

# INTERNAL BULLETIN

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## AN OPEN LETTER TO COMRADE HANSEN

(From a Group of Los Angeles Comrades)

Dear Comrade Hansen:

This letter is prompted by your article, "What the New York Discussion Has Revealed." It seems to us that your article represents a serious departure from the teachings of Comrade Trotsky, and that your method is an undialectical one. We believe that you present an empirical, subjective, and idealistic analysis of Stalinism, which neither explains Stalinism nor takes a correct attitude toward it.

You begin your analysis by "synthesizing a structure," that is, you put together an estimation of Stalinism from fragments of discussions and conversations, and attribute this position to the New York comrades led by Comrade Bartell.

Comrade Frankel was quick to repudiate this "synthesized structure." Nevertheless you polemicize against it. We do not object to your synthesizing a position on Stalinism. That is sometimes necessary in opening a politically necessary discussion.

But you didn't have to oppose your ideas to a synthetic position.

For three years the party has had before it, on black and white, the by no means synthetic and by no means repudiated position of Comrade Dennis Vern.

Comrade Vern realized at the beginning of the buffer zone discussion that it was the nature of Stalinism that was actually involved. Here are a few excerpts from his article of July, 1950. Opposing the position that all the buffer states were bourgeois states, Comrade Vern wrote: "It is obviously not the economy of the USSR but the political moves of the bureaucracy which would dictate the creation of capitalist states in the buffer zone. If the bureaucracy has in fact emancipated itself so completely from its economic base, then we should, as a matter of simple principle, raise for reevaluation the nature of the USSR and its bureaucracy." "Stalin only proposes; it is the economy that disposes." ". . . the state power in the USSR has a class character, is a workers state, and serves the historical interests of the proletariat. . ." "This (Soviet) bureaucracy, we venture to observe, has a class character. So long as it is not transformed into a new ruling class in the USSR, so long as it is based on the workers' (collectivized) economy of the USSR, so long does this rapacious and revolting bureaucracy have a working-class character."

The name of this article is "The Distinction Between State and Society," and was published in the Discussion Bulletin for October 1950.

In a second long document of February, 1951, Comrade Vern repeated these conceptions: ". . . the Soviet bureaucracy insofar as it is identified with the Soviet state power, and that's pretty far, is one of the remains of the October revolution." "From the subjective point of view the bureaucracy long ago broke with the October revolution if, indeed it could ever be said to have embraced October at all." (From an objective point of view) "the bureaucracy is, to most intents and purposes, the Soviet state power. . . The bureaucracy that staffs this apparatus must have, objectively considered, a work-

ing-class character. Between the present apparatus and the Soviet state in 1917 there is a long chain of accumulating quantitative changes. But the qualitative change has not been produced."

To substantiate this fact Comrade Vern quotes Trotsky: ". . . in the final analysis through the interests of the Bureaucracy, in a very distorted form, the interests of the workers state are reflected." (In Defense of Marxism, Page 127.)

This was printed in the Discussion Bulletin of May, 1951.

On August 19, 1951, Comrades Patrick, Ryan, Vern and London presented a resolution on the class character of the buffer states. This resolution was more than that, however; it was an opposition to the line of the Third World Congress in many respects.

But this resolution, too, devoted over a third of its space to Stalinism and the Soviet bureaucracy. Here are a few excerpts: "Stalinism could squander its meaning as a revolutionary international factor and yet retain a part of its progressive meaning as the gate-keeper of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution." "Between Lenin and Stalin there is indeed an ideological counter-revolution and we have not ignored it. But a revolution is not alone or primarily ideological. A victorious revolution is not only a program and a banner, not only political institutions, but also a system of social relations. To betray it is not enough; you have to overthrow it. The new political institutions set up by the bureaucracy in the final analysis defend the social property and thereby the social relations and the revolution. In this fact the class character of the bureaucracy is clearly revealed."

You must admit, Comrade Hansen, that the comrades of the so-called "Vern" tendency were well aware long ago that Stalinism was a question before the party. They took up the question and produced an answer. They have not repudiated what they have written, and they are not anxious to dodge a discussion.

Instead of dealing with this explicit position you chose instead to "synthesize a structure" against which to polemicize.

Why was this necessary?

Comrade Vern answers that you attack a straw man because it is a straw man, unable to defend itself; because you are unable to deal with his position without revealing how "completely" you have departed from Trotskyism's traditional analysis of Stalinism; that, unable to refute his position, you are nevertheless unable to accept it without breaking with the line of the Third World Congress, and the majority of the NC.

Of course, that is simply Vern's own "synthesized structure" as to your motivations.

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A revelation of your method is your presentation in writing of the buffer zone discussion of what you call Comrade Cannon's political question; Comrade Cannon, you write, "acknowledged that these countries could be assimilated into the Soviet Union, but that Stalin-

ism could convert them into workers states -- isn't that a concession to Stalinism?"

You say that you reflected a long time over this question. Why? How could the conclusion that Stalinism had created workers states be a "concession" to Stalinism? Obviously, only if one already held the point of view that Stalinism is unable to create workers states, the point of view that declares Stalinism to be "completely reactionary," "counter-revolutionary to the core" or "through and through."

Suppose you had held, instead, the opinion that Stalinism was completely progressive, revolutionary through and through? Obviously no "concession" to Stalinism could even be thought of. Or if you had held that Stalinism is both progressive and reactionary, depending upon concrete circumstances? No "concession" is involved.

Only from the point of view that Stalinism is "completely" reactionary, counter-revolutionary "through and through" and "to the core" is any concession to Stalinism involved in the designation of the buffer states as workers states.

