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Revolutionary Marxism or Petty-Bourgeois Revisionism ?

**A DEMARCATION OF THE PROGRAMS OF THE
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY AND THE WORKERS PARTY**

**Statement by the Political Committee of the
Socialist Workers Party**

1. The Origin of the Workers Party: The Petty-Bourgeois Opposition Inside the SWP

The Workers Party originated in the petty-bourgeois faction that was organized in the Socialist Workers Party in the fall of 1939, immediately upon the outbreak of the Second World War. Unnerved by the war, the Stalin-Hitler pact, and Stalin's invasions of Finland and Poland, Shachtman formed a bloc with Burnham, who by this time was an avowed anti-Marxist. Together they mobilized the petty-bourgeois elements for a struggle against the program, methods, tradition and leadership of the SWP and the Fourth International. The petty-bourgeois opposition be-

came the transmission belt in the party for petty-bourgeois ideas and moods, a carrier of demoralization, fright and skepticism.

The Burnham-Shachtman opposition began the struggle by raising a hue and cry that "the leadership of the party is bankrupt," "the prognoses did not turn out to be correct," "our program is outlived," "the events caught us unawares," "it is necessary to change the slogans," "we must have fresh thinking," etc., etc. (See Shachtman's first speech, launching the struggle, delivered to the New York membership on

October 15, 1939, Internal Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 3, Nov. 14, 1939.) In a word, the party was asked to improvise a brand new program.

The Russian Question

The opposition then proceeded to assault our programmatic position on the Russian question, a position that had been worked out with scrupulous care over a period of fifteen years and which constituted one of the key sections of our world program. They rejected our traditional slogan of "Unconditional Defense of the Soviet Union," based upon our sociological definition of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state. In its place they proposed a policy of "conjunctural defeatism." Upon what sociological analysis of the Soviet Union did they found this proposal? *None!* Just as they had previously declared that dialectical materialism was of no consequence in determining the political program (see "Intellectuals in Retreat" by Burnham and Shachtman, *New International*, January 1939), so now they declared that Marxist sociology was of no consequence in determining our political conclusions and tasks.

The resolution of the petty-bourgeois faction on "The Second World War and the Soviet Union," submitted on March 1, 1940, states:

The Soviet Union is participating integrally in the world imperialist war for the redivision of the earth . . . The reactionary character of its participation is demonstrated equally by: The policy and aims of the Soviet government and army—bureaucratic expansionism—which in no way advance or defend the interests of the Russian or world proletariat, but on the contrary are solely in the interests of the preservation and extension of the power, privileges and revenue of the bureaucracy . . . Stalin's present war is no more a "war in defense of nationalized property" than Daladier's is a "defense of democracy."

Revolutionary socialists are obligated, therefore, to revise the former conception of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" . . . The general strategy of the third camp (defeatism) applies to the Soviet government and armies as to the other belligerent powers . . .

. . . If the present enemies of Germany (England and France) were to engage the Red Army on Russian or non-Russian soil, as an extension of their opposition to Russian aid to Germany and conflict with Stalinist bureaucratic expansion — that is, if the character of Russia's participation in the war would remain the same . . . our present position would remain unchanged. However, if the character of the war changes from one of inter-imperialist conflict, in which the Red Army acts as a pawn of one imperialist power and as an instrument of bureaucratic expansion, into a war determined by the capitalist imperialist politics of destruction of Soviet state property and the reduction of Russia to a colony — our position would change corresponding to the change in the character of the war. In such a war, the Stalinist bureaucracy, despite the fact that it continues to defend, in its own way, its power and revenue, would be conducting a progressive war. The revolutionary working class would in this case adopt the position of defense of the Soviet Union. (*New International*, March 1940.)

Here we can see how our programmatic position on the Russian question, grounded upon a class analysis of the

Soviet Union, was incontinently thrown overboard in favor of a typical petty-bourgeois simplification and vulgarization. For the class criterion, the opposition substituted a new magic touchstone: the *reactionary nature* of the Second World War, which they endowed with some sort of supra-historical significance, and which presumably overrode the necessity of analyzing the class character of the states participating in the war and determining our attitude toward the belligerent camps on the basis of this class analysis. Trotsky estimated this conjunctural defeatism and counterposed to it our own position, as follows:

In its present foreign as well as domestic policy, the (Stalinist) bureaucracy places first and foremost for defense its own parasitic interests. To that extent we wage mortal struggle against it, but in the final analysis, through the interests of the bureaucracy, in a very distorted form, the interests of the workers' state are reflected. These interests we defend — with our own methods. Thus we do not at all wage a struggle against the fact that the bureaucracy safeguards (in its own way!) state property, the monopoly of foreign trade or refuses to pay Czarist debts. Yet in a war between the USSR and the capitalist world — independently of the incidents leading up to that war or the "aims" of this or that government — what is involved is the fate of precisely the historical conquests that we defend unconditionally, i.e., despite the reactionary policy of the bureaucracy. The question consequently boils down — in the last and decisive instance — to the class nature of the USSR.

Lenin deduced the policy of defeatism from the imperialist character of the war; but he did not stop there. He deduced the imperialist character of the war from a specific stage in the development of the capitalist regime and its ruling class. Since the character of the war is determined precisely by the class character of society and the state, Lenin recommended that in determining our policy in regard to imperialist war we abstract ourselves from such "concrete" circumstances as democracy and monarchy, as aggression and national defense. In opposition to this Shachtman proposes that we deduce defeatism from conjunctural conditions. This defeatism is indifferent to the class character of the USSR and of Finland. Enough for it are the reactionary features of the bureaucracy and the "aggression." If France, England or the United States sends airplanes and guns to Finland, this has no bearing in the determination of Shachtman's politics. But if British troops land in Finland, then Shachtman will place a thermometer under Chamberlain's tongue and determine Chamberlain's intentions — whether he aims only to save Finland from the Kremlin's imperialistic politics or whether in addition he aims to overthrow the "last conquest of the October Revolution." Strictly in accordance with the readings of the thermometer, Shachtman, the defeatist, is ready to change himself into a defensist. That is what it means to replace abstract principles with the "realities of living events." (Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism*.)

The petty-bourgeois faction crossed over to the other side of the class barricades at the beginning of the Second World War—and remained there throughout the war so far as the defense of the Soviet Union was concerned. Shachtman, it is true, promised "that if the imperialists assail the Soviet Union with the aim of crushing the last conquest of the October Revolution and reducing Russia to a bunch of colonies, we will support the Soviet Union unconditionally." ("The Crisis in the American Party" by Max Shachtman,

New International, March 1940.) But, as we shall see later on this promise was worth very little. It was never redeemed.

Marxist Principles and Methodology

The Burnham-Shachtman faction not only broke with our program on the Soviet Union, but *in passing* discarded the Marxist methodology, i.e., the class criterion. All the ABC's of the movement, the most solidly grounded and "automatically accepted" propositions were now disputed and disqualified. The opposition set itself adrift on an uncharted sea in a leaky, unseaworthy vessel equipped with neither rudder nor compass. Involved in the struggle between the opposition and the party, in Trotsky's opinion, were the fundamental principles of our movement. In his *Open Letter to Burnham*, he stated:

It is a question of nothing more nor less than an attempt to reject, disqualify and overthrow the theoretical foundations, the political principles and organizational methods of our movement . . . It is my firm hope that the coming convention will ruthlessly repulse these revisionists. The convention, in my opinion, must declare categorically that in their attempts to divorce sociology from dialectic materialism and politics from sociology, the leaders of the opposition have broken from Marxism and become the transmitting mechanism for petty-bourgeois empiricism . . . The Party must condemn as vulgar opportunism the attempt to determine policies in relation to the USSR from incident to incident and independently of the class nature of the Soviet state. (In *Defense of Marxism*.)

With every passing day of the discussion, the hysteria of the petty-bourgeois opposition grew more unrestrained, their hostility to the party more avowed, and their revolt against its program more unabashed. Trotsky, in a letter to the SWP majority, remarked: "Engels spoke one time about the mood of the enraged petty bourgeoisie. It seems to me that a trace of this mood can be found in the ranks of the opposition." (In *Defense of Marxism*.)

From their break with the party on the Russian question, the opposition rapidly went over to an attack on the organizational principles of the party. Trotsky called attention to their petty-bourgeois mode of thought on this question, as on all others:

From the ranks of the opposition one begins to hear more and more frequently: "The Russian question isn't of any decisive importance in and of itself; the most important task is to change the party regime" . . . It would be incorrect . . . to believe that the shifting of the struggle to the "organizational question" represents a simple "maneuver" in the factional struggle. No, the inner feelings of the opposition tell them, in truth, however confusedly, that the issue concerns not only the "Russian problem" but rather the entire approach to political problems in general, including also the methods of building the party. And this is in a certain sense correct.

We, too, have attempted to prove that the issue concerns not only the Russian problem but even more the opposition's method of thought, which has its social roots. The opposition is under the sway of petty-bourgeois moods and tendencies. That is the essence of the whole matter. (In *Defense of Marxism*.)

The "Organization Question"

The various complaints, accusations, doubts and disbeliefs of the Burnham-Shachtman faction in the sphere of

organization were finally gathered together into a compendium—*The War and Bureaucratic Conservatism*—which became the organization platform of the opposition in the faction fight inside the SWP. Leaving aside their accusations of the existence of a "Cannon clique," a "leader cult," a "one-man leadership," etc., etc. (for a full discussion of these questions see *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* by James P. Cannon), the organization grievances and critique of the opposition rested on two fundamental contentions: 1. The SWP was dominated by a bureaucratic-conservative clique, Stalinist in its tendencies, which, unless deposed, would doom the party. 2. The party must break with its program and improvise a new one, and for this it was necessary to have more and ever more democracy and discussion.

We read in *The War and Bureaucratic Conservatism* "that the Cannon group has no perspective beyond that proper to it as a bureaucratic conservative grouping: self-maintenance, hanging on. If bureaucratic conservatism completes its crystallization and engulfs the party as a whole, then the party cannot survive the war. It will not, as a whole, capitulate to the war. But it will simply be lost, swamped by great events that leave it helpless, to which it cannot respond."

Here, in the words of the document, are the "initial steps in the cure":

What is needed is, in its general outline, clear enough. In place of conservative politics, we must put bold, flexible, critical and experimental politics — in a word, scientific politics. In place of bureaucracy in the regime, not an abandonment of centralism naturally, but democracy also, democracy to the utmost permissible limit. (Quoted in *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, by James P. Cannon.)

What is most important to observe here is that the same non-class, petty-bourgeois approach that we observed in the case of the Soviet Union and its defense, is evinced also on the organization question. The opposition proclaimed that the party was led by a bureaucracy, without even bothering to establish, or feeling any need to establish, the material foundations of this alleged bureaucracy. Trotsky answered the opposition as follows:

Were we to accuse an opposing faction of "bureaucratic conservatism" we would immediately seek the social, i. e., the class roots of this phenomenon. Any other procedure would brand us as "Platonic Marxists," if not simply noisy mimics. Before they began their struggle, the leaders of the opposition were obligated to ask themselves this question: What non-proletarian class influence is reflected in the majority of the National Committee? Nevertheless, the opposition has not made the slightest attempt at such a class evaluation of the divergences. It sees only "conservatism," "errors," "bad methods" and similar psychological, intellectual and technical deficiencies. The opposition is not interested in the class nature of the opposing faction, just as it is not interested in the class nature of the USSR. This fact alone is sufficient to demonstrate the petty-bourgeois character of the opposition. (In *Defense of Marxism*.)

The second most important conclusion to be drawn from the speeches and writings of the opposition on the organization question was this: Despite their prattlings about

democratic centralism, they proved, by all their proposals and actions, that they were deeply hostile to the Bolshevik-type proletarian party and its discipline. As they made amply clear in the subsequent split, discipline stopped for them as soon as they became a minority. They wanted the party to be a perpetual talking shop, a discussion club, which would guarantee the leadership of literateurs and professional intellectuals. Only so long as every member felt free to say anything that entered his head, at any time and at any place—only so long, in the opinion of the opposition leaders, was the party guaranteed against Stalinist degeneration.

The Organization Resolution of the SWP, reaffirmed by the 1940 convention, was directed precisely against such disruptive petty-bourgeois tendencies and inclinations. The resolution stated:

All inner-party discussion must be organized from the point of view that the party is not a discussion club, which debates interminably on any and all questions at any and all times, without arriving at a binding decision that enables the organization to act, but from the point of view that we are a disciplined party of revolutionary action. The party in general not only has the right, therefore, to organize the discussion in accordance with the requirements of the situation, but the lower units of the party must be given the right, in the interests of the struggle against disruption and disorganization of the party's work, to call irresponsible individuals to order and, if need be, to eject them from the ranks. (*The Struggle for a Proletarian Party.*)

Trotsky summed up the basic differences between ourselves and the petty-bourgeois opposition on the problem of the building of the party in his *Open Letter to Burnham*:

In the organizational sphere, your views are just as schematic, empiric, non-revolutionary, as in the sphere of theory and politics. A Stolberg, lantern in hand, chases after an ideal revolution, unaccompanied by any excesses, and guaranteed against Thermidor and counter-revolution; you, likewise, seek an ideal party democracy which would secure forever and for everybody the possibility of saying and doing whatever popped into his head, and which would insure the party against degeneration. You overlook a trifle, namely, that the party is not the arena for the assertion of free individuality, but an instrument of the proletarian revolution; that only a victorious revolution is capable of preventing the degeneration not only of the party but of the proletariat itself and of modern civilization as a whole. You do not see that our American section is not sick from too much centralism — it is laughable even to talk about it — but from a monstrous abuse and distortion of democracy on the part of petty-bourgeois elements. That is at the root of the present crisis.

A worker spends his day in the factory. He has comparatively few hours left for his party. At the meetings he is interested in learning the most important things: the correct evaluations of the situation and the political conclusions. He values those leaders who do this in the clearest and the most precise form and who keep in step with events. Petty-bourgeois, and especially declassed elements, divorced from the proletariat, vegetate in an artificial and shut-in environment. They have ample time to dabble in politics or its substitute. They pick out faults, exchange all sorts of tidbits and gossip concerning happenings among the party "tops." They always locate a leader who initiates them into all the "secrets." Dis-

ussion is their native element. No amount of democracy is ever enough for them. For their war of words they seek the fourth dimension. They become jittery, they revolve in a vicious circle, and they quench their thirst with salt water. Do you want to know the organizational program of the opposition? It consists of a mad hunt for the fourth dimension of party democracy. In practice this means burying politics beneath discussion; and burying centralism beneath the anarchy of the intellectual circles. (*In Defense of Marxism.*)

Burnham's "Science and Style"

The revisionist evolution of the opposition reached a high point with Burnham's publication of his programmatic document, *Science and Style*. In this document, the ideological leader of the opposition discarded, finally, all ambiguity and diplomacy and boldly announced his break with Marxism from A to Z. He sneered at dialectical materialism, dubbed the Marxist tradition *reactionary*, found that Trotsky and Cannon were advocating "the strategy of the defense of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a lesser evil," and concluded with the discovery that socialism is "a moral ideal." (Appendix to *In Defense of Marxism.*)

Despite this, Shachtman and the other leaders of the opposition held firm to their bloc with the avowed anti-Marxist Burnham. Not only did they not repudiate this infamous document; they defended it. And together with Burnham they organized the split after the opposition was defeated at the SWP national convention in April 1940. Trotsky drew the balance sheet of the faction struggle between the SWP majority and the petty-bourgeois opposition in his article, "Petty-Bourgeois Moralists and the Proletarian Party," as follows:

The discussion in the Socialist Workers Party of the United States was thorough and democratic. The preparations for the convention were carried out with absolute loyalty. The minority participated in the convention, recognizing thereby its legality and authoritativeness. The majority offered the minority all the necessary guarantees, permitting it to conduct a struggle for its own views after the convention. The minority demanded a license to appeal to the masses over the head of the party. The majority naturally rejected this monstrous pretension. Meanwhile, behind the back of the party the minority indulged in shady machinations and appropriated the *New International* which had been published through the efforts of the entire party and of the Fourth International. I should add that the majority had agreed to assign the minority two posts out of the five on the editorial board of this theoretical organ. But how can an intellectual "aristocracy" remain the minority in a workers' party. To place a professor on equal plane with a worker — after all, that's "bureaucratic conservatism" . . .

Had conscious agents of the class enemy operated through Shachtman, they could not have advised him to do anything different from what he himself has perpetrated. He united with anti-Marxists to wage a struggle against Marxism. He helped fuse together a petty-bourgeois faction against the workers. He refrained from utilizing internal party democracy and from making an honest effort to convince the proletarian majority. He engineered a split under the conditions of a world war. To crown it all, he threw over this split the veil of a petty and dirty scandal, which seems especially designed to provide our enemies with ammunition. (*In Defense of Marxism.*)

The Origin of the Workers Party

Such, then, was the unprincipled origin of the Workers Party. This petty-bourgeois grouping was gangrenous at its very birth. It represented a revolt, under alien class influence, against the program and tradition of the Fourth International. It broke with our program not only on the Russian and organization questions, but also on the question of Marxist methodology and outlook. At the outset, the Workers Party represented a definitive petty-bourgeois formation that was *moving away from* Marxism.

Nevertheless, the character of the new revisionist tendency had not yet been fully defined or determined at the time of the split. It must be remembered that the Burnham-Shachtman opposition was not a homogeneous political faction, but an unprincipled combination, a bloc of diverse tendencies. The leaders, not agreeing amongst themselves on the fundamental questions, agreed, as it were, to table their disagreements in favor of a common platform on the "immediate, concrete issues" and opposition to the Cannon "regime."

A Marxist organizes a faction only on the basis of a previously elaborated platform or program. The petty-bourgeois faction that became the Workers Party was otherwise situated. First it consummated the bloc with Burnham; it then fought a six-months battle against Trotsky and the

Socialist Workers Party; next it organized and carried through the split. Only upon launching its own organization did it first begin to formulate its program. As brazen an example of political jerry-building in the revolutionary workers' movement as one can find! Shachtman himself belatedly confessed this unprincipled origin of his party. The National Committee *Resolution on the Party*, submitted in January 1946 and adopted at the recent convention of the Workers Party, states:

We emerged from the SWP not as a clear-cut, homogeneous political tendency, but as a bloc of several tendencies. At its foundation, our party was more distinguished by what it had in common against another party than by what it had in common within itself . . . The past five years of our party have been a period in which it has hammered out a theoretical position, a political line, a conception of the revolutionary party, methods of operation, etc., which are specifically its own, which distinguish it clearly and unmistakably in the working class movement. (Workers Party Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 7, March 15, 1946.)

Let us now proceed to study precisely what it is that the Workers Party has "hammered out" in the past five years, and whether it has been brought thereby closer to the program and tradition of the Fourth International, or has moved farther away.

