaboration between the two parties and their memberships as a test of the practicability of the unity and a preparation for its achievement. Without prejudice to either party, we argued: the two memberships must get to know each other and to work side by side with each other. In the course of this collaboration, they will be able to judge each other not merely on the basis of what they have been told or have read, but by what they see in practice with their own eyes. They will be able to check with each other on "stories" that are circulating. They will be better able to judge the extent to which the theoretical or political differences makes possible common practical work in the

class struggle, which is another way of saying, they will be able to see how practical unity is. A unity which is made or even prepared exclusively at the top, already has at least one strike against it.

Let us be more concrete. All our comrades are now acquainted with the circular letter of Comrade X to the leading militants of the SWP. What was contained in it was communicated orally to virtually the entire SWP membership. As I wrote in my circular to our own party (March 8, 1947), the letter of X did not and could not change our position on the unity question. But you have to be blind not to see that such a letter affects -- and affects adversely -- the prospects of the unity. This should be evident not only to the most ardent supporters of unity but precisely and primarily to such comrades. Why? The answer is simple and clear.

If I give the membership of my party an utterly incorrect picture of why I am in favor of unity or of why the other party is in favor of unity, I am, it is true, swinging some doubting people in favor of the idea of unity, but obviously the unity itself will have a very sandy foundation. When the true picture is revealed, as eventually it is, I find I have gained nothing because the comrades will say: This is not why I took a position for unity -- I was for unity on an entirely different basis, I had an entirely different impression of the situation.

If it is reported that an ambidextrous opponent forced the WP leadership to accept unity against its will by putting a "knife at its throat" and "a pistol at its head," the results are equally bad in both parties. In the SWP membership, the report will necessarily produce an attitude toward our comrades which, as everyone of us who has encountered it knows, does anything but create an atmosphere conducive to unity. In our own party, this report, if it remained uncorrected, would necessarily produce confusion, contempt for the leadership (which would be entirely justified if the report were true), and even opposition to unity. To avoid this, a circular was immediately sent to all our members in which the facts were corrected and the record set straight insofar as we were able to do this. Do we thereby serve the interests of a solid unity or not?

Now, what is Johnson's attitude? Here is a situation that calls for political honesty and forthrightness. Neither at the PC meeting, where the letter of X was first read, nor at the New York membership, which was held after we had seen the letter of X, did Johnson or his friends (oversensitive people, please note: I mean, as usual, political friends) find it necessary to make a single comment on it or a single proposal with regard to it. The X letter speaks repeatedly of Johnson's position and makes all sorts of allegations about it. Some of the points made in that letter cannot be dealt with by us; they can be dealt with only by Johnson. The membership is naturally and properly interested -- for good political reasons and not out of idle curiosity -- in the truth or falsehood of these allegations, which only Johnson can establish, or which he is in a better position to establish than we are. He is under a political obligation to speak up, without anyone having to

tug at his tongue. But Johnson does not feel any necessity for speaking.

It is only when he is boxed off into a corner that he says something. He writes the letter to Cannon which the PC requested. Even then, the letter says: "We wish to say, however, that in our opinion nothing said there (i.e., in the letter of X) required any special intervention on our part."

Nothing said in the X letter required a statement from Johnson! Why not? Doesn't it matter whether the statements, the allegations, made about us and especially about Johnson are true or false? Doesn't it matter if the readers of the X letter -- which means the members of the SWP -- accept false statements as true, and base their position on unity upon such statements? Doesn't it matter if the members of Johnson's own party are keenly interested in the truth or falsity of X's allegations about Johnson? Does Johnson believe that misrepresentation or falsification or duplicity is as good as any other basis on which to establish a united party?

Johnson complied with our request that he express himself on the X circular. He finally handed the PC a copy of the letter sent to Cannon. The question of Johnson's position on this score was already being discussed among the membership, at least in New York, as was only proper. The next meeting of the PC had several resolutions from New York branches inquiring about Johnson's statement. We waited in vain for any proposal from Johnson to make his letter to Cannon available to the membership. That motion had to be made by me. It was adopted with Johnson abstaining in the vote.

Johnson's conduct in this matter, while inexcusable, is understandable. His letter to Cannon, for all its diplomacy (which ought to be left to the United Nations where it belongs), and all its ambiguity and all its "clever" Philadelphia-lawyer formulations, convicts him of what we have successfully made unpopular in our party - political duplicity. His proposal to the SWP for a bloc against us was made in the dark, was never reported to us, or, so far as we know, even to the members of the Minority group. His amnestying of the SWP on the Russian question was made in the dark, and was never made known until we forced it into the open. He continues to diplomatize with the party and its leadership on the simple question, which requires only a simple and honest answer, as to whether or not he committed himself to the SWP to split from the WP if we did not "capitulate" to unity. Diplomacy and small-time maneuvers behind the scenes are not calculated to smooth the road to unity.

