

For Members Only

INTERNAL BULLETIN

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JOINT STATEMENT ON PARTY UNITY

(Unanimously adopted by the Political Committee
at its meeting held November 7, 1939)

In view of the fears expressed by some comrades that the present internal discussion can lead to a split, either as a result of expulsions by a majority or the withdrawal of a minority, the leading representatives of both sides declare:

(1) It is necessary to regulate the discussion in such a way as to eliminate the atmosphere of split and reassure the party members that the unity of the party will be maintained. Toward this end both sides agree to eliminate from the discussion all threats of split or expulsions.

(2) The issues in dispute must be clarified and resolved by normal democratic processes within the framework of the party and the Fourth International. After the necessary period of free discussion, if the two sides cannot come to agreement, the questions in dispute are to be decided by a party convention, without, on the one side, any expulsions because of opinions defended in the pre-convention discussion, or any withdrawals on the other side.

(3) Both sides obligate themselves to loyal collaboration in the daily work of the party during the period of the discussion.

(4) The internal bulletin is to be jointly edited by two editors, one from each side.

(5) A parity commission of four -- two from each side -- is to be constituted. The function of the parity commission is to investigate all organization complaints, grievances, threats, accusations, or violations of discipline which may arise out of the discussion and report same to the Political Committee with concrete recommendations.

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SPEECH ON THE RUSSIAN QUESTION

By James P. Cannon

(New York Membership Meeting, October 15, 1939)

The Russian question is with us once again, as it has been at every critical turning point of the International labor movement since November 7, 1917. And there is nothing strange in that. The Russian question is no literary exercise to be taken up or cast aside according to the mood of the moment. The Russian question has been and remains the question of the revolution. The Russian Bolsheviks on November 7, 1917, once and for all, took the question of the workers revolution out of the realm of abstraction and give it flesh and blood reality.

It was said once of a book -- I think it was Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" -- "Who touches this book, touches a man." In the same sense it can also be said, "Who touches the Russian question, touches a revolution." Therefore, be serious about it. Don't play with it.

The October Revolution put socialism on the order of the day throughout the world. It revived and shaped and developed the revolutionary labor movement of the world out of the bloody chaos of the war. The Russian revolution showed in practice, by example, how the workers' revolution is to be made. It revealed in life the role of the party. It showed in life what kind of a party the workers must have. By its victory, and its reorganization of the social system, the Russian revolution has proven for all time the superiority of nationalized property and planned economy over capitalist private property, and planless competition and anarchy in production.

The question of the Russian revolution -- and the Soviet state which is its creation -- has drawn a sharp dividing line through the labor movement of all countries for 22 years. The attitude taken toward the Soviet Union throughout all these years has been the decisive criterion separating the genuine revolutionary tendency from all shades and degrees of waverers, backsliders and capitulators to the pressure of the bourgeois world, -- the Mensheviks, Social Democrats, Anarchists and Syndicalists, Centrists, Stalinists.

The main source of division in our own ranks for the past ten years, since the Fourth Internationalist tendency took organized form on the International field, has been the Russian question. Our tendency, being a genuine, that is, orthodox, Marxist tendency from A to Z, has always proceeded on the Russian question from theoretical premises to political conclusions for action. Of course, it is only when political conclusions are drawn out to the end that differences on the Russian question reach an unbearable acuteness and permit no ambiguity or compromise. Conclusions on the Russian question lead directly to positions on such issues as war and revolution, defense and defeatism. Such issues, by their very nature, admit no unclarity, no compromise, because it is a matter of taking sides! One must be on one side or another in war and revolution.

But if the lines are drawn only when political conclusions diverge, that does not at all signify that we are indifferent to theo-

retical premises. He is a very poor Marxist, -- better say, no Marxist at all -- who takes a careless or tolerant attitude toward theoretical premises. The political conclusions of Marxists proceed from theoretical analyses and are constantly checked and regulated by them. That is the only way to assure a firm and consistent policy.

To be sure, we do not decline cooperation, and even collaboration in one party, with people who agree with our political conclusions from different premises. For example, the Bolsheviks accepted the cooperation of the left S.R.s to carry through the October revolution contrary to the S.R. program. The Bolsheviks were not deterred by the fact that the left S.R.s were inconsistent. As Trotsky remarked in this connection, "If we wait till everything is right in everybody's head there will never be any successful revolutions in this world," (or words to that effect.) Just the same, for our part we want everything right in our own heads. We have no reason whatever to slur over theoretical formulae which are expressed in "terminology." As Trotsky says, in theoretical matters "we must keep our house clean."

Our position on the Russian question is programmatic. In brief: The theoretical analysis - a degenerated Workers' State. The political conclusion - unconditional defense against external attack of imperialists or internal attempts at capitalist restoration.

Defensism and Defeatism are two principle, that is, irreconcilable, positions. They are not determined by arbitrary choice but by class interests.

No party in the world ever succeeded in harboring these two antipathetic tendencies for any great length of time. The contradiction is too great. Division all over the world ultimately took place along this line. Defensists at home were defeatists on Russia. Defensists on Russia were defeatists at home.

The degeneration of the Soviet state under Stalin has been analyzed at every step by the Bolshevik-Leninists and only by them. A precise attitude has been taken at every stage. The guiding lines of the revolutionary Marxist approach to the question have been:

See the reality and see it whole at every stage; never surrender any position before it is lost; the worst of all capitulators is the one who capitulates before the decisive battle.

The International Left Opposition which originated in 1923 as an opposition in the Russian party (the original nucleus of the Fourth International) has always taken a precise attitude on the Russian question. In the first stages of the degeneration of which the Stalinist bureaucracy was the banner bearer the opposition considered it possible to rectify matters by methods of reform through the change of regime in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Later, when it became clearer that the Communist Party of Lenin had been irremediably destroyed, and after it became manifest that the reactionary bureaucracy could be removed only by Civil war, the Fourth International, standing as before on its analysis of the Soviet Union as a workers' state, came out for a political revolution.

All the time throughout this entire period of 16 years the Bolshevik-Leninists have stoutly maintained, in the face of all slander and persecution, that they were the firmest defenders of the workers' state and that in the hour of danger they would be in the front ranks of its defense. We always said the moment of danger will find the Fourth Internationalists at their posts, defending the conquests of the great revolution without ceasing for a moment our struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Now that the hour of danger is at hand--now that the long-awaited war is actually knocking at the door--it would be very strange if the Fourth International should renege on its oft-repeated pledge.

Throughout all this long period of Soviet degeneration since the death of Lenin, the Fourth Internationalists, analysing the now phenomenon of a degenerating workers' state at every turn, striving to comprehend its complications and contradictions, to recognize and defend all the progressive features of the contradictory processes and to reject the reactionary--during all this long time we have been beset at every new turn of events by the impatient demands of "radicals" to simplify the question. Thrown off balance by the crimes and betrayals of Stalin, they lost sight of the new system of economy which Stalin had not destroyed and could not destroy.

We always firmly rejected these premature announcements that everything was lost and that we must begin all over again. At each stage of development, at each new revelation of Stalinist infamy and treachery, some group or other broke away from the Fourth International because of its "conservatism" on the Russian question. It would be interesting, if we had the time, to call the roll of these groupings which one after another left our ranks to pursue an ostensibly more "revolutionary" policy on the Russian question. Did they develop an activity more militant, more revolutionary, than ours? Did they succeed in creating a new movement and in attracting newly awakened workers and those breaking from Stalinism? In no case.

If we were to call the roll of these ultra-radical groups it would present a devastating picture indeed. Those who did not fall into complete political passivity became reconciled in one form or another to bourgeois democracy. Of course, none of us wants to associate the comrades who are again reopening the Russian question with those who in the past have posed the question in such an extreme form and with such sad results. Nevertheless, the experiences of the past should teach us all a salutary caution, and even, if you please, "conservatism", in approaching any proposal to revise the program of the Fourth International on the Russian question. While all the innovators fell by the wayside, the Fourth International alone retained its programmatic firmness. It grew and developed and remained the only genuine revolutionary current in the labor movement of the world. Without a firm position on the Russian question our movement also would inevitably have shared the fate of the others.

The mighty power of the October revolution is shown by the vitality of its conquests. The nationalized property and the planned economy stood up under all the difficulties and pressures of the capitalist encirclement and all the blows of a reactionary bureaucracy at home. In the Soviet Union, despite the monstrous mismanagement of the bureaucracy, we saw a tremendous development of the

productive forces--and in a backward country at that--while capitalist world economy declined. Conclusion: Nationalized and planned economy, made possible by a revolution that overthrew the capitalists and landlords, is infinitely superior, more progressive. It shows the way forward. Don't give it up before it is lost! Cling to it and defend it!

On the Russian question there are only two really independent forces in the world. Two forces who think about the question independently because they base themselves, their thoughts, their analysis and their conclusions, on fundamental class considerations. These two independent forces are:

(1) The conscious vanguard of the world bourgeoisie, the statesmen of both democratic and fascist imperialism.

(2) The conscious vanguard of the world proletariat, the Fourth International.

Between them it is not simply a case of two opinions on the Russian question, but rather of two camps. All those who in the past rejected the conclusions of the Fourth International, have almost invariably fallen into the service of the imperialists, through Stalinism, social and liberal democracy, or passivity, a form of service. * (insert): and broke with our movement on that account,

The standpoint of the world bourgeoisie is a class standpoint. They proceed, as we do, from fundamental class considerations. They want to maintain world capitalism. This determines their fundamental antagonism to the U.S.S.R. They appreciate the reactionary work of Stalin, but consider it incomplete, insofar as he has not restored capitalist private property.

Their fundamental attitude determines an inevitable attempt at the start of the war, or during it, to attack Russia, overthrow the nationalized economy, restore a capitalist regime, smash the foreign trade monopoly, open up the Soviet Union as a market and field of investments, transform Russia into a great colony, and thereby alleviate the crisis of world capitalism.

The standpoint of the Fourth International is based on the same fundamental class considerations. Only we draw opposite conclusions, from an opposite class standpoint.

Purely sentimental motivations, speculation without fundamental class premises, so-called "fresh ideas" with no programmatic basis--all this is out of place in a party of Marxists. We want to advance the world revolution of the proletariat. This determines our attitude and approach to the Russian question. True, we want to see reality, but we are not disinterested observers and commentators. We do not examine the Russian revolution and what remains of its great conquests as though it were a bug under a glass. We have an interest! We take part in the fight! At each stage in the development of the Soviet Union, its advances and its degeneration, we seek the basis for revolutionary action. We want to advance the world revolution, overthrow capitalism, establish Socialism. The Soviet Union is an important and decisive question on this line.

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Our standpoint on the Russian question is written into our program. It is not a new question for us. It is 22 years old. We have followed its evolution, both progressive and retrogressive, at every stage. We have discussed it and taken our position anew at every stage of its progressive development and its degeneration. And, what is most important, we have always acted on our conclusions.

