

# Fourth International

## **The Housing Shortage**

*By Arne Swabeck*

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## **The Coming American Revolution**

*By James P. Cannon*

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## **How to Fight the Anti-Labor Drive**

*An Editorial*

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## **The Conflict in Poland**

*By Ernest Germain*

*February 1947*

*25 Cents*

## Manager's Column

In the first month of FOURTH INTERNATIONAL's three-month campaign for 1,000 new subscribers, our agents have obtained a total of 225. This is 23 per cent.

Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, San Diego and St. Paul have already reached the half-way mark in the campaign. Boston and Cleveland are on schedule. The other cities, however, are lagging in their subscription work and this is the reason our national total is 10 per cent behind schedule.

The scoreboard shows subscriptions obtained through January 15:

### SCOREBOARD

City	Quota	Subs	Per Cent
Pittsburgh	10	7	70
Minneapolis	50	29	58
Milwaukee	15	8	53
San Diego	10	5	50
St. Paul	20	10	50
Boston	20	9	45
Cleveland	15	5	33
Chicago	80	23	29
Flint	30	8	27
Toledo	30	7	23
Connecticut State	10	2	20
Calumet	5	1	20
Portland	5	1	20
Rochester	5	1	20
St. Louis	5	1	20
Detroit	70	11	16
New York Local	200	33	16
Los Angeles Local	120	16	13
Philadelphia	40	5	13
San Francisco	40	4	10
Youngstown	30	3	10
Oakland	15	1	7
Buffalo	40	2	5
Newark	40	1	3
Akron	20	0	0
Allentown	5	0	0
Bayonne	15	0	0
Houston	5	0	0
Reading	10	0	0
Seattle	30	0	0
Tacoma	10	0	0
General	..	32	..
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>23%</b>

Correspondence from the Campaign Directors gives every indication that by the end of the second month the lag will be made up.

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Dick Carlson expresses the determination which put Minneapolis over the half-way mark: "We are proud of the work we are doing. When I say 'we,' I mean every comrade and close friend in Minneapolis. We realize the necessity of getting a

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Managing Editor: E. R. FRANK

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truthful and uncolored analysis of world events into the hands of as many people as possible. Each of us has made up his mind to get at least one sub."

\* \* \*

Winifred Nelson, Campaign Director for St. Paul, reveals the method that brought them to the half-way mark before one-third of the campaign was over: "We are using again the tried-and-true method we found successful in our last FI campaign—that of sending out letters and sample copies and following up soon afterwards by personal calls. In the last campaign, as you will recall, we ended second only to Milwaukee, topping our quota. Our achievement was 170 per cent. In this experience, we got new FI subs—half of our quota—by the letter-sample-copy-personal call method. We found on our call-backs that 40 per cent of THE MILITANT renewal-subscribers to whom we had sent letters subscribed to FOURTH INTERNATIONAL when they were visited. We are feeling pretty good over this campaign. Before the first month of

the campaign is gone, St. Paul has filled half its quota!"

\* \* \*

Although Milwaukee was "a few days late in starting the campaign because we have been busy looking for new headquarters," this branch is now third high with 53 per cent. Virginia Barrett, FI Agent, predicts that they will "go over the quota of 15."

\* \* \*

Cleveland Branch ordered an additional 10 copies of the January issue to be used in subscription work. "This issue sold out very quickly and it is a fine issue for contacts," explains Mary Gladstone.

\* \* \*

Miriam Rasmussen, Campaign Director for Chicago, reports that they have "a Chicago comrade who is out to get the national prize for the Pace-Setter with the most subs. . . . So far we have sold 23 subs. Comrades Belle R. and Frank F. are in the lead. In addition to the national prizes, we are offering a bound volume of FOURTH INTERNATIONAL for 1944 as a prize locally."

Harry Thompson, Local Los Angeles Literature Representative, reports that Central Branch has challenged East Side Branch that it will obtain twice the number of subs in proportion to the size of its membership. Comrade Thompson has proposed the following campaign procedure for the Local: "(1) Literature Agents to set an example by each taking on assignments to visit three or more Militant subscribers or contacts per week; (2) local awards for the highest sub-getter per comrade and branch; (3) a weekly scoreboard of branches and comrades to be stated in the City Letter; (4) the campaign to end with a social or banquet at which the awards will be presented." He further adds: "I believe that this campaign calls for initiative and ingenuity more than anything else. After all, a little Trotskyist initiative and ingenuity will go a long way."

\* \* \*

Toledo has combined the FI campaign with a campaign for Militant subs.

"Our campaign is set up on a point basis," writes Maggie Walker "Counting on 50 Militant subs per month, 10 FI subs per month and assorted literature sales, we have set a goal of 1000 points per team for the three-month period of the FI campaign. The two teams consist of the Housewives Team and the Trade Union Team. So far, the Housewives Team is leading with a score of 262 points to 192 points for the Trade Union Team."

\* \* \*

Pauline Ryder of Philadelphia reports that their "FI sub drive is beginning to gather momentum. Comrade Oliver is in charge of getting them and seeing that the comrades are constantly trying to get subs for our magazine."

\* \* \*

Seattle's Literature Agent, Clara Kaye, reports for the Branch: "The sub campaign has been well talked-up in the branch and you can expect the subs to start coming in. We have a contest chart up. It is a drawing of the FI cover with a list of the comrades' names and their scores serving as the Table of Contents. Over this is super-imposed a thermometer charting the progress made. Comrade Frank made this poster and it is excellently done. We plan to hold at least two mobilizations a month and we are asking the comrades to be responsible for at least one FI sub a month. If this is carried out, we should have no trouble in reaching our goal."

# FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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## REVIEW OF THE MONTH

### The Need of the Hour— A Program of Action That Will Halt the Anti-Labor Offensive

#### AN ALTERED RELATION OF FORCES

A year ago American labor replied to wage slashes and soaring prices which cut deeply into their living standards by engaging in the most extensive and effective series of strike actions in its history. In January 1946 the total man-days on strike jumped to a record 19,400,000 and in February they attained a postwar peak of 23,000,000. During these two months workers in auto, meat-packing, steel, farm equipment, electrical equipment and textiles hit the picket lines. This mighty offensive of industrial labor set back the union-busting schemes of the corporations, placed them on the defensive, and secured significant wage gains for the unions.

The beginning of 1947 presents a somewhat different picture of capital-labor relations in the United States. The strike movement is at a low ebb for the postwar period. Capitalist reaction has succeeded for the time being in regaining the upper hand. The workers are under heavy attack while their enemies are poised to deal new blows at organized labor.

Two big developments toward the end of 1946 marked the shift in the situation. One was the victory of the Republican Party in the November elections which intensified and fortified the sharp swing to the right already manifested by the Truman administration. Then came the abrupt termination of the coal strike in December by John L. Lewis. The miners were subjected to ferocious attack by the entire plutocracy, the government, and the courts which used injunctions, \$3,510,000 in fines, and threats of imprisonment to break the strike. Lewis ordered this retreat, although the miners stood firm and all sections of the labor movement appeared ready to back their fight.

#### ANTI-LABOR LEGISLATION

These events emboldened Big Business and lowered the morale of the workers. Now the agents of the monopolists are preparing to follow up their advantage by imposing new restraints upon organized labor. The gigantic strike movements of 1946 gave the employers considerable respect for labor's power on the industrial front. Direct strike-breaking by means of thugs, scabs and trumped-up "back-to-work" movements which proved effective in the past have now become outdated. To curb the struggles of the workers and whittle down their demands, the employers have recently had to rely in most cases upon government intervention and weak-kneed union leaders.

Unable to break up organized labor by frontal assault, Big Business is seeking to weaken and undermine the unions by legislative means. The main front of the war upon labor is now

concentrated on the political field where the capitalist rulers are strongest and labor is so pitifully weak.

The opening of the 80th Congress at Washington early in January saw a whole sack of anti-labor measures poured into the legislative machinery. There is virtually no opposition within the government itself to this union-crippling drive. Although Truman in his message refrained from openly endorsing the most savage proposals of the Republicans, he invited Congress to enact restrictions upon nation-wide strikes in coal, railroads, and other big industries. In any event, the Republicans completely control Congress and have the power to override a White House veto.

How far the labor-haters intend to go is demonstrated by the viciousness of the bills they have introduced. The principal measure being promoted by the Republican leaders is the Ball-Taft-Smith bill, a remodeled version of the Case bill vetoed last year by President Truman. This bill outlaws strikes for union recognition; prohibits check-off of union dues; requires financial reports to the government by unions; denies the right of collective bargaining under the Wagner Act to foremen, plant guards or inspectors. Welfare funds controlled entirely by unions cannot be supported by employer contributions.

#### TYPICAL PROVISIONS

Unions that strike while agreements are in force can be penalized and workers who strike in defiance of contracts and without official union permission can be fired. Mediation and Arbitration Boards are to be established to render decisions binding on both sides. Jurisdictional strikes and secondary boycotts are forbidden. "Cooling-off periods" of 60 days after the Mediation Board's intervention are provided for, and workers may be fired for striking during these periods. Provisions are also made for the use of injunctions.

Harsh penalties for violating these drastic provisions are included in the Ball-Taft-Smith bill. Individuals can get a year in jail, fines up to \$5,000, or both; unions can be sued for triple damages by the bosses.

It would seem that the authors of this omnibus bill have left little undone to gratify the National Association of Manufacturers. But a host of other anti-labor measures have been listed in both the Senate and House to take care of anything Ball, Taft and Smith have neglected. There are proposals to amend and castrate the Wagner National Labor Relations Act, limit industry-wide bargaining and strikes, outlaw the closed shop, weaken the Norris-LaGuardia anti-injunction law, and swindle workers out of portal-to-portal pay.

One of the most vindictive of these bills has been offered by Senator Ball to prohibit unions from negotiating with corporations outside a 100-mile area. This would in effect bar national unions from collective bargaining. At the same time the big monopolies would be left free to concentrate their full force against local unions. Thus the industrialists aim to chop the unions into little pieces so as to destroy them more easily.

While the corporation representatives in Congress are con-

triving to rob the workers of billions owed them in portal-to-portal wages under the Fair Labor Standards Act, they are preparing to reduce tax payments by the rich. Representative Knutson of Minnesota, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, has proposed a 20 per cent cut in personal income taxes up to \$302,000 which would bring tremendous windfalls to the wealthy but no real relief to the low-income groups. Whereas an average steel worker might save \$5.60 in 1947 taxes under this bill, Tom Girdler, Republic Steel president, would keep \$42,417 more of his \$275,000 salary.

The 79th Congress which was under Democratic control did not pass a single bit of progressive legislation. The FEPC was filibustered to death. The proposal to raise unemployment compensation to \$25 a week was knifed. The bill for a 65-cent an hour minimum wage was blocked.

Certainly the new Republican-dominated Congress with the labor-baiters running amok will not be less hostile toward the demands of the people or less subservient to Big Business. The Republican majority is not only trying to bottle up such progressive measures as anti-lynch and anti-poll tax bills, minimum wage legislation, and veterans' housing appropriations. It is intent upon weakening and destroying many rights such as the National Labor Relations Act that the workers have won by their past struggles.

It is clear to every realistic observer of American politics that the prewar era of reforms is dead and buried. The political agents of Wall Street are today driving in the opposite direction. Their program, dictated by the needs of U.S. monopoly capitalism to master the world and to degrade the living standards of American labor, must become increasingly reactionary and dictatorial. Instead of yielding new concessions to the masses, the capitalists have resolved to withdraw the old ones wherever they can. This postwar period is therefore an era of counter-reforms, of ever-deepening reaction which can be combatted and changed only by a coordinated political and economic offensive of the working class.

## AN IMPOTENT LEADERSHIP

The official labor leaders least of all understand the real character of the present situation. Blind to the signs of the times, they continue to rely upon the old methods of class collaboration, of "business unionism," of running to the White House for a few favors and lobbying in Congress to head off the worst anti-labor moves. Such rotten methods were never worth much, but they are hopelessly ineffectual today.

Now that all basic industry is organized, every important wage negotiation in steel, auto, coal, railroad, maritime, etc., becomes a crucial test of strength between monopoly capital and organized labor to determine what share of the national income each class will receive. Every big strike in industry and transportation tends inexorably to become transformed into a political issue of the first magnitude. That is the main reason why Truman turned upon Whitney of the Railroad Trainmen and John L. Lewis and proceeded ruthlessly to smash the rail and coal strikes. Under pressure from Big Business, Truman had to reassert the threatened supremacy of the capitalist class and its government over the insurgent labor movement.

Under these conditions only the full mobilization of labor's forces and resources for all-out battle against the monopolists and their government agents can beat back the reactionary offensive and win new gains for the workers. The capitalist rulers are determined to punish labor for presuming to challenge its privileges and power. The Washington politicians are

not disposed to make face-saving deals with the union leaders. It requires an aroused, united and fighting labor movement to force them to grant further concessions.

But the union chiefs fear to take the path of struggle either on the industrial or the political arenas. They no longer hope for measurable improvement in the conditions of the workers. They would be happy to hold on to what they have and, above all, retain their bureaucratic privileges.

## CAPITALIST FLUNKIES

Some have already indicated they are not at all averse to revisions in the labor statutes. With their class collaborationist outlook they are eager to resume their role in the days of the no-strike pledge when they policed the rank and file for the benefit of the corporations and their government. The pending restrictive legislation offers the reactionary union officialdom new weapons for bureaucratizing the unions and victimizing militants who resist the policy of capitulation and sell-out.

What a disgusting spectacle such leaders present! Fearing to break with an administration that has so often kicked them in the face, fearing to summon their forces for independent struggle against the Congressional anti-labor drive, they yield up one position after another to the class enemy without a fight. The AFL Metal Trades Department has shamefully declared that portal pay suits are a "dishonor" and condemned the CIO for trying to collect such payments from the employers. The heads of 15 million organized workers are down on their knees, begging the representatives of a handful of monopolists not to hit them too hard! This most militant working class has the most cowardly and short-sighted leadership!

During the coal strike not a single voice in the administration or Congress was raised in defense of the miners. Republicans and Democrats alike, including their "liberal" wings, acted in unison against the miners. The executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government worked together as a strikebreaking team. Now labor finds itself menaced by a fiercely hostile Congress dominated by the most direct and unabashed tools of Wall Street.

## NOTHING FORGOTTEN, NOTHING LEARNED

Despite this manifest bankruptcy of their policy of dependence upon the capitalist parties, the union bureaucrats show no signs of changing their course. One section of the bureaucracy headed by Murray evokes the ghost of Roosevelt, seeks to reform the Democratic Party, and revive the New Deal. But the New Deal is a stinking corpse which the prayers of Murray and the Stalinists cannot resurrect. With Wallace, the last survivor of the liberal wing has been unceremoniously kicked out of the administration. The disintegrating Democratic machine is securely in the hands of the Truman-Byrnes gang, who are cooperating closely with the Republicans.

Another part of the union bureaucracy is turning away from the Democrats and trying to come to terms with the Republican majority who hold the power. Their price is not high. They would be content if the Republicans would consent to divert or soften the blows in store for them.

This submissive attitude of the labor leaders makes the capitalists more arrogant and contemptuous and all the more determined to crush the unions. And it helps sow confusion and demoralization in the ranks of the workers.

The mass production workers are today in a state of suspended animation, of watchful waiting. They are somewhat baffled and perplexed by the obstacles in their way. The most

critical-minded are thoughtfully reviewing the experiences of the past year and trying to find answers to such fundamental questions as these: Why, after a year of intense struggles, do we find ourselves in retreat before the attacks by Big Business? How were the wage gains won on the picket lines so quickly wiped out by the price-gougers and profiteers? Why do we, who are so strong in industry, count for so little in the political life of the country? What must be done to change this situation, to halt the labor-baiters, and get out of the present stalemate?

### A REALISTIC PROGRAM OF ACTION

Throughout the past year the Socialist Workers Party has been energetically advancing a program designed to solve these pressing problems. One of the principal points in this program is the sliding scale of wages as the best means of defense against the constantly rising cost of living. With the jump in prices following the scrapping of price regulations, this proposal put forward by our party alone has been gaining support. The demand for a sliding wage scale has been approved by numerous auto, steel, rubber, packinghouse and other unions. In the form of a "cost-of-living" bonus, it has been included in the contract recently signed by the CIO Oil Workers with the Sinclair Oil Company.

The refusal of the majority of union leaders to fight for the sliding scale of wages has cost the workers dearly. The increases gained through strike action have been quickly cancelled out by price rises. The workers are now confronted with the need to engage in new struggles under less favorable conditions to retain what they previously won. Instead of regaining prewar levels, their real wages are driven ever lower.

Early in 1946 during the first great strike wave *The Militant* urged a United National Conference of Labor, with representation from all parts of the union movement, to achieve a common strategy and launch a unified struggle in defense of labor's rights and living standards. Later the UAW-CIO and many other unions from coast to coast endorsed this proposal. Finally, on Dec. 6, CIO President Philip Murray proclaimed: "It has become self-evident that there is a deliberate and monstrous movement under way to cripple, if not destroy, the labor movement of this country." To counteract this Big Business conspiracy, Murray called for a joint meeting of the leaders of the three national labor organizations, the CIO, AFL, and Railroad Brotherhoods.

So far the leadership has done nothing to implement this proposal. It is clear that unity of action, which is so imperative, can and will be achieved only through the insistent pressure of the ranks upon the reluctant top leadership. By initiating

joint conferences on a local and state basis the ranks can forge a solid fighting front and muster their maximum strength on a national scale for a successful repulse to Wall Street's war on labor.

### LABOR PARTY IS THE URGENT NEED

The third main point in the Socialist Workers Party program is the Labor Party. The swing toward reaction in Washington, the disillusionment with the Democratic Party, the revulsion against Truman's strikebreaking, the rout of the PAC-endorsed candidates in November and the fiasco of the PAC-CIO's policies, the obvious helplessness of organized labor on the political field have prepared the advanced workers for a complete break with the capitalist parties and the creation of a party of their own. From Green and Murray to Reuther and the Stalinists, the top union leaders are conniving to block the road to independent political action.

But fresh forces are surging up in the states and in the localities in support of the immediate launching of a Labor Party. The auto workers of Flint, Michigan, heart of the General Motors empire, have taken concrete steps in this direction. The Big Four GM locals there, Chevrolet, Buick, Fisher Body and A. C. Spark Plug, have set up committees to organize a Labor Party in the Sixth Congressional District. Their slogan is: "Fight Reaction with Independent Political Action! Build a Labor Party Now." Similar developments are taking place in Chicago and other industrial centers.

Wherever the labor party movement is strongest and its supporters best-organized, wherever opposition to the disastrous political course of the bureaucracy is most principled and effective, the influence of our ideas is unmistakable. The events of the past year have demonstrated what vast power is lodged in our clear-cut program and how attractive it is to the best militants in the unions. By persistent agitation and active intervention the slogans of a small party can spread rapidly through the mass movement and help lead it forward. Our ideas have gained influence because they supply realistic answers to the problems confronting the American workers.

The fight to maintain and advance living standards, the task of forging unity of action against the offensive of the monopolists and their government, the unpostponable need of building labor's own political party—this program of struggle can be promoted and realized only by the trade union militants. To break the grip of the officialdom upon the unions and thus release the gigantic power of organized labor, the militants must organize their dispersed forces into a cohesive left wing. This is the prerequisite for the struggle to smash the anti-labor assault.

# The Housing Shortage

By ARNE SWABECK

The housing shortage is becoming more and more acute with no real relief in sight. The mounting cost of living and the shrinkage in housing are the twin burdens that weigh most heavily upon the mass of the people. And they can lead to the most serious upheavals. We are not speaking about ravaged, war torn Europe where millions of suffering human beings must seek shelter among ghastly rubble and charred ruins. We are speaking about the richest country in the world.

Labor productivity in the United States has reached undreamed-of heights; skills are available and so are the raw materials. Technology made new and great strides during the war years. And yet, not even the socially necessary minimum of shelter is available to the people who produce. Does not this indicate the bankruptcy of a system?

The housing shortage is not a new phenomenon in the United States. It existed before the war; it existed during and before

the great depression of 1929. It becomes more and more aggravated as the capitalist system declines and decays. The housing problem, as well as the problem of other necessities of life, is indissolubly linked with the social and economic conditions of the masses. Nowhere in the world can capitalism point to having provided adequate housing for the people. Conversely there can be no real or lasting solution to this problem without a radical solution of the social and economic conditions of the masses.