2. Our Divergent Positions on the Soviet Union

At the time of its formation, as we have seen, the Workers Party had not yet discarded—overtly at any rate—our class analysis of the Soviet Union. Its Russian position reduced itself to the propositions that since the Soviet Union was conducting wars of "aggression" it was therefore practicing an imperialist policy; and since it was participating "integrally" in the imperialist war, its war was reactionary and the proletariat was obligated to practice defeatism. Only in December 1940, eight months after the split and the formation of the Workers Party, did Shachtman take up the challenge of Trotsky and the SWP and attempt to grapple with the fundamentals of the Russian question. But before we go on to that, let us first sketch very briefly the relevant sections of *our* Russian position. The 1931 Russian thesis of our movement declares:

The character of the social regime is determined first of all by the property relations. The nationalization of land, of the means of industrial production and exchange, with the monopoly of foreign trade in the hands of the state, constitute the basis of the social order in the USSR. The classes expropriated by the October revolution, as well as the elements of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois sections of the bureaucracy being newly formed, could re-establish private ownership of land, banks, factories, mills, railroads, etc., only by means of a counter-revolutionary overthrow. By these property relations, lying at the basis of the class relations, is determined for us the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state. (Leon Trotsky, *Problems of the Development of the USSR*.)

The Resolution on the Russian Question adopted by the Founding Convention of the SWP in 1938 carried the

analysis further. After the purges in the Soviet Union, it stated:

The wiping out of the entire revolutionary generation, occurring simultaneously with the complete deprivation of all democratic rights of the masses and the sanctification of the Bonapartist regime of absolutism, has been carried through by the Stalinist bureaucracy with the deliberate purpose of creating all the political preconditions for a fundamental assault upon the economic basis of the workers' state, namely, the nationalization of the means of production and exchange. Just as the revolutionary proletariat, in seizing power in 1917, created the political conditions for the expropriation of private property, so the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy, by consummating its dispossessing of the proletariat from political power, has created the political conditions for the destruction of nationalized economy and the restoration of private property.

But despite the fact that Stalin's Bonapartist regime has cleared the ground for the restoration of capitalism, to this day it has been unwilling or has found itself unable to carry through the counter-revolution in the social and economic sphere. It is entirely possible that the ruling oligarchy feels that its very existence is bound up with the nationalized economy. At any rate, to this day the economic foundations established by the 1917 revolution remain.

From our economic analysis we derive our sociological definition that the Soviet Union is still a workers' state. From the existence of a privileged ruling stratum, which has lifted itself above the population, which rules by the gun and the concentration camp, which has destroyed every vestige of Soviet democracy, we find further that it is a

degenerated workers' state. From this, in turn, we derive the further conclusion that a political revolution is necessary to overthrow the regime of the Kremlin oligarchy, destroy the rule of the bureaucracy, and thereby restore Soviet democracy and control over the state by the working class. The revolution we call for is *political*, as distinct from a *social* revolution, because the social foundations of the Soviet Union continue to be those established by the October Revolution, because they continue to provide the basis for socialist construction. No fundamental changes are needed in the economic base of the Soviet state, in the *forms of property*.

The Kremlin bureaucracy is not a new and independent class; its rule rests on no special forms of property and productive relations peculiar to itself and for which it constitutes the necessary and indispensable vehicle. On the contrary, its rule rests solely and exclusively on the property relations established by the October Revolution. Moreover, as its constant purges and police terror testify, it long ago came into irreconcilable conflict with the demands of Soviet economic development. "The explanation for this is to be found precisely in the fact that the bureaucracy is not the bearer of a new system of economy peculiar to itself and impossible without itself, but is a parasitic growth on a workers' state." (Trotsky.)

The role of the bureaucracy is, however, a contradictory one. On the one hand it undermines, weakens and deals blows to the economic foundations of the Soviet state. On the other hand, in its own way, by its own bureaucratic methods, it defends the social basis of the October Revolution from world imperialism. "The defeat of the USSR in a war with imperialism," wrote Trotsky, "would signify not solely the liquidation of the bureaucratic dictatorship, but of the planned state economy; and the dismemberment of the country into spheres of influence; and a new stabilization of imperialism, and a new weakening of the world proletariat." From this we deduce the duty of the working class to defend the Soviet Union—by its own independent class struggle methods—against imperialism and the internal forces of capitalist restoration. Such in brief is the position of the Socialist Workers Party on the Russian question.

Shachtman Adopts Burnham's Thesis

In an article entitled, "Is Russia a Workers' State?" published in December 1940, Shachtman for the first time subjected our position on the Russian question to a detailed criticism and counterposed to it a fundamentally different position. Here it is in Shachtman's own words:

[Unlike the young bourgeoisie which] was able to develop its specific property relations even under feudalism, [the] working class acquires economic supremacy **only after it has seized political power** . . . Thus, by its very position in the new society, the proletariat still has no property, that is, it does not own property in the sense that the feudal lord or the capitalist did. It was and remains a propertyless class! It seizes state power. The new state is simply the proletariat organized as the ruling class. The state expropriates the private owners of land and capital, and the ownership of land, and the means of production and exchange, become vested in the state . . . The essence of the change lies in the fact that

the working class is in command of that state-owned property because the state is the proletariat organized as the ruling class. (New International, December 1940.)

We recognize here the theory put forward by Burnham and Carter in 1937-38 in the SWP: that because of its peculiar relations to property, a workers' state can exist only if the working class has political power, in addition to its resting on nationalized property and planned economy. Hence, since the Stalinist rulers dispossessed the proletariat of political power, Russia is *ipso facto* no longer a workers' state. Shachtman phrases it:

. . . When the Soviet proletariat finally lost the possibility of submitting the bureaucracy to itself by methods of reform, and was left with the weapon of revolution, we should have abandoned our characterization of the USSR as a workers' state. Even if belatedly, it is necessary to do that now. That political expropriation of the proletariat about which the International has spoken, following Trotsky's analysis — that is nothing more nor less than the destruction of the class rule of the workers, the end of the Soviet Union as a workers' state. (Idem.)

Thus, according to Shachtman the Fourth International was wrong, at least as far back as 1936, in defining the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state.

But then what *is* the class character of the Soviet Union and what are its Kremlin rulers? Here also Shachtman accepts the theory put forward in the SWP by Burnham and Carter in 1938 and by numerous other "innovators" in the International before them (Craipeau, Urbahns, *et al.*). According to this theory, the Soviet Union is a new-type bureaucratic state and the Kremlin rulers are a new-type bureaucratic ruling class. Says Shachtman: "What we have called the consummated usurpation of power by the Stalinist bureaucracy was, in reality, nothing but the self-realization of the bureaucracy as a class and its seizure of state power from the proletariat, the establishment of its own state power and its own rule."

Is the new bureaucratic class indispensable to the new mode of production? Yes, says Shachtman, it is: "The conquest of state power by the bureaucracy spelled the destruction of the property relations established by the Bolshevik revolution. . . For the *given* system—the property relations established by the counter-revolution—the Stalinist bureaucracy is the indispensable ruling class."

Hence it is also false to retain Trotsky's slogan of the *political* revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy. We need, says Shachtman, a full-fledged *social* revolution: "The revolution will thus not merely have 'deep social consequences,' it will be a social revolution."

But what new property relations have been introduced in the Soviet Union by the new bureaucratic "class"? Does not nationalized property, does not planned economy, does not the monopoly of foreign trade still exist? Each ruling class is indispensable to its own special mode of production. How is it possible to have, on the basis of one and the same form of property; two *different* ruling classes — the proletariat and the bureaucratic ruling class? Does not this pluralism run completely counter to the Marxist system? Does it

not necessitate a new world system of economic and political thought, a new method of analysis?

Shachtman tried to get himself out of this by quibbling and splitting hairs. Keeping his Marxism in his library, he studiously ignored the basic and inescapable fact that the property forms in the Soviet Union, and the mode of production, were established by a *proletarian revolution* which expropriated the capitalists and converted their *private* property into *state* or *nationalized* property and that this form of property still exists. To Shachtman this towering sociological fact is of no consequence whatever. Because, he teaches us, there exist not only property forms but also — property relations. The property forms in the Soviet Union are the same as established by the October Revolution. But the property relations — these are new! Says Shachtman:

What is crucial are not the property forms, i.e., nationalized property, whose existence cannot be denied, but precisely the relations of the various social groups in the Soviet Union to this property, i.e., **property relations!** . . . Under capitalism, the difference in the relations to property of the trust head and the day laborer is determined and clearly evidenced by the fact that the former is the owner of capital and the latter owns merely his labor power. In the Soviet Union the difference in the relations to property of the six persons Trotsky mentions (a marshal, a servant girl, a head of a trust, a day laborer, a commissar's son, a homeless child) is not determined or visible by virtue of ownership of basic property but precisely by the degree to which any and all of them "own" the state to which all social property belongs. (Idem.)

The distinction between *property forms* and *property relations* is one that Marxists never thought of before. Where in Marxist theory have property relations ever been determined by anything else but property forms? From Shachtman's reasoning it is not at all clear why the Fascist or Nazi bureaucracy cannot with the same justification be called a new ruling class, since its appropriation of the fruits of economy (what Shachtman vulgarly calls "property relations") is also enormous compared to the earnings of the day laborer or servant girl or even a plant superintendent or manager. In reality, this quibble on the non-existent distinction between property forms and property relations is merely a restatement in different form of the previous proposition that workers' property and the workers' mode of production are impossible unless the workers possess full political power. In a word, the determinant is not, as Marx thought, the economic base—but the political superstructure. Marxism is thus stood on its head by the theoretical innovators of Shachtman's party.

To round out this section and give every man his due, it is necessary to add that the quibble about property forms and property relations likewise did not originate with Shachtman. Carter, the "master splitter of hairs," thought up that one and first introduced it into the Russian discussion in the SWP.

Is the Socialist Program a Utopia?

Trotsky demonstrated in the course of the 1939 discussion with the petty-bourgeois opposition that the theory of a new bureaucratic class, if correct, completely destroyed scientific socialism as conceived by Marx and Engels: "If

the Bonapartist riff-raff is a class, this means that it is not an abortion but a viable child of history. If its marauding parasitism is 'exploitation' in the scientific sense of the term, this means that the bureaucracy possesses a historical future as the ruling class indispensable to the given system of economy." That in turn would signify that not the workers, but a new bureaucratic class was destined to displace dying capitalism. Were this true, nothing would remain but to recognize that the socialist program, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, had been proven, in the light of actual historical development, a utopia.

Burnham, as we know, came to the conclusion that it was true and drew the appropriate conclusions: He deserted the revolutionary movement and pronounced that a new "managerial" ruling class was destined to replace dying capitalism. He conceived of this new class as a world phenomenon growing out of the necessity for collectivization and predicated on the impotence of the working class to reorganize society. Burnham saw the common features of this new class in the Stalinist bureaucracy, the Nazi and Fascist bureaucracies, and even in certain aspects of the New Deal.

How did Shachtman dispose of the fundamental alternative posed by Trotsky? How did he square his new "bureaucratic class" with Marxism? He didn't! *He simply evaded the problem.* Whereas Burnham saw the new ruling class as a world phenomenon, Shachtman, in 1940, attempted to limit this alleged new ruling class, as Stalin did with his socialism, to just "one country." Here are his words:

. . . There is no adequate ground for believing that this tendency will materialize in the form of a universal bureaucratic collectivism . . . The revolutionary struggle against the capitalist mode of production, triumphing in those countries which have already attained a high level of economic development, including the development of labor productivity, leads rather to the socialist society. (Idem.)

Shachtman concluded his study by rejecting Soviet defensism more completely than before, although he still promised to defend the Soviet Union if it were attacked by imperialism — but only in the same way that he would defend a colonial country fighting against imperialism.

It is clear that Shachtman had already traveled a long way in the eight months since the split and the formation of the Workers Party. He broke with the Marxist theory of the state by deriving the class nature of a particular state (the Soviet Union) from the political superstructure and not from its economic foundation. He invented and interposed a new class between the capitalists and the proletariat, thus reducing Marxism to utopian levels. Finally, he limited his new class to one country — an unheard-of phenomenon in the Marxist system. This theory of a "conjunctural" class, like the rest of Shachtman's theories, lacks originality. It was espoused in 1937 by Craipeau and decisively rejected by the Fourth International. (See Leon Trotsky's *Once Again, the USSR and Its Defense*, Internal Bulletin No. 1, Organizing Committee for SP Convention, November, 1937.)

It is instructive to observe that Shachtman, in passing, jettisoned the chief stock-in-trade of his 1939-40 faction: That it was the "concreteness of the events," "the new hap-

penings," the "unforeseen developments" that necessitated a new program. In his study which we have just surveyed, he cites no new facts, adduces no new data. Following in the footsteps of his revisionist predecessors (Urbahns, Craipeau, Bruno R.), he rested his case exclusively on the factual analysis of Trotsky but merely rejected, and stamped as illogical and false, Trotsky's conclusions. Shachtman himself asserted that his programmatic changes should have been made in 1936. They therefore had nothing to do with the "realities of living events" of 1939-40.

Shachtman's Betrayal of the Soviet Union

Shachtman's abandonment of the program of the Fourth International soon bore fruit in the field of practical politics. In June 1941 German imperialism flung its military legions upon the Soviet Union. The Socialist Workers Party issued a flaming manifesto: "Defend the Soviet Union! Defend the Conquests of the October Revolution! Down with the Stalinist bureaucracy that weakens the Soviet Union!" The Workers Party called this policy "criminal." It reneged even on its promise of December 1940 to defend the Soviet Union against imperialism as it would a colony:

The attempt to describe the outbreak of Russo-German hostilities [they informed the world], as a struggle between bourgeois imperialist economy and nationalized property, is a pure invention having no basis in fact . . . Precisely the character of the international situation [whatever that meant] and the nature of the World War [here we meet up again with the supra-historical character of the war] excludes the idea that Russia's particular struggle is against imperialist economy. Those who stand upon a position of defensism on this ground are merely inventing a situation to sustain a viewpoint based, not on the realities of the war, but upon sentiment and outlived considerations. (*New International*, July 1941.)

In this declaration the Workers Party raised the ante once again. They were still willing to defend the Soviet Union, but only on condition that the Stalin regime was overthrown.

As the *New International* of September 1941 was being prepared for the press, Hitler stood at the gates of Moscow. The fate of the Soviet Union truly hung in the balance. Did the Workers Party now perchance relent a little bit and go over to the defense of the Soviet Union, even as it had promised to defend it as a colonial country? No, the Shachtmanites not only remained adamant — they even greeted what they thought was the Soviet Union's impending defeat at the hands of Nazi Germany with scarcely concealed relief. In a special manifesto published by the so-called "Committee for the Fourth International," they told the workers that the Soviet Union was about to go down, but not to worry about it. It was all for the best! Here is what the manifesto said: ". . . Stalin has lost the last vestige of independence . . . Soviet diplomacy is already dictated in London . . . Russia is now face to face with its destiny." But it was all going to work out for the benefit of the working class. It was all really very simple:

If the bureaucratic gang were able to go through the whole process of the present war uninjured, then the establishment of a new social class, based upon a collective form of property, would be the clearly visible culmination of Russia's political and economic evolution. This would

be the blazoned regime of bureaucratic totalitarianism in its final form. On the other hand, if Hitler wins or defeats the Stalinist regime, this same blow will destroy precisely his own future, the only possible and satisfactory conclusion to his adventure. With this victory, he will have wiped from the face of the earth the gloomiest prospect now darkening the horizons of the approaching proletarian and socialist revolution, that is, that of the victory of his "new" order of bureaucratic, obscurantist and neo-feudal totalitarianism [are we not being treated to a new class definition of the Nazi state, in passing?], made possible only in case of symbiosis of the two regimes now closer to this "ideal" — the regimes of Hitler and Stalin. (*New International*, September 1941.)

The good that the Workers Party expected to derive from the defeat of the Soviet Union by Hitler was not only limited to the destruction of Stalinism and Hitlerism. Such a defeat would also, in their opinion, be a powerful blow struck for the socialist revolution:

Assaulting Russia, the most he (Hitler) can do, besides getting some immediate material advantages in case of an overpowering but transient victory, is to destroy a decayed regime and crush Stalinism. [What about the destruction of nationalized property and planned economy and the conversion of the Soviet Union into a colony of imperialism? No answer.] But the Russian land in its immensity will absorb his exclusively [!] military victory and meanwhile the people, who are tempered by the traditions of their great revolution, and brought up in anti-fascist hatred, are immune from internal poisoning by means of assimilation of the conqueror's ideology. By destroying with his guns the Stalinist totalitarian regime, Hitler, like the sorcerer's apprentice of the fable, will have set loose forces of history, bringing forth the torrents of revolution. (*Idem.*)

The Fourth International has always taken the position that it cannot farm out the job of overthrowing Stalin — to imperialism. The Workers Party, however, agreed to sub-contract the job to Hitler. And this was the faction that accused us at the 1940 SWP convention of being a "left cover" for Hitler! At any rate, such was the message of hope and good cheer that Shachtman's "American Committee for the Fourth International" broadcast to the workers of the world in the crucial days of September 1941. Shachtman's theoretical backsliding had rapidly borne evil fruit in an outright political betrayal. The 1941 convention of the Workers Party, meeting soon afterward, endorsed all of Shachtman's positions discussed above and embodied them in the convention resolution on the Russian question. (*New International*, October 1941.)

The events of the war shattered into a thousand fragments Burnham's theory of a new bureaucratic or "managerial" class. The first representatives of the new society, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, lay broken and in ruins. Burnham had told us that Hitler and Stalin, the two main representatives of the new class of "managers" which was destined to emerge all over the world, were united by an "affinity of ideologies" and had joined together "to drive death wounds into capitalism." This theory proved no more enduring than the Stalin-Hitler pact. The events of the war likewise disposed of Shachtman's analysis and appraisals. They demonstrated beyond any shadow of a doubt that the Stalin regime had not lost its "independence"; they destroyed the notion that "Soviet diplomacy is dictated in

London"; and they also destroyed the contention that the Soviet Union was participating "integrally" in the imperialist war — if one is talking about the *capitalist-imperialist* war. Only hair-splitters could now dispute or deny the independent character and aims of Stalin's war against Hitler, or the contradictory, dual nature of the Stalinist ruling oligarchy as we have outlined it previously.

Shachtman Deepens His Break with Marxism

The great events of the war, instead of bringing the Workers Party back closer to our program, served to drive it farther away. The Shachtmanites strengthened their Russian position in a Burnhamistic fashion. After redoubling their attacks on our program (see "Balance Sheet of the War," *New International*, September 1945), they began to extend and broaden their purely Russian "bureaucratic class" into a world phenomenon. In their 1941 resolution on the Russian question, they still maintained that "bureaucratic collectivism is a nationally-limited phenomenon, appearing in history in the course of a singular conjuncture of circumstances." By 1946 they were singing a far different tune:

The international line-up is not merely one of power combinations arising from the most advantageous economic and military alignments, but basically one of a division into two hostile social orders — private capitalism versus bureaucratic collectivism.

It is this fact that gives to the emergence of the new Russian empire a significance much more fundamental than merely the recrudescence of Russian power. Bureaucratic collectivism is Russian just as early capitalism was English. And conversely, bureaucratic collectivism is the source of the new Russian imperialist power as early capitalism was the source of British imperialist power. (*New International*, April 1946.)