The Soviet Union emerged from the October revolution as a workers state. As a result of the backwardness and poverty of the country and the delay of the world revolution, a conservative bureaucracy emerged and triumphed, destroyed the party and bureaucratized the economy. However, this same bureaucracy still operates on the basis of the nationalized property established by the revolution. That is the decisive question for our evaluation of the question.

If we see the Soviet Union for what it really is, a gigantic labor organization which has conquered one-sixth of the earth's surface, we will not be so ready to abandon it because of our hatred of the crimes and abominations of the bureaucracy. Do we turn our backs on a trade union because it falls into the control of bureaucrats and traitors? Ultra-leftists have frequently made this error, but always with bad results, sometimes with reactionary consequences.

We recall the case of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union here in New York. The bureaucrats of this union were about as vile a gang of labor liars and lackeys of the capitalist class as could be found. In the struggle against the left-wing in the middle twenties they conspired with the bosses and the A.F. of L. fakers. They expelled the left-wing locals and used hired thugs to fight them and to break their strikes. The difference between them and Stalin was only a matter of opportunity and power. Driven to revolt against the crimes of these bureaucrats the left-wing, under the influence of the Communist Party in the days of its third period frenzy, labelled the union -- not merely its treacherous bureaucracy -- as a company union.

But this same company union, under the pressure of the workers in its ranks and the increasing intensity of the class struggle, was forced to call a strike to defend itself against the "imperialist" attack of the bosses. Workers who had kept their heads supported ("defended") the strike against the bosses. But the Stalinists, trapped by their own hastily improvised theory, having already denounced the union as a company union, renounced support ("defense") of the strike. They denounced it as a "fake" strike. Thus their ill-considered radicalism led them to a reactionary position. They were denounced, and rightly, throughout the needle trades market as strike breakers. To this day they suffer the discredit of this reactionary action.

To defend the Soviet Union as a gigantic labor organization against the attacks of its class enemies does not mean to defend each and every action of its bureaucracy or each and every action of the Red Army which is an instrument of the bureaucracy. To impute such a "totalitarian" concept of defense to the Fourth International is absurd. Nobody here will deny defense of a bonafide trade union, no matter how reactionary its bureaucracy. But that does not prevent us from discriminating between actions of the bureaucracy which involve a defense of the union against the bosses and other actions which are aimed against the workers.

The United Mine Workers of America is a great labor organization which we all support. But it is headed by a thorough-going scoundrel and agent of the master class who also differs from Stalin only in the degrees of power and opportunity. In my own personal experience some years ago, I took part in a strike of the Kansas miners which was directed against the enforcement of a reactionary labor law, known as the Kansas Industrial Court Law, a law forbidding strikes. This was a thoroughly progressive action on the part of the Kansas miners and their president, Alex Howat. Howat and the other local officials were thrown into jail. While they were in jail, John L. Lewis, as president of the national organization, sent his agents into the Kansas fields to sign an agreement with the bosses over the head of the officers of the Kansas district. He supplied strike breakers and thugs and money to break the strike while the legitimate officers of the union lay in jail for a good cause. Every militant worker in the country denounced this treacherous strike-breaking action of Lewis. But did we therefore renounce support ("defense") of the national union of mine workers? Yes, some impatient revolutionaries did, and thereby completely disoriented themselves in the labor movement. The United Mine Workers retained its character as a labor organization and only last spring came into conflict with the coal operators on a national scale. I think you all recall that in this contest our press gave "unconditional defense" to the miners' union despite the fact that strike-breaker Lewis remained its president.

The Longshoremen's union of the Pacific Coast is a bonafide organization of workers, headed by a Stalinist of an especially unattractive type, a pocket edition of Stalin named Bridges. This same Bridges led a squad of misguided longshoremen through a picket line of the Sailor's Union in a direct attempt to break up this organization. I think all of you recall that our press scathingly denounced this contemptible action of Bridges. But if the Longshoremen's union, headed by Bridges, which is at this moment conducting negotiations with the bosses, is compelled to resort to strike action, what stand shall we take? Any ordinary class conscious worker, let alone an educated Marxist, will be on the picket line with the Longshoremen's union or "defending" it by some other means.

Why is it so difficult for some of our comrades, including some of those who are very well educated in the formal sense, to understand the Russian question? I am very much afraid it is because they do not think of it in terms of struggle. We have some comrades who do not as yet fully understand that discussion amongst us is designed to find the basis for revolutionary action.

From all indications, the proletarian centers of the party are standing absolutely firm on the Russian question. It is strikingly evident that the workers, especially the more experienced workers who have taken part in trade unions, strikes, etc., understand the Russian question much better than the more educated scholastics. From their experiences in the struggle they know what is meant when the Soviet Union is compared to a trade union that has fallen into bad hands. And everyone who has been through a couple of strikes which underwent crises and came to the brink of disaster, finally to emerge victorious, understands what is meant when one says: No position must be surrendered until it is irrevocably lost.

I, personally, have seen the fate of more than one strike determined by the will or lack of will of the leadership to struggle at a critical moment. All our trade union successes in Minneapolis stem back directly to a fateful week in 1934 when the leaders refused to call off the strike, which to all appearances was hopelessly defeated, and persuaded the strike committee to hold out a while longer. In that intervening time a break a break occurred in the ranks of the bosses; this in turn paved the way for a compromise settlement and eventually victorious advance of the whole union.

How strange it is that some people analyze the weakness and defects in a workers' organization so closely that they do not always take into account the weakness in the camp of the enemy, which may easily more than counter-balance.

In my own agitation among strikers at dark moments of a strike I have frequently resorted to the analogy of two men engaged in a physical fight. When one gets tired and apparently at the end of his resources he should never forget that the other fellow is maybe just as tired or even more so. In that case the one who holds out will prevail. Looked at in this way a worn-out strike can sometimes be carried through to a compromise or a victory by the resolute will of its leadership. We have seen this happen more than once. Why should we deny the Soviet Union, which is not yet exhausted, the same rights?

We have had many discussions on the Russian question in the past. It has been the central and decisive question for us, as for every political tendency in the labor movement. That, I repeat, is because it is nothing less than the question of the revolution at various stages of its progressive development or degeneration. We are, in fact, the party of the Russian revolution. We have been the people, and the only people, who have had the Russian revolution in their program and in their blood. That is also the main reason why the Fourth International is the only revolutionary tendency in the whole world. A false position on the Russian question would have destroyed our movement as it destroyed all others.

Two years ago we once again conducted an extensive discussion on the Russian question. The almost unanimous conclusion of the party was written into the program of our first Convention:

- (1) The Soviet Union, on the basis of its nationalized property and planned economy, the fruit of the revolution, remains a workers' state, though in a degenerated form.
- (2) As such, we stand, as before, for the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack.
- (3) The best defense -- the only thing that can save the Soviet Union in the end by solving its contradictions -- is the international revolution of the proletariat.
- (4) In order to regenerate the workers' state we stand for the overthrow of the bureaucracy by a political revolution.

But, say our critics, "Defense of the Soviet Union and Russia is a Workers' State -- those two phrases don't answer everything." They are

not simply phrases. One is a theoretical analysis; the other is a political conclusion for action.

Our motion calls for unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack. What does that mean? It simply means that you defend the Soviet Union and its nationalized property against external attacks of imperialist armies or against internal attempts at capitalist restoration, without putting as a prior condition the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Any other kind of defense negates the whole position under present circumstances. Some comrades speak nowadays of giving "conditional" defense to the Soviet Union. If you stop to think about it we are for conditional defense of the United States. It is so stated in the program of the Fourth International. In the event of war we will absolutely defend the country on only one small "condition": that we first overthrow the government of the capitalists and replace it with a government of the workers.

Does unconditional defense of the Soviet Union mean supporting every act of the Red Army? No, that is absurd. Did we support the Moscow trials and the actions of Stalin's G.P.U. in these trials? Did we support the purges, the wholesale murders of the old Bolsheviks? Did we support the actions of the Stalinist military forces in Spain which were directed against the workers? If I recall correctly, we unconditionally defended those workers who fought on the other side of the barricades in Barcelona. That did not prevent us from supporting the military struggle against Franco and maintaining our position in defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack.

It is now demanded that we take a big step forward and support the idea of an armed struggle against Stalin in the newly occupied territories of old Poland. Is this really something new? For three years the Fourth International has advocated in its program the armed overthrow of Stalin inside the Soviet Union itself. The Fourth International has generally acknowledged the necessity for an armed struggle to set up an independent Soviet Ukraine. How can there be any question of having a different policy in the newly occupied territories? If the revolution against Stalin is really ready there, the Fourth International will certainly support it and endeavor to lead it. There are no two opinions possible in our ranks on this question. But what shall we do if Hitler (or Chamberlain) attacks the Sovietized Ukraine before Stalin has been overthrown? This is the question that needs an unambiguous answer. Shall we defend the Soviet Union, and with it now and for the same reasons, the nationalized property of the newly annexed territories? We say, yes!

That position was incorporated into the program of the foundation congress of the Fourth International, held in the summer of 1938. Remember, that was after the Moscow trials and the crushing of the Spanish revolution. It was after the murderous purge of the whole generation of Bolsheviks, after the people's front, the entry into the League of Nations, the Stalin-Laval pact (and betrayal of the French workers). We took our position on the basis of the economic structure of the country, the fruit of the revolution. The great gains are not to be surrendered before they are really lost. That is the fighting program of the Fourth International.

Three months ago we had a convention. The Russian question had been so well and so firmly settled that nobody wanted to reopen it. Let us keep these facts clearly in mind. They are very important from the point of view of judging how serious a party and how serious a leadership we really have. The worst kind of deception is self-deception. What have we really got to face the war with? Now, last month, barely two months after the convention, we were suddenly confronted with a demand to change our position fundamentally -- to renounce "Workers' State", to abandon defense, to support defeatism.

And this fantastic right-about-face is suddenly proposed to us here in "democratic" America! If Stalin were allied with the United States, and comrades should deny defense of the Soviet Union out of fear of becoming involved in the defense of Stalin's American ally, such comrades would be wrong, but their position would be understandable as a subjective reaction prompted by revolutionary sentiments. The "defeatism" which broke out in our French section following the Stalin-Laval pact was undoubtedly so motivated and, consequently, had to be refuted with the utmost tolerance and patience. But now we have an epidemic of "defeatism" in the democratic camp. This is simply shameful. There is no pressure on us in America to defend the Soviet Union. All the pressure is for a democratic holy war against the Soviet Union. Let us keep this in mind. The main enemy is still in our own country.

Between July and September we were asked to throw our program overboard, to renounce the method of thought whereby we had arrived at it throughout a long period of years, to cast aside the criteria by which we had judged the events, to declare that everything is lost and that there is nothing more worth fighting for.