The most conservative estimates for needs for dwellings in the United States vary from 3,500,000 to 5,000,000 housing units, with a minimum annual construction of 1,250,000 units. These estimates, however, do not at all touch the problem of rehousing that section of the population which is now condemned to live in the slums of the major American cities. To replace these sub-standard dwellings, according to the National Housing Agency, would require at least twenty years of record building which would provide 25,000,000 housing units.

Meanwhile the slum areas keep spreading relentlessly and irresistibly. Overcrowded, filthy, dilapidated buildings, in frightful state of disrepair, poorly heated in winter, suffocating in summer, lacking in toilet and bathing facilities, vermin and rat infested, disease-breeding hovels—this is the picture of the slums in the cities. These are the conditions in the teeming tenements of New York's Lower East Side and Harlem; they are repeated in such well known areas as the "alley dwellings" in Washington, the "Hill District" in Pittsburgh, the "Irish Channel" in New Orleans, Detroit's "Black Bottom," Cincinnati's "Basin," Columbus' "Sausage Row." Among the worst is Chicago's "Black Belt" where—although building experts agree that the density of urban population should not exceed 25,000 to 30,000 people per square mile—the density is 70,000 per square mile. This means 10 to 12 persons to a room in many buildings, and, five to six families sharing one toilet.

Those who live today on the rim of the slums are swallowed up on the morrow by this pestilential tide. Supplementing the big city slums are the shanties that are called "homes" in company towns. Here there is virtually no limit to the number of people per room.

## Hovels and Palaces

From these hovels of the pariahs, let us now turn to the other side of the picture—the luxurious palaces of America's "blue bloods."

It is in their palatial country estates—says Ferdinand Lundberg in his monumental work *America's Sixty Families*—that the rich families, niggardly in philanthropies, really extend themselves, for in these places they are sheltered from the prying eyes of the sweat-stained, fatigue-racked proletariat and the ever-trusting, infinitely gullible middle class.

It has become the recent fashion to point to the four estates and many apartments of William Randolph Hearst as representing the apogee of contemporary extravagance; but Hearst is merely "keeping up with the Joneses" and is doing it very noisily. We must disagree with Dixon Wecter when he writes in *The Saga of American Society*: "The greatest attempt ever made to achieve lordly splendor in America is William Randolph Hearst's 240,000 acre estate at San Simeon, California, with its estimated cost of \$15,000,000 for furnishings and antiques alone. Its great dining hall hung with Sienean banners and a magnificent Gothic chimney piece from the Château du Jour, its sixteenth-century refectory tables, Flemish tapestries, seventeenth-century Spanish candlesticks and old English silver, six Gobelin tapestries costing \$575,000, a notable collection of armour, and Cardinal Richelieu's own bed, are witnesses to the spoliation of Europe." Mr. Wecter is impressed by the fact that Hearst once transported a castle

from Spain to New York in packing cases, that he purchased St. Donat's Castle in Wales, and that at San Simeon he owns a private railway spur and three cars and a diner to transport his guests to the main *palazzo*. Overlooking an entire Bavarian village that Hearst has constructed at Wyntoon, California, Mr. Wecter also overlooks the fact that all this is merely the minimum standard equipment of the contemporary American multimillionaire.

From this juxtaposition of hovels and palaces we cannot fail to draw the conclusion that the housing problem, as well as all other social problems, reflects the distinction of class, of economic position, of wealth and poverty. On the one hand, boundless luxury—on the other, an ocean of want and misery. But, as we well know, in a system whose production is governed exclusively by the profit motive, the needs of the people must of necessity be left utterly disregarded. Production for profit and peoples' needs constitute two opposite poles.

The truth of this has never been more strikingly illustrated than in the whole record of the housing question. It is illustrated in the attitude and actions of the government and its agencies, in the conduct of the mortgage bankers, the real estate sharks, the material manufacturers, all the way down to the home building contractor.

That housing is one of the basic needs of the people nobody denies; and yet every housing program that has been projected since the end of the war has been stymied by the profit motive.

All that the Federal Housing Administration has to show to date are its so-called veterans' temporary emergency units, to be exact: 187,000 Quonset huts, trailers without wheels, chicken coops on stilts. All these are potential new shanty-towns and Hoovervilles. And even this program had to suffer cutbacks first of 13,000 units and then of 12,000 additional units because of constantly mounting reconversion costs.

## "Low-Rental" Housing

The Patman Bill, enacted into law early last year, set up a housing expediter with broad authority to issue directives for allocation of materials, prices and priorities. The aim was to speed construction of 2,700,000 homes, by private enterprise, over a period of two years. The Bill provided for an increase of one billion dollars in government authority to insure home mortgage loans. It authorized \$400,000,000 in subsidies to increase production of scarce materials. Thus the basic provisions of this Bill served to protect the profits of mortgage bankers and material manufacturers. The Bill, however, did little, if anything, to speed the construction of homes for needy people.

Although allocations were made for subsidies, the materials went by and large into the black market. Naturally, building labor followed the flow of the black market materials—mainly into speculative commercial enterprises. And at the end of the first nine months of the building expediter's tenure, only 286,200 permanent family home units had been completed in the entire country. Now "building expediter" Wyatt has quit.

The Wagner-Ellender-Taft Bill, which did actually contemplate some modest federally supported "low rental" housing, not to exceed 125,000 units, during each of the next four years, contained in one of its provisions a guarantee of a certain fixed return to investors in apartment house projects built on slum land.

But even this modest proposal for federally subsidized housing proved too radical for the profit-minded legislators. The Bill never reached the floor of the House of Representatives. Such is the government's record to date in relation to this urgent need of the people.

This do-little record dates back beyond Truman's administration. Let us recall what happened when President Roosevelt, during the first year of his reign, proclaimed that one-third of the nation was ill fed, ill clothed and ill housed: "We seek," he said, "the security of the men, women and children of the nation. That security involves added means of providing better homes for the people of the nation. That is the first principle of our future program."

These words were spoken to mollify the millions who were then out of jobs. A bone had to be thrown to the workers. So the President proceeded to set up such alphabetic agencies as the WPA, the FHA and the others. Yet no more than 133,000 units constituted the sum total of all public housing for the lower-income brackets constructed before the war began.

The FHA became one of the most substantial of these agencies, and it is still in operation. What is its achievement? Did it produce homes for the one-third who were ill housed? For the year 1940, according to FHA's own report, 47 per cent of all American families earned less than \$1,500 annually and only 5 per cent of FHA insured homes were built for them, while the other 95 per cent went for the higher income brackets.

Thirteen years later one-third of the nation still remains ill housed yet the government has not given any consideration whatever to the question of public housing. The reason is not far to seek. Champions of "free enterprise" are bitterly hostile to any public housing program. They understand very well that low rental housing for the working class would slash their juicy profits from speculative, real estate values and from exorbitant rents. Thus the peoples' needs collide with the profit motive; and the government, by its failure to act, makes it perfectly clear on which side it stands—on the side of the big profiteers. This is the fundamental contradiction that besets the housing program inaugurated by the Patman Bill. Moreover, this program is itself based by and large upon the outmoded idea of building for the individual home owner.

## Plight of the Workers

Private home ownership is definitely on the decline. In 1930, for instance, not less than 46 per cent of families living in towns and cities owned and occupied their own homes. By 1940 a survey made of six large cities, not including New York, showed that private home ownership had gone down to 25 per cent. So far as the American working class is concerned, it can by now—in 1947—be affirmed quite certainly that the workers' standard of living will hardly permit the luxury of private home ownership—at least not in the urban centers.

Who can afford to own a private home today? On the basis of standard FHA practices, say its own housing experts, the average family cannot afford to pay more for a house than the equivalent of twice its annual income. To illustrate what this means it should be borne in mind that right now the minimum cost of any house, including the well-known type of jerry-built "defense" home, in any large city or suburb is \$10,000. To afford such a home an annual income of \$5,000 is required. Obviously the average worker's income falls far short of sustaining such home ownership.

The end of 1946 saw even this minimum-cost housing washed away when President Truman swept aside all major controls, priorities and price ceilings, including the \$10,000 ceiling on new buildings. Construction of new homes will henceforth become further and further out of reach of those who are in the most desperate need of housing.

World War II veterans are supposed to have first call on new housing. Not less than 4 millions of them, according to a

survey conducted by the Census Bureau in June last year, want to rent new quarters or buy or build new homes. But they are now civilians and in the overwhelming majority are not any more fortunate than their fellow workers. The foregoing survey revealed that the average veteran in need of new quarters is able to pay not more than \$43 monthly for rent and not more than \$5,500 to buy a house. The survey further revealed that the average weekly income of prospective renters was \$44 and of the prospective buyers \$48.

Proof that the housing problem is indissolubly bound up with the degraded economic and social condition of the working class becomes still more conclusive when we examine these conditions in greater detail.

The Federal Reserve Board and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics have published a survey of the nation's 46 million families, their 1945 income and their liquid assets, including previous year's savings. The survey lists its findings for the lower income brackets as follows:

Income	Number of families	Liquid assets per family
Under \$1,000	9,300,000	\$ 20
\$1,000 to \$1,999	12,400,000	230
2,000 to 2,999	10,300,000	470
3,000 to 3,999	7,000,000	900

The figures are for 1945. Most of these families are hardly in a position to own their own homes. And it may not be amiss to ask the question: What has happened to the liquid assets of all these family groups as a result of the steeply rising cost of living during 1946? By and large the liquid assets of the lower categories have been already wiped out. Besides, the lower incomes listed can only in rare cases be called secure incomes. Buying a home with a twenty-year amortization, under such conditions, would indeed appear a risky venture.

Much ado is being made over the high cost of building. It is high, of course, as are all other costs under the profit system of production. The high cost is usually attributed to the archaic conditions prevailing in the building industry, wherever it is not simply blamed on the high wages of building labor. The first explanation merely begs the question. So far as labor costs are concerned, all of the numerous surveys made of the "high" hourly rate of building labor nevertheless agreed that this category is on the same low economic level as other workers, when the seasonal nature of the building industry is taken into account. As for the high cost of building materials it is necessary to note merely the fact that during 1944 profits of the lumber industry were 164 per cent above the 1936-39 average!

## Archaic Conditions

The building industry is the fourth largest industry of the nation, employing some 2,500,000 workers. Its archaic structure is disclosed by the fact that, at the last count in 1939, building contractors numbered 31,000 and sub-contractors 187,000. The natural outcome of this atomization is that production becomes snarled up in a multiplicity of small scale endeavors while additional charges accrue because of small scale material purchases and deliveries.

On the other hand, let us examine the huge project of Parkchester, an outstanding example of efficiency, put up by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in the Bronx, New York, at a total cost of sixty-two million dollars. This project accommodates about 17,000 families. It was built according to the most up-to-date plans, with the greatest possible standardiza-

tion, mass production methods and wholesale material purchases. Nevertheless rentals in Parkchester's 51 apartment buildings average \$15 a room. This project, reports the Metropolitan Life, renders a return on invested capital of better than 6 per cent.

Right here we come to the nub of the problem which is called "the high cost of building." No industry is so speculative. Speculation enters into every phase—from the buying or clearing of the land to the finished product, and, for that matter, throughout the tenant or owner occupancy. The industry is infested with a veritable wolfpack of profiteering speculators and gamblers in real estate. Land prices, says the National Housing Administration, summarizing the experience of 200 pre-war projects, averaged a cost of \$1,960 per family. This is a figure for cities where low values predominate.

And what about the cost of mortgage financing? Testifying before the Taft Senatorial Committee on Housing, one mortgage broker admitted that in his company's experience of building financing, including risks of depreciation, loss or foreclosure, the costs of service totaled not more than 1.47 per cent. Yet building loans usually carry up to the 5 per cent annual interest charge.

Those millions who are searching ever more frantically for a home may be surprised to learn that mortgage investments set an all-time high in 1946. According to the Federal Home Loan Bank Review preliminary figures indicate that the total of new mortgages made on homes for the year may reach \$8 billion. This is almost 40 per cent more than in 1928, the peak year of the building boom during the Twenties. Few homes were produced in 1946 but the mortgage bankers enjoyed unprecedented prosperity.

## Prefabricated Houses

Is prefabrication perhaps the answer to the housing shortage? One of the most widely publicized experiments conducted so far is the Buckminster Fuller house. It is constructed of aluminum, stainless steel and plastics instead of bricks and lumber. It weighs around three tons instead of the usual one hundred tons. It is circular instead of square. It hangs rather than stands. It is suspended from a central mast with cables fanning out, supporting the roof, the walls and the floor. Its construction is based on the principle that metals are stronger in tension than in compression. Moreover, the curved material parts are designed for manufacture in airplane factories. A single Wichita, Kansas plant now claims an annual capacity of 250,000 housing units.

Wyatt, the building expediter, before his resignation, made a big fight to have the huge Chicago government-built Dodge Plant turned over to the Lustrom corporation to produce enameled steel five-room houses.

Other prefabricators have experimented with plywood panel construction. One of them, the Foster Gunnison concern, a subsidiary of the U.S. Steel Corporation, has advanced funds for the erection of a new plant with a claimed capacity of one complete house every 18 minutes.

Despite all these spectacular claims, there is little evidence anywhere of prefabricated houses. Thus far prefabricated houses exist more in the exuberant ballyhoo of the press than in reality.

Very real, however, are the efforts to squeeze ever greater capitalist profits out of the misery created by housing needs. Included in this program are raids on the public treasury. The housing expediter backed up loans from the RFC to the tune

of \$75,000,000 to be advanced to 11 prefabricating concerns. The Lustrom corporation demanded \$52,000,000 although it had put up virtually no private capital itself. This corporation, it is estimated, would stand to make a profit of \$5,000,000 during the first 14 months of operation, or a profit of 1,400 per cent on its capital investment of—\$36,000. It would take thieves or bank robbers to possibly do better than that.

In addition, it is becoming increasingly apparent that these prospective manufacturers, sniffing a potential bonanza, have set their prices so high that, as they themselves admit, there is little difference in cost between a traditional house and a prefabricated one. But, claim these manufacturers, costs will ultimately be cut because of the buying of material in bulk and because of mass production of the component parts with unskilled labor. In short, unskilled labor—cheap labor—that is their great hope. The peoples' need for housing can go to the devil so long as their profits remain secure. Meantime, in their estimation, there could be no better start in the anti-labor offensive than to strike a blow against the well-entrenched building trades unions.

These are among the factors which cause these unions to be unfriendly, if not hostile, to prefabrication. Expansion of this type of building will bring the conflict to a head.

The building trades unions and the AFL, where these unions predominate, are rather critical of the present housing program. And this critical attitude is not confined to the prefabrication aspect. It springs also from their correct insistence upon large scale rental housing. With this in mind the AFL convention last year established a permanent housing committee. It also urged President Truman to call Congress into special session for the enactment of the Wagner-Ellender-Taft Bill. But these purely perfunctory efforts remained utterly ineffective. And even the modest objectives of this bill, which faces further modification in the 80th Congress, will prove ridiculously inadequate.

To sum up: the situation in housing is basically the same as all the other problems involving the necessities of life to the workers. Workers obtain only as much as they are prepared to fight for; only as much as they are in a position to fight for successfully. And as capitalism continues to decline, this maxim becomes more and more imperative.

The need for housing is an ever more pressing issue—a fighting issue. One year of buck-passing in Washington has terminated in a scandalous mess. What was originally a poor excuse for a housing program has been stymied, sabotaged by profit-hungry monopolies to whom the Democratic and Republican politicians are subservient. To effect any change in this situation will require a tenacious, militant struggle on the part of the workers.

With this in view, the Socialist Workers Party has advanced the demand that the eighteen billion dollars, now allocated by the federal government for war expenditures, be made available for a housing program. Such a demand has nothing in common with the dribbles for federally supported low rental housing provided for in the Wagner-Ellender-Taft Bill. The SWP demand proceeds from the basic assumption that housing for the people is a social responsibility which the government is obligated to assume. Resources of greater magnitude were available for war. They should be equally available for peace. The duty is very clear: Provide adequate housing for every family, including the rehousing of the millions of slum dwellers.

Our immediate demands acquire their full meaning, of course, only in the context of the general revolutionary pro-



gram of which they are a part. Above all does this apply to our demands for adequate housing. The full and complete solution of the housing question is most intimately and directly bound up with a socialist solution of all the burning problems of society.

Let us recall the celebrated housing projects of Vienna, including the famous Karl Marxhof. Magnificent homes were erected in Vienna for workers, paid by taxation, with the heavier levies on the upper income brackets. Rentals were based on the expenses for upkeep and management. These projects were the proud creation of Austrian Social Democracy. For years the Austro-Marxists held an overwhelming majority in the Vienna City Council, receiving at one time as high as 90 per cent of the popular vote. This party never entertained any idea of leading its supporters to install the workers in power and build socialism. Perish the thought. Instead, it limited itself to building workers' homes. This was a noble venture. But in February 1936, Chancellor Dolfuss, upon the urging of Mussolini, trained cannons on the buildings, demolished them, crushed all workers organizations, and in the counter-revolutionary civil war established the rule of the reactionary Heimwehr. Gone were the magnificent workers homes.

The lesson is inescapable. Without the socialist solution even such noble ventures come to naught. Conversely, the capitalist profit system itself remains the greatest obstacle in the way of adequate housing for the people, just as it stands in the way of satisfying all the other peoples' needs. Hence our determination to fight for the socialist solution. In the last analysis only nationalized economy with planned production under workers' control can operate in the interest of the people.

So far as the building industry is concerned, it may appear today one of the most difficult in which to introduce nationalized planned operation. While producing one of the most es-

sential commodities, this industry is very complex, composed of many crafts and skills and coupled with a great diversification of materials. It rests on the basis of ruthless speculative financing.

Yet housing remains a social problem of the highest order. And the complexity of the building industry emphasizes only all the more the necessity of nationalization and planning. Witness the situation that now exists. The problem of securing shelter is one of the greatest uncertainties for most working people, subject as they are to the vicissitudes of the capitalist business cycles. Those who have sufficient savings for a down payment on a home stand to lose it during the depressions. Renting tenants unable to pay are mercilessly evicted. The need for homes is never satisfied, precisely because the profit system bars the way. Assuredly it is urgent to make a change here—a change to production for use, to planning.

Such a system would first of all put an end to speculative land owners, to real estate sharks and rent-gougers, not to mention the profit hungry mortgage brokers and financiers.

Once the building industry is nationalized it would be possible to plan according to the needs and the country's ability to produce. Not only the field of construction, but all the branches producing material would be coordinated, allocations made and measures taken for improvement where shortages appear. Every building worker would be guaranteed steady employment and a living wage. Only then would it be possible to utilize to the fullest extent new inventions, new and more efficient methods, as well as new and better materials. Healthy and comfortable living quarters would be the rule. Every family engaged in useful work would obtain housing to which it is entitled. Profit returns would no longer enter into calculations for home building. On the contrary, the needs of the people would be the highest concern.

# The Coming American Revolution

*Speech Delivered at the 12th National Convention of the SWP, November 15-18, 1946*

By JAMES P. CANNON

We have undertaken as our central task at this 12th Convention of the Socialist Workers Party to analyze the present stage in the development of United States imperialism as it emerged from the Second World War—and its further perspectives—and to draw the necessary conclusions from this analysis.

In our main thesis we deal exclusively with the perspectives of the American Revolution. Secondary questions of tactics, and even of strategy, are left for consideration under another point on the agenda after we have discussed and decided the main question of perspective.

## Why Are the Theses on Perspectives Needed Now?

The question might be asked: Why are the theses on perspectives needed now? In order for the party to see clearly on the road ahead it is necessary to have a main orientation and a long-range view of future developments. The theses we have presented are needed at the present moment for a number of reasons.

First, the whole Trotskyist concept of our epoch as the epoch

of revolutions, has been challenged by a new school of revisionists of Marxism. What answer do we give to this challenge, with specific reference to the United States of America?

What conclusions do we draw from the war and its consequences; from the new power of American imperialism; from the postwar prosperity; and from the retardation of the European revolution? What conclusions do we draw from these great events for the conduct of our own work and for our own future outlook in the United States?