The discussion, then, was conducted around a "formula" -- Stalinism equals counter-revolution through and through. For Comrade Cannon and his supporters the formula predetermined the conclusion (destroyed as states). This is formalism. But you also, Comrade Hansen, are shown to be formalistic. Suppose Comrade Cannon had convinced you that your designation of the buffer states as workers states really did involve a "concession" to Stalinism -- would you still be calling the buffer countries bourgeois states?

E.R. Frank's answer to this question (not, however, to other questions) was a thousand times better. Comrade Frank said that reality has to be recognized no matter where it leads. That is correct. But the recognition of reality leads to formulas, that is, to generalizations. The error lay not in the fact that comrades approached the buffer zone reality with ready-made formulas; but that they subordinated the objective analysis to the formula.

Just this example is sufficient to reveal the formalistic, that is, the undialectical approach which many comrades display toward history and toward Stalinism.

When you begin however to analyze Stalinism then obviously the formula: "Stalinism equals counter-revolution through and through" must be temporarily, at least, set aside. If we agree in advance that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary through and through, we don't need an analysis. An objective analysis of Stalinism, a revelation of its nature, must obviously not begin with an assumption as to its nature. Considering the reality of Stalinism, we should seek to obtain through objective analysis a formula or formulas expressing its nature. That is the purpose of an actually objective analysis.

In this you could, of course, have simply turned back to the analysis of Comrade Trotsky. You could have supplied us with quotations from Trotsky's writings in which he gives in his own words the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism and the necessary "formulas" as to its nature and role. But you didn't do that.

We don't mean to imply that you are required to quote Trotsky. Not at all. But we do mean to point out that, though you usually quote lengthily from Trotsky's works, you decided in this case to make the analysis in your own words. We think your choice is not accidental: having declared in the early pages of your document that "counter-revolutionary through and through" is "the right name" for Stalinism, you undoubtedly did seek some explicit support from Trotsky's writings.

But if you did seek, you certainly did not find! Nowhere, in all the Old Man's very extensive writings on Stalinism, does he call Stalinism counter-revolutionary through and through, to the core, or completely. Nowhere! If this is Stalinism's right name (as you assert) then why did the Old Man call it by a wrong name? Isn't it incumbent on you, Comrade Hansen, to explain to the party how and why Trotsky failed to make a Trotskyist analysis?

Or have things changed since then? If they have, then a Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism is outmoded. An analysis is now necessary which takes account of these changes -- a "Hansenist" analysis, perhaps.

But have they changed? You don't assert that. But if things have not changed (in this particular) then how do you explain that you cannot find any support in Trotsky for your concept of Stalinism? We anxiously await an answer to this question.

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Let us turn now to your "objective analysis," the pages of your article included under the heading -- "The Real Objective Frame."

You write: "The base of Stalinism consists of a peasant and labor aristocracy on which rests an enormous bureaucratic apparatus. This is topped by the Bonapartist oligarchy. The social base of Stalinism is the petty-bourgeois formation which has arisen (!) in the Soviet Union."

This is substantially correct. Although the "petty bourgeois" should not be considered an all-embracing adjective.

Then you point out the size of this formation, and the fact that it enjoys considerable privileges. You follow this with the description of the bureaucracy as being composed of "first and second generation White Guards, Mensheviks, former capitalists, degenerated Bolsheviks, and fascist types, and a small passive minority that reflects the social interests of the workers."

Immediately following this description are these lines: "This counter-revolutionary grouping governs through the Bonapartist dictatorship of Stalin. By Bonapartist in this case we mean a counter-revolutionary regime resting on property forms that are the product of revolutionary conquest. While defending these, it does so through political forms that are the antithesis of those seen during the rise of the revolution."

Just a moment, Comrade Hansen! You promised an objective analysis. In pursuit of this you describe the social base of Stalinism --

a peasant and labor aristocracy, the state bureaucracy, and the oligarchy. You stated that this formation is sizeable, privileged, and composed of people with dishonorable pasts and genealogies. Then you write: "This counter-revolutionary grouping. . ."

How did you "objectively" obtain that adjective?

What makes this grouping counter-revolutionary -- not necessarily to the core, but simply counter-revolutionary? Is it its size? You don't really know what size the bureaucracy of a workers state ought to be, now do you, Comrade Hansen? Generally speaking, it would seem to us that the larger the bureaucracy the better. You will have a hard time convincing us that the size of the ruling caste is the factor that makes it counter-revolutionary. But if that isn't what makes it counter-revolutionary, why did you introduce it in this connection?

Is it your conception that the counter-revolutionary nature of this grouping derives from its composition of first and second generation White Guards, Mensheviks, etc.? What, by the way, is a second-generation White Guard, a second-generation Menshevik? Are political ideas carried in the genes and chromosomes? We find it hard to understand why a second-generation White Guard or Menshevik, or even a former capitalist, couldn't make a perfectly non-counter-revolutionary bureaucrat of a workers state. It is obviously not the composition of the bureaucracy which makes it counter-revolutionary. We wonder why you introduce it at this point.

