

Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

CONTENTS

LETTER FROM JOHNSON AND FOREST TO CANNON, MARCH 28, 1947	1
EXCERPT FROM MINUTES OF PC MEETING HELD APRIL 3, 1947	8
LETTER FROM GOLDMAN TO SHACHTMAN RE: ABOVE LETTER AND EXCERPT, DATED APRIL 8, 1947	10
THE WRONG ROAD - By Max Shachtman	12
THE GENERAL STRIKE AND AMERICAN LABOR TODAY - By Ernest Erber	21
A QUESTION TO COMRADE FOREST - By Irving Howe	29
AMENDMENT TO DOCUMENT: THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY - By Saul Berg	31
ON GUARD! - By Munis and Peralta	33

VOL. II - NO. 3

APRIL 21, 1947

15¢
~~10¢~~

1534

March 28, 1947.

Dear Comrade Cannon:

You are doubtless acquainted by now with the statement in the circular addressed by the National Chairman of the Workers Party to all members, dated March 8, 1947. This circular states on page 10, paragraph 3:

"The references made to Johnson in the SWP circular do not correspond to the facts as we know them. Whether or not Johnson has affirmed his complete solidarity with the SWP on all questions except the Russian question, is his affair, and once the facts are made clear, is exclusively the subject of political judgment. In view of all the other references made to Johnson, our PC at its last meeting adopted a motion to request - not to require but only to request - Johnson to express himself in writing on the references made to him in the circular of the SWP. We await the response of Johnson who was unable to be present at that PC meeting."

Furthermore, at a meeting of the New York membership held on March 12, 1947, Comrade Goldman drew the request to the attention of the membership and went so far as to concretize it, telling the membership that Johnson had been requested to write a letter to Comrade Cannon. Under the circumstances, I propose, in collaboration with Comrade Forest, to comply with the request.

At this stage, however, a letter which would merely make corrections in the SWP circular could have political implications and effects among the rank and file which we are sure all parties to the unity discussions would regret. We therefore will begin by making clear certain important points about which the writer of your circular did not think it necessary to inform your leading cadres in that particular circular. It omitted to say:

- 1) That Johnson's first remark to you on entering the room was that he hoped this would be the beginning of a long collaboration in the struggle against revisionism of the type of the IKD and of the type of Shachtman and that a substantial part of our conversation proceeded along these lines.
- 2) We made very clear to you that the Minority had not the slightest fear of entering the SWP because of "the character of the regime" and that we were confident that a loyal, disciplined Minority with a serious political point of view would have no fear of its point of view being suppressed in the Fourth International.
- 3) We stated also that the differences between the WP Minority and the SWP on the Russian question were "serious enough." To this, you agreed. But we both considered that our respective points of view represented Marxist analyses. Secondly, that taking into consideration the tasks of the Trotskyist movement in the United States at the present time and the situation in the International as a whole, we were ready to accept the conditions which offered the basis for the task of uniting all efforts to build a mass party in the United States. You stated that you had read our documents on the American question and, although there were differences of approach, our orientation showed that to us in the U.S. the main task was the preparation of the party for the coming American revolution.

Within that framework, we are now able to make the necessary corrections regarding the statements about Johnson in the SWP circular. We wish to say, however, that in our opinion nothing said there required any special intervention on our part. At a certain stage the opportunity would have presented itself to inform you of any misconceptions or regrettable omissions on your part and we would have been quite satisfied to leave it to you to choose your time and place to correct any serious misapprehensions these statements might have caused among your membership. We ourselves in discussions both in the leadership and in the membership to the WP did not hesitate to give our version of what had happened and to authorize our

PC to make the necessary corrections, which they did.

The corrections to be made are as follows: The circular states:

"Prior to the arrival of Smith and Ted we had a meeting with Johnson. He affirmed his complete political solidarity with us on all questions except the Russian question, and his earnest desire to be given a formula that would facilitate his struggle and open the road for unification."

We would like to state here that this meeting was an unofficial meeting arranged after the Minority had declared its unwillingness to have an official meeting with the leadership of the SWP. Of all the discussions which led to the meeting our PC was informed. The statement that Johnson affirmed his "complete political solidarity" with us on all questions except the Russian question" is not correct. At that time, as Comrade Stein will remember, we stated that we preferred not to discuss the American position of the SWP but intended to do a criticism of it which would be published in the internal bulletin of the WP. Later in this letter we will take up the question of political solidarity. We are here merely dealing with the facts of an interview.

Where the statement says that Johnson showed "his earnest desire" to be given a formula which would facilitate his struggle and open the road to unification, it should be clarified as follows: We very sharply reproached the representatives of the SWP for not having politically intervened in the long drawn out discussions between the Majority and the Minority in the WP. We stated that one of the requests of the WP Minority from the Extraordinary Party Convention would be such a political intervention. It is only in this sense that we seemed to request a "formula." The passage in the SWP circular is not in any way offensive to us, but under the circumstances, we think that it should be clarified.

We presented a written statement to the PC of the WP giving in outline an account of the conversation with the SWP representatives. We attach a copy of the same, and if there is anything in it which is an unfair representation of what actually took place, we shall be only too glad if you would acquaint us with the matter and we shall be able to correct it in writing, by statement or letter, or in any other way that you might suggest.