Secondly, what shall we say to our co-thinkers in other lands about revolutionary prospects in the United States? They are surely waiting to hear from our convention on this question, for it is of the most vital and decisive importance for them. This applies to the workers of Europe, but not only to them. It applies to the workers of Russia, of South and Central America, of China, Japan, Asia as a whole, India—in fact, to the workers of the whole world which lies today under the shadow of American imperialism.

And finally, what shall the party teach the new members who today are streaming into our ranks by hundreds and who will come to us tomorrow in thousands? What shall we tell

them concretely about the prospects of the revolution in the United States? That is what they want to know above everything else.

Our document undertakes to give straight answers to all these questions.

Another question may well be asked: What is new in the "Theses on the American Revolution" presented by the National Committee?

In one sense it can be said that nothing is new; for all our work has been inspired by, and all our struggles with opportunist tendencies have been derived from, a firm confidence on our part in the coming victory of the American workers.

In another sense it can be said that everything is new; for in the theses of the National Committee on the American Revolution we are now stating, explicitly and concretely, what has always been implied in our fights with opportunist organizations, groups and tendencies over questions which were derivative from this main outlook of ours.

That has been the underlying significance of our long struggle to build a homogeneous combat party. That has been the meaning of our stubborn and irreconcilable fight for a single program uniting the party as a whole; for a democratic and centralized and disciplined party with a professional leadership; for principled politics; for the proletarianization of the party composition; for the concentration of the party on trade union work ("trade-unionization of the party"); and, if I may say so without being misunderstood, for its "Americanization." All of this derived from our concept of the realism of revolutionary prospects in America, and of the necessity to create a party with that perspective in mind.

In short, we have worked and struggled to build a party fit to lead a revolution in the United States. At the bottom of all our conceptions was the basic conception that the proletarian revolution is a realistic proposition in this country, and not merely a far-off "ultimate goal," to be referred to on ceremonial occasions.

I say that is not new. In fact, it has often been expressed by many of us, including Trotsky, in personal articles and speeches. But only now, for the first time, has it been incorporated in a programmatic document of the party. That's what is new in our "Theses on the American Revolution." We are now stating explicitly what before was implied.

For the first time, the party as a party is posing concretely the fundamental question of the perspectives of the American Revolution.

You will note in your reading of the theses that secondary questions of tactics and even of strategy, with all their importance, are left out. And this is not by accident or negligence, but by design. The theses deal only with analysis and perspectives—and these only in the broadest sense—*because that is the fundamental basis from which we proceed.*

Tactical questions and even questions of great strategical importance—such as the alliance of the labor movement and the Negro people, the role of the returned war veterans, the relations between the workers and the poor farmers and the urban petty-bourgeoisie, the questions of fascism and of the labor party—these questions with all their great subordinate importance are left out of the main theses for separate consideration in other documents. They will be considered at another time in the convention, because the correct answer to all of them depends in reality on a correct answer to the main question of general perspective posed in the theses of the National Committee.

Of course, a general line, a general perspective, does not guarantee that one will always find the right answer to derivative questions, the secondary issues. But without such a general orientation, without this broad over-all ruling conception, it is quite hopeless to expect to find one's way in tactical and strategical questions.

The theses have been criticized already by people who deal exclusively in "the small coin of concrete events." We have been criticized because we "do not mention concrete tasks" and "pose no concrete problems."

That is true. But what is wrong with that procedure?

We are Marxists; and therefore we do not begin with the small questions, with the tactics, or even with the strategy. We first lay down the governing line from which the answers to the secondary questions derive.

Those who preoccupy themselves primarily with tactics reproach us for our procedure, and allege that it reveals the difference between their political *method* and ours. That is quite correct. We proceed from the fundamental to the secondary; they proceed by nibbling at the secondary questions in order to undermine the fundamental concepts. There is indeed a difference in method.

Our theses specifically outline the revolutionary perspectives in America and require the party to conduct and regulate all its daily activity in the light of these perspectives.

## Internationalism

Our preoccupation at this convention with American affairs and American perspectives does not signify a departure on our part from the time-honored internationalism which has always distinguished our tendency. Rather, we are taking a step forward in the application of our internationalist concepts to American affairs. That means to bring them down from the realm of abstraction and give them flesh and blood.

We began in 1928 with a struggle for internationalism against the dogma of "socialism in one country" which had been imposed upon the Comintern and all its sections by the Stalinist revisionists. That was the most fundamental of all the principled questions which have shaped and guided the development of our movement in America for the past 18 years.

We said then, and we still believe, that the modern world is an economic unit; and that not a single important social problem—and certainly not the most important problem, the socialist reorganization of society—can be definitively solved on national grounds.

With the presentation of the theses of the National Committee on the perspectives of the American Revolution, we are adding a correlative idea to the following effect: It is no longer possible to speak seriously about the world socialist revolution without specifically including America in the program. Today that would be almost as utopian as was the theory of "socialism in one country" when it was first promulgated by Stalin for Russia in 1924.

This was always true, but it is truer now than ever in the light of the Second World War and its outcome. The United States has emerged from the war as the strongest power in the world, both economically and militarily. Our theses assert that the role of the United States in further world developments will be decisive in all respects.

If the workers in another country, or even in a series of other countries, take power before the revolutionary victory in the United States, they will have to defend themselves against

the American colossus, armed to the teeth and counter-revolutionary to the core.

On the other hand, a revolutionary victory in the United States, signaling the downfall of the strongest bastion of capitalism, would seal its doom on an international scale.

Or, in a third variant, if the socialist revolution should be defeated in other countries or even on other continents, and pushed back and retarded, we can still fight and win in the United States. And that would again revive the revolution everywhere else in the world.

The world situation makes it quite clear that platonic internationalism is decidedly out of date in this country. Internationalism, as the Trotskyists have conceived it, means first of all, international collaboration. But in our view this international collaboration must signify not only the discussion of the problems and tasks of co-thinkers in other countries—this is where platonic internationalism begins and ends—but also the solution of these problems, above all our own specific problems, *in action*. That is our conception of internationalism as we mean to apply it and as we have expressed it in the theses.

One-sided internationalism—preoccupation with far-off questions to the exclusion and neglect of the burning problems on one's own doorstep—is a form of escapism from the realities at home, a caricature of internationalism. This simple truth has not always been understood, and there are some people who do not understand it yet. But our party can justify its existence only if, beginning with an international program, it succeeds in applying this program to the conditions of American life and confirming it in action.

This presupposes first of all an attentive study of America and a firm confidence in its revolutionary perspectives. Those who are content with the role of commentators on foreign affairs—and it is surprising how many there are—or that of a Red Cross society to aid other revolutions in other countries, will never lead a revolution in their own country; and in the long run they will not be of much help to other countries either. What the other countries need from us, above everything else, is one small but good revolution in the United States.

Trotskyism—which is only another name for Bolshevism—is a world doctrine and concerns itself with all questions of world import. But let us not forget—or rather, let some of us begin to recognize for the first time—that America, the United States, is part of the world; in fact, its strongest and most decisive part, whose further development will be most fateful for the whole.

It is from this point of view that we deem it necessary now to outline more concretely and more precisely than before our estimation of American perspectives, and to concentrate on the preparation for them. When we speak of the “Americanization” of the party in this sense we are not speaking as vulgar nationalists—far from it—but as genuine internationalists of the deed as well as of the word.

## The Objective Factors for the American Revolution

Our theses on the perspectives of the American Revolution proceed in accord with the Marxist method and the Marxist tradition by analyzing and emphasizing first of all the objective factors that are making for the revolution. *These are primary. These are fundamental.* Any other approach than that which begins with the objective factors is unrealistic, mere wish-thinking utopianism, no matter how revolutionary-minded its proponents may be.

This characterization of unrealism applies also to the new revelation of those who have exalted the subjective factor—meaning thereby the party and its strength or weakness at the given moment—to first place.

It would be incorrect, however, to add the supplementary qualification that these latter-day experts of the subjective factor, these latter-day revisionists, are “revolutionary-minded.” They are unrealistic, but not revolutionary-minded, for they employ their new “theory” exclusively for the explanation of past defeats and anticipation and prediction of new ones. I don't see anything revolutionary about that.

Our theses pay due acknowledgement to the great strength of United States imperialism. Let no one accuse us of failing to give the American imperialist power its due. We paid due acknowledgement to it. This is correct and proper in a document which aims at scientific objectivity; for the might and resources of the Yankee colossus are so imposing in relation to all other countries, and in relation to anything that has ever been seen in the world before in the realm of material power—and have been so well advertised in the bargain—that no one could possibly overlook them.

But our theses—and here we demarcate ourselves from all those who are hypnotized by the superficial appearance of things—point out not only the strength of American imperialism but also its inherent weaknesses; the contradictions from which it cannot escape; and the new, even greater, power which it has created and which is destined to be its grave-digger—the American working class. That is also part of the American picture which has to be observed and noted if one wants to have a completely true and objectively formulated document.

A one-sided view of the American capitalist system—overestimation of its power and awe-stricken prostration before it—is the source of many illusions. And these illusions, in turn, are the chief source of American labor opportunism in general; of the capitulation and treachery of the radical intellectuals *en masse*; of Stalinism; and of all varieties of reformism and Menshevism.

In considering the perspectives of the American capitalist system in general and of the present postwar prosperity in particular, we observe a peculiar and rather interesting anomaly. The capitalist masters of society, and their ideologues and economic experts, enter the new period with doubts and fears which they do not conceal; while the greatest confidence in the long life and good health of the present order of society in America is either openly expressed or tacitly implied by those who set themselves up as representatives of the workers—namely, the official leadership of the labor movements and the Mensheviks of all grades.

The American bourgeoisie entered the great boom of the Twenties with the exuberant confidence and enthusiasm of alchemists who had finally discovered the philosopher's stone which turns everything into gold. In that golden age of American capitalism a new school of bourgeois economists came from the colleges to proclaim the glad tidings that Marx had been refuted by Henry Ford; that American business genius had discovered the secret of full employment and permanent prosperity without interfering with the private ownership of the means of production, but on the contrary, strengthening it and aiding its concentration.

They continued to beat the drums on this theme up to the year, the month and even to the day when the stupendous myth of the Twenties was exploded in the stockmarket crash of 1929. The very week in which the whole structure came tumbling down, the most learned articles were published in the name of

the most eminent college professors explaining that this prosperity was going to go higher and would continue endlessly.

It is true that the labor leaders and the Social Democrats in this country and throughout the world were captivated by the myth of permanent prosperity in the Twenties and were enlisted in the great parade. But they only followed; they did not lead. The capitalists were in the lead, full of confidence and optimism in those days. The capitalists and their economists were fortified in their faith by their ignorance, and that is a wonderful fortification for some kinds of faith.

They simply observed that profits rolled in and productivity increased at a rate and on a scale never known before, and that this continued year after year. Hypnotized by the marvelous empirical phenomenon, they mistook a passing phase for a permanent condition.

This misunderstanding was widely shared. The myth of the Twenties penetrated deeply into all social strata in the United States and imbued even the great mass of the workers with future hopes of prosperity and security under capitalism. Those were the conditions under which the pioneer communists had to lay the foundation for a party aiming at the revolution. The confidence and illusion in the permanence of the prosperity of capitalism penetrated down into the depths of the working class itself.

The great boom of the Twenties developed under the most favorable conditions. The American sector of capitalist economy was still in its healthy prime, relying on a vast internal market of its own which extended from coast to coast and from Canada to the Gulf, and on an expanding foreign trade. All other conditions were most favorable then.

But in spite of that, it is now a matter of historical record that this great boom ended with the stockmarket crash of 1929. It is a matter of record that the crisis lasted, with some fluctuations, for ten years.

The salient facts and figures about the crisis of the Thirties are recited in our theses. They show the depth and intensity of the crisis, its horrible effects in terms of human misery, and the irreparable blows it dealt to the American capitalist system. National income was cut in half, and with it the living standards of the workers were cut in half. Unemployment reached the figure of 20 million out of a working-class population of no more than 40 million at the time.

The partial recovery, brought about in large measure by huge government expenditures, only led to a second sharp drop in 1937, a crisis within the crisis. The crisis as a whole lasted for ten solid years. And even then, a way out to the revival and increase of production and the absorption of the unemployed, was found only in the war and the colossal expenditures connected with it.

And this artificially induced recovery, which greatly expanded the productive plant of the country and the numerical force of the working class, has only deepened the contradictions and has prepared all the conditions for the explosion of another crisis, far worse than the Thirties and fraught with far more serious social implications.

So, in surveying the future prospects of American capitalism, we simply heed the counsel of realism by putting the question: If American capitalism was shaken to its foundations by the crisis of the Thirties, at a time when the world system of capitalism—and America along with it, and America especially—was younger, richer and healthier than it is now; if this crisis lasted for ten years, and even then could not be overcome by the normal operation of economic laws; if all the basic causes

and contradictions which brought about the crisis of the Thirties have been carried over and lodged in the new artificial war and postwar prosperity, with new ones added and old ones multiplied many times; if all this is true—and nobody but a fool can deny it, for the facts are clearly to be seen—then what chance has the capitalist boom of the Forties, that we are living under now, to have a different ending than the boom of the Twenties?

Marxist realism tells us that it can be different only insofar as the crisis must go far deeper, must be far more devastating in its consequences, and must come sooner than it came in the boom of the Twenties.

The specious theory expounded by the foolishly optimistic bourgeois economists in the heyday of the capitalist boom of the Twenties, to the effect that Marx had been outwitted by American business genius, was refuted by the ten-year crisis of the Thirties—and that crushing refutation remains in the memory of all.

How inexcusable, then, how absurd, how downright reactionary is the cultivation of this myth under the new conditions today!

In justice to the bourgeoisie and their ideologists it must be admitted that they, instructed by the experiences of the past, now take a far more sober and cautious position in their prognostications of the future. The burnt child fears the fire—that is, if he is a bourgeois economist, a businessman, and not a theoretical trifle.

The bourgeois economists and businessmen talk today far more of “boom and bust” than of boom without end. Any businessmen’s economic review you may pick up at random expresses dark forebodings for the economic future. They speak quite casually—as though it is a matter of course, to be taken for granted—of an impending “shake-out” which will slow down the wheels of production and bankrupt the smaller firms which have flourished on the fringes of the boom.

At first, they referred to this process as a “shakedown,” but that expressed their thoughts too truthfully. And since bourgeois economists cannot live without lying and dissimulating, they stopped talking about the “shake-down” and finally hit on the euphemistic substitute of a “shake-out.”

That sounds better but it will not be one cent cheaper.

The sole chorus of optimism, where the economic prospects of American capitalism are concerned, is that raised by the American variety of Mensheviks. And that is a thin, piping chorus of trebles and tremolos, without a bass voice in it, or a baritone, or even a first-class tenor. It is a eunuch’s chorus.

Our fundamental theses on the American Revolution do not tie themselves to the economic prospects of the next month or the next year. They deal exclusively with the long-range inevitable outcome of the present artificial prosperity. From the point of view of our theses it makes no difference whether the deep-going crisis begins in the early spring of 1947, as many bourgeois economists are predicting; or six months later, as many others think; or even a year or two later, as is quite possible in my opinion. Our theses do not consider immediate time-schedules, but the *general perspective*. That is what we have to get in mind first.

We take the position that the crisis is *inherent* in the situation; that it may not be escaped or avoided; and that this crisis, when it strikes in full force, will be far deeper and far more devastating than was the crisis of the Thirties. As a consequence it will open up the most grandiose revolutionary possibilities in the United States. That conception must be at

the base of the policy and perspectives of our party from now on.

I proceed from the discussion of the objective factors in the broadest sense, as our theses do, to go over to another of the most fundamental factors making for the coming American Revolution and its victory.

The American working class which confronts the next crisis will not be the disorganized and helpless mass which met the crisis of the Thirties in bewilderment and fear, and even with an element of despair. Great changes have taken place in the meantime, and all these changes redound to the advantage of the revolution.

## The Transformation of the American Working Class

The proletariat greatly increased in numbers with the expansion of industry during the war. Millions of Negroes, of women, and of the new generation of youth have been snatched up out of their former existence and assimilated into the processes of modern industry. Thereby, they have been transformed from a multitude of dispersed individuals into a coherent body imbued with a new sense of usefulness and power.

Most remarkable of all, the most pregnant with consequences for the future, is the truly gigantic leap which the American workers made from disorganized individual helplessness to militant trade union consciousness and organization in one brief decade. The trade union movement in the early Thirties embraced barely more than three million members. Today the figure stands at *15 million members of organized labor in the United States*.

One can point to this fact and say that this represents a remarkable growth. But these bare figures, eloquent as they are, do not in themselves tell the whole story, the true story. For of the three million-odd members of the trade unions in the early Thirties, the great majority were composed of the thin stratum of the most skilled and privileged workers who are the most conservative in their social thinking. The great bulk of workers in the mass production industries—the most decisive section of the proletariat—were entirely without benefit of organization and had never even known the experience of it.

In spite of that—or more correctly, because of that—when these mass production workers took the road of trade union organization, with the partial revival of industry in the middle Thirties, they were not impeded by the old baggage and deadening routine of the conservative craft unions. They started from scratch with the modern form of organization—the industrial union form—and with the most militant methods of mass struggle, which reached their apex in the great wave of sit-down strikes in 1937.

The benefits these mass production workers derived from trade unionism were wrested from the employers in open struggle, and therefore were all the more firmly secured. The stability and cohesiveness of the trade union organizations created in these struggles were put to the test in the strike wave of the past year. Here we saw a clear demonstration of the great difference in the relationship of forces between the workers and the capitalists at the end of World War II from that which prevailed at the end of the First World War, a difference entirely in favor of the workers.

After the successful termination of the First World War “to make the world safe for democracy,” the ruling class of America embarked on a furious reactionary campaign to break the unions, to establish the open shop and to suppress all forms of labor radicalism. In the “Palmer Red Raids” of 1919 hun-

dreds of political meetings were broken up and thousands of radical workers were arrested, hundreds were sent to prison, whole ship-loads of foreign-born workers were deported. The newly-founded Communist Party was savagely persecuted, its leaders arrested and indicted and the party driven underground.

Simultaneously, the steel strike was broken, in part by ruthless violence and in part by the wholesale importation of strike-breakers; unions newly-formed during the war were broken up and scattered right and left; the railway shopmen’s strike was defeated in 1922. American capitalism, smashing all opposition before it, marched confidently into the strike-less, open-shop paradise of the great boom of the Twenties.

The same thing was attempted, or at least contemplated, for the period immediately following World War II, but the result was a miserable fiasco. This time it was the organized workers who were victorious on every front.

The great industrial unions of the steel, auto, oil, packinghouse, electrical and maritime workers demonstrated their capacity to bring production to a complete stop until the employers came to terms. So great was the new-found solidarity and militancy of the workers that neither violence nor the importation of strike-breakers—the decisive factors in the defeat of the strikes following World War I—could even be attempted by the bosses.

Millions and tens of millions of workers in other industries, profiting by the example of the auto, steel, packinghouse, electrical and other strikes, and riding on the wave created by them, gained wage increases by “collective bargaining,” while keeping their unions intact and even strengthening them.

Where did this marvelous labor movement come from? Who created it?

Here we must pay due acknowledgement to American capitalism. By the blind operation of its internal laws and method of operation, it has created the greatest power in the world—the American working class. Here is where Marx takes revenge on Henry Ford. Capitalism produces many things at a rapid rate and in great quantities. But its richest contribution to the further and higher development of human civilization is the production of its own grave-digger—the organized working class.

American capitalism, as we know, could not work the miracle of boom-without-crisis. But in the period of the Twenties and Thirties, working blindly and unbeknownst to itself, it wrought some other wonders which border on the miraculous.

American capitalism took millions of bare-footed country boys from the bankrupted farms of the country; put shoes on them and marched them into the regimented ranks of socially-operated modern industry; wet them in the rain of the man-killing speed-up exploitation of the Twenties; dried them in the sun of the frightful crisis of the Thirties; overworked them on the assembly line, starved them on the bread-line, mistreated and abused them; and finally succeeded in pounding them into a coherent body which emerged as a section of the most powerful and militant trade union movement the world has ever known.