If the battle of this epoch is between capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism, what happens to the socialist perspective? And what happens to the program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky? The *Resolution on the International Situation*, adopted by the Workers Party at its May 1946 convention (*Workers Party Internal Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 11, April 27, 1946), supplies us with the answer. But first let us note that the resolution passes over in complete silence the utterly discredited theory of the Shachtmanites that Soviet diplomacy was being dictated in London but still affirms, nevertheless, that the position of the Workers Party "has been confirmed to the very hilt." Furthermore, "the proponents of support of Russia in the war. (meaning the SWP and the Fourth International), prompted though they were by revolutionary proletarian considerations, nevertheless capitulated objectively to Stalinist imperialism and helped to cover its deception and enslavement of other nations and peoples with radical arguments." Shades of Burnham's *Science and Style!* Burnham has left, but his soul goes marching on.

But to return to the question that now occupies us: What happens to the socialist perspective? The resolution, following in the footsteps — more correctly, the *first* footsteps — of Hook, Eastman and company, informs us that there is no inevitability — we may have bureaucratic collectivism, or we may have socialism: "The question of the perspective of Stalinism cannot be resolved in a purely

theoretical way. It can be resolved only in struggle." And again: "Whether or not Stalinism can triumph in the capitalist world cannot be denied absolutely in advance. To repeat, it is a question of struggle."

It is clear that our slogan, "Socialism or Barbarism," should now be amended to read: "Socialism, Bureaucratic Collectivism or Barbarism!"

The theory of a new Stalinist class was so thoroughly demolished by Trotsky in 1939 (the war supplied a further vindication of his analysis) that except for bringing certain aspects up to date there is little that can be added. What is important to note here is that the Workers Party now severed its last links with the Marxist methodology and outlook. We explained how, already in 1940, the Shachtmanites broke with the fundamental Marxist material concepts and substituted for them purely arbitrary and idealistic concepts. In 1946, by adopting the above-quoted resolution, the Workers Party rejected the *heart* of the Marxist system: its *monistic concept*. Marxism holds that we live in a world of law, not of pure chance. This is true not only of the natural world, but also of human society. Shachtman (as usual, in passing) substitutes for Marxism an idealistic philosophy of *pluralism*: We may have socialism, we may have Stalinism — who knows? Only the "concreteness of the events" will show. In the theoretical sphere this is the most serious break possible with Marxist ideology. The door is now left wide open by Shachtman for the acceptance of the next section of Burnham's *Science and Style*, the section that teaches us that socialism is a "moral ideal." Nothing then would remain but to abandon the revolutionary struggle and call upon all men of good will, in Norman Thomas fashion, to rally to the cause of Socialism. The perspective of the Trotskyist movement, based on Marx's world outlook as embodied in the *Communist Manifesto*, is discarded by the Workers Party in favor of an idealistic "multiple factors" concept, which is far closer to "True Socialism" than to Marxism.

The Policy of Consistent Defeatism

The rapprochement of the Workers Party with Burnham in the sociological sphere — after Burnham had left their ranks — led to a greater clarity in the domain of their political conclusions on the Russian question. The Workers Party abandoned the game of hide-and-seek with respect to defensism and defeatism. It found that both the Soviet Union and the United States are "imperialist." Therefore, treat them both alike! In the words of its 1946 convention *Resolution on the International Situation*:

The Resolution on the Russian Question adopted by our party in 1941 deliberately "left the door open" with regard to the possibility of again raising the slogan of defense of Russia (not in the Second World War but in a conceivable later war) . . . What is before us concretely is the overwhelming probability of the next world war being fought between two reactionary imperialist powers for the preservation and extension of their empires. In face of this reality, the Workers Party declares flatly that all talk of defense of Russian imperialism (or American imperialism) in that war, or in the period of preparation for that war which we are now living through, is reactionary talk and signifies an abandonment of the principles and interests of the proletariat and of socialism.

The present agitation of the Socialist Workers Party is

conducted in the spirit of the recently issued *Manifesto of the Fourth International* which states:

In the very sight of the smoldering ruin and devastation and blood-letting of the last holocaust, the third world war is being prepared . . . The Fourth International remains unreservedly for the defense of the USSR against imperialism . . . Only the revolutionary action of the masses can forestall the plans of predatory imperialism, defend the USSR by extending the social overturn of October 1917. (*The Militant*, May 11, 1946.)

3. Our Divergent Evaluations of the Stalinist Parties

The break on the part of the Workers Party with our program on the Russian question has produced the sharpest differences between us in evaluating the Stalinist parties and determining our tactical approach to them. Here, as in other spheres, Burnham pioneered when in 1937, in the Political Committee of the SWP, he proposed that we read the Stalinist parties out of the working class movement and treat them as we would the Nazi or Fascist parties. The Workers Party, cautiously nibbling away at our evaluation of the Stalinist parties, has finally arrived at Burnham's 1939 position, or at any rate one that resembles it very closely. In their 1942 resolution on the National Question we already read:

The idea that because the Stalinists are strong and influential, and not yet completely discredited among the workers, it is correct revolutionary policy to raise the slogan of "Let the Communist Party Take Power," is based on a complete misunderstanding of what appears to be a similar slogan raised by the Bolsheviks in the middle of 1917. When the Bolsheviks called for a Menshevik-Social Revolutionary government . . . it was on the basis of the belief that such a government would be a democratic (i.e., a bourgeois-democratic) government, which would allow such democratic political rights to the workers and all other parties, the Bolsheviks included, that the Bolsheviks could sincerely pledge themselves not to resort to violence against that government but confine themselves to persuading the masses propagandistically, utilizing their normal democratic rights. To apply such a tactic to the Stalinists would be absurd. A social-reformist regime is a bourgeois-democratic regime, more or less. A Stalinist regime, call it "proletarian" or anything else, is unmistakably a totalitarian, anti-democratic regime. (*New International*, February 1943.)

Shachtman Rejects Lenin's Slogan

Here we notice not only a rejection of our transitional slogan, "Let the Workers' Parties Take Power," worked out by Lenin in 1917 and vindicated in the revolutionary struggle; but, as is usual with the Workers Party, a break with half a dozen other major programmatic positions or evaluations. We evaluate the Stalinist parties in capitalist countries as working class parties led by treacherous leaders, similar to the Social-Democratic traitors. We understand, of course, that the Social-Democratic bureaucrats are agents of their respective native capitalisms, whereas the Stalinist bureaucrats are agents of the Kremlin oligarchy. But they have this in common: they cannot fight for workers' power, nor do they wish to take power except as agencies of capitalism and usually in coalition with its direct representatives.

The Workers Party resolution, repeating Burnham's *Science and Style*, finds that by this agitation we are "unwittingly doing the political dirty work of Stalinist imperialism."

The original toying with terminology in 1939, the insistence on dubbing Stalin's policy "imperialist," has now revealed its true purpose: to wipe out the distinction between the USSR with its planned economy, and rotting capitalism in its imperialist stage — and thus to justify a consistent policy of defeatism.

The Workers Party, however, has embraced the Burnhamistic thesis that the Stalinists can lead the working masses to power in the capitalist countries — in order to do what? Establish a Stalinist totalitarian state, a replica of the USSR. Note, also, how in common with all vulgar anti-Stalinists, the Workers Party in its resolution idealizes, in a manner completely foreign to our tradition and practice, the Social-Democratic scoundrels — how in its lyricism about the "democracy" of the Social-Democrats, it forgets the bloody deeds and hangman's work of Noske and Scheidemann, Kerensky, or the Spanish Social-Democratic People's Fronters. "Democracy" here is torn out of its historical context and its connection with the development of class relations and the class struggle, and is presented as some sort of supra-historical factor existing in time and space, standing above the class struggle.

The anti-Marxist evaluation of Stalinism is developed consistently, in the spirit of Burnham, by the Workers Party. In the leading editorial of the August 1945 *New International* we read:

. . . it is increasingly clear that the Stalinists are not merely the agents of the bureaucratic ruling class of Russia. That conception is proving to be too narrow. The Stalinist bureaucracy in the capitalist countries has ambitions of its own. It dreams of one day taking power, and establishing itself as ruler of substantially the same bureaucratic despotism that its Russian colleagues enjoy.

Shachtman rightly considers that this is no minor question. He demands that we tell him: "What is the attitude of the International toward Stalinism, toward what we ourselves regard as the absolutely pernicious slogan of 'The Communist Party to Power!' (in whatever form)?" (*New International*, September 1945.)

The "hammering out" of its position on this question was brought by the Workers Party to a smashing climax at its May 1946 convention. There they dotted all the i's and crossed all the t's:

1. Trotsky's evaluation of the Stalinist movement must be rejected. ("The theory that the Stalinist parties like the traditional reformist organizations are agents of the capitalist class, that they 'capitulate to the bourgeoisie,' is fundamentally false.")

2. The Stalinist parties seek state power in order to form Stalinist states, akin to the Soviet Union. ("Stalinism is not merely the servant of Russian imperialism . . . It seeks to establish in every capitalist country in which it

functions the same social and political regime as prevails in Russia today.”)

3. The Stalinist party is similar to the Nazi party. (“ . . . Fascism and Stalinism, while not identical, are symmetrical phenomena.”)

4. Hence our established tactical approach to the Stalinists is no good and must be rejected. (“The traditional policy of the revolutionary vanguard toward the labor-reformist movements (or bureaucracies) does not, therefore, apply to the Stalinist movements.”)

4. Our Divergent Tactics Toward the Stalinists

Our opposing evaluations of the Stalinist parties and their political role have already produced sharp clashes between ourselves and the Workers Party in the field of practical everyday work on the American scene. As a matter of fact, it has become impossible for us to see eye to eye on any immediate problem in which the Stalinists enter as a factor. Two examples will suffice to illustrate.

The Los Angeles Anti-Fascist Campaign

The first case in point revolves around our different approaches to the Stalinists during the campaign against the fascist demagogue Gerald L. K. Smith in Los Angeles in June, 1945. A full account of this campaign is published in the SWP Internal Bulletin, Vol. 7, No. 8, September 1945. Comrade Murry Weiss, our National Committee representative in Los Angeles, reported our tactical approach in this campaign:

Within the framework of the general united front tactic, we developed a special united front maneuver toward the Stalinists. We regarded the Stalinist movement as the key to the situation. The Stalinists control the apparatus of the CIO; the Stalinists have a very large Jewish following; there was considerable sentiment in the Stalinist ranks for “action” . . . We decided to place as much power as we could behind the united front campaign directed toward the Stalinists.

The Workers Party likewise tried to form a united front — but addressed itself solely to the Socialist Party, the Socialist Labor Party, the IWW and ourselves. (See Bulletin quoted above.) How could they ignore the Stalinists, who are incontestably the most powerful working class political force in the labor movement — or, for that matter, in the general working class population of Los Angeles?

5. Our Opposing Positions on the Colonies

The Workers Party break with our program on the Russian question in 1939-40 quickly led to a similar break with our position on the colonial and national question. Nor is this surprising. Our program is an integrated whole. Every section of it flows from our consistent world outlook and was arrived at by a common method. A *fundamental* break with one section soon necessitates a break with other parts of the program, as well.

The resolution nevertheless does, for some unexplained reason, reverse the previous Workers Party stand and (with numerous qualifications and reservations) accepts the slogan of a Socialist-Communist — but not a Communist — government. But as Shachtman’s “iron guard” of young Burnhamites so correctly explains, adoption of this slogan is totally illogical and inexplicable, for it flies in the face of the position so clearly established by the resolution itself. (“On the Slogan for an SP-CP-CGT Government” by Draper, Ferguson, Garrett, Gates, Howe, Victor, Workers Party Internal Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 8, March 22, 1946.)

Their deliberate by-passing of the Stalinists was not due to any difference with us in the practical estimation of Stalinist influence. It flowed directly from their evaluation of the Stalinist party as a non-working-class organization, which, in turn, derives from their class analysis of the Soviet Union as a “bureaucratic collectivist state.” Thus it was that our basic differences on the Russian question expressed themselves in violent fashion in the tactics to be followed in a crucial problem of the American class struggle. What we saw as “the key to the situation,” the Workers Party deliberately by-passed, or, more correctly, tried to by-pass.

The Davis Election Campaign

The same problem came up soon afterwards in the local elections in New York City. The Socialist Workers Party, in addition to running its own candidates, gave critical support to Benjamin J. Davis, the Stalinist candidate for City Council. Davis was not only running on the ticket of a working class party, but had wide mass support. He was the acknowledged spokesman of the Negro people in his community. We gave him critical support, employing here the time-honored tactic of the revolutionary movement.

The Workers Party did not dispute the facts about Davis’ candidacy. Nevertheless, they denounced our policy as “opportunist.” Why? Because “Davis is a leading member of the Communist Party in the United States, a party, which is in reality one of the international agents of Stalin and the Russian bureaucratic ruling class.” (*Labor Action*, October 29, 1945.)

Thus, as we see, our divergent programs on the Russian question constantly produce deep-going tactical divergencies in the practical problems of the day.

For a period after the split in 1939-40, the Workers Party, out of inertia, continued to support our program for the colonial countries—in China, India, etc. But as soon as U. S. imperialism launched its war against Japanese imperialism and concluded an alliance with China, the Workers Party precipitately abandoned the colonial and national program of the Fourth International, and found that China was no longer worthy of support in its struggle against

Japanese imperialism. The new resolution of the Workers Party on China read, in part, as follows:

Up to recently, the fight to defend China in her war with Japan was righteous and just because China was conducting a progressive war for national independence against imperialism . . . Anglo-American imperialism has now not only intervened directly, formally and openly in the war in the Far East, but it has already drawn China completely and integrally into its own struggle . . . To speak of China now as a politically or nationally independent country is a gross deception. To speak of the struggle of China against Japan as "progressive," now that it is completely subordinated to and part of the inter-imperialist war, is equivalent to giving objective support to one of the imperialist camps against the other. (Labor Action, March 16, 1942.)

Shachtman Urges Defeatism in China

The reader will notice that the Workers Party repeated here, point for point, the argumentation it employed to justify its policy of defeatism for the Soviet Union: 1. China is participating "integrally" in the imperialist war; therefore, to support China's war against Japan means supporting one imperialist camp against the other. The character of the war again appears as a supra-historical factor which determines and takes precedence over everything else. The class character of the states engaged in the war, the fact that China is not an imperialist but a semi-colonial country fighting for its national independence, is waved aside. 2. The basically independent character and aims of China's struggle are denied. Just as Stalin's policies were supposed to be decided in London, so China's policies, we were told, were decided in Washington. Of course, we never held that China's rulers possessed as great an independence as the Kremlin oligarchy. China was and remains a semi-colonial country. Nonetheless, China was politically independent to a large degree and, despite its alliance with the imperialist United States, the element of independence continued to be predominant in its war with Japan. (Incidentally, Shachtman never attempted to explain how China, which according to him had completely lost its independence, was able to demand and secure the recall of the American General Stillwell, when the latter meddled in Chinese politics and tried to dictate policy to Chiang Kai-shek.)

Shachtman's proof for the assertion that China's war had become submerged in the imperialist war was no more substantial than in the case of Russia. But Shachtman didn't need any proof. For him it was sufficient, just as in the case of Russia, that China had made an alliance with an imperialist country. That *automatically* converted its just war into an "integral part" of the general imperialist war. It was of no consequence to Shachtman that the Japanese imperialists and their armies were continuing to maraud in China, and that their expulsion by China, either alone or in alliance with another power, was a necessary and progressive task.

The Question of Mixed Wars

What about "mixed wars?" Was this some new problem previously unforeseen by the Fourth International? Not at all. The Trotskyists had foreseen the possibility of

mixed wars (that is, the temporary alliance of the USSR or a colonial country with an imperialist power in a war against another imperialist power or group of powers) and had adopted clear-cut directives on the position to be adopted: We defend the Soviet Union against imperialism *despite* Stalin, we defend China against imperialism *despite* Chiang Kai-shek—and despite any dangerous alliances with imperialist powers they may be forced to make. But we defend them through our own independent class action and by our own militant methods.

The Transitional Program of the Fourth International, adopted on the eve of the Second World War, and in anticipation of its outbreak, restated this position in unambiguous fashion. There can be no uncertainty here. It is worth while quoting the pertinent section:

The imperialist bourgeoisie dominates the world. In its basic character the approaching war will therefore be an imperialist war. The fundamental content of the politics of the international proletariat will consequently be a struggle against imperialism and its war . . . But not all countries of the world are imperialist countries. On the contrary, the majority are victims of imperialism. Some of the colonial or semi-colonial countries will undoubtedly attempt to utilize the war in order to cast off the yoke of slavery. Their war will be not imperialist but liberating . . . The workers of imperialist countries, however, cannot help an anti-imperialist country through their own government, no matter what might be the diplomatic and military relations between the two countries at a given moment. If the governments find themselves in temporary and, by the very essence of the matter, unreliable alliance, then the proletariat of the imperialist country continues to remain in class opposition to its own government and supports the non-imperialist "ally" through its own methods . . . In supporting the colonial country or the USSR in a war, the proletariat does not in the slightest degree solidarize either with the bourgeois government of the colonial country or with the Thermidorian bureaucracy of the USSR. On the contrary, it maintains full political independence from the one as from the other. Giving aid in a just and progressive war, the revolutionary proletariat wins the sympathy of the workers in the colonies, and in the USSR, strengthens there the authority and influence of the Fourth International, and increases its ability to help overthrow the bourgeois government in the colonial country, the reactionary bureaucracy in the USSR.

In other words, the program of the Fourth International anticipated, or at least took into consideration the possibility of, the very alliances that developed in the course of the war between China, and the USSR, and one of the imperialist camps. And the program embodied clear directives on the policy that was to be pursued in that eventuality. To that policy we remained unswervingly true throughout the war. Shachtman, who in 1938 wrote an introduction to the American edition of this program—in which he advised "sticking doggedly to the principles"—abandoned the flag.

Shachtman's New Colonial Theory

Feeling uneasily the insufficiency of the charge that "there is a growing social-patriotic tendency in the war position of the Socialist Workers Party" (*New International*, September 1942), because we, true to the program, continued to defend China against Japanese imperialism, Shachtman

proceeded to "deepen" the question by adopting a brand new theory for the colonial countries. Stripped of its superfluous verbiage, it boiled down to this:

Inasmuch as "the Second World War, imperialist to the marrow, is total and all-dominating"; and inasmuch as "the struggle for national emancipation *has* been deserted by the Chiangs and the Nehrus and the Boses and the Wangs (Chiang Kai-shek, who in his own miserable fashion was *fighting* Japanese imperialism, and Wang Ching-wei, who *capitulated* to Japanese imperialism, are here equated), by the people who led and directed it and then, at the showdown, brought it into the imperialist war camp"; it follows that "the struggle of the colonies for freedom is utterly hopeless during the present World War *if they continue the course of serving one imperialist camp against the other.*" And the conclusion? "Only the leadership of the proletariat can relaunch the just wars of the colonies against imperialism."

