

# Fourth International

## **Problems of American Politics**

### **American Radicalism Today**

*By James P. Cannon*

- **The Maturing Crisis**
- **Dilemma of U. S. Foreign Policy**
- **The Fight Against the Witch-Hunt**

**Leon Trotsky on:**

**Art and Politics in Our Epoch**

*March-April 1950*

25c

## Manager's Column

The January-February issue of **Fourth International** containing "World Report," a round-up on some of the hottest spots in the international class struggle, was well received.

The reaction of L. T. of Boston was typical: "Got my hands on the FI Saturday and finished it before going to bed that night. I guess that gives you an idea of what I think of the issue. It is a crime to think that we have such a small circulation for such a truly historic periodical. After all, when the history of this period is written, what other source of knowledge can be authoritatively used to explain the present?"

J. H. of Worcester likewise found the table of contents "so exceptionally interesting that I immediately started reading the magazine and finished two articles that night, which is unusual for me, as I am generally so exhausted by bedtime that I can't stay awake, no matter what I am trying to read."

And C. S. of Minneapolis writes, "We are very pleased with the current issue of **Fourth International**. Helen gave an educational on it. She reviewed two of the articles and touched on the others. Her main emphasis was on the need for all the comrades to read the magazine."

Group discussions of an issue of the magazine or of a series of articles in various issues dealing with a timely topic are an excellent means of widening the circle of readers. D. C. of Vancouver, Canada, says, "The material in **Fourth International** has been first-rate and is the basis of many discussions among ourselves and with our contacts in the Stalinist and social-democratic movements. It provides us with excellent information."

D. C. thought that the January-February number, which came out late, "was worth waiting for," and that the following articles in the recent period "are particularly

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commendable: 'Revolutionary Course of American Society,' 'The English Revolution, 1649-1949,' the articles in the 'American Empire' issue, 'Mao Tse-Tung's Revolution,' and the articles on the Tito-Stalin split."

He adds that the Vancouver group of FI readers "agrees with the suggestion to include references for further reading on subjects dealt with in **Fourth International** articles. These references would be very helpful, especially to new com-

rades and to those whose only contact with the movement is through the periodical."

Bill of St. Paul "was greatly impressed by Ernest Germain's article in the December, 1949, issue on 'The Purge of Soviet Culture.' A reprint of this in an inexpensive pamphlet to be distributed widely among students, liberals, Stalinists, as well as advanced workers could be an effective propaganda weapon."

We still have extra copies of this issue on hand. In bundles of five or more, the cost is 20c a copy.

Richard Gregor, writing in behalf of the Literature Committee of the Buffalo branch of the Socialist Workers Party, reports that "recent issues of **Fourth International** are received with greater enthusiasm than before. This trend began with the issue on the American Empire and continues, due to the timeliness of the material in all recent issues."

Interest in the British Labor Party is lively among Buffalo workers, according to Comrade Gregor, and the possibility of atomic warfare is a "burning question tormenting the American workers. Members of the literature committee feel that these two questions, Great Britain and atomic warfare, deserve special issues devoted exclusively to the various phases of the subject."

\* \* \*

The next issue of **Fourth International** promises to be of exceptional value to every one participating in the struggle for full equality of the Negro people.

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- The Race Problem and the CIO.
- Negro Intellectuals and Stalinism.
- Two Faces of the Welfare State.
- W. E. B. DuBois—An American Intellectual.
- Negro Liberation through Revolutionary Socialism, a resolution of the SWP.
- NAACP at the Crossroads.

## New Edition

# THEIR MORALS AND OURS

By LEON TROTSKY

All the "moralistic" arguments of anti-Marxists — from the hoary charge that Lenin and the Bolsheviks were "amoral" to the current accusation that the guiding Marxist maxim is that "the end justifies the means" — are answered in this classic work. After taking them up one by one, Trotsky counterposes to the capitalist moralism and sycophants the highest morality of all — that of the socialist revolution.

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# FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

VOLUME 11

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## American Radicalism Today

By JAMES P. CANNON

(Ed. Note: This is the stenographic report of a speech by James P. Cannon at the Plenum of the National Committee of the SWP, Feb. 13, 1950.)

These remarks should be regarded as a supplement to my report to the Plenum a year ago on the development of social-reformist tendencies in the American labor movement. (Published in the March 1949 *Fourth International* under the title of "New Problems of American Socialism"). At that time we noted the great growth of social-reformist ideology in the American labor movement and also in intellectual circles, along with the apparently contradictory weakening of independent social-reformist organizations. We took note of the gathering force of the anti-Marxist offensive in recent years and the integration of the Social-Democratic intellectuals with the labor bureaucracy, which in turn had become further integrated with the capitalist state.

The Plenum a year ago drew the conclusion that it was necessary to sharpen and systematize our ideological fight for the leadership of the working-class vanguard, to establish the position of the Socialist Workers Party as the rightful leader of the Socialist-minded workers and as the organizing center of revolutionary opposition to American imperialism. We correctly saw this as the real condition of future success.

The developments over the past year in this field are of great importance and significance. On the one hand, there has been an accelerated development of all the processes previously noted. On the other hand, the objective conditions prevailing in 1949, and the reactionary atmosphere in particular, prevented any organizational expansion of our forces. Despite all our efforts—and we put forth considerable and determined efforts—we were barely able to hold our own organizationally; we even lost a little, although very little, ground.

But that bare statement of our "statistical stagnation," so to speak, isn't the whole picture of what happened with us during the past year—and it's not really the true picture. If our most important fight is the fight for leadership of the vanguard, of the more-or-less radical and class-conscious elements, then the correct criterion for estimating the past year, and our part in it, is contained in the following question: How did we fare as an independent party in relation to the others, our opponents and rivals? An examination of developments in this respect will show that the hard year of 1949, which seemed to be one of stagnation and frustration, was really a year of progress on the most important front, maybe even the most impor-

tant year in our preparation for the future. In this one respect at least, in the fight for the leadership of the vanguard we are in better shape now, in relation to our opponents and rivals, than we were a year ago.

There is little, if anything, Marxists can do to create a mass movement of discontent with the existing social order. That is produced by the elementary forces and circumstances themselves. A new turn in the objective situation in this country, an economic convulsion, which will have political and social repercussions, will generate a tumultuous growth of diverse tendencies and organizations of political dissent. The real fight for the socialist revolution is, as it always has been, the fight to give the instinctive and spontaneous movement of the masses a revolutionary ideology, direction and leadership. That means unceasing war against reformist and centrist tendencies in the labor movement. This can be traced over the past hundred years, starting with the fight of Marx and Engels against anarchist and reformist tendencies in the First International and moving on to the long fight of Lenin against Menshevism for the hegemony of a Russian revolutionary movement that hardly yet existed, that was more of an anticipation than a reality, and continuing with Trotsky's battles against the Stalinist and Social-Democratic perversions of the revolutionary labor movement.

In the light of this fact the question of primary importance we should ask ourselves today is this: Which organization, as a result of events during the past year, faces a new rise in the class struggle in the best shape and best-equipped to take advantage of the new opportunities, which are certain to make their appearance sooner or later,—and most likely sooner? Seen in this light, if the year 1949 was a tough year for us—and it's always tough to work and struggle and yet make no tangible and demonstrable headway—if it was tough for us, and a test for us, it was truly a year of devastation for the others.

That's clearly seen by reviewing what happened in the space of one year to the other organizations which have been contending with us for the allegiance of those more or less conscious and radicalized elements who are destined to be the cadres of a great future movement. Let's review the year's experience of these organizations one by one, in the order of their importance, without going into great detail because the main facts are well known.

### Stalinist Morale at Low Ebb

The Stalinists have been under terrific fire during the past year. Something happened to them that I doubt ever

happened before in the hundred year history of the modern labor movement. We have seen the Stalinists subjected to governmental hounding and persecution, followed up by the assaults of the bureaucratic labor lackeys of American imperialism, who have harried and pounded the Stalinists on every side. And yet, this test of fire has not strengthened their morale. We couldn't criticize the CP for having lost some organizational ground and some membership under this furious assault. That always happens in the face of severe persecution.

But, normally, time after time in the past, a revolutionary organization subjected to these pressures and persecutions, gained in *quality* what it lost in *quantity*, and even more than that. This was the case in the postwar reaction of 1919-21. The Palmer "Red Hunt" decimated the left-wing of the revolutionary movement organizationally, but at the same time pounded together a hard core of cadres capable of resisting and becoming the new leaders of the future movement of American Communism. The persecution of our party during World War II yielded the same result. Our cadres were tempered in the fire and the morale of our movement was strengthened.

Contrary to these examples, the Stalinists have obviously suffered in morale, in quality as well as in quantity. Under fire of their trial and persecution they evaded all the real issues. Instead of making a bold revolutionary defense which could have awakened the new generation to fervor in the fight for defense of their party, they presented a miserable, capitulatory, evasive defense, which has resulted in demoralizing rather than strengthening their ranks.

The testimony of comrades who have come into contact with Stalinists up and down the country is that they are a rather bedraggled, hunted and harried outfit, who have lost not only organizationally, both in the trade unions and in the numerical strength of their party, but above all in their morale.

### Disintegration of Wallaceites

Let us pass now from the Communist Party to the Progressive Party. Here we have seen a really catastrophic development. Two years ago, one might have thought—as some did—that the Progressive Party had the potentiality of swallowing up all the elements of discontent in this country into one great pseudo-radical organization. This would have been a great obstacle to us because newly awakening workers greatly prefer a large organization to a small one. Very few people are content to remain in a small organization if they can find a bigger one which appears to be almost as good.

But the Progressive Party which began with such fanfare, with the prestige of a former Vice President of the United States and many outstanding figures in American political life at its head, with all the support of the powerful apparatus of the Stalinist Party, began to decline almost from the moment of its formal constitution at the Philadelphia convention in July 1948. Since the first heavy blow of defeat and a disappointing showing in the national elections, the party has been narrowing down. It has been

suffering from wholesale desertions, abstentions, inactivity, losing its character as a mass movement. It has even lost its character as a "Progressive" movement which included Stalinists, becoming more and more a mere front for the Communist Party. Its membership and its influence has been declining at a terrific pace.

It has suffered heavily from the defections created by the Kremlin assault against Yugoslavia. One after another of the prominent non-Stalinist intellectuals and progressives have taken the question of Yugoslavia as a point of departure, for separating themselves in the public mind from the Stalinist elements in the Progressive Party as preparation for withdrawal from the party. Although I haven't read the minds of these gentlemen attentively, from what little I have learned of psychology, psychoanalysis and so forth, I have concluded that many of these people are actuated by a double set of considerations. Some of them, of course, are really sympathetic to the Yugoslav struggle for independence. Others think that's as good an excuse as any to demonstrate their independence of Stalinist domination and prepare their get-away.

Whether or not I am correct on their dual motivation, that process of dissociation is taking place and, in my opinion, will continue. The Convention of the Progressive Party this February in Chicago doesn't promise much. It appears that Wallace is becoming more and more inactive and restless in the isolated prison which the Stalinists have maneuvered him into. Such an outstanding figure as O. John Rogge, the well-known attorney, seeks to delimit the Progressive Party from Stalinism and claims the right to criticize the Soviet Union. Numerous non-Stalinist intellectuals, and even prominent candidates like Isaacson, are rallying around that program.

Despite the deals and compromises which may be patched up between the Wallaceites and the Stalinist leaders to suppress their differences, these are clear signs, not merely of disintegration, but of break-up of the Progressive Party. The whole sad experiment, the attempt to create by fire-cracker methods an American progressive, half-socialist, half-radical party, on a mass basis, with the participation but not domination of the Stalinists, has ended in a fiasco. That is a very good thing because it helps to clear the ground.

The ferment inside the Progressive Party has created favorable conditions for us. In New York our comrades have succeeded in influencing several youth groups of the Progressive Party. Our fight for a principled position on civil liberties at the Civil Rights Congress has had tremendous repercussions; it helped to separate young, earnest progressives, who really want to be radicals and even revolutionists, from the Stalinists. Awakened by the struggle over civil rights, they entered upon an investigation of all the differences between us and the Stalinists. We've recruited a number of such people from the Progressive Party in New York.

Even though our gains have not been very great numerically, it is an important indication that this larger movement, with its greater suction power, has not won away over from the ranks of our smaller party. We

have been gaining from them. The trend is the important thing to watch. It would be readily dangerous if any one of these rival movements pulled at the weak fringes of our party, instead of our gaining from them.

One of our comrades in a Mid-West city who recently had several meetings with both Stalinists and non-Stalinists in the local Progressive Party, reported they were not only in a state of disintegration, but of deep pessimism. His first task was not to explain the political differences between Stalinism and Bolshevism so much as to try and bolster them up and give them a little hope for the future. If that's a sign of prevailing sentiment in the ranks of the Progressive Party, as I believe it is, it is not very favorable for their future prospects. People who have no hope very seldom succeed in waging an aggressive fight. Discouraged people are the poorest soldiers imaginable.

To summarize: the Progressive Party has been virtually eliminated as the potential organizing center of a new radical upsurge. That is a positive gain for the revolutionary party.

### **Socialist Party Prepares Own Demise**

Now, let me pass on to the Socialist Party. It is common knowledge what has been taking place there. Along with a devastating decline in membership and direct influence, it has retreated step by step from every basic element of a Socialist program. Now the Socialist Party has finally voted to give up its one remaining characteristic as an independent political force by voting by a large majority in a referendum to unite with the Social-Democratic Federation. The Social-Democratic Federation, conducting its own referendum at the same time, by a 98 percent majority laid down as a condition for unity that there must be no nomination of independent candidates against candidates supported by the labor movement. This means no candidates against the Democratic Party.

The forthcoming convention of the SP will undoubtedly ratify the proposal of its National Committee majority to renounce independent electoral activity. That means the final dissolution of a party which remained, in spite of all, in the minds of many workers as the representative of independent Socialist ideas. That is another great gain for the revolutionary party insofar as it further clears the road for us as the only independent opposition to American capitalism on the political field as well as in the trade union movement.

I promised to take the rival organizations in the order of their importance. And so, I first took the Stalinists, next the Progressive Party, and then stepped down a big way to the Socialist Party. Now I must take a parachute jump down to the Shachtmanites.

### **"Independent" Shachtmanites.**

#### **Renounce Independence**

The Shachtmanites have gone through a peculiar evolution while playing a little game of deceiving themselves and trying to deceive others. The one thing that justifies the existence of a party, a group or a faction, calling itself revolutionary, is its total political independence of op-

ponent class organizations. In preparing to renounce this political independence, the Shachtmanites concocted the remarkable strategy of beginning the great step by changing their name from the Workers Party to "Independent Socialist League." Under cover of the adjective of independence, they actually prepared to renounce their independence.

By the way, this label of Independent Socialist League is really, redundant for the very word "Socialist" either signifies independence of capitalist parties and capitalist politics or it has no meaning at all. You can hardly have a bourgeois socialist movement, unless you want to debase the name, "Socialism." The very designation of an organization as "Socialist" should signify that it is independent. However, there have been organizations in history called "Independent Socialist" with a certain limited justification. That was the case in Germany when the centrist wing of the Social-Democracy broke with the extreme right during the First World War and afterward. When they called themselves the Independent Socialist Party, they meant, and everybody understood, that they were independent of the official Social Democratic Party.

But the Shachtmanites had no sooner announced themselves as "Independent Socialists" than they came out for support of Norman Thomas in the elections of 1948. That was a shameful and disgraceful thing. The very first action they took after they had liberated themselves from the claim that they were a separate and independent party, after they announced themselves "Independent Socialists," was not to reaffirm their independence from the official Social Democracy but to come out for its support in the election.

That was not a political mistake, not a mere fumble; that was treachery to the principles of Socialism and to the American working class. And this act wasn't modified but only made more detestable by the sneaking and hypocritical formula they clothed it with. They "allowed" their members to vote either for Dobbs, the class-war prisoner and opponent of imperialist war, or for Norman Thomas, the contemptible betrayer of his socialist program during the war. That was not an honest impartiality because they were in reality supporters of Norman Thomas; and the great majority of the Shachtmanites *preferred* Norman Thomas and I presume voted for him against Dobbs and Carlson.

Their policy in the election, which I characterize not as a mistake, but as treachery, corresponded symmetrically to their tactics in the unions.

Here again they cut straight across the actual line of development. In the first 10 years of the CIO, while the masses were still in action and before a homogeneous, privileged bureaucracy had been able to consolidate itself on top of the CIO, we followed the tactic of maneuvering between different groups of bureaucrats, in order to keep democracy alive and gain elbow room for a progressive program in the unions. But this loose situation came to a close with the consolidation of the Reuther bureaucracy as a homogeneous unit in the UAW. Just at that moment, the Shachtmanites, proclaiming their "independent" So-

cialism, began to ally themselves with this treacherous, imperialist bureaucracy against us and against all militant opposition in the union.

### Abandon Independent Class Politics

Now they have climaxed this terror-stricken retreat from the basic position of independent opposition to American capitalism and its agents by their contemptible role in the work of the PAC. They follow in the path of the Socialist Party, with one important difference: They travel faster. It took the Socialist Party 50 years to come to the point where they renounced independent candidates in the elections against the capitalist parties.

The Shachtmanites are coming to that position far more rapidly in a short period of time.

In several cities they already permit their members to participate in the CIO-PAC, not as we do, up to a certain point, in order to keep contact with the union's political life and further the idea of independent labor politics, but drawing a straight line of opposition when it comes to elections on the Democratic ticket. These Shachtmanites are participating in the primaries *within* Truman's Democratic Party. No doubt they will proceed from that to becoming hustlers and supporters of candidates in the general elections on the Democratic ticket who have the endorsement of the PAC.\*

That is a sure sign of the end of the Shachtmanites. An ignoble end, because they are not engaging in capitalist politics even as openly as the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party is officially adopting such a policy and authorizing its members to carry it out. The Shachtmanites, with their left hand, write in their press pious declarations about independent class politics and then, with their right hand, permit their members to become nothing but errand boys for Democratic politicians, masquerading as representatives of labor in the CIO-PAC set-up.