And, mind you, this utterly preposterous demand didn't come from new members of the party uninstructed by the past discussion and thrown off balance by the new events. (That would be understandable). It came from a section of the party leadership!

And what had happened in the meantime? Had there been some fundamental change in Soviet economy? No, nothing of that kind was maintained. Nothing happened except that Stalin signed the pact with Hitler! For us that gave no reason whatever to change our analysis of Soviet economy and our attitude toward it. The aim of all our previous theoretical work, concentrated in our program, was precisely to prepare us for war and revolution. Now we have the war; and revolution is next in order. If we have to stop now to find a new program it is a very bad sign.

Just consider: We could witness all the crimes and betrayals of Stalin, which we understood better than anybody else, and denounced before anybody else and more effectively -- we could witness all this and still stand for the defense of the Soviet Union. But we could not tolerate the alliance with fascist Germany instead of imperialist England or France!

Comrade Trotsky has given a fitting answer to this kind of reasoning:

"Those who seek nowadays to prove that the Soviet-German pact changes our appraisal of the Soviet State take their stand, in essence,

on the position of the Comintern -- to put it more correctly, on yesterday's position of the Comintern. According to this logic, the historical mission of the workers' state is the struggle for imperialist democracy. The "betrayal" of the democracies in favor of fascism divests the U.S.S.R. of its being considered a workers' state. In point of fact, the signing of the treaty with Hitler supplies only an extra gauge with which to measure the degree of degeneration of the Soviet bureaucracy and its contempt for the international working class, including the Comintern, but it does not provide any basis whatsoever for a re-evaluation of our sociological appraisal of the U.S.S.R."

Perhaps it will be thought that I exaggerate or misrepresent the matter. There must, some may say, have been other and more serious reasons for demanding a change in our attitude toward the Soviet Union. I haven't heard them yet, I would be glad to hear them today if there are such reasons. Of course, there has been a great hullabaloo about the Soviet invasion of Polish Ukraine. But that is simply one of the consequences of the war and the alliance with Hitler's Germany. The contention that we should change our analysis of the social character of the Soviet state and our attitude toward its defense because the Red Army violated the Polish border is even more absurd than to base such changes on the Hitler pact. The Polish invasion is only an incident in a war, and in wars borders are always violated. (If all the armies stayed at home there could be no war). The inviolability of borders -- all of which were established by war -- is interesting to democratic pacifists and to nobody else.

For a week or so we had quite a flurry in the party about the invasion of Poland, and demands to change our line on Russia because of it. In this, for the first time, we saw unmistakable signs of the powerful pressure of bourgeois-democratic public opinion on our party. We had to ask ourselves many times: Don't they know that Western Ukraine and White Russia never rightfully belonged to Poland? Don't they know that this territory was forcibly taken from the Soviet Union by Pilsudski with French aid in 1920?

To be sure, this did not justify Stalin's invasion of the territory in collaboration with Hitler. We never supported that and we never supported the fraudulent claim that Stalin was bringing "liberation" to the peoples of the Polish Ukraine. At the same time we did not propose to yield an inch to the "democratic" incitement against the Soviet Union on the basis of the Polish events. The democratic war mongers were shrieking at the top of their voices all over town. As far as I could make sense out of the somewhat hysterical reactions of some of our comrades they were unduly impressed by this democratic clamor. But your "conservative" National Committee was not in the least impressed. That is a merit, not a fault.

In order to penetrate a little deeper into this sudden outburst and trace it to its roots, let us take another hypothetical example. Not a fantastic one, but a very logical one. Suppose Stalin had made a pact with the imperialist democracies against Hitler while Rumania had allied itself with Hitler. Suppose, as would most probably have happened in that case, the Red Army had struck at Rumania, Hitler's ally, instead of Poland, the ally of the democracies, and had seized Bessarabia, which also once belonged to Russia. Would the democratic war mongers in that case have howled about "Red Imperialism?" Not on

your life! Would we have had a 10-day fever in our own New York party? I personally do not think so.

I am very glad that our National Committee maintained its independence of bourgeois democratic pressure on the Polish invasion. The question was put to us very excitedly, point-blank, like a pistol at the temple: "Are you for or against the invasion of Poland?" But revolutionary Marxists don't answer in a "yes" or "no" manner which can lump them together with other people who pursue opposite aims. Being for or against something is not enough in the class struggle. It is necessary to explain from what standpoint one is for or against. Are you for or against racketeering gangsters in the trade unions? -- the philistines sometimes ask. We don't jump to attention, like a private soldier who has met an officer on the street, and answer, "against!" We first inquire: who asks this question and from what standpoint? And what weight does this question have in relation to other questions? We have our own standpoint and we are careful not to get our answers mixed up with those of class enemies and pacifist muddleheads.

Some people -- especially affected bosses -- are against racketeering gangsters in the trade unions because they extort graft from the bosses. That side of the question doesn't interest us very much. Some people -- especially pacifist preachers -- are against the gangsters because they commit violence. But we are not against violence at all times and under all circumstances. We, for our part, taking our time and formulating our viewpoint precisely, say: We are against union gangsterism because it injures the union in its fight against the bosses. That is our reason. It proceeds from our special class standpoint on the union question.

So with Poland: We don't support the course of Stalin in general. His crime is not one incident here or there but his whole policy. He demoralizes the workers' movement and discredits the Soviet Union. That is what we are against. He betrays the revolution by his whole course. Every incident for us fits into that framework; it is considered from that point of view and taken in its true proportions.

Those who take the Polish invasion -- an incident in a great chain of events -- as the basis for a fundamental change in our program show a lack of proportion. That is the kindest thing that can be said for them. They are destined to remain in a permanent lather throughout the war. They are already four laps behind schedule: There is also Latvia, and Estonia, and Lithuania, and now Finland.

Are we going to have another clamor of demands to say point-blank, and in one word, whether we are "for" or "against" the pressure on poor little bourgeois-democratic Finland? Our answer -- wait a minute. Keep your shirt on. There is no lack of protests in behalf of the bourgeois swine who rule Finland. The New Leader has protested. Charles Yale Harrison (Charlie-the-Rat) has written a tearful column about it. The renegade Lore has wept about it in the New York Post. The President of the United States has protested. Finland is pretty well covered with moral support. So bourgeois Finland can wait a minute till we explain our attitude without bothering about the "for" or "against" ultimatum.

I personally feel very deeply about Finland, and this is by no means confined to the present dispute between Stalin and the Finnish Prime Minister. When I think of Finland, I think of the thousands of the martyred dead, the proletarian heroes who perished under the white terror of Mannerheim. I would, if I could, call them back from their graves. Failing that, I would organize a proletarian army of Finnish workers to avenge them, and drive their murderers into the Baltic Sea. I would send the Red Army of the regenerated Soviet Union to help them at the decisive moment.

We don't support Stalin's invasion only because he doesn't come for revolutionary purposes. He doesn't come at the call of Finnish workers whose confidence he has forfeited. That is the only reason we are against it. The "borders" have nothing to do with it. "Defense" in war also means attack. Do you think we will respect frontiers when we make our revolution? If an enemy army lands troops at Quebec, for example, do you think we will wait placidly at the Canadian border for their attack? No, if we are genuine revolutionists and not pacifist muddle-heads we will cross the border and meet them at the point of landing. And if our defense requires the seizure of Quebec, we will seize it as the Red Army of Lenin seized Georgia and tried to take Warsaw.

Some comrades may think the war and the alliance with Hitler change everything we have previously considered; that it, at least, requires a reconsideration of the whole question of the Soviet Union, if not a complete change in our program. To this we can answer:

War was contemplated by our program. The fundamental theses on "War and the Fourth International", adopted in 1934, say:

"Every big war, irrespective of its initial moves, must pose squarely the question of military intervention against the U.S.S.R. in order to transfuse fresh blood into the sclerotic veins of capitalism...."

"Defense of the Soviet Union from the blows of the capitalist enemies, irrespective of the circumstances and immediate causes of the conflict, is the elementary and imperative duty of every honest labor organization."

Alliances were contemplated. The theses say:

"In the existing situation an alliance of the U.S.S.R. with an imperialist state or with one imperialist combination against another, in case of war, cannot at all be considered as excluded. Under the pressure of circumstances a temporary alliance of this kind may become an iron necessity, without ceasing, however, because of it, to be of the greatest danger both to the U.S.S.R. and to the world revolution."

"The international proletariat will not decline to defend the U.S.S.R. even if the latter should find itself forced into a military alliance with some imperialists against others. But in this case, even more than in any other, the international proletariat must safeguard its complete political independence from Soviet diplomacy and thereby also from the bureaucracy of the Third International."

A stand on defense was taken in the light of this perspective.

The slogan of defense acquires a concrete meaning precisely in the event of war. A strange time to drop it! That would mean a rejection of all our theoretical preparation for the war. That would mean starting all over again. From what fundamental basis? Nobody knows.

There has been much talk of "independence" on the Russian question. That is good! A revolutionist who is not independent is not worth his salt. But it is necessary to specify: Independent of whom? What is needed by our party at every turn is class independence, independence of the Stalinists, and, above all, independence of the bourgeoisie. Our program demands such independence under all circumstances. It shall not be changed!

REPORT ON THE RUSSIAN QUESTION

Speech delivered to the New York Membership Meeting at the opening of the discussion on October 15, 1939

By Max Shachtman

In order to have a clear understanding of the present dispute, it is necessary to start with an account of how it originated and developed. It might have been possible to dispense with this aspect of the question if Comrade Cannon had not presented a completely distorted version of it. Our differences did not develop out of thin air nor as a result of an arbitrary whim on the part of any comrade. It can, therefore, be understood only by a knowledge of the actual circumstances in which it arose.

The question now in dispute originated in reality at our last convention. As will be seen later, it is important to bear this date in mind.

As you know, prior to the convention and during its sessions we had no specific Russian discussion or special resolution. Formally the question was dealt with only to the extent that it was referred to in the program of transitional demands which the convention formally adopted. Apparently nobody deemed it necessary to raise the Russian question in the manner in which it had been discussed in the past.

However, it was raised in a new form, at least in one of its aspects, during the discussion on the international report which I delivered. Comrade Johnson in his speech dwelt on the question of our attitude towards Stalin's policy and towards the Red Army in the event of an encroachment upon or an invasion of Poland, the Baltic countries, and other lands adjacent to the Soviet Union. This question was assuming an urgent character because of the negotiations between Stalin and England and France. Stalin was demanding that he be given the right to "guarantee" the Baltic countries and Poland from German attack. I emphasize the fact that this was at the time of the Soviet alliance with France and what appeared to be an impending alliance with Anglo-French imperialism, that is to say, with the "democracies."

Comrade Carter was the only delegate who took up the discussion on this point, and I referred to it in my summary. As I recall it, I said that it would be necessary to consider the question seriously, especially as it became increasingly pertinent, because the masses in Russia's border states undoubtedly looked with the greatest suspicion, fear and hostility upon Stalin's proposal to "guarantee them from aggression." Nobody else took the floor on this point. I don't know whether Cannon was disinterested in the question or did not consider it important at the time, but he did not say a word about it, either privately or on the convention floor.