American capitalism took hundreds of thousands of Negroes from the South, and exploiting their ignorance, and their poverty, and their fears, and their individual helplessness, herded them into the steel mills as strike-breakers in the steel strike of 1919. And in the brief space of one generation, by its mistreatment, abuse and exploitation of these innocent and ignorant Negro strike-breakers, this same capitalism succeeded in transforming them and their sons into one of the most militant and reliable detachments of the great victorious steel strike of 1946.

This same capitalism took tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of prejudiced hill-billies from the South, many of

them members and sympathizers of the Ku Klux Klan; and thinking to use them, with their ignorance and their prejudices, as a barrier against unionism, sucked them into the auto and rubber factories of Detroit, Akron and other industrial centers. There it sweated them, humiliated them and drove and exploited them until it finally changed them and made new men out of them. In that harsh school the imported southerners learned to exchange the insignia of the K.K.K. for the union button of the C.I.O., and to turn the Klansman's fiery cross into a bonfire to warm pickets at the factory gate.

You won't find Ku Kluxers or Black Legionnaires in the auto and rubber factories today—or at any rate, not many of them. But there is a mighty sight of first-class shop stewards and picket captains who originally came down out of the hills and up from the bayous of the backward South at the summons of American capitalism.

The American working class covered the great distance from atomization, from non-existence as an organized force, to trade union consciousness and organization, in one gigantic leap, in one brief decade.

What grandiose perspectives this achievement opens up for the future! What are the limits to the future possibilities and powers of this remarkable class? There are no limits. All things are possible; and all things that are necessary will be achieved.

If someone had predicted in 1932, at the depths of the crisis, that in ten-years' time 10 million new workers who had never known unionism would organize themselves into industrial unions of the most modern type and demonstrate their ability to force the absentee owners of the steel and auto and rubber and other mass production industries to come to terms and not even to dare to attempt to break the strikes—the skeptics would have said: "This is fantasy. This is ultra-left radicalism."

But it happened just the same.

The American workers do not always move when impatient revolutionists call them, as many of us have learned to our sorrow. But they do move when they are ready, and then they move massively.

Industrial unionism is not a new idea. It was projected long before it found its realization on a mass scale in America, and the pioneers of industrial unionism in America suffered many disappointments. In 1930 the IWW dolefully observed its 25th Anniversary. At the end of a quarter of a century, the organization which had proclaimed the program of industrial unionism 25 years earlier was completely defeated, a hollow shell comprising far less members than it had started with in the bright year of promise, 1905, under a great galaxy of leaders. Industrial unionism seemed to be a defeated program in 1930. But only ten years later the majority of the most important basic industries were completely organized in industrial unions under a new name.

The workers did not move when the IWW called them in 1905. They didn't move when many of us called them later than that. But they moved when they were ready and when conditions were mature for it, and then they moved on a scale and at a speed scarcely dreamed of by the pioneers of industrial unionism.

The scale of the difference is remarkable. Bill Haywood, the great captain of the IWW—I love to mention his name—used to dream and speak in his intimate circle of the goal of a "million members" in the IWW. As a matter of fact, the organization never had more than 100,000 at any one time in all its history, and most of the time only a fraction of that number. The great strikes of the IWW which took place in its heyday, those great pioneer battles which heralded and blazed

the way for the CIO—Lawrence, Akron, Paterson, McKees Rocks, the lumber strikes in the Northwest—they never involved more than 10 to 20 thousand workers at any one time.

But in 1946 nearly two million workers of the CIO, with only a few years of trade union experience behind them, were on strike at one time!

These comparative figures show not growth, not simply progress, but a veritable transformation of the class. And what has been seen up to now are only the preliminary movements, the promise and the assurance of far greater movements to come. Next in order—and not far away—comes the political awakening of the American workers. That will be at the same pace and on the same scale, if not greater. The American workers will learn politics as they learned trade unionism—"from an abridged dictionary." They will take the road of independent political action with hurricane speed and power.

That will be a great day for the future of humanity, for the American workers will not stop half way. The American workers will not stop at reformism, except perhaps to tip their hats to it. Once fairly started, they will go the whole way.

He who doubts the socialist revolution in America does not believe in the survival of human civilization, for there is no other way to save it. And there is no other power that can save it but this all-mighty working class of the United States.

The young generation entering the revolutionary movement today, with the goal of socialism shining bright in their far-reaching vision, come at a good time. A lot of pioneer work has been done. Many obstacles have been cleared out of the road. Many conditions for success have matured.

The young generation coming to us today comes to a party that foresees the future and prepares for it. They come to a great party with a glorious record and a stainless banner, a party that has already been prepared for them and awaits their enlistment. They come to a strong party, firmly built on the granite rock of Marxism. This party will serve them well, and is worthy of their undivided allegiance.

This 12th Convention coincides with the 18th Anniversary of the party. The experience and tradition of the party are the capital of the new generation. The work of many people for two decades has not been done in vain. And, besides that, the new recruits can find in a realistic examination of the objective facts many assurances that the course of development is working mightily in favor of the realization of their ideal.

Our economic analysis has shown that the present boom of American capitalism is heading directly at a rapid pace toward a crisis; and this will be a profound social crisis which can lead, in its further development, to an objectively revolutionary situation.

Our analysis of the labor movement has shown that the workers have already demonstrated the capacity to move massively and rapidly forward in the field of trade unionism; and we have every right to confidence that they will move even more massively and with even greater speed on the political field in the days to come.

The objective prerequisites for the social revolution in America will not be lacking. Capitalism itself will provide them. The manpower of the revolution will not be lacking either. The many-millioned masses of the organized workers of America will provide this manpower. It is already partly assembled and partly ready.

The rest is our part. Our part is to build up this party which believes in the unlimited power and resources of the American workers; and believes no less in its own capacity to organize and lead them to storm and victory.

# The Conflict in Poland

## *From Abstentionism to Active Intervention — In the Camp of the Class Enemy*

By ERNEST GERMAIN

The Workers Party of the United States broke with the American Trotskyist organization in 1940 following a difference on the question of defense of the USSR. Since then the Workers Party has developed positions alien to those of the Fourth International on numerous political and theoretical problems. The absence of a rounded Shachtmanite program, opposing the Trotskyist program as a whole, is only an expression of the inertia in the theoretical thinking of the WP. Like all empiricists, Shachtman is content to accumulate tactical "novelties," without feeling the need to generalize them into a new program.

The policy of the WP towards the resistance organizations which appeared in Europe under the occupation of German imperialism combined a similar eclecticism with a new abandonment of the Marxist class criterion. Shachtman obstinately refused to answer the question: "What is the social character of the various organizations towards which it is necessary to take a position? Is it necessary, on the basis of a distinction between mass organizations led by petty-bourgeois leaders and bourgeois organizations directed by White Guards, to have a different tactic towards these different organizations?" He waxed indignant however when he was shown that under these conditions his slogan of "Unconditional support of the resistance movement" (in general? of all the organizations?) implied, by its lack of precision, a support of *bourgeois* organizations. Discussion on this subject is not yet ended, but Shachtman has already had the opportunity to prove in practice how accurate is this implication. An editorial in the *New Internationalist* magazine of September 1946 defends the position of "critical support to the Mickolajczyk camp" in Poland.

### For a "Democratic Revolution" in Poland?

Having abandoned Marxist methodology, Shachtman is compelled to select his criteria from a granary of stale abstractions. A swift glance at Poland shows him that there are Russians present in the country. These Russians "exploit" and "oppress." Consequently, the Polish workers must follow a tactic similar to the one that Shachtman proposed to them under German occupation: take the road towards a "national-democratic political revolution," conducted under the slogans: "Out with the Russians!" "Long live a Free Poland!"

At least that is what you can read on page 198 of the foregoing issue of "N.I." On pages 215 to 218 of the same magazine, A. Rudzienski, in a study labeled "Marxist," as opposed, perhaps, to the rest of the publication, arrives in effect at analytical results diametrically opposed to those of the editorial writer. Rudzienski condemns the STALINIST strategy of a "so-called democratic revolution," which might have been on the agenda at the moment of the "liberation" of Poland, and counter-poses the strategy of socialist revolution to it:

Before the proletariat and the people of Poland is a socialist, not an agrarian or democratic revolution. Only this revolution can save Poland from the hateful foreign yoke, from colonial exploitation and economic and national annihilation. This revolution can conquer only in the common struggle together with the German and European proletariat, in the struggle for the Socialist United States of Europe, basing itself on the defeat of capitalist imperialism and the reactionary Stalinist counter-revolution.

Let us disregard the question of whether or not Poland is at present subject to "colonial exploitation." Let us similarly lay aside the author's tactical ideas—in our opinion erroneous. It is obvious that his *strategy* is a Marxist strategy, resting on the dynamics of the class struggle and on a social analysis of the country's stage of development. But the thesis of the "national and democratic revolution," which the Stalinist lackeys of the Kremlin defended at the moment when the Polish proletariat was ready to overturn the capitalist regime and had occupied the factories, isn't that the very same thesis which Shachtman is defending at this moment? Didn't the Stalinists also fight under the slogans "Out with the Boches," and "Long live a Free Poland," for which Shachtman was yesterday ready to fight against the Germans? Doesn't the entire argument of Rudzienski, demonstrating the *treacherous* character of this Stalinist strategy toward the German "occupier," apply point by point to the analagous strategy of Shachtman as regards the "Russian occupier?"

Shachtman is a severe critic of morals. Fie on the vulgar Polish workers who support the Stalinist regime "under the illusion that socialism is being constructed or out of purely opportunist (!) motives, like jobs or food rations" (N.I., Sept. 1946, p. 198). Fie upon the materialistic peasants who are pro-Stalinist because they have received land! The American petty bourgeois—now there you have people who don't let themselves be guided by such ignoble material interests. They have far loftier motives. They desire above all the right to express themselves freely and to struggle energetically against Stalinism all their lives by writing articles. That is why the idealist Shachtman demands of the Polish workers, famished and exhausted by seven years of war, following upon twenty years of uninterrupted misery, that they should in the first place think about driving "the Russians" out of the country and of struggling for a "free Poland." After that, the matter of "food rations" and of finding work will of course be taken care of—isn't that so, Shachtman?—just as splendidly as was done in the time of the "free Republic." What a fine Marxist adviser is he who proposes to the proletariat that it replace its immediate struggle for its own material interests with a struggle for empty and abstract slogans reflecting petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist ideology!

The "liberty" which Shachtman demands for "Poland" has a very different meaning for the different social classes. The

"free Poland" of General Anders and Cardinal Hlond, that is the Poland where the gentry and colonels are free to exploit the peasants, assassinate strikers, and organize pogroms. The "freedom" which the workers and the landless peasants require, is the freedom to drive out the land-owning clergy, the capitalists and the "managers" forced on them by the State; it is the freedom to manage industry and the land themselves. Petty-bourgeois politicians think that they can for the moment disregard this difference in content, remaining satisfied with the similarity in formulation of the slogan. But to drag the bourgeoisie and the proletarians, landless peasants and exploiting peasants behind one and the same banner, means, in the Twentieth Century, to fill an empty form with *bourgeois* content! The task of the revolutionary party is exactly the contrary—to formulate its program and its slogans in such a way as to rally *around itself* all the exploited masses in the struggle against all their exploiters. It leans on the dynamics of the class struggle and not upon the depth of chauvinist feelings, because it knows that in the last analysis the struggle of the masses for their national democratic aspirations can be victorious only by colliding with bourgeois nationalism, can be victorious only through the realization of the socialist revolution, which will require the expulsion of the "occupier" as well as the destruction of the "native" reactionary classes. A "bloc" with bourgeois nationalism must fatally lead the masses to follow bourgeois and petty-bourgeois politicians to the building of a new "free Republic," completely under the yoke of foreign capital. It is in this direction that clever shysters are trying to drag the masses while imitating their cries of indignation. Does the editorial writer of the "N.I." desire to join this malodorous association?

## The Class Nature of the Polish State

Please tell us the nature of the state that rules in Poland today. Is it a degenerated workers State, already degenerated as it issued from the Russian womb? Or is Poland not a workers state despite the nationalized property, because the proletariat never made a revolution *before* losing State power to a bureaucracy? Then is Poland ruled by a bourgeois State? Without a bourgeoisie? Or is there a bourgeoisie? Who composes it? The "fascist" guerrilla bands in the forest? But then it could not be *their* state, for the state shoots them wherever it can. Or does Mickolajczyk represent an expropriated bourgeoisie fighting a war of restoration against the workers state? . . . (Loc. cit., p. 199.)

As this long quotation again demonstrates, Shachtman has the habit of posing "embarrassing" questions in order to "confound" his adversaries. Introducing this lawyer's technique into the present debate, he nevertheless carefully abstains from replying himself to all the questions which he poses to us. Allow us in turn to pose an embarrassing question to Shachtman. How were you able to write an editorial of close to 4,000 words on Polish policy WITHOUT TELLING US EXPLICITLY what is the CLASS NATURE of the state and of the society in that country?

Shachtman is in error when he expects to confound the militants of the Fourth International by posing the problem of the nature of the Polish state to them. Unlike Shachtman, the question of the state is not for us a subject for cheap jokes but one for study, often very laborious. Trotsky needed 20 pages of his book *The Revolution Betrayed* to clarify the problem of the nature of the Soviet state; he needed 40 additional lines to summarize his position. Of course Shachtman required just one simple line to ridicule to perfection all these labors of Trotsky in "defending the established program." But

what Trotsky defends is not solely the "program," it is the entire *Marxist methodology* which, for example, recoils from the hypothesis that it is possible to create new social classes "intentionally." That is why we will continue, until we have sufficient proof to the contrary, to consider as absurd the theories of a "bureaucratic State" or of a capitalist state issuing from a proletarian revolution or of a degenerated workers' state being installed in a country where there has not previously been a proletarian revolution.

The nature of the state is dependent in the last analysis on the class structure of society. But this structure is in turn reflected in the structure of the State itself and can impose *forms* upon it which are in contradiction with the class interests of the ruling class. In this case, this contradiction reflects a contradiction which is present in the nature of the society itself. Lenin and Trotsky have many times insisted on the fact that the structure of the "consolidated" Soviet state, even prior to the victory of the Stalinist bureaucracy, retained many of the characteristics of the bourgeois state. The contradiction between the proletarian interest dictating the establishment of the widest workers' democracy and the proletarian interest necessitating the defense of the workers' state against its domestic and foreign enemies, often with the bloodiest dictatorial means, only reflected, in the last analysis, the contradictions inherent in the victory of the socialist revolution isolated in a backward country.

When German imperialism occupied the countries of Western Europe, the bourgeois state apparatus split into two blocs: one group "collaborated" with German imperialism; another went into emigration in order to maintain continuity in case of an "Allied" victory, or went into "illegality" in order to channelize a part of the resistance movement and to prepare White Guards in the event of proletarian movements. In Poland, a similar process was produced not at the moment of the German conquest, but rather at the moment of Soviet occupation.

German imperialism tried to transform all Poland into a colony in the strictest sense of the word. The entire state administration of the country was placed in German hands. These measures were accompanied by a transfer of Jewish and state property, comprising altogether more than 50 per cent of industrial and commercial capital, into the hands of German capitalists. Insofar as the Hitler state was a bourgeois state—has Shachtman any doubts on this score?—it is clear that there was not, at the moment of the German conquest, any fundamental change in property relations in Poland, despite the disappearance of three-fourths of the individuals composing the former Polish bourgeoisie.

When the Red Army approached Poland, this country was caught up in the whirlwind of a revolutionary upsurge. The workers occupied the factories, established workers' control over production, set up factory committees, etc. At that moment, it could be said: the proletarian revolution in Poland has begun. But the *political* intervention of the Soviet bureaucracy was primarily *counter-revolutionary*. The Soviet Army was used to "restore order," "re-establish the authority of employers" and to rapidly rebuild a *bourgeois* Polish State apparatus. The former caste of Polish *bourgeois* officers and bureaucrats split into two groups: one group remained in emigration awaiting the moment when the pressure of imperialism would permit of establishing a more "solid" bourgeois power, or went into illegality to prepare this moment more actively; another group "collaborated" with the Soviet bureaucracy, that is to say, occupied, together with innumer-



able Stalinist agents, places in the State apparatus reconstructed after 1944. The *structure* of this State remains unchanged: the same ministers encounter the same gendarmes who more than once previously led them into prison like common law criminals; the same officers profess the same extreme nationalism; the whole business is sanctified by the same clergy. The very division among the agents of the bourgeoisie is not so much a difference of opinion on the question "how can we best defend the interests of our class," as a necessary division of labor in order to maintain the continuity of bourgeois power.

## Has Capitalism Been "Abolished?"

The character of the State which appears in its structure must rest, however, on a well defined social base. "Since the bourgeoisie has, for all practical purposes, been expropriated," says Shachtman, "how can you call the state a bourgeois state, even if it preserves a similar structure?" Shachtman runs a little bit ahead of his chore. A combination of historical conditions was such that the Stalinist bureaucracy, upon entering the country, no longer found any proprietors whatever for numerous industrial and commercial enterprises. The workers themselves had already in fact expropriated many of these enterprises. The Polish bourgeoisie, which has always been extremely poor in capital, was unable, even in the past, to assemble sufficient capital on the basis of private accumulation to create large-scale industry. The problem of the annexed territories with their numerous mines and factories could not find a solution outside of state management—even without Soviet occupation and without the revolutionary upsurge, these industries would have been nationalized. Finally, the tendency of the Soviet bureaucracy towards the "progressive" incorporation of the economic structure of the "buffer" countries into the structure of the USSR has unquestionably influenced the economic measures of the Osubka-Morawski government. We may therefore conclude that the nationalization of *credit* and that of the *key industries* promulgated by the laws of January 3, 1946 are the result of the interaction of the following forces: workers' pressure; the tendency towards statism inherent in Polish capitalist industry; the tendency towards structural assimilation inherent in the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy in the "buffer" countries.

But we cannot, in any degree, equate the nationalizations to an "expropriation of the *bourgeoisie*," or to the destruction of capitalism, which Shachtman seems seriously to imply. The former proprietors are to be indemnified up to the end of 1946. A part of these indemnities can be invested in new *private* industrial and commercial enterprises, explicitly authorized by the law. A system of special credit is functioning for the "private sector" of industry and commerce, and is designed to favor the development of medium and large commercial enterprises, as well as medium industrial enterprises of certain sectors (the only ones which can at this time be created by the Polish bourgeoisie with the capital at its disposal). This credit is distributed by two private banks, which are share-owned corporations: "The Commercial Bank of Warsaw S.A." and the "United Bank of Cooperative Companies S.A." The nationalized enterprises themselves are managed like *private* enterprises, with separate profit and loss balances, without being united into "trusts" or "combines." There is no planning. There is no monopoly of foreign trade. The foreign trade of Poland is an integral part of capitalist world trade, with Russia far from playing even the role of "first client and first supplier" formerly played by Germany.

What must be noted on the other hand is that, given the *present* relationship of forces between classes, the total expropriation of the bourgeoisie after an eventual conquest of power by the proletariat presents itself as infinitely easier and requiring infinitely less expense than in 1939. The Polish workers can and must start from the present reforms in order to drive out the state functionaries and directors, the middlemen and speculators, to establish *workers' management* of industry, to accomplish expropriation, cancel the indemnities, forbid all private acquisition of the means of production above the artisan level, establish cooperatives for distribution, introduce unified planning and the monopoly of foreign trade. It is because economically, socially and technically the reforms of 1945-6 *facilitate* the realization of the socialist revolution that the Polish workers have the duty to *defend* them against restorationist tendencies of the bourgeoisie. But an effective defense of these reforms is possible only along the road of mobilizing the masses in the defense of their *own interests*, which implies a violent struggle against the reactionary regime of Bjerut.

The situation in Poland, like that in Yugoslavia, is obscured by the fact that, as a result of specific historical causes, a large number of the individuals composing the former bourgeoisie have physically disappeared—while the majority of its political personnel remains in place. But in the other "buffer" countries, the situation is completely clear. No one can doubt for a moment that in Finland, in Hungary, in Romania or in Bulgaria, where wages are set by collective bargaining between employers' organizations and trade unions, that in these countries *capitalism* continues. Nevertheless, in these countries also the Stalinists have "conquered" numerous positions within the bourgeois State. Shachtman states more than once that Poland constitutes "the new political pattern" for all the countries occupied by the USSR. Does he perhaps think that King Michael finds himself at the head of—a bureaucratic State? Does he really think that the Stalinist bureaucracy has succeeded in overthrowing capitalism in half of our continent? Shachtman again finds himself in this hardly enviable position of having to share his views with the Stalinists!

