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The Real Issue: "Revelation" or Marxist Analysis?

(Notes on the Minority Statement on the Russian Question)

by G. Clarke and S. Gordon

The Russian question puts all political parties and programs to the test. Ambiguity, equivocation, abandonment of the methods of Marxist analysis serve above all in this question as a bridge to Menshevism and to the camp of the class enemy.

The Minority, under the pressure of democratic public opinion, writes on the Russian question ambiguously, equivocally, and not by the methods of Marxist analysis.

One looks in vain through the 25,000 word book of the Minority to the crucial questions: What is the character of the Soviet State? Shall we defend it against imperialism?

After three months of discussion, we discover in the long-winded effusion of the Minority, euphemistically titled: "What is at Issue in the Russian Dispute," that the class character of the Soviet State is not at issue. A discussion of this question is, if you please, merely a smokescreen raised by the "Cannon clique" for factional reasons.

When and why did the Minority drop overboard the Marxist theory of the state as the criterion for determining the role of the Soviet Union in a war and the attitude of the Fourth International towards that war? You can search this lexicon of confusion with a high-powered glass but you will find no answer to these vital questions. The reason, however, for this conscious evasion is not difficult to ascertain. So firmly was the Marxist analysis of the state implanted into the political and theoretical doctrine of the Fourth International that the outstanding exponent of revisionism and the leader of the Minority combination, Comrade Burnham, was forced to recognize this criterion and to draw his conclusions therefrom only a few months ago. Burnham declared in his fundamental program submitted and then "withdrawn" at the October Plenum:

"The policy of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union was predicated upon the proletarian character of the Soviet state and the conception of the four types of war in which that state might be involved. . . ." (Internal Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 2, page 10)

For Burnham then the question of the class nature of the Soviet state was the issue in the dispute. When he challenged the idea that the Soviet Union could be "considered a workers state" he was laying the necessary basis for the political conclusions that "defense of the Soviet Union would be social patriotism."

Burnham's opportunistic action in withdrawing this document at the Plenum does not in the least remove it from the political struggle in the party. On the contrary, it was and remains the real program of the Minority combination.

In its temporary program, substituted for the real position contained in Burnham's document, until the moment for the latter's presentation is more auspicious, the opposition fails to answer the fundamental questions:

Shall the Soviet Union be unconditionally defended against imperialism? Is the Soviet Union still a workers state worthy of defense by the international working class? By what method do you approach the problem? Why and when have you discarded the Marxist method of predicating policy on the class character of the state?

What do they say? Let us examine their so-called answers:

1. On Defense of the Soviet Union

On page 35 of its document, the Minority finally sums up its answer on the question of defense in these words:

"Defense of the Soviet Union when it is conducting a reactionary war, a war solely or predominantly in the interests of the bureaucracy and its imperialist expansionism, a war against the interests of the world revolution? NO! Defense of the Soviet Union when it is conducting a progressive war against imperialism, in the interests of the world revolution? YES!"

If these conclusions have any meaning at all they mean: Do we defend the Soviet Union under the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy? NO! When do we defend the Soviet Union? Only when the bureaucracy has been overthrown!

There can be no other possible conclusion from this reasoning.

For (1) it is obviously impossible to rely upon the bureaucracy to conduct "a progressive war against imperialism in the interests of the world revolution" because these are not its interest; and (2) if such a war can be conducted in spite of the bureaucracy's interests, then obviously we cannot characterize a war conducted by the Soviet Union as reactionary simply because the aims of the bureaucracy are not in the interests of the world revolution.

How different is the point of view of the Fourth International! Our party says clearly that the aims of the Soviet bureaucracy, whatever they may be, are circumscribed by the class character of the state. Consequently, in a war with a capitalist state the Soviet Union plays a progressive role and deserves defense by the working class no matter how degenerate the character of the bureaucracy. We have a class interest in the preservation of the Soviet Union from destruction by the imperialists.

What does the minority say? What interest does it have in a state whose policy is apparently determined by "imperialist expansionism"?

The question is sharply posed to the minority: Will you defend the Western Ukraine (a territory grabbed under the policy of "imperialist expansionism", we presume), now that it has been nationalized, against attack from Hitler? To this question we get the following remarkable answer:

"The Western Ukraine stands now on the same footing as the rest of the Soviet Union into which it has been incorporated."

Does that mean that in the whole of the Soviet Union we must now have the same attitude toward the Red Army as we have to the Reichswehr in German Poland (remember Shachtman's Plenum resolution?) Our authors will not say.

What policy do they propose. Here is a masterpiece of precision:

"The minority proposes to apply the same basic policy toward the Western Ukraine part of the Soviet Union as towards the Eastern Siberia part. . . We are puzzled to understand why this question is presented so 'crushingly'."

What is this basic policy? Defense only in "progressive" wars against imperialism. If the Soviet Union conducts a "reactionary" war against Hitler—no defense of the Western Ukraine! What determines the character of the war to be carried on by the Soviet Union? Anything, it would seem, except the fact that within its borders industry is nationalized. Thus, according to our minority, both the struggle to maintain nationalization in the Western Ukraine and the struggle to overthrow it could be equally reactionary and of no concern to the working class! And it wonders that such a question is put to it . . . "crushingly".

Or, take the position of the minority with regard to the war in Finland. As we already know, it is for defeatism in Finland, not only against the bourgeoisie, but also against the Red Army—"equally against both." Why, we shall examine later. Here, we are concerned only with the general question of defense.

"But," they say in their document (p. 21) with an air of incredulity, "suppose the imperialists, using the Finnish invasion as a pretext, launch a real (!) attack upon the Soviet Union, with the aim of carving it up among themselves (!), of restoring capitalism (!), of smashing not only (!!) Stalinism but everything that remains of what we fought for 22 years to maintain—will you then be for the defense of the Soviet Union? To which we answer simply (simply!): yes, if the character of the war really changes into a war of imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union, we shall take a clear-cut position of defensism. . ."

If there is a real attack upon the Soviet Union, not one rigged up by Cannon to fool the minority; if its aim is not to leave the country intact as the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics but to carve it up among the imperialists—why if the capitalists are going to be that dirty, then their answer is Yes, we shall defend the Soviet Union—but only IF the character of the war REALLY changes into a war of imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union!

This admirably simple answer, clear and incisive as it is, nevertheless contains a flaw or two: First, it leaves out of account whether such a war would be "reactionary" or "progressive". Secondly, it does not specify what constitutes a real attack. In fact, it is no answer at all.

But, let us go back for a moment to the question: What, in the opinion of the minority, now characterizes the role of the Soviet Union in war? How has its character changed?

2. On the Role of the Soviet Union: A "Revelation"

The minority document characterizes the party position which it shared with us in the past, as follows: "We are for the defense of the Soviet Union in any war against a capitalist power in which it is engaged; we are for the victory of the Red Army in such a war despite Stalin." (p. 6) That, indeed, still remains the position of the party. How did we arrive at it?

"What basic conception motivated this clear and categorical position?" asks the minority document immediately thereafter. And it answers: "The view that in a conflict with any capitalist country, the war, on the part of the Red Army, could only be progressive, that is, even under Stalin it (?) would be defending in its own (i.e., bureaucratic) way the conquests of the October Revolution."

The phraseology here begins to go over from precision to legerdemain. The Red Army takes on the hue of an abstraction. It is the army of a workers' state? Is this why the Red Army defends the conquests of October even under Stalin? Or is there some other reason? We are not enlightened on this point by the authors. However, the very next step in their document reveals why they pass over from precision to legerdemain.

"This is the position," they say, "that the minority now proposes to revise. Such a revision is necessary because it has been revealed (1) that the Soviet Union (that is, the Stalinist bureaucracy and its army) is capable of carrying on not only progressive but also reactionary wars. More to the point, in the present dispute, the Stalinist bureaucracy has proved that it is capable of conducting a reactionary war even against bourgeois states."

Here it must be observed (1) That the Red Army once again loses the color of an abstraction—it becomes: its army, that is, the army of the bureaucracy; (2) The Soviet Union becomes: "the bureaucracy and its army". (3) The "conquests of the October revolution", a transitional phrase used by the minority to unload the embarrassing criterion "workers' state", has disappeared from view completely; (4) Since the Soviet Union has become the Stalinist bureaucracy and since everyone knows that the bureaucracy is reactionary, the Soviet Union can now conduct "reactionary wars, even against bourgeois states".

That is indeed a revision of our fundamental position. How was it arrived at? It was "revealed". Apparently, therefore, by Revelation! It is not unusual for people who depart from scientific premises to try to find comfort in mystic revelation. But it is not very difficult to dispose of the mystery of this Revelation of the minority.

What has been revealed? Let us examine the facts:

(1) Is the Soviet Union and the Stalinist bureaucracy identical? If they are not, why does the document use the two terms interchangeably?

(2) If they are, when did they become so—what new factors made for this change in the nature of the state?

(3) Or, was the Stalinist bureaucracy progressive before the war broke out ("defending in its own bureaucratic way, etc. . .")? Did it become reactionary only after the outbreak of war? What caused the change?

(4) Did the bureaucracy want to and could it defend the conquests of October before, and has it ceased only now to have these characteristics?

(5) What has changed in the nature of the bureaucracy?

(6) What has changed in the character of the bourgeois states fighting the Soviet Union?

(7) What new factor has brought about all these changes?

In seeking an answer to these questions, we have to wade through several pages of "explanation" to the effect that the majority are such dunderheads that we believe "that a capitalist state, because of its class nature, cannot ever (underlined in the original) fight a progressive war and that a workers' state—even a degenerated workers' state, because of its class nature, cannot ever fight a reactionary war." The question against whom the given state is fighting never enters into the discussion for the

minority pedants. For, as everyone knows, wars are only fought by people, never against anyone. The class relationship between the participants is therefore of no consequence to them.

This kind of gibberish is supposed to cover up the fact that in the concrete instance, when a war is being conducted by a capitalist against a workers' (even though degenerated) state, it is the duty of Marxists, and of the working class as a whole, to take their stand along class lines, on the side of the degenerated workers' state, against the capitalist state.

3. On the Character of the War

"The character of the war"—here is the core of the Revelation—"is determined by the predominant political and social aims of each of the belligerents and their enemy, and their objective consequences, and very often by the character of the regime which is conducting the war." (p. 8)

In other words, the character of the war has nothing to do with the class character of the belligerent countries. It is a matter of political and social aims. There are, to be sure, also some objective consequences of these aims. But apparently no objective causes! Finally, there is also "very often" the character of the regime. Here we are a little puzzled: Just what is meant by "regime"? Could it possibly mean class? A little paragraph or two is enough to disillusion us on that point. For this criterion is applied to the "Stalin regime". The minority follows the above passage with this:

"Furthermore (that "furthermore" is really good!), particularly in our epoch, our attitude towards a given war must be based upon the interests of the international proletariat and of the world socialist revolution." Who denies that? Not we! That is not at issue.

Everything here is completely devoid of meaning, barren of all concreteness, all the way down to the purpose which the criterion is supposed to serve.

We Marxists determine our attitude, not to a "given war" but to the living participants in such a war. We distinguish between a "given" civil war and a "given" war between nations. We distinguish between states in a war among nations and between regimes in a civil war. We distinguish between a civil war conducted within the framework of a given class state and a civil war waged by two classes over the character of the state. We distinguish between wars of antiquity and modern wars, wars under the conditions of the rise of capitalism and wars under the conditions of the decline of capitalism. Each requires a different criterion, if we are to arrive at valid conclusions.

What does the minority offer us here? An eternal truth. Like all "eternal truths" it is thoroughly useless to us, but of infinite benefit to the reactionary forces in society who themselves employ such formulae to hide the living reality.

What is at issue are the preceding formulations:

"The character of the war is determined by the predominant social and political aims of each of the belligerents and their enemy." Let's stop here for a moment. Let us examine these aims. Are they class aims? Are they the aims of the government in office? Are they the aims of the Chief Executive? Are they the aims of the army or its generals? Or are they the aims of a state above all class considerations?

The document of the minority does not tell us. They are just the aims of the "belligerents".

Is there any reason why Chamberlain could not accept such a criterion? Cannot Hitler very well fill this formula with the content of his "benevolence" and Britain's "perfidy"? Can Daladier object to a criterion which allows him to say that Hitler's aim is to destroy civilization and his to save it?

Who is to determine what the "aims of the belligerents" are? By what standards are we to measure the objective content of these aims? Not a word, from our masters of the "concrete". Just a jumble of phrases that can mean all things to all men.

The character of the war is determined not only by the aims but also, by . . . "their objective consequences."

What is the meaning of this phrase? It is only necessary to examine it in the light of living reality to understand its utter shallowness. The "objective consequences" of Hitler's war today are the crushing of twenty million Poles, bestial mistreatment of the Jews, etc., etc. So? We condemn it as reactionary. The "objective consequences" of the war next year may be a rising of these same Poles and Jews and proletarian revolution in Germany. So? Do we praise the war as progressive?

