

FIVE CENTS

MAY 1942

THE BULLETIN

INDIA:

1. THE TROTSKYITES RESURRECT A SLOGAN
2. THE WORKERS PARTY and
INDIAN INDEPENDENCE
3. THE R. W. L. and INDIA

By George Marlen

The Trotsky School of Falsification

When Burocrats Quarrel

By J. C. Hunter

THE RED STAR PRESS

P. O. BOX 67 STATION D

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

<u>I N D I A:</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1. The Trotskyites Resurrect A Slogan	1
2. The Workers Party and Indian Independence	12
3. The R.W.L. and India - George Marlen	13
 <u>THE TROTSKY SCHOOL OF FALSIFICATION</u>	
When Burocrats Quarrel - J.C.Hunter	17

Address Communications to:

T H E R E D S T A R P R E S S

P.O. Box 67

Sta. D.

New York

I N D I A

*

I.

THE TROTSKYITES RESURRECT A SLOGAN

In recent days the question of the emancipation of the Indian masses has come sharply to the fore. The Trotskyites chart a course for the Indian toilers in the following words: "Indian Masses Must Call for Constituent Assembly." (The Militant, March 14, 1942.)

Is the slogan "Constituent Assembly" in accord with the Marxist principles which have crystallized out of the experience of class struggle? Will this slogan lead the Indian or any other masses toward liberation from landlord and capitalist exploitation, or will it, on the contrary, mislead them into a pitfall of defeat and a perpetuation of their slave condition? The correct answer to this momentous question is of vital concern not only to the Indian toilers but to the toilers the world over.

In order to obtain the correct answer it is necessary to make an accurate investigation of the role this slogan played in the past, specifically in the Russian revolution, the richest of all revolutions in practical lessons for the working class, and to determine whether this slogan serves the exploiters or the exploited. In our investigation we shall compare the position Lenin held on "Constituent Assembly" in 1917 and the one he adopted after the slogan passed the fiery test of life.

THE RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE

When the Russian workers hurled

Czarism from its bloody pedestal and began to cover the country with a network of Soviets, the political atmosphere in the capitals and in the provinces was filled with numerous slogans. Among the most outstanding slogans was that of "Constituent Assembly." It was raised by the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, and also by the Bolsheviki.

Immediately upon his arrival from abroad Lenin laid down as the basic policy for the Bolsheviki party the struggle for a Soviet government. This policy was absolutely correct. It must be admitted, however, that within that correct line there were certain imperfections. Lenin did not draw a sharp distinction between the concepts "Congress of Soviets" and "Constituent Assembly." For instance in this statement:-

"All power in the state, from top to bottom, from the remotest village to the last street in the city of Petrograd must belong to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Agricultural Laborers', and Peasants' Deputies. The central power must be united in these local Soviets — whether you call them a Constituent Assembly or a National Assembly, or a Congress of Soviets, the name does not matter." (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. XX, Book 1, p. 168.)

Life later established that the name does matter a great deal. In 1919, when the German Social Democrats

proposed to combine the Soviet system with the Constituent Assembly, Lenin without mincing words attacked them as follows:

"The ridiculous attempt to combine the Soviet System, i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the Constituent Assembly, i.e., with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, utterly exposes the poverty of mind of the yellow Socialists and Social Democrats, their petty-bourgeois political reactionariness and their cowardly concessions to the irresistible growth of the power of the new proletarian democracy." (Selected Works, Vol. VII, p. 233.)

Lenin recognized the teachings of historical experience, namely, that the Constituent Assembly represents the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie while the Soviet system represents the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that any talk about combining these diametrically opposed forms is a pretense and a fraud.

Lenin said this at the First Congress of the Communist International, in his Thesis on Bourgeois Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship. He made a complete break with the attitude he himself had shown towards the two names "Soviets" and "Constituent Assembly." That this separation of the two concepts, two names, was a settled matter with Lenin now, was shown by him also on other occasions. In his report to the Eighth Congress of the Bolsheviki Party Lenin said that to attempt to unite the Soviets with the Constituent Assembly was an outrage:

"You know that they wanted to embody the system of Soviets in the constitution of the German democratic republic, i.e., to unite the Constituent Assembly and the dictatorship of the proletariat in lawful wedlock. From our point of view this is such an outrage against common sense in our revolution, the German revolution, the Hungarian revolution and the growing Polish revolution, that all we

can do is to shrug our shoulders. It must be said that such vacillating elements are to be found in the most advanced countries. Educated, informed, intelligent people, even in such an advanced capitalist country as Germany, at times act a hundred times more muddle-headedly and vociferously than our backward petty bourgeoisie." (Selected Works, VIII, p. 30.)

For purposes of contrast, let us return to Lenin's position on Constituent Assembly in 1917. In his pamphlet Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution written in April 1917, in the chapter headed "The New Type of State Arising in Our Revolution," Lenin said:

"This is the type of state which the Russian Revolution began to create in the years 1905 and 1917. A Republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants', etc., Deputies, united in an All-Russian Constituent Assembly of the people's representatives, or in a Soviet of Soviets, etc., - this is what is already coming into life now." (Col. Works, Vol. XI, Pt. 1, pp. 139-40. My emphasis - G.M.)

It is clear that Lenin would never have written this in 1919. In the above citation the distinction between the Constituent Assembly, which could be only a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and the Soviet state system, which could be only a dictatorship of the proletariat, was not only blurred but actually obliterated.

Lenin's basic line called for making the Soviets the center of power. But the (1917) erroneous position on the Constituent Assembly often interfered with a clear demarcation between the Soviet form of government and the bourgeois dictatorship contained within the slogan Constituent Assembly. In one of his speeches in 1917 Lenin even suggested that the central state power might be the Constituent Assembly!

"Once we say — and I repeat, we say it in all our resolutions — that the land must be the property of all the people and pass to them

free of charge, then it is obvious that the settlement of the final distribution of this land, the final establishment of land regulations must be the business of the central state power alone, i.e., the Constituent Assembly or the All-Russian Soviet of Soviets, if such a power, the Soviet of Soviets, were to be created by the peasant and workers' masses. There are no differences of opinion on this score." (Collected Works, Vol. XX, Book 2, p. 113.)

Writing an Open Letter to the Peasant Deputies on May 20, 1917 Lenin urged the peasants to take the land without waiting for the Constituent Assembly, but declared that the Bolsheviks did not dispute the right of this bourgeois institution to determine the final laws with respect to the land:

"We do not in any way dispute the right of the Constituent Assembly to determine in detail the final laws regarding the handing over of the land to the whole people and the forms of its administration." (Collected Works, Volume XX, p. 57.)

The final laws were to be determined, of course, not by the bourgeois Constituent Assembly but by the revolutionary proletarian Soviet government. Lenin also told the peasants that the Constituent Assembly would give legal validity to the transfer of the land to the peasantry by the workers in power:

"The working class, when it has conquered power, will alone be able to guarantee the immediate transfer of all the landowners' land to the peasants without compensation. This should not be delayed. The Constituent Assembly will legalize it, but it is not the peasants' fault that the Constituent Assembly is being delayed." (Draft Resolution on the Political Situation, Collected Works, Vol. XXI, p. 162. September, 1917.)

