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To the Editors of "The Socialist Appeal":

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE PARTY REGIME

By L. Trotsky

During the past months I have received letters in regard to the inner regime of a revolutionary party from several apparently young comrades, unknown to me. Some of these letters complain about the "lack of democracy" in your organization, about the domineering of the "leaders" and the like. Individual comrades ask me to give a "clear and exact formula on democratic centralism" which would preclude false interpretations.

It is not easy to answer these letters. Not one of my correspondents even attempts to demonstrate clearly and concretely with actual examples exactly wherein lies the violation of democracy. On the other hand, insofar as I, a bystander, can judge on the basis of your newspaper and your Bulletins, the discussion in your organization is being conducted with full freedom. The Bulletins are filled chiefly by representatives of a tiny minority. I have been told that the same holds true of your discussion meetings. The decisions are not yet carried out. Evidently they will be carried through at a freely elected conference. In what then could the violations of democracy have been manifested? This is hard to understand. Sometimes, to judge by the tone of the letters, i.e., in the main instance by the formlessness of the grievances, it seems to me that the complainers are simply dissatisfied with the fact that, in spite of the existing democracy, they prove to be in a tiny minority. Through my own experience I know that this is unpleasant. But wherein is there any violation of democracy?

Neither do I think that I can give such a formula on democratic centralism that "once and for all" would eliminate misunderstandings and false interpretations. A party is an active organism. It develops in the struggle with outside obstacles and inner contradictions. The malignant decomposition of the Second and Third Internationals, under the severe conditions of the imperialist epoch, creates for the Fourth International difficulties unprecedented in history. One cannot overcome them with some sort of magic formula. The regime of a party does not fall ready-made from the sky but is formed gradually in the struggle. A political line predominates over the regime. First of all, it is necessary to define strategic problems and tactical methods correctly in order to solve them. The organizational forms should correspond to the strategy and the tactic. Only a correct policy can guarantee a healthy party regime. This, it is understood, does not mean the development of the party does not raise organizational problems as such. But this means that the formula for democratic centralism must inevitably find a different expression in the parties of different countries and in different stages of development of one and the same party.

Democracy and centralism do not at all find themselves in an invariable ratio to one another. All depends on the concrete circumstances, on the political situation in the country, on the strength of the party and its experience, on the general level of its members, on the authority which the leadership has succeeded in winning. Before a conference when the problem is one of formulating a political line for the next period, democracy triumphs over centralism. When the problem concerns itself with political action, centralism subordinates democracy to itself. Democracy again asserts its rights when the party feels the need to examine critically its own actions. The equilibrium between democracy and centralism establishes itself in the actual struggle, at moments it is violated and then again re-established. The maturity of each member of the party expresses itself particularly in the fact that he does not demand from the party regime more than it can give. He is a poor revolutionist who defines his attitude to the party on the individual fillips that he gets on the nose. It is necessary, of course, to fight against every individual mistake of the leadership, every injustice and the like. But it is necessary to estimate these "injustices" and "mistakes" not by themselves but in connection with the general development of the party both on a national and international scale. A correct judgment and a feeling for proportion in politics is an extremely important thing. He who has propensities for making a mountain out of a mole-hill can do much harm to himself and to the party. The misfortune of such people as Oehler, Field, Weisbord and others consists in their lack of feeling for proportion.

At the moment there are not a few half-revolutionists, tired out by defeats, fearing difficulties, aged young men who have more doubts and pretensions than will to struggle. Instead of seriously analyzing political questions in essence, such individuals seek panaceas, on every occasion complain about the "regime", demand wonders from the leadership, or try to muffle their inner scepticism by ultra-left prattling. I fear that revolutionists will not be made out of such elements, unless they take themselves in hand. I do not doubt, on the other hand, that the young generation of workers will be capable of evaluating the programmatic and strategical content of the Fourth International according to merit and will rally to its banner in ever greater numbers. Each real revolutionist who notes down the blunders of the party regime should first of all say to himself: "We must bring into the party a dozen new workers!" The young workers will call the gentlemen-sceptics, grievance-mongers, and pessimists to order. Only along such a road will a strong healthy party regime be established in the sections of the Fourth International.

December 8, 1937.

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NOTES ON THE PARTY DISCUSSION

By Martin

A Party for Workers

The principal reason why I am less tolerant now than before of the "Kibbitzers' Club" theories of organization is precisely the good prospect of an influx of new, politically inexperienced worker militants. I know that such workers will not stay in a kibbitzers' club. They won't talk back to the articulate smart alecks, and they won't write letters to the N.O. either. They "vote with their feet." But the new workers are more important than the old incorrigibles who think the party is a hospital for sick souls and a forum for unrestricted and unlimited self-expression. This is the essence of the problem in New York as well as in Chicago. I hope the leadership sees it this way and utilizes the pre-convention discussion period, and the convention itself, for a salutary pedagogical campaign.

The prejudices against leadership and the fear of discipline are characteristics of the petty-bourgeois who doesn't want to be tied down to anything definite. To the militant worker, however, who has an instinct for organized struggle, strong leadership and firm discipline are the most attractive features of a party. Such a party, in his eyes, is serious; it means business -- and that is what he wants.

Lenin wrote on these subjects in "What is to be Done" and "The Left Sickness." I hope the forthcoming discussion will produce some instructive articles which go to the very root of the new criticisms and help the new workers in the party to learn what is involved and why. I am sorry I cannot participate. There is at least one more pamphlet on this question in my system.

July 24, 1944

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A Real Discussion

In my opinion the pre-convention period must be the occasion for a real, that is, a Bolshevik discussion. In other words, a full and free discussion which leads to a decision by the party. The leadership should not only welcome and encourage the free expression of dissenting and critical views; it must not tolerate the game of avoiding discussion of disputed points at convention time in order to keep it going the rest of the year. In such cases the N.C. should take the initiative.

August 7, 1944

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The "Educational" Counter-Thesis

The "educational" counter-thesis is not interesting to me, as it is all negation except for the insistence on independent and critical thinking. Since I myself have always been, from my earliest childhood, as independent as a hog on ice, and since the beginning of my conscious life, strongly inclined to critical thinking, I cannot have any objection to anyone indulging these traits and recommending them to others.

It is my opinion, however, that the example of our champions of independent and critical thinking lags far behind their precept. They are so pathetically dependent on external pressures and influences that it is painful to observe. Perhaps without realizing it, they slavishly repeat what has been said by politically demoralized people before them, without even any independent variations, without a trace of originality.

To state the brutal truth, they only think they think. Their complaints and formulas are not the product of thought at all, independent or otherwise, but of moods and sentiments induced by intestinal and cardiac disturbances. These moods and sentiments impel them to blame others for their own weakness, their morbid pessimism and fear of the future.

August 27, 1944

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The Letter of James T. Farrell

I forced myself to read again the letter of James T. Farrell. You don't know what an effort of self-discipline it takes to restrain me from answering that letter the way it deserves to be answered and letting our press publish both. However, a politician must write always to serve political ends and may not permit himself the indulgence of mere self-expression.

James T. Farrell didn't realize how hard he was trying to confirm the assertion which he "strongly objects to" -- about the superiority of Trotskyist morality. In addition to its other faults -- and everything in it is wrong -- his letter is dishonest. When we read Frankel's article again we were astounded to see how grossly Farrell misrepresented it. And the tone of the letter! It is rude and brutal. He would never dream of permitting himself to write that way in a critical letter addressed to the Nation, "Politics" or the Saturday Review of Literature. But Frankel and Hansen are only young and not very prominent writers for a small outcast party. Why bother to be polite or fair to them? Nothing is more contemptible in my eyes than to reserve one's good manners for equals and superiors and speak to "little people" like a boor. That, by my standards, is immoral.

Farrell is greatly mistaken if he imagines that he can maintain relations with us on that basis. And he is still more greatly mistaken if he thinks his collaboration with us in the defense case entails any political obligations on our part. Our party is too

dignified, too sure of itself, to take any guff from anybody. I look forward to the day when I will be free and it will be politically expedient for me to speak for the party on this theme.

August 29, 1944

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Revolutionary Perspectives

I don't know to what extent the supplementary resolution deals with the potentialities of the American labor movement in its analysis of the European situation. I should add also the British labor movement. This is most important, for the labor movement in the home countries of the victorious imperialists may well turn out to be the factor which undermines their grandiose schemes of a Roman peace to last, as Hitler dreamed of his own "new order", for "a thousand years." We should be careful not to project the European revolution as an apocalyptic event that will be over and done with in short order. We must see it rather as a drawn-out affair, uneven in its development, whose final outcome, however, can only be the victory of the workers. Despite any defeats and set-backs, the workers may encounter -- and we have no doubt there will be many of them -- we still will have no reason to believe in the viability of capitalism or the possibility of creating a new slave society more productive than capitalism, as the historical alternative to socialism.

All the bourgeois thinkers are convinced that great revolutionary upheavals are on the European agenda, but they imagine that military force, plus the help of Stalin, will suffice to deal with them. They cannot, however, rejuvenate the ruined economy of Europe. On the contrary, every plan they devise is more reactionary than the preceding one and, consequently, more revolutionary in its implications. They cannot restore Britain's ruined foreign trade, and they cannot by one quarter satisfy the moloch demands of America for markets and fields of investment. The perspective is revolutionary in the victor countries as well as in the vanquished.

October 3, 1944

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Discussion of the Russian Question

We think it would be a good idea to acquaint the party members with the discussion we have conducted in the leadership over the role of Stalinism, developments in the U.S.S.R. and the defense slogan. This should first go into the internal bulletin. Let the membership see and participate in the adaptation of basic principles to new conditions.