Is it the privileges of the bureaucracy that make it counter-revolutionary? In a certain sense this is correct. But in "The Revolution Betrayed" Trotsky points out: "A socialist state even in America could not immediately provide everyone with as much as he needs, and would therefore be compelled to spur everyone to produce as much as possible. The duty of stimulator in these circumstances falls naturally to the state which in its turn cannot but resort, with various changes and mitigations, to the method of labor payment worked out by capitalism. . . Bourgeois law is inevitable in the first phase of Communist society. . . Insofar as the state which assumes the task of socialist transformation is compelled to defend inequality -- that is, the material privileges of a minority -- by methods of compulsion, insofar does it also remain a bourgeois state, even though without a bourgeoisie. . . The state assumes directly and from the very beginning a dual character: socialistic, insofar as it defends social property in the means of production; bourgeois, insofar as the distribution of life's goods is carried on with a capitalistic measure of value. . . We have thus taken the first step toward understanding the fundamental contradiction between Bolshevik program and Soviet reality. If the State does not die away but becomes more and more despotic, if the plenipotentiaries of the working class become bureaucratized, and the bureaucracy rises above the new society, this is not for some secondary reasons like the psychological relics of the past (Listen, Comrade Hansen!) but is a result of the iron necessity to give birth to and support a privileged minority as long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality." (Revolution Betrayed, Pages 53-55).

To complete the picture let us add that on Page 143 of the same work Trotsky observed: "The distribution of this earth's goods in

the Soviet Union, we do not doubt, is incomparably more democratic than it was in Czarist Russia, and even than it is in the most democratic countries of the west."

This is what you have done, Comrade Hansen: from "The Revolution Betrayed" you took some figures as to the size of the Soviet ruling caste; you presented estimates as to the extent of its privileges; and gave a description of the various types that compose the bureaucracy.

Of Trotsky's explanation of this ruling caste, however, you said not one word, and then you suddenly introduced the phrase, "this counter-revolutionary grouping. . ." But neither the size, the privileges, nor the composition of the caste are sufficient, separately or in combination, to indicate that the caste is counter-revolutionary.

You clearly approached the so-called "objective" analysis of Stalinism with a preconceived formula -- "Stalinism equals counter-revolution." The steps in your analysis -- the size, privileges, and composition of the caste -- do not really constitute an analysis; they are introduced merely for the purpose of horrifying the comrades into an easy and strictly subjective acceptance of the phrases "counter-revolutionary grouping" and "counter-revolutionary regime."

This is neither an objective nor a dialectical analysis.

From what you have written, moreover, it is by no means evident that this caste and bureaucracy are counter-revolutionary at all, much less "through and through." Nor is this demonstrated in what follows: "By Bonapartist in this sense we mean a counter-revolutionary regime resting on property forms that are the product of revolutionary conquest. While defending these, it does so through political forms that are the antithesis of those seen during the rise of the revolution."

But here the question obviously is whether or not these political forms really are the antithesis of those seen during the rise of the revolution. You assert it, but you make no attempt to demonstrate it.

The decisive political forms seen during the rise of the revolution were the Bolshevik Party and the Soviets. The political forms today are all totalitarianized. Are Stalin's political forms the antithesis, the direct opposite, of the Bolshevik Party and the 1917 Soviets? Yes they are -- from the point of view of democracy, from the point of view of Marxism, from the point of view of world revolution.

But these and other similar viewpoints by no means exhaust the matter. You yourself admit that Stalin's political forms defend the new property relations. Lenin's political forms achieved and defended these same property relations. From that point of view the Stalinist political forms of today are not the direct opposite, the antithesis, of those of 1917.

You are aware of this. You are aware of the hot water your formalism gets you into. Four lines later you assert: "Viewed

politically (the caste) is counter-revolutionary to the core." And viewed economically? Is Stalinism then not "counter-revolutionary to the core"? But how can the bureaucracy be "viewed politically" without taking into account the property forms it guards and defends? To do this you have to leave the solid ground of materialism. Here again we find it significant that you entirely disregard the analysis of Comrade Trotsky.

Trotsky took up the question of political forms and property relations in an entirely dialectical and objective analysis entitled, "Not A Workers and Not A Bourgeois State?" In a section headed "Political Forms and Social Content" Trotsky writes: ". . . in its dependence on objective and subjective conditions the rule of the proletariat is able to express itself in a number of governmental forms. . . either through an open struggle of different parties within the Soviets, or through the monopoly of one party, or even through the factional concentration of power in the hands of a single person. Of course, personal dictatorship is a symptom of the greatest danger to the regime. But at the same time it is, under certain conditions, the only means by which to save that regime. The class nature of the state is, consequently, determined not by its political forms but by its social content, i.e., by the character of the forms of property and productive relations which the given state guards and defends." (Our emphasis.)

Again in the same article: "Of course, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not only 'predominantly' but wholly and fully a political category. However this politics is only concentrated economics." (Reprinted in July-August 1951 Fourth International.)

With your logical method, you declare that "viewed politically" the political forms that guard revolutionary property relations are "counter-revolutionary to the core," "through and through," and "completely." But Trotsky declares that politics is only concentrated economics, that economics constitutes the core of politics.

Perhaps you will assume an air of injured innocence and point to a concession you have made to a materialist approach. On Page 14 of your article you state: "The limits (of Stalin's politics) are set by the new social relations." Some comrades, seeing this, may wonder what the argument is about. Will the differences turn out to be purely verbal? If Stalin's counter-revolutionary politics are limited by the new social relations, then these politics are less than completely counter-revolutionary. "Through and through" -- but limited?

No, we believe the differences are real; it is the concession that is purely verbal. For words do have a meaning. Especially when you insist so strongly on a formulation which is identical with that used by those who are yielding to the anti-Soviet pressure of bourgeois public opinion.