Finally, Johnson, regardless of what motivates him, is encouraging an attitude which militates against the healthy unity and the kind of party that we have always had in mind. The self-suppression of the criticism of the SWP in his article on the general strike symbolizes it. It should be offensive to the SWP as it is offensive to us. Ostensibly, Johnson eliminated the criticism of the SWP from his article in the interests of unity. The suppressed section has been quoted above in full. Read it again. Agree with it or not, it is nevertheless obviously a political judgment,

vigorous but not violent. If such an objective criticism (again, be it right or wrong) has to be suppressed from a publication which has, after all, such a limited circle of readers, because its appearance would presumably have an adverse effect upon unity -- then what is so clearly implied by the suppression cannot but be offensive to the SWP and its leadership. For Johnson is saying in effect that the SWP's support of unity will diminish when it sees even so restrained a criticism of it published for even so restricted an audience. The implication for the SWP is not very flattering! Especially when at the same time Johnson does not suppress his criticism of us, evidently feeling that political discussion and criticism can have no effect upon our party's support of unity. It is a distinct disservice to foster the idea that discussion and mutual criticism are somehow incompatible with collaboration or unification with the SWP. This idea is being fostered sufficiently without Johnson's aid. It is a disservice because it can only strengthen the belief of many SWP comrades that discussion and criticism are some sort of "luxury" in the movement that can be tolerated only at rare intervals; and because it can only strengthen the apprehensions of those of our own comrades who believe -- wrongly, in my opinion -- that unity can be achieved only by the suppression of their political views and that this is too high a price to pay even for unity.

We say for the hundredth time that we are not for converting the movement into a mere debating society, that we are not for endless discussions, that we are not for discussion as a substitute for activity in the class struggle, that we are not for interminable dilettante or academic debates on what is the sex of every angel and how many can dance on the point of a pin. Everyone who knows our party and its life knows that this is true. But we also repeat for the hundredth time that we are for a party which assures a full and free ideological life, which assures all the necessary rights and possibilities of development for any and all tendencies that are a legitimate part of the revolutionary movement, which considers discussion and criticism not as a luxury or as something tolerated when there is nothing better to do but as an inseparable part of the life-blood of the movement. That is what we have in our party now. That is what we want the united party to be -- that and nothing else.

Those who have contrary ideas are entitled to them, but far from yielding to them we intend to combat them with all the necessary vigor and a full sense of our responsibilities. We have never concealed this, not from anyone. Our proposals in this respect are no secret, and that is attested among other things by the fact that my circular of March 8 to the party members was also sent to the comrades of the SWP leadership and the leading comrades all over the world. We have no use for pettifoggery, cheap-jack maneuvers, fancy diplomacy or duplicity and we have no need for them. Whoever employs these devices stamps himself accordingly.

In connection with the questions asked him in the PC for the purpose of a simple clarification of the facts, Johnson made a statement that what we are aiming at "is the discrediting of a political opponent and not the advancement of unification." This accusation is made by the comrade who just wrote in his letter to Cannon "that

Johnson's first remark to you on entering the room was that he hoped that this would be the beginning of a long collaboration in the struggle against revisionists of the type of the IKD and of the type of Shachtman and that a substantial part of our conversation proceeded along these lines." The accusation, consequently, is a little rash.

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A LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP

By J.R. Johnson and F. Forest

The publication of Comrade Shachtman's circular, "The Wrong Road", (Bulletin of the W.P., Vol. 2, No. 3, April 21, 1947) makes it necessary for the membership to consider seriously the distinction between petty-bourgeois politics and Bolshevik politics.

The hysteria, fear and terror which the Majority leaders have instilled into the members and their dissemination of atrocity stories about the SWP are the very worst preparation for the great tasks ahead. They claim that the SWP is slandering and has slandered them to the SWP membership. At this stage all such matters could have been taken up with the SWP leadership calmly and firmly. The present period should have been used judiciously to review our own past and, above all, to elaborate our contributions to party building. The struggle for unity is only a preparation. The real problems of building the mass revolutionary party begin after unity and demand a period of integration during which mutual confidence is established on all sides. Only Utopians who know nothing of the history of Bolshevism can believe that 2000 will become 20,000 in the class struggle without upheavals, conflicts, factions, groupings, etc. That is the way the proletariat learns, different layers come into action, victories and defeats occur and sharp and sudden changes are necessary. As the class struggle develops, theoretical problems are illuminated, old forces tire, new ones emerge. Instead of preparing the membership for this with the seriousness and foresight of Bolshevik leaders, the Majority leadership has it yelling and screaming about the coming struggle over democratic rights and fearful of the bureaucratized, "semi-Stalinist" party of the SWP and of the deep machinations in which Cannonite politics reportedly consists. It is a shameful, scandalous, and utterly degrading procedure and weakens the movement at a critical stage in its development.