Nothing came of this matter in any concrete form at the convention or immediately afterward because the issue was still somewhat vague.

It was still in the realm of secret and obscure diplomatic discussion in the European capitals and chancelleries. In any case, it had not taken on such concrete form as to require from us an answer or perhaps even to make it possible for us to give that answer. But at least, one important thing to bear in mind is that the very fact that it was raised at that time is sufficient by itself to dispose of the slanderous falsehood now disseminated by Cannon, and repeated in the internal bulletin by Goldman, that our resolution and standpoint implied a rejection of Stalin's policy only because he is linked with fascist imperialism, and an acceptance of the policy if he had been linked with the democratic bandits. The question, I repeat, was first raised in the period of Stalin's alliance with French imperialism, and if we did not present a concrete resolution on it then it was only because it had not yet assumed concrete form.

It was only after the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed and the invasion of Poland had passed from the realm of possibility and speculation into the realm of living reality that the question assumed the most urgent importance and actuality. It is not correct that everybody took the events in his stride. The fact is all the leading comrades were greatly disturbed. At the August 22 meeting of the Political Committee, I moved: "That the next meeting of the P.C. begin with a discussion of our estimate of the Stalin-Hitler pact as related to our evaluation of the Soviet State and the perspectives of the future." Nobody argued that there is nothing new in the situation. Nobody proposed a mere reaffirmation of our old line. My motion was carried unanimously, as a matter of course, so to speak. So that the record is given in full and no wrong impressions created among you, I point out that Comrade Cannon was not present at this meeting. His supporters were not so intransigent on the question then as they are now.

The next meeting of the P.C. took place after I had left on my brief tour on the Pact. That was September 1. The second world war had to all intents and purposes broken out and we were faced with enormous tasks and responsibilities. Comrade Gould, who was acting for a week or two in my place, made a series of motions for an immediate plenum, the aim of which was to put the party on a war footing, on the alert, for speeding the preparations to qualify the party for its multiplied tasks. Some of his motions were perhaps not feasible -- that is possible. But the general line of them was absolutely correct and in order. Everybody present was in favor of an immediate plenum. The difference revolved only around the date -- a week earlier or a week later.

But it is most interesting to note that everybody agreed to put the Russian question on the agenda, and that Comrade Burnham was unanimously assigned to make the report on this question!

Now Burnham's position on the Russian question is no secret to the party, even less so to the P.C. It was as well known in the past as it is now. His editorial in the New International, about which there has since been so much clamor, was already out. If the P.C. majority really, and honestly thought there was nothing new in the situation, and if they really were ready to defend their old position without further ado, why in heaven's name was Burnham assigned to make the report? It is entirely unprecedented in our movement to act in this way. If, for example, I am known as an avowed critic or opponent of

the official party position on the trade union question, I would never be assigned by the Committee to report on this question to a plenum or a membership meeting. The Committee would assign a supporter of its position to report on it, and in a discussion I would be assigned to deliver a minority report. Why was a contrary procedure followed in the case of Burnham and the report on the Russian question?

The talk about our having created a crisis or a panic is completely absurd. In actuality it was those comrades who maintain that their political line is so clear, so unaltered, so uncompromising that they must have an organizational stranglehold on the N.C. and the P.C.-- it was those comrades who showed themselves completely disoriented and incapable of giving the leadership they boast about. On precisely that question which they now claim marks the dividing line between the hard Bolshevik and the vacillating petty-bourgeois they demonstratively acknowledged their bankruptcy by failing to put forward one of their number to report and assigning it instead to Burnham. Again to keep the record accurate, Cannon was not present at the meeting.

Two days later, a special meeting was held to consider the question, this time with Cannon present. Although I was still on tour, I venture to speak from hearsay because his arguments were subsequently repeated upon my return. Cannon charged that the comrades were creating a panic for nothing, that they were hysterical, that there was nothing new in the situation. As for the plenum, he was against its immediate convocation for the above reasons and because, he said, it had to be prepared documentarily. Good. Two days later, at the September 5 meeting of the P.C., Burnham submitted his document on the character of the war and Russia's role in it. Apart from this document, from my resolution, and Johnson's statement, no other document was submitted for the plenum. Cannon submitted nothing, absolutely nothing, in the form of a resolution or thesis on the question, or for that matter on any other question on the agenda of the plenum; nor did anyone else. Was that because other comrades thought there really was nothing new in the situation? In my opinion, No. For on September 3, Cannon moved that Crux be asked officially "to express himself on the Russian question in the light of recent events." Furthermore, that Crux be familiarized with "the material submitted in the question" and that we "request his opinion before a decision is taken by the plenum."

Now it seems to me that an obvious contradiction is present here. If there is nothing new in the situation, if all that is needed, as Cannon contended, is a reaffirmation of our previous position, then a decision of that kind could be taken without requesting Comrade Crux's opinion and without making it dependent upon this opinion. The opinion would be, as it was, valuable, enlightening and important, it would be what you will, but yet it could not be of such a nature as to necessitate holding up a vote by us on the question.

The fact is that everybody was disturbed by the events and felt that the old line, even if correct, was not adequate. At the very least, something had to be added to it. And that was the only serious meaning contained in Cannon's motions on Crux. It goes without saying that the request for Crux's opinions was adopted unanimously. But I at least voted for the motion precisely because there was "something new" in the situation, and I was very anxious to read Crux's analysis of it. Yet, I say that the motions were in conflict

with Cannon's views because at the very next meeting, on September 8, Cannon and his supporters came forward against a discussion of the Russian question -- against any discussion. There is nothing particularly new in the situation, said Cannon, in the circular he sent out to the N.C. members commenting on Burnham's resolution. A discussion at this time is a luxury we cannot afford, he said, in just those words. When Cannon says now that a discussion of a position such as Burnham put forward would be fruitful and educational, it simply does not square with his statements a month ago that a new discussion would be a luxury we cannot afford.

On September 12, at the first P.C. meeting to be held after my return from the speaking tour, there was a turnabout face. My motion on the plenum was carried without objection. I did not propose, as is stated, to call the plenum on the Russian question. The four points I proposed for an agenda -- the war crisis, the work of the International, the Russian question, and the organization-press drive-- were adopted virtually without discussion. Why? Because, I believe, among other things I reported that every N.C. member I spoke with on the road was also "panic-stricken." Clarke and Selander in Detroit, comrades in Chicago, all were for an immediate plenum. In Minneapolis I signed a joint telegram with all the local N.C. members pointing out their readiness to come to a plenum almost immediately. There is not the slightest doubt that every responsible leading comrade outside New York felt that a plenum was urgently required to discuss the questions I mentioned.

In the middle of September the events precipitated the problem directly and concretely without waiting for us to get together a plenum. Stalin invaded Poland in alliance with Hitler. What was the party to say? What was its mouthpiece, the Appeal, to say? It is utter nonsense to argue that the membership of the party went blandly about its way, unmoved and uninterested in the events. They were intensely interested in the position the party would take on the invasion and there is not the slightest doubt in the world that the readers of the party press were equally interested. It was, of course, impossible for me to write in the Appeal on the basis of my personal opinion alone. I, therefore, called together all the available members of the staff and of the Political Committee. By its very nature the gathering could not be anything but informal. It could not adopt decisions on such a matter of policy and I announced both before and at the end of the meeting that I considered it a consultative body, that is to say, only the Political Committee could decide the line of our articles. After as thorough a discussion of the question as we could have under the circumstances, it was generally agreed that an emergency meeting of the P.C. would have to be held to decide the question, if possible before the Appeal went to press.

That same evening, September 18, a special meeting was held. We were of the opinion that whatever the party's basic estimate of the class nature of the Soviet State might be, a specific answer had to be given to the specific question. Comrade Burnham moved that the Appeal take the line that through its invasion of Poland the Red Army is participating integrally in the imperialist war, that is to say, that we condemn the invasion. That point of view was rejected by the majority of the Political Committee. Comrade Goldman presented the following motion: "Under the actual conditions prevailing in Poland, we approve of Stalin's invasion of Poland as a measure of preventing

Hitler from getting control of all of Poland and as a measure of defending the Soviet Union against Hitler. Between Hitler and Stalin, we prefer Stalin." Comrade Goldman was the only one to vote for his motion. Yet his position was entirely consistent, consistent in particular with the traditional position of the party and the interpretation we had always placed upon it. But with his motion defeated, Goldman voted for the motion of Cannon.

And what was Cannon's answer to the problem raised by the Polish invasion, the answer that the Political Committee adopted? Here is his motion in full: "The party press in its handling of Russia's participation in the war in Poland shall do so from the point of view of the party's fundamental analysis of the character of the Soviet State and the role of Stalinism as laid down in the fundamental resolutions of the party's foundation convention and the foundation congress of the Fourth International. The slogan of an independent Soviet Ukraine shall be defended as a policy wholly consistent with the fundamental line of defending the Soviet Union."

Now I contend that this was no answer at all, or rather that it made possible a variety of answers. On the basis of this motion, a half dozen members of the Political Committee could write a half dozen different articles. We would repeat time and again that the Soviet Union is a workers' state and that we are for its defense, but that did not answer the question uppermost in the minds of everybody: Do we support the invasion of Poland, or do we oppose it? Cannon categorically refused to give a reply to this question. His point of view was that it is purely a military question and that we were in no position to express ourselves affirmatively or negatively on it. Our task, said Cannon, is merely to explain. In support of this view, Gordon, for example, placed the invasion of Poland in the same category as the invasion of Belgium in 1914, and argued that there, too, we merely "explained" the invasion as an "episode" in the war as a whole but did not say that we were for it or against it. (It might be remarked parenthetically that even in this comparison Gordon was wrong because the internationalists did not hesitate even in the case of Belgium to condemn the invasion by Germany, even though the invasion of Poland by Stalin is not on the same footing.)

At the same meeting I moved that the Committee "endorse the general line of the September 18 editorial" in the Appeal which I had written. Cannon and his supporters rejected the motion, Cannon voting against it and the others abstaining. Why? For the simple reason that I condemned the invasion in the very mildest terms. I had characterized the reports that Stalin was moving to the aid of Hitler as a "sinister plan." Cochrane took objection to this phrase. He motivated his abstention on the basis of it. He considered it too strong. The very next day the press carried reports of a statement made by Trotsky in Mexico condemning the invasion as shameful and criminal.