Or, do our authors mean "objective consequences" of aims fulfilled? In that case we could never support Loyalist Spain or

China, for Negrin's aims and Chiang-Kai-Shek's aims—fulfilled—are the crushing of the proletariat and especially the Fourth Internationalists. On the basis of that kind of reasoning, only a war conducted by us is progressive; every other war, reactionary. On that basis we cannot support any kind of war until we come into power ourselves—a stand which on the face of it contradicts the "concrete" positions on war taken by the minority.

Finally, our learned opponents tell us: ". . . very often the character of the regime which is conducting the war" determines the character of the war.

As in everything else they have written we see that, here too, the theoreticians of the "concrete" live up to their title. The character of the regime conducting the war determines its character. Good. Always? No. In that case, only under certain circumstances. Good. What circumstances, when? "Very often."

Is the present war between England and Germany included under this "very often"? Why not? Chamberlain contends that England is fighting, not the German people, but the regime of Hitlerism. Every petty bourgeois democrat, from the Times to the New Leader repeats this lie after him, calls for support of Chamberlain's fight for "democracy"—in a progressive war to destroy Nazi reaction. The fact that Hitlerism is a regime, that it is reactionary, cannot be disputed. That Chamberlain's regime, compared with Hitler's, is democratic, cannot be disputed either. The liberals and social democrats, and our Anglo-Saxon imperialists themselves call this war progressive because "the character of the regime" of the two belligerents characterizes it. Is there anything in the formula of the minority which excludes this view? Nothing at all.

How can an attitude towards war be in the interests of the international proletariat and the world revolution when it is based on a criterion which can be held by Chamberlain, Roosevelt and even Hitler? It can't be done. This becomes doubly clear if you look at the New Leader. You find people there who perform the same rites.

Have the leaders of the Minority already forgotten the attacks they directed against the social patriots for using the same formula they now themselves employ?

So far our enlightened opposition has been rather sparing in the concrete application of its mystic formula. But with the aid of a Revelation it has attempted to apply the formula in at least one instance. Namely, with regard to the Soviet Union in its war with Finland. Finland, we must observe, somehow escapes this formula. The opposition makes up for this oversight with a rather extended application in the case of Soviet Russia.

4. On the Present War

"From this basic standpoint"—the criteria cited above—"we approach the question: What is the character of Russia's role in the present war—not the war as it was foretold on this or that occasion, and not the war into which one may or will be converted, but the present war?" There is your practical application, says the Minority.

"Stalin (!) is not conducting a war for the defense of the nationalized property from an attack of imperialism which aims to convert the Soviet Union into its colony. On the other side, the imperialists, in this war, are not fighting to divide the Soviet Union among themselves, but, for a series of reasons largely beyond their control(!), they are conducting an inter-imperialist war at each other's expense, with one side seeking to keep the Soviet Union as its ally and the other seeking to win it as its ally." (p. 8)

Several things immediately hit the reader's eye in this . . . "evaluation" of "Russia's role." We learn, first of all that Stalin (!) is conducting this war. As to what Stalin represents—we no longer know. Does he represent the workers state in any way? Is his conduct determined by the social character of the Soviet bureaucracy? To what extent is it determined by the ramifications of the workers state? Are the conquests of October involved in any way? If not, when did they cease to become involved in a struggle between Stalin and the capitalist world? At what precise point? What caused the change?

You will look in vain for an answer to these inter-related questions in the Minority document. For analysis, it simply substitutes a bull of excommunication in the papal style: "Stalin is not conducting a war of defense of nationalized property."

Has he ceased to base his rule upon nationalized property? Does the nationalized property set any limits or restrictions upon his policy? Has the economy of the country ceased to be a factor in determining its politics? Is this true just in Russia? Why just in Russia? If not in Russia alone, are we to draw the conclusion that

economy is not a determining factor on the politics of regimes altogether? That is, has Marxism been wrong all along?

The same holds true in their evaluation of the other—"belligerent" in the war. "On the other hand," the document tells us, "the imperialists in this war are not fighting to divide the Soviet Union among themselves. . . ." Destruction of the workers state and the reintroduction of Russia once more into the sphere of capitalist exploitation is not a war aim of the imperialists—we have reassurance of the opposition on this point!

Why? When did the imperialists stop being harassed by the withdrawal of one-sixth of the earth from their sphere of exploitation? What has called for the suspension of this fundamental consideration, this factor intimately connected with the world crisis of imperialism? What has changed in the character of imperialism? When did it cease to be based on capitalist economy?

While we get no answer to this basic question concerning the laws of motion of imperialism in the Minority masterpiece, we do get this remarkable "answer":

". . . for a series of reasons largely beyond their control (!) they are conducting an inter-imperialist war at each other's expense, with one side seeking to keep the Soviet Union as its ally and the other seeking to win it as its ally."

A lucid reply! First of all we discover that there are "reasons largely beyond their control" which force the imperialists to carry on the war in a certain manner. If we concretize these "reasons beyond control" we have the inner contradictions of capitalism.

The question must occur to the attentive reader: if there are compelling reasons, (flowing from the contradictions of capitalism) beyond their control, which drive the imperialists to fight against each other—and that is true—are there not just as compelling reasons (flowing from the contradictions between capitalism and the nationalized economy) which drive the imperialists to fight together against Soviet Russia? What is the relation between the two sets of compelling reasons? How do they affect each other? or do the imperialists manipulate "reasons beyond control" at will? We will never find out from the Minority because the reasons for its position are "beyond control"—certainly beyond explanation.

Furthermore, if there are reasons "beyond their control" which determine the character of a war conducted by the imperialists, are there no such compelling reasons which determine a war conducted by Stalin? Is Stalin master of the social forces at work in the world? Or do these social forces apply to him also? And if they do, how? Does the contradiction between capitalism and nationalized economy affect his policy also? In what way?

What are the reasons that cause the imperialists to fight each other "with one side seeking to keep the Soviet Union as its ally and the other seeking to win it as an ally?" What are the reasons that cause the Stalinist bureaucracy in control of the Soviet Union to ally itself with one or another bloc of imperialists—beyond what Stalin "wants" or what Chamberlain "wants," or what Hitler "wants"?

The imperialists fight against each other in order to determine who shall take the lion's share of capitalist exploitation in the world. That fight is subordinated to the struggle of imperialism as a whole to maintain capitalism against its main foe—socialist revolution (nationalization of industry, planned economy, establishment of foreign trade monopoly). They carry on the first struggle when the danger of the second subsides. They concentrate on the second struggle when the danger becomes acute or when the possibility for doing away with it altogether becomes opportune.

The Stalinist bureaucracy has created such a possibility by its whole course of action and at the same time it has reduced the danger of socialist revolution. That makes for the relationship of forces in this present war—the imperialists can afford to settle accounts with each other, utilizing the Soviet Union as ally or "neutral," at the same time as they chart their course against the greatly weakened Soviet Union. Britain is fighting Soviet Russia as a "neutral" and Germany as an "ally." With regard to the Soviet Union, the difference between Germany and Britain concerns the auspices under which it shall once more be opened up for capitalist exploitation—under the present British hegemony with Hitler as Super-Wrangel or under German hegemony, with Britain as a subdued ally?

To see only the tactic—"seeing the S.U. as ally"; not to see the strategy—"an attack of imperialism which aims to convert the S.U. into its colony"—that is possible only when one divorces and isolates events from their fundamental source: the process of capitalist decay, i.e., the "reasons beyond their control" of the belligerents. This is substituting for Marxist analysis—subjective impressions.

In the same sense, it is absolute blindness to deny that Stalin is "conducting a war for the defense of nationalized property from an attack of imperialism." Just as the attack of imperialism on the nationalized property of the Soviet Union is inherent in its very character, underlying the basic strategy of both imperialist blocs in this war, so the defense of the Soviet Union from imperialism is inherent in the character of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Here too, we are not speaking of tactics (isolated events) which vary with regard to the strength or weakness of one (the imperialist) or another (the working class, or revolutionary) opponent that the bureaucracy faces, but of the strategy dictated by the economy of the state upon which the bureaucracy bases itself ("reasons beyond their control").

5. On the Nature of the Soviet Bureaucracy

What is the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy? Is it a new class or is it a caste still basing itself upon the working class and its rule in the Soviet Union?

The opposition simply refuses to consider this question. By this refusal it deprives itself of the possibility of giving an objective answer to the question: what determines the bureaucracy's role in this war? It cannot (warring tendencies within the bloc prevent it) go into the "reasons beyond their control," so it apparently just denies the existence of such reasons.

What determines the bureaucracy's role in the war? the opposition asks. And it answers: its aims—a subjective factor.

Whereupon a Marxist asks: How are the aims of the bureaucracy connected with the class character of the state whose regime it is? And we get this answer from the opposition: The class character of the state has nothing to do with the bureaucracy's aims; we can determine these "without raising at this time the class nature of the Soviet State."

Why then should the class character of the British state or the German state have anything to do with the aims of Hitler or of Chamberlain?

The opposition tells us, when we raise the question of the class nature of the Soviet state and point to its nationalized economy, that: "The economy does not go to war, Stalin's Red Army is what goes to war." Why cannot every social democrat use this shibboleth, this half-truth, with equal validity when we point to the monopoly capitalist economy (the class nature) of Germany and Britain; "the economy does not go to war, Hitler's Nazi army is going to war against our democratic army." And, indeed the social democrats do say just that—"from the point of view of the international proletariat," so to speak.

We have always said to the social democrats: Your making the issue between England and Germany one between democracy and fascism is a fraud. Both Germany's fascist regime and England's "democratic" regime flow from, and are determined by the state of their respective economies. England can afford "democracy" as long as its rich colonial booty permits the British ruling class to bribe the labor aristocracy and the petty bourgeoisie. German capitalism institutes Fascism because the ruling class has no such means of bribery and can rule only by the naked fist; it must wrest rich colonial booty from its imperialist competitors. When England and Germany go to war, therefore, the struggle is not between regimes but between economies. That is what determines the aims; regimes are entirely incidental to this determining factor. The war is, therefore, a war for colonial booty waged by two capitalist states. Workers can have no interest in the victory of the one or the other, but must defeat both. By failing to point out that Chamberlain's or Roosevelt's "democracy" is an aim that is entirely conditioned by the requirements of Chamberlain's and Roosevelt's economic class interests, the interests of the class, upon whose economy their regimes rest—we say to the social democrats—you are deceiving the workers, you are betraying the international proletariat.

The opposition unconsciously borrows the formula of the social-patriots in order to revenge themselves upon Stalin and his clique. The intention is, no doubt, noble; but it paves the road to complete revisionism.

Even though its formula leaves the road open for a social democratic appraisal of the war, the opposition does not yet say that the class character of the capitalist states has nothing to do with their war aims, that they determine these "without raising at this time the class nature" of the British or the German state. That holds good only for the Soviet state for some mysterious reasons.

What is the bureaucracy, whose aims, we have seen, determine the character of the war? Here is about as much of a description as we can get out of the minority's document: "The Stalin regime

plays the role of agent of imperialism facilitating the victory of the fascist bandits over the "democratic" bandits; in addition, it pursues imperialistic aims of its own." (p. 8)

"But," we read further on (p. 28) "this 'agent of imperialism' is not at all like such an agent of imperialism as, let us say, the compradore national bourgeoisie of China. It not only rests on a different economic foundation (!), with contradictions and problems peculiar to it (!), but it also has different ambitions, appetites, national and international aims. It is not merely (!?) an agent of imperialism; it follows, or tries to follow, an imperialist policy of its own."

It is not "merely" an agent of imperialism. Good. It follows an imperialist policy of its own. But what else is it (not merely being an agent of imperialism) that necessitates its following an imperialist policy of its own? No answer.

It is not like the compradore bourgeoisie of China. O.K. What is it like?

It is not merely, it is not like, it pursues, it follows—but what is it? What in its nature makes it follow or pursue one course or another? We seek in vain for enlightenment.

We are told: It rests upon a different economic foundation from the Chinese compradore bourgeoisie. Good. How does this "economic foundation" affect its character, its policy? What is this economic foundation? Does it bear a class character? Or is it devoid of all class character? How does this economic foundation differentiate it from the Chinese compradore bourgeoisie? No answer. This, too, is presumably "not at issue."

We are told, moreover, that this economic foundation carries with it "contradictions and problems peculiar to it." Good. What are these contradictions and problems and how do they affect the bureaucracy? In what sense do these contradictions and problems, "peculiar to it," determine a class differentiation between the Soviet bureaucracy—the Stalin regime—and, say, the Chamberlain regime or the Chiang Kai Shek regime, resting upon other economic foundations, with their own "peculiar" contradictions and problems? The opposition again clarifies its peculiar position by—NOT answering.