Logically considered, and viewing only what you wrote in your article, there is only one conception that would justify your formula that Stalinism equals counter-revolution through and through. That is the conception that collectivized property forms are, or can be, counter-revolutionary. (What the Johnsonites did say.) We know, of course, that this is not your conception. But you have produced no



other proof of the counter-revolutionary nature of the bureaucracy. The size of the bureaucracy doesn't make it counter-revolutionary. Neither do its privileges; nor is it the composition of the bureaucracy ("psychological relics of the past," etc. -- L. Trotsky) which makes it counter-revolutionary. And Trotsky established further that political forms in themselves are not necessarily counter-revolutionary.

You present nothing in your article to explain why the bureaucracy is counter-revolutionary at all, much less to the core, through and through, or completely. All you have to buttress your very sweeping conclusion is an empirical description, occupying numerous pages, in which various "bad" effects of the Kremlin's politics are described. Left out of these pages is any description of the various "good" effects that have also issued from the bureaucracy's politics. Are you sure, Comrade Hansen, that the Soviet bureaucracy really is counter-revolutionary at all? If you "know" that it is, without knowing why, where is your science? Marxism? Dialectics?

Not certainly in your conclusion. "Let me summarize," you write, "the Kremlin's politics derive from the enormous caste of millions upon millions of privileged bureaucrats on which it rests and are in strict accord with the interests of that caste as a social formation. It is the parasitic caste that determines the objective course of Stalinism in relation both to world capitalism and the international working class. Marxist method, analyzing the social base of Stalinism, yields this as its first and main result."

But this is not an analysis; it is only a scratch at the surface. If it is the caste (of millions upon millions -- go ahead, horrify us!) which determines the politics of the Kremlin, the question obviously arises -- what determines the interests of the caste? Free will? Sun spots? In your entire document of 29 pages you do not take up this matter. And that is not accidental.

Here is what Comrade Trotsky wrote about this by no means unimportant question: "Politics is concentrated economics. This proposition one should think applies to the Kremlin too. Or, in exception to the general law, is the policy of the Moscow government not 'concentrated economics' but a manifestation of the bureaucracy's free will? Our attempt to reduce the politics of the Kremlin to nationalized economy, refracted through the interests of the bureaucracy, provokes frantic resistance from Shachtman. (Our emphasis.) He takes his guidance in relation to the USSR not from the conscious generalization of economics but from 'observing the realities of living events'; i.e., from the rule of thumb, improvisations, sympathies and antipathies." (This is to be found on Page 124 of "In Defense of Marxism.")

Your article, Comrade Hansen, is an equally frantic resistance to Trotsky's analysis. And it has its objective social function.

World War III is in preparation. Our "very own" country, through its bourgeois state, is going to assail the Soviet Union. From Wall Street's point of view all of Stalin's dirty work is not counter-revolution but counter-reform. What Wall Street needs is not bureaucratic political forms that defend state-owned property, but bureaucratic (or even democratic) political forms that defend private property.

Wall Street intends the destruction of Stalin's political forms in order to effect capitalist restoration. The social content does not and cannot exist without political form. The social content, private property, refracted through the Eisenhower and Churchill bureaucracies, is going to assail the social content, nationalized property, refracted through the Soviet bureaucracy; and in that counter-position even Stalin's political forms are not counter-revolutionary "to the core," "through and through," or "completely."

In this counter-position Stalin's political forms are not counter-revolutionary; they are revolutionary.

Your frantic resistance to Trotsky's analysis is nothing more nor less than a sectarian abstention from the revolution simply because, in this case, the revolution does not please you.

\* \* \*

The Soviet bureaucracy is counter-revolutionary. Your inability to establish this objectively results not only in a concession to the class enemy but in an equally important service to Stalinism. On the basis of your own analysis there is nothing to prevent the conclusion: since Stalin's political forms defend, as you yourself admit, the new property relations, then in the final analysis, leaving aside the size of the bureaucracy, recognizing that a privileged minority is in Trotsky's words an iron necessity in a backward country, and disregarding, with Trotsky, the "psychological relics of the past, etc." then, since the social content (the new property forms) is more important than the political form, shouldn't we seek reconciliation with Stalinism? Shouldn't we, to put it bluntly, regard Stalinism as revolutionary "to the core," "through and through," and "completely"?

There is nothing in your article, Comrade Hansen, which would prevent an unhorrorified comrade from projecting a pro-Stalinist orientation, such as the IEC has in actual fact projected in China.

Stalinism (the political line of the Kremlin) is neither counter-revolutionary nor revolutionary to the core, through and through, nor completely. It is both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary, both progressive and reactionary, both proletarian and bourgeois.

What is Stalinism?

"This could be answered easily enough," you write, "with a definition. However, let us take the more difficult course of determining what it is through objective analysis."

Your "objective" analysis, however, failed to show us what Stalinism is. And you never gave us a definition.

In his article, "Notes on Our Discussion," Comrade E.R. Frank was likewise unable to present a definition of Stalinism and took refuge as do you, in a definition by description.

And yet Stalinism is not hard to define: it is, as an ideology, the familiar ideology of reformism and centrism; it is, to be concrete, petty-bourgeois socialism, non-Marxian socialism, unscientific socialism, utopian socialism. But the petty-bourgeois socialism of

Stalinism is not embedded as was Blum's, Attlee's or Kautsky's movements, in the private property of capitalism. The petty-bourgeois socialism of the Soviet bureaucracy develops on the basis of productive forces socialized by a great revolution. In order to defend the privileged peasant and labor aristocracy the traditional leaders of petty-bourgeois socialism in capitalist countries were forced to defend private property and the bourgeois state. In order to defend the privileged labor and peasant aristocracy in Russia, the Soviet bureaucracy is forced to defend the state-owned property and the workers state.