The X Letter

Before the first New York membership meeting on unity was held, Comrade Shachtman knew the contents of the "X" letter and reported them to the PC. Johnson and Forest authorized the PC to make the necessary corrections. Shachtman did so in his speech. Comrade Forest asked for and received special time at the meeting in order to give an account of all negotiations, discussions, etc., concerning unity in which Johnson and Forest were involved.

Subsequently, the PC obtained a copy of the "X" letter and decided to broadcast, in diplomatic language, that Cannon was a liar. It wanted to place Johnson and Forest in a position where they would have to take their share in calling Cannon a liar. Just a step ahead was the possibility that both Cannon and Johnson and the Secretary of the CIC would all be calling each other liars and exposing plots and counter-plots.

For the correction of error, Johnson and Forest were ready. But they were determined to lend no encouragement to the policy of discrediting political opponents as a substitute for positive political positions. Hence when it was first proposed in the PC that the "X" letter be published, Forest, in the absence of Johnson, opposed the publication of the letter. Nevertheless, the PC requested Johnson to write Cannon a letter. Moreover, the next day, this request, along with the "X" letter, was made known to the membership in a way that left no alternative but to enter into the picture. We did so in a manner calculated to do the least possible harm to our movement. We sent our letter to Cannon and attached to it our report to the PC and to the membership of our part in the unity negotiations. We are requesting the PC that these enclosures also be published. We gave the PC a copy of the letter and enclosures sent to Cannon. Furthermore, we let it be known that we considered our responsibility discharged and that we would not ask for the letter to be published. If the PC wished to publish, that was its business. If it wished to apprise the members of it and the members demanded publication, that too was its responsibility. The letter is the property of the PC. We wanted no part in keeping the question alive. We have analyses that we shall make public. No one will have to urge us to publish these. They will consist of the rigorous analysis of the development of the WP from 1940 to the present day in which we shall show step by step the political and organizational degeneration which we have fought uninterruptedly for six years.

"Bureaucracies" and "Cliques"

The whole procedure of Shachtman from 1940 to today is to obscure his political vacillations and the unclear policies of his own camp by questions of "genuine party democracy". This is the corruption of our membership. In bourgeois society, every trick is used to prevent the workers seeing the political issues clearly and acting accordingly. Bolshevism, for its life, must do the opposite. We shall do everything at our disposal to make the membership see that the course of the Majority as climaxed in this campaign is the enemy of their collective and individual development as serious revolutionaries. Many of them know no better. They came to the movement wishing to learn. It is time they stopped to look where they are going, to think, to come to conclusions, and to act.

The WP leadership has committed many crimes against our movement. This latest maneuver with the scandal, the waste of time, the diversion of the attention and energies of the members, the possible embitterment of relationships throughout the International, the political degradation involved, could only have been undertaken at this time by desperate politicians as the climax of seven years of political disintegration.

Today, the WP lives according to the following evaluation of contemporary politics: The Stalinist regime is bureaucratic collectivist, totalitarian. It is ruled by a clique which practices the leader-cult, holds down the backward masses, miseducates them by force and deception and bureaucratically manipulates them. The Stalinist parties are totalitarian parties. They too are cliques which practice the leader-cult, deceive the backward masses and bureaucratically manipulate them. The Fourth International is led by a clique which is in the pocket of Cannon, the leader, who deceives his followers and bureaucratically manipulates them. The SWP is led by a clique which practices the leader-cult, and miseducates and bureaucratically manipulates the membership. The Johnson-Forest Minority is led by a clique which practices the leader-cult, miseducates its backward followers and bureaucratically manipulates them. Implicit, and not always only implicit, in this worldwide analysis is the idea that it is only because they lack power that the Fourth International, the SWP and the Johnson-Forest Minority have not completed the degeneration which imposes its bureaucratic manipulations on the backward workers by force.