We get, in brief, only what the object is not. An entirely negative approach. On the positive side, we get nothing. And no wonder! The very attempt at a positive answer requires an analysis of the class nature of the Soviet state. And that means the break-up of the unprincipled bloc, than which nothing—not even the "scientific approach"—is more precious. The bloc is the be-all and end-all for the opposition. It must not be shaken up by anything so trivial as clarity of principles.

6. "Stalinist Imperialism"

Proceeding with an absolute indifference to the nature of the state, the opposition goes over to an explanation of what the nature of the regime that rules over this state is not and thus gets an absolutely scientific analysis of what the policy pursued by the regime actually is!

This policy, this object which has no beginning and no middle but only an end, is Stalinist imperialism. What is Stalinist imperialism?

"The nature of Stalinist imperialism," our authors tell us "must be sought in the contradictions of the transitional economy of the Soviet Union and the relations of the 'bourgeois bureaucracy' to this economy."

Here again, we are treated to the usual lucidity that marks the analyses of the minority. The nature of the policy must be sought in the contradictions of the "transitional economy of the Soviet Union." Is this transitional economy still that of a workers state or has it already been transformed into another form of transitional economy? Burnham had an answer. But the satellites of the bloc were NOT yet ready to accept it. So the question goes unanswered.

The policy is further determined by the relations of the "bourgeois bureaucracy" to this economy, says the opposition. Here misrepresentation vies with confusion. Trotsky says, in order to make clear its tendencies toward primitive accumulation, that the Stalinist bureaucracy is in a sense not only a workers' bureaucracy but also a "bourgeois bureaucracy." For the opposition the use of that phrase is sufficient to apply as an unexplained and unrelated characterization of the bureaucracy. What does this mean? Does it mean that the bureaucracy has already ceased to be also a "workers bureaucracy"? If it does, if the bureaucracy has changed its class nature, enlighten us as to when and how this took place! If you are using an isolated phrase in place on an analysis, you are merely acting like charlatans, unworthy of serious consideration.

But let us return to what makes up for the opposition the na-

ture of "Stalinist imperialism." The opposition reasons: The contradictions inherent in Soviet economy cannot be solved within the borders of one state. Lenin and Trotsky, and all Marxists, for that matter, therefore proposed the solution of these contradictions on the international arena by revolutionary means. Stalin set up the false theory of "socialism in one country" which provided NO solution for the contradictions of Soviet economy. Having in the meantime degenerated into a reactionary caste, the Stalinist bureaucracy has discovered in practice that "socialism in one country" doesn't work. So they are now setting out to solve these contradictions on the international arena—by reactionary means.

On the face of it, this appears to be a plausible enough theory. Let's see.

The contradictions in Soviet economy have indeed not only not lessened but increased under Stalinist rule. "Socialism in one country" has proved that it can't work. No one disputes that. But what is the contradiction in Soviet economy? How, let us say, does it differ from the contradictions in the economy of the imperialist countries? In the imperialist (capitalist) countries the contradiction, we know, arises from an abundance of capital and a lack of markets and sources of raw material. Any solution, insofar as it can even be partially fulfilled, therefore depends upon conquest of territory (colonies, semi-colonies, spheres of influence). Their problem is: export or die.

In the Soviet Union the contradiction arises from an abundance of both markets and sources of raw material which cannot be exploited adequately, in spite of planned production and the nationalization of industry (the most advanced forms of socialized production), because of a lack of capital. Its problem is in a sense: import or die.

Like all Marxists, Lenin and Trotsky foresaw that a solution of this problem could be achieved only by the conquest of the advanced capitalist countries, that is, by world revolution. Let us say that Stalin sees the same problem now, from the point of view of his bureaucracy, and therefore wants to solve it the reactionary way. "Stalinist imperialism" then, if it has any meaning at all—if it is to be "sought in the contradictions of the transitional economy of the Soviet Union"—must signify: a policy of conquest directed against Germany, France, England, the United States, either altogether, or by combinations with one bloc of powers against the other. (Agricultural Finland, Ukraine, Latvia, don't fit the specifications!)

To our great surprise, however, we see the Minority set down the policy of "Stalinist imperialism" in these terms:

"Under the Stalinist regime, the inherent contradictions of Soviet economy have not been and could not be resolved by the purely military-bureaucratic measures of the apparatus 'in one country'. Nowadays too and in a sense, far more acutely, the dilemma is still—'Expand or die!' But the Stalinist policy differs fundamentally from that of the revolutionary workers' state years ago precisely in that it is reactionary and counter-revolutionary. This policy is not based solely on the desire of the bureaucracy to assure itself militarily from attack by the imperialist powers. One of the main driving forces behind the policy of the bureaucracy is 'the tendency to expand its powers, its prestige, its revenues.' We call this policy Stalinist imperialism."

We get here the same clarity and precision and concreteness that we got before with regard to defense, to the nature of the bureaucracy, to the character of the Soviet state. The policy is "not based solely"—it has as "one of the main driving forces. . .", etc.

Is the policy of "reactionary" conquest of the advanced capitalist countries "inherent in its economy" (the Soviet Union)? The bold authors do not say.

Instead they confine themselves to: (1) recognizing that among the bases of the policy is "the desire of the bureaucracy to assure itself militarily from attack by the imperialist powers" ("not solely," but nevertheless still there); and (2) to repeating after the "majorityite" Trotsky that another driving force is "the tendency to expand its power, its prestige, its revenues." There is literally not even a scintilla of an original thought in this whole "analysis." It is merely an eclectic jumble of ill-digested thoughts borrowed from others to "prove" a position held against those from whom the borrowing is done.

It is interesting to stop for a moment, and to ask ourselves: Why didn't our authors draw the logical conclusions from their theory of the reactionary Stalinist solution of the contradictions of Soviet economy? Why did they suddenly lose their nerve?

The answer is not difficult to find. Like all their "theories" this one too is in the nature of an improvisation. When they began

setting this improvisation down on paper, they discovered what is a commonly known fact: namely, that a highly developed economy is required in order to combat, not to speak of conquering, an advanced capitalist country. In modern warfare, all other factors being equal, economy is decisive—that's why there are war economies. That's why all machinery is geared for war production. Soviet economy is nowhere near in economic shape to tackle an advanced capitalist country (its rate or productivity alone should indicate that). It is at best, a poor supplement to the greater advantage that Russia has in its vast terrain—for a purely defensive war. The minority knows that and Stalin knows that, as well as we do.

A "reactionary" solution by means of "Stalinist imperialism" in this sense is therefore a patent absurdity. The only reactionary solution possible is the transformation of the Soviet Union into a field of capitalist exploitation for imperialism—with or without Stalin's aid. For that, a change in the nature of the Soviet state, the denationalization of industry, the reintroduction of private property, at the very least—the abolition of the foreign trade monopoly, is absolutely necessary. Is Stalin heading in that direction? Possibly. Has he already accomplished the task? By no means. For that, the Soviet workers still have to be heard from. Meanwhile Stalin and his bureaucracy are still veering between this real reactionary solution and the solution of the international proletariat.

That is why it is absurd to call his policy "imperialism"; that is why it is blindness to be guided only by his "aims"; that is why it is entirely correct to defend the Soviet Union even under Stalin, when in its conflict with imperialism it strengthens itself militarily; that is why we must make it our business to see that the international proletariat destroys the Stalinist bureaucracy and ends the danger of this "reactionary solution"; that is how we distinguish in defending the Soviet Union between the workers' state and its bureaucracy.

That is also why the Minority, after unraveling its bold theory, so bravely fell back upon phrases culled from the works of the Fourth International when it actually came to characterizing the policy for which this theory was to serve as a basis.

What remains of "Stalinist imperialism" is therefore nothing more than the shell, that is, the use of the word as an epithet. It is an epithet used in place of Trotsky's somewhat cumbersome but nevertheless scientific definition: "the policy of the Bonapartist bureaucracy of a degenerated workers' state in imperialist encirclement."

The advantage in using the scientific definition is obvious. It makes possible to distinguish in this policy, what is in the interests of the workers' state (when we have "the desire of the bureaucracy to assure itself militarily from attack by the imperialist powers" and consequently, also the Soviet state) and that is in the interests solely of the bureaucracy (when we have "the tendency to expand its power, prestige, etc."). It makes possible for us to reject completely the policy of invasion itself, with its secret diplomacy, its slavish imitation of Fascist methods, its violation of the right of self-determination, its blow to the morale of the international working class which all serve the reactionary interests of the bureaucracy alone; and at the same time independently of the initial causes of the ensuing war, to defend the U.S.S.R. against imperialism, that is, capitalist state or states.

The epithet "Stalinist imperialism" can perform only one function: to confuse the policy of the degenerated workers' state with that of its imperialist encirclement, to make impossible distinguishing between the class character of the Soviet state and its opponents and consequently make impossible the pursuit of a class attitude, different with regard to the U.S.S.R. than with regard to its capitalist opponents.

If you look beneath the surface, if you see Stalin not only as Stalin but as the Bonapartist bureaucracy of a workers' state in imperialist encirclement; if you see the imperialists not only as the present military-diplomatic line-up, but as parts of a social force which must crush every vestige of nationalized property in the Soviet Union in order to give capitalism another lease on life—then you cannot possibly come to the absolutely light-minded conclusions of the Minority. Then this war, any war, in which the Soviet Union clashes with imperialism or its satellites involves the defense of the nationalized property of the Soviet Union against the attempt to convert it into a colony of imperialism. This basic conflict between imperialism and socialism, the basic conflict in society today, emerges in every war where the Soviet Union meets its imperialist foes. No matter how distorted the superficial appearances, this basic conflict determines the main line of inter-

national developments; it provides a guide for the proletariat in its struggle for power.

The Minority combination does not see this clear Marxist picture of events. It is blinded by a Revelation. Revelations are consoling food for distraught souls—so the Church says. But as Marxists we know that the Revelations of the Bible confused the human race for centuries. Can the Revelations of the Minority do better

for the Fourth International, the enlightened vanguard of the international proletariat? We leave that question for the soul-sick gentlemen who are finding a common home for contemplation in the green pastures of the class enemy. For ourselves, we prefer the "dogmatism" of the scientific Marxist doctrine.

G. CLARKE
S. GORDON

January 10, 1940

Not Soviet Patriotism, But Bolshevik Renaissance

by John Brooks Wheelwright

No title of our program is more salient than the Russian. Without incontrovertible factual evidence of the expected change in the nature of Russian economy, a change in our Russian policy plays into the hands of capitalism, whether Democratic, or Fascist, or both. Russia is still a workers' state, and against attack is to be defended by the workers of the world even though the Stalinist regime retains power over it.

C.P. accusations that we would destroy the U.S.S.R. made us call this "Unconditional Defense". The misnomer confuses public opinion and helps the enemies of our program to claim that it really means something or other like support for all and any counter-revolutionary jobs given to the Red Army.

Our program, which arose through an analysis of the growing degeneration of the U.S.S.R. and the 3rd International, now explains Stalin's policies, and should govern our own. Nothing has occurred to make us abandon it,—except the political aphasia of our boy-scout socialists who are more dismayed by radio commentary upon the Stalin-Hitler honeymoon than by the Franco-Soviet pact. Nothing so frivolous can cause us to condition our defense upon Stalin's fall. If the U.S.S.R. is attacked (say, through Finland) we shall call for revolutionary defeatism from workers under capitalism, and for "Soviet patriotism" from workers in Russia. Stalin has no choice but to enter upon capitalist alliances and to engage in quasi-capitalist wars. The U.S.S.R. has lost its main defense. The 3rd International is not a revolutionary organization. Though our International is as yet a negligible force in world politics, in the course of this world war we shall build an organization more sound and firm than the old Comintern.

Stalin's counter-revolutionary acts, and not bourgeois moral judgment upon them (which persuade one, almost, that Britain would make Stalin a revolutionist) have disaffected the world's workers from the U.S.S.R. and from revolutionary struggle. We must, therefore, implement our theory of Stalinism in order to disaffect the workers from bourgeois influence to rally them to the defense of the U.S.S.R. and dissolve disillusionment into realism.

Stalin's regime (at once a result and a cause of degeneration) is the most handy tool for the reabsorption of Russia into the capitalist system. From him we may expect capitulation. For both sides, Stalinist and capitalist, bargain is cheaper than invasion. The spiritual preparation for a sellout has been thorough. It will turn to butter-and-eggs-man practicality, unless we can stop it. Loyalty to the U.S.S.R. is not braggadocio. Opposition to Stalin is not yammer. It is essential not merely to the U.S.S.R. (where capitalist intervention would emphasize its agitational necessity) but to the extension of the world revolution (where it has passed from agitational to active necessity).