October 16, 1944

"Iconoclasm"

I spoke about "iconoclasts" in "The Dog Days of the Left Opposition"; by name on page 93. Morrison wants to take us back to the "Dog Days" and make the condition permanent. But such a condition could not be permanent in any case. The workers would not stay in such an organization, and the "iconoclasts" would talk each other to death. Then someone would have to begin all over again, and he could not begin otherwise than by reinstating the "authorities" which the iconoclasts had so light-mindedly overthrown.

October 29, 1944

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Education by Discussion

The discussion is just getting started! Everytime these people speak they provide the theme for an article expounding some elementary idea which they challenge. Morrison was more right than he knew when he said, in his criticism of the educational plan, that comrades learn most by discussion. They will learn a great deal about Bolshevism from our critical discussion of his perverted version of it.

November 7, 1944

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"Degeneration"

I see by the "Times" Magazine (Nov. 5) that Charles Rumford Walker is secretary of "Yale University Committee on Post-War Planning and Reconstruction." I remember Walker as a Trotskyist sympathizer who was once very much worried about the danger of "Stalinist degeneration" in our party. One has only to read the pathetic article in the Times of this capitulator to American imperialism to convince himself that there are other forms and kinds of degeneration. Walker is one of many who fell victim to the other kind.

November 9, 1944

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What Democracy Means

If anyone asks you what my letter on the N.C. election means, tell them it means just exactly what it says. I want more democracy in the party! Democracy means that the leaders, not only collectively but also individually, must be called to account before the party; that the party must pass judgment on their conduct, their activity and their abilities as well as on their political ideas. But not only that. Party democracy also means that the party must pass judgment also on the critics of the leadership. Everybody is responsible to the party. And what is the party? The convention is the party. Everything and everybody must be prepared to render account to the convention.

And this only sums up and crowns the principle that all party members, at all times, are responsible to the party. Nobody, nobody, stands above the party. It seems to us that this is the crucial point of the dispute over the unauthorized conferences with the Shachtmanites. Morrison, commenting on Stein's article on this question, says, "we all stand for the same thing." Not on your tintype! In another place he says his objective "has been achieved to the extent of 90%." He is deluding himself. We will not accept his conceptions of organizational responsibility to the extent of even 10%.

It appears to us that, in blowing up the New York incident out of all proportions and then claiming that "his objective has been achieved", as well as in the formulas he advances in Internal Bulletin #6 -- Morrison has other "objectives" in mind than the minor incidents under dispute. Is he perhaps -- again indulging his weakness for underestimating the intelligence of other people -- assuming as "achieved" a construction which will free him and other thinkers from any real party control and party discipline in the future, in more important matters, and assuming at the same time that no one will notice it? If so, he and any others who entertain such ideas are due for a rude awakening.

It is important now to observe each and every leader, local and national, in this discussion. In my opinion, Morrison's articles are insults to the party. Any leader who does not react angrily to these insults is lacking in respect for himself and for the party. Such people will be weak reeds to lean on in a crisis.

November 12, 1944

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What Has Been Disproved?

If anyone, including Logan, wants to know my opinion, you can say I think it would be better to dispense with the hauteur and, instead, show precisely wherein any of the political resolutions of the N.C. for the past four years have been "disproved by events." Nobody has been able to show that yet, as far as I know. What have been "disproved by events" up till now are the criticisms of these resolutions.

November 13, 1944

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The Source of the Flare-up

The present flare-up in the party is simply the expression of the fact that the sharp turn which the party has taken toward more effective mass work has thrown a few self-centered people off balance. The Militant has become a real popular workers' paper; new people are coming toward us, not by scores any longer but by thousands. This is shown beyond dispute by the successes of the sub campaign, the defense work, the call backs and the trade union developments. The new people who are coming forward are more important than those who are falling

behind. The discussion is justified by the extent to which it is utilized to educate the new people.

November 13, 1944

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What the Convention Demonstrated

The worst fault of the thinkers' faction is that they don't think. This is demonstrated once again by the party convention. I am not referring here to the votes -- although they are not without meaning for those who are capable of learning -- but to the fact of the convention itself; its success as a demonstration of party viability, optimism and energy, and the formal seal it was able to place on solid achievements of the past year.

The general success of the convention should not have surprised anyone who is able to observe what is taking place before his eyes and to reflect on what he observes. Conventions rarely introduce anything new; they cannot rise above the party as it is and as it has been in the preceding period. The role of the convention, if one takes time to think about it, is simply to formalize decisions which have already been prepared and to project such new activities as have been made possible by previous work.

If the thinkers had devoted one-tenth as much time to thinking as they devoted to talking and writing about the leader cult and the lack of party democracy they would have been able to foresee that the convention itself, a concentrated expression of all that has been done and learned in sixteen years of struggle, was bound to impress the party members as a crushing empirical refutation of their thesis.

What kind of Stalinist bureaucratism is it when a worker delegate, who knows from his trade union experience -- his daily life!-- what Stalinist methods are, takes the floor and says: "I don't see anything like that in this party, either here or in Los Angeles?" And what kind of a "leader cult" is the party dedicated to when the convention, held after a year's absence of the second line leaders, and four years after the death of the first line leader, acclaims the third line leaders for their direction of the party during the year of its greatest progress?

In fact, the convention, and the year's experience which it summarized and represented, was a great triumph for the conception of a party based on great principles, whose cadres have been educated and selected in the struggle for these principles, not arbitrarily but by the struggle itself; a party whose members are bound together and inspired by common ideas which are not the personal property of an individual leader, like his personal qualities, which he cannot transmit to others, but common property which can be acquired by those who are willing to study, and transmitted by them to others who are willing to learn.

The party which has celebrated this triumphant convention under such adverse conditions, and after such heavy blows had been dealt to its leading staff, nationally and internationally, has a full right to speak of the education of its cadres; and it was nothing more than the logical outcome of all preceding developments that a systematic plan for the higher organization of party educational work was placed at the center of the convention's agenda. Those who foolishly put themselves crossways with the forward trend of the convention had better begin to think seriously about these things. We, the party -- said the convention -- don't want your prejudices, and we are impatient with your twaddle.

November 27, 1944

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Party Democracy and Majority Rule

Logically such a decisive vote as that recorded by the convention after an unrestricted preparatory discussion in the party should impel the opposition to reconsider their position and make an effort to learn something from their experience. Unfortunately, logic makes but slow headway in establishing its hegemony over certain types of human minds where prejudice fights on its home grounds. Past experience tends to discount any optimistic hopes that may be entertained in this respect. I can't remember ever knowing a professional democrat who paid respectful attention to the cardinal principle of democracy, i.e., the subordination of the minority to the majority. They demand "democracy" but they are firmly convinced that demos is a fool.

It would not be realistic to consider the disputes as settled, as far as the illogical "democrats" are concerned, by the simple fact that the party membership has given its decision. It is to be expected, rather, that an attempt will now be made to transfer the debate to the international field where, as a result of present world conditions, the free exchange of information encounters many difficulties. We should take these difficulties into consideration and do our best to overcome them without losing time that can never be made up. Concentrated attention should be devoted to the problem of supplying every possible section of the Fourth International with all available material bearing on the disputes. The work of transmitting full sets of the Internal Bulletins to the foreign parties should be organized and periodically checked until every possibility is exhausted. This, in our opinion, is the most important follow-up on the convention and the discussion which preceded it.

Next, we deem it essential, as we have previously remarked, to publish the convention resolutions in the magazine; and to publish with them the rejected amendments of Logan and the rejected criticisms of Cassidy -- giving the vote in each case. And a report of the convention should be published in the magazine giving an explanation, from the point of view of the majority, of the reasons for the convention's decisions. It goes without saying that the report should be fairly and objectively written, in a style and tone befitting the dignity of our theoretical journal.

There must be no mistake, however, and no misunderstanding as to the character the press must assume in the ensuing period. The press must be edited in strict accord with the decisions of the party convention; not only in the letter, but in the spirit too. Our party democracy must express itself in majority rule without any ambiguity whatever. This must be automatically guaranteed by the decisions made in the assignments to the posts of executive editors for each organ. Naturally, representatives of the minority must be given full opportunity to participate in the editorial work both of the paper and the magazine. But the executive editor charged with the duty of guarding the line of the convention must, in each case, be a man who understands the line and believes in it.

November 28, 1944

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Self Confidence and Skepticism

The objections we hear to our practice of praising our party, its institutions and -- once in a while -- its individual members, is at bottom an expression of the capitulatory skepticism of the petty bourgeois; his deep-seated lack of confidence in the proletariat, in the party, and in himself. All petty bourgeois parties, groups and tendencies, no matter how much they may quarrel among themselves, make it an article of their creed that "no one party" can be trusted with the leadership of the workers' movement. The main lesson they deduce from the Russian revolution is that the "monopoly" of leadership by the Bolsheviks was the source of all evils. To be sure, they feel in their hearts that the revolution itself was a "mistake", but their criticism of the "one party" leadership is a more timid, more round-about way of expressing the same sentiment. It is a way of saying, "It must not happen again."

To the frankly expressed ambition and determination of the Trotskyists to lead the movement for the reconstitution of the International all the centrists of the ill-fated "London Bureau" counterposed the idea of a coalition of groups and tendencies, none of which would have "hegemony"; as against our idea of the Marxist party leading the proletarian revolution and the workers state they visualized this grandiose social transformation, insofar as they visualized it at all, as being smoothly effected by the amicable cooperation of a coalition of parties.