A few weeks before the October

Revolution, Lenin, discussing the future work of the proletarian Soviet government, once again invested the Constituent Assembly with the legal power over the problem of land:

"The Soviet government must immediately declare private ownership in land abolished without compensation and turn over all these lands to be managed by peasant committees pending the solution of this problem by the Constituent Assembly." (Lenin, "The Tasks of the Revolution," Rabochy Put, October 9 and 10, 1917. My emphasis - G.M.)

Just before the overthrow of the Kerensky government Zinoviev and Kamenev made a profound lurch toward the Mensheviks and opposed the taking of power by the proletariat. They offered in justification of their stand a whole chain of aggressive but utterly invalid arguments, waging a desperate contest for a "Combined type" of government of Soviets and Constituent Assembly. In a letter "On the Present Situation" sent to the Party membership, Zinoviev and Kamenev declared:

"The Soviets, which have become rooted in life, can not be destroyed. The Constituent Assembly will be able to find support for its revolutionary work only in the Soviets. The Constituent Assembly plus the Soviets — this is that combined type of state institutions towards which we are going." (Cited in Lenin's Collected Works, Vol. XXI, Book 2, p. 329.)

This stand was of the same political essence as the one taken about a year later by the German Social Democrats who insisted upon the "combined type" as a cover for preserving the bourgeois dictatorship.

Zinoviev and Kamenev found in Lenin a formidable antagonist who lashed out at them for opposing the proletarian insurrection. However, in those very days when Zinoviev and Kamenev were confusing the Party membership with myths about a "combined type" of state, Lenin, who had not yet adopted a clear and correct position on

this dangerously misleading term,
w r o t e :

"Is it so difficult to understand that once power is in the hands of the Soviets, the Constituent Assembly and its success are guaranteed? The Bolsheviks have said so thousands of times. No one has ever attempted to refute this. Everybody has recognized such a 'combined type' but to smuggle in a renunciation of giving the power to the Soviets under the guise of the words 'combined type,' to smuggle it in secretly while fearing to renounce our slogan openly — what is this?" ("Letter to the Comrades," Volume XXI, Book 2, p 115.)

Here, obviously, Lenin should have shown that it was impossible under any circumstances to combine Soviets, representing the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the Constituent Assembly, representing the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. But instead of showing this, Lenin spoke of insuring success to the Constituent Assembly — under the power of the Soviets! Such a view, it must be admitted, did not contribute to the clarity of the workers on the "combined type" of state, nor on the class nature of such an institution as the Constituent Assembly. Lenin inserted the idea of insuring success to the Constituent Assembly into almost every one of his speeches and articles throughout 1917. At one time Lenin indicated that the convocation of the Constituent Assembly should be done by the proletariat, at another time, by the petty-bourgeoisie, and at still another time, even by the bourgeoisie.

That Lenin in 1917 harbored certain illusions with respect to this bourgeois institution is evident from his writings of that period. Like other great leaders of the oppressed, he learned from experience. It goes without saying that had he been as clear on this question in 1917 as he became later, he would never have held the notion that the Constituent Assembly would have the authority to

pass the final law on the land question, that the Republic of the toilers' Soviets would be "united in an All-Russian Constituent Assembly," and he would have denounced all mention of a "combined type." Lenin would have made it clear, as history did later, that the Constituent Assembly would do everything in its power to prevent the peasantry from getting the land and to insure the eternal enslavement of the toilers to the capitalists and landlords.

THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE MISTAKE ON
THE QUESTION OF CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

THE Soviet Power was established in November 1917. Two months later the Constituent Assembly convened in Petrograd in the Taurida Palace, the original seat of the State Duma and of the Petrograd Soviet, the center of the February Revolution. The Constituent Assembly was opened by a Bolshevik leader, Sverdlov. This act, in addition to allowing the Assembly to meet in the Taurida Palace, gave a measure of prestige to the gathering. Sverdlov read a "Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People" drawn up by Lenin, which the Constituent Assembly was asked to approve. It must be pointed out that in the "Declaration" Lenin maintained the "combined type" idea, assigning an auxiliary position to the Constituent Assembly.

Just before the Assembly was convened, Lenin expressed the belief that the Assembly would not convene in accordance with the bourgeois pattern:—

"Let the people know that the Constituent Assembly is being summoned not quite in the way Kerensky intended. We have introduced the right of recall, and the Constituent Assembly will not be quite the thing the bourgeoisie planned." (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. VI, p. 439.)

But soon it became abundantly clear to Lenin that the Constituent Assembly instead of being an auxiliary was

really a bone in the throat of the revolution. The electoral lists for the Constituent Assembly were drawn up prior to the October Revolution, a time when the Bolsheviks did not have a preponderance of support throughout the country as a whole. The bourgeois and opportunist representatives had a majority in the Constituent Assembly. The latter assuming an air of authority, to the creation of which Lenin himself unfortunately had contributed not a little, came in conflict with the October Revolution. The Constituent Assembly refused even to discuss the "Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People" which the Bolsheviks introduced. Representing the interests of the landlords and the capitalists, the Constituent Assembly demanded all power.

The Bolsheviks found themselves in an uncomfortable situation. They were compelled to cut the Gordian knot. The Bolshevik members of the Constituent Assembly withdrew, and the majority of the members, i.e. the bourgeois and opportunist delegates, were dispersed by the workers' guard. Immediately upon the dispersal, the S.R.'s, supported by White Guard officers, staged armed demonstrations in Moscow and Petrograd in defense of the Constituent Assembly.

The Bolsheviks, of course, had no choice other than to disperse the Assembly. But due to their previous declarations and remarks with regard to the Constituent Assembly, their act left a bad taste in the mouths of many workers. For another brief moment clinging to the old illusory idea, Lenin spoke of holding new elections for the Constituent Assembly:

"The only chance of securing a painless solution of the crisis which has arisen as a result of the discrepancy between the elections to the Constituent Assembly and the will of the people, as well as the interests of the toiling and exploited classes, is to enable the people as early as possible to exercise the right to elect anew the members of the Constituent Assembly, and for the Constituent Assembly to

associate itself with the law passed by the Central Executive Committee concerning this new election, for the Constituent Assembly to proclaim unreservedly that it recognizes the Soviet power, the Soviet revolution, its policy on the question of peace, the land, and workers' control, and that it resolutely joins the camp of the enemies of the Cadet-Kaledinite counter-revolution." (Lenin, "Thesis on the Constituent Assembly," Selected Works, Volume VI, p. 451.)

The unfolding Civil War caused the Bolsheviks to shed all illusions concerning the Constituent Assembly. No re elections were ever held. The Constituent Assembly went down into history as a counter-revolutionary bourgeois trap.

To reconvene a Constituent Assembly later, even if the Bolsheviks would have had a preponderance of influence therein, would have been not merely pointless, but definitely harmful. The true historical organs of rule of the proletariat are the Soviets. The Constituent Assembly, a parliamentary body concocted by the bourgeoisie in their revolution and based on bourgeois-democratic, not on working class methods of representation, had no place in the Soviet scheme of things. A Constituent Assembly would have detracted from the authority of the Soviets, and in any case, the Soviets alone were necessary and suitable to carry out the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat and the peasantry. From no angle whatever did the Constituent Assembly provide a vehicle for forwarding the class interests of the toilers.