But our program, the only defense of the U.S.S.R., is endangered. Its friends approve a pro-Stalinist application hardly less treacherous than the pro-capitalist revision approved by its enemies. Our International has as yet no insignia: it has as yet no signature. So it is not presumptuous for me to advise our advisers (among whom Trotsky has the best equipment) they may speak the more correctly if I speak out my mistakes. So here goes:

I do not like our Finnish policy. The Political Committee urges defeatism upon Finnish workers. So far, so good. In Finland, as wherever else, the social revolution is to be won by civil war. Lenin's attack on Warsaw taught a good lesson. (It differed from Stalin's desperate adventure in Finland, being a revolutionary miscalculation; and it cost us less than Stalin's reactionary blunders). Even upon receipt of an engraved invitation from bona fide workers' groups, a Red Army should send its expeditionary troops abroad only with extreme caution. Stalin having attacked bourgeois Finland without the invitation of the workers, rallies them,

and sections of the world's workers, behind the bourgeois war machines.

Our P.C., having urged defeatism upon the Finnish workers, exhorts our Russian comrades to be the best soldiers in the Red Army. We might well leave unperformed this favor to their superior officers (for which we shall get or ask scant thanks). The most tyro revolutionary, once in uniform (small chance of staying out) knows that in the eyes of his buddies he must conduct himself like a good soldier. Their opinion of him and his officers' opinion of him should subsequently and acceleratingly differ. This difference should begin to appear as soon as opportunity affords—such opportunity, maybe, as Stalin's reactionary maneuvers against Finnish worker groups.

There would be little need for such maneuvers if Finnish workers took all the P.C.'s advice. This advice is defeatist, but it is not revolutionary defeatism. "Under the present circumstances" (there are so many 'good soldiers' in Russia) "Finns are to press on for Socialism after the victory of the Red Army." As in many another case such advice: "THIS can be done only after THAT is done" works indeterminate delay of its ostensibly ultimate (oh so ultimate) objective. The Finns would have to press hard indeed. The victory of Stalin's Army would be a victory for socialism scarcely better than defeat. This is why the Fourth International subordinates the defense of the U.S.S.R. to the progress of the world revolution.

To our Russian comrades our P.C. calls for "Soviet patriotism." The term has a bad smell. When used to cover Stalinist chauvinism, it stinks. "Soviet patriotism" means cessation of the struggle against the bureaucracy. But even as we urge not a lessening, but intensification of the Finns' struggle against the bourgeoisie to establish the workers' state, so we should urge not a lessening, but intensification of the Russians' struggle against the bureaucracy to preserve the workers' state. And as we should urge revolutionary defeatism upon the Finns, we must urge it upon the Russians when they are commanded to destroy workers' organizations.

To cover up Stalin's blunders and crimes (and above all with patriotism), is to delay the regeneration of the U.S.S.R. Stalin's victory over Finland could not establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. The form of nationalized (Russified) property which he might (and might not) establish could not further workers' democracy. This Finnish adventure, more clearly than even the "invasion of Poland" (i.e. military re-appropriation of the Ukraine) is a vital embarrassment to the workers' world.

Our anxiety lest we inadvertently encourage outraged bourgeois morality need not lead us to equivocate Bolshevik ethics. Of course, "Russia" is no aggressor against "Finland." Of course "Finland" is for capitalism, (whether democratic, or fascist, or both) handy jumping-off place for an attack upon the U.S.S.R. Of course Stalin, being a Stalinist, has no choice other than those of quasi-capitalist war. Perhaps he took the better course by hopping in before he was hopped on. Perhaps not. He can blunder in even so simple a game. But the main point is the divine justice in this tragedy. The blow struck against "gallant little Finland" is a blow against the U.S.S.R. (which we are pledged to defend) because it is a blow against the world revolution (in which we are pledged aggressors).

Now I am aware that revolutionary defeatism against Stalin's expeditionary forces (even in proper conjunction with revolutionary defeatism against the opposing bourgeois forces) must be limited by the risk of laying Russia open to imperialist attack. Let it do so. The renaissance of Bolshevism on the workers' side and on the bourgeois side a revolutionary defeatism can defeat both Stalinism and capitalism.

We should prepare this by our policy before Russia is invaded. Reactionary pressure is vastly less than the pressure of the explosive force engendered by world revolution. We cannot conduct it if we do not try. The Red Army cannot do it for us. It is not easy to imagine how victory could hasten Stalin's fall from power. It would surely lessen the working class character of the Russian state. But the mere attempt by Russian workers (to say nothing of their probable success despite Pravda's 71-column long praise of the great leader) to overthrow Stalin (whether traitor, patriot, chauvinist, or simple smart alec) would change the temperature of the workers' world. The misconception, the misconduct, the native unpopularity of Stalin's Finnish expedition offer an opportunity for the extension of the October revolution in Russia.

To my eyes, a paradox starts from section (c) of the P.C.'s Finnish policy. How in the world are "Soviet patriots" to "be the best soldiers in the Red Army" . . . "against the military bureaucratic annexation of Finnish territory"? The immediate slogan for the Fourth International in Russia needs only one word: Peace.

Our P.C.'s political objectives—"Victory over Stalinist betrayal" and the "victorious press of Socialism" can be realized by less devious means than their second-fiddling to "Soviet patriotism." When soldiers in Stalinist and capitalist armies fraternize, that is the dawn. We must find out now what time of day it is.

Finland is an important country. It is a type of vassal state, with a developed working class. Of such there are many, and not only in the Baltic and Balkan regions. Germany is a vassal of Great Britain's. One aspect of this war is the refusal of a vassal to pay homage. Hitler refusing tribute, denying sovereignty, assuming the privileges and duties of a peer may well find himself in the present predicament of Finland. Stalin might not dare invade a

class-united Germany. Revolutionary Germany might not care to invite aid from the "Red" Army. But Stalin might care and dare to intervene and mop up. The democracies would defend "gallant little Hitler" against "big bad treacherous Stalin." In a war between Russia and Germany would we propose the policy which the P.C. laid down for the Finnish war? (The class characters of the respective states are the same). Yet we would not greatly strengthen the 4th International in Germany while urging Socialist pressure only after surrender to Russian invaders. Too many Germans (how many Finns?) remember having read somewhere that the social revolution is international in content, national in form.

What choice have ex-Communists but to pass us by for Social Democratic or bourgeois groups? Yet our recruiting grounds are wide. They are no wider among the foreign language groups of this country and the vassal nations than among the native workers of the imperial countries—if only did we but place our victory over Stalin sooner upon our agenda.

I am tired of the jibe that we play a stooge role to Stalin of His Majesty's Opposition. I am not refreshed by moral fulminations against him and all his works when they are by moral principle divorced from act. Stalin at last has stuck his neck out. If we do not wield the axe, then bourgeois imperialists will. Even as Stalin is one of the Elohim who created Hitler, so his bureaucracy is one Person in an unholy Trinity, the other two of whom are bourgeois and worker reaction. Its death is essential to the life of the workers' state in Russia. This happy outcome (a minimum of our world programme) will result more easily with our aid than without it. The regeneration of the U.S.S.R. through the establishment of other more well-favored commonwealths depends largely upon our conduct of the opportunities which world war supplies in plethora. Our P.C. has made a poor start.

Is the USSR A Workers' State? Need for Re-examination

by Samuel Meyers

Comrade Trotsky wrote in the Permanent Revolution that the revolutionary party cannot make a single theoretical error without having to pay for it later in the field of practice. We are now engaged in re-examining the position of our party on the "Russian Question" in order that we may avoid errors which might prove costly to the working class.

Shachtman has well stated that "Unconditional Defense" led Trotsky to condemn the Soviet invasion of Poland; Goldman to support it; and Cannon to say "the Polish invasion is only an incident in a war . . ." etc.,—surely, any position that can lead to three different conclusions needs reexamination.

Our party acknowledges Marxist theory as its instrument of analysis. Marxist theory advances dialectic materialism which teaches that in this world of things, persons and ideas a definite relationship prevails in which the persons group themselves socially according to their relations to things, in this case—means of production. They develop class relations according to the relation they bear to the means of production. Those who own the means of production in the present world society are capitalists; those who labor at these means of production are wage workers. This same theory teaches us that the social system which rules the world is capitalism, the system of the present owning class.

The governments which protect the ownership of the capitalist class are capitalist governments. These did not always exist. They came into existence by means of violent revolution against feudalism. The capitalist class often shared the state power with the feudal classes until they gained complete control of world economy. For them it was possible to share power temporarily with the old classes because they were exploiters, jointly. However, their methods of exploitation were antagonistic to one another and the capitalist state representing a revolutionary class in its time triumphed all over the world.

The proletariat cannot share state power with the old exploiting classes because its revolution does not rest upon the exploitation of any class.

The Proletarian Dictatorship Develops Out of Capitalistic Social Relations

The state or government of the workers is an instrument of violence against the exploiting classes. The proletarian dictatorship

develops out of capitalistic social relations. It is not a proletarian government because it grows out of socialized industry but rather is it a proletarian government because in the struggle of the classes, it is the instrument of rule by the workers. It is the instrument of organized class violence which systematically attacks the property relations of capitalism and socializes industry. The proletarian dictatorship is not produced and created by socialist industry but is the producer and creator of socialist industry.

Marxist theory requires that a state defend class interest. The dictatorship of the proletariat grows out of the social relations of capitalism. To the extent that socialist relations become established, the dictatorship of the proletariat ceases to be a state.

Although the dictatorship of the proletariat is undoubtedly influenced by the social institutions which it brings into existence, it remains essentially a workers state because of its function in defense of the working class and not because it is influenced by the transitional forms of the institutions which it has created. If this government ceases to defend the interest of the working class and becomes an instrument of capitalist policy, it ceases to be a workers state even though it is sustained upon the socialized industry which its preceding revolutionary regime has created. When it becomes an instrument of capitalist policy, it becomes an anti-workers state which dominates and exploits the socialized industries. The mere fact that this state has not yet succeeded in restoring capitalist property relations in the Soviet Union but exploits the working class and puts the soviet economy at the service of world capitalism, cannot preserve its character as a workers state. Its march towards the dissolution of the transitional forms and the restoration of capitalist economy is assured so long as this state is not overthrown by the Russian working class.

The soviet bureaucratic government has proved itself an instrument of violence against the proletarian revolution all over the world, and according to all criteria of revolutionary internationalism is the mortal enemy of the soviet proletariat. Whether the soviet bureaucrats are yet a fully developed class or whether they are merely the trustees of the world bourgeoisie over soviet economy, the state which they constitute and which they use as an instrument of coercion against the members of our class is not on our side of the class struggle.

An Epidemic of Analogies

A great deal of ink has been used in comparing the soviet state to a trade union. This has become a characteristic weakness of the arguments by the comrades of the majority, including those of comrade Trotsky. A veritable epidemic of analogies has been turned loose in defense of "Unconditional Defense." The proverbial saying that analogies need crutches is especially true here. When you reason yourself into a blind alley you say "now let's pretend we are talking about something else; old automobiles; physical organs; organic diseases; spring house-cleaning; or trade unions. It's true, analogies are limited in the scope of their validity because different scientific laws operate in different phenomena, but if we can make it work on an old automobile, it might tend to lend some weight to the same argument applied to a social phenomena.

Not A Union but A State

A trade union will not long continue to collect dues from workers if the sell-outs of the reactionary leaders are so bad that they get no benefits at all from their union. For example, the fakers in one union revoked the charter and sold out the membership to the employers at the height of an organization drive. They reorganized the local and expelled the militants. The workers left the union. The fakers starved because they had neither organized workers to sell out nor could they collect dues from them. The fakers said "we will reinstate the militants, so we can collect more dues and perhaps sell them out again." The workers said "we will rejoin; conditions are bad, and though the fakers are a nuisance we can gain something through organization and perhaps, who knows, even rid ourselves of the nuisance." The workers were right.

The soviet bureaucracy is not a union but a state apparatus. The soviet workers cannot stop paying dues and starve the bureaucracy; they hold the same relation to the soviet state and its bureaucratic apparatus that we in the United States do to the bosses and their cops and their national guard and their F.B.I. and the rest of the anti-labor apparatus. The soviet workers are exploited, driven, starved, murdered, jailed by this bureaucratic state. For the soviet workers as for us there is no escape but revolution. This is not a relationship between workers and their trade union but rather a relation between a once free but now oppressed proletariat, and the shock troops of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

"Who Touches the Russian Question . . ."

Comrade Cannon says "who touches the Russian Question, touches a revolution. Therefore, be serious about it, don't play with it." Be careful, comrades of the minority, you might undo a revolution by a terminological slip of the tongue. Joe Stalin and his G.P.U. are defending the soviet state. Maybe not as well as we could, for you see comrades, they defend it in a counter-revolutionary way; but they defend it! But you, Fourth Internationalists of the minority, are building a bridge to counter-revolutionary defeatism! Such as the vulgar demagogy, or such is the light-minded uncomradely foolishness of the partisans of the majority—Cowles, Wright, etc.