## Our Central Slogan: For an Independent Soviet Poland!

The activity of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Poland inevitably exhibits a double character: on the one hand it has facilitated, in however limited a measure, nationalization, agrarian reform, the establishment of factory committees, etc.; on the other side, it tends to establish a police regime which stifles all independent activity of the masses, it robs the country of the industrial material which it so badly needs for beginning reconstruction, it profoundly discredits, by all its odious actions, the name and ideas of Communism. Those who would deny this dual character of bureaucratic intervention are brought logically to this denial by the fact that they deny the dual character of the bureaucracy itself. There remains only one way out for them: to pretend that in view of the looting of equipment the nationalizations are only a "comedy." Rudziński is nevertheless compelled to admit on page 217 of the September "N.I." the "very limited progressive importance" of the reforms introduced in Poland since 1944, without, of course, drawing therefrom the conclusions on the character of the USSR which follow. Faithful to his habit of posing questions without himself giving any clear answers, Shachtman

does not take a position on this subject. This rids him of the nuisance of having to answer yes or no to the question of whether the proletariat must oppose the restorationist tendencies of the Polish bourgeoisie.

From the dual character of the activity of the Soviet bureaucracy flows the necessity for the Fourth International to distinguish carefully between the actions of the bureaucracy which objectively constitute a step in the direction of expropriation of the bourgeoisie, and those which constitute solely a stab in the back of the revolutionary proletariat. For Shachtman, this distinction means to lead politics back to a "disingenuous formula." Unfortunately for him, this "disingenuous formula" comes from Trotsky himself who employs it among other places in his article "Again and Once Again on the Nature of the Soviet Union" (Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism* p. 30). Shachtman has the right to say: like teacher, like disciples. Until he has extirpated the roots of the bad influence of Trotsky's thought from the mind of the Fourth International, he will not so readily succeed in "re-educating" it. . . .

The Fourth International is opposed to lootings, deportations, national oppression and police terror. It calls upon the masses to struggle against these barbaric methods, with their own class actions. But it refuses to make common cause with those who are orienting towards restoration of the pre-war situation. It demands the immediate departure of the Soviet occupation troops, linking this slogan with that of fraternization between the Polish workers and the Russian soldiers. But it strives at the same time to mobilize the masses for the defense and extension of the reforms of 1945-6. It demands the departure of the occupation troops *precisely because* their presence is a brake upon the struggle for the realization of the socialist revolution in Poland, is even a brake upon the struggle for the defense of the nationalizations. Obviously this position excludes in advance every possibility of a "united front" with the bourgeoisie, the big peasantry or its political agents against the Stalinist regime. It is precisely the united front of the Stalinists with sections of the reactionary classes and strata which we take as one of our main arguments to demonstrate to the workers and poor peasants why the liberation of the workers' movement from the dead weight of Stalinism is an indispensable condition for the victorious conduct of their class struggle.

On the other hand it is not the duty of the revolutionary proletariat to "deny" the existence of national feeling but to try to profit from it by transforming it into a supplementary lever for the *revolutionary* mobilization of the masses. In order to be able to present the workers and poor peasants with a perspective which can win their sympathy and stimulate their spirit of struggle and devotion, we cannot involve them in struggle either for a new copy of the miserable Republic of 1919 or for a replica of the USSR, which they have mainly learned to evaluate through its bureaucratic excrescences. The duty of Polish revolutionists is to *explain patiently* to the masses that Stalinism constitutes the antithesis of Leninism; that the struggle for the socialist revolution means the struggle for a *workers' democracy*, a genuine *Soviet democracy*; that the activities of the Stalinist emissaries are a condemnation of the Soviet bureaucracy but not of the Communist ideal which the latter extirpate in Russia itself in rivers of blood; that the Bolshevik-Leninists are resolute partisans of the right of peoples to self-determination; that consequently the central slogan around which they must mobilize is that of an **INDEPENDENT SOVIET POLAND**, which would differentiate us

as much from the conservative bourgeoisie as from the degenerate bureaucracy.

(The important thing is to fix the *nature* of the slogan, and not its actual wording. It may be that Polish conditions require the substitution of the word "worker," or "communist" or "socialist," etc., for the word "soviet" in the above slogan. This question can be decided only in Poland itself.)

## The Civil War in Poland

However, Shachtman is still not satisfied. He wants us to develop our position precisely and concretely regarding the civil war which is occurring in Poland. A civil war, it seems to us, is fundamentally a war between enemy *classes*. Only narrow-minded petty bourgeois try from time to time to convince us that civil wars are conducted over questions of "regime." Shachtman cannot share such an opinion. Then let him explain to us *what social classes* are at the foundations of the "two camps" in Poland. Is there on one side a "crystallizing bureaucratic class" and on the other side "the peasantry rallying around it the most divergent elements?" This would mean that *neither* of the two decisive classes in modern society, the bourgeoisie or proletariat, is at the bottom of the civil war. Isn't this schematic pattern entirely too far-fetched?

In reality the civil war which is smouldering in Poland is the continuation of the civil war which already raged there under German occupation. The illegal NSZ was then conducting a war to the death against the partisans "of the left," extending in their turn the civil war which Mikhailovich conducted against the Yugoslav partisans and that which the EDES conducted against the EAM in Greece. These civil wars reproduce in a general way the pattern of the Spanish civil war: on one side, the most determined and most conscious elements of the bourgeoisie and landed proprietors, together with the reactionary caste of career officers, the high and middle clergy, the rich peasants, etc., the whole resting on mercenaries and backward or declassed elements from the masses; on the other side, the great mass of the proletariat and the poor peasants, led by an infamous coalition of Stalinists and petty-bourgeois politicians, and subjected at a certain moment in the struggle to the relentless police dictatorship of the GPU (just remember the days of May 1937 in Spain and those of December 1944 in Greece, the assassination in both cases of scores of revolutionary militants). Because of that was it the task of the proletariat to support, even if "critically," Franco or the adversaries of the EAM?

The world bourgeoisie hasn't wasted a single second in "choosing" between the two camps in Poland. Its class instinct appears to be a far surer instrument for political orientation than the impressionist thinking of Shachtman with its hesitant probings. The entire world press in the service of imperialism has been mobilized behind Mickolajczyk. Moreover, in all of Eastern Europe, one of the bloodiest civil wars in history has been conducted for years by the native bourgeoisie. Is it only against "Russian influence" that the possessing classes of these countries are struggling with such desperation? Only dilettantes like Dwight Macdonald, or incorrigible sectarians like the Bordighists can claim that the *spontaneous* mobilization of hundreds of thousands of men and women is secretly "maneuvered" by the "great powers." The Polish workers who occupied the factories, the Greek partisans who entered Athens in September 1944 behind the red flag and singing the International, sincerely thought they were *struggling for socialism*, despite the betrayals of their Stalinist leaders. It was because

their motives for action were *class motives*. Only this can explain the extraordinary passion with which the civil war is waged in these countries: social classes are there locked in struggle for their very existence.

Shachtman naively asks: If fascist bands represent the bourgeoisie, how can the state be a bourgeois state, since it shoots them wherever it finds them? Astonishing question! Was the state of Negrin a bourgeois state? Nevertheless his army also shot the fascists "wherever they were found!" This took place because that "bourgeois state" was pushed along by the will of the *proletariat* to wage a relentless civil war against the bourgeoisie which was protecting itself with fascist bands. The fact that the state remains bourgeois, despite the workers pressure, is explained by the capitulation of the "workers'" leaders to the bourgeoisie, or rather to its "democratic shadow" which has remained in the republican camp. But this state had not yet succeeded in breaking the fighting spirit of the workers to the point where it could capitulate to Franco. This however was implied in the logic of its policy, and that is exactly what took place later. It is precisely because the Polish Stalinists, like the Spanish Stalinists, want to force the workers to remain within the limits of a bourgeois society and state that we accuse them of betrayal. That is precisely the reason why the workers are increasingly breaking with the camp of Bjerut; that is precisely the reason why the counter-revolutionary forces are being continuously strengthened. That is why we fight against Stalinism!

## The Kielce Example: An Illustration for Two Theses

The editorial writer of the "N.I." himself explains to us that it is the Anglo-American imperialists who have imposed the participation of Mickolajczyk in the Osobka-Morawski government. British imperialism is very little interested, it seems to us, in the defense of the interests of the "small land-owning peasants." Mickolajczyk, personally, is an ultra-reactionary politician who published an anti-Semitic paper *Narodowiec* at Lille during the war up to the arrival of the Germans. The fact that he can *deceive* the small peasant masses by appearing as head of the Polish Peasant Party (PPL) can only serve to make him the more adequate for the role that the bourgeoisie has chosen him to fill: to exploit the legality of Bjerut to the hilt, to defend each position important to his class, to serve as a shield for the underground bourgeois opposition up to the moment when the latter will be able, given a different national and international conjuncture, to overthrow the present regime. And who would be naive enough to believe that relations between the "legal" camp of Mickolajczyk and the "illegal" camp of the NSZ are limited to a spiritual agreement on articles of faith?

Swept away by his anti-Stalinist passion, Shachtman pictures things as if the Stalinist government "is organizing" civil war against its "peaceful" adversaries. We are far from any desire to defend the GPU, even "critically"! But historical objectivity compels us to say that Shachtman *reverses* reality. This reality is that the *fascist bands* are the ones who organize pogroms, attacks on isolated municipalities, the assassination of all State functionaries and of all "political agents" of the legal parties. The reprisals of the Polish Stalinists are marked rather by their wavering, their stupidity and their useless cruelty. Far from exterminating its political adversaries, the government has perfected a complicated technique of provocations, tending to strengthen the fascist bands temporarily

and materially, in order to justify a more massive Russian intervention before "Western" public opinion. Needless to say, we turn away in disgust from such dirty maneuvers. We condemn them "unconditionally." We similarly condemn all measures tending to suppress any tendency whatever in the workers' movement. But fundamentally we fight Stalinism by explaining to the masses that its *police* methods against reaction constitute the best method for strengthening the popularity of Mickolajczyk, and of throwing the peasant masses into the hands of reaction. WE COUNTERPOSE TO THE POLICE TERROR AND PROVOCATIONS OF THE STALINISTS THE *REVOLUTIONARY TERROR OF THE MASSES* as a thousand times more effective method of fighting fascism. We demand complete freedom of the *workers' movement* which includes not only freedom of press, of meetings, of organization, etc., but also and above all *the freedom to arm a powerful workers' militia*, which will eliminate the fascist bands far more speedily than is being done by the miserable counterfeits which the Stalinist "militia" constitutes. Not for a moment, however, do we undertake the defense of our *main enemy*, the Polish bourgeoisie and all its political lackeys. Just the contrary. We blame the Stalinists for their incapacity to secure satisfactory results in the struggle *against this bourgeoisie*, because the sole means of getting these results is to wage a relentless class struggle to the end, which can be done only if a Leninist policy is pursued.

The Shachtmanite thesis and the thesis of the Fourth International allow themselves to be compared best in the light of *concrete* incidents in the Polish civil war, such as the Kielce pogrom. As is well known, the fascist bands killed more than 50 Jews of all ages in this pogrom, holding them collectively responsible for the "crimes" of the Warsaw government in which several Jews are seated. While "officially" condemning the pogrom, the partisans of Mickolajczyk have not only excused it, but have also, beyond any doubt, participated in its material preparation. Every sincere revolutionist blames the Stalinists for their criminal provocation which consisted in not allowing the "militia" to intervene until there were enough victims to permit the episode to be converted into a propaganda issue of the first order against the opposition. But the disgust which we feel at such methods and at the useless sacrifice of tens of human lives cannot however lead us to—"critically" support the pogromists. Consequently, if the armed struggle between the militia and the illegal bands had been drawn out—as has already happened many times and will still occur often, Shachtman!—there can be no doubt that we would have called upon the workers of Kielce to mobilize on their own, with their own formations and their elected leaders, in order to crush the fascists. Our place would be in the *opposite* camp to the pogromists, despite our irreconcilable political opposition to Stalinism, which we do not discontinue even for a moment.

On the other hand, if incidents like those of Kielce are prolonged and transformed into a lengthy armed struggle, the camps will be demarcated on a class basis. The clergy, the bourgeoisie, the more or less wealthy peasants will choose the camp *opposite* to that of the Stalinist militia. While he may be able to evade taking a position on an isolated incident, Mickolajczyk will have to choose "his" camp in the case of a prolonged armed struggle. Does Shachtman doubt that this "camp" will be the camp *opposed* to the militia, will be the camp of the pogromists? And in this case what camp would Shachtman support? Is he for the "critical support" of the pogromists? Here is a "concrete" question that the civil war poses!

Harold Laski, one of the most dangerous lackeys of British imperialism, because he likes to drape himself in a red toga from time to time, has found a new elixir to rejuvenate decrepit Social Democracy: "We must combine Eastern collectivism with Western political democracy." Countless "thinkers" and charlatans, reflecting all the nuances of public opinion, have since then wisely ruminated upon this insipid platitude. The spokesmen of General Franco and the last survivors of the "Socialism and Liberty" crew have each found occasion to serve up this same dish, spiced according to personal needs. But here is Max Shachtman extending this strange confederation to the left and discovering, in his turn, that "the question of the relative weight of *nationalization of economy* against the relative weight of *political democracy*" has become "one of the touchstone questions of our times."

## A Return to—Kautsky!

To view "political democracy" as a metaphysical idea above classes and their struggles, as the remarkable polemics of Lenin and of Trotsky already demonstrated 27 years ago, constitutes the essence of *Kautskyism* in the workers' movement. By his very acceptance of this *method of posing* the problem, the editorial writer of the "N.I." shows us where the internal logic of his politics is dragging him. But he does not limit himself to posing the problem, he also formulates "his ideal": "The revolutionary socialists, of course, want BOTH, nationalization AND democracy." Is this a Bolshevik "ideal"? Or isn't this rather the purest kind of centrism? Centrists always desire "sincerely" to combine "real" nationalizations of industry with "the broadest political democracy" in the abstract. The reformists cynically present the marriage of their imitation of nationalization with rotten bourgeois "democracy" as "socialism." But the difference between the two reduces itself to this: that the centrists deceive themselves whereas the reformists consciously deceive the masses.

"Nationalization" of industry means the state management of such industry. So long as this state remains a bourgeois state, it has as much in common with the "ideal" of revolutionary socialists as the municipal council of New York has in common with the Soviet of Petrograd. On the other hand, "democracy,"—must we remind Shachtman of this?—can have absolutely different social content. On the basis of the Shachtmanite definition, Great Britain is in the process of rapidly heading towards "the revolutionary socialist ideal," whereas the Russia of July 1918, where there were only few nationalizations and still less of "democracy" after the attempt upon Lenin's life, appears quite far removed from it. Doesn't Shachtman remember that Lenin himself once defined "the most burning question of our time, is that of the *revolutionary conquest of power* by the proletariat"?

It is not only a question of an ideological controversy, but also of the *criterion* that Shachtman uses to take a position on the Polish civil war. When the abstract idea of "political democracy" is filled with its social content, it immediately appears that to support—critically—the camp of Mickolajczyk is to support "critically" the camp of BOURGEOIS democracy! On the theoretical plane, Shachtman does not dare openly express the idea that BOURGEOIS democracy (implying the restoration of capitalist property relations) constitutes a STEP AHEAD over the "Stalinist dictatorship" in the USSR. But his *practical* attitude in Poland is obviously inspired by the premise that BOURGEOIS democracy (implying the complete restoration of the economic and social situation prior to 1939?)

constitutes a step ahead of the Bjierut dictatorship! That is what abandonment of the class criterion leads to. . . .

This struggle for BOURGEOIS democracy shoulder to shoulder with Mickolajczyk is, sad to say, a lamentable illusion in itself. It is no accident that the countries of Eastern Europe have never known "democratic" regimes in their past. The belated character, the poverty and abject dependence upon foreign capital on the part of the "national" bourgeoisie; the sharpness of the social contradictions; the absence of experience in municipal self-government on the part of the native petty-bourgeois masses provoked a situation wherein these countries constantly went from a state of pre-revolutionary crisis to that of more or less prolonged bloody dictatorships. To think that under present conditions, with social contradictions pushed to the point of convulsions; with an unheard of accumulation of hatreds and passions over seven years—to think that under such conditions any kind of "bourgeois democratic" regime can be established, even for a brief period, means really to deceive oneself and to deceive the workers. A real "victory" for the Mickolajczyk camp, accompanied by a real withdrawal of the Soviet occupation troops, would only be possible after a crushing defeat of the *proletariat as a class* and would end in the reestablishment of a regime like that now ruling in Greece. Is this the "lesser evil" for which Shachtman appears inclined to struggle?

## From Abstentionism to Active Intervention—in the Camp of the Class Enemy!

Refusing to take a position on the concrete civil war which developed in Poland in 1939, Shachtman then defended the position of the "Third Camp." In his "Letter to Burnham," Trotsky demonstrated how the various Shachtmanite positions could at that moment be reduced to a common denominator: *abstentionism* from all political activity, under cover of radical phrases.

But errors have their own implacable logic and develop according to a materialist dialectic which is rooted in the social nature of every ideology. Political abstentionism, expression of the bewilderment of the radical intellectual confronted by cataclysmic historical events, constituted a break with Marxist ideology which determines its line of activity according to its class criterion. Just as the petty bourgeoisie is incapable of remaining "neutral" for long between the proletarian camp and the bourgeois camp, neither can the ideology of the radical intelligentsia balance itself indefinitely in mid-air, between the socialist heaven and the earth of Capital, which radiates an irresistible attractive force. Shachtman has just given us an initial indication of how abstentionism and the theory of the "Third Camp" only constituted a transitional position towards a line of activity favoring and supporting—beg pardon: "critically"—the camp of the imperialist bourgeoisie!

The *conflict* between "nationalization of industry" and "political democracy"—their *combination* being the common ideal of both Laski and Shachtman—is neither an invention of Mickolajczyk, nor a formulation emanating from the minds of the Polish masses. It is the central propaganda theme of the American imperialist press, the English press being more discreet since experience is showing the British capitalists what marvellous profits a "nationalized" coal industry under a "democratic" regime can bring. To the small Yankee business man, whose theoretical ideas are backward even in relation to those of the lackeys of the London Stock Exchange,

this formula is destined to summarize the struggle between world imperialism and the Soviet Union. However absurd this formula may be, taken by itself, it supplies the basis on which the existing forces in the United States and in the entire world are crystallizing. And it is likewise on this basis that Shachtman, partisan of the "Third Camp," discovers that it is better to support "critically" one of the existing camps and he chooses the very same camp which the imperialist bourgeoisie is supporting unconditionally, with the same slogan and under the same pretext! We are compelled to state that the "N.I." editorial constitutes an important, if not a decisive, step, towards social patriotism, towards support of the American imperialist bourgeoisie in its future war against the Stalinist bureaucracy, however "critical" this support may be.

Shachtman hasn't the excuse of taking a position under the despair provoked by the barbarous activity of the GPU; he chooses the camp of Mickolajczyk not at Cracow confronted by Stalinist bayonets, but in New York, confronted by a monstrous press campaign *in favor of* Mickolajczyk. He does not have the excuse of not knowing the real character of the Mickolajczyk camp. He himself asserts that he finds himself looking at a "faker and a scoundrel, an agent of Anglo-American imperialism." He is "aware of this." He likewise "knows" that the Peasant party represents "restorationist tendencies as far as the nationalized property is concerned." While he himself removes all possible misunderstandings from the arena he takes a position—in favor of the class enemy! While he himself speaks of civil war he chooses his position—in the camp of the bourgeoisie! While he himself draws the line of the barricades, he passes over to the other side, to the side of capitalism. Divested of all pseudo-radical phraseology, of all the shoddy polemical artifices, of all the rhetorical questions and of all youthful reminiscences, Shachtman's position can be summarized as follows: "I consider as primary my right to be able to express my own opinions. I abandon in advance the attempt to conquer this right *within the framework* of the defense, of the expansion, and of the consummation of expropriation measures against the old possessing classes. I refuse to get mixed up with those opportunistic workers who choose their camp solely on the basis of questions of food rations and of jobs. I am ready to return the factories to the bourgeois and the land to the landlords on condition that I have the freedom to smear as much paper every week as I desire." This is a position which has lost all contact with the *workers' movement* and which this time classically denotes the fundamental tendencies of petty-bourgeois ideology. This is the lamentable bankruptcy of Shachtmanism.