Norman Thomas, in a press interview after the recent election, expressed the belief -- and hope -- that a "new party" of the workers would arise. By that he meant to say that he had no confidence in his own party except, as he added, as "an educational force." Any Shachtmanite you meet on the street, assuming that you do not search for the philosopher's stone by shopping around at their meetings, will tell you that his hopes for the future are centered in some kind of a unification from which a new party will arise. That is his way of saying that he does not assign any great historic role to his own party.

The so-called "modesty" of all petty bourgeois politicians and commentators simply corresponds to their own pessimism, to the low valuation which they place on their own ideas, their own organization, and their own future prospects. They cannot understand how others can feel and act differently and still be "normal"; just as the petty shopkeeper, or the small land owner buried in the idiocy of rural life, imagines that his prejudices, his morality and his narrow acquisitive traits, along with his rule-of-thumb ignorance which he calls "common sense", represent universal and unchanging human nature. We who believe in the world-conquering power of our ideas, and consequently in our party and in ourselves, seem "queer" to them. They break out into a rash at every demonstration of our self-assurance; they think it is conceit, a trait which, they have been taught to believe, should be decorously screened, not openly flaunted.

I am inclined to think that we made an impermissible concession to this petty bourgeois prejudice in the recent discussion, to the extent that we did not frankly characterize it and counterpose our idea to it.

December 7, 1944

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"The Creative Force of the Future"

Dwight Macdonald, James T. Farrell and other superficial critics of our movement construe our assertion of the historic importance of our movement, and thereby of the work of our leading people, as a sign of exaggerated personal conceit. The literary and academic world generally is painfully limited in its judgment of people and their motivations. They seek always for personal interests and concerns, and of these they take the mean and petty as the norm.

Since personal conceit is a very unattractive vice it may perhaps be worthwhile to take up this accusation and show that Marxists who judge everything, including themselves, from a historical materialist point of view, can be least inclined of all to attribute a role to themselves not conditioned by their historical milieu. We as individuals are significant insofar as we consciously express, and thereby accelerate, the progressive tendencies inherent in the historical process of which we are a part. An elucidation of this question might help our young militants to see the situation, and their part in it, more clearly and -- as a by-product -- put the pigmy critics in their places.

We think we are important because our ideas are going to change the world. Without this conviction we could never build the combat party which is destined to be the instrument of this historic mission. See what Trotsky said on this line about the conviction of the Russian Marxists in the depths of the post-1905 reaction -- that they, a persecuted handful, were superior to the ruling powers. See what he wrote on the same theme in "War and the International" in 1914 when reaction was triumphant everywhere and "the death of Marxism" was being universally celebrated. "We feel ourselves to be the only creative force of the future."

See what he wrote to the conference of the French Trotskyist youth: "You are more important than all the generals and all the statesmen because you alone represent the future."

See what he told me in 1934 about the role of Molinier and Naville. He commissioned me to go back to Paris, cutting down my long deferred visit with him to a single day, to make one final effort to reconcile them. "They have a great responsibility," I said. He answered: "They have the greatest responsibility in the history of the world, and they quarrel and split over trifles."

It is really a bit painful to have to explain that we are not "bragging" when we say our party is better than the other parties, for they are no good whatsoever.

January 19, 1945

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Leadership and the Leader Cult

The "leader cult" theory, as we have heard it explained lately, is a version of the anti-leader prejudice of the syndicalists which was shared in part by menshevism. A nihilistic attitude toward leadership ("iconoclasm") is absolutely fatal to the design to organize a combat party; without a firm, authoritative and continuing central leadership the combat party must remain in the realm of daydreams. See the theory of "Leaders versus Masses" of the German K.A.P.D. See the I.W.W. constitutional provision for a complete change of officers every year.

Lenin, who was in dead earnest about organizing a revolution, exalted the concept of leadership higher than anyone had ever done before. Perhaps that was his most distinctive, his most Leninist contribution to the theory of organizing the party and the revolution. See the polemics against him by Martov, Luxembourg, Trotsky and others. See Trotsky's later evaluation of this dispute. See "What is to be Done", "One Step Forward", "Left Sickness" and the early theses of the Comintern.

In the genuine "leader cult" the "Leader" is arbitrator -- this is the key to an understanding of the problem. It is a social formation; there must be interests to arbitrate; and there must be the element of compulsion in the last resort. The leader principle is not confined to the single individual at the apex of this social formation, as some people imagine. That is a purely idealistic conception of this historical phenomenon. The leader principle goes all the way to the bottom, down to the basic units of the social organism in question. The ancient Persian satraps under the "Great King", the feudal lords under the absolute monarchs, the catholic bishops under the Pope, the Gauleiters under the fascist Fuehrer, the Provisional District Presidents under Lewis, and the District Secretaries under Stalin -- they all reign supreme in their own domains and exercise the same arbitrary powers there as the Lord over All exercises universally. It is necessary to remind careless thinkers that "ideas do not fall from the sky." This includes the idea of the Supreme Leader which is

a solidly-based social manifestation which, under given conditions, is necessary and therefore is invented. And its main instrumentality is not "hero worship" but compulsion.

January 19, 1945

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"Boo! Hoo!" say the Babes in the Wood, wiping their dripping noses on their sleeves, "Our situation is terrible. It would be so much better if Trotsky were here. Cannon doesn't take the place of Trotsky." Listen, snivellers; I never promised to take Trotsky's place. I promised to take Cannon's place, and I am keeping my promise. Whose place are you taking? Play your own part as best you can with the talents God gave you and quit crying for the impossible. Less moping, please, and more attention to reality! Less whimpering about the defects of others and more emphasis on personal performance!

Trotsky said he was sure of the victory of the Fourth International, although he knew that he could not participate in it personally. Those who are so ready to discount the present leadership, and that in process of development, don't realize that their pessimism manifests their own addiction to the cult of the leader. They trusted Trotsky the man but do not trust the power of his ideas to create other human instruments. But Trotsky's greatness was above all in his ideas. The party which assimilates these ideas still has the best of Trotsky in its service.

January 15, 1945

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Our party method: Not merely to learn, think and do ourselves, but to organize others to learn, think and do. Our strength is in our combination. The "machine" (human) is stronger than any individual can be. Team work is better than the prima-donna system in any field; in the field of party leadership above all. Those who feel themselves qualified and called to leadership must learn how to work together and permit no anarchistic individuals, no matter how talented they may be, to disrupt the "machine."

It is idle to reminisce about Trotsky and his decisive personal role. All laws and rules bend a bit when genius appears on the scene. But geniuses do not grow on trees. We need methods and working rules to govern the functioning of people who fall short of genius. That is the kind of material we have, and most probably that is all we are going to get. In this there is no ground for pessimism, for weeping and wailing, for bawling like lost calves. Men of common clay will suffice to lead the party and the revolution provided only that they know how to organize themselves, to work together.

January 15, 1945

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Democracy or Snobocracy

Add a chapter on this theme to the pamphlet "Reflections on the 11th Party Convention". A critical analysis of the attitude of Morrison, Logan, etc. The petulant hauteur of the patricians whose superiority is not recognized. They go around with their noses in the air and imagine that this makes them taller than other people. The idea of a self-selected elite of independent thinkers, counterposed to a stupid mass of blind followers, hand-raisers and hero-worshippers, is not a democratic idea but a snobocratic pretension. It is founded not at all on an actual division within the party membership but on the petty-bourgeois self-centeredness and conceit of its authors.

January 15, 1945

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No Jestng about Splits

At a New York membership meeting Roland, it was reported, spoke of a "split atmosphere." Such assertions cannot be passed off. No ambiguity whatever on such a question can be tolerated. It is the duty of all concerned to make explicit statements of their attitude and intentions whenever any suggestion of "split" is heard. (See Trotsky's letter -- "In Defense of Marxism" -- and the subsequent action taken by the majority). We do not want to hear any talk about a "split" even in jest.

Our democracy is free enough and elastic enough, to permit the correction of any error of the leadership by normal means. For that reason the public opinion of the party must condemn anyone who dares even to think of splitting the party. Fair treatment and comradely discussion with all those loyally working inside the party, no matter how great the differences of opinion may be -- relentless warfare against all those who threaten to step outside the party. This is our policy. As for those who actually resort to split, and thereby try to destroy the party -- such people are traitors in our eyes.

January 17, 1945

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On Democracy and Criticism

Free criticism is the essence of democracy, the condition for fruitful collaboration. A leader who "resents" criticism, reacting to it subjectively, is guilty of two glaring faults insupportable in a leader:

(1) He unconsciously sets himself against democracy in process, for democracy expresses itself precisely in criticism. If one "resents" criticism what is the use of talking about democracy, about the theory that many heads are better than one?

(2) By setting up "defenses" against criticism and reacting to it resentfully, a leader cuts himself off from one of the best, in some respects, the best, way of learning. That means -- he is not yet a real leader.

A leader should be measured not only by what he knows, but also by his capacity to continue learning. When he gets "old", that is to say when he stops learning, he ceases to be useful. I think that is what Lenin meant when he said: "Revolutionists, when they reach the age of 50, should be shot."

January 19, 1945

* * *

Resentment or insensitivity toward criticism is one of the most terrible weaknesses a leader can be afflicted with. I believe one of the characteristic marks of a real leader is the capacity to listen attentively to criticism. One who resents criticism inspired by good will is simply impossible, too childish for the role of leader. But even criticism inspired by malice sometimes contains a kernel or half-kernel of truth which one may profitably heed and appropriate. I personally learned more than anyone knows precisely this way. Lenin, it is said, answered the S.R.'s when they accused the Bolsheviks of appropriating their agrarian program: "Did we ever promise that if you had anything good we would not take it."