Just as in the case of the Soviet Union, when Hitler was at the gates of Moscow, the Workers Party saw as the first task of the Russian proletariat the overthrow of Stalin, so now Shachtman advised the Chinese masses: ". . . in order to fight your classic foe, imperialism, it is necessary to remove the main obstacle in the road of that fight, Chiang." (*New International*, June 1942.)

Shachtman and company refused to defend Russia against Hitler until the Russian workers had overthrown Stalin and established a Bolshevik leadership. Now they would not defend China against Japanese imperialism until Chiang Kai-shek was deposed and supplanted by a working class, that is, a revolutionary and not a reformist working class leadership.

This new colonial policy of the Workers Party was a monstrous distortion and vulgarization of Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution, which supplies the theoretical basis of our political program for the colonies. Trotsky demonstrated that the national bourgeoisie in the colonies cannot be *fundamentally* independent, and cannot therefore carry through the struggle for national independence *consistently, in a revolutionary manner, and to the very end.* Shachtman converted Trotsky's idea into a new historical absolute that the colonial bourgeoisie cannot struggle *at all* against imperialism. At any rate, not during an imperialist war. As if war reversed all peace-time politics, as if war was not the continuation of politics by other means! The new colonial policy of the Workers Party demonstrated that our controversy with them on China involved, not a disagreement on a single concrete issue, but a thorough-going break on their part with the colonial program of the Fourth International. This placed us on opposite sides of the barricades in China during the war.

Shachtman's Policy on India

The official resolution of the Workers Party in 1942 on "The National and Colonial Struggles," explained that:

Under conditions of the imperialist war in the East, the only class capable of re-launching the war for national independence of the colonies is the proletariat. Under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, the national struggle is brought inevitably into one or another of the

warring imperialist alliances. This was already amply clear during the First World War. [1] It has been confirmed again and again by the events in the Philippines, in Indo-China and Malaya . . . and is being confirmed currently in India. (*New International*, January 1943.)

Far from being confirmed in India, this theory was shattered by developments in that country in August 1942. All the world knows that the Indian bourgeoisie, under the leadership of the Congress Party, took advantage of the difficulties of British imperialism and launched a struggle for independence. The Workers Party scarcely disputed that. The opening passage of their official *Statement on India* read:

The All-India National Congress has, by resolution adopted at its Bombay meeting, decided to call upon the 400,000,000 people of that great country to launch civil disobedience in a great effort to win freedom for their country. (*Labor Action*, August 17, 1942.)

That seems to dispose of Shachtman's new contribution on the colonial question. But self-justification and "independence" were more important to the Workers Party than objective truth. The Workers Party refused to support the struggle launched by the Congress Party, and took refuge in the boldly-conceived formula: "Stand by the People of India." (*Idem.*)

In his *Open Letter to the Workers of India*, written in 1939, Trotsky declared:

In the event that the Indian bourgeoisie finds itself compelled to take even the tiniest step on the road to struggle against the arbitrary rule of Great Britain, the proletariat will naturally support such a step. But they will support it with **their own** methods: mass meetings, bold slogans, strikes, demonstrations and more decisive combat actions, depending on the relationship of forces and circumstances.

That was the policy advocated by the Socialist Workers Party in 1942 and, as we learned later, it was the policy of the Indian section of the Fourth International. But the Workers Party, in their ever more violent and sweeping break with the program of our movement, found that this policy was a "white-washing and support of the Indian colonial bourgeoisie, in a manner clearly reminiscent of the Stalinist collaboration with the Chinese Kuomintang (1925-27)." (*New International*, September 1942.)

Recent Vindication of Our Program

The close of the imperialist war saw the sharpening of the struggle of the colonial peoples to free themselves from the grip of their imperialist masters. The wars for national independence in Indonesia, Indo-China, Burma, etc. should close the debate as to whether these struggles had become "submerged" in the imperialist war. The facts are conclusive that the colonial peoples utilized the difficulties and conflicts of the imperialists to advance their own cause. The Workers Party, however, does not agree with our evaluation and continues to maintain a hostile attitude toward our program. Its 1946 resolution reaffirms its old positions:

The analysis and prognosis of the Workers Party was confirmed in fact. To give support to any of the colonial

countries "fighting imperialism" during the war could only mean giving objective support to one imperialist coalition against the other.

We are further informed, however, that:

The colonial movements, now that the war is over, are entirely justified in seeking to play off American imperialism against its rivals and to maneuver among them in the interests of national liberation. That is why the revolutionary Marxists, for all their class criticism, support the nationalist movement in Indonesia and similar movements in other colonies.

But the resolution hastens to remind us that they could not give such support during the war "without becoming in fact supporters of American imperialism." It is hard to follow the logic. If it is permissible for these nationalist movements to maneuver between and make blocs with imperialist powers in peace-time, why is it not correct—or even *more* correct — to do the same in time of war? How does war reverse the essential politics of times of peace? So this, too, must be put down as a "new" and "distinctive" contribution of the Workers Party—a contribution, alas, that pulls it still further away from the program and methodology of the Fourth International.

The Civil War in China

China today is the scene of a raging civil war. Again we take our stand on the basis of the class forces involved in the struggle. Our party position was stated in our recent analysis of the Chinese events:

Today the situation has sharply changed. Japanese imperialism, the marauder of China, now lies prostrate. The new and far more powerful overlord, U. S. imperialism, has entered and is preparing to subjugate China. And the native bourgeoisie, already trembling before the rebellious masses, has flung itself into the arms of this new imperialist overlord. The main enemy today of the Chinese masses is U. S. imperialism and its Kuomintang ally. That is why in the unfolding class struggle in China we take our stand on the side of the workers and peasants, even though they are now under the false leadership of the Stalinists, and against U. S. imperialism and the Kuomintang. (Fourth International, October 1945.)

But here again, as so many times before, the struggle does not come up to ideal specifications, and therefore the Workers Party decides to maintain its traditional policy of neutrality, of supporting neither side. The 1946 resolution of the Workers Party washes its hands of the whole dirty business:

... one side, while representing the national bourgeoisie, is now merely the outpost of American imperialism, while the other side, in spite of its peasant composition, is a tool of Stalinist imperialism ... Support of this movement today can have no other effect than to extend the Stalinist empire and bring under its subjugation a large portion of the land and people of China.

The Workers Party favorite and most-oft-employed tactic of abstentionism derives in this case as in others

from its theory of the new bureaucratic class, of Stalinist imperialism, and of the non-working class character of the Stalinist parties. Inasmuch as the Stalinists have emerged, virtually throughout the world, as the main leaders of the working class in this first period of the aftermath of the Second World War, the Workers Party, if it remains consistent, is destined to "abstain" in practically every class action or preparation for class action in the next period. Hence, also, it is destined to clash with us in one event after another.

Abstentionism: A New Principle of the Workers Party

The Workers Party has elevated abstentionism to the level of a major principle. It abstained in the war between Germany and the Soviet Union, advocating defeatism with a lofty impartiality both toward Nazism and the degenerated workers' state. It abstained in the war between China and Japan. It abstains now in the civil war between Yen-an and the Kuomintang. It will support Russia, China, the Yen-an movement only when and if they are under genuine revolutionary working class leaderships. Until then, these politicians of the "concrete" stand firmly for the victory of the elusive "Third Camp."

Trotsky observed this innate tendency in the petty-bourgeois faction, even in its earliest days, to walk away from the real struggle. In his previously-cited *Open Letter to Burnham*, he wrote:

Throughout all the vacillations and convulsions of the opposition, contradictory though they may be, two general features run like a guiding thread from the pinnacles of theory down to the most trifling political episodes. The first general feature is the absence of a unified conception. The opposition leaders split sociology from dialectical materialism. They split politics from sociology. In the sphere of politics they split our tasks in Poland from our experience in Spain — our tasks in Finland from our position on Poland. History becomes transformed into a series of improvisations. We have here in the full sense of the term the disintegration of Marxism, the disintegration of theoretical thought, the disintegration of politics into its constituent elements. Empiricism and its foster-brother impressionism, dominate from top to bottom ...

Throughout the vacillations and convulsions of the opposition, there is a second general feature intimately bound up with the first, namely, a tendency to refrain from active participation, a tendency to self-elimination, to abstentionism, naturally under cover of ultra-radical phrases. You are in favor of overthrowing Hitler and Stalin in Poland; Stalin and Mannerheim in Finland. And until then, you reject both sides *equally*, in other words, you withdraw from the struggle, including the civil war. Your citing the absence of civil war in Finland is only an accidental conjunctural argument. Should the civil war unfold, the opposition will attempt not to notice it, as they tried not to notice it in Poland, or they will declare that inasmuch as the policy of the Moscow bureaucracy is "imperialist" in character "we" do not take part in this filthy business. Hot on the trail of "concrete" political tasks in words, the opposition actually places itself outside the historical process.

6. Our Opposing Evaluations of the Character of the Present Epoch, Perspectives in Europe and the Revolutionary Tasks

The abandonment by the Workers Party of the Marxist perspective, methodology and political program, as evinced in their positions on the Russian question and the colonial and national questions, as well as their evaluation of Stalinism, was symmetrically completed by its no less decisive break with our movement on the question of European perspectives and policy, and by their embracing the "Three Theses" with its "theory of retrogression." Before we proceed to an analysis of the Workers Party position on this question, it is necessary to outline briefly the "theory of retrogression" and its relationship to the program of the Fourth International.

Beginning with the war, a group of German emigre Trotskyists (the International Communists of Germany—IKD) unfolded the perspective of an era of "The Iron Heel." The name is derived from the title of Jack London's famous novel which fictionally projected the idea of a fascist dictatorship lasting three centuries. The German emigre circle took for good coin Hitler's boast that his empire would last a thousand years. They considered Hitler's victories more or less definitive. They believed that Europe had slipped back several centuries and that the long, painful climb must begin all over again, retracing the steps trod by others a century and more ago. The new theory, springing from a mood of darkest pessimism, demanded the total abandonment of our revolutionary perspective, and just as thorough-going a revision of our revolutionary program and tactics. A document entitled *Three Theses on the Political Situation and the Political Tasks*, the basic text of the new and gloomy gospel, sketched out the supposed era we are now living in and the program which the authors believed it necessitated. Here are the main links of the "theory of retrogression:"

1. "... this is a war of long duration . . . that has no prospect of being decided by means of military power and thus reach its 'natural' end."

2. "... economy is retrogressing. . . . Wherever one looks, there are destruction, gangrene and anarchy in alarming degree which seal the catastrophe of culture."

3. "The prisons, the new ghettos, the forced labor, the concentration and even war-prisoners' camps are not only transitional political-military establishments, they are just as much forms of *new economic exploitation which accompanies the development toward a modern slave state* and is intended as the permanent fate of a considerable percentage of mankind."

4. Workers and capitalists alike are victims of this new slave state. Alongside the workers and peasants are the "students, journalists, professors, officers, priests, merchants . . . they range without distinction amongst the victims of the German repression." Since the different classes are all similarly "victims of the German repression. . . . The longer the war lasts, the more will German fascism appear as the main enemy. . . . Everything will be levelled to a desire for the overthrow of this enemy."

5. "The political situation . . . is characterized above

all by the destruction of workers' and non-fascist bourgeois parties. . . . With certain exceptions, there is no longer an independent traditional bourgeois or proletarian political or workers' movement . . . even the 'national' bourgeoisie is being more and more crushed. . . . Under such circumstances protest against growing suffering must find *another outlet*." And what is this other outlet? A brand new movement, comprising "all classes and strata." What is the purpose and program of the new all-class organization? To fight the "main enemy," German fascism. On the "order of the day" stands the "struggle for national liberation" in Europe.

6. What happens to Marx's class struggle—to the fight for socialism, to the program of the Fourth International? That is not the order of the day, the retrogressionists teach us. That must wait for a later stage. Now the job is the all-class fight for national liberation: ". . . the transition from fascism to Socialism remains a utopia without an intermediate stage, which is basically equivalent to a democratic revolution." (*Fourth International*, December 1942, our emphasis.)

The Second Version of the Three Theses

When life smashed *every single link* of this preposterous petty-bourgeois fantasy, the Three Theses professors worked up a second edition of their "theory of retrogression." In their new work, "Capitalist Barbarism or Socialism" (*New International*, October 1944), they undertook to give their previous revisionist theory a truly world sweep that did not leave untouched or whole one stone of the edifice of Marxism, as built by Marx and Engels and added to by Lenin, Trotsky and a host of others. Where the first edition of the "theory of retrogression" rested on the perspective of an unending war and Hitler's long domination of Europe, the new edition rested on no special facts but was given a broad historic inevitability. Given the defeats of the workers, retrogression arises ineluctably, we were told, out of the processes of capitalism itself. Here are the highlights of the second, "improved" version of the Three Theses:

1. "The development toward the modern slave state is a *world phenomenon* which arises out of capitalist putrefaction." The whole of society is now turning around in its tracks and moving backward—the "retrogressive development." "It is a process that appears before us as the horrible battle for the self-preservation of a society doomed to death, and harks back in reverse order to the end of the middle ages, the epoch of 'primitive accumulation,' the Thirty Years War, the bourgeois revolutions, etc. In those days it was a question of smashing an outlived economic form and of winning the independence of nations—now it is a question of abolishing independence and of shoving society back to the barbarism of the Middle Ages."

2. The United States now takes over the job from Germany of master of the developing slave state, but the essence of the process remains the same as before. "We said earlier that America . . . introduces no essential alterations

into the picture, and can only seal the fate of capitalism which was already decided in Europe itself."

3. Marx described how one big monopoly gobbles up a lot of independent concerns. What is now going on is that one or a few big monopolist *countries* are gobbling up a lot of independent nations. Hence a new "law": "What is now to be expropriated is no longer the capitalist . . . but the *nation*. . . One capitalist nation kills off many."

4. Thus is established the profound theoretical groundwork for the original Three Theses theory of the "all-class" movement fighting against the foreign oppressor under the slogan of "national liberation"; for the reconstitution of the independent nation.

5. The working class is thrown back to the conditions of its birth. It is dissolved into the new indistinguishable dough, the nation or the people, which must now struggle for the aims won by our forebears, namely, the democratic capitalist revolution and the constitution of the independent capitalist nation. "The rebellion of the working class, which has been hurled back by the mechanism of imperialism into a state of unorganization, dismembered, atomized, split up, counterposed to each other in its various strata, politically demoralized . . . and whose organizations . . . are finally smashed and extirpated with every kind of bourgeois organization and opposition . . . finds a mighty prop in the rebellion of the peoples and nations who are suppressed, thrust back, oppressed, enslaved and levelled through the monopoly of the few nations . . . as the Russian revolution and bourgeois society degenerate and move to the brink of dissolution, they compress the development into the one from which they emerged: into the problem of the democratic political revolution. . ."

The new sesame which is to open all doors is the struggle for national liberation. "National freedom," we learn, is the "strategic transition point for the reconstitution of the labor movement and the socialist revolution. . . Before Europe can unite itself into 'socialist states,' it must first separate itself again into independent and autonomous states."

The members of the IKD in Britain, seeking to bring the question down from the theoretical heights to the realm of practical politics, found that the revolutionary wave in Europe from 1943 to 1945 "was but a dress rehearsal for the great *national-democratic wars of liberation of all suppressed peoples of Europe against imperialism* that are to come."

A New Chapter of People's Frontism

As they see it, "the retrogressive development of capitalism led to the destruction of the national independence and democratic liberties of the most important European nations. Under these circumstances, the class struggle had to exchange its old traditional forms for new ones. Instead of the more or less free play of the different social and political forces in the old democracies, with the existence of political parties and trade unions, we now find a national-democratic liberation movement of the whole people against the national and political oppressor."

They confront us very bluntly with the only two possible alternatives: "Revolutionists have the choice either

to give *unconditional support* to these movements or to withdraw altogether from politics. For the struggle for democratic and national freedom does by no means run counter to the struggle for the proletarian revolution which, on the contrary, is not feasible without going through the stage of the democratic revolution." (*Workers International News*, July-August 1945.)

In order doubly to insure that no one misunderstands what they are driving at, the IKD theoreticians explain:

There is good ground for the fact, and it should stimulate reflection, that neither in **Capitalist Barbarism** nor in the **Three Theses** or anywhere else did we occupy ourselves with "proletarian" revolutionary prospects. Except for scorn and contempt, not a single word will be found in our writings about all this revolution-rubbish of the Fourth. (*New International*, October 1945.)

The petty-bourgeois, revisionist and liquidationist theory of the IKD has been subjected to critical analysis in the press of the Fourth International and it is unnecessary to repeat it here. (For the most recent critique, see article by E. Grant on "The Character of the European Revolution," *Fourth International*, March 1946.) On the face of it, the Three Theses clearly represent a fundamental break with the Fourth International on the following basic points:

1. They reject the class struggle between the capitalists and the workers as the main motive force in present-day society.
2. They reject the Fourth International's estimate of this epoch as one of proletarian revolution and the struggle for socialism.
3. They reject the Marxist conception that the working class is the only progressive and revolutionary class in present-day society.

From their petty-bourgeois theory of this era as one of "democratic revolution" for which the "whole people" struggles is derived their capitulationist politics of class collaboration, the proposal that we "unconditionally support" the wartime Resistance movements. Stripped of their verbiage, their proposed policies are indistinguishable from the People's Front politics of the Stalinists and the Social-Democrats.

The SWP and the International Reject the Three Theses

The Socialist Workers Party reacted with a healthy class reflex against this shameful capitulation to the pressure of bourgeois public opinion. The SWP demonstrated the petty-bourgeois philistine character of the IKD theory, showing how it departs both from the perspective and politics of the Fourth International. We traced it back to its alien class roots. We rejected it. The 1942 resolution of the SWP declared:

Official patriotism serves simply as a mask to conceal the class interests of the exploiters. The subsequent capitulations of the French bourgeoisie to Hitler have proved this to the hilt.

The aspiration of the masses of France and the other occupied countries for national liberation has profound revolutionary implications. But, like the sentiment of anti-fascism, it can be perverted to the uses of imperialism. Such a perversion of the movement is inevitable if it

proceeds under the slogans and leadership of bourgeois nationalism. The "democratic" imperialist gangsters are interested only in recovering the property which has been taken away from them by the fascist gangsters.

This is what they mean by national liberation. The interests of the masses are profoundly different. The task of the workers of the occupied countries is to put themselves at the head of the insurgent movement and direct it toward the struggle for the socialist reorganization of Europe. Their allies in this struggle are not the Anglo-American imperialists and their satellites among the native bourgeoisie, but the workers of Germany . . . The central unifying slogan of the revolutionary fight is the "Socialist United States of Europe" and to it all other slogans must be subordinated.

The Fourth International, at its April 1946 Conference, similarly expressed itself in no uncertain terms. Its resolution

. . . unanimously condemns the revisionist ideas contained in the . . . **Three Theses, Socialism or Barbarism, Problems of the European Revolution.** The leadership of the IKD has substituted for our transitional and socialist program, which corresponds to the objective historical character of our epoch and remains fundamentally that of the socialist revolution, a national-democratic program, based on "the necessary detour of the democratic revolution" and on the perspective of the "coming great national-democratic wars of liberation of all the oppressed peoples of Europe."