To counteract these "bureaucracies" and "cliques" Shachtman has his "cadre". All types of revolutionaries are welcome. Their rallying cry is not revolutionary activity which is not suitable for the backward masses. It is not the mobilization of the parties for the task of transforming themselves into mass parties. For this the small, insignificant parties are not ready, whatever may be the objective situation. Their rallying cry is "democracy." Their main business is anti-Stalinism, anti-Cannonism, anti-Johnsonism. Their specific political method is exposure of the dishonesty, duplicity and bureaucratic methods of political opponents; by this means to effect the enlightenment of the duped, deluded and backward followers as to the unreliability of their leaders. The organizational force of this political activity is the "cadre", the sole, the original contribution of Shachtman to the political ideas of the Fourth International. This, stripped of all decoration, is the special political atmosphere of the WP.

The present campaign against Johnson is merely the climax of a political degeneration which began with the birth of the WP. In 1940, the then SWP Minority accused the SWP of "bureaucratic conservatism". The inference was clear. The WP, by democratic dynamism, would show how to build a party. The WP leaders had the confidence and allegiance of a membership whose efforts, devotion and readiness to oppose the bourgeoisie stand second to none in our movement, when all the circumstances of social origin and specific conditions in the United States are taken into consideration. But the proponents of democratic dynamism have shown themselves to be a colossal failure. They have no perspectives of any kind. In 1940 when they hoped to demonstrate their party-building capacities, they rallied behind a Russian position consisting of all sorts of diverse elements which later divided into the three leading positions in the WP, including that of the "P Minority". The real burden of the attack, however, was the leader-cult, the clique, bureaucratism, duplicity, etc. Now in 1947, when their perspectives of party-building are nil, they place the whole responsibility upon the proletariat and Stalinism. It is impossible to blame "bureaucratic

conservatism". Therefore, "bureaucratic conservatism" becomes the "bureaucratic jungle", and for the impressionistic analysis of the Russian state of 1940 is substituted the impressionistic analysis of the Stalinist parties.

Far more than in 1940, the exposure of the cliques, leader-cults, and all the shameful crimes of political opponents has become the means whereby the "cadre" is held together. This is the Bolshevism of the leaders of the Workers Party. It is the last resort of bankruptcy. The WP leadership knows that all its unique contributions to Marxism are doomed. It seeks to save its Russian position, which is being overwhelmed by state capitalism, by narrowing the Russian question down to one of defensism or defeatism. It knows that once there is a unified party within the United States, the bulk of the membership will discard the concepts of retrogressionism, no revolutionary situation without a revolutionary party, removal of the Socialist United States of Europe from the top of the order of the day, etc. etc. Hence, the frantic character of its attempts to smear all its opponents as the primary political campaign in the last few months of its existence.

"The Wrong Road"

Shachtman's unique contribution to political thinking, called "The Wrong Road" gains its sole political coloration from the quotations he cites from Johnson. In his anxiety to establish that we, the state-capitalists have entered into an unprincipled bloc with Cannon, the workers-statist, Shachtman throws all caution to the wind and recklessly introduces at this time, when the two parties are about to be united, such phrases as "opposite sides of the barricades", "I shoot in one direction and you shoot in another." All this is done by a principled man out to arouse the suspicions of the Johnson-Forest Minority that its leaders are introducing a "little change" to court the SWP. Contrast this to the sober and serious manner in which Johnson and Forest state their differences on the Russian question in their letter to Cannon:

"The Minority would like to clarify also its position on the Russian question. In our opinion the differences on the Russian question go very deep and it has been clear to us for a long time that they encroach upon the general politics of the International. However, so long as our particular struggle was devoted mainly to resistance against and exposure of the political positions of the WP, we did not emphasize more than was necessary our differences with the International. Now, however, that unity, in our opinion, is assured, not only in the U.S. but in the International as a whole, we propose to make very clear to the International what are the consequences of what we consider to be their entirely false position on the Russian question. In the SWP circular it is stated that the line of the Fourth International has been 'brilliantly analyzed in the new theses of Germain on the Russian question'. In our opinion, the theses of Germain

represent a serious blow to our movement, particularly because they use a method and arrive at conclusions which we cannot for one moment conceive as being acceptable to Comrade Trotsky. This the Minority proposes to express in no equivocal terms. But at the same time we wish to affirm our considered political judgment, which is that in the U.S. these questions cannot and should not be allowed to disrupt the work of building the American party."