The mistake on the question of the Constituent Assembly produced chiefly the following harmful results:

- 1) The support given by the Bolshevik Party in 1917 to the idea of a Constituent Assembly sowed many illusory expectations in the mind of the masses. They believed that the Constituent Assembly would contribute to the emancipation of the exploited

masses, especially the peasants. It required the bitter lessons of experience itself to dispel these illusions and to reveal that the idea of a Constituent Assembly is a bourgeois trap.

2) The proposal to dissolve the Constituent Assembly produced a brief internal crisis in the Bolsheviki Party. A considerable number of the Bolsheviki themselves found it difficult to rid themselves of their illusions about the Constituent Assembly.

3) After being dispersed the anti-Bolshevik members of the Constituent Assembly used the entire affair as a powerful ideological lever to pull many a vacillating worker and peasant to the side of the bourgeoisie. "Constituent Assembly" governments were formed in Samara and in Archangel. The Samara government, headed by Chernov, president of the Constituent Assembly, was among the first units of the fallen bourgeois order to open civil war against the Soviets. It raised a "People's Army" of considerable size and prepared the ground for the White Guard dictator, Admiral Kolchak. In a few months after the Constituent Assembly had been dispersed, the Samara government occupied the Volga region which was named "the territory of the Constituent Assembly." The Archangel Constituent Assembly "government" was amongst the first to facilitate the imperialist intervention against the Soviets. The same kind of counter-revolutionary activity characterized all the other "Constituent Assembly" governments. Some of the "democratic" representatives were quite outspoken. Menshevik Jordania in the Georgian Constituent Assembly declared on the 14th of January 1919: "I prefer the imperialists of the West to the fanatics of the East."

The final impact of counter-revolution, the Kronstadt uprising, utilized the slogan "for Constituent Assembly," and many confused workers and sailors marched into battle to reestablish capitalism, without suspecting what they really were fighting for. Lenin recalled how a mere vote in Kronstadt for the Constituent As-

sembly electrified the White Guards who immediately rallied to the Kronstadt counter-revolution:-

"Victor Chernov sent a runner to Kronstadt: on the proposal of this runner the Menshevik Valk, one of the Kronstadt leaders, voted for the 'Constituent.' In a flash, with radio-telegraphic speed, one might say, the White Guards mobilized all their forces 'for Kronstadt.'" (Lenin, Selected Works, Volume IX, p. 195. Lenin's emphasis.)

4) When revolution broke out in Germany in 1918 the German Social Democrats successfully utilized the slogan "Constituent Assembly" to trap the workers, stifle the German Soviets and stabilize bourgeois rule. The central target which the Social Democratic leaders selected for attacking Lenin was the question of the Constituent Assembly. Kautsky's well-known pamphlet on the dictatorship of the proletariat revolved around the question of the Constituent Assembly, as Lenin himself observed in his work against Kautsky:

"The question of the Constituent Assembly and its dispersal by the Bolsheviks is the crux of Kautsky's entire pamphlet." (Selected Works, Volume VII, p. 152.)

Standing at that time on the revolutionary position against the slogan of Constituent Assembly, Trotsky, too, was compelled to take up his pen and answer Kautsky. As an illustration of the contradiction the Bolshevik Party got itself into we shall cite one of Trotsky's contentions whose sense was directly opposite from the meaning contained in the actual statements made by Lenin in 1917 with respect to the land question:

"But in any case, we did not consider the Constituent Assembly, after the manner of the democrats, as the future master of the Russian land, who would come and settle everything." (Terrorism and Communism, p. 42.)

Lenin as we remember, had said

that the Bolsheviks did not dispute the right of the Constituent Assembly to determine the final laws regarding the transfer of the land to the toiling masses and the form of its administration and even considered it possible for the Constituent Assembly to become the center of power.

Though answering the attacks of the Social Democrats, sometimes in an inconsistent manner, the Bolsheviks rose in arms against the poisonous fog caused by the slogan of "Constituent Assembly" and "combined type" of government. These opiates became the most potent deterrents in the German revolution in 1918-1919 in which the German Social Democrats succeeded in creating ideological havoc in the minds of the masses and in preserving the power of the bourgeoisie.

Such in brief was the damage to which the mistake on the question of the Constituent Assembly contributed its share.

After historical experience in a backward country like Russia and in advanced countries like Germany and Austria, Lenin adopted a clear and correct stand against the slogan of Constituent Assembly. In the Soviet Union not only among the Communists but even among the peasants the expression "Constituent" became an epithet. Lenin mentioned this in his speech at the Third Congress of the Communist International.

"The word 'Constituent' is a term of abuse among us, not only among the educated Communists, but also among the peasants. They know from practical experience that the Constituent Assembly and the White Guards are one and the same, that the latter inevitably come after the former." (Selected Works, Volume IX, p. 233.)

From some quarters the question might be asked, Is it not a fact that the Russian bourgeoisie was extremely reluctant to convoke the Constituent Assembly? Yes, this is a fact. Although the bourgeoisie made a distinction between its feelings towards the

Soviets and the proposed Constituent Assembly, organically detesting the former and expressing affection for the latter,— "Monarchists and Black Hundred men registered their love for the Constituent Assembly." (Leon Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution, Vol. II, p. 160),— it was disinclined to call the Constituent Assembly.

The fact that the bourgeoisie at one time or another are reluctant to utilize some institution of theirs is not a reason for revolutionary workers to call for that institution. In calling for a Constituent Assembly the Bolsheviks, as we have shown, spread illusions about it. The very calling for such an institution could only breed illusions, for the Constituent Assembly was a bourgeois body functioning in the interests of the bourgeoisie. When the Constituent Assembly was actually convened the Bolsheviks found themselves in a dilemma, because their forecasts concerning the Constituent Assembly were not vindicated, and the Bolsheviks were compelled to disperse the very body whose convocation they had demanded for months. This dilemma, also, was inevitable. A bourgeois institution must be given no support, regardless of whether the bourgeoisie are willing or unwilling at this or that time to utilize that institution. A bourgeois institution must be exposed and combated, no matter what the momentary attitude of the bourgeoisie may be.

To what can we ascribe the reluctance of the Russian bourgeoisie to convoke the Constituent Assembly in 1917? To a mistake on the part of its leaders. One must remember that in the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat errors are committed on both sides. Why did the leaders of the bourgeoisie fear to convoke a Constituent Assembly in 1917? Standing aghast before the most turbulent revolutionary tide in history, they feared that the majority of the Constituent Assembly would be composed of peasants to the Left of the S.R.'s and ready to expropriate the landlords. Lenin also held this belief. In an article entitled, "On

Constitutional Illusions," dated August 8, 1917, Lenin wrote:

"The Constituent Assembly in present-day Russia will yield a majority to peasants that are more left than are the S.R.'s. The bourgeoisie knows this. Knowing this, it cannot fail to fight most decisively against a speedy convocation of the Constituent Assembly." (Collected Works, Vol. XXI, p. 64.)

History shows that the fears of the bourgeoisie were without the slightest foundation. As we have said before, the electoral lists for the Constituent Assembly were drawn up shortly before the October revolution, when the bourgeoisie was greatly enfeebled. The actual elections took place a few weeks after the October Revolution. It convened in Bolshevik Petrograd, when the Soviet regime already had been in power for two months. Nevertheless it registered itself in its overwhelming majority on the side of the landlords and capitalists.