The Fourth International does not minimize the importance of the slogan of self-determination for every people, or of other democratic slogans in general; but it does not separate them from the rest of its transitional and socialist program, it does not put them forward even for a limited period as ends in themselves, nor does it proclaim any intermediate stage of "democratic revolution" to be accomplished by "all the people" and distinct from the socialist proletarian revolution. (*Fourth International*, June 1946.)

Workers Party Endorses Three Theses

In contrast to the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International, the Workers Party, from the first, fell victim to the same capitulatory moods as the German emigre circle and ended up by embracing all the essentials of the Three Theses.

Immediately after the United States entered the war, the Workers Party endorsed plank number one of the Three Theses: the theory of a long war without any definitive military decision. Here is Shachtman's own testimony on the point in his open letter to the authors of the Three Theses:

Soon after the entry of the United States into the war, I, among others, set forth the point of view that this would be a war of long duration, lasting five years, perhaps ten years or even more [Lund reports that the estimates ran from ten to fifteen years] with no decisive military victory by either imperialist camp in sight, and that the war would come to an end only when "interrupted" by proletarian (or genuinely popular) revolutions . . . This point of view was embodied in theses finally adopted by the leading committees of our party . . . The views of the German section, so far as we know, are set forth only in the very summary Three Theses. My impression is that on this point there is sufficient similarity between our views. (*New International*, September 1943.)

In the same letter Shachtman stated that the Workers

Party had likewise embraced the theory of retrogression and the developing modern slave state:

We hold that one of the outstanding manifestations of the decay of imperialism in this war is that it **throws society back**, and forces toward the top of the political agenda questions which are "historically outlived" . . . We hold further that this is not some peculiar aberration of German imperialism alone, but a characteristic of modern imperialism in general; that this is not purely or essentially a temporary phenomenon . . . we see a further development of the trend in present-day capitalist society toward the establishment of what your Thesis and our Resolution both refer to as the modern slave state.

The editors of the *New International*, in their introduction to *Capitalist Barbarism or Socialism*, went to great pains to point out that "the views of the German comrades, as elaborated in their document, are in fundamental solidarity with those summarized above." The IKD returned the compliment in its *Foreword*: "Shachtman was practically the only American comrade who . . . worked out what is in our opinion a correct position."

The Workers Party resolution, published in the January and February 1943 *New International* and re-endorsed by the 1944 convention of the party, does indeed show that the Shachtmanites and the Three Theses revisionists agree on every essential. Just like the Three Thesesites, the Workers Party finds that a "democratic revolution" interposes itself before the future socialist revolution ("Fascism is reactionary because it removes from the top of the order of the day . . . the direct struggle for proletarian socialist power and to put in its place the historically outlived, anachronistic struggle 'for democracy'") . . . and only after "the 'national revolution' has triumphed," can the class struggle and the fight for socialism begin.

Just like the Three Thesesites, the Workers Party finds that "the struggle for national freedom is now on the order of the day in advanced capitalist countries" and that it is "an indispensable prelude . . . of the struggle for socialism."

Almost word for word, the Workers Party resolution repeats the IKD view that all classes are enslaved by the conqueror and unite in an all-class organization, under a common banner, to fight for national freedom:

This enslavement of the workers and peasants is accompanied by corresponding actions against the bourgeois classes . . . the small merchants, the middle classes, the better-off professionals are dispossessed, expropriated . . . the big bourgeoisie and the ruling governmental bureaucracies of the conquered lands are treated with no more, if any, consideration . . . The genuinely popular and democratic movement of resistance is composed overwhelmingly . . . of workers and peasants . . . large sections of the petty bourgeoisie . . . bourgeois and petty bourgeois intellectuals . . . some of the demobilized military officials, bureaucrats of the conquered regime, members of the clergy; finally, so also are some members of the big bourgeoisie . . . As to their aim . . . what they have as a common objective may be summed up in two words: **national freedom.**

Just as the IKD, the Workers Party finds that the working class movement no longer exists:

The working class movement . . . unions, political parties, cultural organizations, cooperatives, etc. exists

nowhere in Europe except in the form of a tradition . . . and in the form of small "cadre" groups, generally isolated from each other.

What role should revolutionists play in the Resistance Movements? Here the Workers Party seemed slightly to the "left" of the IKD, but examination quickly reveals that its radicalism is purely verbal. In essence, it agreed with the Three Theses. We learn from the resolution that "the Marxists seek to establish the hegemony of the proletariat and of proletarian policy in the general movement." (Hear! Hear!) But the resolution quickly proceeds to tell the IKD not to be alarmed: "The 'hegemony of the proletariat' in the national movement does not mean the abandonment of the struggle for national liberation in favor of the 'purely socialist' struggle." No, they do it a different way. They gain proletarian hegemony by placing "at the head of its demands the war cry of national freedom."

Again almost word for word the Workers Party repeats the philistine wisdom of the IKD on the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe:

To believe that this slogan should occupy the same place in the Marxian program . . . now, when Europe is divided into one independent state and a whole series of subject nations, is the sheerest kind of abstractionism and dogmatism . . . Before the masses can see the "Socialist United States of Europe" as a realistic slogan, they undoubtedly want to have at their disposal **independent** national states.

Like the IKD, the Workers Party finds that Hitler is the main enemy. The resolution informs us

that just as the main enemy of the people in occupied China is Japanese imperialism [but in China, where defensism and national liberation is a progressive and not a reactionary task, we were told that Chiang Kai-shek was the main enemy, weren't we?], so the main, not the only, but the main enemy of the people in occupied Europe is Hitlerite imperialism. The workers in the national movements therefore should not hesitate to come to practical agreements with Allied imperialism, or its agents and representatives, by which they are provided with material aid and supplies for the struggle.

Social-Patriotic Implications of the Three Theses

The San Francisco opposition in the Workers Party correctly pointed out the social-patriotic implications of Shachtmanite "retrogressionism":

If "national freedom" is the first thing that must be achieved and if the intervention of Allied arms and support of its war contributes to this achievement, are not the workers who oppose both camps of the imperialist war, who wish to turn the latter into a civil war for socialism, and who put forth class demands, the real deserters from the front of the united, national and Allied fight for "national freedom"? (Scopa, "National Liberation — A New Trap!" Workers Party Internal Bulletin, December 1943.)

And again:

If, therefore, the slogan of national liberation is no longer "outlived" for the national states of Europe as the National Committee claims, then it should also disclose that the imperialist war has been transformed into a just

national war and that we should support not only the various national military movements but also the Anglo-American "liberation" coming to their aid. Even if they fail to draw this conclusion this is the logic of the National Committee position on the National question: (Idem.)

The "theory of retrogression"—this whole pretentious structure of petty-bourgeois illusions, vaporings, despair, sighs for reconciliation of the antagonistic classes — was positively razed to the ground by the beginning of the Italian revolution in August 1943. The Three Theses with their retrogressions and democratic-national revolutions and their struggles of the "whole people" for national freedom, were demolished more conclusively than could be done by dozens of resolutions or polemics. Living events closed the debate and rendered the decision. The Italian revolt constituted the most striking confirmation of the program and analysis of the Fourth International and an annihilating refutation of all the hairbrained speculations of the Three Thesesites.

Shachtman was taken quite aback—temporarily. He quietly dumped the Three Theses overboard — for the moment. In his article on "Problems of the Italian Revolt," he informed his readers: "Where the first demonstrations of workers [where are all the professors and priests and merchants?] broke out in the industrial North, Italy heard again the cry... *Soviets!* That is what some newspaper reports said, and it would not be surprising. [Why not? What is happening to the democratic revolution?] to learn that it was true." (*New International*, September 1943.)

We next hear: "The Italian revolution can triumph and leave no room for a relapse into reaction . . . only as a socialist revolution." [Wonders will never cease!] To say that it can succeed only as a socialist revolution is like saying that it can succeed only as an international revolution. Concretely and first of all, this means a revolution on a European scale, a Socialist United States of Europe." (Idem.) But must we not have independent national capitalist states before we can talk of a Socialist United States of Europe? Not a word!

It is an illuminating commentary on the Workers Party, its hodge-podge eclecticism plus its lack of serious thinking, that the very issue of the *New International* in which the foregoing article appeared also contained Shachtman's previously quoted open letter to the authors of the Three Theses in which he declared his solidarity with their views!

However, Shachtman's article on Italy proved only a passing aberration. Apparently, out of old habit, he had simply repeated a number of formulas of Trotskyism when suddenly confronted by the Italian revolutionary developments. But he, and the Workers Party with him, soon returned to the "retrogressionist" path. Their 1944 convention adopted the National Committee's "retrogressionist" resolution previously discussed.

Bolshevism and People's Frontism

By 1944 Europe was in a revolutionary situation. The Socialist Workers Party subjected the European problem to a concrete analysis and pointed to the tasks ahead. (Later on we learned that our appraisals were in essential solidarity

with those of the European Trotskyists.) Here is how we estimated the situation:

The working class of Europe and to a considerable extent even the petty bourgeoisie are in a deeply revolutionary mood. The big capitalists, as a whole, stand discredited, because of their collaboration with the Nazis and fascists . . . Politically, the revolutionary mood of the masses expresses itself by the fact that the working class in its decisive majority is throwing its weight behind the traditional working class parties, the Stalinists and the Social Democrats, primarily the Stalinists. Why? Because the masses still mistakenly believe that these parties will lead them forward in the revolutionary struggle for socialism. (E. R. Frank, "Liberation Movements of Europe and Trotskyist Tasks," *The Militant*, December 23, 1944.)

But the misleaders who stand at the head of those two working class parties were channeling back the insurgent mass movement into the blind alley of People's Frontism. The "Liberation" or "Resistance" movements, we found, were *basically* similar to the People's Fronts in Spain and France in 1936. They comprised "a political bloc between the Stalinists and Social Democratic leaders and the leaders of the bourgeoisie, or a section of the bourgeoisie. . . The 'Liberation' leaders attempt to stifle, sidetrack and confine the mass movement to the utopian fight for bourgeois democracy." They were everywhere providing the mass base for "the wretched People's Front cabinets in Europe." (Idem.)

Therefore the key tasks before the vanguard were: First, to build the revolutionary party as the indispensable force to rally the working class to a revolutionary socialist program and for revolutionary action. Second: "The revolutionary vanguard will preach the necessity of *breaking the* (People's Front) *bloc* with the bourgeoisie *inside* and *outside* the government." (Idem.)

The thought-out character and utterly consistent course of the Fourth International can be seen by juxtaposing the tasks set forth above, and the present key slogan of the European Trotskyist movement which calls for breaking the governmental coalitions with the capitalists and the formation of governments of the mass working class parties.

The Workers Party, as we have seen, had a fundamentally different line; a line which stated that the whole nation, *all classes*, had a common stake in fighting for "national freedom" against the foreign oppressor; a line which proposed that the proletarian vanguard strive for hegemony in the Resistance movements by placing at the head of its demands "the war cry of national freedom." In other words, the practical-political program of the Workers Party was very similar to that of the Stalinists and Social Democrats.

In the one and only reference to this problem that we have been able to discover, Shachtman explains in a footnote:

To identify the national revolutionary movements in Europe with the old People's Fronts . . . is at least ninety-nine percent wrong. In a word: the latter were bureaucratically confined parliamentary comedies to prevent action by the masses in favor of the *status quo*; the former are revolutionary struggles of the masses, with arms in hand, against the ruling state power. (*New International*, March 1945.)

This being so, why did not the Workers Party carry out its line? Why did they not support the six-party Committee for National Liberation in Italy and its counterparts throughout Europe? *Participation* in mass movements, we know, is not the issue. Revolutionists participate in every movement, when it assumes a mass character, but they do so with their own revolutionary program and methods. The Workers Party resolution, however, called for *political solidarity* with these People's Fronts; for participation in the People's Front movement, *as a People's Frontier*. The IKD mentors of the Workers Party had written that these movements must be "unconditionally supported." And this is the nub of the difference between ourselves and the Shachtmanites. But why didn't the Shachtmanites *carry out* their line? Apparently they were ashamed to. The Workers Party *never* found the courage to analyze the actual make-up, character and activity of these "Resistance" and "Liberation" movements, or to explain why they dared not solidarize themselves with these People's Fronts *in the concrete*, as they repeatedly solidarized themselves with them in the abstract.

This shameful game of political hide-and-seek shows that the Workers Party, along with abstentionism, has raised eclecticism and inconsistency to the level of a guiding principle. Nor is this an accidental phenomenon. There is one class in modern society that cannot be consistent in its politics. That class is the petty bourgeoisie.

The Post-War Version of the Three Theses

The resolution of the 1946 Workers Party convention, in the sections on the national question, rehashes all the political conclusions derived from the second version of the Three Theses. It is unnecessary to quote them at length, because they have been put forward in their entirety in the Socialist Workers Party by Morrow and his faction. It will suffice simply to list the main planks of the Shachtmanite platform of 1946—the post-war version of the Three Theses:

1. "The sections of the Fourth International . . . proved to be politically sterile . . . failed to become the most ardent and consistent champions of national liberation, of the central aim of these revolutionary democratic movements."

2. We are now in the period of bourgeois democracy, the "democratic interlude." And this "is understood by everybody in Europe (except the leadership of the Fourth International)."

3. That is: "Why the struggle for the masses revolves around so-called 'constitutional' or parliamentary questions."

4. Like Morrow, the Workers Party knew ahead of time that the German revolution was impossible. The Fourth International showed it was hopelessly ignorant because it had a revolutionary perspective for Germany.

5. Also like Morrow, the Workers Party constructs its program on the basis of the alleged moods of the masses and not on the basis of the objective situation.

6. The same problem of national liberation continues to dominate Europe, but is now centered in Germany and Eastern Europe. The slogan for a Socialist United States of Europe is a "propagandist abstraction."

7. Just as in their 1942 resolution there was not the faintest trace of a class approach to the soldiers of the Nazi and Fascist armies, so now the Shachtmanites are blind to any proposals for fraternization between the European workers and the soldiers of the Allied and Soviet armies, etc., etc.

In a word, as the second edition of the Three Theses explained, everything *essentially* remains as before. Only geographically and tactically is there a certain adjustment. (For our position see articles in the *Fourth International* by E. R. Frank, December 1944; William F. Warde, January 1946; Pablo, July 1946.)

To sum up this whole miasma of capitulation, confusion and muddling which is the political program of the Workers Party on the national question, we get the bizarre combination that for colonial Asia, where national defense and national liberation are progressive tasks, only the proletariat can re-launch the national struggle, and therefore only struggles headed by a revolutionary proletarian leadership merit support. The Workers Party would not

support the struggle initiated by the Congress Party in India in 1942. But in Europe, where the defense of the national state, or "national liberation" separate and apart from the socialist struggle, are reactionary slogans—in Europe the proletariat must dissolve itself in the "whole nation" and put to the fore the fight for national independence! The Workers Party refused to support semi-colonial China in its battle for national freedom against Japanese imperialism, because China had concluded an alliance with the United States. But in Europe, it was perfectly all right for the People's Front Resistance movements to conclude practical agreements with the Allied imperialists!

The Stalin-Bukharin People's Front policy of the all-class bloc, the policy of capitulation and betrayal, which Trotsky excoriated in 1927 for semi-colonial China, is now refurbished and reintroduced by the Workers Party—for Europe in 1942-46! By way of compensation, however, we are given a "pure," an ultra-leftist policy, in reality a policy of abstentionism, under cover of the most radical phrases—for Asia! Such are the "distinctive contributions" of the Workers Party on the national question.

7. Our Divergent Tactical Programs on the American Scene

The razor-sharp demarcation between our program and that of the Workers Party on the Russian question, the colonial and national questions, the European revolution, has revealed that what is involved are not secondary or even fundamental differences on single, isolated issues, but the antagonism of two basically divergent world programs, systems of thought and methodology. What is involved is the antagonism between Marxism — its philosophy, methodology, politics and traditions; and petty-bourgeois eclecticism, empiricism and impressionism — with its endless inconsistencies, its patch-quilt of ideas borrowed from alien class sources and antagonistic programs; its constantly shifting and contradictory politics.

The divergence in approach and method has revealed itself no less sharply, no less fundamentally, in our ideas on how to participate in and gain leadership of the working class struggle in America. It is unnecessary, and virtually impossible here, to take up all our disagreements on the American scene, because we find it increasingly difficult to see eye to eye with the Workers Party on almost any problem of the American labor movement and the specific tasks of the revolutionary party. It will suffice to demarcate our disagreements under three major headings: the Labor Party, Trade Union Tactics, How to Fight American Fascism. In all three fields we shall observe how the Workers Party exhibits the identical traits that it displayed in its positions on the great international events: the same tendency toward ultimatism and abstentionism, the same hunt for "ideal" struggles, the same inconsistency and nervousness, the same penchant for jumping from one position to another, the same chopping up of related positions and tasks and forcibly dividing one from another, the same bizarre eclecticism which combines the crudest opportunism with unrestrained adventurism. The absence of a unified conception produces the most disastrous consequences precisely here in the field of the American class struggle.

A. — POLICY ON THE LABOR PARTY

Ostensibly, both we and the Workers Party have the same or very similar positions on the question of a labor party. We both favor the formation of a labor party based on the trade unions, and we both advocate the adoption by such a party of a program of transitional demands. But even where we agree abstractly, as in this case, our *approach* is so *different* from theirs that we have never yet been able to agree on supporting the same candidate in any election! We advise the workers to vote one way; the Workers Party advises them to vote a different way. In 1944, both we and the Workers Party were active in the Michigan Commonwealth Federation, an embryonic labor party. It must be recorded as a fact that in every important debate that took place in this organization, our comrades were on the opposite side of the fence from the Workers Party. The source of these antipathetic positions is not difficult to trace.

Let us begin with the American Labor Party. This party, established in New York State by the trade union bureaucrats in 1936, is a genuine mass organization based on the trade unions. The bureaucrats, however, subverted it and made of it a pawn of their own for the purpose of wheedling concessions from the two major capitalist parties, in return for support of their candidates. In other words, we had here a diseased and degenerated labor party. From the first, the Socialist Workers Party understood its task to be the regeneration of this party into a genuine instrument of working class political action. In line with this approach we laid down in 1938 the policy of supporting all ALP candidates who run *solely* on the ALP ticket, while *not* supporting any ALP candidates who are also candidates of the Democratic and Republican parties. In this policy the class line is absolutely clear. Clear also is the tactical approach as well as the purpose of the tactic.

The Workers Party says it likewise stands for a labor party based on the trade unions. But when the ALP runs independent candidates it refuses to support them. On what ground? Here is Shachtman's best explanation, word for word:

The mere fact that the ALP was set up as a labor vote-getter for the New Deal wing of the Democratic Party was an implicit recognition, not only by the labor officialdom in New York, but even by Roosevelt, that hundreds of thousands of workers were restless under the old policy of outright capitalist politics in the labor movement. The ALP represented a partial abandonment, at least in form, of this kind of politics. Yet it did not represent the adoption of independent working class politics; it was not a genuine Labor Party, regardless of whether or not thousands of its working class supporters thought of it as one. Because it was not a real Labor Party it was impossible for revolutionists to support it in the elections, for a vote cast under its symbol would not be an expression of independent class politics. (*New International*, April 1943.)