January 21, 1945

* * *

An Insult to the Party

The leaders of the opposition showed a great deal of disrespect for the opinions and sentiment of the party membership. Perhaps the worst manifestation was the demand that James T. Farrell's letter be published; the attempt to impose his pompous strictures on the party as some kind of authority which the party was bound to recognize. That was a coarse and brutal insult to the party. The party would not be a party if it had not learned to rely on itself and to reject out of hand every suggestion of guidance from outside sources.

We learn and correct our mistakes through mutual discussion and criticism among ourselves. We Leninists have studied the art of revolutionary politics and organization and our decisions receive the constant corrective of the workers mass movement. We work at it every day. Such individuals as James T. Farrell, whose main interest and occupation lie in other fields, haven't yet started even to think about it seriously. His banal letter alone is sufficient proof of that. Before he, or anyone like him, can presume to teach us he must himself first go to school. We take our ideas and our work far too seriously to welcome instruction from people who haven't the slightest idea of what they are talking about; who mistake vague impressions and philistine prejudices for professional competence.

It is remarkable how politics lures the amateur. Every other art and science, every profession and occupation, has its own recognized body of knowledge and its own rules and standards which amateurs and laymen respect from a distance and take for granted. People who don't know the business do not presume to lay down the law to those who do. Neither James T. Farrell, nor anyone else who didn't wish to make himself ridiculous, would ever dream of intruding -- with a ponderous air of authority, at that -- on a discussion among practitioners of another art or profession outside the field of his own special study and experience.

But in the art of revolutionary politics and organization -- which is not the least difficult nor the least important of the arts -- since its aim is to change the world -- any dabbler feels free to pontificate without the slightest sign of serious preparation. Dwight Macdonald is the arch-type of these political Alices in Wonderland. But Farrell, as the most cursory reading of his childish letter shows, is not much closer to the real world. There is nothing we can do about it. We can't prevent such people from committing their half-baked notions to paper as soon as they pop into their heads and then waiting for the earth to quake.

But we have people in our ranks -- worse yet, in our leadership -- who excitedly demand that we set aside our rules and suspend our business to listen to these preposterous oracles and even to heed their revelations. We should in all conscience object to that. That is downright offensive. We now learn that James T. Farrell's letter has finally found its place in Shachtman's magazine. That is where it belonged in the first place.

January 16, 1945

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REFLECTIONS ON THE 11TH PARTY CONVENTION

By Martin

1. An Unfounded Opposition

The outburst of factional struggle took the party membership by surprise. The appeal against the leadership was not nourished by any sentiment of discontent in the ranks. On the contrary, the opposition made its appearance at the moment when the party morale was perhaps at its highest point, an expression of satisfaction with the visible progress of the party and confidence in the leadership. The open attempt to discredit the leadership struck the party ranks as a cross-current and resulted only in inflicting the most damaging blows to the prestige and authority of its authors. Seldom has an opposition headed by prominent leaders met such a prompt and crushing repudiation. One simply cannot escape the conclusion that the source of their feverish excitement was in themselves, not in the general situation of the party.

Since the liquidation of the factional struggle with the petty-bourgeois opposition four years ago the internal life of the party has been marked by a spirit of unity and good will based on a great solidarity of views. The relationship between the party ranks and the elected leadership was one of mutual confidence. Harmonious collaboration was the rule in carrying out the party tasks. Our political unity had been effectively demonstrated at the Plenum-Conferences of 1940 and 1941, and again at the Tenth Party Convention (1942). Incidental disputes of a local character, which arose throughout this period were resolved to the general satisfaction of the membership.

During these four years many things happened, and the party was dealt heavy blows. The tragic death of Trotsky, the greatest calamity, struck us very soon after the split. The great trade union struggle in Minneapolis; the arrests and the trial; the entry of the United States into the war; the imprisonment of the 18, followed -- one shock after another to a small party whose ranks had been decimated by a deep split.

But thanks to its political homogeneity and its internal solidarity, the party stood up under these blows, and even made substantial progress. Party work and activity expanded on all fronts; the professional staff of the party was strengthened in quantity and quality; and recruiting proceeded at a faster pace than ever before in our history. If neither the optimistic fighting morale of the ranks nor the authority of the leadership could be seriously disturbed by the opening of the factional struggle, it was because they were both solidly based on real accomplishments, on real triumphs over difficulties.

The appearance of an unexpected opposition just at the time when the party was making its greatest advances, in the absence of the most prominent leaders, only underscored its untimeliness, and made it incumbent upon the leaders of the opposition to give reasons of more than ordinary import and urgency. This they could not do.

The acting leadership conducted the dispute in a manner which leaves little to criticize; and did it, moreover, without permitting the constructive external work of the party to be demoralized, or even interrupted. That was a great achievement, a great step forward, in the development of the most important and hardest-to-build of all workers organizations -- the democratic combat party. It was correct, and fully in line with our tradition, to first clear the ground of secondary issues and to make every reasonable concession to redress grievances, real or imaginary, so as to center the attention of the party on the discussion of important questions. Bolsheviki do not waste time and energy fighting over trifles.

2. The Aim of Discussion

A great deal of nonsense is disseminated about our "aversion" to discussion; the Shachtmanites specialize in this chatter. It is true that we don't believe in conducting aimless discussions around the clock, and around the calendar, like a club of bohemian free-thinkers. But if anyone wants to bring serious criticisms of the policy and conduct of the leadership, then by all means let them be presented to the membership for full and free discussion.

Despite all the fantastic and hysterical accusations to the contrary, the record shows that this has always been our method of dealing with serious disputes. Our party, the most democratic in the world, has never known any other procedure. In the recent discussion the party remained true to its great tradition. It will do the same, it can safely be said, in the subsequent handling of those issues, which were implied or adumbrated in the recent discussion but not fully clarified. The most fundamental issues, which lay at the basis of the opposition but were not fully developed, remain yet to be discussed in full scope and thereby fully clarified.

If many of our critics and opponents in the past have more or less sincerely believed that we are "against" democracy it was because they understood democracy in a very one-sided manner -- in the sense of unlimited self-expression. We conceive democracy in a broader sense and want to put it to a more definite use. If they want to discuss for the sake of discussion, we want to discuss in order for the party to decide. Nothing is more barren than aimless discussion, endlessly prolonged, which leads to no conclusion. This is the worst feature of the disputes within isolated groups which lack a proletarian rank and file; a power which can intervene in the disputes and decide them and call the leaders to order.

It was precisely this lack of a proletarian deciding force in the Dog Days of the Left Opposition which permitted the intellectual anarchism and irresponsibility of some of the leaders to assume such monstrous forms as to make them unfit for later assimilation into a normally functioning proletarian party. That is the trouble right now with such demoralized leaders of the emigration as the authors of "The Three Theses." They recognize no restraints and one could argue with them in closed committee circles from now to doomsday without gaining a single inch. A few hundred revolutionary workers would soon put these anarchists in their places! Insofar as we conduct a debate with them it must be clearly understood as an appeal to workers against

them. A broad international discussion is now obviously necessary, but it must be pointed toward a decision by the rank and file and a stern regulation of all the affairs of the movement on the basis of this decision.

3. Not "Tempo" but Perspectives

The artificial debate over "democratic demands" does not arise over "tempo" as is alleged, but over perspectives. Democratic slogans have an applicability also in periods of rapid tempo. But the specific slogans to be raised, withdrawn, modified or emphasized must be determined by an analysis of the concrete situation regardless of whether the tempo is rapid or relatively slow. The "blueprint" approach is false in either case. A fruitful debate among Leninists can only occur over the applicability of specific democratic slogans in a concrete situation. And such questions as a rule can be decided only on the basis of full information as to the actual state of affairs; that is, on the spot. Why should the American party assume that we are called upon to give such detailed advice from afar? It is our duty, rather, to aid European parties in the struggle for programmatic intransigence.

We don't know of any proposals to reject the use of democratic slogans as a means of mobilizing the masses in a given situation. We do know of attempts to substitute a so-called democratic program for the program of proletarian revolution. That is the significance of "The Three Theses." That danger is real, not imaginary. We are fighting against that. All the clamor raised in the artificial struggle against our alleged opposition to democratic slogans is nothing but a form of indirect support of the authors of "The Three Theses."

The attempt to witticize on the subject of optimism and pessimism is not very well placed. It is no laughing matter. Nobody ever yet made serious preparations to organize a revolution which he didn't believe in. The lack of faith in the ability of the workers is the psychological source of all forms of opportunism. "The Three Theses" illustrate this once again. They were grounded on the assumption that Hitler's "new order" was firmly established on the continent of Europe. This foundation is crumbling away; it wasn't very solid in the first place. Now we see the same approach to the danger of Stalinism. There can hardly be a real difference of opinion among us as to the danger of Stalinism or the necessity of struggling against it.

The differences arise over the perspectives of the struggle. Shall we presuppose the victory of Stalinism in Europe, or the victory of the Roosevelt-Churchill-Stalin alliance? Or, shall we maintain our conviction that the power of the masses is greater and prepare the struggle with the perspective of victory? If there is any ground for a real conflict between us that is where it lies. That is the meaning of "optimism" and "pessimism". It is not a question of "tempo" but of perspectives.

4. Right and Left Dangers

There is a somewhat disturbing consistency in the various issues raised or adumbrated by the opposition. In addition to the differences over perspectives masked as a dispute over democratic demands we hear the astonishing contention that the Fourth International must be on guard against the left danger. If the perspective is revolutionary, if we are witnessing the beginning of a great revolutionary upsurge, we must rather expect manifestations of the right danger in the sharpest form. That is a historical law.