The mistake the bourgeois leaders made in not convening the Constituent Assembly much earlier, when they were still in power, proved very costly to them. Let it be remembered that the bourgeois Provisional Government of Kerensky was not regarded by the masses as the legally established body conforming to the expressed will of the people. It was a provisional government, pending — the general feeling was — the convocation of an elected body, presumably the Constituent Assembly or some sort of combination of the Soviets with the Constituent Assembly. To overthrow this provisional government was relatively a very easy task and did not bear any air of usurpation of power. But suppose the bourgeoisie had convoked the Constituent Assembly, and with great fanfare had established a "duly elected," "lawful," authoritative government of the "Free Russian Democratic Republic." In that situation, the Bolsheviks would have had a far more difficult task in leading a revolution, for they would have appeared in the light of usurpers who were acting against the will of the people

which the bourgeoisie pretended was represented in the Constituent Assembly. The revolutionary process would have been inhibited by the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Fortunately, the bourgeoisie missed their chance.

It is a striking fact that the German bourgeoisie, despite the mighty revolutionary sweep in Europe and the existing Soviet power in Russia, did not hesitate to call the Constituent Assembly, thus profiting by the costly mistake of the Russian bourgeoisie.

INDIA, CHINA AND THE SLOGAN OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

THE Second Congress of the Communist International held in July-August 1920, was marked by revolutionary ideas which were the product of the rich experience of the era. Among other questions, the problem of revolution in colonial countries was on the agenda. By that time the idea of calling for a Constituent Assembly was so odious, its reactionary character so clearly established that it was kept at a respectful distance from the Congress!

The Second Congress of the Comintern, led by Lenin, stressed the need to fight for the Soviet system in the backward and colonial countries. Lenin held that it was not even necessary for the backward countries to pass through the capitalist stage of development, for it was possible for them to march toward Communism through the Soviet system:-

"We must not only form independent cadres of fighters, of Party organizations, in all colonies and backward countries, we must not only carry on propaganda in favour of organizing Peasants' Soviets and strive to adapt them to pre-capitalist conditions; the Communist International must lay down, and give the theoretical grounds for, the proposition that, with the aid of the proletariat of the most advanced countries, the backward

countries may pass to the Soviet system and, after passing through a definite stage of development, to Communism, without passing through the capitalist stage of development." (V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. X, p. 243.)

During Lenin's active political life, the Communist International had little experience in colonial countries, and this lack of experience might have been the reason for some imperfections in the decisions with respect to the bourgeois "revolutionists" in the colonies. The experience of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927, however, completely unmasked the colonial bourgeoisie as agents and junior partners of world imperialism. In a negative fashion history upheld Lenin's slogan of Soviets for the colonial countries, led of course by proletarian revolutionists, not manufactured by the Stalinist counter-revolutionists. The solution of the democratic tasks in the colonial countries can be achieved only by a proletarian Soviet government.

The Trotskyites have resurrected the old and long-buried slogan of "Constituent Assembly" and apply it today, in 1942, to India. The very idea of Constituent Assembly was described by Lenin more than two decades ago as Kolchakist, i.e., White Guardist:-

"...even the best of the Mensheviks and S.R.'s defend precisely the Kolchakist ideas, aiding Kolchak and Denikin, covering up their dirty and bloody capitalist cause. These ideas: people's rule, equal, direct election right. Constituent Assembly...." (Vol. XVI, Russian ed., p. 305. My emphasis - G.M.)

Not only have the Trotskyites resurrected the slogan which serves world imperialism, but they, by way of reinforcement, display it as the central slogan in their agitation in India:

"Together with certain other groups, the original committee has

now constituted the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India as our adherent of the Fourth International. The party is now centering its agitation on the central slogan of the Constituent Assembly." (Fourth International, March 1942, p. 82. My emphasis - G.M.)

Editorially the Fourth International expresses enthusiastic approval of this line of centering the Indian Trotskyists' agitation on this slogan:

"The Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India is correctly centering its agitation on the slogan of the immediate convening of the Constituent Assembly." (Ibid., p. 72. My emphasis - G.M.)

The Trotskyite noise about Constituent Assembly directs the minds of the revolutionary workers along the path of bourgeois-democratic institutions which always have served and always will serve the interests of the exploiting classes. Preventing the workers from realizing the rich lessons of the Russian Revolution, the Trotskyite leaders set up the errors of the past as Marxian principles, palming off the position abandoned by Lenin as a Leninist line supposedly unalterably held by Lenin. Real Leninists will warn the Indian and other toilers against falling into the Trotskyist trap. They will honestly admit that Lenin made an error in 1917 with respect to the question of the Constituent Assembly and that his later and final position on this question represents the actual position of Marxism today. They will repeat to the workers Lenin's words that in the wake of the Constituent Assembly there inevitably comes the White Guard dictatorship, that the Constituent Assembly and White Guardism are politically synonymous -- both representing the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

THE PRESENT MOMENT AND THE
TROTSKYITE BASIC LINE

INDIA is a social and political

volcano where subterranean rumblings are pointing to a possibility of a violent explosion. Normally, the situation in a country pregnant with revolution develops along the line of peasants' and workers' uprisings, and the formation of a Left bourgeois government labelled Provisional Government, Convention, or Constituent Assembly, which, if there is no genuine Marxist party to expose this government and lead the masses to a Council government, acts to enrench and intensify bourgeois reactions.

In the present complex situation the class struggle is moving along a line different from any in the past. On the one hand there is operating within the working class an opportunist force far more powerful than Social Democracy or Anarchism. This force is Stalinism. As long as this force is not exposed to the wide strata of the workers who mistake it for Leninism, the betrayal of the masses by this force aided by other opportunist tendencies is a foregone conclusion. The history of Germany 1923, China 1925-27, England 1926, Germany 1930-33, France 1934-37, and Spain 1931-39 proves that this is an iron law. Sheltered by the Stalinist "Comintern" bourgeois reaction grew in every revolutionary situation and crushed the masses under the bloody heel of Fascism.

It is in connection with this mighty pseudo-Bolshevik power that the Trotskyites represent a real danger, for their basic line is and has always been to give political aid and comfort to the policies of Stalin's Comintern. The Trotskyites are the chief scapegoat and the historical prop of the Stalinist bureaucracy because of Trotsky's participation in the original Stalinist conspiracy against Lenin and the workers.

On the other hand the bourgeoisie today is pursuing a different method of instituting the Fascist regime. No longer does it confine its tactics to the uprisings of generals like the Kornilov attempt in Russia, the Kapp putsch in Germany or the Franco rebellion in Spain. Nor is it able any longer to build over a period of years

a mass Fascist movement, as was the case of Germany. History dictates to the imperialists to act speedily and avoid a prolonged and dangerous civil war. Hence, the imperialists are resorting to a novel tactic - international Kornilevism. Fascism is brought in from the outside. By this tactic the French bourgeoisie spared itself an armed conflict with its workers and peasants which doubtless would have been of greater intensity than in Spain. Under the pretense of "war" with Nazi Germany, the gates of France were flung open and Hitler's Gestapo was brought in to crush the French masses and serve as a lever for establishing a French Fascist regime.