## Towards "Socialism and Liberty" or Towards the Fourth International

When Shachtman broke with defense of the USSR, he did not then take a position on the class character of the Russian State. An *ad hoc* theory was constructed only a year later. When he discovered the presence of a new class on the globe, he was careful to limit its possibilities: it was "unique," the result "only" of a victorious proletarian revolution which subsequently degenerated. Refusing to follow the theoreticians of bureaucratic collectivism, he thrashed in the contradictions of his own position and was forced to combat those among his own militants who, logically, consider the Stalinist parties in the whole world as "big totalitarian parties of a new bureaucratic class."

Now, however, Shachtman sees himself compelled to say B

after having said A. According to the editorial writer of the "N.I.," "the Stalinist regime is seeking (!) to compose (!) the new bureaucratic class from the state apparatus" (p. 197). As a consequence, Shachtman asserts that the "unique" Russian bureaucratic class can produce children—"intentionally," of course, in order to insist on the determinist and historical character of this strange "sociology," which continues out of laziness of thought to call itself "Marxist"! We have the right to ask him: And the French Stalinists, wouldn't they, too, like to form a "new bureaucratic class," if God furnishes the occasion? The ideological road of Shachtman is that of Burnham. What he lacks is the courage to spell out the revisionist alphabet to the end.

Trotsky predicted a more rapid evolution of Shachtmanism on the road of revisionism than the one which actually took place. Experience shows us that the hesitations in the Shachtmanite evolution correspond with the presence of a *cursor*, of which there is no use determining the origin in a psycho-analytic way so long as we can determine its social origin. It is this, that the Shachtmanite party contains not a few honest militant workers who also exert a pressure on the leadership. This pressure is of infinitely less importance for this leadership than that of the petty-bourgeois circles in which pessimism and the revision of Marxism have been in style for the past ten years. But it is strong enough to make this leadership think twice before taking each too "daring" step. Shachtman takes hold of political subjects like a merchant who displays his "latest Parisian styles," devoured with ambition to beat "the competition" by "novelty." But he is still forced to reckon with the psychology of his militants who continue to judge policy according to the outmoded criterion which is called the class criterion. The resultant of this double contradictory pressure, is the vacillating course which the political evolution of the WP takes, the alternations of solemn protestations of "loyalty" to the "program of the Fourth International" with the elaboration of "tactics" which are more and more inspired by enemy programs. To bring these divergent points back on a common line, all that is necessary is to link them to each other, as Trotsky did with the Stalinist policy of the "Third Period." This line, connecting isolated ultra-left positions to an ever more opportunistic general position, is called the line of *centrism*. It is no accident that the column entitled "Fourth International Notes" has just been replaced in *Labor Action* by the heading "International Socialist Notes" and starts up again with excerpts from the POUM paper. . . .

The worker militants who have been able to draw up the balance sheet of Shachtmanism from inside of the WP must now make their choice. The path of Shachtman, the path of revisionism, leads right up to Kautskyism and will end in "Socialism and Liberty." The path of the Fourth International, contrary to what the slanderers say, is neither that of "conservative defenders of the program established once and for all," nor that of "fetishists on the Russian question." With the exception of the imperialist staffs, it would be difficult to find an organization where the slightest information concerning every possible aspect of Russian society is collected with so much care, analyzed with so much effort, discussed with so much disinterested passion as in the Fourth International. We bow neither before formulas nor before "sacrosanct" quotations no matter what the source. But the only thing we cling to and defend to the very end, whatever may be the events which press upon us, is our *method of work*: the Marxist method. That we refuse and will always refuse to abandon for unprincipled impressionism which daily discovers new "truths,"

throws itself in all directions at one and the same time, constructs the roof before having laid down the foundations, and passes from morning to evening through the whole gamut from beatific optimism to the blackest pessimism. Because the Fourth International is today the only organization which remains faithful to the Marxist method of analysis and understanding it is capable, not only of foreseeing events correctly, but also of correcting its errors and constantly adjusting its line without having to upset its program at every moment. Experience has confirmed and will confirm this law: all organizations and all people who draw away from the Fourth International will complete their evolution in the camp of the imperialist bourgeoisie. The worker militants of the WP must choose. History gives them a last warning in the form of the editorial of the *New International*.

November 15, 1946.

Translated by Ed Wilde.

### **P.S.: Shachtman Supports Adherence of Trieste to Italy (New International, December 1946)**

On his journey over to the imperialist camp, Shachtman for six years had to build up strength to conquer the passive resistance in his party and the inertia in his own thinking. Now he is rushing ahead at a steadily accelerated pace. We note the acceleration, we characterize the direction, but let us never forget this fact: The initial impulse came six years ago when Shachtman took a position on the Russo-Finnish war independently of his analysis of the nature of the Russian state.

Shachtman has glided surreptitiously from the non-existent Third Camp into a non-existent Second Camp, that is, the camp of abstract "political democracy," without any class content. We said at that time: Shachtman does *not yet* dare take a position in favor of *bourgeois* democracy. Now his transition has been accomplished. The moralist has come down from the clouds—pardon us, from the Third Camp—and it must be with a sigh of relief that he finally feels solid ground under his feet, even if it is the ground of the imperialist camp!

But as so often happens, the "realist" Shachtman has chosen the most unreal and most unrealizable of positions. Even the correspondent of *Libre Belgique*, staid conservative sheet of Brussels, had to admit that in Trieste "all the workers, Slav or Latin, are for Tito." The reason for this is to be found both in their vigorous class instinct and in their immediate interests. Of all the countries occupied by the USSR, Yugoslavia is the one where the revolutionary upsurge was most wide-spread, where the civil war was pushed furthest, where the popular committees, before their bureaucratization were able to liquidate the greatest part of the bourgeois state apparatus and the capitalist economy. This constitutes an undeniable force of attraction for the Trieste workers, despite the subsequent establishment of an odious police regime. But the workers of Trieste also know that in Italy there are between 2 and 3 million unemployed. They know that adherence of Trieste to bankrupt bourgeois Italy would rob them of all hope of even minimum guarantees for existence. They don't want this "freedom to starve" that Shachtman is so eager to offer them.

In elaborating his position on the national question, Shachtman started from the necessity of "temporarily" subordinating the struggle of the working class itself to the "national aspirations of all the people." But here is the peculiar dialectic of deviations: he has now arrived at a position which is not only counter to the class interests of the proletariat, but also *counter*

to the national aspirations of the masses. This "solid ground" of realism resembles nothing so much as quicksand.

In 1934 the workers in the Saar were called upon to choose by referendum between annexation to "democratic" France, return to Hitler Germany, or maintenance of the *status quo*. Not one Trotskyist, not even a reformist or Stalinist, took a position in favor of "democratic" France. In innumerable articles Trotsky, and Shachtman himself, explained that it was precisely the *decomposition* of "democratic" imperialism—with its corollaries of unemployment, high cost of living, political-financial scandals—which demoralized the proletariat and gave it, as well as all other layers of the population, the feeling that "we must get out of this" in one way or another. Hence Trotsky, and Shachtman, drew the conclusion: to pose this imperialist democracy—whose putrid decay every worker smells—as the alternative to fascism, means to guarantee the victory of fascism. If we re-read attentively Shachtman's articles of that period, we are compelled to repeat Trotsky's words: This man writes with equal facility on both sides of a question!

Italy in 1946 is a more rotten "democracy," more impotent and more despised by the masses, than France in 1934. And Tito, with all due respects to his secret police, is not Hitler. Will Shachtman tell us whether "bureaucratic totalitarianism" is "a greater evil" for the working class than fascism, since this totalitarianism leads Shachtman himself to take "defensive" positions which even the monstrous nature of Nazism could not bring him to? On this position of his we can only repeat all the more emphatically what is true regarding the reformist position of the "lesser evil": The more that bourgeois "democracy" in Italy reveals itself as rotten and incapable of satisfying any of the aspirations of the masses, the more the masses in Trieste will turn toward Tito and his five-year plan. The more any hypothetical "Shachtmanites" in Trieste follow a policy detached from the life and struggles and immediate interests of the workers and the more they guide themselves solely by their Stalinophobe paranoia, so much the stronger will the Stalinist grip on the masses become. Like rabbits hypnotized by a snake, they would be an easy prey for Tito's secret police!

We, on the other hand, have the duty of putting the Trieste workers on guard against any illusions about the "peaceful building of socialism" in Yugoslavia. We must tell them frankly that they cannot make a choice between two equal evils, since annexation even to a Yugoslavia structurally assimilated into the USSR would mean in reality the bureaucratic strangling of the workers' movement. There remains only one *realistic* position, in the most profound meaning of the word: to struggle for a Soviet Commune in Trieste. We must tell the workers of Trieste that they cannot march alone toward socialism, that they cannot march toward socialism even in an isolated socialist Italy or Yugoslavia. But we can also tell them that if, following the rising curve which their social struggles have taken for two years, they succeed in seizing power in Trieste itself, and if they give the entire European working class the example of a real *Soviet Democracy*, even for only a few weeks, the class struggle in Italy would be given a powerful impetus and this example would act as an irresistible magnet on the advanced masses of the countries occupied by the USSR. From the point of view of the relations of forces, in the present state of unstable equilibrium, the immediate crushing of such a Commune by Anglo-American or Yugoslav troops is most unlikely. In any case, from an internationalist point of view and from the point of view of the immediate interests of the masses, this solution offers infinitely more attractions and opens infinitely more at-

tractive perspectives than adherence to the Republic of Monsieur de Gasperi.

Shachtman is always at the beginning of the revisionist alphabet. A Trieste belonging to Italy means also, incontestably, a Trieste in the hands of the Anglo-American General Staff. Why does Shachtman show so little consistency, why does he not frankly prefer a "bourgeois democratic regime" in Russia—with capitalist property restored, of course, but who is interested in such trifles!—to a "totalitarian dictatorship"? General Eisenhower and the Morgan bank have already dreamed aloud of giving the Russian workers this "unexpected opportunity"

to choose "the slow poison" instead of "the bullet through the head." Whence this sudden timidity at taking a position on this "real" problem, Shachtman? For after all, to struggle beside the workers for their material interests, to believe that expropriation of the capitalists means at all events an advance toward socialism which must be saved, to lead the proletariat through its immediate struggles to the overthrow of world capitalism and of the Stalinist dictatorship—all this is part of that dreadful "finished program" which Shachtman has decided to reject more and more completely.

January 1, 1947.

## On the Slogan of "Workers' and Farmers' Government"

By PABLO

The formula, "workers' and farmers' government" first appeared in 1917 in the policy of the Bolsheviks.

In this instance it assumed two aspects. 1) As a general propaganda slogan it represented a popular designation for the dictatorship of the proletariat "underscoring the idea of an alliance between the proletariat and poor peasantry upon which the Soviet power rests," as our Transitional Program states. 2) As a slogan of current policy, it was concretized, between April-September 1917, by the Bolsheviks, then still a minority in the Soviets, as the demand addressed to the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries to "break the coalition, and take the power into their own hands." This had an enormous educational value for the masses.

The theme of this article is this second aspect of the question. The slogan of the "workers' and farmers' government," sanctioned by the Bolshevik experience of 1917, was definitively endorsed by the Communist International after the October insurrection.

In particular the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in its *Resolution on Tactics* revived the slogan in both these aspects, but it especially insisted upon its importance as a slogan of current policy. We know that subsequently the Communist International of the epigones, whenever it attempted to revive the formula of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" in the colonial countries, and after 1934 through its Popular Front policy the world over, as our Transitional Program correctly states, "gave to the formula of 'workers' and peasants' government' a completely different, purely 'democratic,' i.e. bourgeois content." Our movement has always rejected this interpretation and whenever it has used this formula, as for example during the first period of the Spanish Revolution and in France between 1934-1936, it has done so in the manner of the Bolshevik experience of 1917 and of the Communist International up to 1923.

To arrive at a correct understanding of the formula, "workers' and farmers' government," as a slogan of current policy, it is therefore necessary to study this experience concretely.

### The Bolshevik Experience

The formula of the "workers' and farmers' government" as a slogan of current policy is meaningful only under certain given conditions characterized by a relationship of forces between the parties claiming to represent the working class and the bourgeoisie which "places on the order of the day as a political necessity the solution of the question of the workers' government." (Resolution on tactics of the Fourth Congress of

the C.I. The Transitional Program justifies the use of this slogan by analogous arguments.) Under these conditions the revolutionary party which is still a minority in the working class addresses the demand to the majority working class parties to "break the coalition, take the power," and carry out a genuine working class policy.

That is what the Bolsheviks did between April-September 1917. Let us briefly review the characteristic features and events of this period. On March 14, 1917 the first provisional government presided over by Prince Lvov was formed, as a result of an agreement with the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies dominated by the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. This government continued up to the crisis of May 3-5, 1917. On May 18, after the resignation of Milyukov, the first coalition government was formed, presided over again by Prince Lvov with the participation of the "Socialist" delegates from the Petrograd Soviets.

This government continued until the July Days of 1917 when it gave way to the second coalition government presided over by Kerensky. During this entire period from March until the July Days a regime of dual power existed in Russia: On the one side the political government of the bourgeoisie and on the other side the Councils of workers, peasants and soldiers. Lenin considered this period from March 12 to July 17 as the period of expansion of the effective power and democracy of the Soviets, conditions which guaranteed the peaceful development of the Revolution by means of ideological struggle of the workers' parties within the Soviets.

The Bolsheviks, for their part, represented on the national plane during this period a small minority in the Soviets. (At the First All-Russian Congress of the Soviets on June 16, dominated by the Menshevik delegates, the Bolsheviks represented barely 13 per cent. Moreover, at the First All-Russian Congress of peasant delegates held at Petrograd from May 17 to June 11 the Bolshevik fraction was insignificant.)

Under these conditions the Bolsheviks went through this entire democratic period of the revolution with two essential slogans: "All power to the Soviets" and "Down with the capitalist Ministers."

In the given relationship of forces within the Soviets this meant in practice that the power would pass into the hands of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries who held the majority there.

Consequently the formula "All power to the Soviets, Down with the capitalist Ministers" meant in practice the demand "for a Menshevik-Socialist-Revolutionary Government."

Lenin expressly admitted this when for example during the Kornilov *coup d'etat* he proposed that his party offer a conditional compromise to Kerensky by calling for "the return to our pre-July Days slogan of all power to the Soviets, of a government of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries responsible to the Soviets."

The Bolshevik demand addressed to the "Socialists" during this period had a revolutionary meaning precisely because it was not a question of the formation of a parliamentary government, but of a government based upon the Soviets and controlled by the Soviets.

Moreover, during this same period the Soviets, effectively assuming power were a) the sole armed force of the people against which the bourgeois government was absolutely impotent, and b) the democratic form *par excellence* of the free expression of the majority which could be won over by ideological struggle alone. Lenin found these conditions sufficed to reject any idea of a violent transfer of power to the proletarians and semi-proletarians, recommending on the contrary ideological struggle within the Soviets.

Replying to the criticisms of the Menshevik press, which accused the Bolsheviks of inciting the workers not only against the government but also against the Soviets, he wrote: "In Russia we have now enough liberty to be in a position to make the will of the majority prevail through the composition of the Soviets of workers' and soldiers' representatives. Consequently, if the proletarian party desires seriously (and not in the Blanquist manner) to take power, we ought to struggle to gain influence in the Soviets. All this has been said, repeated, and explained again and again in *Pravda* and only stupid or malicious people cannot understand it." Further on, in the same article: "We have a right for which we are going to fight: We will fight to acquire influence and the majority in the Soviets. We repeat again: We will declare ourselves in favor of transferring power into the hands of proletarians and semi-proletarians only when the Soviet of representatives of workers and soldiers adopts our policies and is disposed to take this power into its hands."

We have another very clear example of the anti-capitalist, revolutionary interpretation of the slogan, "workers' and farmers' government," concretized in the formula "Menshevik-Socialist-Revolutionary government," on the occasion of Kornilov's *coup d'etat*.

As we have already pointed out, Lenin regarded the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" as perfectly in order for an entire period "of a possible peaceful development of the Revolution in April, May, June, up to the days of July 12-22, that is to say, up to the moment when actual power passed into the hands of the military dictatorship (of Kerensky)." After Kerensky unleashed the terror against the working class and against the Bolsheviks in particular, that is to say, after the freeing of the government from effective control by the Soviets, their decline into impotence, and the stifling of democracy within them, Lenin considered: "that this slogan is no longer correct because it does not take into account the accomplishment of the passage of power (into the hands of a military dictatorship) and of the real and total betrayal of the Revolution by the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries." Lenin thereupon called upon the workers' vanguard to declare for "a decisive struggle," to abandon every "constitutional or democratic illusion," every illusion regarding a "peaceful" development.

However, in the first days of September came the revolt of Kornilov, his march from the front toward the capital to overthrow Kerensky and proclaim himself dictator.

Kerensky and his "socialist" Ministers, submitting to the pressure of the masses, determined to defend the endangered Revolution with arms in hand, saw themselves forced to struggle against the reactionary general.

Just at this crucial moment the opportunists in the ranks of the Bolshevik Party raise their voices to express, if only indirectly, a kind of confidence in the provisional government to "defend it (in common) against the Cossacks." They propose a bloc with the "Socialists" to "support" the government.

## An Important Lesson

The position Lenin took on this question contains a lesson of tremendous educational value for all the revolutionary parties concerning the Leninist application of the united front tactic and of the "workers' and farmers' government" slogan which, under certain political circumstances is an inevitable consequence of the latter.

Lenin was for the immediate expulsion from the Party of the defenders of the bloc with the "Socialists." (*Rumors of Conspiracy*, August 31, 1917.)

In his letter to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party dated September 12, 1917 Lenin thus defined his position toward the Kerensky government:

And even now we must not support Kerensky's government. That would be unprincipled. It will be asked: What, not even fight Kornilov? Of course, fight him! But that is not the same thing; there is a dividing line, that line is being overstepped by certain Bolsheviks, who allow themselves to become "compromisers" and to be carried away by the flood of events.

We will fight and are fighting Kornilov, just as Kerensky's troops are. But we do not support Kerensky; on the contrary, we expose his weakness. That is the difference. It is a rather subtle difference, but an extremely important one, and must not be forgotten.

What change, then, is necessitated in our tactics by the Kornilov revolt?

We must change the *form* of our struggle against Kerensky. While not relaxing our hostility towards him one iota, while not withdrawing a single word we uttered against him, while not renouncing the aim of overthrowing Kerensky, we say: We must *recon* with the present state of affairs; we shall not overthrow Kerensky just now; we shall adopt a *different* method of fighting him, namely, we shall point out to the people (who are fighting Kornilov) the *weakness and vacillation* of Kerensky. That was done before too. But now it has become *the main thing*. That is the change.

The change, furthermore, consists in this, that *the main thing* now is to intensify our agitation in favor of what might be called "partial demands" to be addressed to Kerensky, namely: arrest Milyukov; arm the Petrograd workers; summon the Kronstadt, Viborg and Helsingfors troops to Petrograd; disperse the State Duma; arrest Rodzyanko; legalize the transfer of the landlords' estates to the peasants; introduce workers' control over bread and over the factories, etc. These demands must be addressed not only to Kerensky, and not so much to Kerensky as to the workers, soldiers and peasants who have been *carried away* by the struggle against Kornilov.

Draw them still further; encourage them to beat up the generals and officers who are in favor of supporting Kornilov; urge them to demand the immediate transfer of land to the peasants; suggest to them the necessity of arresting Rodzyanko and Milyukov, of dispersing the State Duma, of shutting down *Rech* and the other bourgeois papers, and instituting proceedings against them. The "Left" Socialist-Revolutionaries particularly must be pushed in this direction.

As to the talk of defence of the country, of a united front of revolutionary democracy, of supporting the Provisional Government, and so forth, we must oppose it ruthlessly as mere talk.