That won't work. Their calculations that they can have their cake and eat it too will be disappointed. They may cherish the illusion that they can preserve in their public press a reputation as representatives of independent political action, while their rank and file members keep contact and, as they say, get in "on the ground floor" of Democratic politics. But this policy will hit them in the face as all previous experiences along that line have done to others who have tried it.

Those Shachtmanites, who cater to the bureaucracy, who support PAC candidates in the Democratic Party primaries and then hustle votes for them on the Democratic ticket may make little careers for themselves. But after they get

\*After this speech was delivered the January 1950 Information Bulletin of the Independent Socialist League published motions on political action submitted to its recent National Committee Plenum. Shachtman proposed that ISL members participate, under certain conditions, in primaries of the capitalist parties and support "labor" candidates seeking nomination of those parties. His motion was not accepted. However, a counter-motion by Ben Hall to maintain the traditional position of refusing support to capitalist candidates under any conditions was also rejected. Further details can be found in the March 20 Militant.

in on the "ground floor" and get some contacts and positions, the first thing that will occur to them is: What do we need this disreputable "Independent Socialist League" for when our future career lies elsewhere? As happened with scores and thousands of members of the Socialist Party who were allowed to take the same course, they will begin dropping their membership in the Independent Socialist League, remaining platonic sympathizers, and maybe contributing a dollar or two now and then for conscience sake.

### An Immutable Law for Socialists

But the "contacts" the Independent Socialist Leaguers are establishing by participation in the Democratic primaries and elections means death for the Shachtmanite organization as any future rival of ours for the allegiance of revolutionary workers. It is the law, laid down by theory and confirmed by a hundred years of experience, that the essential condition for the growth and development, and ultimately for the survival of an independent socialist organization, is the inflexible and unvarying maintenance of its *class* independence. That's the meaning of principle, it has a class meaning.

Tactical flexibility within the labor movement—on one side of the class barricades—is necessary, as we all know. But crossing the class barricades is fatal. When Marxists have said, "No class collaboration," that's what they meant. All maneuvering has to be done on the workers' side of the barricades, not in the camp of the class enemy—and the camp of the class enemy, *par excellence*, is the political parties of the bourgeoisie. "Socialist" maneuvering cannot be done there at any time or under any circumstances.

A comrade remarked to me, *apropos* of participation in the CIO-PAC: "There's danger in this whole work in the PAC, particularly if comrades want to carry it to the point of participation in the Democratic primaries and elections." I told him: "*Danger is not the right word; the right word is death.*" Any proposals of this kind would be death proposals for our party as an independent revolutionary force. And if not as an independent revolutionary force, what right have we to exist?

Of course, there are always attractive circumstances surrounding these proposals. If I may revert to my early training, the sin of class collaboration is often tempting. But "the wages of sin is death."

### PAC Class Collaboration Old Story

This PAC business of "capturing" a capitalist political party is an old story in a new guise. It has been tried many times before. The fact that political and organizational death does not occur immediately is sometimes deceptive. The full consequence of errors like this are not always apparent right away. In politics people seem to get away with one mistake after another, with one crime after another, but that appearance is only deceptive.

Very seldom is a boxer in the ring knocked out with a single blow. Following a prize fight when one of the contestants is knocked out, there is sometimes discussions among spectators: "Which blow knocked him out? Was it

a left hook or a right cross?" But all students of the profession, and particularly those who dealt and felt the blows can testify: "No, it wasn't the last blow but the accumulated effect of a hundred blows that so weakened the organism of the fighter that, although the last blow might have been much weaker than the first blow, in the end he's knocked out." That's what always happens in the end to "socialists" who play with class collaboration.

Back when the Socialist Party had its peak influence, during the First World War and immediately before, some Socialists in the Northwest got tired of running for office every year and never getting elected. Like an individual here and there in our party who distributes *The Militant*, makes speeches, fights the trade union bureaucrats, runs errands and organizes affairs, they began to ask: "When are we going to win something? Isn't it possible to get there quicker? Maybe somebody else can get it for us cheaper, wholesale, so to speak."

These impatient Socialists, of 30-odd years ago, headed by C. T. Townley, a Northwestern stem-winder had the idea—not even original with them—that Socialist "principles" were all right but the tactics were all wrong. It was wrong to run against the big parties because too many people voted for them out of habit and you could never get a majority. Why not take advantage of the primary law; enter the primaries of the capitalist parties; nominate progressive and socialist candidates on their tickets, and thus beat them at their own game?

So the Townleyites organized among the farmers and workers in the Northwest a movement that cut quite a swath in those days called the Non-Partisan League. Looking over the two major parties, the one that appeared most promising to be captured for Socialism and Progress was the Republican Party. They built a great organization in North and South Dakota, Minnesota and Nebraska and other grain-producing states and nominated a lot of their people on the Republican party ticket. Some even got into office. Then they discovered that they didn't have any need for the Socialist Party which was a hindrance to their personal careers. This get-rich-quick experiment devastated the Socialist organization in that area; it never recovered from it.

### **The LaFollette and Epic Illusions**

The Socialist Party nationally tried the same thing in 1924 when for the first time they renounced their independent presidential candidates by hooking themselves onto the train of the La Follette petty-bourgeois party. They've been staggering from that self-inflicted blow ever since until they fell down in a coma this year.

These people in the PAC—these bright young labor skates who imagine that history began with them—may think they've discovered something new. But it's really very old stuff. The same thing was tried again in California during the Thirties with Upton Sinclair's EPIC movement. Sinclair, who had several times been the Socialist Party candidate for governor, suddenly decided to "End Poverty In California" through the medium of the Democratic Party. The inspirers of this "EPIC" movement forsook the Social-

ist Party and put on a whirlwind campaign to capture the Democratic Party for Socialism.

During those depression years there was such a sweep of radicalism that the Socialist Party had a rare opportunity to rebuild itself by fighting for a program which would really express the needs and desires of the great mass of discontented in California. But the whole movement was channeled into the Democratic Party. Sinclair was nominated for governor and defeated. The next time, Olson, an EPIC man, was elected. A few renegades made careers for themselves. Finally the whole thing piddled out into a reconstituted Democratic Party. The California organization of the Socialist Party itself was so emaciated that when we joined the SP out there in 1936, our first task was to round up the stragglers one by one, prop them up, and tell them, "The future has hopes, don't doubt it."

The net result of Sinclair's "Epic" experiment was to make careers for a few individuals and to debilitate the Socialist Party. The Social-Democratic Federation has played the same game in New York until it is nothing but a miserable appendage of the Democratic political machine and the Liberal Party. Many Socialist Party members have been doing the same thing in PAC over the last ten years. One reason why the SP is finally officially endorsing the program of supporting Democratic candidates is because 90 percent of their former members have already gone over one by one to that field. The SP's independence has long been very much of a fiction and it is ending now in disillusion and ignominious death.

In this period we must teach our young cadres these lessons. Especially our trade unionists, for that's where the great danger comes from. Trade unions are hot-houses for the accelerated development of opportunism. Trade unionists are under constant pressure to adapt themselves to the practicalities of their situations. It is precisely because they, as individuals, are submitted to such pressures from every side that they cannot maintain a revolutionary position without a party.

The party must not ask these party trade unionists what it is necessary for them to do for the sake of expediency; the party has to advise them what they can't do in the name of expediency if they want to remain revolutionary socialists. One thing they can't do is cross the line of class collaboration in politics.

### **Trotsky's Conditions for Collaboration**

In the next stages of our ideological campaign, we should explain to our members why Trotsky set down, as basic principles of the Fourth International and as conditions for collaboration with him after he got out of Russia, uncompromising opposition to the Stalinist politics of the Anglo-Russian committee and to the Stalinist politics in China of joining the Kuomintang, the party of the Chinese bourgeoisie. Why did he do that? Because, in the Anglo-Russian committee, which was a block between the Stalinist trade union leaders of Russia and the reformist leaders of the Trade Union Council in Great Britain, was involved the idea that there could be a substitute for the independent Communist Party of Britain.

This combination of trade union leaders of the two countries was supposed to carry out a fight against imperialist war and conduct the class struggle over the head of an independent revolutionary party organization. By throwing all their weight in support of the Anglo-Russian committee, the Soviet government and the Stalinist Third International shut off the Communist Party of Great Britain from any chance of independent growth in the very period of the 1926 General Strike. Just when the situation was wide open for a revolutionary voice, the Communist Party was put to one side and the Anglo-Russian Committee was permitted to strangle the developing movement at leisure.

Similarly in China. The renunciation of the independence of the Communist Party of China and its attempt to function as a fraction of the bourgeois Kuomintang, sealed off its revolutionary possibilities, and helped to strangle the Chinese revolution of 1925-27.

Our comrades have to be indoctrinated with the idea that nowhere and never can we depart from the line of independent class politics. There's a field for operation in political work in the unions today, but it requires a combination of flexibility and firmness that the comrades can't easily acquire without constant aid and counsel from the party.

One comrade gave an admirable formula for this combination in reporting on work in his union. He participates in PAC, helps push it along the road of independent political action, and maintains close contact with the workers active in it. But when they came to the crucial point and the proposal to support one set of candidates against the other in the Democratic Party primaries, he correctly said: "This is the time, brothers, that I have to withdraw because I don't believe in Democratic Party politics." Some

comrades think that might hurt and isolate us. It does, to a certain extent and for a certain time. On the other hand, it serves as a warning which these workers will remember when their disillusionment comes.

Such conduct establishes respect in their minds for the fact that Trotskyists have definite principles. We are willing to participate in union political activities, but won't cross over the class barricades and collaborate with any party of the bourgeois class. In the long run, we will gain and not lose from that kind of firmness.

We must participate in these formative movements, but not at the expense of forgetting or transgressing our basic positions. We have to educate our people so that they can carry through any kind of complicated tactic on the working-class side of the barricades and still be firm enough to stop at the danger-sign of crossing class lines. We must firmly reject all temptation to buy participation in any movement at the expense of principle.

To sum up. Our great victory of 1949, in my opinion, was that we alone of all the radical movements in this country maintained our class independence and stood our ground. That is a great achievement, and we don't need to claim any more. Recruiting slowed down in the unfavorable climate of reaction.

A few members fell aside from activity, or even withdrew from the party. But the cadres have all remained firm and strong.

We came out of the experiences of this past year stronger than our opponents precisely because we remained tough and inflexible on principled lines. That's the condition for future advances and for eventual victory in our fight for the leadership of the vanguard, just as leadership of the vanguard is the condition for the victory of the working class over United States capitalism.

# The Maturing Crisis

By **GEORGE CLARKE**

Since the end of the last war, and particularly since the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine, the world politics of American Imperialism has dominated domestic politics and the domestic scene in this country. The drive for world supremacy—with its corollary, the cold war with the Soviet Union—has profoundly influenced the march of events at home. It has in part shaped the direction of economic trends. It has created strong pressures toward the police state. It speeded the bureaucratization of the CIO. It has had a strong effect on the consciousness of the American workers and on their activities, or lack of activity, in the class struggle.

One year ago, approximately, American Imperialism appeared to be in full flush of victory on the world arena. Its plan to erect a West European bastion against the Soviet Union, with the bricks of Marshall Plan aid, was going full speed ahead. From the Marshall Plan there followed inevitably, and with increasing success, the forging of the

North Atlantic military alliance. America could already report certain successes in the first conflicts in the cold war. The air-lift was defeating Stalin's Berlin Blockade. With the removal of the Stalinist ministers, stable capitalist governments were being created in France and Italy. And, thanks to the treachery of the Kremlin and its counter-revolutionary policies, America was winning the "battle of Greece." Above all, what gave confidence to the American bourgeoisie was its seeming monopoly of the atom bomb. That monopoly appeared to solve the deep and intricate questions posed by a projected Third World War.

## Crisis of U.S. World Policy

Now, one year later, that picture has been sharply altered. All the elements of political crisis, at least as far as America's foreign policy is concerned, have appeared.

1. *The anarchy and dislocation of European economy:* Two years before the completion of the Marshall Plan,



which superficially has gained its economic objectives, European capitalism is showing all the symptoms and contradictions that foretell the coming of crisis. Production in Western Europe has been restored to pre-war levels, but their markets for a large volume of goods have shrunk internally as well as on a world scale. At the same time, Western Europe and England have begun to resist the unrelenting pressure of the North American colossus and to clamor for larger rations of world trade and overseas markets. The struggle with Great Britain has become particularly sharp, taking the form of a bitter trade and currency war over the entire world. England heads the opposition to America's plans for "unification" and "integration" of Western Europe (i.e., its transformation into a semi-colonial region of the United States), without which the Marshall Plan can be nothing but a gigantic relief scheme.

Simultaneous with these first cracks in the Marshall Plan structure, there has appeared the baffling problem of Germany, a problem as insoluble for American imperialism as that of the rest of Europe. Germany is the focus of all the contradictions preventing America from creating any kind of stability in the Old World. Washington is faced with two alternatives, both of them bad: Either to revive Germany to its past power, both economically and politically, to rebuild the technological giant which will quickly devour all its competitors on the continent, and thereby destroy everything the Marshall Plan billions have achieved to date in the revival of Western Europe. Or, in seeking a compromise to fit Germany into its present patterns, American Imperialism must permit the German industrialists to turn toward Eastern Europe for markets, thus strengthening the opposing side in the cold war. In either case the perspective is a dismal one and does not allow any rational course on the part of American Imperialism.

So, as has been clearly noted even by the heads of ECA, despite all the billions poured out by the Marshall Plan Western Europe rushes towards the inevitable crisis.

2. *The developments in Asia, particularly in China.* The defeat of Chiang Kai-shek, unexpected on so wide and sweeping a scale, has had a jolting impact upon the American bourgeoisie. True, they were resigned after Marshall's return from China in 1947 to the loss of China, but they did not believe it would be lost so quickly, or that the victories of the Stalinist peasant army would be so thorough. Now they shudder in icy fear that this revolutionary development, however the Stalinists in China have distorted it, may spread to the rest of Asia. The greatest of potential markets, which American Imperialism has been eyeing so greedily all these years, may be irrevocably lost.

The best it can now hope for is some form of trade agreement with the Chinese Stalinists. But, it is quite obvious that Wall Street will not be able to dictate its own terms, at least not for some time to come, as it did in the past. And no sooner had Mao's armies conquered China than the first big breach appeared in the imperialist front. Differences of interests between America and England came to the surface which resulted in England's recognition of the Mao government and set new tendencies in motion on

the world diplomatic arena to the disadvantage of the U.S. State Department.

*The third outstanding development was the atomic explosion in Russia.* Above all, this explosion has blown up the theory of a quick American victory in a war. It has undermined that miraculous military superiority derived from the atom bomb monopoly, although America's real military predominance, based on its unrivalled productive plant, remains. By the same token, the atomic explosion in Russia, has weakened America's position toward its allies in Western Europe who, now facing danger from two sides, are far more critical of their Yankee protector. Finally, the effect of this explosion in Russia upon the American people cannot be exaggerated. If any single event proves decisive in starting a trend toward new political thought in this country, it will be the advent of the atom that confronts the people with the spectre of total disaster. The nightmare becomes still more gruesome as spy-scare headlines announce that Russia either possesses the H-bomb secret, or will soon have it. Perhaps it will yet be said that the splitting of the atom undermined capitalism just as Marx once said that the invention of gunpowder was a powerful factor in undermining feudalism.

### Clamor for a Deal with Stalin

These developments on the world arena have created a strong division in the top circles of the American bourgeoisie, not yet entirely apparent, but clearly moving toward a crisis of morale. The Republicans have even announced in their election platform that, for the first time since 1940, foreign policy will be at issue in the elections. Bi-partisan policy, although followed in actuality, will cease to have the same moral effect it has had since the beginning of the last war. This was plain in the first discussions over China that blew up on the question of Formosa. Bourgeois liberals, like the *New Republic* editors, have proclaimed the death of the Truman Doctrine and are urging the elaboration of some new foreign policy.

In 1948 Henry Wallace was the sole voice among the American bourgeoisie in favor of a settlement of the cold war with Russia. Today, in various forms, this cry for a deal is being taken up by a substantial section of American bourgeois public opinion. Senator McMahon's speech in the Senate, although still upholding administration policy, nonetheless contains a strong element of this demand for a deal. The same outcry comes from the Association of American Scientists.

This clamor, which is only beginning, has already compelled Acheson to defend, explain, and rationalize the policy which only a year ago was considered the last word in wisdom. He says in effect that a deal now exists. But it is not formalized, it is established by force: America dominates Greece—that constitutes a settlement with the Soviet Union in the Mediterranean. The defeat of the Berlin Blockade—that constitutes partial terms with the Kremlin on Germany. American puppets win elections and dominate governments in various European countries, and that constitutes a type of agreement. Thus, according to Acheson, a *de facto* deal with the Kremlin in the form

of an armed truce has been in existence for a number of years and will probably continue on this basis. But this is hardly the last word to be said about the evolution of American foreign policy, and it is doubtful that Acheson will be the one to say it.

Yet, precisely because of the uncertainty of the outcome of a projected anti-Soviet war, as a consequence of the invention of terribly destructive weapons, its unleashing more and more takes the form of an act of desperation and therefore tends to postpone it. And because it would be an act of desperation, it becomes difficult to determine the time of the actual outbreak of war. The monopolists will hesitate many times before taking the fatal plunge, until they reach the blind alley in world and domestic politics, the crisis from which there is no escape but war.

On the other hand this fumbling, this division, this lack of confidence and sure perspective in its world policy on the part of the American bourgeoisie is lowering its prestige not only abroad but also at home; and this uncertainty must find a reflection in the domestic situation, in American politics and in the class struggle. The doubts and weakness of the ruling class will tend to stimulate greater confidence among the masses in dealing with their main enemy who no longer appears as powerful, arrogant, as self-assured as it did in the past. Eventually, this loss of prestige will lead to splits within the labor agencies of American imperialism, i.e., among the trade union bureaucracy, and to the growth of opposition movements on a larger scale than ever before.

### Symptoms of Economic Crisis at Home

If the conditions of a crisis of American world policy are maturing, so too are the conditions for a domestic crisis. Its advent, which even bourgeois analysts have been predicting for many years, will radically alter the political scene and the relationship of forces in this country. This prognosis, made by the National Committee of the SWP in its plenary session one year ago, remains as correct today.