The Johnson tendency, which arose from its Marxist criticism of Trotsky's position on the Russian question, needs no lessons on blocs from Comrade Shachtman. In 1941, we refused a bloc with the defeatist, Carter, against the conditional-defensist, Shachtman, on the ground that the Carterite brand of Bureaucratic Collectivism which posed the question of a third alternative represented the greater deviation from Marxism. Today, in the United States, we categorically refuse to make a bloc with Shachtman whose Bureaucratic Collectivism has become indistinguishable from that of Carter-Garrett. As to the bloc internationally, we ask: Defeatism for what? For critical support to Mickolajczk? For the proposal, at this stage of European developments, of entry by the European sections of the Fourth International into the respective Social-Democratic parties? Or for the mobilization of the masses in workers committees, peasant committees, with the perspective of workers power and the Socialist United States of Europe? If the Russian question were a question involving the practical activities of large numbers of the proletariat and therefore the practical activities of the party, unity would be impossible. Until that time, the question is a theoretical question. We remind the party of what we wrote in our analysis of the different tendencies on the Russian question.

"The Minority here affirms that any Marxist party which governs its practical politics by the theoretical perspective of bureaucratic collectivism as a 'third alternative' to capitalism or socialism-a) repudiates Marxism which is based from top to bottom on the duality of bourgeoisie and proletariat as contenders for mastery in modern society. b) leads inevitably to tampering with the fundamentals of Belshevik strategy. The result at the very best can be only the strengthening of bourgeois-democratic illusions in the party and in the masses."
(Statement of the Johnson Minority on the Origin, Character and Perspectives of the Johnson Faction, Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 16, p. 29).

For years no one has been able to get a word out of Shachtman on the theory of retrogression which dirtied the pages of the MI month after month. To this day, Johnson and the party wait in vain for the resolution of the WP on the American question, a new draft of which was submitted to the 1946 Convention on the morning of the day of its adoption. The party waits for a resolution on the Negro question into which is to be incorporated the resolution of Berg. The International waits in vain for some guidance on the jungle that is the theory of bureaucratic collectivism. On all

these questions, the leadership has been silent, has been silent for years. A hopeless confusion besets the party as to whether unity is desirable because the objective situation and the radicalization of the masses demand that we mobilize our forces to build the party; or whether unity is necessary in view of the political stagnation in the United States. Silent on all these fundamental questions, the party leadership jumps into its element and sets the stage for its real politics -- what Johnson said to Cannon after the Plenum had taken its decision. Isn't this the dragging of the party into the mud? Is no voice of protest going to be raised?

Precisely because Shachtman's politics consists of nothing else but exposures of bureaucracy and dishonesty, he must regard any sober statement of political agreement or disagreement as a bending of political line or a capitulation. As a substitute for political positions which can be judged by the vanguard in relation to the proletariat as a whole, he pursues a policy of destroying his opponents by attacking them in subjective terms as bureaucratic, dishonest, and deceptive. As he judges the working class politically always as backward and in terms of defeat, so he carries on his politics within the framework of disillusionment and rejection by the working class of political leadership in general. In the name of democracy, he seeks to rally around himself all who have a distrust of the leadership of the SWP and the International but who have no political position except their grievances and disappointments.

With no political positions which can win decisively in the course of the class struggle, Shachtman can think only in terms of "hunger" for blocs which have an immediate practical value in isolating an opponent. So lightly does he take his own political positions that he cannot even imagine that others would go to the political trouble of undertaking a serious collaboration to struggle against them. When confronted with such a possibility, he does not even bother to deny that he is revisionist. In his terror at being isolated, he can only try to drive a wedge between his political opponents by sowing mutual distrust. For what purpose: So he can win one of them to his own political positions? Hardly. His political positions are mentioned only in passing. Rather what he would like to achieve is the winning of Cannon or the Johnson Minority to his "right way" of making politics, euphemistically called "a high maximum of frankness and mutual understanding." Frankness and mutual understanding on what? Political differences? Hardly. Rather frankness in exposure and counter-exposure of every step in negotiations. The membership must be continuously informed of every disagreement, major or minor, every "confidential" letter, until it devotes all its energies to nothing else but speculations and suspicious probings of motives and intentions, and until it regards any judicious and firm leadership as bureaucracy and cliquism, "exclusively at the top." Practical collaboration is necessary in order that the members "will be able to check with each other on 'stories' that are circulating." With such a "right way", the Bolshevik party is to be trained to fight against the bourgeoisie.

In his haste to drive the wedge between the Johnson-Forest Minority and the SWP, and the SWP and the Johnson-Forest Minority, Shachtman divulges to the Johnsonites that "anybody who knows anything about the SWP leadership is aware that it has no use whatever for the political tendency represented by Johnson..." At the same time, he challenges the SWP that the deletion from the article on the Social Crisis in the United States and the General Strike "should be offensive" to them. He chooses to quote what we openly chose to delete after unity was seriously proposed. This, as we stated immediately, was our contribution to the climate which should prevail at this stage after seven years of antagonistic separation. He did not choose to quote what we stated as our considered political judgment in our American Resolution of a year ago, when unity was not an immediate perspective, and even before the SWP elaborated its American resolution.