Leaving aside individual aberrations, and judging by main currents, we see this law demonstrated over and over again in every new crisis. "Leftism" is fundamentally a sickness of the labor movement at ebb tide. It is the product of revolutionary impatience, of the impulse to jump over objective difficulties, to substitute revolutionary zeal and forced marches for the supporting movement of the masses. Opportunism, on the other hand, is a disease which strikes the party in the sharpest form at the moment of social crisis. It is the product of the sentiment of capitulation before the moral and material power of the bourgeoisie.

In the light of historical experience it seems incredible that anyone should see "leftism" as the main danger at the beginning of the revolutionary crisis. If history teaches us anything, such a posing of the question must itself be characterized as an opportunist manifestation. The greatest danger to the Fourth International right now, at the moment of the revolutionary upturn, is the sentiment of conciliationism toward menshevism in any of its forms or manifestations.

The "examples" cited in proof of the "left" danger are arbitrarily and one-sidedly selected, and even then falsely interpreted. The principal difference between us and the official British Section arose over the proletarian military policy. Objections to this policy in the spirit of pacifist abstentionism scarcely deserve the designation of "left" deviations.

But leaving that aside, and the "Three Theses" along with it, let us turn to another and far more significant page of our recent history. Simultaneously with the outbreak of the war in Europe the Fourth International was plunged into an internal struggle which threatened its existence. This struggle, as is known, centered in the Socialist Workers Party but its repercussions were world-wide and its leadership was truly international. Here is a question: Did the petty-bourgeois opposition, which was strong enough to muster 40% of our membership for a split against Trotsky, against our program and against our tradition, represent a right or a left danger? And -- to carry the inquiry one necessary step further -- is the sentiment of conciliationism toward this opportunist clique a right or a left danger? These questions are very pertinent to the new controversy arising in our ranks on an international scale. When we begin to discuss them we will begin to get down to the nub of the matter.

5. Shall We Discuss the "Workers" Party?

In discussing every difference of opinion and every proposal we should aim to carry our thoughts through to the end and draw the whole party into our thinking. For this it is necessary not only to explain to the party what is proposed but why it is proposed. The characteristic defect of all eclectic thinking is that it is only half-thinking. It is marked by the failure to carry a thought through to the end; the tendency to jump to conclusions and formulate proposals midway in the consideration of a subject.

Take the question of the Shachtmanites, for example. We witness an attempt, direct or implied, to revise our estimate of the petty-bourgeois opposition. But the question is not ended with our estimate of the Shachtman party; it is only started. What follows from this estimate, or the proposal to revise it? To what end is it pointed? If we keep thinking without stopping half-way we must recognize that our estimate inexorably leads us either (1) toward reconciliation and unity, or (2) toward a deepening of the split. The discussion is not completed until that question is decided and reasons given for the decision.

We, on our part, assume that the course toward deepening of the split is necessary and correct; our attitude flows from that. Naturally, if someone has a different proposal, we are ready to discuss it. But if that is the case, let us discuss fully and properly, in logical order, from premise to conclusion. Let us go back to the internal struggle and the split in which it culminated, and put the following questions as a basis for the discussion:

- (1) Was the analysis of the petty-bourgeois opposition, which we together with Trotsky made at that time, correct or not?
- (2) Was the attitude which we took toward them properly based on the analysis?
- (3) Was our action in expelling them when they refused to accept the convention decisions the proper action?
- (4) What changes have taken place in the meantime? Has the Shachtman party come closer or gone farther away from us?
- (5) Do these changes provide the logical ground to reassert and strengthen our original decision, or to change or modify it?

Do I hear an answer to these questions?

By all means let us discuss the "Workers Party" if anyone really wants to discuss it. But let us not nibble at the proposition. Let it be discussed fully -- to the end.

6. Our Attitude and Theirs

Opponents and critics of our Party busy themselves in the effort to create the impression that the American Trotskyist movement is split in two, that there are "two wings" etc. Such publications

as the "Call" and "Politics" overlook no opportunity to confuse people by painting up the Shachtmanite organization as one of these "wings", as some sort of "Trotskyites." Besides the genuine Trotskyites, they maintain, there are some others who are not so bad and do not demand so much; the cut-rate Trotskyites, so to speak -- they can get it for you wholesale.

The propaganda of the Shachtman group itself is devoted primarily, almost exclusively, to us. After four and one-half years of self-proclaimed independence they are still unable to conduct themselves otherwise than as a mistreated faction of our party. They run after us like a parasite divorced from its host. Their "politics" consist in sniffing at the fringes of our movement in the hope of finding some waifs and strays with whom they may limp in sympathy.

But we, on our part, long ago turned our backs on this wretched reminiscence of the past and directed all our attention to the awakening workers who are far more important and potentially far more revolutionary than any or all of these moth-eaten cliques of yesterday. We demand absolutely nothing from Shachtman & Co. except that they carry through their split to the very end. We insist on that. We gained the upper hand precisely by this policy. We have thrived and grown strong by this policy. It was not adopted in the first place without serious thought and deliberation. It has been vindicated a thousand times in practical experience. That is why ill-considered suggestions or proposals to change or modify this policy, whether directly made or implied, are bound to be given short shrift by the party membership.

Such suggestions or proposals, implicit in the attitude taken by the opposition in the recent discussion, run counter to the orientation of the party. To be carried into effect they would require that the lessons acquired in harsh experience be unlearned, and that positions gained in struggle be given up. The sentiment of conciliationism looks backward, not forward.

There is a time to debate with people who infringe on the principles of Bolshevism and call its organizational methods into question, and there is a time to close the debate and proceed to open struggle. It is important in each case to do the right thing at the right time. The time for debates is when the differences and criticisms are presented by loyal members of a common organization. The time to declare open war is when organizational loyalty is violated, when the critics take the road of split and set up a rival organization, outside the party. We must not mix up these two prescriptions. It was because we kept them separate, each in its proper place, that we defeated the petty-bourgeois opposition, first in the internal discussion, as a faction against faction, and then in the open struggle, as party against party.

No change in our attitude toward the splitters can be entertained except to make it stronger, more precise and definite, more intransigent. Our policy in dealing with the petty-bourgeois opposition, which has been correct from beginning to end, was not invented by us, nor did it fall from the skies. It was derived from the theory and experience of the international movement. Up to the split, and for a few months afterward, we had the direct guidance of Trotsky who

embodied this theory and experience. After the death of Trotsky we kept in mind what he had taught us and drew further on historical examples.

In this connection read Lenin's letter to the German Communists after the break with Levi. Read Trotsky's letter on the Spanish events after the break with Landau. These two letters, so rich in the practical wisdom of great fighting political leaders, both say the same thing, almost in the same words. "Stop the sterile discussion with these deserters, forget that they ever existed, and turn your attention to the workers, recruit new cadres". This was the gist of the advice of Lenin and Trotsky in dealing with people who rejected the discipline of the party.

Lenin and Trotsky were leaders of endless patience. They never tired of explaining things over and over again to loyal people who were willing and able to learn. But they also knew how to judge when patience ceases to be a virtue and becomes a fault. That happens sometimes sooner but never later than the moment when dissenting factions take the road of split, when the ideologic dispute between factions of a common organization is transformed into a struggle of party against party. We learned that from Lenin and Trotsky, and the party has profited enormously by the knowledge. Nobody can teach us differently at this late date, least of all in the question of our attitude toward the enemy party of Shachtman and Co.

7. Are We "Afraid" to Approach Other Organizations?

Our resolute decision to have no truck with the Shachtmanites is interpreted by some people to mean that we have an attitude of narrow exclusiveness toward all other political organizations, a fear of permitting our members to come into contact with their members lest they be won over. This idea is implicit, if not directly stated, in Morrison's comments.

The history of our party cuts the ground from under all such assumptions. Our approach to other political organizations is dialectical, not formal. They are all equal to the same thing -- that is, they are all rivals of our party -- but they are not equal to each other by a long shot. We study each organization concretely, seek to understand its own peculiar qualities, and on that basis determine whether we should go toward them or stand aloof from them. Above all we seek to ascertain the origin of each organization under investigation, its composition and the general direction of its development. That is the dialectical method, the best way to study anything in politics, and not only in politics.

Let us take some examples from our history. We were expelled from the Communist Party in 1928. Yet, for five years thereafter we maintained the position of a faction of the C.P., directing the main weight of our propaganda toward its membership. Why? Because the Communist Party had originated as a revolutionary organization, and while the process of Stalinist degeneration had already set in, it was by no means completed and there was a possibility of reforming the party. We were a mere handful, isolated and shut off from participation in the mass movement, while the Stalinist Party and its

peripheral movement embraced virtually all of the militant revolutionary workers. For these reasons we concentrated our attention on the C.P., called ourselves a faction of it, ran after its members and sympathizers night and day, and recruited our main cadres right out of its ranks.

There was not a trace of exclusiveness in our attitude. It was only in 1933, after the German events, that we recognized that quantity had been transformed into quality, that the Comintern had degenerated beyond the possibility of reform, and proclaimed our independence of it. But even then -- yes, and even now -- we could not "ignore" the Communist Party; we could not turn our backs on it. It contained, and still contains, too many militant workers in its ranks to permit such an attitude. We still approach the Stalinist workers whenever we get a chance, or at any rate, we should approach them.

Take the case of the Muste organization, the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, later the American Workers Party (AWP). It originated in 1929 as a mildly reformist, anti-communist substitute for the Communistic left-wing which had withdrawn from the old trade unions under the influence of the ultra-left swing of the Comintern -- the "Third Period." This was a bad origin, and the composition of the C.P.L.A. corresponded to it. We took an attitude of outright hostility to the new formation.