We have long ago become aware of the true situation in the U.S.S.R. We cannot longer deceive ourselves nor can we throw sand in the eyes of the workers by characterizing the soviet state as a workers state. We must remember that even now the bourgeois liberal demagogues are cashing in on our mistakes by leading the workers to make a choice for the bourgeois democratic state on the presumption that if the soviet state is a workers state, they would much prefer the former. We could only do the interests of the proletarian revolution the greatest good by clearing the atmosphere and disassociating the present soviet state from the workers state, in the minds of the workers.

Our revolution is a world social revolution, the conquest of world economy by the workers. Any revolution of the proletariat in Russia is an inseparable part of the social revolution. The socialized industry of the Soviet Union in that event will be an asset but will not alter the relation of the soviet proletariat to the present Soviet State, a state that crushes international proletarian revolt; today for the benefit of Hitler, and tomorrow for Chamberlain.

Old Automobiles

Comrade Trotsky's analogy with the automobile allows for some suggestion. For instance Comrade Trotsky goes on the presumption that the automobile is in possession of the mechanic and that the gangsters have been foiled. A nice quiet little repair job

will do the trick. First catch the gangster! The automobile more closely resembles the socialized soviet economy than the Soviet State. When the gangster soviet state has been overthrown by the workers, they will surely be able to salvage the soviet chassis of economy.

A Workers' State with A Bonapartist Foreign Policy

Comrade Trotsky is very methodical in his analysis. He defines the foreign policy of the Soviet State as the policy of, "The Bonapartist bureaucracy of a degenerated workers' state in imperialist encirclement." This precise definition is composed of several parts which many new comrades who may not have gone through the thorough training given us by Trotsky would not understand. Therefore, it behooves us to subject this definition to a decoding in the light of our understanding of its component parts. "Bonapartism," says Trotsky, "is one of the forms of the victory of the bourgeoisie over the uprising of the popular masses." What is "imperialist encirclement"? Imperialist encirclement implies a condition in which the Soviet economy and the social organization is subjected to the influences of capitalist world economy and its social organization. In the relations between the two, we have been taught the latter predominates in its weight of influence so long as the proletariat has not yet achieved its victory in the leading bourgeois nations and much more so if the governmental apparatus of the encircled state is dominated by the "most valuable agency of world imperialism." (Trotsky, Bulletin 2, p. 4.)

How far must a workers state degenerate before it ceases to be a workers state? Here it would be wrong to reply that only the restoration of private property relations is the deciding factor. Comrade Trotsky in the pamphlet "Russia-Problems of the Development of the U.S.S.R.," gives us an object lesson in studying the transformation from one state form to another and the shifting of power from one class to another. On Page 24, he says, "A new political order does not arise out of nothing. The class which has come to power builds the apparatus of its domination out of the elements that are at hand at the moment of the revolutionary or counter-revolutionary overthrow. The soviets led by the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionists were in Kerensky's day the last political resource of the bourgeois regime. At the same time, the Soviets, above all in the form of the Bolsheviks, were the crucible of the dictatorship of the proletariat which was in the course of preparation. The present day soviet apparatus is a bureaucratic, plebiscitarily distorted form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. At the same time, however, it is a potential instrument of Bonapartism. Between the present function, the blood of civil war would still have to flow. Yet, the victorious counter-revolution would find precisely in the plebiscitary apparatus invaluable elements for the establishment of its domination, just as its very victory would be unthinkable without the passage of decisive sections of the apparatus to the side of the bourgeoisie." In this passage we have a brilliant prognosis and a fine analysis. (The book was written in 1931.) It teaches us that under certain circumstances namely, internal civil war, the bureaucratic apparatus could become a Bonapartist regime which is "one of the forms of victory of the bourgeoisie over the uprising of the popular masses." Who will deny that a civil war has prevailed in the Soviet Union in recent years? If this civil war has been one-sided in character, it has been no less decisive for the victory of the Bonapartist elements. The annihilation of the Bolshevik cadres and their supporters in the ranks of the working class has been better described by Trotsky than we can describe it. The purges and the Moscow trials are also civil war. Comrade Trotsky in this pamphlet speaks of the "Living historic process, which is inexhaustible in the sphere of creating transitional and combined forms." To be sure Trotsky said in 1931 that the final answer would have to be given in the mutual testing of class forces in mortal combat. The fact that the "most valuable agency of imperialism" has succeeded in carrying through a Bonapartist revolution proves that that mortal combat has already taken place in one of these "inexhaustible forms."

This Time There Will Be Consternation

On Page 9, Bulletin No. 1, Trotsky says, "For a long time we asserted that Thermidor in the U.S.S.R. was only being prepared but had not yet been consummated. Later, investing the analogy to Thermidor with a more precise and well deliberated character, we came to the conclusion that Thermidor had already take place long ago. This open rectification of our mistake did not introduce the slightest consternation in our ranks." (My emphasis.) Here

again, for the sake of the newer comrades, it would be well to define our terms. Let us use Trotsky's definition: "By Thermidorian overthrow, the Left Opposition always understood such a shifting of power from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie which is in essence already decisive, but is accomplished formally still within the framework of the soviet system under the banner of one faction of the official party against the other." (My emphasis.)

Comrade Trotsky overstates the meaning of the fact that there was no consternation in our ranks. To begin with the mistake of comrade Trotsky in regard to Thermidor was not only his but the mistake of all of us and though we might react on the realization of this mistake in one manner or another there was no cause for consternation against any comrade because of our common error. However, in the present case if the majority of the national committee of the American party persists and succeeds by raising the intimidating demagogic cry of split in prevailing upon the comrades to accept its analysis, there will be due cause for consternation when they find they were mistaken years later and correct themselves.

Indeed, there will be due cause for consternation because it is not possible to correctly answer the questions of the workers on the concrete issues such as Polish invasion, etc., on the basis of the old analysis.

No, comrade Cannon, with all your rhetoric, he who touches the Russian Question, touches not a revolution but a revolution betrayed and defeated by Bonapartist counter-revolution by means of civil war. "All is not yet lost," if by that you refer to socialized industries; but if you mean political power, all is lost. The proletariat does not rule the U.S.S.R. The socialized industries have been turned into a means for the exploitation of the soviet proletariat by its political oppressors. It is for the "Marxists" of the Cannon regime to prove that this is not possible in Marxist theory. According to Trotsky, those who determine everything by socialized industries are thinking as "vulgar economists" and not dialectic materialists.

To what do comrade Trotsky's exact and well-balanced definitions bring us? To an equation, where you start with plus one workers state and add thereto so many minus quantities that the answer is there for anyone who will take the trouble to add minus two to plus one; answer equals one anti-workers state. Can we continue to throw sand first in our own eyes and then in the eyes of the workers? By all our habitual definitions a state is an instrument of violence in the hands of one class against another. The soviet state is an instrument for the subjugation and exploitation of the soviet proletariat.

If you resolve the equation and give the correct answer, the worker will understand. If we tell the worker the bitter truth, he will condemn the soviet state but will still be able to look to a workers state as preferable to the bourgeois democratic state.

On Page 5 of Bulletin 2, Trotsky says, "If the Red Army menaces workers strikes, or peasant protests against the bureaucracy in the U.S.S.R., shall we support it or not? Foreign policy is the continuation of the internal. We have never promised to support all the actions of the Red Army which is an instrument in the hands of the Bonapartist bureaucracy." (My emphasis.)

What A Splendid Formula Against Unconditional Support

Comrade Trotsky goes on to say "We have promised to defend the U.S.S.R. as a workers state and solely those things within it which belong to a workers state." This definition does not confirm the soviet state as a workers state. It simply implies that the nationalized economy is that part of the Soviet Union which goes to make up a workers state and that we will defend that. With this we heartily agree. Within a world economy predominately capitalistic an isolated nationalized economy can become an instrument for the exploitation of the working-class by a counter-revolutionary state power on behalf of its bureaucratic privileged supporters. Though we defend the socialized industries against foreign attack as well as against the bureaucracy, we must realize that these socialized industries do not of themselves establish the character

of the soviet state as a workers state. To suppose so would be to think in "vulgar economics," (Trotsky), and not as dialectic materialists.

In 1931 Trotsky agreed formally that a proletarian dictatorship is inconceivable without a ruling proletarian party, but made certain extenuations in the case of the U.S.S.R., which in my opinion are no longer valid. "If we proceed from the incontestable fact that the C.P. of the S.U. has ceased to be a party, are we not thereby forced to the conclusion that there is no dictatorship of the proletariat in the U.S.S.R., SINCE THIS IS INCONCEIVABLE WITHOUT A RULING PROLETARIAN PARTY? Such a conclusion, entirely consistent at first sight is nevertheless a caricature of the reality, and a reactionary caricature, which ignores the CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES OF THE REGIME and the HIDDEN RESERVES OF THE DICTATORSHIP." (My emphasis.)

The working class has had a belly full of the "creative possibilities of the regime," and we can only hope that the soviet workers will succeed in overthrowing this regime before it "CREATES"! the assassination of comrade Trotsky. As to the "hidden reserves of the dictatorship," little has been left hidden since 1931 by the purges of the bureaucracy. Comrade Trotsky's extenuations of 1931 no longer exist.

That which is still hidden from the "creative regime" must be rallied for the overthrow of the Soviet bureaucratic state. The regime of dual power no longer exists. In its place, we have the anti-workers bureaucratic state.

In 1931 Trotsky stressed the difficulty of gauging the degree in the shifting of power in the U.S.S.R. as follows: "In evaluating social processes the establishment of the degree of maturity attained and of the termination is especially important. THE MOMENT OF THE CHANGE FROM QUANTITY TO QUALITY HAS A DECISIVE SIGNIFICANCE, IN POLITICS AS WELL AS IN OTHER FIELDS. THE CORRECT TERMINATION OF THIS MOMENT IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND AT THE SAME TIME MOST DIFFICULT TASKS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP."

No wonder there is a difference of opinion at this time among us. Comrade Trotsky puts it this way: "Upon analysis it turns out however, that these conclusions are of a purely terminological character. Our critics refuse to call the degenerated workers state—a workers state," and further, "It would therefore be a piece of monstrous nonsense to split with comrades who on the question of the sociological nature of the U.S.S.R. have an opinion different from ours, in so far as they solidarize with us in regard to the political tasks."

Our heroes of the majority—Cannon, Cowl, Wright and company—do not see it that way. They have discovered a bridge to counter-revolutionary defeatism on comrade Shachtman's back porch; and why—because they tend to vulgarize the qualifying terminology of Trotsky until "workers state" and "nothing has changed" are the sole refrain they can sing. No need to watch for "the moment of change from quantity to quality which has decisive significance."

The bureaucratic state launches its enterprises of invasion of Poland and Finland in harmony with its own interests and without regard to the soviet or world proletariat; so our pious Cannonites exhort the Finnish and Polish workers to become partisans of the Red Army "WHICH IS AN INSTRUMENT IN THE HANDS OF BONAPARTIST BUREAUCRACY."

The Russian workers and the fourth internationalists are told to be the best soldiers, to die for the aims of the bureaucracy.

Thus, we revive the spirit of the Moscow confessors. And with them we say, to the Nero of the Kremlin, "We, who are about to die salute you. . . ." "nothing has changed."

WE DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION AGAINST IMPERIALIST INVASION as we would China or Spain or Ethiopia. For the Polish and Finnish workers, our slogan is neither Mannerheim or Kuusinen! For Proletarian revolution! There is no lesser evil! The main enemy of the Finnish workers is the Finnish capitalist state which they cannot defend against anyone but must overthrow. But the Stalinists are not the lesser evil. Our support of the Soviet Union is conditional support.

Burnham Revises Marx—and Himself

by John G. Wright

Burnham has embarked on an unprecedented revision of Marxism—behind the back of the party. From a “philosophic” opposition of Marxism—denial of the Marxist dialectic—he has finally arrived at a political rejection of the fundamental tenets of our doctrine.

He has thrown overboard the Marxist theory of the state.* There is a new kind of state, located in the historical period of transition from capitalism to socialism, namely, the “bureaucratic state.” He has revised the Marxist concept of the economic roots and the political and class nature of imperialism. There now exists a new kind of imperialism—“Stalino-imperialism.” The Marxist conception of the class struggle in modern society, he maintains, is no longer valid. Society is no longer divided into two camps, that of imperialism and that of revolution, with the bourgeoisie heading the former and the proletariat the latter. There is a third major class—and a third camp—in society, that of the “bureaucratic exploiters.” And so on down the line.

An attempt is being made to picture matters as if Burnham's current position is in complete harmony with his former position, and represents merely an extension of it in the light of new developments. This is not true.

Burnham's present position is in conflict not only with Marxism but also with the position that Burnham has held for the past two years, that is, since the Founding Convention of our party in Chicago in 1938, and which he changed only on the day the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed.