At the meeting we pointed out that the inadequate and evasive motion of Cannon would meet its first test twenty-four hours later at the mass meeting which Goldman was scheduled to address and at which questions would undoubtedly be asked about the party's attitude towards the invasion. But the Committee refused to take any steps to deal with this matter. The result was that when Goldman spoke the next day, September 19, he not only declared at a public meeting that there was a dispute in the party on the subject and

that we were calling a plenum to settle it, but also that the Political Committee disagreed with Trotsky in condemning the invasion. And as you know, in the article which Cannon was assigned to write for the Appeal on the subject, he carefully refrained from characterizing or condemning the invasion and confined himself merely to rejecting the Stalinist contention that the result of the invasion would be the liberation of the Ukrainians and the White Russians.

Finally we came to the P.C. meeting on the eve of the plenum. The document which we awaited from Comrade Crux had not arrived. We had the Burnham resolution on the subject, but the majority, which had insisted on the need of preparing material prior to the plenum, had no resolution whatsoever to offer. I could not subscribe entirely to the Burnham resolution, and I announced that I would offer one of my own on the invasion of Poland. When the question of reporters arose, Burnham announced that he would either write a different resolution or support one that would be introduced. This announcement occasioned no astonishment or criticism at that time. At the same meeting, confronted with the fact that the majority had no document at all to present to the plenum on the Russian question, Cannon presented the following motion as his resolution: "We reaffirm the basic analysis of the nature of the Soviet State and the role of Stalinism, and the political conclusions drawn from this analysis as laid down in the previous decisions of our party convention and the program of the Fourth International." This was the sole contribution made by the majority.

To sum up, therefore, the Political Committee confined itself to a simple reiteration of the traditional party position not as a basis for giving concrete answers to concrete questions, but as a substitute for these answers, that is, it failed and refused to give an answer to the specific questions posed by the events. To the extent that it tried to give one, it was false and spread confusion or else left matters hanging in the air. Cannon's article in the Appeal is one example. Goldman's speech at the New York mass meeting is another. If that is the meaning of revolutionary leadership on the issues of the day, I have nothing in common with it.

Now as to the actual contents of the dispute. One way of approaching the question is from the angle of the so-called unprincipled bloc that we have formed. The argument runs about as follows: Burnham says that the Soviet Union is not a workers' state. Shachtman says he does not raise this question. Consequently, the minority is a bloc and an unprincipled one. I regard the charge as unprincipled bunk. While I have not and do not raise the question of revising the party's fundamental position on the nature of the Soviet State, I was and am ready to discuss the question. The fact is that I requested such a discussion and the minority supported me in this request. We proposed that the pages of the New International, our theoretical organ, be opened up for such a discussion. This was at first refused and granted only at the plenum. Why am I not in favor of centering the present discussion around that question here? Because I do not think it is necessary. In fact, under the circumstances I do not think it would be fruitful. The way in which the discussion has already been started indicates to me that it would only serve to obscure the real issue and dispute at

hand. In what sense do I mean this? (Burnham is now being condemned for having withdrawn his document. But this withdrawal actually occurred on the basis of the advice of Comrade Crux and of my advice.)

In ^a brief letter to the Political Committee which arrived before his main document, Comrade Crux pointed out that in so far as the dispute was "terminological" no practical political question could be altered by changing the formula "workers' state" to the formula "not workers' state" or "bureaucratic caste" to "class". He said, granted that it is not a workers' state: granted that it is a class and not a caste. What change would then be introduced into our political conclusions? The opponents, as Crux pointed out, would have gained an "empty victory" and would not know what to do with it.

I do not begin to deny the importance even of the "terminological dispute" if only because we must strive for the strictest scientific accuracy in our characterizations. But under the circumstances, that is, of the need of answering the questions raised by the Polish invasion, such a dispute could very easily degenerate into a sterile and purely terminological discussion. That can already be seen by the manner in which the question has been presented. A workers' state is defined as a social order based upon nationalized property. On that basis, many comrades conclude that the whole problem is exhausted. That being the definition of a workers' state, the Soviet Union is a workers' state. Thus we do not advance an inch.

Why would such a discussion be sterile at the moment? Because it would not and does not necessarily alter one's political conclusions. Trotsky pointed that out and so do I. The political question is: Will you defend the Soviet Union? Whereupon it must be asked: What do we defend? The only remaining conquest of the Russian Revolution is nationalized property. Now there is not a soul in our party who stands for the denationalization of property in the Soviet Union -- not Burnham, not Cannon, not Shachtman, not Johnson. The only question that can possibly be in dispute is -- How do we defend nationalized property?

Let us take the question from another angle. The fundamental position of the party, no matter how often reiterated, does not provide us automatically with an answer to the concrete questions. For example, Goldman, Cannon, Trotsky, all proceed from the fundamental conception that the Soviet Union is a workers' state. Yet Goldman approved the invasion, Cannon was indifferent to it, considering it a purely military question which we were incapable of judging, whereas Trotsky denounced the invasion. It was for such reasons that Burnham was, therefore, prevailed upon to withdraw his thesis from the present discussion, to withhold it for another and more suitable occasion and place, to confine the discussion of the questions that he and others have raised to the theoretical organ of the party.

In this connection I was challenged by Cannon: Why don't you propose to expel Burnham as a defeatist? I made a motion two or three years ago declaring defeatist views are incompatible with

membership in the party, and Cannon supported me in that position. I do not propose such a motion now. Cannon says that I speak equally well on both sides of the question. By the same token, he can speak well on one side of the question at one time and be silent on it at another. Why doesn't he propose the expulsion of the defeatists? But, it is argued, you make a bloc with Bukharin against Cannon and Goldman, with whom you are in fundamental agreement. The argument is not valid. In 1925-26 the Sapronovist group of Democratic Centralists declared in its platform that the revolution was over. The Thermidor had triumphed. Russia was no longer a workers' state. Yet when the opposition bloc was formed in 1926 by the Moscow and Leningrad groups, the Democratic Centralists entered into the bloc. If they broke from it later, it was on their initiative -- "artificially" said Trotsky, and not on his initiative. He opposed the break, as he pointed out in 1929 in a letter to one of the supporters of the Democratic Centralist group. If he joined with them in one bloc, it was because all supporters of the bloc jointly gave the right answers to the concrete questions before the party. In my opinion, that is what we have to do now. I could vote a hundred times over, just as Goldman does, for the "fundamental motion" of Cannon. So can Aborn and Erber and others. But I cannot give the same answer to the problems that Goldman gave or that Cannon gave. And that makes it impossible for me and all others to join with the them just as it makes it mandatory for me and all others to join with those who give the same answer.

But does not that deprive you of a fundamental position from which to derive your policies? Not at all. There are fundamental criteria for a revolutionary Marxist which are just as valid now as they were a year ago and twenty-five years ago, even before the Russian Revolution. The first is the fundamental and decisive character of the war in question, and we say that the decisive character of the present war is imperialist. And secondly our policies in all questions must be derived from the fundamental conception of the interests of the world socialist revolution, to which all other interests are subordinate and secondary.

Before I can return to this question I find it necessary to deal again with the point: Is there anything now in the situation to cause us to change our policy? Yes! And in reality everybody acknowledges it, if not explicitly then tacitly. Is it because of the pact with Hitler? If so, then you are a People's Fronter. No, that is a slander. I have already pointed out that the questions we now raise were first raised three months ago, at the time of the Soviet alliance with the democratic imperialists. No, it is not the pact itself that changes the situation. I have pointed out a hundred times in articles and speeches that an isolated Soviet State not only may but often must conclude commercial, diplomatic, and even military agreements with imperialist powers, and that there is not a particle of difference in principle between an agreement with a democratic country, a fascist country or a feudal country. So it is not the pact itself that necessitates a change in our policy. It is the concreteness of the events and it is doubtful that we could have foreseen them in their actuality. And the actuality, if only because of its concreteness, is different from our necessarily limited prognoses, as different as arithmetic is

from algebra.

As I understand it, that is how Lenin dealt with the reality of the democratic revolution in Russia. His prognosis about the "democratic dictatorship" did not and could not conform with the concrete reality. He had no hesitation in altering his political conclusions to suit that reality. I can give many other examples. It is argued that there is no need to be surprised at the events and no need to modify our policy because we foresaw them. Before 1914 Lenin foresaw the degeneration of the Second International. But it was only after August 4, when the Second International ranged itself openly and, so to speak, dramatically on the side of imperialism that he proposed a change in policy, that is to say, to withdraw from the Second International to which he had belonged and to call for a Third International.

Another example. Trotsky saw and foresaw the degeneration of the Third International. In Germany Stalinism betrayed the proletariat and the revolution no more than it had betrayed them in China six years earlier. Yet although we retained our fundamental views on the principles of revolutionary Marxism, we broke with the Comintern not on the occasion of the Chinese betrayal but on the occasion of the German. It is argued against us now that we propose a change in policy only because the alliance is made with the fascist imperialists and that we did not propose such a change when the alliance was made with the democratic imperialists four years ago. One could just as legitimately argue that we considered it all right for the Stalinists to betray Chinese coolies but not to betray the superior white workers of Germany. Both arguments are equally wrong. What was involved in both cases was an accumulation, precipitated in the form of a concrete event or a series of events.

Similarly in the case of the invasion of Poland and the Baltic countries. In the period of the pact with France, the question was essentially theoretical and we could put forward only hypotheses. It is true Stalin was then also an agent of imperialism. But the war and the concrete events attending it had not yet broken out. Years ago the Stalinist regime indicated that it might or would act in the way it has now really acted, just as before the war of 1914 the social democracy indicated that it might or would act the way it finally did when the war broke out.

The challenge to present some fundamental change in the situation is in this case either superficial or irrelevant. As I understand our basic position, it always was to oppose separatist tendencies in the Federated Soviet Republics. Now I ask: what fundamental change occurred, what was the nature of this change, and when did it occur, to cause us to raise the slogan of an independent united Soviet Ukraine, that is to say, a separatist slogan?

Another example: When and why did we decide in favor of a political revolution in Russia? Because of the imprisonment or the shooting of Zinoviev? No. That is so much nonsense. We changed our policy on that question because an accumulation of things dictated that change.

Take the question from still another angle. I do not have to be

instructed on the admissibility of a workers' state extending the revolution to other countries, even by military means and without regard for frontiers laid down in imperialist treaties, or for that matter any other kind of frontiers. I have taught that to thousands of people. But I point out that throughout the early years of the Bolshevik movement we hailed the advances of the Red Army into other countries. When the Red Army marched into Poland in 1920, then regardless of whether or not it was tactically correct, we hailed its progress enthusiastically. We called upon them to weaken and destroy the Polish army and to facilitate the victory of the Red Army. We took the same position when the Red Army invaded Georgia. We said then that "democratic" considerations about which international menshevism howled so much were entirely subordinate (if they were involved at all in the Georgian case) to socialist considerations. We denounced the opponents and critics of the Red Army. We justified the entry of the Red Army into Georgia.

Now, if there is nothing new in the situation, why does not the majority propose to hail the advance of the Red Army into Poland, into the Baltic countries, into Finland? Why don't we call upon the workers and peasants of these countries to welcome the Red Army, to facilitate its victory, to help destroy all the obstacles that stand in the way of this victory?