When will this crisis occur? Without making any pinpoint predictions, it is interesting to note that at the first of this year the bourgeoisie and all its leading spokesmen and economists had no more than a six-months perspective for the boom. That was all they were willing to gamble upon. While this prognosis cannot be read like a timetable, it serves as an index of the instability of the present economic situation and is verified by the appearance of the following symptoms of crisis.

First: the recovery from the 1949 recession can be explained to a large extent by the increase in government expenditures. Whereas the gross private domestic investment dropped from \$45 billion in 1948 to \$36.8 billion in 1949, government expenditures in the same period rose from \$36.7 billion to \$43.5 billion. Thus the decline in business activity was made up for almost to the penny by huge government spending. This appears in the large budget deficit of some \$5 billion which continues in the very midst of so-called prosperity conditions.

Second, the steady decline of foreign trade. In 1948,

there was a favorable margin of almost \$2 billion in foreign trade after deducting Marshall Plan aid and private loans from the surplus of exports over imports. By 1949 that margin disappeared and it is anticipated that in 1950 there will be a deficit of some \$.6 billion. This is the consequence of growing competition and world productivity, a new factor since the end of the war.

A few aspects of this new world competition will suffice to indicate the trend. Despite apparent agreement there has been a British ban on oil imports from dollar areas into Great Britain and some other members of the sterling bloc. There has been a growth of refinery capacity on the European continent, which has caused cut-backs in American oil production in Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. The unfavorable price position of U.S. steel products and the increasing capacity of the European steel industry, which now has a surplus of some 8 million tons, has lowered the demand for American steel in world markets. Auto exports have declined some 15% in 1949 compared to 1948. Coal exports have dropped by one-third, one of the factors behind the bitter struggles in the mine areas. The export of manufactured foodstuffs has dropped some 30%.

Third, and one of the most significant symptoms of crisis, is the decline in expenditure for plant, and equipment. Taking 1948 as the index of 100, investments in this sphere dropped to 93 in 1949 and by 1950, as has been indicated by many reliable sources, the index point will drop to 80. In other words, new investment in American industry is tending to fall quite rapidly, resulting in an accumulation of idle capital which can no longer be profitably invested at home.

### Shrinking of Domestic Market

Meanwhile the domestic market itself has begun to shrink. Besides such a major and long-range factor as the great growth of productivity without a corresponding increase in the workers share in the national income, more immediate and direct signs of this contraction are already visible.

We note first a sharp decline in farm income, which in 1947 was some \$18 billion. By 1948 it dropped to \$16.7 billion, in 1949 to \$14 billion and it is estimated will drop to \$12 billion in 1950.

A parallel development has been the great increase in consumer credit. In other words, consumer income is no longer being stored in savings as a cushion against future shocks but on the contrary is being mortgaged on a wholesale scale; it is as if, to change the metaphor, a time-bomb were being planted under the whole economy. A statistical contrast will show the gravity of this development. In 1949, consumer credit equalled 8.4 percent of the national income. But in 1929, the year immediately preceding the last depression, consumer credit was only slightly larger or 8.7 percent of the national income.

Two months ago, *The Militant* calculated that unemployment had mounted to some 5 million, or one and one-half million more than admitted at the time in doctored government statistics. Today, the government admits the existence of an unemployed army of almost 5 million

which means the figure is now closer to 6 or 6.5 million. This is a larger percentage of the labor force (although the labor force is larger today) than in 1929, the last pre-crisis year of the pre-war depression.

### The Basis of the Truman Coalition

These are all elements of crisis, symptoms of a strong trend and indicative of the direction of this trend, but by themselves they have not yet been strong enough to alter the present relative economic stability. The Truman coalition with the labor bureaucracy has rested primarily upon these boom conditions. The coalition has not been subject to the strains and pressures it would have experienced had crisis conditions been more advanced than they are today. There has been no frontal offensive by the corporations against the labor movement on the economic field.

Heavy profit-taking has continued from year to year, almost since the end of the war. Wage increases have not only been offset by rising prices but by the increased productivity of labor, in the forms of a speed-up and the worsening of working conditions—one of the generous gifts granted to the corporations by the trade union bureaucracy. To this must be added the failure of the trade union movement to struggle for substantial wage concessions. Under such conditions, the corporations were not constrained to carry on a frontal attack on the trade unions and the living standards of the American working class. And, in the absence of such an offensive, the Truman coalition with the labor bureaucracy has been able to survive and even to have smooth sailing in the past 16 months since the presidential elections.

Now, of course, it will not take the outbreak of a crisis to alter this situation. Increasing competition among the corporations, loss of foreign trade and the reduction of profits at home—all these factors are bound to create a change in the attitude of the bourgeoisie even before an economic tailspin occurs. The pronouncement of the Steel Fact Finding Board a year ago that wage increases were already impermissible, heralded an expected sharpening of competition, a decline in profits and a determination on the part of the corporations not to grant further wage increases. An anticipation of such conflicts is already apparent in the "soft" sectors of industry, like coal, which have been placed on the "sick" list. Here we encounter a fierce resistance to concessions, joined in by the entire capitalist class and by the administration, sorely trying the "coalition" and producing the first resurgence of labor militancy even under "boom" conditions.

Nevertheless, the first effects of the slow growth of unemployment, which set in with the slight "recession" of 1949, have been to create fear rather than militancy among the American workers. It is by virtue of such conditions that Truman has been able to continue his program of social demagoguery without substantial social reforms. This is one of the most striking phenomena of the last period. We have never known in this country a president as radical in his promises of social reform with such a meager, slight and almost non-existent record in the legislation of actual reforms. Yet, as is well known, he has

not been able to rely upon demagoguery and promises alone. This is clearly seen in the paradox, that this most "laborite" of all Federal administrations has also been the most repressive and most reactionary in its trend toward a police state. Complemented by the bureaucratization in the unions, this growth of repressions is the best index of how shaky, is the present conjuncture and how precarious the base of Truman's "laborism."

### Radical Parties Put to the Test

In the meanwhile, however, the combination of "laborism" and repression has had a debilitating effect upon American radicalism. In reading the excellent book by Ray Ginger on Eugene V. Debs, one is struck by the great dissimilarity of the times prior to World War I and our own. The rampant reaction and anti-labor repressions of Debs' day were not accompanied by social reforms. The robber barons fought tooth-and-nail against the organization of unions and against granting any real improvement of the workers' living standards. In this, the government was a most faithful tool. As a consequence, with all other roads blocked, the workers in large numbers turned toward the Socialist Party, towards socialism in the vague form they understood it.

If we extend the contrast, it will be observed that the situation today is also greatly different from that prevailing during the Roosevelt New Deal era. That too was a period of social reforms but one without the sweeping repressions of today. While the broad masses, contrary to their sentiments before the First World War, were not receptive to radicalism, nevertheless, the radicals had an arena in the struggles which unfolded and could attract the advanced elements of an awakening working class to the revolutionary movement.

The present situation is very much unlike these other two. Broad masses are under the spell of the Truman-Welfare State illusion. Social reforms remain mostly a promise but the workers permit themselves, at least for a time because of conditions of employment, to be put off with this promise. On the other hand, the advanced elements, although more cognizant of Truman's demagoguery, tend to be frightened by the repression. It is not a question of this or that particular worker but of a broad layer of the more militant and conscious workers whom the radicals could influence in previous periods.

The *Stalinists* have suffered disastrously in this past period not so much from blows but from an utter inability to create any genuine support for a struggle against the repressions that have fallen upon them, so discredited had they already become.

The *Wallace* movement, which suddenly appeared as the great new dispensation in 1948, was completely outflanked by Truman's demagoguery and its decline has been just as sudden, if more catastrophic. It is doubtful whether there has been any similar experience of a movement that has catapulted downward so quickly. True, the Progressive Party still has some mass support as was indicated in the 1948 New York City elections, but it has lost all the

original momentum it possessed in the Spring and early Summer of 1948.

The *Socialist Party* is going through the throes of its final disintegration. It has announced its desire to liquidate itself into the Social Democratic Federation. But this is not quite accurate in describing the real process which has already gone beyond that stage. In many places in the country, the SP for all practical purposes is dissolved into the Democratic party, or more precisely into its trade union adjuncts, PAC and LPEL, and into the Americans for Democratic Action. What merges with the Social Democratic Federation will therefore be only the rag ends of a movement that has already made its merger with a section of the petty bourgeoisie even further to the right.

The *Shachtmanites*, yielding to the pressure of an adverse period, have abandoned their perspective of an independent revolutionary party. Their pessimism has deepened and blackened with the collapse of their hopes in Europe. Having decided that America was no longer a suitable spot upon which to build a perspective, they conjured up a great dream about the mish-mash centrist RDR in France. But the RDR disappeared without a trace almost before Shachtman could hold his first meeting and celebrate his great victory in another continent. Internally, their ranks go through a steady decomposition, politically and organizationally.

Against this adverse background the achievement of American Trotskyism in the past period has been remarkable. Despite defeats in the unions, despite persecution, and above all despite isolation, the revolutionary vanguard organized in the Socialist Workers Party has suffered incidental losses at its perimeter but not in its main structure. The cadre—and that is what counts—has remained politically firm, yielding neither to Trumanism nor Stalinism.

The Trotskyists were able to weather the storm first of all because of their profound and unalterable convictions, upon which the great perspective for the victory of the proletariat on a world scale and in the United States is based. This will be enriched by an understanding of the maturing contradictions of US imperialism which are preparing the ground for the greatest social crisis America has ever seen.

### **Effects of Welfare State Demagogy**

We have already referred to the beginning of the crisis of the world policy of American imperialism and to the maturing conditions for a domestic economic crisis. Now let us add that the social demagogy of the Truman administration which at the present time has a restraining effect on the masses, will become a stimulus for mass radicalization in the next period. Throughout the last few years there has been a continuing public debate in the press and on the radio, in the speeches of the politicians and in the platforms of the parties on the question of Communism versus capitalism, on the advantages of one against the other. There has been a public debate on the question of the Welfare State and on Socialism, and the Republicans promise to make them main issues in the 1950 elections.

We must not overlook the profound effect this is having on the consciousness of the American workers. As crisis conditions mature, this one-sided propaganda of the bourgeoisie will lead to a political polarization along class lines and to the growth of radicalization on a hitherto unknown scale.

It will certainly incline the broadest masses toward readier acceptance of the Trotskyist transitional program. For in effect, if the Welfare State idea were to be drawn out to its logical conclusions, there could be read into it all of these transitional demands. True, neither Truman nor the Democratic Party nor the labor bureaucracy have any intention or desire to infuse their empty demagogic rhetoric with any logic or reality, but that will not prevent the masses from thinking these problems out to their most radical end. And if in its broad mass, the workers are being inclined toward more radical politics, the more advanced elements are being conditioned today to accept the revolutionary program.

Within the coalition in the Democratic Party certain molecular processes are also at work. It is not the same kind of coalition that existed in Roosevelt's day. The base of the bourgeoisie and its political machinery has been constantly narrowing; the reliance of the Federal administration upon the labor movement correspondingly grown. In state after state, the old-line political machines have either been destroyed or are in great difficulties. The trade union bureaucracy, acting as a united AFL-CIO political unit, wields far more machine control within the Democratic Party than it has in the past.

But precisely this increasing preponderance of the labor bureaucracy, and behind them of the trade unions, in the Democratic Party must prepare the conditions for the irreparable shattering of this party. When the Democratic Party splinters under the blows of the crisis—and it is inconceivable that it can be transformed into a labor party in this country—it will emerge in unrecognizable form, in numerous fragments. This would completely disrupt American politics in its traditional two-party form.

### **Repressions and Labor Struggles**

As the struggle of larger masses unfolds, the repressions carried out by the government will be directed against broader groups of American workers. This will sharpen the class conflicts and the strikes, giving them an ever deeper political character. The trade union bureaucracy, bound hand and foot to the governmental administration and to the State Department, is constantly compromising itself in the eyes of the masses and thus assuring, as the conditions for struggle develop, that it will not be the last target of mass discontent.

There are already indications of this. The speed-up in the Ford empire produced a struggle that was directed not only against Ford, but against Reuther. The growing unemployment in maritime, far more extensive than in any single industry in the country, erupted in a fight in New York aimed first of all, against the Curran administration in the National Maritime Union. The miners' strike and

victory is at least as compromising in its exposure of Murray and Reuther as it is of the Truman Administration. And its full repercussions have still to be felt. These are heat-lightning flashes of struggles that will develop on many planes and in many industries in the next period.

Finally, and not least important, is the world crisis of Stalinism. The world-shaking importance of Tito's break with Stalin cannot be overestimated. This break is only be-

ginning to reverberate within the world and American Stalinist movement. This development gains in significance from the fact that the crisis of world Stalinism parallels the maturing debacle looming before world capitalism.

The period of reaction has not yet run its course. But the signs of a great and stirring change are clearly on the horizon. Trotskyism, as its great leader predicted, will yet speak with the voice of millions.

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## To the Memory of Henry Sneevliet And the Comrades Who Fell With Him

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By SAL SANTEN

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**Editor's Note:** Eight years ago, in April 1942, a Nazi firing squad took the lives of Henry Sneevliet and seven of his co-workers in a concentration camp in Holland. Hitler and his Dutch Quislings had good reason to fear Sneevliet. The outstanding revolutionary socialist leader of the Netherlands working class, he was also the founder and builder of the first proletarian Marxist movement in the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia. Banished for his activities there, Sneevliet was later imprisoned for his solidarity with the Dutch and Indonesian sailors of the Dutch cruiser "Zeven Provinciën" who in February 1933 had mutinied against a wage cut and in solidarity with strikes on the Indies mainland.

Sneevliet rallied to the Trotskyist movement in 1934. His party, the Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (RSAP), became a constituent part of the independent world Trotskyist movement. A few years later, however, differences developed between Sneevliet and the leadership of the Fourth International. Sneevliet's centrist position on the question of the International, on the Civil War in Spain and on tactics in Holland led to a struggle within his party and a break with the Fourth International forces.

Sal Santen, the author of the first article, was one of the leaders of the Trotskyist faction in the RSAP and is now a leader of the Trotskyist party in the Netherlands. His account of Sneevliet's farewell message is a poignant confirmation that the Trotskyist movement is the continuator and inheritor of the best revolutionary traditions of the Dutch working class. The second article written by an eye-witness, without political affiliation, remains an imperishable record of the last hours of the martyred revolutionists.

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**"I hope to have the necessary strength to remain true to the last to the maxim of the Malays: Berani Karena Benar — Be Courageous Because It Is Best That Way."**

Excerpt from Sneevliet's last letter written the night before his execution.

History has already rendered its verdict on the differences which eventually led to the split between Leon Trotsky and Henry Sneevliet. The Fourth International, which the revolutionary Dutch leaders believed was constituted prematurely, has fully justified its right to existence.

More than that, it has become the only revolutionary center in the world. Sneevliet's allies, at the time of the bitter faction struggles (1936-40), often represented parties which were far larger than the sections of the Fourth International. Today they and their parties or factions have completely disintegrated or have simply disappeared from the political scene. One has only to read the miserable "democratic socialist" verbiage of a Gorkin to understand that it is only through a sorry misunderstanding that such figures could ever have pretended to the name of revolutionists, let alone lead a revolutionary party in a revolutionary period.

A rapid survey of the fate of the ILP, the PSOP, the SAP, will suffice to show that Sneevliet was on the wrong side in the period of the constitution of our world party. History has already rendered its verdict, we said. But a number of years were necessary in order to accord to the leader of RSAP (Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party) and to his party the place which such genuine militants deserve. It is useful today to draw up a balance sheet of everything which has separated us over these long years. But side by side with this it is our duty to separate sharply, not Sneevliet from the International but from his former allies in the years 1936-40.

### "We Are Proud to Be the First . . ."

Those who knew of his activities from the outbreak of the Second World War until his death need no proofs to buttress the unshakeable conviction that an abyss separated him from all the centrists, whose break with the International was only a stage in their degeneration. What is there in common between a Shachtman who, during the test of the war, spent his time proclaiming "the death of the Fourth International," and Sneevliet whose proud words spoken just before he died are immortal: "*Friends, we are proud to be the first in the Netherlands to be condemned before a tribunal for the cause of the International and who must therefore die for this cause.*"

By a quirk of history which, however, is only apparently a quirk, the struggle between the Fourth International and centrism assumed a particularly aggravated expression in the clash between the leader of the October Revolution and a revolutionary party of a very small country which was characterized by the stability and prosperity, if not of the entire proletariat, at least of a considerable aristocracy of labor. Moreover, in this country, precisely because of the apparently impregnable positions of reformism and of the trade union bureaucracy, the revolutionary movement was always infected with sectarianism.

The whole life of Sneevliet proved that he knew how to raise himself above the political level of his country. But during the formative years of the International he was not able to free himself from the tradition of the Dutch labor movement, which had never succeeded in making the conquest of power a real political perspective. His attitude, beginning with the outbreak of the Second World War, demonstrates that he was able to adjust himself rapidly and completely to a drastically new situation forced upon imperialism as well as upon the proletariat of the Netherlands. Better than anyone, Sneevliet understood that the Netherlands had ceased to be an islet in Europe. And with that unconditional internationalism, for which he paid with his life, he indicated the place which the proletariat of this country will henceforth occupy as an *inseparable part of the European proletariat*.

In his speech at the 20th anniversary of the Trotskyist movement in the United States, Comrade Cannon pointed out the difference between the activity of Debs, one of the great pioneers of American Socialism, and that of the SWP. Debs was a consistent and implacable fighter against capitalism; but the question of *how* capitalism was to be overthrown was not a burning question for him. The SWP carries on the revolutionary traditions of Eugene Debs but at the same time it is faced with entirely new tasks.

The attitude of our Dutch section and of the whole International toward Sneevliet cannot be different than that of the SWP towards Debs. Whatever may be the international significance of our conflict with Sneevliet as an instance of the struggle against centrism, it reflects at the same time a fundamental aspect of the Netherland labor movement: the struggle between the tasks of yesterday and those of today. The RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party), which has taken the place of the RSAP, considers it an honor to continue the pioneer work Sneevliet began in the Netherlands. His intimate bonds with the Indonesian masses, for which he paid first by deportation from Indonesia, and then during the mutiny of the Dutch warship, "Zeven Provinzen," by a prison term; his attitude towards the Indonesian problem will stand as an example for the Dutch comrades, an example also of his courageous and irreproachable internationalism.