To be sure, Burnham has never presented to the party a definitive resolution on his position. Apart from the document he submitted on September 5th for the October plenum and then withdrew, there is only one other document extant, and this not a separate resolution but an amendment submitted by himself and Carter to the National Committee resolution on the Soviet Union in 1938. What have these two documents in common? They are diametrically opposed in every essential detail.

What Kind of State is There in the Soviet Union?

It is not true that Burnham's views on the nature of the Soviet State today are identical with the views he held prior to the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact. Here is what he wrote in favor of his original position:

“If we look at the facts, and not at words, the most accurate formula is probably a ‘semi-bourgeois state’ or an ‘embryonic bourgeois state.’ . . . Is this a ‘no-class’ state? Of course not. It is simply not, primarily, the instrument of the two major classes in contemporary society. But it is the instrument of the ‘new middle class’ (striving to become a consolidated bourgeois class) within the Soviet Union itself. . . . Such a state, clearly, is to be expected to be most unstable, transitory, torn by crisis; and this is just what we find. It should theoretically be expected to be in irreconcilable conflict with its own ‘economic foundations’. . . and this is certainly the case. It must go or the economic foundation must go.” (*Internal Bulletin* No. 5 pp. 23-34, December, 1937).

Today, Burnham finds not only that there is no irreconcilable conflict between the “non-workers” state and its economic foundation, but that it is no longer the instrument of a new “middle class”. It is now a “bureaucratic” state, the instrument of the “bureaucracy and its affiliates”. If yesterday, Burnham saw the evolution of the Soviet ruling stratum in the direction of a “consolidated bourgeois class”, then today he writes: “The ruling stratum of the Soviet Union does not constitute a crystallized bourgeois class in the traditional sense, nor can it be predicted with assurance whether its evolution in the future—even if unchecked—will be toward such crystallization.” (*Bulletin* No. 2, p. 9, Nov. 6, 1939).

*Yet Burnham himself at one time wrote: “No question of principle can be more important: only by the clear and constant recognition of the class nature of the state . . . can a revolutionary party sustain a correct strategy in the class struggle. Any watering down whatever of this principle means, necessarily, betrayal.” (*New Militant*, August 24, 1935).

Burnham denies today what he affirmed yesterday. What proof does he adduce in favor of his new position? The only “proof” adduced by Burnham is the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact. In his September 5th resolution he flatly states that: “The signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact brought to a definitive climax the series of developments within the Soviet Union which began with the rise of Stalin and entered a stage of rapid transformation during the past five years.”

Burnham is fond of insisting that scientific hypotheses are tested by the predictions that are made on their basis. How does he square his hypotheses and predictions of 1938-1939 with his present position? Since when is it “scientific” to change one's position literally overnight without so much as an explanation, analysis, or rectification of one's former position?

We take the liberty of posing a number of questions to Comrade Burnham.

(1) What happened to the “semi-bourgeois” or “embryonic bourgeois state” you discovered in the Soviet Union in 1938?

(2) What happened to the “new middle class” whose instrument it was in 1938 and thereafter?

(3) Just when and how was the irreconcilable conflict between this “class” and its “state” and its own ‘economic foundation’ resolved?

(4) Why is it now impossible for you to predict the crystallization of a bourgeois class that you predicted so flatly in 1938 and thereafter?

Is the Bureaucracy A Class?

Today, Burnham asserts that a new class rule has been established in the USSR: “The Soviet Union . . . has assumed a definitively exploitative character in the economic realm. The ruling stratum of the population systematically exploits the masses of the people for its benefit.” (Emphasis in the original. *Internal Bulletin* No. 2, p. 9, November 6, 1939).

Yet it was none other than Burnham himself who denied the existence of such a class so far as we know, from 1937 up to the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact. Here is what he said in his 1937 amendment: “These privileged strata do not as yet constitute a class in the full socio-economic sense, and it would be an error, leading to political disorientation, to consider their consolidation as a class already completed.” (Emphasis in the original. *Bulletin* No. 6, p. 69, January, 1938).

Is the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact also “proof” of this consolidation which you, Comrade Burnham, denied only yesterday? Why wasn't the signing of the Stalin-Laval pact just as valid proof of such a consolidation? Burnham simply changed his position without the knowledge of the party and behind the back of the party.

Has the Economic Structure of the Soviet Union Changed?

From 1938 up to September 5th 1939, when Burnham presented his new position to the party, he held the following views on this question:

“. . . In spite of the political rule and the change in nature of the Soviet State, and in spite of the introduction into the economy of more and more alien features, the economic structure as established by the October Revolution still remains basically unchanged. It is true that the bureaucracy will, if its course is unchecked, carry through a basic change. But it has not yet done so, and here again it would be altogether incorrect to anticipate what may possibly or even probably occur in the future.” (*Bulletin* No. 6, pp. 69-70, January, 1938).

Yet in his September 5th resolution, Burnham flatly states that such a change has been effected, “partly through the destruction of the nationalized forms of economy and partly through the manipulation of them.” Proof? We have only to refer to the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact which, if you please, has “brought to a definitive climax the series of developments within the Soviet Union which began with the rise of Stalin. . . .”

Here we get a clue to Burnham's “scientific” method. Making

a claim is tantamount to establishing a claim. Apparently, the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact is a universal recipe. It explains everything. It proves everything. Whence does this pact derive its miraculous properties in contrast to other pacts like the Stalin-Laval pact, for example? Silence.

Is it conceivable that Burnham had a one-sided and false appraisal of the significance of the Stalin-Hitler pact from the beginning? Yes, this is indeed the case.

After the collapse of Stalin's People's Front, in the post-Munich days, the editors of the *New International* posed the question of the Stalin-Hitler pact, and here is the answer they gave:

"In point of fact, there is no fundamental difference between the two tactics. . . Hitler's price will be high, very high. If not outright cessions of territory and mandates, then at least a modification of the monopoly of foreign trade, to permit German goods and German capital to enter the Soviet market. This means: to reach an agreement with Hitler Stalin must destroy the last remaining conquest of the October revolution, the nationalized economy." (*New International*, November 1938).

Such was the political forecast. To be sure, said the editors, there is no "fundamental" difference between entering into an alliance with Daladier-Chamberlain or Hitler but they envisaged the actual consummation of such a pact only at a price fundamentally different from that paid by Stalin for his alliance with France: nothing short of the destruction of the economic base of the Soviet Union! But what is the reality?

Stalin did succeed in signing a pact with Hitler. No territories or mandates have as yet been ceded by Stalin. On the contrary, it appears that Hitler "ceded" Polish Ukraine and the Baltic area to Stalin. The monopoly of foreign trade has not yet been modified. In addition to a trade pact with Germany, Stalin signed one with England. The nationalized economy still stands in the old territories, and new areas have been "sovietized." But Burnham has a preconceived hypothesis: the Stalin-Hitler pact must mean the destruction of the nationalized economy. And so he blandly writes in his "prognosis" of November 1938 into his resolution of September 1939. It saves a lot of trouble.

Why Defend the Soviet Union?

Only yesterday, Burnham denied the contention of the majority of the National Committee that his revisionist position on the nature of the Soviet Union must inevitably lead to defeatism. He wrote: "We are defensists because we estimate that, in the light of the actual situation in the Soviet Union, the actual development there, such a policy is in the interests of the proletariat and of the world revolution."

Today, Burnham sings a different song, also as he claims, "in the interests of the proletariat and of the world revolution."

Today, he maintains that the "defense of the Soviet Union is social patriotism, and must be abandoned for a defeatist policy."

Up to the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact Burnham insisted that ". . . It is the imperative and inescapable duty of the Russian and international proletariat to defend it . . . against any and all imperialist powers—whose military victory in a war against the Soviet Union would guarantee the destruction of the economy and the restoration of capitalism. . ." (Emphasis in the original. *Bulletin No. 6*, p. 70, January 1938).

We repeat, from the day Burnham wrote the foregoing lines, despite the fact that he no longer considered the Soviet Union a workers' state, despite the fact that he designated the bureaucracy as a "solely reactionary force",* he nevertheless remained an unconditional defensist against imperialist attack. He changed his position, not on the occasion of the invasion of Poland, not at the outbreak of the Finnish-Soviet conflict but immediately after the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact.

How Staunch A Defensist Was Burnham?

None was louder in advocating defense than Burnham. In point of fact, he maintained that the genuine policy of defense

*Burnham wrote in his 1938 amendment: "The dual character of the bureaucracy—reactionary and progressive—has now ended. The bureaucracy . . . now functions solely as a reactionary force." (Emphasis in the original. *Bulletin No. 6*, p. 66, January 1938). In other words, he specified in advance that the war in which the Soviet Union would be engaged against the imperialists would be conducted by this "solely reactionary force". But he did not on that account affix the label of "reactionary" or "social patriotic" to the policy of defense.

really flowed from his position and not the "contradictory" position of the N.C. Majority, to which he used to refer as the Cannon-Abern resolution.

He was very meticulous on this point. Thus, when after our Founding Convention, Cannon wrote an article covering the decisions of the Convention, the editors of the *New International*, especially Burnham, felt it was not emphatic enough on the unanimity of the N.C. on the question of defense, and so a "correction" was printed in the next issue. It read as follows:

"Attention has been called to the possibility that some readers may gain the impression that the difference between the National Committee resolution and that of the NC minority related primarily to the question of defense of the Soviet Union. If the author (i.e., Cannon) has inadvertently made such an interpretation possible, he requests that it be corrected. The NC minority resolution expressed itself in favor of defense of the Soviet Union from imperialist attack." (*New International*, March, 1938).

In the post-Munich days, in October 1938, the editors of the *New International* did not fail to point out that:

"Most ominously of all, then, is the liquidation of Czechoslovakia a terrible symptom of the threat to the Soviet Union. The partitioning of the Soviet Union: (is) the one perspective which alone can make the collective mouth of every section of international imperialism water."

In the same October 1938 issue we find: "We have replied that the distinction between the democracies and the dictatorships is altogether secondary . . . and we have said that fundamental policies follow not from the form of government but from economic need and interests. The Soviet Union is a dictatorship, and we support and defend it. . ." (Our emphasis).

If we dispense with further quotations it is only for lack of space. The columns of the *New International* and of the *Socialist Appeal* bear witness that everything Burnham said and wrote on the USSR prior to September 5th was for UNCONDITIONAL DEFENSE AGAINST IMPERIALIST ATTACK.

What Was the Basis of Burnham's Defensist Position

In his September 5th, 1939 resolution, Burnham states blandly that this policy of defense was predicated upon two concepts: (1) the proletarian character of the Soviet State; (2) the conception of "four possible types of war" the Soviet Union might wage.

The implication is that Burnham's position at least, if not that of the majority, was predicated on this basis. Not at all. So far as the majority is concerned, true enough, it has always maintained that the Soviet Union is proletarian, though degenerated, in character. But Burnham remained a defensist since 1937, although he denied the proletarian character of the Soviet Union. Why? Was it because of the conception of the "possible types" of war this "non-proletarian" state could wage? The Majority never held this position. Neither did Burnham. He gave entirely different reasons for his defensist position. He gave a totally different "conception"—also comprising of four (4) parts. Here is what he wrote at some length to justify his position of defense:

"We are defensists because we estimate that . . . such a policy is in the interests of the proletariat and of the world revolution. . . We are for defense, primarily because we—both of the Committee Majority and of the Committee Minority—consider that the socio-economic relations still obtaining in the Soviet Union are progressive, and are worth defending. They are progressive," continues Burnham, "for four major reasons: (1) Their origin is in the October revolution. . . (2) The traditions and ideals of the Revolution still carried . . . in the hearts and minds of the Russian masses are bound up with the socio-economic relations. (3) These relations provide the indispensable foundation for a workers' state. . . (4) Most decisive of all in showing the necessity for a defensist policy is to compare the possible alternatives from the point of view of the workers' revolution. . . If the Soviet Union is defeated by an imperialist power, it will revert to the position of a semi-colonial country . . . and the world revolution will be set back enormously. In the struggle against imperialism the Soviet masses will have a genuine chance not merely to defeat the imperialist power (by itself progressive), but in the course of the struggle to cast off from their back the usurpers, regain class rule, and go triumphantly forward." (Emphasis in the original, *Bulletin No. 5*, pp. 20-21, December, 1937).

In conclusion Burnham said: "The consideration of alternatives leaves no doubt whatever that a defensist policy is mandatory,

and this consideration alone suffices to refute all varieties of defeatists." (Our emphasis. idem).

Today, Burnham superciliously dismisses our fundamental principled position and the program of the Fourth International as an "ancient and outlived thesis." He feels no obligation to subject the documents of our movement to a direct critical analysis, and to provide a theoretical foundation for his own position. Apparently that is not his "responsibility". But what about his own position of yesterday? Doesn't he owe the party an accounting for that? Thus far, there has been silence.