"The Socialist Workers Party has had one inestimable advantage over the Workers Party in that in general, and in particular in its treatment of international news, it shows not the faintest trace of retrogression and places itself before the American working class as the Trotskyist party of the socialist revolution at home and abroad. Not only in relation to Europe but in relation to the United States the SWP propaganda is in the full Trotskyist tradition in that it is conscious always of the challenge to the bourgeois order contained in the aggressive actions of the proletariat. The SWP constantly makes the American workers aware of the coming social revolution in the United States."

At the time this proved to Shachtman that we had "capitulated to Cannonism" and that therefore a "cadre" was necessary. The same Shachtman, who, in the pre-convention period was anxious to prove the capitulation of Johnson to Cannonism, now emerges as the defender of the political differences of Johnson and Forest with Cannon. The role of clarifier of political differences is the one least suited to Shachtman, the perennial muddler of political positions. We do not need your help in this Comrade Shachtman. Events and politics will influence and decree the relations between the Johnson-Forest Minority, the SWP and the CIC, not your petty-politics. We of the Minority would be guilty of the utmost stupidity if we claimed that we know how the mass revolutionary party in the United States will be built. What we know is that the WP Majority's fundamental premises are wrong and that we have our contribution to make. We do not know who will be on which side and when, what will be the sides, how often they will change. All that is before us now. We of the Minority will put forward our views at the EPC with Bolshevik vigor and full of confidence, hope and excitement that at last the unified movement in the U.S. will develop in the midst of a radicalized working class, and that its major conflicts and difficulties, will take place on the American question under the impact of the greatest social force the world has ever seen -- the American proletariat which has at last lifted up its head and is staring the American bourgeoisie in the face, questioning everything it has hitherto accepted.

Shachtman spends a great deal of space on the supposed criminality of the bloc with Cannon against revisionism of the type of the IKD and of Shachtman. Was ever such hypocrisy and stupidity? First of all, there was no bloc. In our conversation with Cannon we talked about our hostility to bureaucratic collectivism, to the democratic political revolution, to everything connected with retrogression. But if there was a bloc, then what? Doesn't everybody know that Johnson and Forest are mortal enemies of these concepts. Haven't we published it far and wide? Here it is again. We are the irreconciled enemy of all this and in the International Movement we shall form a bloc against all this with whom we please, when we please, where we please. We hate it, despise it, we shall stamp upon it wherever we can. All who oppose this are our political allies, all who support this or play with it, are our political enemies. Wherever it is possible to differentiate ourselves from Shachtman and his retrogressionist, defeatist impressionistic politics and his organizational slander campaign, we shall do so. Trotsky, even after characterizing the then SWP Minority as the petty-bourgeois opposition, fought to retain it within the International. We have fought for unity and will continue to do so because of the necessities of the objective situation in the United States. We have been concerned to get the membership away from Shachtman's corrupting and demoralizing influence into the larger arena of the unified Trotskyist Movement. We have felt that it needs this guidance and further opportunity to learn than the Minority could give it.

Unfortunately, the SWP leadership bears its share of responsibility for the influence of the WP Majority over the membership. The SWP is the official section and the majority. From 1940 to today it has refused to recognize openly that its judgments in 1940 (a) that the WP was afraid of the war, (b) that it was afraid of the tasks of proletarianization, were absolutely false. It allowed the WP, up to the intervention of the CIC, to take all the initiative in regard to unity. It has read the internal bulletins where the WP passionately sought a way out of its failure to build a mass party. It rejoiced at the difficulties, saw only their negative side and hoped for the disintegration of the WP so as to be able to say: "We told you so." All this was only added material for the WP leadership. We are confident that in the unified movement the mischief that the WP leadership has made with the fundamentals of Marxism will be short-lived. They were able to continue it only because they were isolated in the period during the war. We were confident that sooner or later as the international Movement once more developed and events began to unroll, the political rubbish which Shachtman had accumulated would be blown to the winds. The SWP leadership would be committing a mistake in regard to the WP if it did not see this barrage of anti-Cannonism, anti-Johnsonism for what it is -- the recognition of coming defeat.

Who Has Muddied Up the Waters?

We ask the WP membership the following question: Who has muddied up the waters on unity? Johnson and Forest have given a full account of discussions on unity with the SWP and the representatives of the IS. But even if they had not, what then?