But why should we not support the *independent* candidates of the ALP? Why did the Workers Party, for example, refuse to support Dean Alfange, the ALP candidate for Governor of New York, who ran *against* the capitalist candidates? Here is a repetition of the same old business: because there is a lot of filth and dross connected with a specific class action, the Shachtmanites decide to wash their hands of the whole dirty business. Indeed they are for a labor party, but until one is formed that meets their specifications 100 per cent, they will have nothing to do with it. Ultimatism and abstentionism — this can lead only to the isolation and disintegration of the revolutionary vanguard.

Vulgar Anti-Stalinism in the ALP

In the spring of 1944 a sharp factional struggle took place inside the ALP. The Stalinists and Social Democrats were fighting for control of the organization. Programmatic issues between them — there were none. Both factions stood on an identical pro-Roosevelt, pro-war program. We support critically the independent candidates of the ALP, despite their program. But in this purely internal fight we could have supported one side or the other only on the basis of a better program, on the basis that one or the other represented the greater good or at least the lesser evil. Since both factions were identical in all essentials, including their support of the capitalist parties and candidates, we saw no reason to take sides. *The Militant* of April 8, 1944 declared:

The campaign was fought over one single question: who would make the best lackey for Roosevelt. Dubinsky, Rose, Counts and Co. fought for this "honor" on the basis of greater seniority. Hillman and the Stalinists, on the other hand, claimed greater zeal. For a worker striving to create a genuine labor party independent of the capitalist parties there was no choice between the two contending cliques inside the ALP.

The *Militant* took the only correct position when it advised workers that no progressive purpose would be served by the victory of one or the other faction, that the task for class-conscious workers therefore was to lay the "foundation for the reorganization of the ALP into a genuine labor party . . . not by backing one bureaucratic clique against the other, but by solid educational and or-

ganizational groundwork in the trade union locals and the ALP clubs."

The Shachtmanites do not support the *independent* candidates of the ALP. But in this purely *internal* clique fight they could not resist taking sides. For once they did not abstain. Their vulgar anti-Stalinism got the upper hand and they supported the pro-war, pro-Roosevelt Social Democrats against the pro-war, pro-Roosevelt Stalinists. On what basis? Here is their own explanation:

The Workers Party called upon the registered ALP voters to cast their ballots for the misnamed "right wing" as a lesser evil in comparison with the equally misnamed "left wing," i.e., the Stalinists. Why? How reconcile this policy with a refusal to support the ALP candidates in the regular election . . . In the regular elections, the test is: "Is this a genuine Labor Party we are called upon to vote for?" The ALP failed to meet this test. In the primary elections, the question was: "Who shall control the party? Under the control of which of the two groups to which we are now limited (if we are able to vote at all) is there a better opportunity to convert the ALP into a genuine labor party, a better arena for the advocates of such a party, more elbow room? Between the two, whose victory will retard the struggle for a Labor Party?" The answer was not difficult to give: the Stalinists were the greater evil; the Dubinsky group was not a "good," it was also an evil, but the lesser evil.

Vulgar anti-Stalinism, as we have seen before, goes hand in hand with a painting-up of the Social Democracy. The Shachtmanite "policy" on the ALP, moreover, illustrates most strikingly how ultimatism and abstentionism go hand in hand with opportunism.

The Frankenstein Election

Our antagonistic approaches to the labor party problem were again disclosed in the 1945 Detroit elections. This time the Political Action Committee (PAC) and the CIO were running Richard Frankenstein, at that time vice-president of the United Automobile Workers Union, for Mayor. In the essence of the matter, Frankenstein was running as a labor candidate. Everyone recognized him as the candidate of the powerful Detroit CIO movement. And the whole capitalist class rallied as one man to repulse the CIO challenge. (In Detroit elections candidates are not permitted to run under party labels, but under a "non-partisan" label.) There were, of course, many seamy sides to the Frankenstein candidacy. We are not referring to his cowardly program which our party mercilessly criticized, but the fact that the local organization of the Democratic Party endorsed Frankenstein's candidacy and that Frankenstein himself was a member of the Democratic Party. Nonetheless, the predominant character of Frankenstein's candidacy was its labor aspect.

Our party, while exposing all the weaknesses and faults of the Frankenstein campaign, took a firm stand in support of Frankenstein's candidacy:

The best way for the Detroit workers to lay the basis for a labor party is by mobilizing all forces for the election of Frankenstein and the CIO-PAC candidates for the city council next November. An overwhelming victory for the Detroit labor candidates will arouse American labor everywhere and help inspire an irresistible movement for a nation-wide labor party. (*The Militant*, August 18, 1945.)

Our party went on the radio and, in general, conducted a vigorous campaign for the labor party and our transitional program, on the basis of *critical support* for Frankenstein. Our campaign proved very fruitful for the party's growth both in membership and influence in Michigan.

The Workers Party again counterposed to our policy the practice of issuing ultimatums and then abstaining under cover of radical phrases. It demanded, first, that the PAC be transformed into a labor party. Thus "the independent political march of the workers in this country will have begun." Until that action was taken, however, "Frankenstein does not represent that independent path . . . Frankenstein is not such a candidate and should not be supported by labor." (*Labor Action*, September 3, 1945.) Once again the Shachtmanites washed their hands of the whole dirty business.

B. — THE TRADE UNION QUESTION

The six-year record of the Workers Party in the trade union sphere has demonstrated to our satisfaction that the Shachtmanites are congenitally unfit for any serious revolutionary work in the trade unions. Their petty-bourgeois traits and habits of thought come to the surface in the most glaring fashion in the trade union field, and clash most sharply with the needs of the working class movement.

Just as in the question of the labor party, we and the Workers Party ostensibly have the same general aims and goals in the trade union movement. But again, as in the case of the labor party question, we invariably clash on all the tactics by means of which we must achieve our general aims and goals. It must be recorded as a fact that in every union situation where members of the two parties met, we invariably found ourselves fighting for conflicting policies and backing opposite slates and candidates. We do not have to seek far for the explanation. The head-on clash derives from our different approaches to the problem in hand and from our divergent methods of work. We propose to illustrate the antipathetic tendencies in this field by giving a summary outline of our trade union orientation during the war and contrasting it with that of the Workers Party.

The Socialist Workers Party adopted, beginning with the war, a tactical policy of limited aims in the trade union movement. In line with this tactic we laid down a sharp prescription of *caution* in our work. We frowned on attempts to seek big union posts. We discouraged attempts to organize power caucuses. Instead, we laid out a course of intensifying the educational phase of our work, the work of penetration, preparation, solidification of our cadre in the unions, and party recruitment.

This tactical orientation was not determined arbitrarily. It was dictated by the relationship of forces, which turned sharply in our disfavor because of war patriotism, the subservience of the trade union bureaucracy, the absence of significant mass opposition, and our own isolation and weakness. These and other factors combined to make us highly vulnerable to attack. Any adventurism on our part would have wiped out our weak trade union forces. Any policy which mistook the minor, isolated skirmishes in the first years of the war for big upheavals, and any attempts to substitute the action of the vanguard for the action of the mass, would have resulted in the beheading of our trade

union cadre and made it easy for the trade union bureaucracy to wipe out the nascent progressive movement.

We adjusted our specific tactics many times to meet the exigencies of the developing mass movement, but continued under the over-all prescription of caution, under the over-all orientation of limited aims. Only in May 1945 did we execute a decisive tactical turn to proceed to the building of a left wing, to fight for leadership in the various local unions, and to organize blocs with various progressives for that purpose. We permitted ourselves this fundamental shift in our trade union orientation only with the approaching end of the war and the clear signs of the growing militancy of the workers. (See SWP Internal Bulletins, Vol. 4, No. 1, August 1942 and Vol. 7, No. 2, April 1945.)

In contrast to us, the Workers Party had no over-all estimation of the relationship of forces, of the mood of the workers, of the fundamental trends. They displayed a deep-rooted inability to see the picture whole. From this flowed their incapacity to map out a long-term policy and hew to it consistently. Hence their jumpiness, their hysteria, their kaleidoscopic changes of front, their mistaking every swallow for the summer, followed by moods of panic and despair.

Contrasting Tactics in the Trade Unions

In 1942 and 1943, while we were building and consolidating our forces and penetrating ever more deeply into the trade union movement, the Shachtmanites were engaged in a frenzied activity, trying to "galvanize" the masses into action, substituting their own negligible forces for those of the workers. They did not, of course, create any mass upsurge through their attempts to "electrify" the workers, but they did get tossed out of numerous union organizations. When the masses began to move, we were able to participate and play a significant role, because we had consolidated, through hard, consistent work and struggle, *stable union fractions* in a number of key industries. But the Shachtmanites were like an orator who exhausts his lung-power in the opening passages of his speech and whose voice is gone at the climax. They had dissipated their forces in numerous skirmishes and "electrification" adventures. They had no stable fractions or any other kind of fractions left in the unions when the great strike wave engulfed America. Their trade union activity had proved to be nothing but a flash in the pan.

The documents of the Workers Party show conclusively that they possessed not a glimmer of understanding as to how to go about developing a perspective for the party in the mass movement. The 1942 resolution of the Workers Party declared:

We reject the false and essentially tail-endist and opportunist theory that the American workers are not in motion, are in a state of apathy, and will not move in defense of their rights and standards in the coming period. The contrary is the case . . . Whoever argues that the American workers are today at rest, that they are not moving, will not move in the future [this is just thrown in for good measure], and cannot be made to move by militant leadership and guidance . . . deserves a position as a benevolent trade union bureaucrat, but does not deserve the name of revolutionary socialist. (*New International*, March 1943.)

In his letter to the authors of the Three Theses, Shachtman asks:

Are you unaware of the Cannonite policy of "preserving the cadres during the war," which is interpreted in practice as complete passivity in the unions and the class struggle, self-effacement, what Lenin used to call *khvostism* (tail-endism), which is taught to the SWP membership as the quintessence of Leninist wisdom, in contrast to our "adventurism"? (New International, September 1943.)

In his "Five Years of the Workers Party," Shachtman sums up approvingly the trade union work of his party, and after again characterizing our policy as "abstentionism," comes to the considered conclusion that: "We (the Shachtmanites) rightly judged both the needs and the possibilities." (*New International*, April 1945.)

The Verdict of Life

Trade union work is one field where life itself has already rendered decisive judgment as between ourselves and the Workers Party. In 1939, the Shachtmanites split away almost 50 per cent of our membership, counting the youth. Shachtman informs us in his "Five Years of the Workers Party," that: "Before long (after the war was in progress), virtually our entire membership was concentrated in important industries and active in the labor movement." Thus we started roughly even. Our policy, according to them, was "abstentionist," "tail-endist," etc. Theirs "rightly judged both the needs and the possibilities." But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, after all.

In the course of the war we proletarianized our party and built solid, stable fractions in auto, steel, maritime and several other key industries. We possess a party cadre that commands the respect and confidence of thousands of workers in these unions. We possess leadership in a number of localities. We played a significant role in several key cities in the recent strike struggles. We are recruiting workers, through our trade union fractions, more rapidly than ever before.

And the Workers Party? Listen to the Shachtmanites' own testimony. Here are the significant remarks of one of their national leaders, Erber, in a discussion preceding their New York City convention in 1945:

The vital importance of the city convention we are preparing stems from the critical situation in the party today. Some comrades seem anxious to deny that a crisis exists. If everyone agrees that the morale of the membership is terribly low, that the members do not have much confidence in the leading committees, that significant numbers are beginning to lose confidence in the future of our party, that recruiting has all but stopped, that a serious financial problem is developing, if everyone agrees to this as the state of affairs today, I will not quibble with those who shy away from the word "crisis"...

The root of our present problem is that the party is removed from its working class base, i.e., we are no longer in industry in significant numbers nor are industrial workers in our party in significant numbers.

We were a party with a predominantly petty-bourgeois membership. The war gave us the opportunity to place our petty-bourgeois membership in industry. Their presence there had a time limit on it — "for the duration." [Why?] We had to make use of this time to recruit and hold enough industrial workers to change the character of our party. We failed in this. The end of the war dumped our petty-bourgeois members out of industry. This is the root of the problem. This is the long and

short of it. (Ernest Erber, *Comments on New York City Convention Discussion*, City Committee Bulletin, December 31, 1945.)

It is true that Workers Party members never built up very much seniority in the plants, because like gypsies they were always on the move — from plant to plant, from industry to industry, from city to city. But that is merely part of the explanation, and a small part at that. Through out the war, the Shachtmanite "student youth" were constantly getting themselves thrown out of plants because of their crazy, bohemian behavior. They were unable to sink roots anywhere. As soon as the war ended, the remainder began a mass exodus out of the plants. The Workers Party even had to launch a campaign against "de-colonization." Albert Gates, another national leader of the Workers Party, in an organizational report stated:

... the party ... cannot permit a process of de-industrialization or de-colonization to take place. That such a process is present in the party is reflected by a tendency of some comrades to quit industry altogether, having regarded their industrialization as a temporary war measure, and of others to return to New York on the ground that since the war is nearing an end, their colonization efforts must likewise end. (WP Active Workers Conference Bulletin No. 4, July 19, 1945.)

But all this complaining and admonition was to no avail. The petty-bourgeois tide was too strong to stem. Let us, however, continue with Erber's revealing testimony:

But why did we fail to recruit and hold industrial workers during the period of 1942-45, some will ask. This is truly a crucial question for our party. There are, in the main, three different answers given to it by Shachtman, Johnson and myself. [There is no dearth of answers in any case.] ... But there is another side to the question of a discussion on why we failed to change our party composition while in industry. That is the fact that right now we are not in industry. Right now the desperate problem is to get back into industry. (Erber, *idem*.)

The Shachtmanites have yet to explain how it is that our policy of "abstentionism and tail-endism" in the trade union movement produced significant growth and widening influence, while their policy of "bold and correct participation" produced only disintegration and demoralization.

C. — THE STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM

The divergent approaches and methods of work of the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party were manifested again, in practically identical fashion, in the struggle against American fascism. We have already made reference to our respective campaigns against Gerald L. K. Smith in Los Angeles in the summer of 1945, in connection with the problem of Stalinism. Here we wish to delineate our conflicting tactical approaches from a more general point of view.

From our analysis of the social scene in America today, we derived our estimate that fascism here is still in its first stages. This means we must prepare for a lengthy struggle, the main line of which must be the mobilization of the organized forces of the working class. Thus we oriented ourselves primarily, in the concrete situation prevailing in Los Angeles, toward impelling the CIO, the Stalinist-dominated unions and organizations, into action. We played the role

of inspirer, guide, educator and (insofar as we could) leader. But we never thought to substitute ourselves, the vanguard, for the mass.

In contrast, the Shachtmanites displayed all the bad features we have become familiar with in the trade union field. They were incapable of arriving at an over-all estimate of the situation. Therefore they could not orient themselves properly. They divorced the problem of the fight against fascism from other related tasks in the labor movement, and they tried to substitute their own action for the action of the masses. Hal Draper, the Los Angeles National Committee representative of the Workers Party, informed our party negotiating committee that: "We expect nothing from the labor movement at this time in the struggle against the fascists. It is up to the socialists to act."

Our main line was: Into the labor movement; attack the Stalinists with our united front proposals; action against the fascists — but united *mass* action. This line was not only wholly realistic, but in the given situation proved highly successful. Due in considerable measure to our activity, a united front of mass organizations was forged and a huge anti-fascist meeting organized, which inspired similar anti-fascist demonstrations in numerous other cities when Gerald L. K. Smith appeared for public meetings. (See Internal Bulletin, Vol. 7, No. 8, September 1945.)

According to the unimpeachable evidence of our Los Angeles comrades, the Shachtmanites "miscalculated the entire situation ('we expect nothing from the labor movement at this time'), based themselves primarily upon a heckling attack on us, *provided comfort to the fascists*, and were overwhelmed by the real course of events which we predicted and prepared for." To this annihilating balance sheet must be added one more item: And as in the trade union field, the Shachtmanites learned nothing from the experience. After their "theory," voiced by Draper, had been rudely shattered, Shachtman blandly wrote, in his April 30, 1946 letter to the SWP — as if nothing had occurred:

The failure of the SWP to accept the invitation of the WP to organize joint demonstrations against G. L. K. Smith at a time when the mobilization of wide masses against Smith was a practical impossibility (!) reveals in our opinion either political short-sightedness or an inadequate understanding of our tasks in the struggle against fascism, or both.

This statement reveals a trait we have come across before so many times in the documents and articles of the Workers Party, a trait so characteristic of petty-bourgeois politicians — the trait of *subjectivism*. The urge for self-justification is infinitely stronger than the urge for objective truth.

8. Proletarian Military Policy

Before closing this section it is necessary to record one further important difference in basic policy between the Workers Party and ourselves — on proletarian military policy. While it is true that this policy is by no means limited to America, it has first received an "American" application. The policy was adopted by our party in 1940 under the guidance of Trotsky and is summarized in this major transitional demand: "For military training of workers and worker-officers, financed by the government, but under control of the trade unions!"

This transitional demand was derived from our general Marxist views on militarism and the program of the workers' militia. (SWP Resolution on Proletarian Military Policy, Internal Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 1, August 1940.) Our party inaugurated in 1940 an aggressive propaganda based on this proletarian military policy. It must be remembered that Hitler was at this time overrunning Europe and the question of military conscription was agitating the American people. There was a certain pacifist opposition to conscription. John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers Union, and a number of capitalist politicians came forward with the proposal to raise an army by voluntary recruitment. We immediately differentiated ourselves sharply from all pacifist muddlers as well as from the left-capitalist charlatans. We said: "We are not pacifists. We understand the necessity for military training in a world dominated by militarism. But we have no confidence in the capitalists, in Roosevelt. Look what happened in France. Learn from the betrayal of Petain. We favor military training — but only under our control." Such, in a nutshell, was our proletarian military policy.

The Workers Party remained, and to our knowledge still is, on record for a workers' militia. But whenever it is

a question of taking the Marxist formulas off the shelf and applying them in real life, the Shachtmanites shrink with a true petty-bourgeois reflex from Bolshevik "harshness." First they grasped at Lewis' proposal as the last straw of salvation. In its issue of August 12, 1940, *Labor Action* blazoned forth the message: "In his fight against conscription we are with Lewis 100 per cent." To which Trotsky answered: "We are not with Lewis for even a single per cent, because Lewis tries to defend the capitalist fatherland with completely outmoded means." (*Fourth International*, October 1940.)

As is usual with the Shachtmanites when they confront a serious problem, they first "lose" the class line, the class criterion. Thus armed, they proceed to "solve" the problem, not on the basis of principled considerations, but by some special circumstances concocted on the basis of the impressions and pressures of the moment. Since the air in the United States was heavily laden with pacifism in 1940, the Shachtmanites inhaled a breath of it and then exhaled it in their anti-war propaganda. Their pacifist mood was clothed, as usual, in the most bombastic language and put forth under cover of ultra-radical phraseology. The SWP military policy was declared to be nothing less than "a concession to social patriotism" and an "abandonment of the revolutionary internationalist position." (*New International*, January 1941.)