### Sneevliet's Comrades

On April 13, seven years will have passed since the day when Henry Sneevliet and seven of his comrades were murdered by the Gestapo. If we do not deal in this article

with Menist, Dolleman, Schiefer, Edel, Koeslag, Gerritsen and Witteveen, who fell with Sneevliet, it is not at all because we underestimate them. Menist was the leader who succeeded in smashing the influence of the Stalinists in Rotterdam so effectively that they never again succeeded in taking roots there (in the 1939 communal elections the RSAP received 19,000 votes in this city, far surpassing the Stalinist vote); Dolleman was a worker who became one of the best-educated Marxists in the Netherlands and who remained closely connected with the Fourth International during the faction struggle—these men, together with their other comrades, have won a permanent place in the hearts of the Dutch working class.

### The Farewell Message

But one cannot deny that Sneevliet was their leader much longer than he was ours. In him we honor the devotion and the courage of all the militants in the Netherlands who gave their lives in the cause of the international proletariat. If we honor him first of all, it is also in order to discharge an obligation which has long been ours. We had the opportunity of transmitting our last greetings to Sneevliet in his cell several days before his execution. At that time, we made it known to him that, despite all differences and frictions on the question of the International, his life would remain for us a revolutionary example and that the Dutch proletariat would lose in him one of its best leaders. We hope that we spoke these words in the spirit of the whole International. In his farewell letter, Sneevliet wrote:

*"The farewell visit of Bep and your little girl, so important to me, has already blotted out the memory of the old frictions which existed between S. and me. It is good to know that BOTH OF US had thought of eliminating them before the definitive separation which will soon occur."*

The "frictions" (a curse on the Nazi censor who kept Sneevliet from making his thoughts more precise!) were not of a personal character. They related to the policy of the Fourth International. That is the reason which makes us consider it our duty on this commemoration to see that these words of reconciliation of our fallen comrade become the common property of the whole International. It is furthest from our mind to interpret these words as Sneevliet's "political testament" but it is good to know that we, in the name of the International, were able to grasp the hand of Henry Sneevliet and through him, of all those who fell with him, before the fatal salvos were fired.

And on this April 13th, we bow our heads before these comrades who did not fear to sacrifice their lives as their best contribution to the task before us all: the overthrow of capitalism.

April 1949

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## AN EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT

# The Last Hours Of the Condemned Men

I have just read an article in the October 27th issue of *De Vlam* entitled "In Memoriam to the Victims of the Nazi Terror." Although I do not belong to the *De Vlam* group [a centrist organization in Holland] and although I come from an Anti-Revolutionary family [the "Anti-Revolutionary" Party is the right wing party in the Netherlands whose most prominent leader is the former Prime Minister Colijn]—and I am not today affiliated to any party—I was in a position during my four years of imprisonment to make many friends among the communists and the socialists, and I have a great deal of admiration for many of them.

After having served 8 months in the Schevingen prison [a well known Nazi prison near The Hague] on April 5, 1942 I was transferred to the cell block at the Amersfoort camp [the concentration camp where Sneevliet and his comrades were executed] and most of the time there I was kept in solitary confinement. The seven other cells of the cell block were empty. I spent six weeks there, after which they returned me to the camp proper.

## The Prisoners Arrive

On Sunday April 12 I was awakened by the sound of SS guards. They were Dutch SS led by German SS. It was about 9 p.m. They opened the doors of all seven cells and set up a strict guard. I heard them shout: "*Es kommen jetzt gang gefährliche Leute.*" (Very dangerous people are arriving.) Orders were issued and a few moments later, I heard them lock up in each of the cells a comrade-in-misfortune.

Soon I heard one of the prisoners say: "Before the war, the Dutch government was hounding me; after May 15, 1940 it was the German government. If I did not have the bad luck to be sent to the hospital, they would never have found me." [This, undoubtedly, was comrade Menist who shortly before his arrest was hurt in a street accident and sent to the hospital.] Then I heard Sneevliet's magnificent voice: "Lads, we are proud to be the first in the Netherlands to be condemned before a tribunal for the cause of the International, and who must therefore die for this cause."

I should say in passing that the guard was so strict that every 15 minutes they covered the cells (including mine) to look through the peep-hole to see if anyone was trying to commit suicide or escape. Two Dutch SS constantly turned their flashlights on the outside windows even though they were completely boarded up. This continued through the night, a tense troubled night. I quickly grasped who my comrades in the cell block were. Seven (and not

eight) condemned to death. [That is correct. One of the eight, after having been horribly tortured, had supplied names and then committed suicide.] They all had the right to sign an appeal for clemency which they actually did.

## Himmler Denies Clemency

[At the outset, all the comrades had refused to sign an appeal for clemency. But their attorney had insisted, saying that the chief justice had admired their courageous defense in which they had clearly voiced their solidarity with the German workers, and he then tried to get clemency for them. In most such cases, Seyss Inquart had the final say, but in this case it was Himmler himself who made the decision. The answer from Berlin was "No."]

One of the prisoners made the remark that it was nice of the judge to have promised them that this evening their wives (the wives of three of the prisoners, I believe) would be freed. "They are already at home, my friends," he said. [This promise was actually made. But once again the Nazis did not keep their word. Comrades Mien Sneevliet-Draayer, Trien de Haan-Zwagerman, Jenny Schiefer and Jel Witteveen were imprisoned in the Ravensbrueck concentration camp until the end of the war.]

About six a.m. the prisoners were informed that their request for clemency had been turned down (what a farce!) and that the verdict would be executed immediately.

Sneevliet then requested that they all be shot together, hand in hand. This was refused. "*Sie werden gefesselt mit den Haenden auf dem Ruecken.*" (Your arms will be tied behind your back.) Then Sneevliet requested that they not be blindfolded. This was granted. Then he demanded to be the last to be shot, being the oldest among them. I heard him say: "It is my right, isn't it comrades, as the oldest among you? I was your leader, wasn't I?" He was then permitted to light up a cigar. They commented (oh, morbid humor!): "Yes, charge it to the Netherlands Government."

## "I Kept My Faith . . ."

Then Sneevliet began to speak and said something like this: "*Last night I went through my Gethsemane. When I joined the movement as a youth my pastor said to me: 'My boy, you can do what you want if you remain true to your faith.' Well, last night I struggled with myself and I kept my faith. My faith in the cause of the International. Many struggles and much suffering will still be needed, but the future belongs to us!*"

That was what he said. Then he told some stories about Indonesia (where he had worked for many years as a revolutionist and where he had been deported from in 1919 for having inspired the masses with the example of the workers and poor peasants of Russia.

## "The International Shall Be the Human Race"

Then they put them all in a small cell, 90 centimeters by 2 meters, right opposite mine. Then came the most moving moment: "Shake hands, comrades"—and then with all

their heart they sang the Internationale. What a melody and what words! I have attended many concerts but never have I heard anything sung with so much emotion and so much conviction. I am not ashamed to say that I wept. When later, I myself was condemned to death (the sentence was not carried out) I was no more stirred than at this unforgettable moment. Finally one of the prisoners requested silence to say a Catholic prayer. I do not know who he was. [Undoubtedly, he was the printer, not a member of the underground RSAP-MLL-Front—but sentenced to death because of his courageous attitude during the trial.] The silence was complete. The guards let them alone.

They were then led out to the place of execution. The first salvos were fired around nine-twenty. When four weeks later I was transferred from the camp cell block, I learned that all the barracks were locked up on the

morning of the execution. No one was able to see who was being taken out of the cell block. Everyone knew that something unusual was happening in the camp. But no one knew just what it was. Later I was to tell my story to the party comrades of the condemned (they will remember Prisoner No. 15.) [Many revolutionists were imprisoned in the Amersfoort camp. This was also the camp where Herman Peters, one of the principal leaders of the Dutch section of the Fourth International was murdered six months later.]

I feel I must write that I have the greatest admiration for the way these men died. Fearless and full of confidence in their cause. I cannot resist writing you these details, being the only one who was with these heroes in their last hours.

—Signed, No. 15 PDA

# Dilemma of U.S. Foreign Policy

By JOHN SAUNDERS

Bad times have befallen the arrogant masters of American industry who only a short time ago were poised to reap the harvests of a hundred years' rule over a helpless and distraught world. The dream of "The American Century" is being dispelled almost before the imperialist giant has had a chance to spread over this wide planet. The harsh reality of disillusionment is having a profound and bewildering impact on America's monopolists.

How impressive was the strength of U.S. imperialism as it dropped atom bombs on defenseless Hiroshima and Nagasaki! Even at that time, however, it was evident that the cruel incineration of tens of thousands of Japanese was less for the purpose of bringing about unconditional surrender of the Nipponese empire than of exhibiting trump cards to the Soviet Union at the coming peace conference. Almost overnight America's monopolists renewed their postponed but never-forgotten task of reopening the Soviet Union to capitalist exploitation. A large section of the American bourgeoisie calculated that the time was ripe to achieve this end and, with a boldness reminiscent of 1917-1921, openly and boisterously spoke of preventive war against the Soviet Union.

If this policy of immediate war was not adopted by the State Department, it was not due to a difference over aims but rather to the hopeful illusion that these aims could be effectively accomplished by peaceful means. The psychological advantage of possessing a monopoly of the atom bomb together with undisputed economic superiority over a badly battered Soviet Union were deemed sufficient to force the Kremlin to make concessions and finally capitulate before the seemingly overwhelming might of the American marauder.

However, it would be wrong to state that the entire bourgeoisie, or even its most authoritative section, shared this optimism. The danger to American and world capital-

ism of an immediate war tempered their thinking and caused them to follow the path of delay.

The soldiers' demonstrations overseas frightened Washington as well as its General Staff and forced a hasty demobilization. The prestige of the Soviet Union, which played the most decisive role in the defeat of Hitler, remained at its height. The more astute American statesmen were aware that a carefully studied campaign was necessary to reorient the thinking of the American masses. All this called for additional time. We must also remember that the influence of the Stalinists in Western Europe was then tremendous and, if hard-pressed, they could with little difficulty have precipitated revolts throughout Europe.

## Kennan's Blueprint for Conquest

So the bourgeoisie gratefully accepted the plan of the State Department prodigy, George F. Kennan, with its unusual virtue of delaying matters till 1952. This plan assured the American capitalists that by 1952 they would be in a better position to obtain their demands peacefully, and, failing that, to win a short and easy victory through war. The Kennan thesis was a schematic but well-synchronized plan that embraced the economic, political and military fields. It drew up a timetable for war, setting the date for 1952. The United States would reach the peak of its military strength at that time. Assurances were received from a group of scientists led by Vannevar Bush that the Soviet Union would not be able to produce its first atomic weapon before then. The contrary opinion of other scientists was ignored. By 1952 the American military machine would have at its disposal sufficient atomic bombs to annihilate the Soviet Union in short order.

In the meantime, large military expenditures would serve the dual purpose of preparing the United States for



war and preventing a serious depression. A four-year Marshall Plan was to be put into effect which would further bolster the American economy by propping up exports during this period and at the same time helping European production to exceed its prewar level. With the aid of the Marshall Plan Western Europe would not only be able to stave off revolution but would eliminate Stalinist influence within its governments as well as the working class. The beneficent results of the Marshall Plan would also have a debilitating effect on the Stalinist puppet regimes in Eastern Europe. It would help to forge a grand anti-Soviet alliance of the Western European states.

Faced with this overwhelming power, there would be little left for the Soviet Union to do except capitulate. Failing that, the full might of this grand alliance would force the Kremlin to its knees by war. If the Soviet Union accepted the terms of surrender peace could be assured for an indefinite period by opening up Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to capitalist exploitation, enabling the built-up Western European powers to find a ready market for their expanded production. It seems that Kennan left nothing to chance.

The danger that Moscow might move prematurely before the plan was fulfilled was properly discounted. That this was the last thing Stalin desired was well known to American statesmen. Kennan was aware of the weakness of Chiang-Kai-shek in China but hoped he would flounder along for another few years. Europe was the strategic area and here the Soviet Union was to be contained. Kennan correctly calculated that Stalin would not proceed beyond the limits marked out by Washington and backed by its money and its arms. Meanwhile the cold war was to be extended to embrace the embargo of shipments to countries beyond the iron curtain of the products of heavy industry so essential to their well-being as well as to their war potential.

### Everything According to Schedule

Nothing succeeds like success. American capitalists were drinking toasts to the perspicacity of the brilliant young strategist, Kennan. Everything seemed to click. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Atlantic Pact and military preparations at home became accomplished facts and seemed to be achieving their synchronized goal. These involved the expenditure of billions at home and abroad. But, with the working class harnessed to the plan through the efforts of the labor bureaucracy in the CIO and AFL, no audible disgruntlement on the part of the overtaxed workers seemed to be voiced. The Kennan plan brought record profits into the coffers of American industry even excelling the boom profits of wartime. The Marshall Plan with the inevitable strings attached permitted American monopolists to continue their exports to a dollar-hungry world. They could eat their cake and still have it.

Stalin was forced to pull in his horns in one outlying sector after another. Three countries bordering on the Soviet Union, Turkey, Iran, and Norway, braved the wrath of the Kremlin and to varying degrees attached themselves to the American sphere of influence. Finland's relations

with Moscow cooled off perceptibly. Greece, due to the treachery of the Kremlin gang, now became the undisputed satellite of American imperialism. There were many signs that the embargo of heavy industry was weakening not only the Soviet Union but the attachment of the satellites to the Moscow regime. And this pressure undoubtedly created economic difficulties inside Yugoslavia that contributed to the rift between Stalin and Tito.

American newspapers and journals heralded the expansion of production and the increase in living standards in Western Europe in contrast to the lagging production and reduced standards in Stalin's buffer countries. The Stalinists were summarily dismissed from their posts in the governments of France and Italy and their hold on the trade unions in Western Europe was systematically undermined. To top off this bright picture, the Atlantic Pact reached fruition, further isolating the Soviet Union and making it more vulnerable to attack.

Two factors, however, combined to expose the superficiality of the Kennan plan. While contained in Europe, the Stalinists gained a smashing victory in Asia. The armies of the Stalinist Mao Tse-tung lured away the bulk of Chiang's forces and smashed the balance, forcing the Generalissimo to seek temporary shelter in Formosa under the continued care of the State Department. With over 450,000,000 Chinese brought into military alliance with the Soviet Union, making a total of about 800,000,000 people under Stalin's influence—a third of the world's population occupying a fourth of its wide expanse—it doesn't require a military strategist to determine that there has been a significant shift in the relationship of forces to the detriment of the American imperialists.

Then in the latter part of September 1949 the world was apprised that the Soviet Union had come into possession of the atom bomb, thereby ending the monopoly upon which the American strategists banked so heavily. Even the scientists most addicted to wishful thinking were forced to acknowledge that the Soviet Union would have a sizable stockpile of this formidable weapon within a year or two, thereby negating the superiority of American arms. The carefully conceived Kennan timetable was thrown askew.

Time was running against the fortunes of American imperialism. Not only would the American military machine be weakened *vis-a-vis* the Soviet Union by 1952 but the whole economic fabric would then be placed in a vulnerable position. A built-up Europe would come face to face with a limited market for its products while a prodigal America would be forced either to curtail its expenditures or be hurled onto the road of bankruptcy.

### Danger Signals in Europe

The boasts of Paul Hoffman, Marshall Plan administrator, that the United States was winning the cold war because Western Europe was being built up faster than Eastern Europe were falling on deaf capitalist ears. The masters of industry recognized only too well the return of the old capitalist sickness of overproduction. The bourgeois journalists were writing what the *Fourth International* had informed its readers when the Marshall Plan was first con-

ceived that the very success of the Marshall Plan would turn out to be its gravest weakness. With the world capitalist market restricted by the loss of about 800 million people living outside the orbit of American imperialist exploitation, the developing crisis of capitalism bids fair to become the worst and most turbulent in its history.

The race for markets makes enemies of the best friends. Atlantic Pact countries are already at each other's economic throats. And the fast-shrinking export market of American industry is in danger of drying up. Not only does the dollar shortage persist but with the decline of Marshall Aid, expenditures will become progressively less. On the other hand, if Uncle Sam continues to shell out in the accustomed manner, the only stable economy in the whole capitalist world will be hopelessly undermined.

One danger signal is already at hand. For the first time in its history capitalist America is running a sizable deficit in boomtime. As long as 1952 was to be "the year of decision" the American banker could stand this temporary drain. But now with the time-table seriously delayed he cannot afford to continue his profligate course much longer. As if to multiply the already difficult tasks facing American imperialism, demands for new handouts are being made by the Asiatic nations as well as by Latin America.

### Devaluation and Armaments

Aware that they are heading toward an abysmal crisis, the American imperialists are seeking a way out. The panacea of devaluation was heralded as the cure-all for Europe. Against the bitter remonstrations of some European statesmen, especially the British Labor Government, Washington forced this measure through.

But the results were not exactly what Washington hoped for. The increase in European exports was insufficient to alter much the course of trade in favor of Europe. But it was sufficient to raise the level of the class struggle there. It gave new impulse to the resistance of the workers against their masters who had tried to resolve the contradictions of capitalism on the backs of the working class. Far from stabilizing the European currencies, their convertibility into dollars and into the monetary values of one another is as far removed today as ever before. It is only a question of time before a further devaluation will be found necessary.

With the hope of reopening Eastern Europe to capitalist trade gone for the present, a new substitute for export trade in the European economy must be sought. Why not have armaments replace exports as in the United States? Goods calculated to be destroyed would reduce the field of competition and permit a capitalist economy to function a while longer. But the additional tax burden on the European masses of such an arms program could prove to be the straw that broke the back of the capitalist camel there.

### Integration -- Cure Worse Than Disease

Thus realizing the hopelessness of the panaceas of devaluation and the armament economy, the important accent of late has been on "integration." This loose word seems to embrace the entire gamut from the formation of an Atlantic Pact Union to the easier conversion of interna-

tional currencies and the ending of certain trade practices as import quotas, protective tariffs and double pricing. While the United States has threatened countries which persist in these trade practices with the denial of Marshall aid, the American monopolists show no signs of themselves abandoning them, thereby pointing up the hypocrisy of the project.