Stalinism, Comrades Hansen and Frank, is the petty-bourgeois socialism of a workers state. There is nothing mysterious or supernatural about it.

Petty-bourgeois socialism has always rested upon a labor and peasant aristocracy. It has never hesitated to use any and all methods in defense of the privileges of this aristocracy. The murders of Lenin, Liebknecht, and Luxemburg were the work of petty-bourgeois socialism (and Trotsky's murder too). It has always been conciliatory and collaborationist toward the bourgeoisie, and treacherous and malevolent toward Bolshevism. Stalin only expresses this line with state power.

But Stalin's line is not expressed by a bourgeois state power, as it was in Germany under Ebert, France under Blum, and England under Attlee; but by a workers state. The political line is basically the same, yet the objective consequences are sometimes basically different.

The inability of both factions in the leadership to understand Stalinism is responsible for the concept that the Yugoslav and Chinese CP's are not Stalinist parties. Why aren't they? Because, we are told, they do not simply carry out the policy of the Kremlin. But whose policies do they carry out? Those of the Tito and Mao bureaucracies. Whether a petty-bourgeois socialist line is controlled from Moscow, Peiping, Belgrade, or London, important in some respects, is nevertheless not a basic difference.

Petty-bourgeois socialism is non-Marxist socialism. In the final analysis it is a bourgeois ideology. But only in the final analysis. And, to consider the thing realistically, our own political line deals with petty-bourgeois socialism not only in the final analysis but in hundreds of intermediate connections.

What your approach to Stalinism lacks is the dialectic. Read what Trotsky wrote: "The fundamental flaw of vulgar thought lies in the fact that it wishes to content itself with motionless imprints of a reality that consists of eternal motion. Dialectical thinking gives to concepts, by means of closer approximations, corrections, concretizations a richness of content and flexibility; I would even say a succulence, which to a certain extent brings them close to living phenomena. Not capitalism in general, but a given capitalism at a given stage of development. Not a workers state in general, but a given workers state in a backward country in an imperialist encirclement, etc."

Not a political line in general, Comrade Hansen, but a given political line at a given stage of development. Not a motionless imprint -- "Stalinism equals counter-revolution through and through" -- but a closer approximation, a concretization: Stalinism in what circumstances, contrasted to what?

Stalinism contrasted to Kerenskyism, Czarism, Hitlerism, or Zionism, is not counter-revolutionary through and through. In what particular? Contrastd to the political methods of fascism, Stalinism is not different; contrastd to the social content of fascism, they are separated by a class line and a barricade.

The party of Lenin and Trotsky was the greatest party that history has yet produced. It acted, consciously, in accord with the struggle of the Russian workers and peasants, led them at the highest point of the class struggle in revolution against the old state and later against the old property forms. If we take the party of Lenin and Trotsky, their political line, the democratic Soviets, as our standard, then contrastd to these the methods, party and political institutions of Stalinism are counter-revolutionary. The degeneration of the Soviet state, represented in no way other than through the destruction of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviets, will inevitably, if the proletarian revolution does not intervene, produce the overthrow of the workers state, the actual counter-revolution. In contrast to Marxism, which would maintain and strengthen the new social relations, through the international revolution, the line of Stalinism is counter-revolutionary.

But in contrast to the line of imperialism, seeking the destruction of the planned economy, the line of Stalinism, in refusing, arms in hand, to agree to that destruction, is not counter-revolutionary.

Resistance to the revolution is counter-revolution. Resistance to counter-revolution, in behalf of socialized property even though that resistance is limited and inadequate, has the content of revolution.

On Page 9 of your article you ask Bartell: "Don't (Bartell's questions) imply that a force that can 'lead revolutions' is not counter-revolutionary?" They certainly do imply that. What Comrade Bartell will reply we don't know, but the question is a good one. Do you yourself mean to imply that a force that can lead revolutions is counter-revolutionary? From some place you got a formula -- "Stalinism equals counter-revolution" -- and you slap this formula all over the place, indiscriminately and "completely."

But the formula was derived from another context, the counter-position of Stalinism to Bolshevism. Turned by you into a "motionless imprint of reality," it is applied in an entirely different "concretization" -- in the counter-position of Stalinism to the buffer zone bourgeoisie, Hitlerism, and Chiang Kai-shek. With this method you naturally come up with the nonsensical revelation that a force that can lead revolutions is a counter-revolutionary force. An undifferentiated universe in the "total" style of Johnson-Forrest is very easy to construct with such formalism.

"Isn't the leadership the subjective factor in a revolution? Isn't Stalinism therefore subjectively revolutionary?" You are not

satisfied to make the error once; you've got to repeat it. Certainly the leadership is the subjective factor in a revolution. So? Do you, however, agree with Trotsky that "the objective rises over the subjective." With your formula you now define the Stalinists as counter-revolutionists objectively considered. Because Stalinism equals counter-revolution when counterposed to the Left Opposition, you can't use the formula in an absolute sense and thereby equate the Stalinists with the bourgeois lords of finance capital.

To take a formula, valid in one or more contexts, and use it indiscriminately in all connections, collisions, and relations, is not the work of science (Marxism), but of religion. There are no immutable laws or formulas. If you can understand this you will be taking your first inescapable step in actually understanding Stalinism and much else beside.