Nothing is more revealing of the unprincipled character of the

opposition bloc—Burnham-Shachtman-Abern—than their attempt to hide from the party Burnham's revisionism. Step by step the opposition is moving toward Burnham's anti-Marxist position.

Burnham's position must be kept hidden from the party for it cannot stand the light of day. It contradicts not only reality but everything that Burnham himself held only yesterday—not to mention Shachtman and Abern. To help comrades orient themselves in the present dispute we have confronted Burnham—with himself.

Marxist Criteria and the Character of the War

by Murry Weiss

The opposition insists that our differences are on the "character of the war," rather than on the "character of the U.S.S.R." This counterposing of two questions, inseparably related in the present discussion, (as well as in the war itself) reveals clearly the false, non-Marxist approach of the opposition.

When we state that Marxists determine the character of wars from the basic criterion, the class character of the state, Shachtman hastens to warn: "not automatically!—not abstractly!" Comrade Shachtman reviews the history of 100 years of wars, apparently to prove that the character of the war is not "automatically" determined by the character of the state. I say apparently, because upon closer study, it becomes clear, that in the course of this historic review Comrade Shachtman does two things: (a) While seemingly striving to prove that the character of the state does not automatically determine the character of the war, he abandons the criteria of the character of the state altogether. (b) In order to facilitate his task he distorts and vulgarizes our conception of how the character of wars is determined.

In passing let us note that this technique of revisionism, by indirection and subterfuge is becoming quite characteristic of all of Shachtman's contributions to the discussions. At an earlier stage, this same technique was to be observed on the question of the slogan "unconditional defense."* In his document on the Russian question Comrade Shachtman quotes the Marxist position with regard to the opposition's conception of reactionary and progressive wars: "Your division of wars into progressive and reactionary, however correct it may be, leaves out of consideration precisely that criterion which we consider fundamental, namely, the class character of the state which is conducting the war. Without such a basic criterion which determines the character of the war, you must inevitably oscillate with every trifling change in the military map instead of following the map of the class struggle. Without declaring your position on the class character of the Soviet Union, you are deprived of a class criterion making possible a basic judgment of the war and the role of the various belligerents."

After this quotation comes the decisive section of the opposition's document. On page 7, Comrade Shachtman says, "More than one significant example can be adduced to show that to employ abstractly (my emphasis—M.W.) the criterion of the class character of the state in order to judge the character of its war, is to adopt a sterile and meaningless position, to be trapped by an empty formula." Then Comrade Shachtman proceeds to list a series of examples to prove this. If by these examples Comrade Shachtman were simply trying to prove that to use the class criteria abstractly and mechanically would lead us into a false position, there would be no basic dispute. We could then see whether it is the proletarian wing of the party that falls into errors of

*The revision of the slogan, "For the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack," began by a complete distortion of the past and present meaning of the slogan, and as Comrade Lund said, by "a horrible deformation of our whole position not only since the creation of the 4th International but since the very beginning of the Left Opposition." Now, Comrade Shachtman denies that he ever did this. Comrade Lund and practically the entire party received the wrong impression. But Comrade Shachtman "drops" the distortion, (even if dishonestly) only to take up, as we shall see, the revision, with renewed energy.

abstract and mechanistic thinking. But Comrade Shachtman does not pursue the aim of guarding against the abstract and incorrect application of Marxist criteria; he strives to overthrow the criteria.

In his attempt to liberate himself from the Marxist criteria on the war question and in his attempt to drag the party with him, Comrade Shachtman finds the need to search through the authoritative theoretical writings of our movement, to which Comrade Trotsky has been an outstanding contributor, and find some formulation to bolster his revisionism. He quotes from Comrade Trotsky: ". . . in general the productive forces, upon a basis of private property and competition, have been working out their own destiny. In contrast to this, the property relations which issued from the socialist revolution are indivisibly bound up with the new state as their repository. The predominance of socialist over petty bourgeois tendencies is guaranteed not by the automatism of economy—we are still far from that—but by political measures taken by the dictatorship. The character of the economy as a whole thus depends upon the character of the state power."

It is very significant that Comrade Shachtman does not give the source of this quotation! For those who wish to check it against the original, it was torn by the opposition from the context of p. 250 of *The Revolution Betrayed*, the section called "Is the Bureaucracy a Ruling Class?" Isolated as Comrade Shachtman has isolated it, apparently it would give weight to his thesis that the class nature of the state does not affect the character of its wars. But placed back in context it proves the very opposite.

Comrade Shachtman quotes: ". . . in general the productive forces, upon a basis of private property and competition, have been working out their own destiny. . . etc., etc." This sentence finishes a description by Trotsky, explaining that bourgeois society has had many castes and regimes without changing its social foundations. In the U.S.S.R. on the contrary, continues Trotsky, the state can influence the changing of the social foundations. Why? Precisely because it is a workers' state!

Trotsky then continues his explanation that the fall of the present bureaucracy, if not replaced by a new socialist power, would mean restoration of capitalist property forms. (Comrade Shachtman, of course, did not quote this). Trotsky, however, is still more explicit: "the question is all the more important, upon whom the present Soviet government relies, and in what measure the socialist character of its policy is guaranteed." (p. 251) This is the very opposite of what Comrade Shachtman tries to prove! And farther down this same page: "It continues to preserve state property only to the extent that it fears the proletariat." (Why did Comrade Shachtman omit this?) And as if this were not enough and he had seen in advance how future revisionists might try to distort his words, Trotsky concludes this section: "But a victorious revolution is fortunately not only a program and a banner, not only political institutions, but also a system of social relations. To betray it is not enough. You have to overthrow it. The October revolution has been betrayed by the ruling stratum, but not yet overthrown. It has a great power of resistance, coinciding with the established property relations, with the living force of the proletariat, the consciousness of its best elements, the impasse of world capitalism, and the inevitability of world revolution." Thus the key question in determining whether we defend the U.S.S.R. or not still is, what class is in power, in the U.S.S.R.—the working class, an entirely new class, or the capitalist class?

What a revisionist can do with a text torn out of place is almost as remarkable—almost but not quite—as what a Marxist can do with it by putting it back in context.

From the above quotation which he took out of its context Comrade Shachtman literally draws the conclusion that the character of the war is not determined by the class character of the state. When Comrade Trotsky shows how the character of Soviet economy, while determining the character of the Soviet state is in turn profoundly affected by the retroactive role of the Soviet state power, Comrade Shachtman tries to deduce from this the conception of the predominance of the state power. If there is any doubt about this at all it is eliminated by examining the formula upon which Comrade Shachtman would determine the character of the war. On page 8 he says, "The correct formula would be: The character of the war is determined by the predominant political and social aims of each of the belligerents and their enemy, and their objective consequences, and very often by the character of the regime which is conducting the war. Furthermore, particularly in our epoch, our attitude towards a given war must be based upon the interests of the international proletariat and of the world socialist revolution." In this "formula" we see the completion of Comrade Shachtman's transition. Here, he no longer lectures on the inadvisability of using the Marxist criteria, the class character of the state, abstractly, in determining the character of war; he abandons the criteria entirely. The evasive and amorphous character of the formula is not compensated for, by the reference to the interests of the international proletariat and the world revolution. Such revolutionary sounding phrases have often in the past covered the retreat of traitors from the Marxist position on war.

An even more crass example of the non-Marxist character of Shachtman's new formula is found in his open letter to Comrade Trotsky on page 12, "We have never supported the Kremlin's international policy, I repeat with you. Concretely, for example, we did not support the Kremlin's policy toward bourgeois Finland (or Poland, etc.). But what is war? War is the continuation of politics by other means. Then why should we support the war which is the continuation of the international policy which we did not and do not support? The Fourth International also told the Russian proletariat not to support the Kremlin's foreign policy. Then why should we now tell the Soviet workers to support a war which is the continuation of that policy?"

Shachtman's "correct formula" together with this priceless piece of logical construction, does not contain one ounce of Marxist content. The struggle of classes, the role of the dominant class, expressed through the state and its regime, is replaced by the conception of regimes which pursue social and political aims quite independent of their class basis. This formula, absolutely good for nothing for a Marxist approach to the war question, is quite ideal for the purposes of journalistic impressionism. By removing the Marxist "disciplined" approach, a greater leeway is given to the "independent thinkers."

Let us pose both criteria, the Marxists' and the opposition's, against a few of the examples Shachtman himself gives. But first, let us state clearly our actual conception of the class character of the state and its relation to war. For the Marxist the class character of the state sums up the questions: What is the ruling class of a given nation? How does it conduct its exploitation? What is the class that it exploits? How does the ruling class maintain its power? By what state forms? What is its historical position in the development of the class struggle? What is its relationship at the present time to the struggle of the international proletariat against the bourgeoisie? In other words an understanding of the character of a state is indispensable to an analysis of the character of the war it conducts, because it reveals the relationship of forces in the class struggle within that country and internationally and the character and interests of the dominant class. For the Marxists this is fundamental. War is not only the continuation of politics, it is the continuation of the class struggle in politics. When Marxists wish to analyze a war they ask first "which class interests are expressed in this war and how are they expressed?" To determine this we must examine the class character of the state involved in the war. Let us then take up the examples.

The class character of the Spanish Loyalist government was capitalistic and imperialistic, argues Shachtman, and yet we gave material support to the Loyalist government against Franco. It is characteristic of Shachtman's new supra-class approach to mix up questions that should be separated, to blur two concepts that should be carefully delineated—thus Shachtman lumps together

in his wanderings through historical examples, national wars, imperialist wars and civil wars. The Marxists called for material support to the Loyalist government against Franco precisely on the basis of an analysis of the class relations and the class character of the state. In the struggle between Franco and the Loyalist regime we saw a struggle between Spanish fascism and bourgeois democracy; but we saw more than that. The Spanish war was a civil war. At bottom the division of the two camps, Franco and the Loyalists was a class division. The class struggle of the Spanish workers coincided with material support to the bourgeois Loyalist government. Spanish fascism aimed its death blows at the proletarian democracy which was tied by the links of treacherous leadership to the bourgeois state. Giving material support to the Loyalists' struggle against Franco, we called for the socialist revolution as the only means of bringing that struggle to a victorious conclusion. All of us surely remember that this was the distinguishing feature of our position in Spain. We said the character of the Loyalist state is capitalist. In the last analysis they will capitulate to the fascists. Only a workers' revolution and a workers' state can destroy fascism. Without the criterion of the class character of the state, what would have been our position in Spain? It was our estimate of the class character of the Loyalist government, of the Franco forces and of the workers' camp that determined our two-fold position—material support of the Loyalist government; victory over fascism through the socialist revolution. But let us see how the opposition with its brand new formula would fare in the Spanish events. (It can be said that the opposition position was tested in the Spanish events in a certain sense. Note the attitude of the S.P. Centrists on the question of Caballeros' "Provisional Revolutionary Government.")

Let us use the same logic Comrade Shachtman uses in his shallow and sophistic argument in his Open Letter to Trotsky. The opposition would then say in Spain, "Do we support the policy of the Loyalist government? No, we never have. The policy of the Loyalist government is imperialistic, counter-revolutionary; the Loyalist government participates in the war against Franco only in the interest of preserving its own type of capitalist and imperialist rule. Moreover, the policy of the Loyalist government leads to the victory of fascism. But war is the continuation of politics. How can we tell the workers to support a war materially or otherwise which is the continuation of such a policy?" Our answer would be: truly, war is the continuation of politics by other means, but you do not understand what politics are involved in the civil war in Spain. The politics of the working class in Spain demands a war against fascism. The bourgeois democracy with the help of the misleaders of labor stands at the head of this war. The working class will give material support to the Loyalist armies' struggle, while at the same time preparing for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism as the only way of winning the war against fascism.

Let us take the example of the Italo-Ethiopian war. It was precisely our estimate of the class character of the state that determined our position in the Italo-Ethiopian war. We characterized the Italian state as imperialist. The Italian working class, conducting its struggle against imperialism found an ally in the Ethiopian masses, who in spite of the feudal slave character of the Ethiopian regime, were striking a blow at Italian imperialism by resisting the invasion.

The defeat of Italian imperialism in this war would have been a tremendous spur to the Italian working class. It would have helped to overthrow the imperialist state and establish an Italian workers' state. And that is why we supported Ethiopia in the war. But how would the minority with its criteria determine its position? According to Shachtman's formula, and the logic of his whole position, it's the "political and social aims of the regime" which determines the working class's attitude toward a war.

The political and social aims of Haile Selassie's regime were indeed far from progressive. Taking as our point of departure the "aims" of the Haile Selassie regime and fitting that into Shachtman's neat sophistry from "a" to "z" we wouldn't get support of the Ethiopian struggle at all.