Moreover, genuine integration of European economies would bring about a far more serious crisis than is in the offing. It would mean closing down entire industries in some countries in favor of those who could for various reasons produce more cheaply. Whereas a depression forces marginal producers in each industry to shut down, integration would wipe out such industries on a national basis.

For capitalism this cure is worse than the disease. And obviously no European country will follow the advice of the arrogant but not overbright American industrialists who would temporarily profit most from such a course, only to tumble into a more cataclysmic crisis a little later. American capitalism correctly states that only integration can solve Europe's economic crisis—but only a socialist economy with its nationalization of property and planning for use can perform such integration. Thus the present crisis is insoluble under capitalism. Hoffman correctly states that the alternative to integration is another descent into barter and autarchy. But Hitler did not choose that road for Germany because he liked it, but only because there was no alternative. Europe, and especially England, are heading in the same direction.

While the Marshall Plan has the effect of postponing the European crisis for another year or two, the situation in Germany is becoming quite critical. Even before it has reached prewar levels of production German economy is already in a tailspin. There are well over two million unemployed in this country bringing the percentage of unemployed to more than 10% of the labor force. Deprived of its former markets, Germany once more faces the prospect that haunted the Kaiser and then Hitler after him, only on a far greater scale.

### Germany -- Prize of Cold War

Whoever wins Germany wins the cold war. That is the grand prize American imperialism has eyed since the end of the war. Washington was not concerned with helping the German workers but it is also now becoming increasingly clear that it can offer little help to the German capitalists. It has failed in its efforts of convincing the other countries of Western Europe to open up their markets to German competition. It is obvious that it will succeed in gaining for the German capitalists only a minimum of concessions from its neighbors and if it forces the issue will drive the latter from the American orbit. None of the Western European countries can compete against the formidable German industrial machine in a free and unfettered market. It would therefore be suicidal for them to accede to the wishes of Washington. And American imperialism has no other markets to offer them. It requires these for itself.

Washington advises the Germans that unity can be at-

tained by war against the Soviet Union, which has already achieved a partial success in integrating Eastern Germany into its sphere of operations. But German must fight German to achieve this task. Warfare on their own soil, avoided in World War I and which the German bourgeoisie expected to avoid in World War II, becomes a grim certainty in World War III if they ally themselves to America. Irrespective of the outcome, German capitalism will be destroyed in the process.

Now more than ever is the Trotskyist program for Germany realizable and necessary. The establishment of a genuine workers' state in Germany would at once lead to a Socialist United States of Europe and would kindle the flames of world revolution. Such a program could arouse the German masses to action and, once embarked on such a course, could not be halted by any existing force.

But this is the very last thing Stalin desires. Like the imperialists, he has nothing to offer the German working class; but he can assure the German capitalists a slightly longer life. Stalin offers the German capitalists the only markets in the world that are really open to German goods, the eager markets of the Soviet Union, the buffer countries, Eastern Germany and the vast expanse of China. These markets are complementary to the German economy and it is no surprise that an ever larger section of the German bourgeoisie, anti-communist to the core, is clamoring for this orientation. This state of affairs is causing more gray hair around the temples of American State Department officials than the turn of the Chinese events or the detonation of the atom bomb in the Soviet Union.

But would Stalin dare to build up a united Germany which, when restored to health, might once more lash out at the Soviet Union? Would Stalin not be constructing a Frankenstein that might perhaps succeed in devouring the Soviet Union? Every policy has its risks and to Stalin such a danger is a lesser evil to a workers' revolution which would beyond doubt bring an end to the barbarous rule of the Kremlin gangsters. If we base ourselves on the thinking of the Soviet bureaucrats in the past, which made the USSR the object of attack in World War II, we can see why Stalin will prefer to take this course. He hopes thereby to strengthen the industrial potential of the Soviet Union which has been almost completely cut off from all heavy industry manufactured on this side of the "iron curtain." Stalin figures that, with the monopoly of foreign trade in his hands for the buffer zones and perhaps China in addition to the USSR, he can cut off trade with Germany at will if the German capitalists get too obstreperous.

### Debacle in Asia

It is in the midst of these difficulties that the complete disintegration of the Chiang regime took place in China. The fact that it had been previously predicted made it none the more palatable to Washington, which had been overawed by the speed of the debacle. The loss of face suffered by the mighty giant of the West extended to all Asia and indeed throughout the world. While the loss of China had been discounted in advance there was a tendency to counter this loss with the knowledge of the extreme difficulties fac-

ing Mao in building up Chinese economy without United States aid. There was also supreme confidence in the State Department that Stalin could not integrate such a large backward country into his sphere. There is no denying that these difficulties are real and will in the last analysis spell disaster for Stalinism. But Washington is not sure that it will be the one to profit from the events in China.

There is a creeping realization today that it is all Asia which is lost. The recognition of the Ho Chi Minh government in Indo-China by the Kremlin and by Mao, with India on the sidelines, makes it fairly certain that the French puppet Bao Dai will not succeed even with French and American military aid in thwarting the will for independence of the struggling Viet Nameese. Thailand and Burma dare not take sides in the cold war and it is but a question of time before they are either drawn into Moscow's orbit or gain their complete independence from both Moscow and Washington.

India, the second most populous country in the world, has announced its neutrality. Nehru has recognized Mao to the consternation not only of Washington but of his friends in the British Commonwealth. He refuses to lead the Asiatic peoples in a crusade against the Soviet Union under the aegis of the American dollar. He fears his own masses far more than he does American imperialism and prefers to balance himself between the two major world powers. He counts on getting American aid on his own terms and told that to the American industrialists right in their own country during his recent visit.

So humbled has the position of American imperialism in Asia become that the American journalists are forced to write how difficult it will be for the United States to continue domination over Japan and the Philippine Islands, who too are yearning for independence from their "benevolent" protector. When economic conditions in the Orient worsen, as they shortly must, the full force of the chain reaction from the Chinese debacle will first make itself felt.

### Tempest in the Pentagon

Even before the events in China had reached their final stage, an atmosphere of defeat and gloom pervaded the corridors of the Pentagon. Differences were known to exist among the services but were kept under wraps with only a rumor here and there leaking out. The atomic blast in the Soviet Union announced in September 1949 knocked the lid from this internal wrangling and inaugurated the Battle of the Pentagon. In vain did the press plead against washing dirty linen in public to avoid hurting American prestige. The top brass as well as the top bourgeoisie knew that it was the other way round. The Kennan plan had misfired. The battle of the brass merely reflected the worsening position of American imperialism on the economic, political and military fronts. The United States was losing the cold war. And the grim thought was penetrating the minds of the American brass that it could not win a hot war.

There were of course no principled differences between the branches of the military whose heads testified before the

House Armed Services Committee in October 1949. Each service wanted the lion's share of the budget. Such differences always exist and can easily be settled in quite conference.

What happened was that a section of the bourgeoisie now intervened in the struggle and utilized the grievances of the Navy to make its position known. It had been previously overawed by the military clique that had begun to stockpile bombs, and at the same time assured the country that the Third World War would be a lark where a handful of airmen would destroy the Soviet Union, if necessary, without any appreciable damage to this country. So psychologized had the American people become with this insidious propaganda that it was even necessary for Omar Bradley, Chief of Staff, to caution against expecting too easy a victory.

But the propaganda had taken hold causing a terrific disillusionment upon Truman's announcement that the American monopoly of the atom bomb was at an end. The more perspicacious capitalists who feared the "get tough" policy and saw its dangers to the American capitalist system, and those who wanted a more realistic approach to the coming war so that they would be sure to win it, combined to bring the issues out into the open.

The hearings themselves were of course on the low level of the Big Brass but in their analyses the heretofore-silent capitalist press was able to make known the ramifications of the various problems that are besetting American imperialism. No one took seriously the testimony of the Navy that it was immoral to bomb defenseless people with the new atomic weapon, especially since the admirals had previously asked for carriers to assume this same mission. But the thought was nevertheless brought home that if there was any successful retaliation on the part of the Soviet Union, the American bourgeoisie would be the first to reap the wrath of an aroused and deluded nation. They had to realize that they were playing with fire.

### **New Military Balance-Sheet**

The hearings brought out the hopelessness of a military victory for the United States. If we read between the lines we find that a stalemate is the only thing that the Big Brass can assure the country. The Navy wanted carriers for re-invasion because they had no confidence that the Army could stop the Soviet forces short of the English Channel, Army boasts to the contrary notwithstanding. The generals correctly answered the Navy that, once driven out of Europe, a re-invasion would be impossible since no concentration of forces could be effected against an adversary equipped with the atom bomb.

No one took seriously the writings of General Arnold, the former Air chief, who envisioned an airplane blitzkrieg behind Soviet lines which would so disrupt their forces that they could not cope with the American forces. For the first time the country was apprised of the feebleness of the American military vis-a-vis the armed might of Soviet land forces. It was obvious that the United States could not by itself face Moscow's superior numbers. This was acknowledged by all concerned.

Greater emphasis was placed on the Atlantic Pact. Yet no one expected to get adequate help from British, French and Belgian forces. Germany then assumed first importance in the calculations of the American military. Here is how the *U.S. News and World Report* of December 9, 1949 reports the combined views of the Big Brass:

Mind you, the important thing is Germany. We can't hold this strip of Western Europe without the Germans. We will put up a real fight and a lot of people will be killed, but we can't hold it for sure without the Germans. And we've got to hold, got to, or the rest of the war will be one awful war with no decisive end. Just bombs and destruction and no decisive end.

What the article omits is that it is problematical that American imperialism can hold it even with the aid of German troops, that it will have little possibility of getting the West Germans to fight on its side and that if Washington does win over the Germans, it will do so only at the expense of losing the support of the rest of Western Europe.

### **Repercussions at Home**

The American people are also frightened. Irrespective of the fortunes of the armies in the field, the huge concentration of the country's population in key cities as well as of its industries will be pulverized by the atom blasts of the Russians. Even if an impassable radar screen against airplanes is perfected no such defense against the ever growing Soviet fleet of modern schnorkel submarines is assured. Besides, the speedier development by Moscow of guided missiles already effective at a range of 500 miles spells disaster for the large coastal cities on the Atlantic and Pacific Seaboard. The cost of defense against the atom bomb is prohibitive even for the wealthiest country in the world.

The Battle of the Pentagon also paved the way for a section of the capitalists to express their fear of military control. The Committee on Economic Development, composed of solid bourgeois elements, warned the American people of the danger of a police state if the military continued to have the upper hand. Above all they did not want the Big Brass to have the final say on the use of the atom bomb. They remembered only too well what happened to the Japanese Empire where the capitalists became subservient to the warlords.

Even where the military seemed to be on safe ground in preparing the country to build up a defense against atom bomb retaliation, it ran into almost insurmountable difficulties. Industrialists who had huge capital investments on the seaboard and Great Lakes united in a campaign to prevent the Big Brass from transferring plants to the more sheltered Southwest. Instead, they demanded the construction of new plants in the old areas of concentration. Profits were to remain sacrosanct.

There were other repercussions to the Battle of the Pentagon, which we needed not discuss. But they all pointed in one direction. They showed the fear, the division and the confusion of the American industrialists. Their confidence had been shaken beyond repair. There is no longer any doubt that if they plunge the country into war it will be not because they feel certain to win but rather

out of desperation arising from their well understood weakness.

There was only one hope on which the U.S. banked heavily: that the Stalinist freebooters would collapse first as the result of the economic pinch so relentlessly exerted by Washington. But two things are worrying the State Department: that the economic squeeze is driving the Stalinists to expand all the more and that, threatened with an impasse, the Stalinists would themselves fight rather than succumb.

### Talk of Deal with Kremlin

With the road of easy victory barred forever there is therefore once more talk of a deal with the Kremlin. No one has any illusions of the permanency of such rapprochement. It could at best be a breather to give American imperialism the opportunity to better prepare to launch its attack. But even a deal means a continuation of the cold war, conducted perhaps with a little less fanfare.

For a while the State Department tried to gain new strength with the expectation of possessing soon a hydrogen bomb from 10 to 1,000 times more effective than the atom bomb. But the at-first sly references to this more dreaded weapon convinced them, that the American bourgeoisie and especially its supposed allies were far more frightened of the weapon than were the Russians, not to mention the fear that the masses would be driven to revolt. It was an even greater equalizer than the atom bomb.

The pleas for a new understanding became more insistent. The warmonger, Churchill, whose speech in Fulton, Missouri inaugurated the cold war, espoused this sentiment in the heat of the British election. Nor does it matter much that he did it to gain a few votes. He merely reflected the public will for peace which no European statesman could

resist. And good conservative American capitalists and their Congressional representatives joined in this plea. The move is once more up to Washington.

Truman and Acheson are busily explaining to the American people the facts of life; the rules long ago set forth by Machiavelli and Clausewitz and adopted as an inherent part of diplomacy ever since. You must be strong if you wish to bargain. Let us wait a little until we gain *vis-a-vis* the Kremlin. But other voices are heard which say that time is not on the side of American imperialism. Delay will find the American imperialists in a still weaker position. Let us make this deal while there is still time. The Stalinists, they reason, will be assuaged by the American dollar. Money so spent will bring far greater returns than a Marshall Plan. The Kremlin by past experience can be relied on to forestall and break revolutions far more effectively than funds sent to Europe and Asia for that purpose. But irrespective of whether a deal comes now or a little later it will bring no relief to the masses and will be short-lived.

The peoples of the world are beginning to attune their thought processes to the atomic age. They readily express their fear at the terrific power over life and death that the mad rulers now possess. They are beginning to wonder in awe at the tremendous vistas that lie before them if atomic energy is harnessed for useful purposes. The seeming submissiveness of the masses merely reflects the deep thinking that is going on beneath the surface. When their minds are made up we shall see a lightning change in their reflexes. The fright and impotence of the American bourgeoisie are no small factor in convincing the American as well as the world masses that they must take matters in their own hands to avoid catastrophe. The choice is between socialism and death and the desire for life is as strong as ever.

## Two Young American Writers

By G. F. ECKSTEIN

With single books Norman Mailer (*The Naked and the Dead*) and William Gardner Smith (*The Last of the Conquerors*) have had, the one a brilliant, the other, a distinguished success. These young men, further, have shown that they are repelled by Stalinism, without cultivating any illusions about bourgeois democracy. Here is the unmistakable sign of a new wave of radical intellectuals. Their appearance raises again the question of the relationship between young writers and the politics of our troubled times.

Mailer's book describes the course of a small task force on a Pacific Island during World War II. The misery of the men, the decadence and corruption of the fascistic officer caste, these emerge not from preaching but from the interplay of event and character, panoramic, yet built out of a rich detail. With tremendous courage, Mailer traces the civilian background of each of his numerous soldier characters; the crimes of American capitalism in the war

appear as the intensive expression of the mean, cheated, degrading lives to which it condemns the majority of Americans in peace. In itself, and still more, as the work of a young man of twenty-five, this book is evidence of an amazing talent.

### Mailer and Melville

But it is more than that. In his strength as well as in his weaknesses, (and he has grave weaknesses), this talented writer is a profound expression of American civilization. His true analogue is not the host of war novelists of this or the last war with whom he is automatically included and compared. He is organically related to another American writer, a man of genius, who, ten years before the Civil War, produced perhaps the greatest of American novels—the *Moby Dick* of Herman Melville. So close is the continuity that to examine the two books together affords

crucial insights into Mailer and provides a concentrated picture of a century of American development.

Whatever else Melville's book is, it is rooted in a meticulous study of a representative group of Americans, not soldiers this time but sailors, the common seamen, skilled harpooners, mates and captain of a whaling vessel. While Whitman sang paeans to great individuals, Melville in 1851 drew the individualism of American capitalism to the end. The maniacal captain, Ahab, leads society (the ship) to its destruction. So that there should be no possibility of misunderstanding, an "imperial" sky-hawk (the American eagle) is caught in the flag and affords the final view of the disappearing *Pecquod*. Melville is repelled but fascinated by Ahab, a man maniacal but heroic in his will to achieve his purpose.

Mailer's task-force is also representative of American society as a whole. And the central character of Mailer's book is Sergeant Croft, the man of will, effective and dominating. If the passion in Ahab seeks to overcome the white whale, Croft seeks to overcome the mountain. If to a far lesser degree, Croft, like Ahab, is torn by internal rages. Croft, a sadistic killer, is not the heroic character that Ahab is, but, like Melville, Mailer is fascinated by the will to achieve and the power to dominate of this evil man. Thus, with an interval of a century, American society in crisis projects out of itself imaginative symbols of its conflicting forces which create an almost identical pattern of central character and consequent relationships.

But 1947 is not 1851. If Melville visualized no embodiment of a force to oppose Ahab, it was because there was none at the time. Melville was no active politician and did not concern himself with the problem that the Civil War could solve. He penetrated so deeply below the surface of capitalist society that it took nearly 75 years before the crisis of world capitalism could make people begin to see what he was driving at. Hence the dynamic character of his imaginative vision. But Mailer? Imaginatively he has not moved an inch beyond Melville and that is because he does not in 1947 see the clash of contemporary forces as Melville saw them in 1851. Mailer's book, politically speaking, is suffused with a sense of the social crisis as actual. He is familiar with the ideas of Marxism. But a writer creates from levels far deeper than his consciousness of political ideas. And in this book can be felt the whole retarded political development of the United States.

Revolutionary traditions have been overlaid by tremendous economic expansion. To this day America has no mass proletarian party. That the proletariat as a class is a candidate for the resolution of the antagonisms of capitalism, this concept, for most American intellectuals, is a European phenomenon from which America has been exempted. The CIO in 1936 was a visible sign that this was not true. But Mailer wrote in 1947. Less than a dozen years is a very brief time for so far-reaching a conception to become an integral part of the national consciousness and thus an unconscious heritage of the artist.

Precisely because he is unable to present artistically a counter to Croft, the book falls short of genuine dramatic power. The point is so important for Mailer's future as a

writer that it demands illustration, particularly because the Stalinists, taking advantage of the confusion of bourgeois thought, continue to make the most outrageous approximations between a writer's political beliefs and his artistic creation.