Again, we endorsed Stalin's seizure of the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1929. We defended the action from all varieties of democratic and "revolutionary" critics who pointed out that the railway was Chinese or partly Chinese, and that the Chinese were not consulted about the seizure. Why don't we by the same token endorse the seizure of Poland and other countries by Stalin today? What is new in the situation? The refusal even of the majority to take the same position today that we all took in 1920 and even in 1929 indicates that at least in this respect the burden of proof about what is now in the situation rests upon the majority.

I cannot take seriously the argument of the majority that the only thing really new in the situation is that people in the party are succumbing to "democratic pressure." That there is an enormous democratic pressure being exerted upon the labor movement and even our movement is undeniable. That it is necessary to guard against yielding to that pressure is equally true. But it is necessary not only to guard against that pressure but to fight against it. How? We must first recognize that the whole policy of Stalin facilitates the work of democratic demagogues. As in the past they exploit Stalinist crimes and the resentment against them felt by the working class in order to bring the working class more completely under the sway of imperialist and anti-Bolshevik ideology. We can combat the efforts of the democratic imperialist agents only by a correct and unambiguous policy of our own and not by mere denunciation. We can combat them only by pointing out that Stalin's course has nothing in common with ours. Only by condemning the Stalinist invasion as an act which is contrary not only to the interests of the international working class but to the interests of the Soviet Union itself. We cannot combat it -- the workers will rightly turn their backs on us -- if we endorse Stalin's action, if we condone it, or even if we appear to do so.

Now as to the slogan of unconditional defense which we must now

abandon, in my opinion, unless we mean to keep the formula and by means of sophistry to fill it with a new content. What did this slogan mean to us in the past? Goldman says now: "I repeat. It was taken for granted that the slogan of defending the Soviet Union applied only in case of war by a capitalist nation against the Soviet Union." Let us grant that for a moment and we shall see who it is that unwittingly yields to the pressure of democratic patriotism and to the pacifist distinction between wars of aggression and of defense.

What we really meant in the past when we said we were for unconditional defense was this: We are for defeatism in the enemy country and patriotism in the Red Army. In the Red Army we are the best soldiers. We are for the victory of the Red Army and for the defeat of its enemy, and that regardless of who "started the war." We never asked who struck the first blow or who first crossed his own frontiers. By Soviet patriotism we also meant that we call upon the soldiers and population of the enemy to give active support to the Red Army; that we call for sabotage in the country and in the army of the Red Army's enemy. Isn't that what we always said and meant in the past by our slogan?

Now why didn't we and don't we say that in the case of Poland, or tomorrow, in the case of Finland? Isn't Poland a capitalist country? Isn't it an imperialist power? Isn't it an ally of the democratic imperialists opposed to Russia? In accordance with our old conception, we should have called upon the Polish masses to welcome the Red Army. Why didn't we? Was it because Russia was the military aggressor? But we have not over and we should not now draw any basic distinctions between defense and aggression, and Cannon was a thousand times right in pointing out that Marxian platitude, as he so very often is.

Further. Why don't we take that line in the case of the Baltic countries -- Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia? They are capitalist countries, they are tools of one or another imperialist bloc. If they are engaged in any kind of struggle - regardless, I repeat, of who fired the first shot or who first crossed frontiers - it is obviously a question of war between the Soviet Union and a capitalist power. In that case, by unconditional defense we must mean, as we always did in the past, that we are for the victory of the Red Army. Surely we never took the position in the past that we gave unconditional defense to the Soviet Union only when the troops of a capitalist power take the initiative in the struggle and cross into the territory of the Soviet Union. By virtue of our old position, we should fight for the victory of the Red Army and simultaneously for the defeat of the opposing armies. The majority is simply not consistent with itself. While holding to the old conception, it has adopted a document which says that we are opposed to the seizures of new territory by the Kremlin. According to Comrade Trotsky, the Stalinist invasion was shameful and criminal, that is to say, we condemn it. Now we would not condemn Russia for invading Germany, would we? And if Poland had first attacked, militarily, the Soviet Union, I do not believe we would condemn Stalin or the Red Army for repulsing this attack and pushing the Polish Army back to Warsaw or further. Why wouldn't we? Would it be because in that case Poland was the "aggressor," whereas in the

actual case Russia was the "aggressor"?

Again. Comrade Goldman said his error, which he now acknowledges, consisted in supporting the invasion under the impression that it was not done in agreement with Hitler. When he became convinced that it was done in agreement with Hitler, he opposed it. It seems to me that Comrade Goldman replaces here one error with another. If that is his motivation for opposing the invasion, then at the very least we overlooked an important problem in failing to oppose a similar step when Stalin sought to take it in agreement with Daladier and Chamberlain. That was precisely the point that was dealt with by Comrades Johnson, Carter and myself at the last convention. Certainly the reason we failed to act at that time could not have been based upon the fact that Stalin planned his action in alliance with the democratic imperialists.

You give no answer to the concrete questions! Trotsky says: "We were and we remain against seizures of new territories by the Kromlin." Goldman says now, All right, but it's all over now in Poland; consequently, the basis for the dispute has been removed. Unfortunately this is not the case. If we are against such seizures, we are against them not only after they take place but also before. It is radically false to think that Poland was an incidental or accidental episode in the war, an episode of no characteristic importance. Yesterday it was Poland and today the Baltic countries, tomorrow and the day after, Finland, Roumania, Afghanistan, India, China, and other countries. The same problem will arise continually and with it the necessity of giving an answer far more concrete than we were systematically given by the majority of the P.C. Do not think for a moment that you can dispose of such questions the way Cannon tried to do today. I was shocked when I heard him say half-jokingly, "off the record", that the best thing that could happen to Finland would be to wipe it off the map altogether. That is a piece of first-class political cynicism. I am not a Finnish patriot any more than I am a Polish patriot. But as a revolutionary Marxist I am at the same time a consistent democrat. I am ready to subordinate democratic considerations only to socialist and internationalist considerations. I have no hesitation at all in saying that I am concerned not only with the socialist revolution but also with the national and democratic rights of Finland and the Baltic countries. I am prepared to subordinate even those rights to the interests of the socialist revolution if and where the two conflict. I am not ready to subordinate them to the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Decisive in politics is not only the "what" but also the "who." I am damned particular as to who "liberates" countries like Danzig or the Sudetenland. Under Hitler the right of self-determination "triumphed" in appearance. In actuality reaction triumphed. And when Stalin invades Poland it is the Stalinist counter-revolution that has triumphed.

Your policy or rather your lack of policy makes it impossible for us to talk intelligibly or effectively to the masses of those countries who are threatened by Stalinist seizures or invasion. I want to see the party and the International adopt a policy which enables us to advance the cause of international revolution in those countries. We say in our international program that the anti-Hitlerite patriotism of the masses in the bourgeois countries has something potentially progressive in it. I want to be able to say to the masses of Russia's border states:

"Your anti-Stalinist patriotism has something potentially progressive about it. Your fear of a Stalinist invasion, your hostility to it, is entirely justified. You are not so ignorant that you do not know what Stalin's rule over you would mean. You must resist any attempt military or political, to establish that rule. You must fight against the Red Army and not for its victory, if it seeks to establish Stalin's domination over you. But I say to you, your present patriotism is only potentially progressive. You cannot and must not fight against Stalinism under the rule of your own bourgeoisie, be it in Poland or Latvia or Finland, because that bourgeoisie is imperialist or the agent of imperialism. You must resist being driven into slavery under Stalin. So fight for power in your land. Win over the army and establish an army of your own, the people's militia, and fight for your own socialist cause."

It is true that by this line I will not succeed in having a revolution in Poland or Finland overnight. But if I reach two workers with it I will have brought them one step closer to the goal they must attain, and that is what should be the purpose of any political line. The majority says: We will not approve and we will not condemn. We will merely "explain" the invasion. I say: Resist. Fight the Stalinist army under your own independent class banner. Fight them because they have imposed upon them the execution of an imperialist policy.

At this point the majority objects. The term "imperialist policy" cannot be applied to the Stalin regime. Comrade Goldman adds that while the term may be used in a broad or journalistic sense, it is incorrect because it may be deduced from this term that the Soviet Union is a capitalist imperialist state. That may well be. I do not deny it. But it does not necessarily follow, for otherwise many of our characterizations would have to be rejected on the same grounds. In the first place, I am not the first one to have used this term in our movement. Only a couple of years ago, in a discussion with a Chinese comrade about the dangers of Stalinist intervention in China, the question was asked by the comrades: Does that mean that Stalin can follow an imperialist policy in China? To which Trotsky replied: Those who are capable of perpetrating the Moscow frame-ups are capable of anything. Could not a "capitalist imperialist Soviet State" also be deduced from this entirely correct statement?

We say that Stalin has adopted the political methods of fascism. Stalin's regime is closer to the political regime of fascism than to any other we have ever known. From this statement, often repeated by us, some people have deduced that fascism rules in Russia. But this has not altered our characterization of the Stalin regime. We say in one and the same breath that Hitler's regime is totalitarian,* I still believe that this is entirely accurate. The false deductions that some make from these statements do not mean that the statements are wrong.

We say that there is a Bonapartist regime in Germany and in Russia. I recall that when Trotsky first presented the formula of Soviet Bonapartism, he was criticized by many comrades. They argued that his Bonapartism covers too many different things. He replied that while neither Marx, Engels or Lenin had ever applied the term Bonapartism to the workers' state that was not to be wondered at;

* (insert): Mussolini's regime is totalitarian, Stalin's regime is totalitarian.
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they never had occasion to, although Lenin did not hesitate to apply terms of a bourgeois regime with the necessary qualifications to the workers' state, as, for example, "Soviet state capitalism," Bonapartism, said Trotsky, is an exact, scientific, sociological characterization of the Soviet regime. Yet it may very easily be objected that it follows from this characterization that the Soviet Union is a bourgeois state.

Again. Trotsky points out -- and I think it is right even though Comrade Weber characterized it as stupid -- that in one sense the Soviet Union is a bourgeois state just as in another it is a workers' state. Elsewhere he says that the bureaucracy which has the state as its private property is a bourgeois bureaucracy. Shouldn't we reject these characterizations because of what some people may deduce from them as to the nature of the Soviet State.