Returning to this question of "compromise" with Kerensky



against Kornilov in his article "On Compromises" of September 14, Lenin thus set forth the conditions:

The compromise would amount to this: that the Bolsheviks, without making any claim to participate in the government (which is impossible for the internationalists until a dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry is actually realized), would refrain from demanding the immediate transfer of power to the proletariat and poor peasants and from employing revolutionary methods of fighting for this demand. A condition, one that is self-evident and not new to the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, would be complete freedom of propaganda and the convocation of the Constituent Assembly without further delay, or even at an earlier date than that appointed.

The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, as the governmental bloc, would agree (assuming that the compromise is reached) to form a government responsible solely and exclusively to the Soviets, and also to the transfer of the entire power to the Soviets in the localities. This would constitute the "new" condition. No other condition would, I think, be advanced by the Bolsheviks, confident that, with full freedom of propaganda and with the immediate realization of a new democracy in the composition of the Soviets (new elections) and in their functioning, the peaceful progress of the revolution and a *peaceful solution* of the party strife within the Soviets would be guaranteed.

Among other things, what is interesting in Lenin's position are the two conditions for the compromise he lays down for the "united front" proposed to Kerensky: a) full freedom of propaganda in the Soviets; b) returning effective power to the local Soviets. This is very important. Once again Lenin refuses to support a "Menshevik-Socialist-Revolutionary government," assumes no political responsibility for its actions, but promises only to resume the road of peaceful progress of the Revolution within the Soviets reconstituted with full powers and democratic organization, and consequently to tolerate the government of the "Socialists" as long as it is the emanation of the freely expressed will of the Soviet majority.

In conclusion, to understand the real meaning of the formula, "workers' and farmers' government" given by the Bolshevik experience of 1917 as a slogan of current policy, it is necessary to take into account the following conditions:

a) The demand of the Bolsheviks addressed to the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries was to be placed in the framework of the existence of a united front organized by all the workers' parties, the Soviets, having effective power and complete internal democracy. The Government was to be based on the Soviets and controlled by them. It would therefore be a Government of the type of the Commune, within the framework of a genuine democratic workers' republic.

b) Even under these conditions the Bolsheviks would not support such a government, would not assume any political responsibility for its actions, but they would tolerate it only in so far as it was the emanation of the freely expressed will of the majority of the Soviets.

c) The Bolsheviks did not in the least restrict their propaganda in the Soviets to have their point of view adopted by the Soviets and consequently by the Government of the Soviets.

It is necessary to keep constantly in mind all of these conditions to understand the true transitional, anti-capitalist and revolutionary significance of the formula, "workers' and farmers' government" employed between April and September 1917 by the Bolsheviks.

The Communist International revived this formula in the same sense. The aforesaid resolution on tactics adopted by the Fourth Congress of the C.I. is perfectly clear on this point. After having emphasized that this formula as a slogan of *current policy* acquires an importance when the relationship of forces

between the workers' parties and the bourgeoisie places on the order of the day the question of a workers' government, the resolution specifies that this slogan "is an inevitable consequence of the whole tactic of the united front." But what united front, of what extent, on what program? The resolution gives a clear answer to all these questions.

What is involved is not a united front of a temporary and restricted character to attain certain limited objectives, on a program of economic demands, such as a trade union united front. It is a question of a much broader plan of action.

"To the *open* or *masked* bourgeois and Social-Democratic coalition," specifies the resolution, "the communists oppose the united front of all the workers, and the *political and economic* coalition of all the workers' parties against the bourgeois power for the definitive overthrow of the latter."

The communists themselves define in their propaganda what the program of such a government ought to be:

The most elementary program of a workers' government must consist in arming the proletariat, in disarming the counter-revolutionary bourgeois organizations, in establishing control over production, in imposing upon the rich the main weight of taxation and breaking the resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

Our Transitional Program explains this matter in the same sense when it says:

Of all parties and organizations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should in our opinion form the program of the workers' and farmers' government.

The more recent examples of the Spanish and French experiences further illustrate the practical use of this slogan and its meaning.

## The Spanish Experience

In April 1931 King Alfonso left Spain and the Republic was proclaimed.

The Spanish revolution began. Its first steps in 1931, with the governments of Zamora-Maura and Lerroux, in which the "socialist" ministers predominated, recall the provisional governments of March to July 1917 in Russia.

There was, however, an essential difference between the two situations: the action of the masses in Russia was channelized from the first in the extra-parliamentary organization of the Soviets, while in Spain there were no Soviets in 1931. Because of this fact the bourgeois parliament, the Cortes, acquired considerable importance and the formula of the "workers' and peasants' government" was concretely translated in the Spanish situation in a different manner than in Russia.

The radicalization of the Spanish masses was manifested in 1931 in the forward thrust of the Socialist Party which quickly became the leading parliamentary party.

Nevertheless the Socialists refused to take over the entire power by themselves on the pretext that they did not have an absolute majority in the Cortes.

In his letters addressed to the leaders of the Spanish Left Opposition, Trotsky outlined the following tactic for this period: During the formation of the first coalition government of Zamora-Maura and before the June elections he recommended the slogan "Down with Zamora-Maura" which was the equiva-

lent of the Bolshevik slogan "Down with the capitalist ministers."

Proceeding from the proposition that the Spanish workers' vanguard was interested in pushing the socialists to take complete power and force them to break the coalition, he reasoned along these lines:

The slogan "Down with Zamora-Maura" is perfectly apropos. It is only necessary to clarify one question: the communists do not agitate in favor of minister Lerroux, nor assume the slightest responsibility for the socialist ministry; but, on every occasion, they deal their most decisive blows against the most determined and consistent class enemy, thereby weakening the conciliators themselves and opening the road for the proletariat. The communists say to the socialist workers: "Unlike us, you have confidence in your socialist leaders; therefore make them at least take power. In that we will honestly help you. After that, let us see what happens and who is right. (Letter on the Spanish Revolution, June 24, 1931.)

Returning to this question after the socialist victory in the June elections, he wrote:

Let us consider a bit how the Spanish workers *en masse* may view things: their leaders, the socialists, have the power. This increases the demands and the tenacity of the workers. Every striker figures that not only does he not have to fear the government but on the contrary must hope for its aid. The communists ought to take advantage of the preoccupations of the workers precisely in the following way: "Make demands upon the Government, it is your leaders who are part of it." The socialists will claim in their replies to the workers' delegations that they do not yet have the majority. The answer is clear: With a truly democratic electoral system and the breaking of the coalition with the bourgeoisie the majority is assured. But that is what the socialists do not want.

It is clear from these citations, what is involved is not supporting or propagandizing for a parliamentary socialist government applying its program, but above all addressing the socialist workers and promising them revolutionary aid against bourgeois reaction in case they force their leaders to break effectively with the coalition and take power.

But can power be won through the parliamentary road? This hypothesis is not theoretically excluded in certain exceptional conditions. What is important is not *how* a "workers' government" is formed, but the *kind of action* (purely parliamentary or revolutionary) which it undertakes afterwards and the *program* it tries to carry out.

The aforementioned resolution of the Communist International envisages the possibility of a "workers' government" arising from a parliamentary combination which can "provide the occasion for reanimating the revolutionary workers' movement."

Nevertheless, to leave no illusion about the significance of such a government if perchance it should be formed, the same resolution adds: "It goes without saying that the birth of a genuine workers' government and the maintenance of a government carrying out a revolutionary policy must lead to the bitterest struggle and eventually to civil war against the bourgeoisie."

Trotsky who did not advise directly counterposing Soviets to the Cortes, democratically elected "on the basis of genuinely universal and equal suffrage for all men and women of 18 years of age," nevertheless adds in the very same letter:

All the above arguments will remain suspended in midair if we limit ourselves exclusively to democratic slogans and their parliamentary refraction. There can be no question of such a limitation. The communists participate in all strikes, all protests and demonstrations, always raising up new sections of the population. The communists participate in the struggle with the masses and in the front ranks of the masses and the base of these struggles, the communists put

forward the slogan of Soviets and, on the first occasion, form the Soviets as *organizations of the proletarian united front*.

Thus the experience with the formula of the "workers' and farmers' government" as a slogan of current policy in the given conditions of the Spanish situation, despite its peculiarities, leads to the same conclusions as the Bolshevik experience: The revolutionary party in the minority demands of the majority workers' parties (either in the Soviets or in the Parliament) that they break the coalition, that they take power.

At the same time the revolutionary party conducts untiring propaganda around a program of transitional demands which in its opinion should constitute the program of the "workers' government," supported and controlled by the organized masses.

## The French Experience

Let us now turn to the French experience. Between February 1934 and June 1936 France passed through a profound political and social crisis proceeding from the upsurge on February 6, 1934 of the reactionary and fascist forces which imposed upon the country the "preventive Bonapartist" government of Doumergue to the powerful wave of proletarian revolt of the days of May-June 1936. Trotsky devoted a series of articles and brochures to the most profound examination of this situation, a study which provides us, among other things, with rich information concerning the meaning and use of the formula of "workers' and farmers' government" as a slogan of current policy.

After the reactionary and fascist *coup d'etat* of February 6, the Socialists and Communists, under pressure of the masses, urged a "united front against fascism," to include the Radical-Socialists. From 1936 on this was the notorious "Popular Front." But in 1934 this united front had no program against fascism. Trotsky concluded that the most important consequence of this united front, embracing at this period the whole of the public political activity of the two parties, must be "the struggle for power." (*Whither France?*) "The aim of the united front can be only a government of the united front, i.e. a Socialist-Communist government, a Blum-Cachin ministry."

This must be said openly. If the united front takes itself seriously, it cannot divest itself of the slogan of conquest of power. By what means? Trotsky replies: "By every means which leads to that end."

"The struggle for power," he writes, making his thought more precise, "means the utilization of all the possibilities provided by the semi-parliamentary Bonapartist regime to overthrow this regime by a revolutionary push, to replace the bourgeois state by a workers' state."

This argumentation has particular pertinence for those people who envisage the creation of a "workers' government" solely under conditions of a parliamentary victory of the workers' parties, which assure them the majority.

Trotsky explains that it is the offensive campaign for the conquest of power and its revolutionary program, which will unleash the strength and enthusiasm of the masses and tear them away from their parliamentary and democratic conservatism. Trotsky writes:

The struggle for power must begin with the fundamental idea that if opposition to further aggravation of the situation of the masses under capitalism is still possible, no real improvement of their situation is conceivable without a revolutionary invasion of the right of capitalist property. The political campaign of the united front must base itself upon a well elaborated *transitional program*, i.e. on a system of measures which with a workers' and farmers' government can assure the transition from capitalism to socialism.

Moreover, he specifies the nature of the action the united front ought to employ to achieve its aim, the taking of power:

A concentrated campaign in the working class press pounding steadily on the same key; real socialist speeches from the tribune of parliament, not by tame deputies but by leaders of the people; the utilization of every electoral campaign for revolutionary purposes; repeated meetings to which the masses come not merely to hear the speakers but to get the slogans and directives of the hour; the creation and strengthening of the workers' militia; well organized demonstrations driving the reactionary bands from the streets; protest strikes; an open campaign for the unification and enlargement of the trade union ranks under the banner of resolute class struggle; stubborn, carefully calculated activity to win the army over to the cause of the people; broader strikes; more powerful demonstrations; the general strike of toilers of town and country; a general offensive against the Bonapartist government for the workers' and farmers' power.

The French experience with the formula of "workers' and farmers' government" in 1934 is especially interesting because it shows us among other things how little the revolutionary spirit is impeded by arguments which invoke the impossibility of conquering power through the parliamentary road, to justify passivity under the conditions of a twofold drive of the menacing reaction and the radicalized masses.

## The Present Experience

With the end of the war, we witnessed a powerful impulsion of the masses, at least throughout Europe, toward the parties which spoke for the working class, the Communist and Socialists. This was the manifestation of the first stage of the radicalization of the masses. In many European countries these parties have even on the parliamentary plane the majority.

Their real power is actually much greater than the parliamentary refraction, necessarily falsified by the operation of a voting system which practically excludes youth, often women, as well as the omnipotence of the political machinery of the bourgeoisie, of its administration, press and all its means of manufacturing public opinion.

On the other hand, in this first stage of the radicalization of the masses, the revolutionary party, represented by the sections of the Fourth International, is still weak and cannot intervene as an independent factor.

All of these conditions make the formula "workers' and farmers' government"—as a slogan of current policy taken in its anti-capitalist and revolutionary sense—more timely than ever.

It is the central slogan of this period, the dorsal spine of all the transitional demands. As our Transitional Program correctly says "each of our transitional demands ought to lead to one and the same political conclusion: the workers ought to break with the traditional parties of the bourgeoisie to establish, together with the peasants, their own power."

The concrete application by our young sections of our transitional program, elaborated in 1938 before the war, but which did not really become *actual* until now, has not occurred without deviations. The press of our European sections in particular has more than once given an incorrect interpretation to the central transitional slogan *par excellence* of the "workers' and farmers' government," either in a sectarian fashion, or more often, in an opportunist sense.

The interpretation of this formula is sectarian when it is used solely as a slogan of general propaganda, i.e. as a popular designation for the dictatorship of the proletariat in such circumstances that, presented in this way, it arouses virtually no

response amongst the masses. This error has been committed for example by our Greek comrades who summoned the masses to struggle for the "workers' and farmers' government," in the sense of the dictatorship of the proletariat, at the very moment when these masses were grouped in their overwhelming majority throughout the country around the Greek Communist Party and its "front" organization, the EAM.

To promote the political experience of these masses who had undeniable revolutionary aspirations meant that in Greece the formula, "workers' and farmers' government," should have been concretized in the slogan: "The EAM (purged of its bourgeois elements) to power."

The tactical task in Greece consisted in teaching the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses (poor peasants, petty-bourgeois masses) who followed the EAM, and wanted the "Laocracy," that is, a regime of the people, that they should break with the so-called bourgeois democrats (who were more insignificant than anywhere else thanks to the acuteness of the class struggle in Greece) and compel the Communist Party and the few other formations speaking for the working class and the poor peasantry grouped around it, to take the power.

At the same time, our comrades should have conducted untiring propaganda around a precise program of transitional demands (which all have an excellent field of application in Greece) and which, in our opinion, should constitute the program of this government. The Greek comrades neglected to pass from general propaganda for the "workers' and farmers' government" to its adaptation to the given situation, and it required the energetic intervention of the International to have them change their tactic.

Another sectarian deviation from this formula consists in presenting it as designed to "unmask" the treacherous nature of the parties and organizations of the Second and Third Internationals.

We are sure that the final result of this demand constantly addressed to the old "communist" and "socialist" leadership: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take power," given their almost organic incapacity to separate themselves from the political semi-corps of the bourgeoisie, will be to reveal their treacherous character to the masses. But, in this case as with the entire tactic of the united front, this demand is not a simple maneuver on our part, but a sincere appeal to the workers to force their parties to break with the bourgeoisie, and *along this road, even if this rupture is partially realized, we will support them with all our might against every attack of bourgeois reaction.* That is the kind of language we should speak to the workers.

Let us now come to the opportunist interpretation of the formula "workers' and farmers' government" which is more frequent and more dangerous, because it can divert the whole of our politics onto a centrist basis.

We have seen this deviation develop within our French section. The last Congress of the P.C.I. has already provided the occasion for conducting a preliminary discussion on this question and to bring to light the two different interpretations given the slogan "C.P.-S.P.-C.G.T. government" used by our French section.

There are comrades who conceive of this formula as purely *parliamentary and democratic*, a minimum demand which has no connection with the "workers' and farmers' government." The reason given is that this formula can be employed, it seems, only in its general propaganda sense, that is to say "as a popular designation for the dictatorship of the proletariat." That, it seems, sums up the Bolshevik experience with this slo-

gan. On the other hand the campaign for the "workers' and farmers' government" cannot be launched without "posing by this very fact the candidacy of the revolutionary party for this government." One reads in the same article of this comrade: "The Workers' and Farmers' Government is on the order of the day when the revolutionary party, carrying with it an important fraction of the proletariat, prepares for the dictatorship." Proceeding from these considerations, they reject this formula for the present period as "equivocal," "inopportune," and "dangerous."

But in that case, what is meant when the slogan, "C.P.-S.P.-C.G.T. government" is launched?

That concerns, we learn to our great astonishment, a tactical question, namely to formulate "the necessity of a 'C.P.-S.P.-C.G.T. government' in the event of an electoral victory of the workers' parties, and only in the event where a parliamentary majority has been obtained!" This parliamentary government will apply *its program* and although it is in reality "a bourgeois government called to administer the interests of the bourgeoisie," our party will say to the "communist" and "socialist" workers: "We are ready to march with you . . . to support this government that you recognize as your own; we are ready to defend it with you, against its enemies and false bourgeois friends, to allow it to realize its program, which up to now is your program!" And this unimaginable confusion is called the application of the united front tactic with the workers' parties on a minimum program and on the parliamentary plane! (Our author, in effect, conceives that this use of the slogan of a "C.P.-S.P.-C.G.T. government" flows from a united front policy with the communists and socialists, on the basis of their program, and on the parliamentary field.)

Poor united front tactic, poor Bolshevik experience, poor resolution of the Fourth Congress of the C.I., poor Transitional Program!

Everything here is entangled in inextricable confusion.

## Conclusions

This article will have achieved its purpose if it succeeds in demonstrating:

a) That the formula of "workers' and farmers' government" has two aspects: one as a slogan of general propaganda, serving as a popular designation for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The other as a slogan of current policy under the following given conditions: such a relationship of forces between the workers' parties and the bourgeoisie that the solution of the workers' government becomes a political necessity.

b) That this second aspect is the one that especially interests the revolutionary party in a situation characterized by the attachment of the masses to the traditional workers' parties, while it itself remains as yet weak.

c) Under these conditions, the utilization of the formula "workers' and farmers' government" must be put forward concretely as a transitional, anti-capitalist and revolutionary demand addressed to the old leadership: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take power into your own hands."

d) "Break with the bourgeoisie" necessarily means to apply not the program of these parties, which is precisely the program of the coalition, but an effective working class, anti-capitalist and revolutionary program.

It can sometimes happen that the program of the "workers' government" can be in large part the program defended by the

Communist Party, or the Socialist Party, or by their united front. This can occur only in the exceptional circumstances that these parties advance a really revolutionary program, at least on paper. In this case we will try to compel their leadership to bring this program before the masses and to engage in struggle for its realization.

Such was the case, for example, in January 1935, when the National Committee of the French Socialist Party launched a program of *struggle for power, of destroying the bourgeois state apparatus, of instituting the democracy of the workers and peasants, of expropriating the banks and big industry.* (Program cited and approved by Trotsky. See *Whither France?*)

The revolutionary party formulates this program for the whole of the working class and for its government. We do not say: "Apply *our* program." We say: "A genuine workers' government which has effectively broken with the bourgeoisie will begin to apply this program" and will conduct an untiring propaganda around the transitional demands which constitute this program and which alone can concretize for the masses what to *break effectively with the bourgeoisie* means.

e) The formula of "workers' and farmers' government" is an inevitable consequence of the united front tactic, but not of a united front between the unions on a minimum basis of economic demands, but on a much higher basis, both political and economic, which embraces the highest domain of working class action, that of power.

f) A "C.P.-S.P.-C.G.T. government" applying *its* program in a parliamentary fashion is a bourgeois government, even if the whole of its members belong to a workers' party, as is the case with the present British Labor Party.

The revolutionary party does not *support*, does not *defend* these governments, not even for an instant, but on the contrary ought "to pitilessly unmask before the masses the true nature of these fake "workers' governments." (Resolution on Tactics, Fourth Congress of the C.I.)

g) The demand addressed to the traditional parties: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take power" should be accompanied not only by propaganda around the transitional demands which must constitute the program of the "workers' government," but also by propaganda along the following idea: A government of this kind is possible only by transcending the framework of bourgeois democracy, only by summoning the masses to revolutionary action, only by organizing them in formations suited to apply the working class program (committees of workers control over production, over food) and to combat the resistance of the bourgeoisie (militias).

It is not excluded that a "workers' government" can in exceptional conditions arise from a parliamentary combination. But what invests it with its effectively working class and anti-capitalist character, is the program, the appeal to the masses, the organization of the masses.

At the same time the revolutionary party explains clearly to the masses that the formation of such a government will only be the first step along the road to the total overturn of the bourgeois state which can be accomplished only under the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The revolutionary party intends to lead the struggle for the formula of "workers' and farmers' government" as a slogan of current policy, concretized in each country in one or another manner, in this sense, and exclusively in this sense.