The SWP resolution on proletarian military policy took cognizance of this rightward evolution of the Workers Party. "Since the party convention," it stated, "the seceding faction (Workers Party) has evolved consistently in the direction of traditional left socialist anti-militarism which at bottom is only a form of pacifism."

9. Our Opposing Concepts of the Party

The organization question, our concept of the party and how to build it, was the second big issue in dispute between ourselves and the Burnham-Shachtman faction in 1939-40. The discussions on this question, recorded in two books — *In Defense of Marxism* by Leon Trotsky and *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* by James P. Cannon — have in truth exhausted the differences between our two concepts of the party. As a matter of fact, very little fundamentally new has been said on this subject since Lenin wrote his memorable work, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, which comprises the record and an analysis of the struggle between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, at the 1903 convention of the Russian Social-Democratic Party.

The Shachtmanites, who show an organic tendency toward opportunism in every political question, naturally display the same tendency in the organizational sphere, in their concept of the character of the party, in their methods of building the party. The six-year struggle between ourselves and the Workers Party has imparted to our differences on this question a finished character.

We want a party of workers, a party that has discipline both for the leaders and the rank-and-file, a party of action and struggle, a party that is Marxist to the marrow of its bones, a party which shrugs off with contempt all alien ideologies and pressures, a party so constituted that it can seriously contemplate leading the workers in the revolution. That is why we believe in a homogeneous party, a party built solidly upon a common program and common methods. We reject any concept of a party of fundamentally different tendencies. Such a party can never forge a genuine discipline and is destined to fly apart in opposite directions when confronted with the first serious test. We are firm believers in party democracy and we practice it. But we insist that democracy be combined with centralism — not just in name, but in fact. We insist that once a decision has been taken, the discussion shall cease and the minority subordinate itself to the will of the majority.

Despite all their protestations to the contrary, the Shachtmanites want, and have constructed, a "discussion club" party, a petty-bourgeois "madhouse," a perpetual talking shop. They are still hunting for the fourth dimension of party democracy. Their every instinct and their most deep-rooted characteristics force them to want and to do everything they can to create a party which will forever be a happy hunting ground for "literateurs." "independent spirits," "free souls." They want a party which has an accommodating attitude toward every perversion of Marxism, a party where one feels free to "experiment."

The SWP resolution on "Organizational Principles," adopted by the founding convention in 1938, declares:

The revolutionary Marxian party rejects not only the arbitrariness and bureaucratism of the Communist Party, but also the spurious and deceptive "all-inclusiveness" of the Thomas-Tyler-Hoan Socialist Party, which is a sham and a fraud. Experience has proved conclusively that this "all-inclusiveness" paralyzes the party in general and the revolutionary left wing in particular. . . The SWP seeks to be inclusive only in this sense, that it accepts into its ranks those who accept its program and denies admission to those who reject its program.

The "All-Inclusive" Talking Shop

The Shachtmanites fought against this concept of a homogeneous Bolshevik organization in the faction struggle and split of 1939-40. Thus *by implication* they adopted the principle of an "all-inclusive" talking-shop party. Today the Workers Party has *explicitly* embraced this opportunist concept of organization. In his "Answers to Questions on the Cadre," Shachtman declares:

We are unlike these previous movements (the Bolsheviks before 1917, the Communist Party of America at any time in its history, or the Communist League of America at any time in its history) in that our **composition** is much broader than was theirs at any time. Our **program** and **theories** are not less clearly and strictly defined than were theirs. Our party, however, takes in, makes room for, and allows the free functioning of people who have such differences with our party's theories and policies as were never tolerated or possible in the movements before. Do you have any doubts about it? If so, tell me of one revolutionary Marxist party which allowed for such a wide range of differences in its ranks as we allow in our party. If you go through the histories with a glass you will not find one, because there never was one. . . Such a wide range of differences in a reformist party? Yes, and even a wider range at one time or another. But never before in a revolutionary party!

I think it was Erber who coined the phrase that our party is an all-inclusive **revolutionary** party (the underlined word sufficiently distinguishes us from Norman Thomas' all-inclusive **reformist** party). Properly understood, I am ready and proud to refer to ourselves by this formula. (Workers Party Internal Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 14, May 15, 1946.)

Shachtman Invites In the YPSL

Just how broad and accommodating the Workers Party really is, can be seen in their appeal to the 1945 convention of Norman Thomas' Young People's Socialist League to "Join ranks with the Workers Party! Let us be more concrete. We propose to you that the YPSL shall fuse with the Workers Party and operate as its youth organization."

The YPSL, however, is a dyed-in-the-wool sect of petty-bourgeois opponents of Bolshevism, of Trotskyism. Their political resolution declares: "No more than reformist social-democracy can Bolshevism achieve our goals." In their opinion, Bolshevism is responsible for Stalinism and all its consequences. "We reject the notion," they conclude, "that this set of tactics shall be imitated in our attempt to achieve socialism."

But the Workers Party is "all-inclusive" enough to take in — better yet, to *invite in* — these hard-boiled Souvarinists. "We know," Shachtman states in his appeal to the YPSL for fusion, "that many of you have significant differences with the Workers Party, particularly on the questions of historic Bolshevism or Trotskyism and of aspects of the Russian Revolution." But that's nothing to worry about, he says: "To us, this is the least disturbing aspect of the problem of our relations." (*Labor Action*, April 2, 1945.) In other words: Come on in and join the discussion!

In the light of the foregoing, we can certainly agree with Shachtman that he stands for an all-inclusive party. But we cannot agree with him that he also stands for a *revolutionary*

party. Like Norman Thomas' "socialism," *that* is a misunderstanding.

Perhaps an even more effective demarcation between the organizational concepts and methods of the SWP and the WP can be made by contrasting the actual development of the two parties during the past six years.

As previously indicated, the Burnham-Shachtman faction was approximately as strong in numbers as the SWP at the time of the split in 1940. The bulk of the Workers Party membership went to work in industry during the war period, as they have already testified. Thus both parties had an even start in 1940. It is true that we had practically all of the experienced trade unionists, whereas they had the students. But this advantage of ours was obviously canceled out by our "tail-endist," "abstentionist," "do-nothing" policy in the class struggle, in contrast to their "bold, enterprising and correct" policy. Thus, to repeat again, the two parties had an even start in 1940.

In the six years that have since elapsed we accomplished these things:

1. We transformed the SWP from a discussion group into a genuine workers' party, the bulk of whose members are industrial workers.

2. We built solid and stable union fractions in half a dozen key industries and lesser fractions in a number of other industries.

3. We have been recruiting steadily and in increasing numbers, mainly from among workers in industry.

4. We have forged a solid core of proletarian leaders, as witness the substitute leadership which stepped into the breach in 1944 when most of our older leaders were sent to prison.

5. Our weekly paper, *The Militant*, which Trotsky once criticized very sharply for its intellectualism, has become a real workers' paper — not only a brilliantly written paper for the workers, as Trotsky described the old *Militant*, but a paper of the workers. Its popularity is attested by the astonishing successes of its subscription campaigns. Since 1944, the paper has increased its *paid circulation* at least tenfold.

The mounting progress of our party can be explained only by its homogeneity, by the revolutionary morale of its membership, by their confidence in the party and its leadership. Such ardent party patriotism cannot be manufactured or bureaucratically imposed. It can only be the reflection of the nature of the party itself and its successes.

The old SWP, prior to the departure of the Burnham-Shachtman faction, was held down by its predominantly petty-bourgeois composition. The new party is able to move forward with effectiveness and consistency because it is predominantly a workers' party both in its membership and its leadership.

Two Fundamentally Different Parties

In contrast to the SWP, the Workers Party has shown no ability to grow, sink roots in the labor movement, and gain influence over the workers. We have more than doubled our membership since the split. By the coming convention, our membership, based on our present rate of recruitment, will have increased 150 per cent over 1940. The Workers Party, according to its own figures, has a membership which stands at roughly *half* of the party members and youth that split away from the SWP in 1940. (See WP New York City Convention Bulletin No. 4, December 31, 1945, p. 17, last paragraph.) Thus the numerical disproportion between our memberships is now four to one — and it is growing every day.

We have proletarianized our party and built significant and influential trade union fractions. The Workers Party, by its own testimony, still has a petty-bourgeois membership. Their trade union fractions have all but disappeared. They are out of industry, and they have not succeeded in recruiting workers. Today, after six years of frenzied trade union activity, of screaming and bragging, the WP *Resolution on the Party* has to put these "two tasks" at the "center of agitation and activity of the party cadre: No backsliding! No de-industrialization! No de-colonization!" (Workers Party Internal Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 7, March 15, 1946.)

The resolution of the October 1945 Plenum of the SWP records the fact that "as a result of the successes scored and the experiences undergone during the war, the ranks of the SWP face the coming period with unlimited confidence in the prospects of the party, and its eventual development into the mass revolutionary party of the American workers."

The Workers Party, having failed, by its own admission, to proletarianize its ranks, or sink roots in the unions, or recruit workers, is in a "crisis" — "the members do not have confidence" in the leaders and their "morale . . . is terribly low."

Nevertheless, our type of party, so attractive to and so appreciated by revolutionary workers, evokes from Shachtman and his associates only fear, antagonism and actual hatred. All our accomplishments and successes are greeted by Shachtman with derision, sneers and contempt. He describes our party as a "bureaucratic jungle." He calls the SWP leaders "bureaucratic louts." His researches into the articles of the soul-sick Albert Goldman have convinced him that "Stalinist rot has set in" in the SWP.

In the light of Shachtman's ultra-friendly attitude toward the Souvarinist petty-bourgeois Yipsels; considering that even their rejection of "historical Bolshevism" and "historical Trotskyism" did not disturb his urbanity or provoke any sharp protest from him, we must conclude that his frenzied hatred of our party stems from the same causes, and is of the same class nature, as the hatred of all petty-bourgeois opportunists for principled, unswerving, "hard" Bolshevism.

10. Our Divergent Attitudes Toward the Fourth International

One of the most decisive criteria for evaluating any tendency or group in the labor movement is its attitude toward the Fourth International. Is it friendly or is it hostile? Is it drawing closer to the international Trotskyist movement, or is it moving farther away? All experience has demonstrated that this constitutes an almost infallible test, because the attitude of groups or parties is not determined in the long run by personal sympathies or antipathies, but by profound political considerations. Inevitably those who are enemies of our party and the Fourth International have been found to be enemies of our program, our tradition and our aims. Especially as regards centrist formations such as the Independent Labor Party in Britain, Trotsky considered this question — namely, their attitude toward the Fourth International — as a *decisive* indication of the real underlying *tendency* of the group or organization.

On the basis of this test we must conclude that the Shachtmanites are implacable enemies of the Trotskyist movement. The record of their attitude toward the Fourth International is one of consistent hostility. They attempted to engineer splits in its ranks, they tried to undermine its authority in order to cripple and destroy it, and to supplant it as the international leadership.

Let us review the record. First, as we know, the Fourth International is founded on the same organizational principles as its component parties: democratic centralism. The Trotskyists discuss, have plenty of democracy, but not for self-expression, but in order to arrive at decisions. Once a decision is reached, everyone is expected to carry it out. This principle is written into the "Statutes" or rules of the Fourth International. Statute 4 reads: "The sections are required to observe the decisions and resolutions of the International Conference, and in its absence, of the International Executive Committee . . ." These Statutes, adopted during Trotsky's lifetime, are not only known to Shachtman. He voted for them.

After defying the authority of the April 1940 convention of the SWP; after carrying through his criminal split aimed at crippling our movement in the critical war period, and attempting to extend the split throughout the international movement, Shachtman, in his new post as National Secretary of the Workers Party, addressed the May 1940 Emergency Conference of the Fourth International with the following request: "The Workers Party . . . is desirous of sending delegates who can participate in the Conference . . ."

The secretary of the Emergency Conference replied to the Workers Party request as follows: "If the Workers Party of the United States desires to participate in the Conference it may do so on the condition that it recognizes the authority of the Conference and agrees to accept its decisions. On that basis the Workers Party is invited to send fraternal delegates to the Conference." (International Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 1, July 1940.)

Of course, Shachtman and his associates could not participate in a conference if they had to recognize the rule of the majority. Hence they did not accept the invitation of the Emergency Conference, and, as their letter of April 30, 1946 to our party states, "refused to recognize . . . the

validity . . . of the decisions adopted by this conference on the split in the SWP." (Note: Shachtman must resort to outright lies in an attempt to cover up his irresponsible anarchism. In the face of written proof to the contrary, he asserts in this same letter that he was not "afforded the opportunity to participate" in the deliberations of the Conference.)

Shortly afterwards, the Workers Party set up a "Committee For the Fourth International" in opposition to the elected Executive Committee of the Fourth International.

Shachtman and Co. Try to Destroy the Fourth International

Throughout the period of the war, when communications were difficult and contact between the parties was in many instances unavoidably broken off, the Workers Party labored with might and main to sow confusion, to split off sections, to denigrate the leadership of the International, to destroy the organization. (Stanley's trip to China and India; Gates' letters to the British WIL; Shachtman's correspondence with the Italian group, etc., etc.) In his *Science and Style*, Burnham had predicted that the Fourth International would not survive the war. The Shachtmanites worked like trojans to make this prediction come true.

In a circular letter to the Workers Party branches, reporting the decisions of the December 1944 WP National Committee meeting, Shachtman summed up the attitude of his party toward the Fourth International:

The committee had a discussion finally on the question of the Fourth International. It was the common view that the International as any kind of organized body worthy of recognition by us or by any serious revolutionist, no longer exists.

So what is to be done?

Of the steps to be taken, the most important and immediate is the formation of a bloc with the Independent Communists of Germany [the IKD] with whom we have developed fraternal political and organizational relations. . . With this bloc, we shall endeavor to group the other groups which generally belong to the Trotskyist movement.

In 1944-45, the parties were beginning to re-establish contact. War censorship was gradually being lifted. The fact stood out like a bright beacon light: The Fourth International had lived and fought bravely throughout the dark days of the war. Despite calumny and unheard-of persecutions, in defiance of concentration camps and death, the Trotskyists carried on the work of the Fourth International. In the midst of the war, new sections were formed in India, Italy, etc. Even more remarkable than this unremitting activity was the *solidarity of ideas* which the parties and the cadres maintained under conditions of enforced isolation. No other International has ever demonstrated such a firm cohesiveness on all the basic political ideas and perspectives. The Fourth International covered itself with glory during the war by its struggle for working class internationalism.

Beginning with 1944, a great activity started to knit

the threads of organization firmly together again. Four parties in Europe held a conference in February 1944 under the very noses of the Gestapo and set up a European Executive Committee. They achieved a great measure of coordination in their work and began issuing an illegal press. A much more representative conference was held in Europe in January 1945. The work of organizational revival was climaxed by the holding of a world pre-conference at Brussels in April 1946. This conference, larger and more representative than the Founding Conference of the Fourth International in 1938, adopted a world resolution, issued a manifesto, and elected new representative leading bodies.

Throughout this whole period, when the Fourth International was consolidating its ranks and preparing for the struggle to build mass parties, the Workers Party continued to denigrate its efforts. The Shachtmanites belittled its accomplishments, printed foul slanders concerning its activities, and in general conducted themselves as implacable foes of the Fourth International. In September 1945 Shachtman drew up a "Balance Sheet of the War" and declared:

During the war, the Fourth International simply ceased to exist as any kind of real movement. It is amazing, but a fact, that for five or six years the International had nothing to say (or was prevented from saying anything) in a dozen of the most important problems of world politics. There was no international leadership, and that which arrogated this role to itself was far worse than bad; it was arrogantly bureaucratic, theoretically sterile or psittacotic, politically a thousand times wrong or impotent. In a word: the International failed completely during the war, failed in every respect, failed inexcusably. (New International, September 1945.)

Thus the record stands, beyond dispute, that for five years Shachtman and Co. tried to destroy the Fourth International and to supplant it with a new international of their own. But the record is also unmistakably clear that Shachtman and Co. failed in their efforts.

Shachtman's New Tactical Approach

Beginning with 1946, Shachtman and Co. modified their tactical approach, while retaining their hostile attitude toward the Fourth International, its program, tradition, methods and leadership. Having failed to kill the Fourth International in open combat, they now tried to re-enter it for the purpose of blowing it up from the inside.

In a letter dated January 20, 1946 which the Workers Party addressed to the Executive Committee of the Fourth International, we read: "We have always considered and still consider the Fourth International as our international organization." Where is the proof for this astonishing assertion? Listen: "This has been sufficiently demonstrated by our program, our activities in the course of our existence — the period comprising the crucial years of the second world war." That is the proof!

Aside from the very vital fact that the program of the Workers Party represents a break in *every essential* with the program of the Fourth International, how explain the formation by the Workers Party of the rival "Committee For the Fourth International"? First, the letter informs us, the committee "never actually functioned." Anyhow, "its aim was . . . to restore the unity of all Fourth Internationalists." Who could object to that?

Therefore, on the basis of their proven "loyalty" and unremitting labors for "unity," the "Workers Party wishes to become a formal part of the Fourth International . . . one of the two United States parties," or, failing that, "a sympathizing section."

Naturally, the International Conference would not accede to this request, because it is against the rules of the organization, specifically Statutes II and VI. Statute II states: "The national sections are formed on the platform and in accordance with the organizational structure defined and established by the Founding Conference of the Fourth International." Statute VI states: "In each country there can be but one section of the Fourth International."

As we see, the Fourth International does not believe in an all-inclusive organization any more than does the Socialist Workers Party. But this elementary Leninist tenet, written into the organizational principles both of our party and the Fourth International, is now rejected by Shachtman, who, in common with all Souvarinists, discovers it to be "Stalinist monolithism." Shachtman finds that:

By the rejection of the Workers Party appeal to be recognized as a sympathizing section, the present International leadership, under the stimulations of the SWP, has taken another step toward that detestable monolithism [that is, Stalinism] which the Trotskyist movement arose to combat in the revolutionary movement. (1946 International Resolution of the Workers Party.)

Shachtman is not only driven into irreconcilable conflict with the SWP because of his concept of an all-inclusive party, but is similarly driven into irreconcilable conflict with the Fourth International because of his concept of an all-inclusive International.

No one should minimize the importance of the attitude toward the movement of world Trotskyism because the Socialist Workers Party is no longer affiliated to the Fourth International. While we disaffiliated in 1940 after the passage of the anti-democratic Voorhis Act, and have had no organizational relations with the International since that time, nevertheless, we continue to remain in full political solidarity with its program and aims. The question of adherence to the Fourth International, lacking immediate organizational importance, while the Voorhis Act remains as law, retains, however, all of its decisive importance in the ideological sphere.

Shachtman Tries to Organize a New Split

Having failed to kill the Fourth International in open combat, and having further failed in their attempt to enter for the purpose of blowing up the organization from within, Shachtman and Co. are now bent on forging a new and broader bloc for the purpose of organizing a bigger, better and more crippling split than they were able to engineer in 1940. The WP International Resolution says:

The party leadership is instructed to continue unceasingly its efforts to establish a bloc in the International of all those groups and sections which, without seeing eye to eye on every single political and theoretical question, nevertheless represent one basic political tendency in the International, with the aim of having this tendency prevail in the ranks of the Fourth, before the present prevailing tendency, which is a combination of opportunism, sectarianism and bureaucratism, suc-

ceeds in squandering the great political capital accumulated by the Fourth and reducing it to an impotent sect.