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One last question. In your article it appears to us that you are not really fully in accord with the formula: Stalinism equals counter-revolution through and through. You use it sparingly. And yet it is this "through and through" which is the point actually in dispute. Very few members of our party deny that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary (though the fact that some do is very significant). What a great many of us do deny is that it is counter-revolutionary "through and through," "to the core," and "completely."

Your article includes a great deal of material that illustrates that Stalinism is indeed counter-revolutionary. From that point of view it was interesting, if not exactly new. But in not more than a dozen lines you assert that "through and through" concept.

That is "new." When you write again, and we trust that you will not simply ignore our contribution to the discussion, will you take up this concept? You don't have to convince us that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary. We know that. Show us, please, how and why it is counter-revolutionary to the core, completely, and through and through.

It is a task, we predict, you will find impossible to carry out.

With comradely greetings,

Joseph Ironsmith  
Marguerite Gallagher  
Sylvia Ryan  
Charles Fleming  
Esther Patrick  
Sam Ryan  
Kenneth Earle  
Leo Kay  
Evelyn Freidman  
Bernie Freidman

Los Angeles, California  
March 25, 1953

THE "PROOF" OF OUR "STALINOPHOBIA"

By Art Preis

(The following are my remarks, as delivered, in the discussion from the floor during the debate between Comrades Joseph Hansen and Harry Frankel, in New York, Sunday, March 29, 1953.)

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Comrade Frankel reached a peak of impassioned utterance with his battle-cry, "Down with caution!" -- or at least with "that kind" of caution which he claimed revealed itself in the party leaders' reactions to the revolutionary events in Yugoslavia, China and, above all, Korea.

The party leadership not only has a false position on Stalinism now. Long ago we were so blinded by Stalinophobia, so incapable of distinguishing between the malignant and benign phases of the Stalinist cancer, that we floundered helplessly before the new events, he implied.

He spoke with especial indignation and scorn of what he called the leaderships' "third camp" position on the Korean war. He left the impression that the party leaders put forward a "plague on both your houses" position, that we violently resisted taking a correct position and altogether conducted ourselves in a shameful manner.

This constituted the sole concrete "proof" of his contention about the leadership's "false" line on Stalinism.

It is true that on the same night that Truman announced his intervention in Korea, June 27, 1950, six PC members\* -- Stein, Breit-

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\*Two of these six "Stalinophobes," Comrades Bartell and Hansen, were then maintaining a position on the nature of the states in Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia that was subsequently adopted by the Third World Congress. The question of the defense of Yugoslavia weighed heavily in this decision. Comrade Clarke later explained: "I prefer not to commit ourselves at this moment. There is the element of Stalinist manipulation; an element of a possible deal and a possibility that this struggle in Korea is a smokescreen for a Stalinist move against Yugoslavia."

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man, Wright, Hansen, Bartell and Clarke -- acting hastily and without waiting for adequate information, took a wrong position on North Korea, although sound on American imperialism, South Korea and the Kremlin.

That position on North Korea never saw the light of day.

Within two weeks of Truman's declaration of intervention in Korea and still on the basis of the scantiest information, every single member of the PC but one agreed that a civil war was in progress in Korea. I do not mean that even then every one wanted to commit the party on this position publicly. Several comrades, whom I shall name presently, still preached caution.

The first two issues of the paper following Truman's declaration did not contain a specific reference to a civil war in Korea. But there could be little mistaking the paper's stand, which was an uncompromising, unambiguous attack on U.S. imperialism and its puppet South Korean regime.

I merely cite, in addition, and in no sense as derogation, that the lead article in the July 3, 1950 issue of the paper -- the first after the war began -- was written by Comrade George Clarke, who, needless to say, did not speak of civil war in Korea.

I was on my vacation during this time, but the day after I received my copy of this July 3 issue (off the press June 30 -- A.P.), I hastened back to 116 University Place. Comrade Hansen had had the same impulse as I. I recall that the two of us came into the editorial office at the same time and vehemently insisted that the paper take an open stand regarding the North Korean struggle. I recall that Comrade Warde around that same time expressed similar views.

At the very next meeting of the PC, on July 11, 1950 -- the first full meeting we had been able to hold since the start of the war -- we learned that others, including Comrade Bert Cochran, who wrote from Detroit, and Comrade Wood, had the same views. There was a resolution from our co-thinkers which also expressed this view. And we learned subsequently that all the NC members in California, including Comrades Cannon and Murry Weiss, had come to a similar position.

No one has a better right than I to speak on the July 11, 1950 meeting. The records show I spoke four separate times in support of the position that we openly and firmly characterize the struggle in Korea as a civil war. Comrade Stein agreed with this characterization but said he thought it had been implicit in the paper.

There were two other comrades present whose views are particularly interesting and enlightening for us in view of Comrade Frankel's injunction against "caution."

Comrade Bartell spoke these pearls of wisdom for Frankel: "I think it was correct for us not to jump as a reflex action into support of any moves Stalin may make and there was no prior information about Korea which would indicate mass upheavals. On the contrary," he insisted, "the initiative seemed to come entirely from the Kremlin. Since then my opinion has shifted a good deal in the direction of the position held by our co-thinkers."

But still Comrade Bartell, not having Comrade Frankel's advice on caution, was not ready to yield to his reflexes. He added: "If more information is necessary, we can wait. . . ."

Comrade Clarke, as if anticipating Comrade Frankel's belated accusations, replied indignantly to Comrade Bartell's inference that the paper's silence on North Korea laid us open to a "third camp" accusation:

"Our position now on the Korean conflict is not a 'plague on both houses.' . . . Our position is that American imperialism is the main enemy. . . . We have not called for cessation of military struggle by

the North Koreans but for the withdrawal of American troops. . . "

But he conceded, "We have not said everything nor have we committed ourselves completely."