Johnson and Forest went out of their way to tell Cannon that there were suspicions within the WP that the offer of unity on the part of the SWP was a maneuver to win the Johnsonites. We said we did not believe this but if it were, we would not be a party to it. This, if you please, was after the WP Plenum had decided to accept the conditions. (We had deliberately avoided seeing Cannon or the SWP officially before the WP had taken its decision.) Now if when we said this, Cannon had asked: "Suppose the WP is carrying out a maneuver, what would you do?" and we had replied: "If the WP is not sincere and is maneuvering, then certainly we shall not collaborate with them on it either", or, more precisely, "We shall split." Even if this had happened, which it did not, we ask, what then? How did this muddy up unity?

The WP leaders assert that they took their decision under no threat. We agreed that their decision had been arrived at because of their position on unity. The X letter was published along with the comments by Shachtman. Wasn't that enough? No. The PC had a weapon in its hands. Look at the result. We repeat: If the waters are muddied, who muddied them? Johnson and Forest have been told in the PC by Gates that he can no longer speak freely in the PC in the presence of Johnson and Forest because of their political orientation. This statement, made by Gates before he went on tour, was protested by Johnson, who, however, said that he would not force the protest. Since Gates' return, he has repeated it unchallenged. So Johnson and Forest are agents of the SWP in the PC who will report the discussion and decisions of the PC of the WP to the SWP. All this is supposed to be Bolshevism and lead to clarification of political issues. When, as it inevitably must, all this comes before the membership, it is supposed to educate and prepare it for a fruitful unity. We have already made the following statement to the PC:

"In the past, Johnson and Forest have always kept the PC and the party fully informed on all questions dealing with negotiations or discussions with the SWP or other representatives of the CIC concerning unity. In our opinion, however, the question in the Committee has now reached a stage where what is at issue is the discrediting of a political opponent and not the advancement of unification or the clarification of the membership of the parties concerned and of the Movement. To the same degree that consistent with political principle we did everything possible in the past to advance the political struggle for the unification of the two parties, so now we do not propose to assist the Committee in diverting the discussion. We would, however, remind the Committee that the relations of Johnson and the Minority as a whole to the Committee and the party have a long history. We are prepared to go into it only, however, when it will have been made plain to all concerned who forced the issue, what purposes it was intended to serve and those who forced it are prepared to bear the full responsibility of the consequences. We are not prepared at this stage to make any statements other than

those we have made or protestations of loyalty to this committee. If the Committee is dissatisfied with our statements on the questions at issue, it is in command of a sufficient majority to take whatever steps it pleases."

Finally, we ask the membership to note that in our opinion the shameful politics of the PC had reached a stage where we considered that it was time for the faction all over the country to be personally informed and consulted. Johnson asked for permission to go on tour and it was granted. Johnson and Forest have been in communication. We take note of the fact that unity negotiations are now in the hands of the leadership of the WP, the SWP, and the CIC, to be ratified at the EPC. It is inconceivable to us that our movement will make a comedy of these serious matters or that they are nothing more than scraps of paper to be torn up at the slightest opportunity. On that basis, Comrade Johnson and Forest shall take on themselves the responsibility of initiating in the faction.

(1) a discussion on the best and most effective means of bringing before the International our version and analysis of the recent events and the political organizational course which they represent.

(2) a reconsideration of our previous attitude to the PC and the WP as expressed in our statements to the Convention and in the introduction to the article on the general strike.

The Party will be duly informed of our decisions. Until that time we propose to take no notice whatever of rumors, trick questions, publications of our private correspondence, or other political methods of the Majority.

J. R. Johnson
F. Forest

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THE "DRAMA" OF TROTSKYITE UNITY

By Jim Cork

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To a non-Trotskyite, the antics surrounding the movement for unity between the two Trotskyite factions have their hilarious side.

Now that unity between them seems practically assured, the theoretical organs of both sections are working overtime to present to their respective memberships (and to the world) their specific program on all the basic political questions which heretofore have divided (and still divide) the two wings of World Trotskyism.

This activity is especially feverish on the part of the Shachtmanites, who expect to be swallowed in the impending unity, and want, therefore, to leave their political legacy to the world before their newspaper and theoretical organ disappear into limbo.

A sort of woe-begone atmosphere surrounds some of their latest disquisitions on the question.

To an objective socialist observer, the about-to-be-achieved unity seems especially ironic in view of the fact, whatever intelligence and capability for critical independent thinking has been developed by Trotskyites in the U.S., seems to have gathered around the Shachtman wing.

From the pens of Shachtman, Howe, Judd, Erber, etc. have come some fine theoretical analyses on various political subjects, as well as some forthright straight-line left wing journalism.

The Shachtmanites have shed a good deal of the indefensible political and organizational heritage of Bolshevism.