It is in accordance with this spirit that we say Stalin is pursuing an imperialist policy. In two senses. In the first place, he is acting as a tool of imperialism, an agent of imperialism. To that characterization nobody seems to take objection. Stalin crushed Poland jointly with Hitler. The spoils of their victories are being jointly divided throughout eastern Europe. But also, in another sense, he is pursuing an "independent" imperialist policy of his own. To my characterization, Comrade Weiss among others answers that there is no such thing and can be no such thing as imperialism except as a policy of decaying monopoly capitalism. That reply is correct only in one sense; namely, that the policy of monopoly capitalism is the modern form of imperialism. But there was imperialist policy long before monopoly capitalism and long before capitalism itself. "Colonial policy and imperialism," said Lenin, "existed before this latest stage of capitalism and even before capitalism. Rome, founded on slavery, pursued a colonial policy and realized imperialism." It is entirely correct, in my opinion, to characterize the Stalinist policy as imperialist, provided, of course, that one points out its specific character, that is, wherein it differs from modern capitalist imperialism. For, as I have insisted on several occasions, I do not identify Stalin with Hitler, Chamberlain or Roosevelt. Stalin has showed himself capable of pursuing imperialist policy. That is the fact. The Kremlin bureaucracy has degenerated beyond all prediction. When we say it has interests all its own, we do not only mean that they are diametrically opposed to the interests of the proletariat but that these interests are very specific. They also have a specific economic basis. Like every bureaucracy, the Stalinist is interested in increasing the national income not in order to raise the standard of living of the masses but in order to increase its own power, its own wealth, its own privileges. In its struggle for self-preservation not only from the living forces of the proletariat and peasantry in the Soviet Union, but also from the consequences of the chronic economic crisis in the country, it is now seeking new territories, new wealth, new privileges, new power, new sources of raw material, new trade facilities, new sources of labor power. A policy of expansion which under Lenin and Trotsky would mean extending the basis of the socialist revolution means under the Stalinist bureaucracy, degenerated and reactionary to the core, a policy of imperialism. That is, it has an imperialist policy peculiar to the Soviet regime in its present stage of decay.

Now, that is as close to a characterization of it as I can come. How do you characterize this policy? What is your political or sociological definition of it? You do not give any. Bonapartism, too, is not 100 per cent exact. The analogy upon which it is based is like all great historical analogies a limited one, but it is close enough; it is an approximation and no improvement upon it has yet been made. Similarly with the term imperialist. Until a better term is found to describe the present Stalinist policy -- and you have proposed neither a better one nor any at all -- I shall persist in using the one which I have put forward.

These are the considerations which in our opinion make it impossible for us to continue employing the slogan for the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union in the sense in which we construed it in the past. It is that sense which dictated the attitude of the majority, most explicitly, consistently and not accidentally expressed in the position taken by Comrade Goldman.

It is, of course, entirely true that a fundamental line is required for a correct approach to all concrete political problems. That fundamental line must be in general the interests of the world socialist revolution. In so far as the war itself is concerned, we must proceed from the fundamental and decisive character of the war, and judging it by that standard it is necessary to characterize the war as imperialist in its decisive aspects. I say, "in its decisive aspects," because in all modern wars there are, so to speak, conflicting elements. Let me take a well-known example. In the last world war, Lenin contended in 1914 that if the struggle had been confined as to a duel between Serbia and Austro-Hungary, on the part of Serbia the progressive element of struggle for national unity would have been decisive, that is, revolutionists would have wished for the victory of Serbia, even of the Serbian bourgeoisie. But scarcely had that war started than it was extended throughout Europe. The progressive element represented by Serbia's national aspirations was lost in the midst of the struggle for imperialist mastery between the two big blocs. That is, the character of the war changed. In its decisive aspects it was imperialist. Serbia was nothing more than part of one of the imperialist camps.

Another example is furnished by the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Bismarck's struggle against Napoleon III for the establishment of a united German nation was historically progressive. But when Bismarck proceeded to take Alsace-Lorraine, the character of the war changed, so to speak, and was condemned by Marx and Engels. Now the present war may and in all probability will also change. Our resolution foresees that and provides for it. If the character of the war changes into a war of imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union, the position of the revolutionary party must change accordingly. Comrade Cannon notes that this is contained in our resolution, but instead of recognizing it for its real and simple significance, he devotes himself to scathing remarks about the phrase "bourgeois counter-revolution is on the order of the day." For this obviously true statement I am denounced as a pessimist. Why? Trotsky used exactly the same phrase more than two years ago. As far back as then he said that if Franco wins in Spain, the bourgeois counter-revolution will be on the order of the day in the Soviet Union. I deeply resent the attitude which accepts without a word a phrase

or formula or concept uttered by Comrade Trotsky, and for purely factional reasons condemns those who merely repeat the phrase as pessimists, if not worse. If the character of the war changes, I repeat, and if the bourgeois counter revolution has not triumphed in Russia, we will defend the Soviet Union from imperialist attack.

It may be asked: How can you defend a country that has pursued an imperialist policy? The class struggle is not as simple as it is implicitly represented by that question. Under certain circumstances, we have done that in the past; we will do it in the future. Even in the case of Spain, which none of us believed to be a workers' state of any kind, we were for the "defense" of Azana and his regime in our own way and by our own methods, even though that same regime was openly imperialist and still claimed imperialist domination over the colonies of Spain. With all the greater reason, with all the greater force, will the policy of defense apply in the case of an imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union.

I have said that Stalin is following an imperialist policy in two senses, in that he is a tool of imperialism, rather an agent of imperialism, and that his own policy is imperialist. I have at the same time denied the foolish charge that we consider this policy identical with the imperialism of Hitler or Chamberlain. No, there is imperialism and imperialism, just as there is Bonapartism and Bonapartism.

As a matter of fact I believe that the key to the imperialist policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy is to be found in the historical analogy with Bonapartism. The analogy between the Stalinist regime and the old Bonapartist regime has been used repeatedly by Comrade Trotsky and by our press in general. Given certain limitations, and allowing for the necessary changes, the analogy is both correct and illuminating. Bonaparte came to power to safeguard the social rule of the bourgeoisie by expropriating it politically. The bourgeoisie admitted, in Marx's words, that in order to preserve its social power unhurt its political power must be broken. Yet though Bonaparte came to power to preserve the social rule of the bourgeoisie, Marx pointed out that the third Napoleon represented an economic class, the most numerous in France at that time, the allotment farmer. To be sure, the farmers then as now, were a class only in a limited sense. Like Bonaparte Stalin represents not what is revolutionary but what is conservative in the farmer and in all other groups upon which his regime rests. In order to perpetuate his domination, Bonaparte carried out a policy which Marx characterized as the "imperialism of the farmer class," that is, the policy or hope of opening up new markets at the point of the bayonet, so that with the plunder of a continent the dictator would "return to the farmer class with interest the taxes wrung from them."

Now it may be argued that imperialism is a class policy. In the interests of what class, it may be asked, does Stalin carry out this so-called imperialist policy? Let us assume the legitimacy of this question for a moment. Here, too, we can find illu-

mination in the analogy with the Bonapartist regime. Like the second Bonaparte, Stalin "is forced to raise alongside the actual classes of society, an artificial class, to which the maintenance of his own regime must be a knife and fork question." I do not believe that the Stalinist Bureaucracy represents a new class, in any case none comparable with the great historic classes of society like the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. But in the sense in which Marx used the term to describe the Bonapartist bureaucracy, so, too, the Stalinist is an "artificial class." It seeks new resources of labor and of raw materials, markets, seaports, gold stores, and the like. It is compelling in life to recognize what it denies in theory, the impossibility of constructing a socialist society -- even that caricature of socialism represented by the present regime -- in one country. As a bureaucracy, increasingly separated from the masses because increasingly threatened by them it is interested in a growing national income only for its own sake, only in order to enhance its privileges and power -- economic, social and political. But its own existence, its own rule, constitutes the greatest brake on the development of the productive forces, and consequently on the national income. Hence, its growing urge to expand and to resolve its crisis abroad. And where the earlier Bolsheviks sought to resolve the crisis abroad in a socialist internationalist sense, by spreading the revolution, by raising the spirit of the class struggle abroad, the Stalinist regime seeks to resolve its domestic crisis by a policy which we cannot characterize as anything but imperialist. It is substantially on the basis of this analysis alone that we can consistently oppose what Trotsky calls "new seizures of territories by the Kremlin." It is on the basis of such an analysis that we are able to tell the masses or their vanguard what to do both before and after the Stalinist invasions.

And what policy shall we advance for the Russian masses? There, too, I do not believe we advance very far by the simple reiteration of the formula of unconditional defense. I would say to the Russian worker or soldier: The Stalinist bureaucracy is hurting Russian. It is discrediting the revolution in the Soviet Union throughout the working class of the world, which it is driving into the arms of the imperialist bourgeoisie. It is using you as tools of imperialism. The task that you are performing now under Stalin's command is an ignominious and reactionary one. Unite with the Ukrainian workers and peasants in the territory you have been sent to conquer and jointly overturn the Stalin regime in order to establish a genuine Soviet power. And I would say this to them tomorrow in the case of an invasion of Finland or India.

But I am now asked by Goldman and Cannon: You give no answer in your document to what should be our policy towards the defense of property nationalized by Stalin after the invasion. Is it progressive or reactionary? I cannot characterize this question, considering who are its authors, as anything but impudence. The majority refused to give an answer to any concrete question. We at least tried to give an answer to some of the concrete questions. However, in so far as the question has an independent merit of its own, it presents no difficulties for us. Naturally nationalization of property is progressive as against private property, just

as the freeing of the serfs by Alexander III was progressive as against the enslavement of the serfs. I would resist any attempt to reduce emancipated peasants to serfdom again. And it goes without saying that I would defend nationalist property. But I must continue to emphasize that the questions of today are not answered or successfully evaded by necessarily hypothetical questions about tomorrow. However important the latter undeniably are, they do not eliminate the urgency of today's problems and the problem of a Hitler attack against the Ukraine was and is the question of tomorrow.

The question of Stalin's invasion of Poland and of the Baltic countries is the question of today, and that is the one we must answer first and that is the one the majority failed and still refuses to answer.

I find very interesting and important the formulation in Comrade Trotsky's latest document that we subordinate the overthrow of Stalin to the defense of nationalized property and planned economy, and we subordinate the defense of planned economy and nationalized property to the interests of the world revolution. I should like to ask a question about that formula. What is meant in it by "subordinate," especially in the phrase dealing with the subordination of the defense of the Soviet Union, that is, of nationalized property, to the interests of the world socialist revolution? Now my understanding of our position in the past was that we vehemently deny any possible conflict between the two. The defense of Russia was always and unalterably in the interests of the world revolution, and especially against the Stalinists we maintained that the world revolution was the best way to defend the Soviet Union. But I never understood our position in the past to mean that we subordinate the one to the other. If I understand English, the term implies either that there is a conflict between the two or the possibility of such a conflict. If there is a possibility of such a conflict, and I believe there is (it has already been shown in life), that indicates again that we cannot continue maintaining the slogan of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union. By that slogan in the past we meant nothing more than this, that we place no conditions to our defense of the Soviet Union, that is, we do not say we will defend the Soviet Union on the condition that the Stalin regime is first removed. If I understand the meaning of Comrade Trotsky's new formula, it is this: We defend the Soviet Union on the condition that it is to the interests of the world socialist revolution; that it does not conflict with these interests; and that where it does conflict with these interests, the latter remain primary and decisive, and the defense of the Soviet Union is secondary and subordinate.