Comrade Clarke wound up: "I prefer not to commit ourselves at this moment. . . "

But here Bartell chided Comrade Clarke by name, and said: "It would be an unprincipled concession for us to refrain from taking sides in the paper, if we believe that is the correct policy."

But the PC did not take final action until the following week, principally in deference to Comrade Clarke, who wanted to wait for more information.

On July 15, 1950, Comrade Hansen, our Senatorial candidate, in an address over the ABC network, publicly characterized the struggle in Korea as a civil war and indicated our attitude toward the North Koreans. The July 17 issue of the paper carried this speech in full as our lead story.

The facts show not the horrendous picture of floundering painted by Comrade Frankel, but the quickness with which even the few most cautious comrades caught up with the general view and the ease with which we came to agreement.

What would you say, Comrade Frankel, of someone who twists, distorts and misrepresents the position of the leaders of this party to the exact opposite of what the record clearly proves it to have been? Should we not use your own winged phrase -- "a political frame-up"? I prefer, however, to put it down to factional one-sidedness and a careless failure to check your facts.

But you must still explain how the leadership of this party could so easily arrive at unanimity on Korea and a correct position -- and many of us from the first days of the war -- if we had a "third camp" and a "Stalinophobic" position, if we had a false understanding of Stalinism and revolutionary struggles.

And what does this do to your theory, which I have shown rests on such false facts?

I could go on and demonstrate that in the cases of Yugoslavia and China, we were exceptionally quick in detecting the revolutionary developments, hailing them and supporting the struggle. We showed no caution on the score of backing the revolutionary masses.

But we have been and will remain cautious in changing any of our basic theoretical conceptions on the nature of Stalinism or anything else. Against Comrade Frankel's slogan of "Down With Caution" -- or "Long Live Recklessness" -- in abandoning our traditional principled concepts, we will fight.

# # #



(Further Remarks on Korea)

Rank and file supporters of the Cochranite tendency dismissed my ten-minute talk with a standard formula: "After all, Comrade Preis talked only on a minor point." My "minor point," however, seemed to have a major impact on the PC minority members, as I observed them in the rear of the hall while I was speaking. The simpering, sneering, snickering and smirking that has characterized their behavior toward majority speakers in this discussion suddenly vanished. Instead, they displayed great agitation, glowering and grimacing, with Comrades Cochran and Clarke gesticulating excitedly and pouring advice into Comrade Frankel's ear.

If there was any doubt that my remarks were considered something more than a "minor point," Comrade Clarke dispelled it. He took the floor as soon as he could and delivered himself of a 22-minute hysterical harangue, shrieking at the top of his lungs all the way.

The burden of his emotional outburst was a "confession" in the manner of a "sinner" at a Holy Roller revival: "We were wrong. I admit it. We had a third camp position. We were all wrong."

We do not exact self-abnegating "confessions" of past errors from comrades in our movement; but if they feel impelled to make them, let them not falsely implicate others. Comrade Clarke, as I shall show, had no right to use the pronoun, "we," thereby tying in comrades of the PC majority who had a correct position on Korea with his own incorrect position, which he now belatedly "confesses" was a "third camp" position, in spite of his own vehement denials at the time of the events themselves.

Let us not take this "confession" seriously, since it was obviously whipped out of Comrade Clarke -- if not with a rubber hose then with the lash of factional desperation. Rather let us examine the testimony of one whom the minority faction is representing as an infallible authority on all things political -- Comrade Cochran.

Comrade Cochran wrote a letter, read to the July 11, 1950, meeting of the PC, which does not confirm the minority's present factionally-motivated characterization of the PC majority's reaction to the Korean events. Nowhere in his letter -- and Comrade Cochran is not one to put the kindest interpretation on the shortcomings of others -- does he speak of a "third camp" position or anything remotely like it.

I quote his letter to demonstrate that if there was any awareness then of "third campism" and "Stalinophobia" it was not on the part of the present harsh critics of the party leadership.

"I was not entirely satisfied with the paper's treatment of the war in Korea," wrote Cochran. "It is necessary to sharply point out, as we did, the Kremlin's responsibility for the present state of affairs, for the partition of the country, etc., and to condemn the whole Stalinist course."

Obviously, Cochran did not then consider that "sharply" pointing out the Kremlin's crimes and condemning "the whole Stalinist course" was evidence of "Stalinophobia" and "third campism."

He added: "It is incontestable that the North Korean government is dominated by the Kremlin, but, I believe, it nevertheless constitutes the present leadership of the Korean mass anti-imperialist struggle. I believe we would favor supporting that struggle, despite our deadly enmity to its leadership, against the Korean Chiang Kai-sheks and their Wall Street backers."

There is nothing in this that had not already been stated by most of the other members of the PC and NC who had expressed a position. But there is also nothing in the tone or words to indicate that Comrade Cochran then held the view that the party leadership had succumbed to "third campism."

But there was a further sentence in his letter which, in retrospect, throws light also on the latter-day claim about our failure to recognize the revolution in China. Comrade Cochran wrote then -- a year before the Third World Congress and two and a half years before his followers discovered Stalinophobic germs in our leadership -- that: "I think our attitude toward them (North Koreans) should be about the same as was our attitude toward the Yen-an-led movement in 1945. . . ." This sentence is a refutation of the slander that we had a Stalinophobic attitude toward the Chinese revolution. Comrade Cochran, in fact, asked no more of the party than that it maintain an attitude toward the North Korean struggle "about the same" as it had held from the start -- in 1945 -- toward the struggle led by the Chinese Communists against Chiang Kai-shek.