The Constituent Assembly slogan, definitely a trap for the Indian masses, for certain reasons may not be the most immediate danger. The danger that the Indian workers and peasants may soon face is being brought upon them from the outside. Fascist Japan is the policeman of the Pacific and Asia for world imperialism, and may be brought into India to crush the masses. Unless the masses are given to understand the real process of history, unless the new imperialist tactic of introducing Fascist military slavery from the outside is made plain to them, unless the pernicious influence of the opportunist forces which mislead and betray them is eliminated, the Indian masses will share the dreadful fate of the French, the Balkan, the East Indian and other workers and peasants.

By instilling into the minds of the revolutionary workers the illusion that the British imperialists are actually trying to hold off the Japanese Fascist army from entering India, the Trotskyites objectively only aid the world imperialists to bring their fascist policeman of Asia into India.

It is possible that the entire imperialist scheme of carrying on the class struggle against the toilers under the cloak of fighting among themselves will collapse. The Indian masses in a stormy upsurge may attempt to sweep away all exploitation and oppression. In that case, Stalinism, whose influence is felt everywhere

within the world proletariat, will inevitably push itself to the fore, as in every other revolutionary situation, and will bend all efforts to disrupt the revolution. Either through the Leftist policy of paralysis and puches or by means of a Rightist policy of forming some sort of bourgeois-democratic government and attaching the masses to it, as was done in Germany in 1923, in Spain and in France a few years ago. No matter what counter-revolutionary policy Stalin's "Comintern" will pursue, the Trotskyite slogan of Constituent Assembly will prove of help in confusing and disorienting the workers. One need only

recall Trotsky's support of the Socialist-Stalinist "workers" government in Saxony in 1923, his "critical" support to the Republican-Stalinist government in Spain in 1936-1939, his formula of a Blum-Cachin government.

Only through the exposure of the imperialist policy and the pseudo-Bolshevik betrayers within the proletarian camp can the advanced workers gather the elements for a new Marxist party and open a possibility of success for the impending Indian revolution.

SEND FOR A FREE COPY—

THE
TROTSKY SCHOOL
OF
FALSIFICATION
PART ONE

A Collection of seventeen articles published in past issues of THE BULLETIN in the section THE TROTSKY SCHOOL OF FALSIFICATION. Documented historical exposure of many aspects of Trotsky's support to the Stalin gang of renegades in betraying the working class. Vital material for an understanding of Trotsky's opportunist role in the Stalinist development.

Address:
P.O. Box 67
Station D.
New York

II.

THE WORKERS PARTY AND INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

THE Shachtmanite Workers Party follows in the footsteps of Cannon in exhuming the slogan of Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly in India is endowed by the Shachtmanites with no mean task — to liberate India from the domination of imperialism:

"We must struggle for a Constituent Assembly of the People, based upon universal suffrage — an Assembly whose first act should be to draft and proclaim the People's Declaration of Independence from British and all foreign rule." ("A Program for Indian Independence," Labor Action, March 23, 1942, p.3)

This is a clear case of the Shachtmanites shunting the workers off on the deadly path of bourgeois democracy. Spreading illusions about the Constituent Assembly, the Shachtmanites set for that bourgeois body a task which it could never perform. The liberation of India from all imperialism is and can only be the task of Soviets led by genuine proletarian revolutionaries. The parliamentary, bourgeois-democratic Constituent Assembly, if it is convened, will and can only serve to fortify the domination of imperialism. The Constituent Assembly will undoubtedly make a great demagogic noise about "national independence" and "democracy," but its real function will be to paralyze the masses and save the imperialists whose footmen and lackeys are the "Constituent" Indian bourgeoisie themselves.

"The Constituent Assembly is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie." Such was the dictum of the Second Congress of the Third International in the period of Lenin's leadership (see Thesis and Statutes of the 2nd Congress of the C.I., p. 64.). From such a dictatorship the masses of India can expect no kind of freedom whatever. The Indian bourgeoisie, a particularly servile and comprador type of parasitic class, fears more than anything to

lose the use of the club which British imperialism wields over the Indian masses. As long as the workers are not in power on a Soviet basis, all institutions of state will serve the interests of imperialism and its bourgeois and feudal hangers on.

The Shachtmanites make a to-do about "universal suffrage" in the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Here, too, is a specimen of the reformist illusions spread by the Shachtmanites. As if the degree of suffrage determines the class character of a state institution! The Russian Constituent Assembly was elected on the basis of universal suffrage. More, the elections were held after the bourgeoisie was already overthrown. Nevertheless, the Constituent Assembly represented the interests of imperialism. Only the Bolshevik-dominated Soviets rendered the workers and peasants a class service. This is the lesson of history which the workers must learn concerning the bourgeois-parliamentary Constituent Assembly.

No reliance on the "democratic" frauds invented by the bourgeoisie and palmed off as genuine by the opportunists! No fostering of illusions about the sham "democratic" institutions of capitalist rule! The Shachtmanite leaders, like the Cannonites, under the cover of phrases about "Councils," "universal suffrage," "mass pressure" and the like, are diverting the toilers from the path of the Soviet system directed by the revolutionary proletariat and supported by the peasant masses.

If the bourgeoisie convene a Constituent Assembly, the participation or non-participation of the Marxists in the elections will depend on the situation. In any case, their purpose can be no other than to expose the reactionary nature of the slogan of Constituent Assembly, show the bourgeois class essence of this body and fight for workers' and peasants' Councils and establishment of a proletarian State.

THE R.W.L. AND INDIA

ON THE SLOGAN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

NCE an objective investigation of the lessons of history has been made, the opportunist nature of the Trotskyist position on the slogan Constituent Assembly can be perceived by a trained political eye without great difficulty. Far more difficult of discernment is the opportunism inherent in the relation of the Revolutionary Workers League led by Cehler to the slogan of Constituent Assembly. To reveal it one must examine the R.W.L.'s method of handling this position.

In an article "Problems of the Indian Revolution" published in the R.W.L.'s International News of May 1940, the slogan was raised: "For a Constituent Assembly as a Subordinate Strategy to the Building of Soviets." Now the R.W.L. declares that it has modified this position. An article in International News of May 1942, "Social Forces in the Indian Revolution," states with reference to the 1940 article:

"The events of the past few weeks compel us to supplement the previous article and to modify it in one important respect."

What is the alteration based on "the events of the past few weeks" that the R. W. L. has wrought with regard to its position? Here it is:

"All talk about a 'Workers and Peasants State' or 'democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry' is vain, for the basic reason that the peasantry is incapable of pursuing an independent role. THIS leads to the modification to which we referred earlier. Under the conditions of a revolutionary situation, the former slogan of the Constituent Assembly (as an auxiliary to the struggle for workers and peasants councils) NOW becomes a reactionary slogan capable only of meeting the political needs of the Indian bourgeoisie and American

finance capital." (International News, May 1942. My capitals - G.M.)

Let us put two and two together and observe the move the R.W.L. has made. On the one hand it says in general that its modification in position was compelled by "the events of the past few weeks." On the other hand, it states specifically: "All talk about a 'Workers and Peasants State' or 'democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry' is vain, for the basic reason that the peasantry is incapable of pursuing an independent role, THIS leads to the modification to which we referred earlier." The R.W.L. definitely endeavors to give its readers the impression that something new and recent has occurred which has given it a new understanding and has led to the modification in position.