A stage of civilization is coming to an end only when another is growing up within it, whence arise violent interlocked contradictions, dramatic conflict of representative personalities, or insoluble conflicts within the single personality.

The Orestes of Aeschylus is a man torn between the blood-feud morality of the aristocracy and the constitutional law of the new Athenian democracy. Dante, representative poet of religious medievalism, was so much aware of the new secular age, that Engels called him the first modern man. Shakespeare, politically an adherent of the radical aristocracy, was fascinated by the individualistic passion of the new bourgeois man.

To take a now familiar example of a pattern constantly repeated in the mature Shakespeare: It is against the background of the typical feudal virtues of loyalty, honor, discipline, as expressed by Horatio that Hamlet engages in the dramatic but perilous search for inner conviction, freedom of choice, which distinguish bourgeois man in his progressive stage. Two centuries later Balzac, admiring the aristocracy, hating the new bourgeois and condemning socialism, yet was so stimulated by the clash of opposing forces that his gigantic creation is as fresh today as when it was written.

Most gifted writers are content to deal with only one aspect of a civilization; in our day Joyce, Eliot and Proust described one side of bourgeois society, the decay of its values; at the opposite pole, Silone in *Fontamara*, Malaquais in *Men from Nowhere* do fine work by isolating clinically forces that directly or indirectly are in opposition to official society. But for the last half century, no imaginative writing has appeared comprehensive enough to convey the sense of active opposition of fundamental forces and fundamental values.

### Sergeant Croft and Captain Ahab

This is what Mailer has attempted. He is not a mere recorder of decay, nor is he a clinical student of some restricted section of the mass. He attempts to portray a whole. He shows us on the one side a fascistic counter-mobilization in General Cummings, the plotter of fascism, and Croft, its living instrument. But on the other side there is, artistically, nothing, a mere mass of men. Near the end of the book, Red, the worker, has his chance to mobilize the men against Croft. He fails miserably. But he has failed long before that—in Mailer's imagination. Croft is a perfectly realized creation. Red is not. And in literature that is what counts. The book is therefore artistically unbalanced.

Melville constantly posed Ahab's struggle to prevent revolt among his men. He posed also the conflict or opposing forces within Ahab himself and with a truly cosmic grandeur, he makes the whole the symbol of man's eternal struggle in his attempt to master nature. Though his theme is ultimate destruction, he develops and integrates the

various strands of his conception with the radiance and exuberance of conscious mastery. When he was finished, he wrote to Hawthorne that he had written a wicked book and felt as spotless as a lamb. But the situation today is too urgent for Mailer to envisage calmly the destruction of society. The problem which Melville imaginatively envisaged is now actually here.

Mailer is conscious of the violent contradiction between his political hopes and the reality he achieved in *Croft*. He therefore vents his rage on Hearn, the soul-sick intellectual. He humiliates him physically and intellectually before the fascist general. He places him in direct conflict with *Croft* and sends him to ignominious defeat and death. But in the book as conceived by Mailer, Hearn can offer no artistic balance to *Croft* and Cummings. In *Moby Dick* Melville treats his soul-sick intellectual, Ishmael, with genial contempt. Melville would not place upon any such person the main responsibility for checking Ahab.

Let us look at *Croft* again. This is a character that grows. At every crisis it is he who expands to meet it. But nowhere does Mailer ever seem to have visualized a collective, cooperative action arising from masses or groups of men, all to one degree or another burning with resentment. Hence the emphasis on Hearn's individual failure; hence too the unreal character of Red's failure: "If one man would move, they all would. But nothing happened. He kept telling himself to jump at *Croft*—and his legs wouldn't function." It all depended upon Red. And his legs shook. But even *Oliver Twist* was bold enough to ask for more.

A sense of the collective gives iron strength to many a leg which by itself would not only shake but crumble. Profoundly true and profoundly glorious is that moment in *Fontamara* when the peasant boy in prison, faced with torture and blows, suddenly realizes that come what may, he must keep silent and not betray his companion of whom he knows little and understands less. It is the modern individual above all who can find himself only as part of a whole. Mailer who saw so much must certainly have seen revolts individual and collective. It was in that very Eastern theatre that at the end of the war the great GI revolts against being kept from home took place. But though he probably would have defended and supported them, they awakened no organizing impulse in his imagination.

I sense here a type or rather in this case, a stage of mind very familiar among American intellectuals, seeking an answer to social chaos or crisis in administrative efficiency, that stops short at the abstract analysis of economic forces and cannot make the leap to Marxism which is the doctrine of the struggle of the proletariat to achieve the classless society. Mailer has the great virtue of sincerity. He refuses to have any part in the synthetic radicalism of the Stalinists and their "proletarian" literature. There are depths in the dialectic of revolt and creation, of individual and mass, which Mailer has not plumbed. What is most hopeful is that he refuses to pretend.

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The reality of revolt is precisely what Smith, the Negro writer, has. Smith in his book presents no collective conception of society. But for him as a Negro, the perspective

of freedom, in relation to the Negro as he is, is a permanent part of his consciousness.

The novel describes the experiences of a Negro regiment in occupied Germany and the writer, as if relieved from the pervading blight of American race prejudice, expresses the lyricism of young people making love even in that unpropitious environment. Smith is a natural writer. In a few pages of flashback to his youth in Philadelphia, the easy style becomes hard and firm, and indicates what we can expect from him when, after this interlude, he returns to his native environment. American race prejudice puts a brutal end to the idyll. But before the book is finished, a Negro soldier, maddened by persecution, shoots an officer, and jumping into a truck, seeks some sort of existence different from that which tortures him—the most convenient place is the Russian zone. The sense of universal social crisis so omnipresent in Mailer's book is absent from Smith's. Smith's book is in every way a much slighter work. Yet, for historical reasons, understanding of revolt comes easily to the Negro writer.

Revolt and violence are deep in American tradition. If it comes so easily to Smith, it is because of the special situation of the Negroes as Americans in American society. It should be noted that while *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, written in 1852, was sweeping the United States and the world, Melville in 1854 wrote *Benito Cereno*, where the revolt which did not take place in *Moby Dick* is the center of the story and is a revolt of Negro slaves. The leader, Babo, is a heroic character to whom Melville (within the narrower range) gives the formidable qualities of Ahab without his conflicts. With a matchless irony, which to this day escapes his critics, and a perfection of realization of his conception which was rare with him, Melville struck a blow at prevailing conceptions of the Negro which remains unsurpassed in modern literature. The revolt failed but at least it took place and Melville lavished all his forces upon it.

Mailer will yet have to find this, a social conception for the future of man in which his imagination and observation can take root and flourish, and project characters of the power of *Croft* in opposition to him. One such character in *The Naked and the Dead* would have made this novel one of the supreme masterpieces of the century. Find this road Mailer must. Because if he doesn't, his talents will not expand.

### Crisis of Contemporary Art

The miserable self-torturing and psychoanalytical preoccupation, the sense of isolation of contemporary writers is familiar enough and proof sufficient. Far more significant is the career of Melville after *Moby Dick*. Having sent society to its doom, Melville became immersed in incest, mother-fixation, hatred of the father, ending many years later in the morality for morality's sake of *Billy Budd*. The historical premonitory curve he traced in his decay is a tribute to Melville's essential greatness and his incorruptible integrity.

But those who today, 1950, are trying to claim Melville

for their psychopathic preoccupations are as presumptuous as Schlesinger and his followers who are trying to claim him for their "new" liberalism. If Melville sent the *Pecquod* to the bottom of the sea in 1851 and then retired into himself, it was only because, as *Moby Dick* shows in many places, he had sought desperately for potentially triumphant forces of revolt, and failed to find them. The man who drew Babo, Bulkington, Queequeg, Daggoo and Tashtego, Steelkilt and the carpenter, would have understood the modern proletariat.

Yet today all opposites are balanced on a razor's edge. And many fine writers have sunk into the morass of self-analysis. What to do? We are here on the shore of an uncharted sea. However much his work is the expression of social forces, an artist's development is a very individual thing. Shakespeare in his thirties obviously went through some soul-shaking personal experiences. Gauguin went to the South Seas. Who can imagine what Dostoevsky's imprisonment meant to him? It seems pretty certain that the study of Shakespeare, particularly King Lear, was one bridge by which Melville crossed over from the gay romancer to the philosophical insight and creative power of *Moby Dick*. It seems also that there was a version of *Moby Dick* written in 1850 before the reading of King Lear in which neither Ahab nor the white whale appear. It was obvious that social forces around Melville had not changed so violently within that period as to account for these profound changes in his artistic conception. All we can say is that Melville had changed, or he had absorbed new ideas, got rid of old ones. We have here only results, the ultimate sources and impulses are lost in the mysteries of personality. A writer must find his own way.

Yet a few remarks can be made. Artists do make violent leaps from one level of penetration to another, and have often struggled consciously to do so by ways suitable to the structure of their personality and their experiences. Today we can go even further. We live in an intensely political age and theory and historical experience show us that the condition of any artistic development is an uncompromising hostility to the values of Stalinism and to those of American bourgeois society. Whoever capitulates to either of them is lost, and lost utterly is the creative writer whose imagination, like Mailer's, is active in social terms. Nor can resistance be merely passive or confined to a narrow political activity. There can be felt even in the pro-revolutionary writings of Malraux a tension of political activism which is characteristic of the impatient intellectual and foreshadows disillusionment and violent revulsions following upon defeats. The primary condition of strength and endurance is to see the enemy in all its amplitude. A babel of self-contradictory tongues, professional, journalistic and unashamedly amateur, serve by their combined obfuscation no purpose except to protect the tottering foundations of a decayed bourgeois culture from serious examination. Against this heterogeneous body going everywhere except forward, the Stalinists, armoured and equipped like a task-force, apply their "stand and deliver theory" of culture. Each side poses an "either-or" and seeks to encompass the whole field. Perhaps it is in the systematic and truly philosophical opposition to the decay and perversions of these two barbarisms that young writers, fortunate enough to begin where Mailer and Smith begin, can find their way to those deeper levels which will nourish and not desiccate their talents.

# The Capitalist Witch-Hunt

## --- And How to Fight It

(Note: The following resolution was unanimously adopted by the February 1950 Plenum of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party.)

Since the close of the war for "the four freedoms" the American people have been subjected to unparalleled attacks upon their democratic rights. These attacks testify to the ever-sharpening conflict between the monopolist masters of the United States and the interests of the great majority. Determined at all costs to maintain their privileges, powers and profits against the unsatisfied demands of the masses for peace, security, equality and liberty, the representatives of Big Business are compelled to deprive the people of their hard-won rights, destroy democratic institutions and head toward transforming the nation into a police state.

These capitalist-inspired assaults upon civil rights directly threaten the very existence of democracy and the labor movement in the United States. They provide daily proof that the American people cannot preserve, enjoy or enhance their free-

doms unless they replace the dictatorship of the plutocracy with their own Workers and Farmers government.

The witch-hunt was planned and initiated by the highest agencies of the capitalist regime. It was unleashed in connection with the cold war under the pretext of eliminating the Stalinists as agents of a foreign power. This maneuver was facilitated by the fact that the Communist Party is so widely discredited, distrusted and detested as an apologist and tool of the counter-revolutionary Kremlin oligarchy.

But subsequent developments have unmistakably shown that the hue-and-cry against the CP was a prelude and cover for an all-out offensive against the basic rights of the entire American people. By now the thought-control system issuing from Washington has invaded almost every important department of American activity and affected the lives and liberties of the most diverse categories of citizens.

Public and private workers alike, teachers and students, scientists and writers, clergymen and lawyers, unemployed and



foreign-born have already been caught in the widening net of the witch-hunt.

### Totalitarian Methods Used

The witch-hunters resort to a wide variety of reactionary methods and totalitarian techniques. They have instituted purges for opinion, political blacklists and frameup trials. They have done away with traditional safeguards of legal procedure by introducing the practices of conviction without hearings or trial; acceptance of the doctrine of "guilt by association"; presumption of guilt in the absence of proved innocence; and punishment of attorneys for the defense. They have developed the FBI into a far-flung secret political police, relying on stool-pigeons and paid informers.

They have pressed every branch of the government into their service. The administration conducts its purge by usurping unconstitutional powers by decree. Congress enacts anti-labor legislation like the Taft-Hartley Law and subsidizes odious investigating bodies like the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The courts levy fines and issue injunctions against labor organizations like the miners. Posing as champions of "law and order," the Attorney-General and FBI do not hesitate to flout the law by wiretapping, perjury, etc.

The two principal weapons of the witch-hunters have been Truman's loyalty program and the Smith "Gag" Act. The first proscribes organizations solely because of their views and penalizes their members and supporters by arbitrary administrative action. Organizations are placed on the Attorney-General's blacklist without notification, hearings, or specification of charges. There is no precedent in American history for such an official political blacklist which is borrowed from the "thought-control" arsenal of totalitarian states.

The government purge with its subversive blacklist has provided the inspiration, model and sanction for the entire campaign against civil rights.

The Smith "Gag" Act, first invoked in 1941 to imprison the 18 Trotskyists, has now been employed to stage a political trial and convict 11 leaders of the Communist Party. The upholding of the Stalinist convictions by the higher courts would considerably promote the government's aim to outlaw and suppress all minority political parties to its left.

### The Aim -- War and Fascism

All these measures serve to pave the way for still harsher legal and extra-legal moves against the rights and liberties of the American people. The monopolists and militarists are deliberately working with a twofold end in view.

First, they are perfecting plans to impose a totalitarian military dictatorship in the event of war. The drive of American imperialism toward world domination and its preparations for war against the Soviet Union require regimentation of American labor, militarization of the country, and the suppression of tendencies and voices critical of imperialist policies and practices.

Second, the witch-hunters are provoking mass hysteria against "reds" and against labor to create a political and psychological climate in which the most vicious ultra-reactionary ideas, forces and activities can operate with impunity. A series of incidents over the past year indicates how the atmosphere generated by the witch-hunt encourages and incites mob violence against blacklisted groups, Negroes, Jews, and union leaders. Most spectacular were the attacks on two Robeson concerts near Peekskill where the local press, police and officials collaborated with hoodlums and legionnaires to beat up

hundreds of people peacefully exercising their right to assembly.

The North witnessed an attack upon a white union organizer in Chicago who had invited Negro fellow unionists to his home; the South saw a reign of terror in Groveland, Florida, where the entire Negro community was driven out in fear of their lives.

This atmosphere has contributed to the renewal of murderous attempts on labor leaders, including the shooting of Victor Reuther, the placing of dynamite in the UAW headquarters in Detroit, the assassination of ILGWU organizer William Lurye in New York, etc.

The ultimate aim of the capitalist forces behind the witch-hunt is to stamp out all organized opposition to their autocratic rule. This means, above all, to cripple and crush the mighty labor organizations. The anti-union provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act are interwoven with its anti-communist clauses. The destruction of the unions cannot be decisively effected without eventual resort to fascism. Taft-Hartleyism, red-baiting, political blacklisting, thought-control, the instigation and protection of mob violence, race-hate are typical pre-fascist phenomena. They serve warning that the present witch-hunt is ploughing the ground and sowing the seeds for the future sprouting of outright fascist movements in the United States.

### Role of the Union Bureaucracy

Only in the light of these circumstances is it possible to gauge the real role of the top union leaders and the full measure of their betrayal of the cause of democratic rights. Organized labor leagued with the Negro people and other minority groups can summon more than enough power and pressure to halt the onslaught of reaction. But the union officialdom has been unwilling and unable to mobilize these forces in a mighty protest movement.

The union bureaucrats cannot combat the enemies of civil rights because they support the main foreign and domestic policies which have produced the witch-hunt as well as the Truman administration which is its prime author and promoter. Moreover, they have themselves become indispensable cogs in the witch-hunting apparatus.

With rare exceptions, the union leaders either enthusiastically endorse the prosecution of the CP under the Smith Act or take a non-committal attitude toward it. Although formally on record against the Truman purge of government employees, they do not offer any vigorous opposition to its operations. They do not even put up a principled fight against the penetration of the purge system into private industry through political blacklisting, restricting and firings of union members in the plants.

Because of their commitment to State Department policy and tolerance of Truman's purge they are compelled to make one concession after another to the witch-hunters. Their resistance is actually reduced to occasional ineffective, half-hearted complaints against the most flagrant abuses and worst excesses of the drive against civil rights.

Far from heading a mass movement against the witch-hunters, the AFL and CIO officialdom is busy carrying out parallel purges of their opponents within the unions. Here the concern of the union bureaucracy for self-preservation meshes into the "cold-war" plans of U.S. imperialism and its political executives. The union leaders seek to cover up for their lack of fighting spirit against labor's foes and the failure of their policies to improve the workers' condition by an orgy of red-

baiting, not simply against the Stalinists, but against Trotskyists and other militants. They hope to forestall and stamp out all criticism in the ranks by a wild hue-and-cry against the "Commies," by penalties, intimidation and expulsions of union members and their spokesmen.

The AFL leadership has long been notorious for red-baiting. The new factor is the involvement of the CIO and the unrestrained participation of its top officials in the anti-red crusade. This came to a climax in the 1949 National CIO Convention where the Murray machine voted itself unprecedented centralized authority over all CIO affiliates; established discriminatory political conditions for full membership rights by barring "communists" from CIO national offices; ousted the United Electrical Workers and moved to expel other Stalinist-controlled unions.

The purge begun against the Stalinists is being extended to other individuals and groups disagreeing with the Murray machine or the anti-democratic actions bound up with its "CIO National Policy." The crudest application of this purge is taking place in the National Maritime Union where Curran's machine has instituted loyalty pledges, resorted to large-scale expulsions, trampled on the elementary rights of the members and even called in the cops to suppress the majority opposition in New York. Similar purges and unconstitutional expulsions have occurred in the AFL maritime unions, the SUP on the West Coast and the SIU on the East Coast.

The bureaucrats are abusing their complete control of the union apparatus, the hiring hall and the closed-shop, not only to deprive critical union members of their democratic rights, but also of their jobs.

Thus the struggle to maintain democracy inside the trade unions against the bureaucracy is directly linked with the struggle against the witch-hunters on a national scale.