There is another strong refutation of this "third campism" version of the party leadership's reaction to the Korea events. It is the simple comparison of the July 3, 1950 issue of the paper with the Shachtmanite Labor Action of that same date.

The front-page headline of Labor Action read:

"The Only War Aim on Both Sides in Korea: Which Imperialist Power Will Control Asia?"

The main headline of <sup>our</sup> ~~the~~ paper read:

"Truman Usurps Power, Pulls Country Into Undeclared War

"Korea Crisis Used to Speed Police State Plans at Home."

The other front-page headlines on Korea read:

"Hands Off Korean People's Right to Decide Own Fate!

and

"U.N. Exposed as Tool of U.S. in Korean War"

I cite all these facts not to conceal or minimize the shortcomings of the paper's position, which I acknowledged at the very start of my talk, but to expose the tendentious, distorted and exaggerated version being peddled by Clarke and his co-factionalists to provide some semblance of a factual prop for their charge of Stalinophobia.

Clarke's "confession" about "our" third-camp position did not end his arguments against me. He had a real clincher -- a haymaker. "Even Comrade Cannon," shouted Comrade Clarke, "said we had a semi-Shachtmanite position!"

Let us assume for the moment that Comrade Cannon actually used the words "semi-Shachtmanite" ascribed to him by Comrade Clarke -- or even other words meaning the same thing. How does Comrade Clarke explain the fact that the CHIEF STALINOPHOBE -- Comrade Cannon -- made the sharpest condemnation of the paper's line?

How does Comrade Clarke explain the fact that Comrade Cannon's "accomplices in crime" -- the California members of the NC -- joined with their fellow-Stalinophobe in addressing a Memorandum to the PC, presented to the July 22, 1950, meeting, sharply criticizing the paper's errors. Strange indeed it is to hear a self-confessed "third camper" and "Stalinophobe" attempt to implicate the very ones who attacked the wrong policy most sharply.

But, in his frenzied attempt to defend an indefensible charge, Comrade Clarke put words into Comrade Cannon's mouth that he never spoke. The verbatim text of Comrade Cannon's remarks to the July 22, 1950 meeting, at which he presented the L.A. Memorandum, discloses that he never used the expressions "semi-Shachtmanite" or "third camp" with reference to the paper's position.

And lest Comrade Clarke hasten to explain that he was giving not the exact words but the "sense" of Comrade Cannon's criticism, I add that that is just as false.

Comrade Cannon, as the text of his remarks reveals, was anxious to warn in the sharpest manner possible against the slightest wavering in recognizing and supporting revolutionary struggles even under Stalinist leadership and against even the slightest appearance of a concession toward "neutrality" in such struggles.

Therefore he emphasized that it wasn't enough that the correct facts about the North Korean struggle were "all stated in the paper from time to time." They were stated, he pointed out, "in a diffused way, with constant reservations, disposing the blame on each side -- the Kremlin and Washington -- and thus blurring the line of policy." The paper, he said, "made some concessions to neutrality, by an almost equal distribution of blame. . . The correct demands are all stated in the paper here and there. But it is diffused too much and buried beneath balancing of blame. . ."

Then he made his sole reference to the Shachtmanites -- and not by way of accusing the paper's staff of having held a semi-Shachtmanite or even a one-tenth-of-a-Shachtmanite position.

"These are genuine revolutionary movements of great masses, of millions of people. The misfortune is that they begin under Stalinist leadership everywhere. But if we make that a condition for withdrawing our support or blunting it with reservations, we will be doing in effect what the Shachtmanites do formally and in an extreme sense. They always find reasons to abstain from real struggles."

Where Comrade Cannon as a warning for the future said "if we do so and so," Comrade Clarke offers a "slight" revision, having him say "we did do so and so." And by additional "paraphrasing" Comrade Clarke winds up with proof out of Comrade Cannon's own mouth that he is now a "Stalinophobe" because he attacked the party leadership for a "semi-Shachtmanite" position on Korea!

But there is an important side of this example of the party's attitude on Korea that Clarke and Frankel carefully omitted altogether.

They dug back to the first few days of the Korean war and deduced Stalinophobia from the fact that some comrades drew incorrect conclusions from a hasty scanning of inadequate and scanty information. But they don't tell us why for more than two and a half years this same Stalinophobia hasn't cropped up again on this same question.

On the contrary, the paper has done a job of merciless exposure of American imperialism and of consistent, complete explanation of the class nature of the Koreans' struggle that has won the commendation of the whole world movement. Our material on Korea has been reprinted in the revolutionary labor press of all the continents. And we have been waging our most intensive public campaigns -- election campaigns, above all -- around the most intransigent and unambiguous proclamation of our Korean program.

In the fact that a few comrades (Comrades Clarke and Bartell being outstanding) went momentarily off the beam, Comrade Clarke can see only a demonstration that the party was even then rife with Stalinophobia. I see it differently. I see in the early Korean events the fact that when some comrades showed hesitation, the party, including most of those leaders now accused of Stalinophobia, promptly and firmly set the hesitating comrades right and without any internal convulsions. This showed the party's political health.

If the Korean example -- their chief one -- is typical of the minority's other examples of our Stalinophobic manifestations, then their case is a fabrication from beginning to end -- Comrade Clarke's public breast-beatings and confessions notwithstanding.

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April 8, 1953.