To anyone who has studied and understood the development of the R.W.L. this impression of having made some new discovery recently has a very peculiar air about it. As a matter of fact, the understanding about the "Workers and Peasants State," the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," and the incapability of the peasantry pursuing an independent role are very old stuff with the R.W.L. As far back as 1939, in its Draft Program, the R.W.L. threw the "Workers and Peasants State" and the "democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry" into the Stalin-Trotsky camp and repudiated them:-

"We reject in principle the Stalinist position of support of the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry, and the Trotskyist position of support to a Workers and Peasants Government as a 'transition' to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Between the Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat there can exist no other kind of state. The type of government both

the Stalinists and the Trotskyists refer to is a bourgeois government, a bourgeois state. We refuse any support to any such state." (Draft Program of the R.W.L., 1939, p. 47.)

As for the peasantry, in the same document the R.W.L. clearly showed that the peasantry could have no independent role, but could only follow either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie:

"Distrust the peasantry; organize separately from it; be ready for a struggle against it, inasmuch as it is a reactionary or anti-proletarian force; but attempt to work with it and win it over to proletarian revolution. For if the peasantry does not follow the workers it will follow the bourgeoisie. There is, there can be, no middle course." (Ibid., p. 49. My emphasis - G.M.)

Thus, all the knowledge which the R.W.L. now says compels it to discard the slogan of Constituent Assembly in India was thoroughly clear to the R.W.L. years ago.

But while in 1939 it completely had at its command all the understanding which it now says compels it to discard the slogan of Constituent Assembly for India, in 1939 in the same Draft Program, the R.W.L. posed the slogan of Constituent Assembly for backward countries into which category India falls:

"In the bourgeois revolutions Constituent Assemblies played important roles in furthering the democratic aims of the bourgeois revolution. There are countries today, however, in which the bourgeois revolution has not yet developed to any high level; the country is in a backward state where the agrarian carry-over, and the landowner domination tied up with finance capital, make possible the utilization of friction between the national bourgeoisie and landowners, and the proletariat and peasantry. In such countries the proletariat can advance the demand

for the Constituent Assembly as a PURELY AUXILIARY slogan." (Ibid. p. 51. My emphasis-G.M. Caps. in original.)

And what is more, concretely, the R.W.L. advanced the slogan of Constituent Assembly for India! "For A Constituent Assembly as a subordinate Strategy to the Building of Soviets" was their slogan in their article, "Problems of the Indian Revolution" (International News, May 1940, p. 10)

Observe the self-contradiction of the R.W.L. position:- The same knowledge at one time is compatible with, and at another time incompatible with the slogan of Constituent Assembly! While the R.W.L. in modifying its position on Constituent Assembly refers to a specific article on India, it leaves unaltered its position on Constituent Assembly in general as established in its Draft Program of 1939. Since the R.W.L. is now telling the workers that its understanding of the "Workers and Peasants State," the "democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry," and the incapability of the peasantry to pursue an independent role, is the reason for discarding the slogan of Constituent Assembly, and since it had this same understanding when its Draft program was issued, that document is obviously a mess of self-contradiction for it retains the slogan of Constituent Assembly.

Very obviously, it was not any understanding about the "Workers and Peasants State," or about the "democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry" or about the incapability of the peasantry to pursue an independent role which led to the R.W.L.'s modification of its position on the slogan of Constituent Assembly in India. And the story about "the events of the past few weeks" with its air of having made a great new discovery may likewise be taken with a grain of salt.

THE SOURCE OF R.W.L.'S GYRATIONS

REALLY to grasp the origin of the

R. W. L.'s gyrations, the relation of that group to the Trotsky organization must be understood.

It so happens that the leaders of the R.W.L. having been with Trotsky for a few years up to 1934, but having opposed Trotsky in 1934 on the so-called French Turn, tell the workers that Trotsky was a Marxist up to the time he introduced the French Turn. In July 1930, when Oehler, the leader of the R.W.L. was already a member of Trotsky's organization, the Trotskyite Militant issued the slogan of Constituent Assembly for India. At that time Trotsky, in his policy of giving "critical" support to Stalin's "Comintern," advocated the slogan of Constituent Assembly:-

"The Indian Communist Party, the creation of which was held back for six years - and what years! - is now deprived, in the circumstances of revolutionary democratic ascent, of one of the most important weapons for mobilizing the masses, precisely the slogan of the democratic Constituent Assembly." (L.D. Trotsky, Militant, July 12, 1930, p. 5.)

As we have said, the leaders of the R.W.L. persist in the story that Trotsky in those days was still a Marxist. The slogan Constituent Assembly, therefore, had to be regarded by them in some way or other as a Marxist slogan. After breaking with Trotsky organizationally, they were constrained to introduce it into their Program.

The leaders of the R.W.L. for years have been supporting this slogan. But after separating from the Trotsky organization they realized that almost on every Trotskyist position which they held it was necessary for them to insert some Left "modification" or at least a loophole to give the impression of a fundamental difference with the Trotskyites. Thus, in the Draft Program they put in a precautionary loophole which would allow them to introduce a "modification" whenever they saw fit, any time, anywhere:

"The slogan of Constituent Assembly is an auxiliary action to win allies and must be concretized in each given situation. Even in some backward countries at certain periods it would not be advisable to advance the slogan; it may be advisable to boycott." (Ibid. p. 51.)

We see that the "mystery" for "modification" of the slogan is being gradually dispelled. All these excuses about "The events of the past few weeks," the "Workers and Peasants State," the "democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry," and the incapability of the peasantry to pursue an independent role are only blinds which, when removed, leave bare the fact that the ground for introducing the "modification" had been laid out years in advance with an eye to future requirements for "differentiating" the R.W.L. from the Cannon and Shachtman outfit.

The whole business has all the earmarks of a typical factional maneuver. For it is quite clear that since the basis for "modification" existed all along and that the story of "the events of the past few weeks" and the sudden discovery of the role of the peasantry, the "Workers and Peasants State," and the "democratic dictatorship" is flimsy and ridiculous, it is obvious that something else is behind the "modification." The leaders of the R.W.L. who keep up a pretense of being different from the Trotskyites, are constantly faced with the need to fabricate "differences" with the Trotskyites from the Left. In consequence, in the eyes of disappointed Trotskyite workers, the R.W.L. may appear as a Marxist organization. On the slogan Constituent Assembly the R.W.L. for years had the same line as Cannon's organization. Today Cannon in noisy headlines splashes before the workers the slogan Constituent Assembly for India. The R.W.L. advanced this slogan for India in May 1940. Now the leaders of the R.W.L. evidently have decided that the time has arrived to make use of the loophole they prepared years in advance and differentiate themselves from Cannon. Incident-

ally, as will be observed, the loophole, containing the indefinite phrases such as "may be advisable" can be used for advancing the slogan for other countries. Since a reason had to be given for using the loophole, the story was presented of "the events of a few past weeks" and "All talk about a 'Workers and Peasants' State' or 'democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry' is vain for the basic reason that the peasantry is incapable of pursuing an independent role. THIS leads to the modification to which was referred earlier."