Later, a change began to take place in the direction, and also in the composition, of the Muste organization. Muste and some of his collaborators had a positive quality, their activity in mass work. Under the impact of the crisis this mass work, especially in the unemployed field, took a radical turn. Militant workers, repelled by the bureaucratic regime of the C.P. and its sectarian policies at the time, entered the Muste organization, shifted the weight in its composition and changed its general direction. The A.W.P. began to turn to the left and proclaimed the necessity of a new political party. On that basis we completely changed our attitude toward it. Hostile aversion was changed to friendliness and active fraternization. We engaged, on our initiative, in cooperative actions, opened friendly discussions and eventually fused with them.

Just as our position as a loyal faction of the C.P. was changed into a decision to break completely with them and select an independent course, so in the case of the Muste organization, our attitude was changed in an opposite sense. But our changes were conditioned by the changes which took place in these organizations. Neither whims nor caprices, nor organizational exclusiveness, nor any kind of subjectively motivated considerations had anything to do with our decisions.

8. Different Tactics -- One Aim

Our fundamental attitude was the same all the time, and is the same now. We aimed then and we aim now to build one party on the basis of one program. All tactics must be judged by this end. All tactics must serve it.

We changed our attitude toward the Socialist Party for similar reasons. But since this party was much larger than ours, and would not listen to any talk of fusion, we took the bull by the horns and unceremoniously dissolved our party, sacrificing our cherished independence, and joined the S.P. without conditions. In that action, conditioned by the left swing of the S.P. and our own necessity to establish intimate contact with its left wing, it would be very difficult to find a trace, even a single "germ", of narrow-minded exclusiveness and organizational fetishism.

But it should not be forgotten that our attitude toward the S.P. changed a second time. After we had completed our work there, and were obliged to carry through the split in order to free our hands for revolutionary work, we slammed the door on the wreck of Norman Thomas' party and paid no further attention to it. Unlike the Stalinist movement, the S.P. has no serious body of proletarian supporters. It would be a waste of time to bother with it any longer. And time is one thing that revolutionary militants cannot afford to waste.

During this period under review, from 1929 to 1937; while we were clinging to the Stalinists and then breaking with them; fighting the S.P., then joining them; then splitting with them and forgetting about them -- during this period of changing political tactics conditioned by changes in the organizations mentioned, we unconditionally refused to have anything to do with the Lovestoneites and we expelled the Oehlerite sectarians from our ranks. The reasons for this were not in the least subjective either. The Lovestoneites were an opportunist sect going backward. The Oehlerites, originally Trotskyists, became ossified in a sectarian mould. We had nothing to gain by interminable debate with them. Debate and revolutionary propaganda in general, bear fruit only when directed to groups, parties or masses of workers who are in motion and going forward.

9. Forward, Not Backward

The objective political method by which we steered our course toward other organizations over a period of many years, through the most complicated situations and changes, guides us today in determining our attitude toward the W.P. They are not a growing and progressive workers' organization, but a petty-bourgeois clique declining in membership and going backward ideologically. They became hardened in their prejudices and refused to learn anything in debate, even from Trotsky. They refused to learn from events afterward; they only deepened their errors and transformed them into crimes. They set up an independent "party" against us but still think and act like a faction of our party. This clique is parasitic through and through.

On top of everything else, the numerical relationship of forces between their organization and ours shifts steadily in our favor -- convincing evidence of the correctness of our policy.

We know all about their situation. Our refusal to have anything to do with them politically, does not mean that we "ignore" them. They are our enemies and we are watching them all the time. The 60-40 relationship at the time of the split has changed to an 80-20 relationship. The new members recruited by our party during the past year alone, come very close to equalling the total membership of the W.P.; and the quality is better. Stewing in their own juice, the Shachtmanites reminisce about their "golden age", the good old days of factional struggle without organizational responsibility; they pilfer our internal documents for publication in their press; and they dream of creating a supporting faction in our organization.

Leaving them to their own devices, we keep our program clear and direct all our activity to the awakening workers. They sigh for the past, but the past cannot return. We are looking forward, not backward. The present situation of the party without them is better than the past with them. And the present is only a preparation for the future which will be better yet -- provided we stick to our course.

January 14-21, 1945

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OUR METHOD AND THEIRS

By Joseph Hansen

(Speech at 11th National Convention Nov. 19, 1944)

There is an old American proverb that every dog has his day. I have been in the dog house so long that to me it seems about time to come out and do a little barking of my own.

The campaign of the minority against my article, "How the Trotskyists Went to Jail," has become so ludicrous that it is now the laughing stock of the party. But it would be a mistake to dismiss this campaign simply because of its obvious absurdity. Like all unusual manifestations in the party it calls for careful attention and meticulous analysis. If we do not permit ourselves to be swayed by epithets or emotional outbursts, but maintain a cool objective attitude and consciously apply the dialectic method of analysis to the issues in dispute, then all of us perhaps can learn something from the discussion which apparently started over what seemed a minor assignment in our press.

What the Article Was About

Almost a year has passed since the article was written. The passage of time has undoubtedly facilitated the campaign of the critics. According to their version, I was only concerned about cigars, watches, lips and views from train windows. The hue and cry was so great that like Comrade Wright I myself began to doubt. Was it true what they were saying? Was that all I had been concerned about? And so, like Comrade Wright, I went back and read the article again just to refresh my mind. I must say that after rereading the article at this late date I am still under the impression that I carried out the assignment better than my critics try to make out.

I tried to describe a Trotskyist defendant on his way to prison -- taking Comrade Cannon as prototype of all the defendants. I tried to show that he was not a man of violence -- the bomb-throwing type they draw in political cartoons, as the bourgeoisie would like the workers to believe, but a normal human being, a part of America. I tried to bring in socialism, the decay of capitalism, the struggle for emancipation of the workers, a glimpse of the socialist future, the morality of Trotskyism, the importance of our movement, in order to show that Trotskyism -- that strange name -- is not an alien philosophy as the bourgeois propagandists try to make out, but flesh and blood and bone of America.

The article was not without historical precedent. Nor was it primarily the precedent of Comrade Morrow's portrayal of Cannon in the Minneapolis court -- the article that utilizes radiant warriors, swords and dragons to make its point. When Debs was sent to prison, the Socialist Party of that time wrote the same type of articles about him. If Comrade Michaels wishes to make an analysis of articles of this type in order to discover the origin of the Stalinist germs he

claims are distinguishable in my article, then let him go back to the days of Debs. He will find that the germs of Stalinism appeared in America under the leadership of Debs long before Stalin seized power in the Soviet Union.

I do not pretend to be so skilled a writer as those who depicted Eugene Debs, but I did the best I could -- and to this day I believe I did not do so badly.

The Hue and Cry

Nevertheless, certain people began to raise a hue and cry about the article. They held that it exhibited "self-adulation" and a "fawning" attitude toward the leadership of the party; i.e., that my intention in writing the article was to do some public boot licking. They held that it disclosed a tendency toward leader-worship; i.e., a strong personal tie that cuts through all differences of principle. Some people outside the party denounced the idea of Trotskyism being the most moral of programs and held the article exhibited political paranoia. Comrade Morrison held it proved I had three or four Stalinist germs in my system, and as we all know, in our party, Stalinism is regarded as the syphilis of the labor movement.

The virulence of these criticisms, their sweeping nature, the theoretical considerations they immediately give rise to, are proof that the criticisms do not deal with matters of an editorial character. Were it only a question of the editorial pencil, it would be easy to arrive at an amicable understanding regarding the article. Were the criticisms minor, I would be the first to say, "Perhaps your judgment is better than mine; you are more experienced; in the next article of this type we will try to make an improvement." But such, unfortunately, is not the case.

Thus the dispute revolves primarily not around the article as such, but around the line that was followed in writing it. It is the line that is decisive.

Our Line

In their "Statement on the Internal Situation," Comrades Schoenfeld, and Russel write as if the article were simply my "personal reaction on how the Trotskyists go to jail." Such is not at all the case. Our press is not designed to publish simply "personal reactions." If that were all I was interested in, I would not have joined the party in the first place. I would have retired long ago to some ivory tower where one presumably writes for time and eternity and it doesn't matter if you take two or three days like Flaubert to polish up a dozen words of "personal reaction." My conception of the task of a revolutionary writer is diametrically opposed to the ideas of the school primarily concerned about one's own personal reactions.

The line of a Marxist propagandist and agitator has a very real base. It flows from the character of the society in which we find ourselves. What is the reality facing us? The truth is -- whether we like it or not -- we fell heir to the dirtiest job in history; to clean out the Augean stables of capitalism. Our task is not to mirror society but to change it. That is the basic conception

at the bottom of every word we write. And we can't clean out these foul stables with a packet of satchet powder and a bottle of smelling salts. We are not in the party because we love parties as such, in and of themselves, but because the party happens to be the instrument of revolutionary change and no other instrument has yet been discovered to replace it.

Because of this fundamental conception of our epoch and our task, the organization of the party into an instrument capable of accomplishing the task cannot help but be of consuming interest to every serious-minded party member. And the same holds true of its propaganda, which is the vehicle through which the party's program reaches the masses.

That is why we must vigorously disagree when Comrade Schoenfeld speaks about the "normal right of discussion" of party members with members of opposing parties. Those parties stand in our way. They are obstacles that must be overcome. For us discussion is of no interest in and of itself, but only as a tool, a weapon to be utilized against these opposing parties; a means to an end. We want shock troops to smash these parties. Discussion consequently must remain under the direction and control of the party.