Viewpoints Differ

They've polemicized vigorously and tellingly against the conception of Russia as a workers' state. They've broken with the conception of a monolithic one-party domination. They've developed ideas on democracy generally, and worker's democracy in particular, which differ in basic essentials from Lenin's and Trotsky's views.

Their ability, especially to break with some of Trotsky's pet theories, is regardless, for the moment, of the validity of their objections, a psychologic phenomenon of some significance, in view of the traditional hold that Fuehrer worship has had in the history of Bolshevism.

They have developed a relatively more realistic outlook than heretofore in dealing with the problems of the labor movement in America. A good deal of their basic political beliefs are indistinguishable from the attitudes of left-wing socialists both here and

abroad.

In short, their political development in the last five years has been in a commendably good direction.

Now they're about to allow themselves to be dumped into the "sumpf" again.

Stalin Ueber Alles

With the Cannonites, we move in an entirely different atmosphere. They haven't a shred of independent critical thinking in their makeup.

They are capable only of icon-worship, and writing footnotes to the history of Bolshevism and the works of Lenin and Trotsky.

They write today as they wrote 5 years, 10 years, 15 years ago. They have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

Their dogmatism, intolerance, doctrinairism, and air of omniscience make an overall combination hardly distinguishable from that of the Stalinists, whose psychological prisoners, indeed, they are.

Their intolerance of differences of opinion is, of course, exercised most severely against those nearest to them, and those most recently with them.

I still remember the arrogance with which Pope Cannon excommunicated Jim Farrell, when the latter dared (!) to criticize the ludicrousness of the Fuehrer worship in that famous (and hilarious) letter of Hanson's re: Cannon.

Were they the "ins" in the seats of power instead of "outs," their arrogance, intolerance, and surbness that they alone hold the truth, would make them quite capable of "achieving" all the anti-democratic excesses of the Stalinists.

The only difference would be that they would do those things in the name of a different conception of the world revolution than that presumably held by the Stalinists.

Such people can make no lasting contribution to a movement that must, above all, be the quintessence of equalitarian, democratic, tolerant attitudes (to them amorphous, bourgeois idiocies, no doubt) for no movement can be bigger than the calibre of the people that lead it and give it tone.

Quien Sabe?

What the Shachtmanites hope to achieve by unity with the Cannonites only their high priests can tell. So far the telling hasn't been conspicuously successful.

Indeed, the latest effort in that direction, "Unity -- Will It Work?" by Albert Goldman, in the April issue of the "New International," is a tragi-comic affair.

Goldman tries to make the coming unity as palatable as possible for his comrades, but what a lame, weasel performance it is.

Before the abstract fetish of unity, every difficulty is airily waved away by Goldman.

On almost every basic political and organizational question Goldman admits that the conceptions of the WP and the SWP are practically diametric opposites.

Yet, somehow, we are to believe, the unification of both groups will redound to the benefit of the American working class. 'Tis indeed political metaphysics!

"I Confess"

Goldman admits that:

1) The WP's conviction that Soviet Russia is not a workers' state is contrary to that of the SWP.

2) The WP is opposed to the defense of the Soviet Union in a war, though the SWP would be for it.

3) On the Polish question the WP would give support (though critical) to the national independence struggle of the bloc of independent socialists, peasants, bourgeois democrats, etc. against the Stalinists, but the Cannonites would (and do) support Soviet totalitarianism in this struggle. And although Goldman says, "As convinced as I am that defending Stalinist totalitarianism in any way, shape or form is a crime against the socialist revolution," he blandly swallows that pill, too.

4) That in this country the Cannonites ". . . generally favor support of and united fronts with the Stalinists. . . The WP takes a contrary position."

5) That the Cannonites also generally support the Stalinites in the elections whereas the WP is opposed to such support.

6) That the two organizations have different conceptions on the organizational problem i.e. basic differences on the nature of a revolutionary party, on the principle of democratic centralism, etc., not to mention such questions as the atmosphere inside a party, the problem of Fuehrer worship, etc., which the Shachtmanites have raised vs. the Cannonites in previous polemics.

No Rhyme

I have searched assiduously through Goldman's article for

one important, basic political or organizational belief which both groups share.

I haven't been able to find any such. Goldman's answer, then, to the question contained in his title, "Unity -- Will It Work?" is evidently, "Yes, although we have nothing, absolutely nothing in common."

'Tis downright unprincipled! The Shachtmanites will deserve all the castor-oil they'll have to swallow, but some good left-wing socialists are going to be lost in the shuffle.

At least those with a humorous turn of mind can gain some titillation for their funny bone when they ponder the nature of the three-ring political circus that must ensue when unity is finally achieved.

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