Counterposed in the question of Russia in the war we have the same two methods of analysis: Shachtman's revisionist formula and formal logic as against the Marxist criteria. For Shachtman, war is not the continuation of politics by other means but is the continuation of the foreign policy of a regime. In the war of Russia against imperialism, Shachtman can see only the policy of the Kremlin regime. But the Kremlin regime does not follow independent class politics. As we have analyzed it, and Shachtman fakes no open exception to this, the Kremlin regime is "a parasitic

growth on the workers' state". Now what is the politics of the Russian working class in this war? If the Kremlin expresses the interests of the corrupt parasitic bureaucracy, the Bolshevik-Leninists must express the interests of the Russian working class. Contained in the war against imperialism there are these contradictory interests. That is why the program of the Fourth International said to the workers of Russia: Fight imperialism! Defend the conquests of the Russian revolution against imperialism, and in order to carry the war to victory, overthrow Stalin. The opposition says that the Soviet Union can now conduct a reactionary war against capitalist states. Although they are carefully unclear on this point, they mean against imperialism; for it is not conceivable how the Soviet Union could be at war with any capitalist nation that is not directly and integrally connected with one imperialist camp or another.

The position of the Fourth International states: that in any war between the Soviet Union and capitalism we would see a class war in which the progressive side would be the Soviet Union regardless of the treachery or misleadership of the Stalin bureaucracy. We took this position on the basis of our analysis of the class character of the U.S.S.R., the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the relation of the U.S.S.R. to imperialist war and world revolution. The opposition blandly states that this is what they now want to revise. On what basis? As a result of new, decisive developments in the social character of the U.S.S.R.? No: The opposition does not present such evidence. They do claim to see new and decisive developments in the policy of Stalinism. These developments have no immediate or significant connection with the social basis of the workers' state. These decisive changes in the Stalinist regime (changes which determine such incidentals as the character of war) are based on those laws of motion generated within the regime not connected with nationalized and planned economy. Basing himself on a distortion of the Marxist conception of the retroactive rather than the passive character of the Soviet state Comrade Shachtman evolves the theory of the State, independent of, and above the class.

We have referred to the formal syllogism of Shachtman contained in his open letter to Trotsky. (a) Against the Kremlin's foreign policy; (b) Against the Kremlin's foreign policy in Finland; (c) What is war?; (d) War is the continuation of politics by other means; (e) Then how can we support the war which is the continuation of the Kremlin's policy?

This smug type of reasoning is based entirely on the conception of a Kremlin regime which carries on politics of an independent character not determined by any class compulsions or limitations. To be more precise, Shachtman's analysis oscillates between two conceptions: the bureaucracy as a class in itself, and the bureaucracy above the class, free to act in its own interests and unhampered by its class base. Along these two lines the opposition endows the Stalinist regime with many new attributes. The Stalinist regime seeks to replenish the exhausted fixed capital of the Soviet Union by a policy of economic imperialism. The Kremlin intervenes in India to "capture" a revolution and thereby win that territory for the imperialist designs of Stalin. All of these developments are taking place according to our opposition as a result of the contradictions of socialism in one country which the bureaucracy tries to resolve by "imperialism."

We have always said that the contradictions of an isolated workers state could not be resolved by Stalinism. Yet Stalinism does in its own way try to resolve them.

At one stage on the international arena this was expressed in the policy of bureaucratic adventurism, at another by the policy of treacherous opportunism. At all stages Stalinism betrayed the working class of Russia and the world. And now in the war, Stalinism in essence continues on the same path of betrayal. We still say that it can solve nothing and that it will be destroyed by either the imperialists or the revolutionary working class. Let us assume that the corrupt Stalinist bureaucracy now believes that it can conquer territory and solve the economic contradictions of the U.S.S.R. by military adventures. What can be our conclusions? Can we base our policy on what the dreams of a reactionary Stalinist bureaucracy are at a given moment? Or on the class realities in Russia and in the war? We always knew that Stalin's policy would be treacherous when the war with imperialism broke out. Did we make conditions as to what kind of treachery it would be?

The reality of the present war is that the imperialists have seized the moment of the Finnish invasion, which Stalin conceived and conducted in a thoroughly bureaucratic manner, to start the war against the Soviet Union. What is at stake in this, the first

stage of the war, is exactly what will be at stake tomorrow when the war intensifies; the very existence of the Soviet Union; the danger of imperialism crushing the basic achievements of the Russian revolution.

Anglo-French imperialism with the not so distant support of U.S. imperialism has entered the Finnish-Soviet war and established the first base of military operations against the Soviet Union. While conducting this real war against the Soviet Union on a limited scale and at the same time prosecuting the war against Germany, the allied imperialists seek to transform the entire war, into a grand scale, "holy war" against the U.S.S.R. The well-informed Pearson and Allen in their Washington Merry Go Round column of January 13, state:

"That was why Lord Riverdale's report and Chamberlain's warning of grimmer warfare are not considered inconsistent with President Roosevelt's prediction that there may be peace talks by spring. Riverdale emphasized the hope that Britain's heavy airplane production and purchases would have such repercussions as to bring Germany into peace conversations, following which there would be a new united war front against Russia."

The real military and financial aid of imperialism to Finland, the international political and ideological crusade against the U.S.S.R., the diplomatic jockeying, particularly of Britain in relation to Germany, all testify to the incontrovertible fact that the U.S.S.R. stands face to face with the danger of a fully developed war of imperialist intervention. That war is already in its first stage.

In our resolution on Finland we state, "Despite the present alliances, or future changes in the alignment of the powers, the class antagonism between the imperialist states and the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state retains its full force."

The opposition in its document on the Russian question takes us to task for this formulation. In a footnote on pages 8 and 9 they say, "In passing, it should be noted that the Majority is here again expressing its idealistic and not dialectical understanding of the role of the nationalized economy. Precisely because the state is degenerated, the class antagonism does not retain its "full" force, that is, the counter-revolutionary regime has served to reduce the force of the antagonisms and therein, among other things, lies its reactionary character . . . at least half the political errors of the Cannon group are due to a failure to understand this".

Since "at least half of our errors" are due to our position on this question we will take great pains to discover where and with whom the error lies.

First let us make clear that in speaking of the full force of the antagonisms between the U.S.S.R. and world imperialism, we do so in a fundamental sense. The growth of Stalinism and the consequent defeat of the working class in many countries; that is, the defeat of the revolutionary threat, has made it appear that the basic class antagonisms between the Soviet Union and capitalism has been reduced. To confuse this superficial appearance, with the reality, is to make a fatal mistake.

Stalinist diplomacy embraces the bourgeois democracies; the Soviet Union is permitted to enter the League of Nations; the Franco-Soviet Pact is signed; the Communist parties become war-mongering bourgeois democracy-loving institutions; bourgeois statesmen speak patronizingly of the Stalin regime; a crop of petty-bourgeois intellectuals become the "friends of the Soviet Union," and finally Stalin forms an unscrupulous alliance with Hitler. Does all this signify the lessening or a sharpening of the antagonisms between the Soviet Union and the capitalist world? In the basic sense we would say it sharpens the antagonisms to the disadvantage of the working class. Why?

If we understand the elementary fact so clearly stated in "War and the Fourth International" that "Every big war, irrespective of its initial motives, 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," we can grasp the question of the "force of the antagonisms" from the most important standpoint. As far as imperialist hunger for the territories of the U.S.S.R. are concerned: it exists and moreover, grows continually more uncontrollable and acute. The victory of the Russian revolution not only gave the international working class the first example of the workers' state in practice, but also deprived world imperialism of a potential market for capitalist exploitation. This, imperialism cannot tolerate. The last two decades have witnessed the enormous accentuation of all the contradictions in capitalist economy which imperatively drives imperialism on the road of expansion. Is it not clear that this not only maintains the antagonism

onisms between the U.S.S.R. and imperialism at "full force" but also intensifies it continuously?

And the degeneration of the workers' state? That only presents imperialism with the opportunity to accomplish that which they are only too anxious to do! The degeneration of the workers state has simply weakened the resistance of the state to the pressure of world imperialism—but it hasn't "weakened" the basic class antagonism between the workers' state and imperialism. In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Comrade Trotsky writes, "The evolution of the Soviet bureaucracy is of interest to the world bourgeoisie in the last analysis from the point of view of possible changes in the forms of property. Napoleon I, after radically abandoning the traditions of Jacobinism, donning the crown and restoring the Catholic cult, remained nevertheless an object of hatred to the whole of ruling semi-feudal Europe, because he continued to defend the new property system created by the revolution. Until the monopoly of foreign trade is broken and the rights of capital restored, the Soviet Union, in spite of all the service of its ruling stratum, remains in the eyes of the bourgeoisie of the whole world an irreconcilable enemy, and German National Socialism a friend, if not of today, at least of tomorrow."

But the minority continues to see in Stalin's friendships and services to imperialism an expression and cause of the softening of the class antagonisms between the U.S.S.R. and capitalism. To borrow their own phrase, at least one half the errors of the opposition consists in their inability to distinguish Stalin from the U.S.S.R. which is incidentally the same error that the Stalinists make.

A striking analogy to this question can be found in recent German history. Before the victory of Hitler the liberal bourgeoisie of Germany, employing the same common sense logic to which our own opposition is addicted, argued: if the workers' organizations replace the present leadership with an aggressive revolutionary leadership that will intensify the antagonism with fascism. Better the present leadership which softens the contradiction. The revolutionists replied: yes the replacement of the corrupt and treacherous workers' leadership with a revolutionary leadership would sharpen the antagonism with the fascists, but to the advantage of the working class. To maintain the degenerated leadership would mean, to basically sharpen the class antagonism with the fascists to the disadvantage of the working class.

Many wise people saw, or rather thought they saw, a softening of the class antagonism between the workers' organizations and fascism as a result of the activities of the Social Democratic leaders. The Iron Front, the entrance of Social Democrats into the Government, etc., all seemed to testify to a generally softening of the class contradictions. In reality monopoly capital grew more desperate every day and felt compelled to launch its attack on the workers' organizations through the instrumentality of fascism. It was the degeneration of the workers' leadership that facilitated their task. It is the degeneration of the workers' state that threatens to facilitate the intervention of imperialism into the U.S.S.R.

The opposition will undoubtedly reply: "All this is simply a reiteration of an ancient thesis. How about the real war? The concrete events that demand concrete answers?" We permit our-

selves to be sufficiently aroused by the challenge to enter into this, the exclusive territory of the opposition.

Regarding the "real war" we still await a clear answer from the opposition on the question of what kind of a war does Finland conduct against the U.S.S.R.? At times the opposition admits the imperialist character of Finland's war. But the opposition also continuously states that an imperialist attack for the purpose of destroying nationalized property in the U.S.S.R. has not yet taken place. If the real imperialist attack lies ahead, then what is the character of the present imperialist attack? To state that the war is imperialist on both sides does not help to clarify this point. It should be clear that for the purpose of a correct answer we must have no ambiguity on the question of the nature of Finland's war as well as Russia's.

It may be argued that Allied imperialism pursues anti-German aims in the Finnish-Soviet war. That is, to keep the Soviet Union so busy in Finland that it will be difficult for Stalin to help his imperialist ally Hitler. While this is undoubtedly a part of allied imperialism's aims it would be pure nonsense and blindness to imagine that this was all. Allied imperialism is concerned with the development of its present war against the U.S.S.R. Its basic aims, regardless of any future temporary shifts, or present secondary tactical interests, remains the destruction of nationalized economy and the opening of the U.S.S.R. for imperialist exploitation. It is this basic interest that determines the character of Finland's war against the Soviet Union. And it is an understanding of this, plus our analysis of the character of the U.S.S.R. and the role of Stalinism that determines the position of the Fourth International in both camps.

Many opposition supporters (following through to the end the logic of the opposition arguments) have raised the slogan (in the discussions): "Today the main enemy of the Russian workers is Stalin." They reason: If Stalin is incapable of leading a victorious war against imperialism; if indeed Stalin undermines the foundations of the Soviet Union's resistance to world imperialism, then shouldn't we devote our main efforts to overthrowing Stalin? This reasoning, familiar to all who remember the "third period" of Stalinism and its social fascism theory, is very prevalent, particularly among the younger members of the opposition. We will confine ourselves to the remark that it was this slight misconception as to who was the main enemy that helped to bury the German revolution.

For the Marxists, the main enemy of the Russian working class, as well as the international working class, is the class enemy. The main enemy of the Russian workers is the imperialist bandit who attacks the Soviet Union, no matter what his pretext may be. The Russian worker and the international working class will in such circumstances defend the Soviet Union to the last drop of their blood.

In spite of Stalin—against Stalin!—the Soviet workers will defend the Soviet Union. The Bolshevik-Leninists in the U.S.S.R. will be the best fighters and because of that they will tell the Russian workers the truth: In order to win this war against imperialism we must overthrow the traitor Stalin and appeal to the revolutionary working class of the world to come to our aid.

January 14, 1940