The line of a Marxist propagandist and agitator likewise has a political basis. The class which will accomplish the revolutionary change must be mobilized and aroused to the necessity of accomplishing the change. But the working class is not homogeneous, it is heterogeneous; not just one mass, but an aggregate of fairly well defined groupings, ranging politically from the most advanced and class conscious, to those limited by all kinds of backward prejudices, ignorance and mental twists that are the scars of growth under capitalism. Depending on the relation of forces, the party tries to speak to one level or another.

For a long time our party spoke only to the most advanced, class conscious and politically trained. That was the task of the day. Our party couldn't jump over this important stage as Comrade Cannon explains in his History of American Trotskyism.

But now a new period is opening up. That means our party is beginning to address itself to groupings it has never before dealt with in a consistent and sustained manner. These layers of workers approach politics in an emotional way. They are untrained in abstract thinking and look at politics as at everything else in a personal way. Their manner of thinking is extremely plastic. That is why our press has begun to run columns like those of Kovalsky, Grey, Jackson, The Workers Forum -- and these are only the beginning.

In making this change, the staff writers depend upon the field workers for reports as to the reaction of the new levels we are approaching. For these levels are largely inarticulate and our own party members must become their voice in speaking to the propagandists of our press. The subjective reaction of a party member to this type of articles is important, but his objective report; how the workers react, is far more important. That is why it is so necessary that every field worker take it upon himself to report consistently the

exact reaction of workers to our press. Otherwise our staff cannot direct their articles with sufficient precision.

But still another problem faces the revolutionary propagandist and agitator. Many of the workers we are now approaching think of politics in terms of good men for office and bad men. Often it is their first approach to the politics of program. Even when they grasp a program such considerations color and sway their thinking.

The question then is, do we want to reject propaganda that pictures the leaders of Trotskyism in a light favorable to the workers, or do we want to boldly seize this weapon in the arsenal of politics which the bourgeoisie depend upon and which they utilize so extensively?

I say, yes.

We should picture the representatives of Trotskyism in as favorable light as possible. Contrast them to the selfish, vicious and rapacious representatives of rotting bourgeois society. Depict them as the leaders whom future society will consider the giants and titans of our time.

If we permit any bitterness over slights, fancied or real, any jealousy or hatred, whether conscious or unconscious, to sway us; then we will be unable to that degree to arrive at an objective appreciation of articles about them and their way of life.

That is why it is so extremely important right now, that we make sure our leadership is not tainted with the foul disease of Stalinism. We don't want leaders of whom we are ashamed. If they are tainted, we want to fight tooth and nail to replace them. If I felt as these comrades of the minority feel about the leadership; if I felt they had degenerated -- and degenerated to the point where the disease must be labelled as Stalinist degeneration -- then I would organize a faction, cry out the alarm to the party, hunt down the source of the infection, expose it in all its ramifications, call on the party to eliminate the source of the disease, and replace the leaders with better ones.

And I would do this, not on the evidence of 30 or 40 germs, not on the evidence of three or four germs, but on the evidence of one germ.

But suppose this hypothetical faction should succeed in its aim. Suppose it replaced the present leadership with a new leadership of whom we could be proud. The same problem would still remain for the revolutionary propagandist and agitator. For my part, I wouldn't care if these new leaders were bald as an egg, told time by squinting at the sun, and had lips unsullied by tobacco in any form -- I'd still do my best to picture them to the masses as the symbols of the program of Trotskyism.

What are the views of Comrade Morrison on this question? Does he agree? On the contrary, he takes an opposite view. In the Internal Bulletin, Volume VI, No. 11, page 11 where he tries to refute me on this point, he declares: "No, Comrade Hansen, the type of

worker who remains cold to all the other approaches will not join the party; and were he to, he would have to be subjected to a very rigorous education in Bolshevism. . . . To attract workers one must depend on the program simply and clearly explained and on our activities in the working class."

Now I declared my purpose to be "to appeal to workers who might remain cold to all the other approaches." Comrade Morrison distorts this into an appeal "to join the party," but we will let this slight distortion pass by since the ultimate aim of this type of propaganda is indeed to persuade workers to join the party.

Naturally such workers are going to require a "rigorous education in Bolshevism." You have heard the report of the Educational Director, Comrade Carsten, and know that this is one of the big problems facing the party.

And naturally we must depend on the program "simply and clearly explained and on our activities in the working class." We can only vote for these kindergarten propositions with both hands.

But in rejecting the type of propaganda that shows our leaders as the living symbols of Trotskyism, it seems to me that Comrade Morrison falls into ultra-leftism. He rejects, so to speak, "democratic and transitional" forms of propaganda. To this extent we can agree with the comrades of the minority that our party faces an ultra-leftist danger as they have maintained during previous sessions of the convention.

If we are agreed up to this point, then we can begin to see how serious is the charge that germs of Stalinist degeneration infect our party. And we can see how any hunt for Stalinist germs -- if it is not justified -- interferes with plunging into the work ahead.

The Germ Hunt

Yet it is precisely with such a germ hunt that we are concerned. The criticism of my article alone; i.e., the criticism that it revealed a tendency that could be labelled only as a Stalinist germ of degeneration, was sufficient evidence to convince me that we were dealing with something on an entirely different plane than mere editorial criticisms of this or that phrase or sentence. When the same critics found similar Stalinist germs of degeneration in other incidents of party life I considered the empiric evidence overwhelming. On top of this was the declaration of Comrade Morrison, ideological leader of the minority, that, "Since the terrible Stalinist degeneration, every serious person in the Marxist movement fears and thinks of possible degeneration."

In order now, was a discussion of the origin of these germs of Stalinist degeneration. In other words, a qualitative change had occurred in the development of the discussion begun by the minority.

My article, as such, along with the other items criticised such as the censure in New York, Comrade Frankel's article against Shachtman, Comrade Martin's educational proposals, receded in importance. Consequently, assuming that Comrade Morrison would at least

attempt to conduct the discussion along the traditional Marxist lines, I challenged him in an article, "Two Conceptions of Our Tasks," to disclose to us the origin of these germs of Stalinist degeneration.

We of the majority did not indulge in any invective despite the provocation of the unbridled outbursts of the minority, but simply asked, where do these germs come from? Nothing more. Just a simple question. Where do they come from?

To use an analogy, we asked this question just as the health authorities might make inquiry of a patient who turns up with syphilis in an area where the citizenry wish to stamp out the source of infection.

To help Comrade Morrison in his search -- I had an interest in the search since he accused me of being infected with the foul disease of Stalinism -- I even outlined the extant theories of the origin of this disease, the Marxist theory and the two variations current among our petty bourgeois enemies.

These two variations are first, that Stalinism derives from Bolshevism, which is the more or less standard version and one which Morrison at one point in the discussion specifically rejected, and the other that brilliant example of independent thinking produced by the petty bourgeois opposition of 1939-1940; i.e., "bureaucratic conservatism." The Shachtman-Burnham-Abern theory holds that there is a Cannon "clique" in power in our party, that it is conservative in politics and bureaucratic in regime as a result of the pressure of environment of the American labor movement. As is obvious, it is not quite accurate to call "bureaucratic conservatism" a germ of Stalinist degeneration, but I hoped that Comrade Morrison in his reply would clarify this point.

What was Comrade Morrison's response to this challenge? Did he attempt to reply in the traditional Marxist manner? He replied; but in a very peculiar manner.

First, he made out that it was I who was attacking him! This tactic, in my opinion, simply added insult to injury.

Second, he made out that the burden of proof was on me; i.e., that it was necessary for me to prove his criticisms were not Bolshevik.

Third, -- and this is very grave -- he said nothing whatsoever about the famous Shachtman-Burnham-Abern thesis of "bureaucratic conservatism," thus leaving the door open for him to support that thesis at a later date while saying nothing now.

Fourth, -- and this likewise is very grave -- he left the door open for later acceptance of either of the petty bourgeois versions as to the origin of Stalinist germs of degeneration, or some new as yet unheard theory he himself may cook up. No other conclusion is possible from his declaration in the Internal Bulletin, Volume VI, No. 11, page 4: "I do not hesitate to say now that if the ideas and practices of the P.C. majority, which I have criticized, continue

and if more of the same type of practices and ideas are introduced, I shall not hesitate to say that a definite tendency has appeared in the party. On the basis of three or four more or less minor deviations from Bolshevik procedure, I am not ready to formulate any theory, but I may be compelled to do so if a greater number and more serious deviations occur."

Now I must admit that I don't know whether Morrison's views are the official views of his group or not. Comrade Morrow has been singularly silent on the organizational question. We do not have a single word from him as to whether or not he agrees with Morrison about Stalinist germs. I would not want to say that an unprincipled combination exists here, but I think it somewhat unfair that although Morrison has ventured to give Morrow some faint support in his political theories Morrow has never reciprocated with even the faintest word encouraging Comrade Morrison in his gallant fight to save the party from Stalinist germs. I repeat that I wouldn't want to declare that Comrades Morrison and Morrow have entered into an unprincipled combination, but I will say that it seems to me that if Comrade Morrow considers himself a Marxist he would make it his duty to the party to make clear whether or not he agrees with his fellow thinker on this question of germs, spirits and independent thinking.

In passing, let me also answer this point which Comrade Schoenfeld has been belaboring, namely that my declaration "Rank and file members of Morrison's tendency. . . whisper among themselves that the petty-bourgeois opposition of 1939-40 was right on the organizational question" constitutes argument by "innuendo and false implication" thus making "an atmosphere where comradely discussion is extremely difficult."