And what is to be the platform of this proposed bloc? Shachtman is very accommodating: As a minimum requirement he is content to bloc with anyone who (1) breaks with the Fourth International on the Russian question, regardless of the exact reason for the break; and who (2) "oppose the political nihilism of the official Fourth International leadership on the national question."

If this has any meaning at all, it is that Shachtman is trying to construct an unprincipled combination in the Fourth International, duplicating exactly his construction efforts of 1939-40: First, gather together a bloc on the

flimsiest and most "all-inclusive" basis, engineer a split, and *then* begin discussing and "hammering out" a program. The methods of this proposed bloc have already been revealed in the *little* split (a very little split, indeed!) engineered in the Socialist Workers Party by Shachtman, Goldman and Co., and in the advice that Goldman, Morrow and Milner gave to the minority of the French party to provoke a split, if necessary, on the question of the French referendum. In other words, they conspired to cripple the French section on the eve of its greatest opportunities.

The six-year record of the Workers Party in relation to the Fourth International is thus established as a record of unrelieved hostility, of enemy maneuvers, of provocations, of splits, of war to the death.

II. Conclusions

When Trotsky founded the International Left Opposition, he laid down three basic criteria for the demarcation of the revolutionary Marxist tendency from all other political tendencies in the labor movement. These criteria were the attitude of every tendency toward (1) the Russian question; (2) the Anglo-Russian Committee; (3) the Chinese revolution.

From the present objective conditions, the character of the epoch and specifically the given stage of the epoch, the recent experiences of the labor movement and the basic tendencies that these experiences have produced, we can lay down the following rock-bottom programmatic criteria operating today to demarcate the revolutionary tendency from all forms and varieties of opportunism:

1. Evaluation of the Soviet Union and the attitude toward its defense. (Rejection of all theories of a new bureaucratic class and all derivatives of this theory.)

And, the corollary of this point: Evaluation of the Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries and the attitude toward these parties. (Rejection of all theories that deny the working class character of these parties.)

2. Evaluation of the character of the epoch, attitude toward the European revolution and the tasks of the vanguard. (Rejection of all varieties of revisionism in the form of "retrogressionist" theories, conclusions or derivatives.)

3. Attitude toward the Bolshevik conception of the party. (Rejection of all Menshevik conceptions of "all-inclusive" parties or Internationals.)

On the basis of our study we are in a position to define precisely and scientifically the character of the Workers Party.

First, we must agree with the Workers Party that they constitute a "distinctive tendency." Their six-year record is proof that they have "hammered out" a distinctive program and concepts of party organization and work. This certainly entitles them to be considered as a special *tendency* in the labor movement.

The Workers Party originated as a petty-bourgeois faction in revolt against the program and tradition of the Fourth International—petty-bourgeois both in its composition and in the class roots of its thinking. The record shows that the Workers Party remains a petty-bourgeois organization, both in composition and in the class roots of its ideology.

In the light of its concrete six-year existence, its demonstrated lack of ability to work and sink roots in the broad labor movement and to recruit workers, and its talking-shop character, the Workers Party must further be defined as a sterile, ingrown literary sect.

The Workers Party originated in the bloc of Shachtman with the avowed anti-Marxist Burnham, which paved the way for splitting the Socialist Workers Party. The Workers Party still justifies this bloc with an avowed anti-Marxist, still justifies the split of 1940, including even the theft of the SWP theoretical organ. (See Shachtman's "Five Years of the Workers Party" and his letter of April 30, 1946 to the SWP.)

As we have demonstrated, in the ensuing six years, the Workers Party has *consistently* broken with the *essentials* of our program, has *consistently* developed an opportunist position on the major political questions, has continued to wage unremitting warfare against our organization, our concepts, our methods, our leadership. On the three basic international criteria which delineate the Marxist current from the opportunist, the Shachtmanites have established themselves as the consistent and front-line champions of opportunism and revisionism.

The *tendency* represented by Shachtman and Co. can thus be established with scientific precision on the basis of this study. The Workers Party is a petty-bourgeois, centrist, ingrown sect, moving ever more swiftly *away from* Marxism *toward* left Social Democracy.

Letter to the Workers Party

April 10, 1946

National Committee
Workers Party, U. S.

Dear Comrades:

As instructed by the PC of the SWP, we are communicating to you herewith a series of motions adopted by the last meeting of the PC with reference to the organization of the discussion of questions in dispute between the SWP and the WP, in connection with the proposal for the fusion of the two organizations.

We believe these motions are self-explanatory, but if any points seem to you unclear, we stand ready to furnish the necessary explanations either in writing or in oral discussion between our respective sub-committees.

Fraternally yours,

Farrell Dobbs
For the Secretariat

SWP-WP Discussion

Motions Adopted by the Political Committee of the SWP,
April 9, 1946.

Motion One: The PC is of the opinion that important differences exist between the SWP and the WP on the following questions, and that a discussion and clarification of these differences are a necessary precondition for a definitive decision by the next party convention on the question of unification of the two organizations.

- (1) Evaluation of the split of 1940 and its causes.
- (2) Marxist principles and method. The necessity of an aggressive, uncompromising struggle against revisionists of Marxism in every field, including the field of philosophy. The impermissibility of blocs with anti-Marxists against Marxists.
- (3) Attitude toward the Fourth International since the split of 1940:
 - (a) The Emergency Conference of 1940.
 - (b) The existence and functioning of the Fourth International since 1940.
 - (c) The resolutions and decisions of the International Conference of April, 1946.
- (4) The Russian question.

- (5) European perspectives and policy. (The resolution of the International Conference of April, 1946—the position of the AK of the IKD: “Three Theses,” “Socialism or Barbarism.”)
- (6) The national and colonial questions. (India-China during the war.)
- (7) Evaluation of the Stalinist parties and workers’ organizations under their leadership and control in capitalist countries, and our tactical attitude toward them.
- (8) Tactics in the American Labor Movement.
 - (a) The labor party question in the United States.
 - (b) Methods of organizing the fight against native fascism in the U.S.
 - (c) Trade union tactics and methods.
- (9) Evaluation of the YPSL and attitude toward it.
- (10) Proletarian military policy.
- (11) Conception of the party.

* * *

Motion Two: The Secretariat is instructed to draw up a summary statement of our position on these disputed questions for publication in our Internal Bulletin.

* * *

Motion Three: The Secretariat is instructed to submit to the National Committee of the Workers Party the above list of questions which in our opinion are in dispute between our party and the WP, as a program for discussion between the two parties, expressing our readiness at the same time to add any other questions which in their opinion should be included; and if they so desire, the Secretariat will meet with a corresponding sub-committee of their organization to elaborate the program of questions for the discussion.

* * *

Motion Four: The Secretariat is instructed to invite the National Committee of the Workers Party to prepare and submit a summary statement of their point of view on the questions in dispute between the two organizations, preferably in a single document of five to ten thousand words. This document, when received, is to be published in our Internal Bulletin for the information of the party members, in the pre-convention discussion on the question of unification.

Letter from the Political Committee of the Workers Party

April 30, 1946

National Committee
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

I have been directed by the Political Committee of our party to send you the following reply to your communication of April 10th, in which you include motions on the SWP-WP discussion adopted by the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party on April 9th.

Motion Four adopted by your Committee instructs your Secretariat to invite our National Committee “to prepare and submit a summary statement of their point of view on the questions in dispute between the two organizations, preferably in a single document of five to ten thousand words.” Motion One adopted by your Committee lists eleven questions on which your Committee “is of the opinion that important differences exist between the SWP and the WP.”

We assume that a summary statement of our position on these eleven questions is intended primarily for the information of the membership of the SWP. The fact that the leading committee of the SWP is of the opinion that there are differences between the two parties on these eleven points presupposes that your party leadership is sufficiently acquainted with our position on the basis of official resolutions and documents of our party and of our articles that have appeared in our press. That being the case, it seems to us impossible to set forth our position on these eleven points, which embrace some of the most important questions of theory and policy in the revolutionary Marxist movement, in the space of five or ten thousand words which have been assigned for this purpose. On some of the points you list, our party has written a considerable body of literature which could not be compressed within so tiny a space without either being entirely inadequate for your purpose or without lending itself to involuntary misconception. In either

case, the purpose of discussion and clarification of the differences which you consider a necessary precondition for a definitive decision by your next party convention on the question of unification, would not be served. Consequently, all we can do in this letter is to indicate our position on your numbered questions and to add references to those documentary materials in which our point of view is adequately set forth.

* * *

1. Our party has no official document in which the split of 1940 and its causes are evaluated. However, the prevailing opinion in our party is that under the concrete circumstances of the time, our position and conduct were, by and large, correct and that of our opponents, the majority of the SWP, incorrect. Having said this, it must be added that we consider it of far greater and more urgent importance to discuss and achieve the unification of the Trotskyist movement in the United States today than to debate the question, however important in itself, of the split in 1940. The latter cannot fruitfully be substituted for the former in the present case, any more than in similar cases in the history of the revolutionary movement. We do not consider a difference of opinion in evaluating the 1940 split to be a barrier to overlooking the split by unification of the two parties today.

2. Our party is as firmly committed to the principles and methods of Marxism as it is opposed to the revision of Marxism in the sense in which the term "revisionism" has been classically employed in the Marxian movement. This is clearly set forth in the "Founding Principles of the Workers Party" adopted by the founding convention of the Workers Party in 1940, a copy of which is appended to this letter. In view of the fact that you make no specific reference to any "bloc with anti-Marxists against Marxists," we can deal with this question only by the equally general statement that, as Marxists, we do not consider blocs with anti-Marxists, such as the Stalinists, against other Marxists to be permissible or in any way consonant with revolutionary Marxism.

We do not understand why special reference is made to the necessity for an aggressive and uncompromising struggle against revisionists of Marxism in the field of philosophy particularly. Insofar as the dialectical materialism of Marxism is reflected in the fundamental program and politics of Marxism, we consider our program and policies to be solidly founded in Marxian theory. However, neither the fundamental program on which we stand nor the "Founding Principles of the Workers Party" adopted by our founding convention deals specifically with Marxist philosophy and it does not make it directly a programmatic question. So far as we know, the same holds true of the fundamental program and declaration of principles of the SWP. We know of no proposal to make the philosophy of Marxism a specific part of the program of the Marxist party.

3. (a) Our attitude toward the Emergency Conference of 1940 was expressed in the communication we addressed to it asking that our representatives be invited for the purpose of stating our point of view on the split in the SWP, and is therefore part of the record of that Conference. The Conference not only failed to invite representatives of our party but even members of our party who were duly elected as members of the Executive Committee of the Fourth International at the international founding conference in 1938. Neither our party nor the members of the Executive Committee referred to were afforded the opportunity to participate in the preparations of this conference or in its deliberations. Consequently, we refused to recognize either the validity or the correctness of the decisions adopted by this conference on the split in the SWP. With regard to the political decisions taken by the conference, as set forth in the manifesto on the imperialist war adopted by it, we

were and remain in accord with it insofar as it corresponds to the point of view of our party.

(b) While recognizing the unprecedented difficulties which faced an international like ours in the performance of its tasks since 1940, that is, during the war, we nevertheless believe that it failed, both organizationally and politically, to discharge the duties devolving upon it. The final dissolution of the International Secretariat established at the Emergency Conference of 1940 was only one of the proofs of this. Here again, there is no official document of our party on the subject and we know of none by the SWP. Our views, generally speaking, have been set forth unofficially in recent articles in our theoretical press.

(c) The resolutions and decisions of the International Conference of 1946 which we consider of first importance, namely, the resolutions on the world situation and the resolution on the IKD, have been dealt with in corresponding documents of our party. Our position on the world situation was set forth first in our resolution on the national and colonial question in Europe and Asia, adopted at our party convention in February, 1944. Our position on the world situation today and the tasks of the revolutionary Marxists is contained in a draft resolution adopted by our National Committee for submission to our coming national convention. It also contains the necessary references to the decision of the International Conference on the IKD. We are appending both of these documents to this letter. Our position on the decision taken by the International Secretariat on the question of unity in the United States is contained in the letters sent by our party to the International Conference before it adopted its decision. This document too is appended. The decisions of the Conference have in no way altered the repeatedly stated position of our party in favor of unity with the SWP.

4. We do not consider Russia a workers' state in any sense whatsoever. We consider it a reactionary social order which we characterize as bureaucratic-collectivism. We are against the defense of the Stalinist state. More than this it is impossible to set forth in a few words. We therefore refer you to such well elaborated and detailed presentations of our viewpoint as are contained in the resolution on the Russian question adopted at our 1941 convention and to that section of our resolution on the international situation, drafted by the National Committee for our coming convention, which deals with the Russian question and brings our position up to date in the light of the recent social and political developments. Both of these resolutions are appended.

5. For our position on European perspectives and policy, we refer you again to our draft resolution on the international situation which is appended, as well as to our resolution on the national question in Europe adopted by our 1944 convention. Insofar as our party has taken an official position on the resolution of the International Conference of 1946 and on the views of the IKD they are contained in these two resolutions. Our National Committee and many of the branches of the party have held several discussions of the viewpoint of our German comrades as set forth in the "Three Theses" and in "Socialism or Capitalist Barbarism." A continuation of this discussion is even now going on in the pages of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. Our party has not, however, adopted an official position with respect to either of these two documents as such, except insofar as the political line of the document "Socialism or Capitalist Barbarism" is dealt with in the introduction to the document written by the Editorial Board of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL and approved by our Political Committee as a statement of its views. This introduction is appended for the information of your members. We do not know of any

document which gives the official analysis and position of the SWP on the theoretical and political views of our German comrades.

6. Our position on the national and colonial questions is the traditional position of Lenin. We are for the support of all nationally oppressed countries, colonial and semi-colonial countries in particular, in the struggle against imperialists. At the same time we are opposed to supporting any country which is an integral part of any imperialist camp which is at war with another imperialist camp, again in accordance with the traditional position of Lenin and Trotsky. Our position on India and China in the second world war is set forth, in conformity with these fundamental principles, in the resolution on this question adopted by our convention in 1944. It is appended herewith.

7. The National Committee resolution on the international situation contains a section which gives its analysis of the character and role of the Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries and our attitude toward them. It is appended herewith. This is not yet the official position of our party but it has been submitted for adoption by our national convention.

8. (a) Our party is in favor of and conducts a continuous agitation for the formation of an independent labor party in this country, based on the trade unions. Our detailed position on this question is contained in the resolution on the labor party adopted by our national convention in 1944. This is appended herewith.

(b) As is traditional in our movement, we favor the mobilization of the widest sections of the organized working class in the united front struggle against fascism. The failure at any given moment to achieve such a mobilization of the working class and its mass organizations does not exclude the utilization by the revolutionary vanguard of every possibility of demonstrating against fascists and fascist demonstrations. The failure of the SWP to accept the invitation of the WP to organize joint demonstrations against fascists like G. L. K. Smith at a time when the mobilization of wide masses against Smith was a practical impossibility, reveals in our opinion either political short-sightedness or an inadequate understanding of our tasks in the struggle against fascism, or both. Our views on this question are more amply developed in a pamphlet on the subject written by a member of our National Committee, Comrade Hal Draper, and approved by the Political Committee.

(c) It is impossible to go into any detail in reply to so general a question as "trade union tactics and methods," except to refer you to the resolution on the trade union question adopted by our last convention and appended herewith. As can easily be seen, this resolution conforms both to the traditional position of the revolutionary Marxists and to the objective situation in the American union movement.

9. Our evaluation of the YPSL differs in no respect from our evaluation of any similar half-reformist half-centrist movement. A sympathetic attitude, especially to those Socialist youth who are striving, however hesitantly or confusedly, toward a revolutionary Marxist position, is clearly indicated. That is what we sought to express in the open letter of our party to the Detroit convention of the YPSL in 1945, a copy of which is appended.

10. Our position on military policy is represented by our uncompromising opposition to imperialist wars and our support of all progressive wars, particularly those of the working class against the bourgeoisie and of nationally oppressed peoples against their imperialist oppressors. We are opposed to capitalist militarism in all its forms, including capitalist conscription. Unlike the pacifists, with whom we have nothing in common, we are for the promotion of workers' defense guards and a workers' militia, as set forth in the program of the Fourth International. While our party has no official document on

the position taken by the SWP on conscription, it is our view, as set forth in polemical articles in our press, that this position was wrong and that many of the arguments and much of the propaganda made for it in your press was both wrong and dangerous. An unofficial polemical article written by Max Shachtman in the January, 1941, issue of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL is available in the bound volume for that year.

11. Our conception of the nature and purpose, the structure and principles of the revolutionary party is familiar to all Marxists and is restated by us in the "Founding Principles of the Workers Party" and in our communications to you on the question of the unity of the WP and the SWP.

* * *

It goes without saying that we welcome any discussion between the WP and the SWP on all questions in dispute. We reiterate our point of view that a decision on unity can be adopted by the SWP, as it has already been adopted by our party, on the basis of the more than ample knowledge which both parties have of each other's political positions. Not only the leadership but also the membership of the WP is sufficiently acquainted with the differences between the two organizations and with the positions taken on the points in dispute by both organizations to endorse the proposal for unification. If it is held that the membership of the SWP is unacquainted with the nature of these differences, the documents we have submitted should suffice not only to inform your membership but to convince them that comrades holding divergent views on these questions can co-exist in a democratic revolutionary Marxist party. However, inasmuch as it cannot be maintained that the leadership of the SWP is unacquainted with the position of the Workers Party on the questions in dispute, it seems to us that it is its obligation, as a party leadership, to take a position on the question of unity and to recommend it to the membership.

Inasmuch as our party considers itself sufficiently acquainted with the political views of the SWP to adopt a position in favor of unification, which it has done, we find no necessity to add any other questions to those you have already listed. If you, for your part, find it necessary or advisable to submit a statement of any length on your position on the questions in dispute and on the question of unity, we are prepared, it goes without saying, to acquaint our membership with it immediately. If you find it necessary to ask us any specific questions on specific aspects of our theoretical or political positions which are not answered by the documents appended to this letter, we are ready to comply with your request for further information.

As for the general matter of clarification of the differences in the ranks of the organization, it is our view that the best and most fruitful way to proceed, if you consider a discussion an indispensable preliminary to a decision on the question of unity, is by means of a discussion bulletin jointly edited and published by the two parties and by joint meetings of the membership of the two parties. We make this proposal for a joint bulletin and joint membership discussion meetings precisely as one of the steps that would facilitate and accelerate the unification of the two parties into one and as the best means for a planned and regulated discussion of systematically counterposed views.

It is important, in conclusion, to emphasize that none of the views or proposals set down above are viewed by us as contradicting or substituting for the views and proposals on unification set forth by our party in its communications sent to you and to the International Executive Committee.

Fraternally yours,

Max Shachtman, National Secretary
For the Political Committee