The decided lack of a straightforward, unequivocal statement that

the slogan Constituent Assembly was reactionary at the time they originally advocated it, the offering of flimsy reasons for "modifying" the slogan, the inconsistencies and contradictions that are so evident in the political work of the R.W.L. inspire no confidence in that organization and bode no good to the workers' cause from that quarter. People who glibly shift away from a position for factional interests and with fabricated reasons can readopt that position or a variant of it just as easily, since principled considerations play no part in such maneuvers.

George Marlen
April, 1942

FREE BACK ISSUES

THE BULLETIN

A Genuine Weapon For Those Who Seek To Build
A New Revolutionary Party. An Ideological
Rallying Ground For A Struggle Against Every
Form Of Reaction.

Address:
P.O. Box 67
Station D.
New York

WHEN BUROCRATS QUARREL

THE internal faction fights in the American Trotsky movement have brought to light considerable interesting material bearing on the political character of the leaders of the several factions. One such document is a series of articles by J. P. Cannon, "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party," in which Cannon defends himself against the attacks of the Shachtman group in the 1940 period.

Amongst the outstanding charges of the Shachtmanites against Cannon was that his organizational methods in the Socialist Workers Party were marked by Stalinist bureaucratism. In defending himself against this charge, Cannon with great approval quoted a declaration by Shachtman made in 1935 when the latter was still in close alliance with Cannon. Shachtman at that time, during an internal factional struggle, tried to prove that there was no element of Stalinism in the organization led by Cannon. To do this Shachtman shifted the question from the concrete organizational situation in the American Trotsky group to some very general factors of class relationships. The passage which Cannon in 1940 quoted so approvingly gave what was purported to be an historical argument. For illustration Shachtman argued that the tendency which Lenin attacked in Stalin was not purely his organizational tendency, but rather Stalin's reactionary reflection of certain class relations in Soviet Russia. From Lenin's statement in the Testament that the rule of the proletariat is based on the collaboration of two classes (workers and peasants), Shachtman somehow drew the conclusion that "This creates the whole environ-

ment for the growth of a Soviet Bureaucracy." Such a class basis for Stalinist bureaucratism, argued Shachtman, did not exist in the American Trotsky movement, and moreover in light of the fact that vast material power such as Stalinism has was also lacking, it was infantile to speak of Stalinist bureaucratism in the American Trotsky group (in 1935 called the Workers Party). Although the passage from Shachtman which Cannon quotes is very lengthy, we must reproduce it in full, with Cannon's introductory remarks:-

"In an article entitled, 'The Question of "Organization Methods," signed by Shachtman under the date of July 30, 1935, and published in the Workers Party Internal Bulletin, No. 1, he answers the argument about "Stalinism" as follows:

"'But then (it is now argued by some), didn't Lenin launch a struggle against Stalin purely because of the latter's organizational methods, his rudeness and disloyalty, and propose on those grounds to remove him from his post? To this reference is added the broad insinuation that we here constitute a similar bureaucracy, with similar methods, who must be fought as mercilessly as Lenin and Trotsky fought Stalin.

"'The analogy does not even limp because it hasn't a leg to stand on. It is of the most superficial nature and betrays a failure to understand the problem of the Stalinist bureaucracy and Lenin's attitude towards its central figure. (1) It is not true that Lenin op-

posed Stalin solely on organizational grounds. The famous testament is prefaced by the significant observation that the rule of the proletariat is based upon a collaboration of two classes. This creates the whole environment for the growth of a Soviet Bureaucracy. This bureaucracy, in the period of its degeneration, in the midst of a constantly self-reproducing capitalism, represents the pressure of alien classes. Because of this fact, the bureaucracy tends more and more to bear down upon the proletarian kernel of the country; it shows an increasing contempt for it and a growing inclination to lean upon enemy classes. Stalin was the personification of this bureaucratic tendency. If the testament is read in connection with the noted articles and letters Lenin wrote shortly before his death, the political and class connection will become apparent. If nothing is learned from the testament except that "Stalin is rude - remove him!" - then, indeed, nothing has been learned. (2) The bureaucracy in the Soviet Union is a social phenomenon. It has deep roots in Russia's past and present historical development. It has close class connections. It has tremendous material and intellectual power at its disposal - power to corrupt, to degenerate, to undermine the proletarian base of the Union. To speak of our pitiful little "bureaucracy" in the Workers' Party - or any section of it - in the same breath with the Stalinist bureaucracy, can be excused only on the grounds of political infantilism." (J. P. Cannon, Internal Bulletin, S.W.P. April 1940, p. 19. My emphasis J.C.H.)

Cannon recommends careful study of this argument of Shachtman's:-

"That quotation deserves study by the comrades in the party who want to probe to the bottom of this light-minded talk about 'Stalinism' in connection with the regime in our party. The whole paragraph deserves study line by line and word by word." (Ibid.)

Shachtman's effort in 1935 to shift the argument from the factor of specific organizational situation to some general factor of class relations is a very typical performance. This maneuver is worthy of some study, for the real nature of Stalinist bureaucratism, its origin, growth, purpose and outcome are involved, as well as the political methods of Shachtman and Cannon.

Shachtman tried to give the impression that in the Testament Lenin did not attack Stalin for purely organizational reasons. Shachtman makes it appear that in the Testament Lenin based his approach to Stalin on the grounds of some general class relations, that Lenin considered the growth of bureaucratism, as personified by Stalin, to be fostered by these general class relations. It is with this purpose that Shachtman states:- "The famous testament is prefaced by the significant observation that the rule of the proletariat is based upon a collaboration of two classes. This creates the whole environment for the growth of a Soviet Bureaucracy." This was Shachtman's fundamental premise in shifting the problem from the specific organization question to general class relations.

Shachtman's linking — with Cannon's approval — of the growth of the bureaucracy which Stalin personified with the rule of the proletariat resting on the collaboration of two classes (workers and peasants) sounds very "Marxist," especially to those who do not know Lenin's actual position. An investigation of what Lenin actually said in the Testament will reveal that Lenin's position was the exact opposite of the picture Shachtman painted and Cannon quoted later to support himself.

Lenin observed the growth of Stalinism at its initial stages and tried to prepare a struggle against it. By 1923, when the Testament was completed, Stalinist bureaucratism was already highly developed. As a result of the bureaucratic machinations afoot behind the scenes, a split was threatening in the Central Committee and in

the Party, so it seemed to Lenin. Did Lenin link this situation with the factor of the collaboration of the two classes? An affirmative answer is what would follow from the Shachtman-Cannon argument. The concrete, specific statement of Lenin's Testament, on the other hand, constitutes unequivocally an answer in the negative. Lenin unceremoniously pushed aside what Shachtman-Cannon pretended were the primary factors in Lenin's estimation. Here are Lenin's words quoted from the Testament as published many years ago by the Trotskyites themselves:

"Our party rests upon two classes, and for that reason its instability is possible, and if there cannot exist an agreement between such classes its fall is inevitable. In such an event it would be useless to take any measures or in general to discuss the stability of our Central Committee. In such an event no measures would prove capable of preventing a split. BUT I TRUST THAT IS TOO REMOTE A FUTURE, AND TOO IMPROBABLE AN EVENT, TO TALK ABOUT." (The Suppressed Testament of Lenin, Pioneer Publishers, 1935, p. 5. My capitals-J.C.H.)