I say, if you want to end this whispering, then let these comrades who whisper come out in the open here on the convention floor and present their views for the entire party to consider. And I'll add this for the benefit of comrades of the majority. If any of you return to your branches and hear any more of this whispering going on, hold up the whisperer as completely discredited. He was too cowardly to state his views before the convention; thereby he has forfeited his right to any serious consideration whatsoever.

I said what I did about whispering in order to provide Comrade Morrison with an opportunity to state his full views on the theory of Shachtman-Burnham-Abern. The very next sentence but one following the one quoted by Comrades Schoenfeld and Russel, reads: "We ask Morrison directly, since you do not agree with Macdonald's explanation of how Stalinist procedure can appear in Trotsky's party, do you then agree with the explanation advanced by Abern, Bern, Burnham and Shachtman? Isn't it Bolshevik procedure to say what is?" I even underlined that last sentence so that Morrison would be sure to see it and declare publicly his views on this question.

As we already know, he refused to answer this plain question, thus leaving the door open for possible future acceptance of the organizational theories of the petty bourgeois opposition of 1939-40.

It is quite evident that the critics are wriggling. They don't want to pursue the discussion on this plane. They want to discuss, but under their own rules, and they are not the rules of Marxism.

Morrison even goes to the extent of trying to get rid of the term Stalinism. Listen to this remarkable paragraph from his article, "A Reply to Comrade Hansen," in Internal Bulletin Volume VI, No. 11, page 7: "And then comes what Hansen obviously thinks is the annihilating blow which will do away with me utterly and completely; if Stalinist germs have entered the Trotskyist party, where do they come from? They come, my dear comrade, direct from Stalinism. Did you ever hear that such a disease exists -- not only in the Soviet Union but everywhere? Stalinist ideas are everywhere. Does anyone think that our party can build a Chinese wall around its members and prevent ideas hostile to the working class from penetrating into our ranks? In the capitalist and Stalinist world, capitalist and Stalinist ideas (germs) are everywhere."

I must admit that I have heard about the existence of the disease of Stalinism. But I was taught by Trotsky and his orthodox followers that it was a scientific term with an exact meaning. Observe what Comrade Morrison has done with the term; he has expanded its meaning to include capitalist ideas, even "ideas hostile to the working class." The scientific distinction between various types of "germs" has vanished; even the ideas of slavery and feudalism could sleep comfortably together in this bed. Comrade Morrison's explanation of Stalinism is like oil on water, it spreads out very thin and displays all colors of the rainbow.

Comrade Morrison, trying to dispose of this hot cargo which he tried to run through our picket lines on the field of theory, even cooks up a fantastic theory of pre-revolutionary Stalinist degeneration that will make a worthy museum exhibit alongside the minority's fantastic theory of post-fascist bonapartism which they tried to palm off on us during the first days of the convention. Comrades Schoenfeld and Russel in the true style of "audacious iconoclasts" dutifully support this misshapen monster of a theory.

Consider some of the other views developed on this point by comrades of the minority. Comrades Schoenfeld and Russel declare in their document, page 4, "Only a constant guard can check against well-meaning comrades beginning to adopt certain characteristics similar to the methods of the Stalinists."

What do they mean by "similar"? Doesn't "similar" mean like the methods of the Stalinists, and also unlike? We would like to know wherein these "certain characteristics" are like and wherein they are unlike. And still more wherein do Comrades Schoenfeld and Russel differ from Comrade Morrison who stated flatly that these germs are Stalinist germs?

Take Comrade Bennett's theory, which she tried to develop in her speech. She now calls these methods simply "bureaucratic." She used a harsher term previously. But what does she mean by bureaucratic? Does she refer to the fascist bureaucracy? The labor bureaucracy? The bureaucracy of democratic capitalism? The Stalinist?

We would like to know.

Consider that this whole mish-mash -- this utter confusion on the field of scientific theory -- this whole fantastic stew arose from our asking one simple little question; What is the origin of these germs of Stalinist degeneration?

Thus we come to an impasse. Our critics refuse to develop their theories and try to wriggle out of their position by expanding the meaning of the unfortunate term "Stalinism." This brings us to the next stage of the discussion. For if our opponents refuse to reply, then we can only say your methods of discussion are different from ours, and your methods are not the methods of Marxism.

A qualitative change occurs in the discussion. We now enter the field of method.

Empiricism Versus Dialectics

It may seem presumptuous on my part to point out a deficiency of Comrade Morrison's in the field of theory. I can only reply apologetically, that it wasn't I who thought up the idea of Stalinist germs and then refused to theorize on their origin. I only found myself under a microscope and it occurred to me that something was wrong. It might prove interesting to turn the microscope on the microbe hunters.

As a matter of fact Comrade Morrison was unwitting enough to expose the method of thought which he uses in analysis, and he has thus provided us with direct evidence as to how method can affect results. The evidence is in Comrade Morrison's article, "A Reply to Comrade Hansen," in the Internal Bulletin, Volume VI, No. 11, page 3: "Hansen accuses Morrison of having a thesis, namely, that Stalinist methods are growing in our party, and because Morrison has this thesis he must look for something to support it. But anyone who can read and wants to understand can read all that Morrison has written and see that all that Morrison says is, that such and such a procedure in such and such a case is Stalinist in character. Morrison does not build a theory and look for incidents to prove his theory. He observes incidents and warns against the actions of the P.C. He does not want to draw the conclusion of the existence of a tendency. He is working on the hypothesis that these incidents are minor episodes which will not leave a trace on the party if the members become aware of the danger."

What is this but vulgar empiricism? Empiricism, I might explain, is a disregard for science and theory -- the observer becomes hypnotized by what seem to him concrete facts.

Let me illustrate precisely what Comrade Morrison is doing through the use of an analogy. As we all know, Comrade Trotsky called Stalinism the syphilis of the labor movement. Let us imagine then, a patient who undergoes a routine examination by his family doctor. The doctor reports with the utmost agitation and concern; "All four samples of your blood indicate positively that you are suffering from the first stages of syphilis."

Naturally the patient is highly alarmed, wants to start the cure immediately, and -- find out just where he picked up the disease.

But the doctor says, "Don't worry." He even uses the exact words of Comrade Morrison as recorded in his article in the Internal Bulletin, Volume VI, No. 11, page 3: "Now everybody knows that two or three or four germs, even as deadly as Stalinist ones, are not very dangerous. To be dangerous they must multiply to a considerable number."

Wouldn't the patient respond rather angrily, "Doctor, I haven't the time to wait for you to find a considerable number. And in any case you're a quack. For if they really are the germs of the foul disease you mention, you would immediately set out to cure me -- and help me find out where I picked them up. Your statement makes me doubt your diagnosis is correct, especially in view of the fact that I have done nothing. . . and been no place. . . where that particular disease is prevalent. . . or at least I would 'hesitate a thousand times' before going back again."

The method of Morrison becomes even more glaringly evident in the remarkable sentences of his already quoted: "On the basis of three or four more or less minor deviations from Bolshevik procedure, I am not ready to formulate any theory, but I may be compelled to do so if a greater number and more serious deviations occur."

Morrison's "maybe" about formulating a possible theory to explain a hypothetical further growth of Stalinist degeneration in Trotsky's party, coupled with his silence about the theory advanced by the petty bourgeois opposition of 1939-40, indicates that he is playing with ideas. What is "maybe" but yes and no? At this moment yes, at that moment no? In brief, he is considering the possibility right now. If he had more of an independent spirit he might bring it out now. If he had an ounce of dialectic in his method he would have brought it out when he first observed what he thought was a germ of Stalinist degeneration. When will Morrison finally conclude "yes" to the theory with which he is playing? I don't know. None of us know. You can't open his head with a can opener and look inside. How many germs must he observe? Who knows what he will seize upon next to call a germ?

Comrade Morrison is playing around with theories -- and that is a serious departure from orthodox Marxism.

I want to make clear that I am not at all advocating that belief in the dialectic method or skill in its practice should be made a requirement of party membership. But in the leadership of the party the question is different, particularly with those the party presents to the public as its representatives in the field of theory. Of these leaders the party membership has a right to know where they stand, what methods they use in analysis, how able they are to use dialectics.

If a leader does not meet these requirements, then the party has a right to place a question mark over his theoretical productions.

I also want to add that the method of discussion I have tried to follow since Morrison first discovered Stalinist germs in Trotsky's party is not at all original with me. I am not an independent thinker. On the contrary, the method I have tried to follow is simply one of the great lessons I learned from the orthodox Trotskyist leaders, particularly in the faction struggle of 1939-40.

On Independent Thinking

So far as "independent" thinking is concerned -- we have heard that advocated before. It was one of the slogans of the petty bourgeois opposition of 1939-40. It was used to persuade the naive and unwary, who might hold a high opinion of their own individual worth, to struggle against the central leadership of the party in order to become dependent upon such innovators as Burnham and Shachtman.

Of the present advocates of "independent" thinking, of the "spirit of intellectual independence and integrity," I can only remark that it would be difficult to find any critics more lightminded, empty-headed, frivolous and irresponsible.

The truth is, they are not even a miserable caricature of the critical spirit. They are not independent at all. The very opposite of "audacious iconoclasts," they suffer from the worst kind of dependence. They fear hunting down the Stalinist germ to its logical end because they are in ignominious dependence on the arch-fiend himself, James P. Cannon. They couldn't get along without Cannon. Who would they have to criticize? Who could they be independent of?

As against "independent" thinking, we oppose dialectic thinking. It is much more exact and scientific. It is the orthodox method of Marxism.

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