### Treachery of the Stalinist Leaders

Although the main target of the anti-red drive, the Stalinist leaders have followed a no less perfidious policy in the field of civil rights than have the AFL and CIO officialdom. In 1941 the CP applauded the prosecution of the 18 Trotskyists in Minneapolis under the Smith Act which provided the precedent for their own trial and conviction in 1949. This conduct in turn has given union officials a precedent and plausible pretext for turning their backs upon Stalinist victims of the witch-hunt. Where the Stalinists have sought support beyond their own circles they have found themselves confronted with their rotten record of civil rights, and especially their denial of support to the Trotskyists.

The apologists for the totalitarian rule and countless crimes of the Kremlin find it difficult to come forward as exponents of democracy either in foreign affairs or in the trade unions. The Stalinist controlled unions are notorious for their lack of democracy, bureaucratic practices, and suppression of free speech.

Even now while under severe repression, the Stalinist leaders continue their criminal behavior, although it harms their own defense and enormously discredits them before public opinion. They try to sabotage aid for James Kutcher and oppose a presidential pardon and restoration of civil rights to the 18 Trotskyists. They demonstrated at the national Bill of Rights Conference in New York in July 1949 that they preferred to blow up a promising united-front defense movement rather than support any demand for civil rights to their political opponents.

The American agents of the Kremlin have amply shown

that they cherish as little regard for the elementary duty of class solidarity and united action against the witch-hunt as the union leaders who follow the line of the State Department. Their symmetrical policies of denying support to political opponents reinforce each other, helps the forces of repression, and weakens the fight against them.

### Growing Resistance to the Witch-Hunt

The American people have a firm attachment to democratic principles and glorious traditions of fighting for them. Over the past year there have been multiplying signs of resentment against the witch-hunters and a growing resistance to their attacks on civil rights.

The disclosures in connection with the Coplon trial that J. Edgar Hoover's secret political police was operating a huge network of paid informers and stoolpigeons, invading the private lives of many citizens and breaking the law by widespread wiretapping have called forth protests from prominent public figures, metropolitan newspapers, and even U.S. Senators.

Numerous leading educators, learned societies and professional groups have criticized the encroachments on academic freedom arising from loyalty tests, red-hunts, and the drive for ideological conformity. Presidents and faculties of universities in California, Illinois, New York and elsewhere have vigorously spoken out for free thought and free expression in the face of attempts to saddle their institutions with loyalty tests. This opposition stopped the textbook-burning plans of the House Un-American Committee.

The National Conference of the NAACP took a strong stand against the entire witch-hunt as an instrument of racial as well as political discrimination. The National Civil Rights Mobilization conference at Washington this January grew out of the distrust and impatience of the Negro people at the failure to enact civil rights legislation.

Among the most encouraging manifestations of the determination to combat the loyalty purge has been the broad range of backing behind James Kutcher's case. Outstanding representatives of almost every section of the American people menaced by the thought-controllers have come forward to support his campaign, including hundreds of national, state and local unions.

The volume of protest has become so loud and the alarm among many of his liberal supporters so acute that Truman has had to issue soothing hypocritical assurances that the "hysteria" his administration fosters will soon die out.

### "Critical" Supporters and Opponents

Two different attitudes toward the witch-hunt can be observed among the liberals. On the right, the Social Democrats inspired by the New Leader philosophy and other Trumanites have eagerly participated in the anti-communist campaign, although now and then deprecating certain "excesses" of its overzealous executors. These elements prefer a purge limited for the present to the Stalinists.

But the direct agents of the monopolists and militarists pay no heed to such reservations but take advantage of the red-scare and cold war propaganda to proceed against all opponents of their policies. They are even using the Hiss verdict to smear highly placed figures in the witch-hunting administration itself as dupes or tools of the "reds."

Against these collaborators with the witch-hunters stands another group of more militant and consistent liberals, a num-

ber of them associated with the Wallace movement, who are genuinely concerned over the drive toward a police-state and have proved willing to defend the rights of all victims of the repression, regardless of their political ideas or affiliations. It was these non-Stalinist liberals and Wallaceites who opposed the Stalinists and joined with SWP representatives at the national Bill of Rights Conference and elsewhere to uphold the principled position of defending civil rights for all.

Moreover, numerous members, unionists and sympathizers of the CP have balked against accepting the shameful and suicidal Stalinist line.

All these forces rising to resist the imposition of thought control upon America provide the basis for building a powerful united front mass movement dedicated to the preservation and extension of civil liberties.

### Capitalism, Stalinism and Democracy

Pointing to Stalinism as the horrible example, the propagandists of Big Business assert that socialism means slavery and that maintenance of the so-called "free-enterprise" capitalist system is the sole guarantee for preserving liberty in America. They are guilty of a double lie. First of all, the capitalist rulers and their henchmen who are carrying on the witch-hunt are the chief enemies of civil liberties and labor's rights today in the United States.

In the second place, Stalinism is not only anti-democratic but anti-socialist to the core. Stalinist totalitarianism flows from the irreconcilable hostility of the Soviet bureaucracy and its agents to the program and advocates of socialism.

The real situation is quite different. From the standpoints of both democracy and socialism, there are many bonds of identity between imperialism and Stalinism. Despite their different social bases, the destruction of democracy, either through the witch-hunts of the capitalists or the police-state methods of the Stalinists, have a common source in the concern for the perpetuation of the powers and interests of privileged groupings and their fear of the masses. That is why the imperialists and Stalinists can so often and easily join hands and align themselves against the interests of the people.

On the other hand, a movement which defends the welfare of the people and has no interests separate or apart from them, has no reason either to fear the masses or hesitate to submit everything to their judgment and decision. The struggle for emancipation from capitalist domination and all forms of servitude can be most easily and effectively conducted under conditions of the greatest freedom for the masses. That is why, while recognizing the inherent limitations of freedom under capitalist rule and in class society, revolutionary socialists have always demanded the widest possible democracy and have everywhere been in the forefront of all struggles for the defense and extension of the liberties of the people.

Today the intensified reactionary offensive against civil rights and the free functioning of the trade unions makes the struggle against the capitalist witch-hunters the urgent task of every worker and every individual concerned with the advancement of American society.

### Unconditional Defense of All Victims

The cardinal rule of this struggle must be the unconditional defense of all victims of reactionary repression and united opposition to every restriction upon democratic rights. "An injury to one is an injury to all." Toleration or support to the infringement of the rights of any group or individual em-

boldens the witch-hunters and opens the way for further assaults upon others.

The Stalinists have provided a memorable lesson of the dangers arising from violating working class democracy and the principle of class solidarity. They began by breaking up meetings of political opponents; then refused to defend their opponents against persecution; and finally called upon capitalist authorities, including the FBI, to act against their opponents. These disreputable deeds have not only boomeranged against them but inflicted great damage in the entire field of labor defense by nullifying unity of action and handing the union bureaucracy an excuse for a parallel line of conduct.

Despite our irreconcilable differences, despite the crimes committed against our movement and the interests of labor by the Stalinists, we Trotskyists have invariably supported Stalinist victims of repression and called upon the rest of the working class to do the same. We follow this policy, not out of agreement with the Stalinists or in remission of their crimes, but solely because of our unwavering adherence to the principle of class solidarity.

### SWP Champions Solidarity Policy

Our party has become the banner-bearer and outstanding practitioner of this policy in the United States. We have consistently come to the aid of all victims of reaction, not only here but abroad. We have defended conscientious objectors, Jehovah's Witnesses, Puerto Rican Nationalists, foreign-born workers, Anarchists, liberal clergymen, teachers, scientists, writers and magazines threatened by censorship, civil service employees and many others. We have initiated and participated in many significant struggles to protect persecuted minorities like the Negroes, Mexicans and Jews, as in the Fontana, California case, the Hickman defense in Chicago, the Freeport case in New York, in Minneapolis, Los Angeles and elsewhere we have taken the lead in mobilizing labor and its allies to defend themselves against the threatened fascist violence of Gerald L. K. Smith.

In Detroit and other industrial centers our members and sympathizers helped set in motion imposing union protest demonstrations against the Taft-Hartley Law. Within the unions the Trotskyists have been steadfast fighters against any restrictions upon internal democracy and the rights of the membership, whether they emanated from the official bureaucracy or the Stalinists.

Notably around the Minneapolis Trial and the Kutcher case we have participated in and supported powerful national movements against the Smith Gag Act and Truman's loyalty purge.

This proud record has attracted many militants toward our party and won it a growing reputation as a sincere and principled defender of democratic rights.

Liberals, labor officials and the Stalinists often call upon the government and its agencies for action against ultra-reactionary elements. Jewish groups, for example, request the Post Office Department to ban anti-Semitic literature from the mails. Defaming the Trotskyists as agents of fascism, the Stalinists during the war demanded the suppression of *The Militant*, etc.

### No Dependence on Capitalist State

The working class and the minorities must vigorously oppose every transgression upon their civil and constitutional rights, from whatever quarter they come, and utilize every

safeguard provided by law. But they cannot entrust the protection of their liberties to the capitalist regime or expect the powers-that-be to stop or eradicate the menace of fascism.

First, the government itself today spearheads the assault upon the people's rights. The President orders the loyalty purge; Congress passes anti-labor legislation; the courts levy fines and issue injunctions against the unions. Second, the capitalist parties work hand in glove with white supremacists in the South and the Big Business enemies of labor in the North who are behind the witch-hunt.

Third, the authorities have time and again demonstrated by their action and inaction their lack of interest in punishing or removing the perpetrators of violence against the Negroes, the unions and the liberties of the people. Neither the Federal or State governments convict any lynchers in the South. Nor have the officials displayed much zeal in uncovering the murderous assailants of Carlo Tresca, William Lurye, the Reuthers, and other labor figures.

### Government Shields Fascist Elements

On the contrary, the capitalist state apparatus screens and shields fascist forces and collaborates closely with them. In Peekskill the local authorities and police connived in the attacks by the mobsters and hoodlums; Governor Dewey's investigators whitewashed their role; and the entire paid press tried to unload responsibility for the violence upon the "reds."

Even when, under pressure, government officials pretend to move against mobsters and Ku Kluxers, they only make theatrical gestures to appease outraged public opinion without actually punishing the real criminals. For every slight tap the capitalist agencies offer the right, they deliver a hundred harsh blows against the left. This has been illustrated by the Smith Act. While the 30 Fascists indicted under this Act in wartime were left off scot-free, the Trotskyists and Stalinists were convicted and given heavy jail sentences.

The same procedure has been followed in the loyalty purge. While the Attorney-General's blacklist includes a few fascist groups, in practice it is almost entirely applied against members of leftist organizations. The U.S. Department of Defense has given away the whole game by omitting the Ku Klux Klan, Silver Shirts and similar fascist outfits from its own subversive list applied to draftees.

"Under conditions of a capitalist regime," Trotsky once wrote, "all curtailment of political rights and freedoms, no matter against whom they may be originally directed, in the end inevitably fall with all their weight on the working class—especially on its most advanced elements."

### How to Fight Fascism

Class-conscious workers should not fall into the trap of demanding infringements of anyone's civil rights, including those of the fascists. At the same time they should recognize the real situation and make it plain to others. The civil rights of fascist elements are not being threatened; the authorities are in league with them. They are in no danger of persecution or need of defense. They are not the victims but the sponsors and beneficiaries of the current repressions.

The menace of fascism does not arise from their propaganda but from their gangsterism, their mob attacks upon advanced workers, Negroes, and labor organizations. With tacit acquiescence of the authorities, the fascists operate as extralegal agencies of repression against the institutions and freedoms of the working class and minorities. Consequently, the

real situation is that the labor organizations and minorities are obliged to act in self-defense to protect themselves against reactionary violence.

The history of Italy and Germany conclusively proves the folly and futility of relying upon the capitalist government, its police, or its parties in the fight against the fascists. The masses can safeguard their rights, their lives and their organizations only by mobilizing the full strength of their own forces in the most vigorous united and independent defensive actions against the race-bigots, anti-Semites, union-busters and mobsters who threaten them.

Organized labor has the ability as well as the duty to assume the leadership in this struggle. The trade unions are not only the chief bulwarks of democracy and the centers of proletarian power; they are likewise the main target of the capitalist authors of the witch-hunt whose ultimate objective is the destruction of the labor movement. The anti-labor campaign and anti-red hysteria are inseparable aspects of the monopolist drive toward the establishment of a police state in this country. Thus the defense of civil liberties is a life-and-death matter for American labor.

Without full democracy and freedom of expression inside the unions, they cannot effectively fulfill their tasks of defending the welfare of the workers and leading the struggle against reaction. Thus the fight for union democracy is directly interlinked with the general struggle for civil liberties.

### Program and Perspective

The objective of our party is the creation of a broad nationwide defense movement, composed of all forces menaced by repression and devoted to the defense of all victims of reaction. Such a movement would revive on a higher level the spirit of class solidarity characterizing the pre-World War I Socialist and labor movements.

It is both possible and necessary to join together extensive forces on a national and local scale in common defense actions around specific issues and cases, as the experience in the Kutcher case and the demonstrations against Gerald Smith indicate. The militants should be on the alert to propose and initiate such united front actions, participate in them with all available resources, guide them along correct lines and imbue them with the maximum strength.

The Truman administration and its liberal spokesmen spread the illusion that the present wave of repression is the result of a temporary hysteria which will soon run its course and automatically exhaust itself. The workers should not permit themselves to be duped by this deliberate lie.

The trends toward thought-control and the police state spring from the most profound and urgent needs of the monopolist and militarist rulers of U.S. capitalism. Washington has organized and carried forward the loyalty purge and its associated prosecutions in the most planned and methodical manner. The witch-hunters do not intend to relax their persecutions but to intensify and extend them, if they can get away with it.

The repressive measures are not an episodic phase or transitory phenomenon but a permanent feature of decaying capitalism. The only way to stop the witch-hunters and their assaults is to create and set into motion a mighty mass opposition to them and to carry through the struggle against capitalist reaction to its logical conclusion in the establishment of a Workers' and Farmers' government, genuinely representing the people's interests.

# Art and Politics In Our Epoch

By LEON TROTSKY

[Ed. Note: The following letter by Leon Trotsky appeared in one of the early issues of *Partisan Review* in 1938 under the editorship of Dwight MacDonald. Trotsky's hope that this magazine would "take its place in the victorious army of socialism" was not borne out by its subsequent evolution, as his second letter indicates.

The disillusioned intellectuals on *Partisan Review* proceeded from "reevaluations" of Marxism and rejections of Bolshevism to a sterile preoccupation with problems of pure esthetics and literary techniques detached from their social roots along with an adaptation to the standpoint of liberal supporters of imperialist policies. In the process MacDonald separated himself from his associate editors and launched a new magazine *Politics* which, after wallowing helplessly in political, cultural and esthetic disorientation, recently folded up.

Since 1938 Diego Rivera has made his peace with Stalinism, a step which has improved neither his art nor his politics.

Despite the reconversions of these intellectuals, to capitalism and Stalinism, the two great incarnations of reaction in our time, Trotsky's remarks on the relations of art and politics retain their validity and urgency. More than ever today "the function of art is determined by its relation to the revolution."] \* \* \*

You have been kind enough to invite me to express my views on the state of present-day arts and letters. I do this not without some hesitation. Since my book *Literature and Revolution* (1923), I have not once returned to the problem of artistic creation and only occasionally have I been able to follow the latest developments in this sphere. I am far from pretending to offer an exhaustive reply. The task of this letter is to correctly pose the question.

Generally speaking, art is an expression of man's need for an harmonious and complete life, that is to say, his need for those major benefits of which a society of classes has deprived him. That is why a protest against reality, either conscious or unconscious, active or passive, optimistic or pessimistic, always forms part of a really creative piece of work. Every new tendency in art has

begun with rebellion. Bourgeois society showed its strength throughout long periods of history in the fact that, combining repression and encouragement, boycott and flattery, it was able to control and assimilate every "rebel" movement in art and raise it to the level of official "recognition." But each time this "recognition" betokened, when all is said and done, the approach of trouble. It was then that from the left wing of the academic school or below it—i.e. from the ranks of new generation of bohemian artists—a fresher revolt would surge up to attain in its turn, after a decent interval, the steps of the academy. Through these stages passed classicism, romanticism, realism, naturalism, symbolism, impressionism, cubism, futurism . . . Nevertheless, the union of art and the bourgeoisie remained stable, even if not happy, only so long as the bourgeoisie itself took the initiative and was capable of maintaining a regime both politically and morally "democratic." This was a question of not only giving free rein to artists and playing up to them in every possible way, but also of granting special privileges to the top layer of the working class, and of mastering and subduing the bureaucracy of the unions and workers' parties. All these phenomena exist in the same historical plane.

## Decay of Capitalist Society

The decline of bourgeois society means an intolerable exacerbation of social contradictions, which are transformed inevitably into personal contradictions, calling forth an ever more burning need for a liberating art. Furthermore, a declining capitalism already finds itself completely incapable of offering the minimum conditions for the development of tendencies in art which correspond, however little, to our epoch. It fears superstitiously every new word, for it is no longer a matter of corrections and reforms for capitalism but of life and death. The oppressed masses live their own life. Bohemianism offers too limited a social base. Hence new tendencies take on a more and more violent character, alternating between hope and despair. The artistic schools of the last few decades—cubism, futurism, dadaism, surrealism—follow each other without reaching a complete development. Art, which is the most complex part of cul-

ture, the most sensitive and at the same time the least protected, suffers most from the decline and decay of bourgeois society.

To find a solution to this impasse through art itself is impossible. It is a crisis which concerns all culture, beginning at its economic base and ending in the highest spheres of ideology. Art can neither escape the crisis nor partition itself off. Art cannot save itself. It will rot away inevitably—as Grecian art rotted beneath the ruins of a culture founded on slavery—unless present-day society is able to rebuild itself. This task is essentially revolutionary in character. For these reasons the function of art in our epoch is determined by its relation to the revolution.

But precisely in this path history has set a formidable snare for the artist. A whole generation of "leftist" intelligentsia has turned its eyes for the last ten or fifteen years to the East and has bound its lot, in varying degrees, to a victorious revolution, if not to a revolutionary proletariat. Now, this is by no means one and the same thing. In the victorious revolution there is not only the revolution, but there is also the new privileged class which raises itself on the shoulders of the revolution. In reality, the "leftist" intelligentsia has tried to change masters. What has it gained?