I should be very much interested in having the comrades of the majority give me concrete examples of conditions under which they would subordinate the defense of the Soviet Union to the interests of the world revolution. Give me one or two, and by an example I do not mean the case of, let's say, a political revolution of the workers and peasants in Russia against the Stalin regime. How can that be interpreted as subordinating the defense of nationalized property to the interests of the world revolution? We have said in the past at least that the political revolution against the Stalin bureaucracy is not a blow against its economic foundations but that

it is the best way, and, in fact, the only really sound and fundamental way in which to defend these economic foundations. The two concepts in that case are now in conflict. There cannot be in that case any question of subordinating the one to the other. The interests of both are identical.

Until concrete examples are given by the majority and until the other questions I have raised are answered, and answered objectively and convincingly, I continue to contend that our slogan of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union has been proved by events, by reality, to be false and misleading, to be harmful, and that therefore it must be abandoned by our party. We must adopt in its place a slogan which is clear, which is defensible, and which makes possible a correct policy in harmony with our revolutionary internationalist position.

* * *

I want to turn now in my concluding remarks to other questions raised in the discussion on the Russian question and related to it. We are accused of many things. We create constant crises, we are panic-stricken at every turn of events, and so forth. These charges I have already taken up in my presentation, and upon another occasion I will take them up in even greater detail.

Our charge against the majority, however, is of a different nature and we describe it politically as bureaucratic conservatism. There have been numerous manifestations of this in the past and especially in the recent past. We have found that whenever a proposal is made for implementing the party policy or for establishing a new line of policy or action, we are immediately confronted with the accusation that this creates a "crisis." We had that at the last national convention, where a perfectly normal and proper, and, in my opinion, still necessary proposal to establish an organizational department with an organization secretary was met with a barrage of attack. Instead of a calm discussion on the proposal, the convention was thrown into a turmoil in which we were accused of not understanding the A.B.C. of Bolshevik organization. To the extent that the discussion on the proposal was taken out of this "theoretical" realm, it was rejected on the grounds that no qualified comrade was available for the position in question. Our proposal that Comrade X be considered for the post was condemned, and we were condemned along with it because of our alleged lack of appreciation of the importance of trade union work, work in the field, and so forth. To shift that comrade to direct organization work for the party was allegedly light-minded and God knows what else. Less than a month after our proposal was rejected, the same comrade suddenly did become available, and this time the proposal was made not by us but by those who had originally opposed it, and it was hurriedly approved and adopted. It suddenly ceased to be a scatter-brained idea; it suddenly ceased to be the occasion for creating a crisis.

When the war broke out, we confronted a similar inertia. In this case, too, our proposals for immediate action to prepare the party for its tasks were answered with the assurances that there is nothing new, that we had always foretold the war, that we should not be panicky because it broke out, and more of the same. Yet although this was the position of the majority of the Political Committee, I found during my tour that the reaction of the minority to the war

crisis, which was described as panic-mongering, was nevertheless the spontaneous reaction of all the non-resident National Committee members with whom I came in contact.

Again, more recently on the question of the Russian invasion of Poland. The record establishes the fact that the majority was not only not prepared to give an answer to the new problems but denied that such an answer was required. And when that which was qualified by the P.C. as a concrete answer was finally written, it proved to be more of an evasion than an answer. And even this article, which appeared in the Appeal over the signature of Comrade Cannon, was and could be only a personal opinion of its author for the simple reason that the motion of the Political Committee on the subject, as I quoted it to you before, was so general as to admit of a variety of purely individual interpretations. The Political Committee simply did not show a serious attitude towards the problem.

At the plenum the majority presented for a vote the document of Comrade Trotsky which had arrived only a few hours earlier. There could not have been an opportunity for any comrade to reflect on this document. Some of them had not even had a chance to read it. Moreover, it was physically impossible for anybody to have read it in full for the simple reason that one page of the manuscript was accidentally lost in transit. Nevertheless, read or unread, studied or unstudied, complete or incomplete, the document was presented for a vote and finally adopted by the majority on the grounds, as one comrade expressed it, of faith in the correctness of Comrade Trotsky's position. Faith is a very good thing, and a prompt support of Comrade Trotsky's position on various questions has justified itself on more than one occasion in the past. But faith is no substitute for arriving seriously at a thought-out position. This was all the more so the case with this document. Even a hasty reading of it must convince any serious person, as it convinced me, that it is one of the most audacious and breath-taking documents in Marxian literature. In it Comrade Trotsky deals not only with those questions which we have long been familiar with and on which we have had a traditional and thoroughly discussed position, and also with a number of matters and viewpoints which I contend are new to our movement. The question of the inevitability of socialism is not, in my opinion, dealt with in this document as we have dealt with it in the past. In any case, it raises the question from a new angle. Similarly with the question of the nature of our epoch which we have hitherto characterized as an epoch of war and revolution. Similarly with the point raised in the document about the possibility of a new type of state which is neither bourgeois nor proletarian. Those are questions which I do not want to deal with here and now but which are, to my view, so obviously a matter for deep reflection and discussion as to exclude so light-minded a treatment as is represented by a motion to adopt the document a few hours after it has been given to the members of a party plenum.

When Trotsky raised the slogan of a united independent Soviet Ukraine a few months ago and proposed to submit it to an international discussion, not the slightest objection was raised. When we proposed to open up a discussion on the Polish invasion and problems related to it, the majority raised the most vehement objections. We are not a debating club, they said. The question was settled fundamentally at our last convention, and the convention before, and twenty-two years ago. Up to the plenum even our proposal for a theoretical discussion

of the questions in the pages of the New International was rejected. Discussion had become, in Cannon's words, a luxury that the party could not afford. I point to the fact that even at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Party held under the threat of the guns of rebelling Kronstadt and of peasant uprisings throughout the country which menaced the very existence of the Soviet Republic, the same delegates who condemned the views of the Workers' Opposition as incompatible with party membership, and which prohibited the formation of factions, nevertheless adopted at the same time a resolution which provided amply for the continuation of the discussion on a theoretical plane in special discussion bulletins of the party and at special meetings. Discussion was not a luxury that could not be afforded by the Russian party, even under those acutely dangerous circumstances. For our party we were told it was a luxury we couldn't afford. And in addition, those comrades who insisted on discussion were sneeringly and demagogically dubbed "independent thinkers" who believe that they are wiser than Trotsky.

The political passivity of the party leadership has as its counterpart an organizational rigidity and a super-sensitivity and brusqueness towards all critics, and regardless of the merit of the criticism. This is especially and notoriously the case in its attitude towards the youth. This fact has been observed and commented upon more than once and I will not elaborate on it here except to say that the truth about it cannot and will not be eliminated by repeating the commonplace formula that "we must not flatter the youth."

At the last national convention Cannon and his supporters demanded in their slate an organizational majority on the new national committee. On what political grounds? At the plenum at least the claim was presumably based upon the political differences over the Russian question. What was the political basis for this organizational majority at the convention? There simply wasn't any. At the preceding convention in Chicago two and a half years ago, a more or less united leadership was established. Yet Comrade Cannon could come to the convention in New York and declare that he would not assume responsibility for one single member on the Political Committee. We insisted at the convention, as you know, upon including in the new National Committee a number of young comrades. The slate presented by Cannon's friends completely excluded the youth except for the one direct representative to which they are constitutionally entitled. The convention gave the party leadership what was tantamount to a mandate on this point by voting into the N.C. a number of youth comrades whom we proposed.

After the convention a Resident Political Committee was established by the majority, a committee that was presumably satisfactory to this majority. That was only three months ago. At the last plenum, this committee was drastically reorganized and so reorganized that we refused to take any responsibility for its recasting. The national labor secretary of the party was eliminated from the committee. All the youth comrades elected at the convention were dropped from it, including Comrade Gould and Comrade Erber, as well as Comrade George Breitman. That is, the committee was reorganized on a purely factional basis. I deny that this had an established political basis. I deny that it was reorganized on the basis of positions taken on the Russian question. I deny that it was reorganized in order that the fundamental position on the Russian question, about which the majority

speaks, might prevail in the party leadership. If that was the only ground for the reorganization, why were not comrades like Bern and Erber and others who voted for the original Cannon motion on the Russian question invited to the caucus meeting that was openly convened at the plenum for the purpose of deciding on the reorganization? I do not agree with the steps taken for a single minute.

I do not agree either with the conception of leadership growing among the majority and even openly advocated by many of them, at least in informal conversation. I do not agree that any one man must under all circumstances be guaranteed the leadership of the party or the control of that leadership. I do not agree that if you approve that concept you will have a democratic regime in the party. I want a genuinely collective leadership, one that operates, discusses, and decides collectively. And a leader cult which we have had flagrantly expressed by a number of responsible members of the Political Committee is a bad substitute for a collective leadership.

I freely admit that these questions were not brought up, at least not brought up fully, at the July convention. In the first place, the pre-convention meeting of the N.C. plenum decided against discussing such questions at the convention. The majority argued that "the membership can't settle these questions. They must first be settled by the leadership." There is a kernel of truth in this and that is another reason why I did not bring the matter before the convention in all its amplitude. It has not been my custom -- because I do not believe it is correct -- to precipitate every dispute and disagreement among the leadership into the ranks of the party. I am not a professional "rank and file" demagogue who rushes into a membership discussion on the slightest provocation or no provocation at all. And it was with the intention of exhausting the last and remotest possibility of resolving these problems among the leading comrades themselves that I hesitated to bring them before the convention. Yet the situation demanded that the convention be given an opportunity of exercising an influence and pressure on the leadership, if only on a limited scale. That is probably the reason why there was a certain confusion and bewilderment during one part of the July convention. And while I am willing to take my share of the responsibility for it, I cannot take it all or even the major portion of it because it does not belong on my shoulders.

I believe also that it is imperative to change that alien spirit of arrogance and contempt for the membership which is manifested by responsible representatives of the party leadership in organizational and literary posts, which rightly irritates and angers the comrades but which is considered by those responsible for it as a good characteristic of "hard Bolsheviks." Repeated manifestations of this ugly spirit continue to go unrebuked, particularly by those whose main responsibility it is to rebuke and eliminate them.

These phenomena and many others that could be referred to create a distinctly unhealthy and harmful situation in the party. The indispensable and preliminary condition for restoring a healthy state in the party is a frank, sober, calm and objective discussion, not envenomed by personal and factional recriminations and insinuations

This alone can create that free atmosphere in the party which will permit an intelligent and fruitful discussions of the multiplicity of questions now raised again so acutely by the war and the new stage of degeneration of Stalinism. Only that way can we arrive at decisions; adopt policies which will be a firm and lucid guide to the party and, through it, to the working class. In that sense and in that spirit, as a contribution to that desirable end, we submit our resolution to the discussion of the party.