Clearly, the split due to bureaucratism which Lenin thought threatened in the Central Committee and the Party had nothing to do with the collaboration of the two classes. A split on the basis of class disagreement, Lenin held, was "too remote a future, and too improbable an event, to talk about."

Since, contrary to the pretenses of Shachtman-Cannon, it was not a matter of class factors, what, then, did Lenin have in mind when he dealt in the Testament with the situation in the Central Committee and the Party? The next paragraph of the Testament answers this in unmistakable words. Lenin had in mind considerations "of a purely personal character" as influencing the near future:-

"I have in mind stability as a guarantee against a split in the near future, and I intend to examine here a series of consider-

ations of a purely personal character." (Ibid., My emphasis-J.C.H.)

In the next paragraph Lenin stated that the fundamental factor was the relations between two specific persons, and proposed as a remedy a purely organizational alteration:-

"I think that the fundamental factor in the matter of stability - from this point of view - is such members of the Central Committee as Stalin and Trotsky. The relation between them constitutes, in my opinion, a big half of the danger of that split, which might be avoided, and the avoidance of which might be promoted in my opinion by raising the number of members of the Central Committee to fifty or one hundred." (Ibid. My emphasis - J. C. H.)

The character of the remedy proposed by Lenin is in itself, even disregarding his direct denial of a class basis for the split he believed impending, a proof that Lenin did not have in mind some general class factors, but was motivated exclusively by certain specific organizational factors. Notice Lenin's proposed remedy - to raise the number of members of the Central Committee to fifty or one hundred. This was tied up with the relations of two Central Committee members, Stalin and Trotsky, with personal relations, Lenin explicitly indicated. If the situation in the Central Committee were based on class factors, such a remedy would have been fantastic and infantile, since numbers make no difference where fundamental political lines are involved. Obviously, Lenin had in mind to dilute the power of the members of the Central Committee, or at least of certain members.

The next sentence of the Testament reveals more in detail precisely what was in Lenin's mind. Stalin has too much power; he does not wield it well:

"Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution." (Ibid.)

In relation to the actual situation, these words, of course, were very mild, but they show what Lenin viewed as the crux of the situation.

The following portions of the Testament continue with personal evaluations of various members of the Central Committee. Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and Piatakov are weighed in the balance.

The postscript of the Testament attacks Stalin for rudeness, impatience, lack of loyalty, impoliteness, inconsiderateness and capriciousness. Again, Lenin proposed a purely organizational change, the removal of Stalin from the post of General Secretary as a means of preventing the split Lenin thought was in the offing.

It is clear that Lenin purposely stated that a split based on disturbed class relations was too remote even to talk about so as not to leave any doubt that he had in mind precisely personal and organizational matters, not general class relations. It is a remarkable fact that in the Testament, which was intended as a blow against Stalinist bureaucratism, the entire subject matter consists of a discussion of individuals. The reason is that this is how the problem of the growth of Stalinist bureaucratism appeared to Lenin.

The Testament shows unmistakably that the essence of the question of Stalinism was the question of power, the power which had become concentrated in the hands of the bureaucrats. Stalinism arose as, and consisted of, a criminal usurpation of power by certain corrupted individuals in the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. These individuals represented themselves, i.e., their own bureaucratic, careerist interests. A number of years before, as revolutionaries, they had helped to establish a Workers State. But they degenerated, and from revolutionaries they were transformed into careerists devoted not to revolution and socialism but solely to their personal power, privilege, position, and prestige. These renegades did not act as the agents of either the proletariat or the peasant-

ry. The careerists feared the workers and peasants who were foes of bureaucratism. They feared Lenin who was preparing a battle against the whole conniving clique. And they also feared the bourgeoisie who were striving to destroy the Soviet republic which was the material basis of the bureaucrats' careerism. The usurpers, in need of a political machine, deliberately built their bureaucracy through the method of bribery, job distribution and wire-pulling, to fortify their power and position against the toilers. Dreading the advance and spread of the proletarian revolution - (we speak of the period of 1922-1923) - which they knew to be a threat to bureaucratism, they deliberately introduced reactionary policies for the express purpose of strengthening their own usurped power against the toilers. In 1923 they purposely betrayed the German revolution to safeguard their usurped power. Such treacherous policies, historically, operated in the interests of the bourgeoisie, but this was an indirect result, for the careerists' primary concern was their own power, not the needs of this or that class.

It was no accident that Lenin expressly declared against vague prattle about general class relations in discussing the rising Stalinist danger. The crux of the problem was the bureaucratic degeneration of certain individuals in the Central Committee. Stalin had shown his hand far more than anyone else, and was therefore singled out as the most immediate menace.

Class relations are, of course, of basic importance for an understanding of historical, economic and political developments. Events occur in the context of class relations. Thus, the Stalinist usurpers, while representing their own, individual, careerist interests, functioned historically in the interests of the imperialists. It is only in this way that the factor of general class relations enters into the problem of the rise of Stalinism. But to talk, like Shachtman-Cannon, in general terms about class relations in connection with the origin and rise of Stalinism is to conceal the specific individual corruption and degeneration

of the various Bolshevnik leaders which was the real origin of Stalinism.

Shachtman in 1935, for his own careerist interests, wanted to conceal the concrete burocratism of the specific individuals of the Cannon machine, of which Shachtman was at that time a part. Hence in giving an "historical example," the case of Stalin, Shachtman introduced his general talk about class relations and pushed out of view the factor of personal and organizational degeneration. This is a political trick common to burocrats who are striving to hide their burocratism — to talk it out of existence with vague chatter about "class relations." This distracts the attention of the workers from the actual problem, the specific burocratism of the opportunist organizations, and shunts them off to "theoretical" discussions. Meanwhile the swindlers at the top continue their burocratic practices.

When Shachtman in 1940 raised the cry against Cannon of Stalinist burocratism, he was telling some truth on this score at least. This was a case

of "the Devil quoting Scripture." Shachtman, naturally, concealed the fact that he himself, for years the ally of Cannon, was a prime builder of the burocratic Cannon machine. Shachtman's fraudulent argument about Lenin's Testament and "class relations" is only one example of the demagogic trickery used by Shachtman to protect the Cannon outfit while he was a part of it. Only Shachtman's factional, careerist effort to create a group of his own led him to start a rumpus about Cannon's Stalinist tendency and to concoct "political differences" with Cannon.

Cannon in 1940 had the same purpose as Shachtman in 1935. Anxious to conceal the specific character of his leadership — its burocratism, its careerism — Cannon quoted Shachtman's convenient "theoretical" fabrications.

This is inevitably the outcome of the faction fights of burocrats who pose as Leninist revolutionaries. Falsification, distortion and deception are their methods. Self-exposure is the penalty they have to pay.

J. C. Hunter

F R E E Copies

T H E P O L I T I C A L M O R A L S
O F T H E
T R O T S K Y I T E L E A D E R S

Unmasking the pretensions of the Cannons and Shachtmans and of their "inspirer," Trotsky, whose fraudulent efforts to appear infallible are only one symptom of their essentially Stalinist character.

Address:
P.O.Box 67
Station D₄
New York.