May 1946.

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# From the Arsenal of Marxism

## A Documentary History of the Fourth International

By LEON TROTSKY

### The Defense of the Soviet Union and the Opposition

The analogy with Thermidor as employed in the text of this document was used by Trotsky to denote an actual shift of power from the hands of one class to another, i.e., the triumph of the bourgeois counter-revolution in the Soviet Union. In 1935 Trotsky found this analogy to be inexact, and employed the term thereafter to designate a reactionary development which occurred "on the social foundation of the revolution," and which therefore did not alter the class character of the state. The reasons for this correction were treated at length by Trotsky in his article, "The Soviet Union Today—The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism" (New International, July 1935)—Ed.

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(Continued from December 1946 issue)

### Comrade Urbahns' Mistake

The source of a whole number of Comrade Urbahns' false conclusions lies in the fact that he believes Thermidor to be already accomplished. To be sure, he does not draw *all* the necessary conclusions from this. But those few conclusions he has had the time to make are enough if they become entrenched, to ruin the cause of the Leninbund.

In an article devoted to my deportation from the Soviet Union, *Die Fahne des Kommunismus* wrote that "the Stalinist rule can no longer be regarded as representing the working class and it must therefore be combated by any and all means." (February 1, 1929.)

The same article drew an identity between the deportation of Trotsky and the guillotining of Robespierre and his companions. In other words, Thermidor was proclaimed as accomplished. If this formulation of the question was arrived at in the heat of the moment, it would not be worth while dwelling upon. Political struggle is inconceivable without exaggerations, isolated mistakes committed in gauging things by rule of thumb, and so on. One must not take the details but the basic line. Unfortunately the leadership of the Leninbund is stubbornly trying to convert this blunder into a basic line. *Volkswille* of February 11 carries a resolution on the situation in Russia in connection with my deportation. This resolution flatly states: "This is Thermidor" (*Das ist der Thermidor*), and it goes on to add:

Hence flows the necessity for the Russian proletariat to fight for all the liberties against

the Stalinist regime so that it may find itself equipped to cope with the impending open counter-revolution.

The leading article in *Volkswille*, February 13, states that "with the deportation of Trotsky the last line has been drawn under the Revolution of 1917." It is hardly surprising that with such a position Urbahns is obliged to make ever more frequent declarations to the effect that he is not "one hundred per cent in agreement" with the Russian Opposition, because the Russian Opposition "does not go far enough." Alas, Urbahns himself has kept going further and further—along the path of his original mistake.

Urbahns (like Radek) has converted the analogy with Thermidor, which is very important in the class sense, into a formal, and in part, personal analogy. Radek said: The expulsion of the Opposition from the Central Committee is equivalent to the elimination of Robespierre's group from the government. The guillotine or exile to Alma-Ata—that is only a question of technique. Urbahns says: The crushing of the Opposition and the deportation of Trotsky is equivalent to the guillotining of Robespierre's group. The broad historical analogy is superceded here by an arbitrary and cheap comparison of a personal and episodic character.

The Russian Revolution of the Twentieth Century is incomparably broader and deeper than the French Revolution of the Eighteenth Century. The revolutionary class on which the October Revolution rests is far bigger numerically, far more homogeneous, compact and resolute than the urban plebeians of France. The leadership of the October Revolution in all its tendencies is far more experienced and perspicacious than the leading groups of the French Revolution were or could be. Finally, the political, economic, social and cultural changes accomplished by the Bolshevik dictatorship are far more deep-going than the changes accomplished by the Jacobins. If it was impossible to wrest power from the hands of the plebeians without a civil war, although they had been weakened by the growth of class contradictions and the bureaucratization of the Jacobins—and Thermidor was a civil war in which the *sansculottes* suffered defeat—how then can any one assume or believe that power can pass from the hands of the Russian proletariat into the hands of the bourgeoisie in a peaceful, tranquil, imperceptible, bureaucratic manner? Such a conception of Thermidor is nothing else but *inverted reformism*.

The means of production, once the property of

the capitalists, remain to this very day in the hands of the Soviet state. The land is nationalized. The exploiting elements are still excluded from the Soviets and from the Army. The monopoly of foreign trade remains a bulwark against the economic intervention of capitalism. All these are not trifles. But that is not all. By the power of its attack, the Opposition has forced the centrists to deliver a number of blows—which are of course by no means mortal and far from decisive—to the Thermidorial class forces and the tendencies that reflect them inside the party. One must not shut his eyes to this. In general, a policy of blindfolding oneself is a poor policy.

The Stalinist left zigzag is just as little the "final balance" of the Thermidorian danger as the deportation of Oppositionists was the "final balance" of the October Revolution. The struggle continues, the classes have not yet spoken their final word. Centrism remains centrism; Bolsheviks must remain Bolsheviks; capitulators merit only contempt. And the ultra-Left muddleheads must be called to order!

On May 1, 1928, *Arbeiterstimme*, organ of the Austrian Communist Opposition (Comrade Frey's group), developed the following thoughts in an article entitled, "Despite Stalin, Soviet Russia Is a Proletarian State":

There are political questions which serve as infallible touchstones. . . . And for the Left Communist Oppositions, which appear today as all sorts of groupings and shadings, there is likewise such a touchstone—it is the question of the proletarian character of Soviet Russia. . . . There are elements in the Left Communist Opposition who, in their indignation at Stalinist policy in all its manifestations, throw out the baby along with the dirty bath water. In certain minds the idea is arising that should the Stalinist policy persist, Russia must become transformed in a purely *evolutionary* manner into a bourgeois state. . . . Every type of *degeneration* in Soviet Russia is the product of the subversive work of the bourgeoisie which is being objectively fostered by the Stalinist course. In this way the bourgeoisie is seeking to *prepare* the downfall of the Soviet power. But to overthrow the proletarian dictatorship and to really seize power—this the bourgeoisie can achieve *only* through a *violent* overturn. . . . We fight against the Stalinist course. But Soviet Russia is something quite different from Stalin. Despite all the degeneration, which we fight and will continue to fight most resolutely, so long as the class-conscious workers are armed, Soviet Russia remains for us a proletarian state, which we defend un-

conditionally in our own interests, in peace as in war, in spite of Stalin and precisely in order to defeat Stalin who is incapable of defending it with his policy. Whoever is not *absolutely firm* on the question of the proletarian character of Soviet Russia, hurts the proletariat, hurts the revolution, hurts the Left Communist Opposition.

This formulation is absolutely irrefragable from the standpoint of theory. Comrade Urbahns would have done much better to reprint it in the organ of the Leninbund than to publish Korschist and semi-Korschist articles.

### **Not Centrism in General, But a Specific Type of Centrism**

The article in the organ of the Leninbund, analyzed by us, tries to attack our position from another side. "Although Centrism," the author argues against me, "is a current and a tendency inside the working class, it differs only in degree from another current and tendency inside the working class, namely—reformism. Both serve, even if in a different way, the class enemy." (*Fahne des Kommunismus*, No. 31, p. 246.)

On the surface this has a very convincing ring. But in reality, Marxist truth has here been transformed into an abstraction and therewith into a falsehood. It is not enough to say that centrism in general or reformism in general constitutes a current inside the working class. It is necessary to analyze just *what function* is fulfilled by a given centrism, in a given working class, in a given country and in a given epoch. Truth is always concrete.

In Russia, centrism is in power. In England, reformism governs today. Both of them—Comrade Urbahns teaches us—represent a current inside the working class and they differ only in degree (*graduel*); both serve, even if differently, the class enemy. Very good, let us make note of this. But what tactic flows from this, say, in the event of war? Must Communists in Russia be defeatists like Communists in England? Or, on the contrary, must they be defensists in both countries, not unconditionally, to be sure, but with certain reservations? After all, defeatism and defensism are class lines and cannot be affected by second-rate distinctions between Russian centrism and British reformism. But here, perhaps, Comrade Urbahns himself will recall a few things and make the necessary correction. . . . In England the factories, the railways, the land belong to the exploiters, the state rules over colonies, that is, remains a slave-holding state; and the reformists there defend the existing bourgeois state, defending it not very skillfully nor very cleverly; the bourgeoisie regards them semi-distrustfully, semi-contemptuously, watches them jealously, keeps barking orders at them and is ready to chase them out at any moment. But for better or for worse the English reformists in power defend the domestic and foreign interests of capitalism. The same thing applies, of course, to the German Social Democracy.

But what is Soviet centrism defending? It is defending the social system that originated from

the political and economic expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It defends this social system very poorly, very unskillfully, arousing distrust and disillusionment among the proletariat (which does not unfortunately dispose of the same experience as the British bourgeoisie). It weakens the dictatorship, helps the forces of Thermidor, but because of the objective situation Stalinist centrism nevertheless represents a proletarian and not an imperialist regime. This is not, Comrade Urbahns, a difference of "degree" but a difference between two class regimes. We have here the two sides of the historical barricade. Whoever loses sight of this fundamental difference is lost to the revolution.

### **"Inverted Kerenskyism"**

But in that case, objects Urbahns, what is the meaning of your own words to the effect that Stalinism is inverted Kerenskyism? Improbable as it may seem it is precisely from this formula that Urbahns seeks to deduce the conclusion that Thermidor has already been accomplished. As a matter of fact, just the opposite conclusion flows most obviously from my formula. Kerenskyism was a form of bourgeois rule. It was the last possible form of bourgeois rule in the period of an impending proletarian revolution. It was a shaky, vacillating and unreliable form of rule, but it was nevertheless a bourgeois rule. For the proletariat to attain the transfer of power, nothing more nor less was required than an armed uprising, the October Revolution.

If Stalinism is inverted Kerenskyism, then this means that ruling centrism is, on the road to Thermidor, the last form of the rule of the proletariat, weakened by domestic and foreign contradictions, by the mistakes of its leadership, by lack of its own activity. But it is nevertheless a form of proletarian rule. The centrists can be replaced either by the Bolsheviks or by the Thermidorians. Is any other interpretation really conceivable here?

By the way, I do recall that another interpretation is conceivable. From my formula of "inverted Kerenskyism" the Stalinists have drawn the conclusion that the Opposition is preparing an armed uprising against the rule of centrists, just as, in our day, we prepared the uprising against Kerenskyism. But this is obviously a fraudulent interpretation, dictated not by Marxism but by the requirements of the GPU; and it cannot withstand the slightest touch of criticism. Precisely because centrism is inverted Kerenskyism, it is the bourgeoisie and not the proletariat that requires an armed uprising for the conquest of power. Precisely because Thermidor has not been accomplished, the proletariat can still realize its tasks through a profound internal reform of the Soviet state, of the trade unions and above all, of the party.

### **Proletarian or Bourgeois State?**

It must be acknowledged that in the article examined by us there seems to be a half-step backward with regard to Thermidor. But this hardly improves matters. Is Soviet Russia a bourgeois state? The article answers: *no*. "Have we

still a proletarian dictatorship in Russia?" Again the article answers: *no*. Then what have we got? A state beyond classes? A state above classes? To this the article answers: In Russia we have a government which "apparently mediates between classes, but which in reality represents the interests of the economically stronger class." (Issue No. 32, p. 246. My emphasis.) Without stating openly which class it considers "stronger," the article nevertheless leaves no doubt that it refers to the bourgeoisie. But, after all, a government which appears to mediate between the classes but which in reality represents the interests of the bourgeoisie, is a bourgeois government. Instead of declaring this openly, the author resorts to circumlocution, which does not attest to intellectual frankness. There are no governments beyond classes. In relation to the proletarian revolution Thermidor signifies the transfer of power from the hands of the proletariat into the hands of the bourgeoisie. It can signify nothing else. If Thermidor has been accomplished, it means that Russia is a bourgeois state.

But is it true that in the Soviet Republic the bourgeoisie is "the economically stronger class?" No, it is nonsense. The author apparently does not at all take into consideration the fact that by making such a contention he places a cross not over Stalin but over the October Revolution. If the bourgeoisie is already economically stronger than the proletariat; if the relation of forces is shifting in its favor "with giant strides" (*mit Reisschritten*), as the article states, then it is absurd to speak of the further maintenance of the dictatorship of the proletariat, even if it has survived, as a vestige, to the present day. Happily, however, the representation of the Soviet bourgeoisie as the economically stronger class is simply a phantasy, and nothing more.

Urbahns may reply to us that the article has in mind not only the domestic but the world bourgeoisie. But this does not improve matters at all. The world bourgeoisie is far stronger economically than the Soviet state. No one disputes this. That is why the theory of socialism in one country is a vulgar national-reformist utopia. But this is not our way of posing the question. The productive and political role of the world proletariat enters as a most important factor into the relation of forces. The struggle takes place on a world scale, and the fate of the October Revolution is decided in this struggle. Do the ultra-Lefts believe that this struggle is hopeless? Then let them say so. The changes in the world relationship of forces depend to a certain extent also upon us. By proclaiming, openly or semi-covertly, that present-day Soviet Russia is a bourgeois state and refusing, entirely or three-quarters, to support it against world imperialism, the ultra-Lefts of course place their little weight on the bourgeois side of the scales.

What distinguishes Stalin's Soviet Republic from Lenin's is not a bourgeois power and not a supra-class power but the elements of *dual power*. The analysis of this condition was long ago made by the Russian Opposition. By its policy the centrist government has given the bourgeoisie maximum aid to define itself and to create its unofficial levers of power, its chan-

nels of exerting influence on power. But as in every serious class struggle, the contest occurs over the ownership of the means of production. Has this problem already been settled in favor of the bourgeoisie? To make such assertions, one must either lose his mind altogether, or be without one to begin with. The ultra-Lefts simply "abstract" themselves from the socio-economic content of the revolution. They devote all their attention to the shell and ignore the kernel. Of course, if the shell has been damaged—and it has been—the kernel is also threatened. The entire activity of the Opposition is imbued with this idea. But between this and shutting one's eyes to the socio-economic kernel of the Soviet Republic there runs an abyss. The most important means of production conquered by the proletariat on November 7, 1917 still remain in the hands of the workers' state. Do not forget this, ultra-Lefts!

### What Must Our Policy Be, If Thermidor Is Accomplished?

If Thermidor is accomplished, if the bourgeoisie is already "the economically stronger class," it means that economic development has definitively shifted from the socialist to the capitalist track. But in that case one must be courageous enough to draw the necessary tactical conclusions.

What significance can restrictive laws against leasing land, hiring labor, etc., have if economic development as a whole is on the path of capitalism? In that case these restrictions are only a reactionary, petty-bourgeois utopia, an absurd hindrance to the development of the productive forces. A Marxist must call things by their names and recognize the necessity of *repealing reactionary restrictions*.

Of what significance is the monopoly of foreign trade from the standpoint of capitalist development? It is purely reactionary. It obstructs the free inflow of commodities and capital. It hinders Russia from entering the system of the circulating channels of world economy. A Marxist is obliged to recognize the necessity of *repealing the monopoly of foreign trade*.

The same thing may be said of the *methods of planned economy* as a whole. Their right to exist and develop is justifiable only from the standpoint of a socialist perspective.

In the meantime, the Russian Opposition has always demanded, as it still does, more systematic restrictive measures against capitalist enrichment; it demands the preservation and strengthening of the monopoly of foreign trade and an all-sided development of planned economy. This economic platform acquires its full meaning only in connection with the struggle against the degeneration of the party and other organizations of the proletariat. But it is enough to assume that Thermidor is accomplished for the very bases of the Oppositional platform to become nonsensical. Urbahns is silent on all this. Apparently, he does not at all take into consideration the interdependence of all the basic elements of the problem. But by way of compensation he consoles himself and others by the

fact that he is "not in one hundred per cent agreement" with the Russian Opposition. A cheap consolation!

### For Proletarian or for Bourgeois Democracy?

While Comrade Urbahns and his co-thinkers do not draw all the conclusions that flow from an "accomplished" Thermidor, they do draw some of them. We have already read above that they deem it necessary for the Russian working class to reconquer "*all liberties*." But here, too, the ultra-Lefts halt irresolutely on the threshold. They do not explain what liberties they have in mind, and in general they touch upon the subject only in passing. Why?

In the struggle against Stalinist bureaucratism, which expresses and facilitates the pressure of enemy classes, the Russian Opposition demands democracy in the party, the trade unions and the Soviets on a proletarian basis. It implacably exposes the revolting falsification of democracy which under the label of "self-criticism" is corroding and decomposing the very foundations of the revolutionary consciousness of the proletarian vanguard. But for the Opposition the struggle for party democracy has meaning only on the basis of the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It would be Quixotic, not to say idiotic, to fight for democracy in a party which is realizing the rule of a class hostile to us. In such a case, one could not speak of a class democracy in the party and in the Soviets, but of "general" (that is, bourgeois) democracy in the country—against the ruling party and its dictatorship. The Mensheviks have more than once accused the Opposition of "not going far enough" because it does not demand democracy in the country. But the Mensheviks and we stand on the opposite sides of the barricade, and at the present time—in view of the Thermidorian danger—more irreconcilably and hostilely than ever before. We are fighting for proletarian democracy precisely in order to shield the country of the October Revolution from the "liberties" of bourgeois democracy, that is, from capitalism.

It is solely from this standpoint that the question of the *secret ballot* should be considered. This demand of the Russian Opposition has as its aim to give the proletarian core the opportunity to straighten its back first in the party, and then in the trade unions, in order, with the aid of these two levers, then to consolidate its class positions in the Soviets. Yet Comrade Urbahns and some of his closest co-thinkers have sought to interpret this demand of the Opposition, which remains wholly within the framework of the dictatorship, as a general democratic slogan. A monstrous blunder! These two positions have nothing in common; they are mortally opposed to each other.

Speaking vaguely about "liberties" in general, Urbahns called one of these liberties by name: it is the *freedom to organize*. In the opinion of ultra-Lefts, the Soviet proletariat must conquer for itself the "freedom to organize." That Stalinist bureaucratism is holding the trade unions now, at the time of the left zigzag, more tightly

by the throat than ever before—this is incontestable. That the trade union organizations must be enabled to defend the interests of the workers against the growing deformations of the regime of the dictatorship, to this question the Opposition has long ago given its answer by word and deed. But it is necessary to have a clear conception of the aims and methods of the struggle against the centrist bureaucracy. It is not a question of winning the "freedom to organize" against a hostile class government, but of struggling for a regime under which the trade unions will enjoy—*within the framework of the dictatorship*—the necessary freedom to correct their own state by words and deeds. In other words, it is a question of the "liberty" which is, for instance, enjoyed by the powerful alliances of industrialists and agrarians in relation to their own capitalist state, upon which they exert pressure might and main, and, as is known, not without success; but it is not at all a question of "liberty" that the proletarian organizations possess or seek to get in relation to the bourgeois state. And this is not at all one and the same thing!

The freedom to organize signifies a "freedom" (we know *its character* very well) to carry on the class struggle in a society whose economy is based on capitalist anarchy, while its politics are kept within the framework of the so-called democracy. Socialism, on the other hand, is unthinkable not only without planned economy in the narrow sense of the term but also without the systematization of all social relations. One of the most important elements of socialist economy is the regulation of wages, and in general of the workers' relations to production and to the state. We have pointed out above the role that trade unions must play in this regulation. But this role has nothing in common with the role of the trade unions in bourgeois states, where the "freedom to organize" is itself not only a reflection of capitalist anarchy but an active element in it. Suffice it to recall the economic role of the British coal miners in 1926. It is not for nothing that the capitalists together with the reformists are now carrying on a desperate and hopeless struggle for peace in industry.

Yet Urbahns advances the slogan of freedom to organize precisely in the general democratic sense. And indeed it would be impossible in any other sense. Urbahns formulates one and the same demand for Russia and for China and for the capitalist states of Europe. This would be absolutely correct—on one trifling condition, namely: if one recognizes that Thermidor is accomplished. But in that case it is already Urbahns himself who "does not go far enough." To put forward the freedom to organize as an isolated demand is a caricature of politics. Freedom to organize is inconceivable without freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and all the other "freedoms" to which the decision of the February conference (Reichsausschusses) of the Leninbund refers vaguely and without commentaries. And these freedoms are unthinkable outside the regime of democracy, that is, outside of capitalism. One must learn to think one's thoughts out to the end.

(To Be Concluded)

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