The October revolution gave a magnificent impetus to all types of Soviet art. The bureaucratic reaction, on the contrary, has stifled artistic creation with a totalitarian hand. Nothing surprising here! Art is basically a function of the nerves and demands complete sincerity. Even the art of the court of absolute monarchies was based on idealization but not on falsification. The official art of the Soviet Union—and there is no other over there—resembles totalitarian justice, that is to say, it is based on lies and deceit. The goal of justice, as of art, is to exalt the "leader," to fabricate an heroic myth. Human history has never seen anything to equal this in scope and impudence. A few examples will not be superfluous.

The well known Soviet writer, Vsevolod Ivanov, recently broke his silence to proclaim eagerly his solidarity with the justice of Vyshinsky. The general extermination of the old Bolsheviks, "those putrid emanations of capitalism," stimu-

lates in the artists a "creative hatred" in Ivanov's words. Romantic, cautious by nature, lyrical, none too outspoken, Ivanov recalls Gorki, in many ways, but in miniature. Not a prostitute by nature, he preferred to remain quiet as long as possible but the time came when silence meant civil and perhaps physical annihilation. It is not a "creative hatred" that guides the pen of these writers but paralyzing fear.

Alexis Tolstoy, who has finally permitted the courtesan to master the artist, has written a novel expressly to glorify the military exploits of Stalin and Voroshilov at Tsaritsin. In reality, as impartial documents bear witness, the army of Tsaritsin—one of the two dozen armies of the revolution—played a rather sorry role. The two "heroes" were relieved of their posts.\* If the Honest and simple Chapayev, one of the real heroes of the civil war is glorified in a Soviet film, it is only because he did not live until the "epoch of Stalin" which would have shot him as a Fascist agent. The same Alexis Tolstoy is now writing a drama on the theme of the year 1919: "The Campaign of the Fourteen Powers." The principal heroes of this piece, according to the words of the author, are Lenin, Stalin and Voroshilov. Their images [of Stalin and Voroshilov] haloed in glory and heroism, will pervade the whole drama." Thus, a talented writer who bears the name of the greatest and most truthful Russian realist, has become a manufacturer of "myths" to order!

Very recently, the 27th of April of this year, the official government paper *Izvestia*, printed a reproduction of a new painting representing Stalin as the organizer of the Tiflis strike in March 1902. However, it appears from documents long known to the public, that Stalin was in prison at that time and besides not in Tiflis but in Batum. This time the lie was too glaring! *Izvestia* was forced to excuse itself the next day for its deplorable blunder. No one knows what happened to the unfortunate picture, which was paid for from State funds.

Dozens, hundreds, thousands of books, films, canvases, sculptures immortalize and glorify such historic "episodes." Thus the numerous pictures devoted to the October revolution do not fail to represent a revolutionary "Center," with Sta-

lin at its head, which never existed. It is necessary to say a few words concerning the gradual preparation of this falsification. Leonid Serebriakov, shot after the Piatakov-Radek trial, drew my attention in 1924 to the publication in *Pravda*, without explanation, of extracts from the minutes of the Central Committee of the latter part of 1917. An old secretary of the Central Committee, Serebriakov had numerous contacts behind the scenes with the party apparatus, and he knew enough the object of this unexpected publication: it was the first step, still a cautious one, towards the principal Stalinist myth, which now occupies so great a place in Soviet art.

### The Mythical "Center"

From an historical distance the October insurrection seem much more planned and monolithic than what it proved to be in reality. In fact, there were lacking neither vacillations, search for solutions, nor impulsive beginnings which led nowhere. Thus, at the meeting of the Central Committee on the 16th of October, improvised in one night, in the absence of the most active leaders of the Petrograd Soviets, it was decided to round out the general-staff of the insurrection with an auxiliary "Center" created by the party and composed of Sverdlov, Stalin, Bubnov, Uritzky and Djerjinsky. At the very same time at the meeting of the Petrograd Soviet, a Revolutionary Military Committee was formed which from the moment of its appearance did so much work towards the preparation of the insurrection that the "Center," appointed the night before, was forgotten by everybody, even by its own members. There were more than a few of such improvisations in the whirlwind of this period.\* Stalin never belonged to the Military Revolutionary Committee, did not appear at Smolny, staff headquarters of the revolution, had nothing to do with the practical preparation of the insurrection, but was to be found editing *Pravda* and writing drab articles, which were very little read. During the following years nobody once mentioned the "Practical Center." In memoirs of participants in the insurrection—and there is no shortage of these—the name of Stalin is not once mentioned. Stalin himself, in an article on the anniversary of the October insurrection, in the *Pravda* of November 7, 1918, describing all the groups and individuals

who took part in the insurrection, does not say a word about the "Practical Center." Nevertheless, the old minutes, discovered by chance in 1924 and falsely interpreted, have served as a base for the bureaucratic legend. In every compilation, bibliographical guide, even in recently edited school books, the revolutionary "Center" has a prominent place with Stalin at its head. Furthermore, no one has tried, not even out of a sense of decency, to explain where and how this "Center" established its headquarters, to whom it gave orders and what they were, and whether minutes were taken where they are. We have here all the features of the Moscow trials.\*\*

With the docility which distinguishes it, Soviet art so-called, has made this bureaucratic myth into one of its favorite subjects for artistic creation. Sverdlov, Djerjinsky, Uritsky and Bubnov are represented in oils or in tempera, seated or standing around Stalin and following his words with rapt attention. The building where the "Center" has headquarters, is intentionally depicted in a vague fashion, in order to avoid the embarrassing question of the address. What can one hope for or demand of artists who are forced to follow with their brushes the crude lines of what they themselves realize is an historical falsification?

The style of present-day official Soviet painting is called "socialist realism." The name itself has evidently been invented by some high functionary in the department of the arts. This "realism" consists in the imitation of provincial daguerreotypes of the third quarter of the last century; the "socialist" character apparently consists in representing, in the manner of pretentious photography, events which never took place. It is impossible to read Soviet verse and prose without physical disgust, mixed with horror, or to look at reproductions of paintings and sculpture in which functionaries armed with pens, brushes, and scissors, under the supervision of functionaries armed with Mausers, glorify the "great" and "brilliant" leaders, actually devoid of the least spark of genius or greatness. The art of the Stalinist period will remain as the frankest expression of the profound decline of the proletarian revolution.

This state of things is not confined, however, within the frontiers of the U.S.S.R. Under the guise of a belated recognition of the October revolution, the "left" wing of the western intelli-

\*See, for example, the article of N. Markin, "Voroshilov and the Red Army" in Leon Trotsky's *The Stalin School of Falsification*.

\*\* This question is fully developed in my *History of the Russian Revolution* in the chapter entitled "Legends of the Bureaucracy."

\*\* For the cinematic elaboration of this mythical "Center," see page 55 of this issue.

gentsia has fallen on its knees before the Soviet bureaucracy. As a rule, those artists with some character and talent have kept aloof. But the appearance in the first ranks, of the failures, careerists and nobodys is all the more unfortunate. A rash of Centers and Committees of all sorts has broken out, of secretaries of both sexes, inevitable letters from Roman Rolland, subsidized editions, banquets and congresses, in which it is difficult to trace the line of demarcation between art and the G.P.U. Despite this vast spread of activity, this militarized movement has not produced one single work that was able to outlive its author or its inspirers of the Kremlin.

### Rivera and October

In the field of painting, the October revolution has found her greatest interpreter not in the U.S.S.R. but in far-away Mexico, not among the official "friends," but in the person of a so-called "enemy of the people" whom the Fourth International is proud to number in its ranks. Nurtured in the artistic cultures of all peoples, all epochs, Diego Rivera has remained Mexican in the most profound fibres of his genius. But that which inspired him in these magnificent frescoes, which lifted him up above the artistic tradition, above contemporary art in a certain sense, above himself, is the mighty blast of the proletarian revolution. Without October, his power of creative penetration into the epic of work, oppression and insurrection, would never have attained such breadth and profundity. Do you wish to see with your own eyes the hidden springs of the social revolution? Look at the frescoes of Rivera. Do you wish to know what revolutionary art is like? Look at the frescoes of Rivera.

Come a little closer and you will see clearly enough, gashes and spots made by vandals: catholics and other reactionaries, including, of course, Stalinists. These cuts and gashes give even greater life to the frescoes. You have before you, not simply a "painting," an object of passive esthetic contemplation, but a living part of the class struggle. And it is at the same time a masterpiece!

Only the historical youth of a country which has not yet emerged from the stage of struggle for national independence, has allowed Rivera's revolutionary brush to be used on the walls of the public buildings of Mexico. In the United States it was more difficult. Just as the monks in the Middle Ages, through ignorance, it is true, erased antique literary productions from parchments to cover them with their scholastic ravings, just

so Rockefeller's lackeys, but this time maliciously, covered the frescoes of the talented Mexican with their decorative banalities. This recent palimpsest will conclusively show future generations the fate of art degraded in a decaying bourgeois society.

The situation is no better, however, in the country of the October revolution. Incredible as it seemed at first sight, there was no place for the art of Diego Rivera, either in Moscow, or in Leningrad, or in any other section of the U.S.S.R. where the bureaucracy born of the revolution was erecting grandiose palaces and monuments to itself. And how could the Kremlin clique tolerate in its kingdom an artist who paints neither icons representing the "leader" nor life-size portraits of Voroshilov's horse? The closing of the Soviet doors to Rivera will brand forever with an ineffaceable shame the totalitarian dictatorship.

Will it go on much longer—this stifling, this trampling under foot and muddying of everything on which the future of humanity depends? Reliable indications say no. The shameful and pitiable collapse of the cowardly and reactionary politics of the Popular Fronts in Spain and France, on the one hand, and the judicial frame-ups of Moscow, on the other, portend the approach of a major turning point not only in the political sphere, but also in the broader sphere of revolutionary ideology. Even the unfortunate "friends"—but evidently not the intellectual and moral shallows of *The New Republic* and *Nation*—are beginning to tire of the yoke and whip. Art, culture, politics need a new perspective. Without it humanity will not develop. But never before has the prospect been as menacing and catastrophic as now. That is the reason why panic is the dominant state of mind of the bewildered intelligentsia. Those who oppose an irresponsible skepticism to the yoke of Moscow do not weight heavy in the balance of history. Skepticism is only another form, and not the best, of demoralization. Behind the act, so popular now, of impartially keeping aloof from the Stalinist bureaucracy as well as its revolutionary adversaries, is hidden nine times out of ten a wretched prostration before the difficulties and dangers of history. Nevertheless, verbal subterfuges and petty maneuvers will be of no use. No one will be granted either pardon or respite. In the face of the era of wars and revolutions which is drawing near, everyone will have to give an answer: philosophers, poets, painters as well as simple mortals.

In the June issue of your magazine I found a curious letter from an editor of a Chicago magazine, unknown to me. Expressing (by mistake, I hope) his sympathy for your publication, he writes: "I can see no hope however [?] from the Trotskyites or other anemic splinters which have no mass base." These arrogant words tell more about the author than he perhaps wanted to say. They show above all that the laws of development of society have remained a seven times sealed book for him. Not a single progressive idea has begun with a "mass base," otherwise it would not have been a progressive idea. It is only in its last stage that the idea finds its masses—if, of course, it answers the needs of progress. All great movements have begun as "splinters" of older movements. In the beginning, Christianity was only a "splinter" of Judaism; protestantism a "splinter" of Catholicism, that is to say decayed Christianity. The group of Marx and Engels came into existence as a "splinter" of the Hegelian Left. The Communist International germinated during the war from the "splinters" of the Social Democratic International. If these pioneers found themselves able to create a mass base, it was precisely because they did not fear isolation. They knew beforehand that the quality of their ideas would be transformed into quantity. These "splinters" did not suffer from anemia; on the contrary, they carried within themselves the germs of the great historical movements of tomorrow.

### "Splinters" and Pioneers

In very much the same way, to repeat, a progressive movement occurs in art. When an artistic tendency has exhausted its creative resources, creative "splinters" separate from it, which are able to look at the world with new eyes. The more daring the pioneers show in their ideas and actions, the more bitterly they oppose themselves to established authority which rests on a conservative "mass base," the more conventional souls, skeptics, and snobs are inclined to see in the pioneers, impotent eccentrics or "anemic splinters." But in the last analysis it is the conventional souls, skeptics and snobs who are wrong—and life passes them by.

The Thermidorian bureaucracy, to whom one cannot deny either a certain animal sense of danger or a strong instinct of self-preservation, is not at all inclined to estimate its revolutionary adversaries with such whole-hearted disdain, a disdain which is often coupled with lightness and inconsistency. In the

Moscow trials, Stalin, who is not a venturesome player by nature, staked on the struggle against "Trotskyism," the fate of the Kremlin oligarchy as well as his own personal destiny. How can one explain this fact? The furious international campaign against "Trotskyism," for which a parallel in history will be difficult to find, would be absolutely inexplicable if the "splinters" were not endowed with an enormous vitality. He who does not see this today will see it better tomorrow.

As if to complete his self-portrait with one brilliant stroke, your Chicago correspondent vows—what bravery!—to meet you in a future concentration camp—either fascist or "communist." A fine program! To tremble at the thought of a concentration camp is certainly not admirable. But is it much better to foredoom oneself and one's ideas to this grim hospitality? With the Bolshevik "amoralism" which is characteristic of us, we are ready to suggest that gentlemen—by no means anemic—who capitulate before the fight and without a fight really deserve nothing better than the concentration camp.

It would be a different matter if your correspondent simply said: in the sphere of literature and art we wish no supervision on the part of "Trotskyists" any more than from the Stalinists. This protest would be, in essence, absolutely just. One can only retort that to aim it at those who are termed "Trotskyists" would be to batter in an open door. The ideological base of the conflict between the Fourth and Third Internationals is the profound disagreement not only on the tasks of the party but in general on the entire material and spiritual life of mankind.

The real crisis of civilization is above all the crisis of revolutionary leadership. Stalinism is the greatest element of reaction in this crisis. Without a new flag and a new program it is impossible to create a revolutionary mass base; consequently it is impossible to rescue society from its dilemma. But a truly revolutionary party is neither able nor willing to take upon itself the task of "leading" and even less of commanding art, either before or after the conquest of power. Such a pretension could only enter the head of a bureaucracy—ignorant and impudent, intoxicated with its totalitarian power—which has become the antithesis of the proletarian revolution. Art, like science, not only does not seek orders, but by its very essence, cannot tolerate them. Artistic creation has its laws—even when it consciously serves a social movement. Truly intellectual crea-

tion is incompatible with lies, hypocrisy and the spirit of conformity. Art can become a strong ally of revolution only in so far as it remains faithful to itself. Poets, painters, sculptors and musicians will themselves find their own approach and methods, if the struggle for freedom of oppressed classes and peoples scatters the clouds of skepticism and of pessimism which cover the horizon of mankind. The first condition of this regeneration is the overthrow of the domination of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

May your magazine take its place in the victorious army of socialism and not in a concentration camp!

Leon Trotsky.

Coyoacan, D. F., June 18, 1938.

## A Second Letter

(The following letter was addressed to Dwight MacDonald, then editor of *Partisan Review* on January 20, 1938.)

Dear Mr. MacDonald:

I shall speak with you very frankly inasmuch as reservations or insincere half-praises would signify a lack of respect for you and your undertaking.

It is my general impression that the editors of *Partisan Review* are capable, educated and intelligent people but they have nothing to say. They seek themes which are incapable of hurting anyone but which likewise are incapable of giving anybody a thing. I have never seen or heard of a group with such a mood gaining success, i.e., winning influence and leaving some sort of trace in the history of thought.

Note that I am not at all touching upon the content of your ideas (perhaps because I cannot discern them in your magazine). "Independence" and "freedom" are two empty notions. But I am ready to grant that "independence" and "freedom" as you understand them represent some kind of actual cultural value. Excellent! But then it is necessary to defend them with sword, or at least with whip, in hand. Every new artistic or literary tendency (naturalism, symbolism, futurism, cubism, expressionism and so forth and so on) has begun with a "scandal," breaking the old respected crockery, bruising many established authorities. This flowed not at all solely from publicity seeking (although there was no lack of this). No, these people—artists, as well as literary critics—had something to say. They had friends, they had enemies, they fought, and exactly through this they demonstrated their right to exist.

So far as your publication is concerned, it wishes, in the main instance, apparently to demonstrate its respectability. You defend yourselves from the Stalinists like well-behaved young ladies whom street rowdies insult. "Why are we attacked?" you complain, "we want only one thing: to live and let others live." Such a policy cannot gain success.

Of course, there are not a few disappointed "friends of the USSR" and generally dismal intellectuals who, having been burned once, fear more than anything else to become again engaged. These people will send you tepid, sympathetic letters but they will not guarantee the success of the magazine since serious success has never yet been based on political, cultural and esthetic disorientation.

I wanted to hope that this was but a temporary condition and that the publishers of *Partisan Review* would cease to be afraid of themselves. I must say, however, that the Symposium outlined by you is not at all capable of strengthening these hopes. You phrase the question about Marxism as if you were beginning history from a clean page. The very Symposium title itself sounds extremely pretentious and at the same time confused. The majority of the writers whom you have invited have shown by their whole past—alas!—a complete incapacity for theoretical thinking. Some of them are political corpses. How can a corpse be entrusted with deciding whether Marxism is a living force? No, I categorically refuse to participate in that kind of endeavor.

A world war is approaching. The inner political struggle in all countries tends to become transformed into civil war. Currents of the highest tension are active in all fields of culture and ideology. You evidently wish to create a small cultural monastery, guarding itself from the outside world by scepticism, agnosticism and respectability. Such an endeavor does not open up any kind of perspective.

It is entirely possible that the tone of this letter will appear to you as sharp, impermissible, and "sectarian." In my eyes this would constitute merely supplementary proof of the fact that you wish to publish a peaceful "little" magazine without participating actively in the cultural life of your epoch. If, on the contrary, you do not consider my "sectarian" tone a hindrance to a future exchange of opinion then I remain fully at your service.

Sincerely,

Leon Trotsky