In Section 3 of the circular, it is stated that the formula was worked out between the SWP leadership and Smith. You then go on to say:

"This formula was presented by Smith to Johnson and promptly accepted by him. At the same time he announced that he would accept it and carry it out in any case, regardless of the position taken by the WP majority or any of its other factions. "

This is not quite correct. On the evening of Sunday, February 2, Comrade K of the SWP met us about seven in the evening and told us that Comrade Smith had discussed with Comrade Shachtman and wanted to see us immediately. We understood from him that we should meet Comrade Smith and some members of the SWP. Immediately we refused to do so. We stated that in the capacity in which Comrade Smith was meeting us, we would not meet him in the company of members of the SWP. Comrade K. informed Comrade Smith of this and Smith met us alone. The circular states that when Comrade Smith presented the formula to Johnson, Johnson said that he would accept it and carry it out in any case regardless of the position taken by the WP Majority or any other faction in the WP. This is incorrect. It is to be coupled with the fact that a little later the circular states: "Johnsonannounced that he would accept the conditions in any case. Shachtman, confronted by the resolute stand of Johnson with the prospect of remaining alone in the party with the right-wing, spoke for the acceptance of the terms."

What actually occurred was this. Comrade Smith presented to Johnson in ten minutes the proposals that he had made to Shachtman, and which he informed Johnson, Shachtman had agreed to. It took Johnson just ten seconds to agree, for obviously there was no question at all of raising or answering the possibility as to what would happen if Shachtman who agreed would afterwards disagree. All the representatives of the SWP who have ever participated with us in discussion would be able to inform you of our reiteration of the fact that in our opinion, Shachtman has been perfectly sincere in his desire for unification of the organizations. Moreover, unification had been accepted by an overwhelming majority of our party. In the course of the discussions at the plenum, however, which Comrade Smith attended, Comrade Johnson found it necessary to make the following statement:

"In the resolution of the WP minority it has been clearly established that our attitude to Cannonism in quote is not the attitude of the majority of the WP. Further, as far as you wish to take any assurance of it, there is not a single member of the minority in the WP who is scared of going into the SWP without the majority of the WP. We have no need to pick up scraps of unity in an undignified manner because less than two weeks ago we had the opportunity of going into the SWP and the pre-conference with all privileges. We informed the EC of that and of the discussions, informed the SWP of our position that we would inform the leadership of the WP. We did so. I do not expect ... and those who think like him to understand that all our actions have been motivated by political principle and the necessity to try to advance in every way possible the correct functioning of the preconference... the right of all its members and prospective members, therein included the existence of the WP majority."

We take this opportunity of saying that nothing that is said in this circular is to be interpreted as reflecting in the slightest degree upon the good faith of Comrade Smith. We worked with him as closely as possible. We appreciated to the full the difficult situation in which he was placed. We would like here to state that we considered his various procedures taken as a whole to be a credit to the movement.

This, we think, takes care of the facts about which there is dispute, and we would like to repeat in fairness to you that we are prepared to dig into our memories and archives to correct and recorrect them to the last comma until everybody is satisfied. Many of these facts, we should note, have been repeated to the New York membership by Comrade Forest who was allowed special time for so doing. We append a copy of her prepared speech.

Clarification, however, being on the order of the day, we take this opportunity to clarify certain issues upon which the Minority is extremely anxious that you and your leading cadres and for that matter your whole party should know where we stand.

1) The question of "complete political solidarity on all questions except the Russian question" with the SWP.

Comrade Shachtman in his circular states "Whether or not Johnson has affirmed his complete political solidarity with the SWP on all questions except the Russian question is his affair, and once the facts are made clear, is exclusively the subject of political judgment."

The political opinions of the WP Minority in relation not only to the WP Majority but to the SWP are stated in the resolutions which were submitted to the last convention. When we change our political opinions on any of these questions, we shall do so in writing and in a manner suitable to the particular political circumstances in which we find ourselves. In our personal discussion with you, you showed that you were acquainted with these documents. We take your statements

that we are in complete solidarity with you on all political questions to mean what any person in a non-factional situation would take them to mean. But inasmuch as the question has been raised, we would like to reiterate that we find ourselves in complete solidarity with you in the main question, the strategic approach to the American question especially as outlined in your speech delivered to the 12th National Convention of the SWP and printed in the Fourth International of February 1947. In the course of seven years in the WP, the Minority has developed certain conceptions which it considers of great importance for the International movement as a whole and for the movement in America in particular. We are now engaged in clarifying what has been a most important experience in regard to all aspects of building the party in the U. S. As we told the representatives of the SWP in the first discussion, we believe we have a contribution to make. We look forward to the opportunity of bringing them before comrades who share with us certain fundamental conceptions, and through the movement to the American masses who in the last analysis will decide what is correct or incorrect in the proposals of the Marxist party.

It is necessary, however, to clarify our attitude up to the moment when the unity negotiations were officially broached by Comrade Smith. The Minority had determined to concentrate all its efforts on making a serious struggle for the unification of the two organizations at the coming Extraordinary Party Convention. We believed, as we had already stated in all our resolutions, that at the back of the refusal of the SWP to contemplate unity was a false calculation of its forces, that it was calculating them in relation to the forces of the WP and not in relation to the tasks of the revolutionary movement in the United States. And we made it clear that this particular misconception of the SWP, which was probably shared by the International, would be our special target for the next period in order that the comrades in the International and the members of the SWP might be brought to see the problem as we saw it. At the moment, however, that unification was seriously proposed, as a possibility, we immediately changed our tactics. Whereas previously our emphasis had been on criticism of the SWP, the same ideas would now take the form, particularly in a unified organization, of positive proposals. We therefore withdrew a section of a document on the miners strike which had been written before the proposals of Comrade Smith, and it has been published in that form. We considered that at that time and henceforth these ideas should be stated in a different way, particularly because we had not had the opportunity to develop our ideas in comradely association and mutual influence with the leaders and members of the SWP.

2) The Minority would like to clarify also its position on the Russian question. In our opinion the differences on the Russian question go very deep and it has been clear to us for a long time that they encroach upon the general politics of the International. However, so long as our particular struggle was devoted mainly to resistance against and exposure of the political positions of the WP, we did not emphasize more than was necessary our differences with the International. Now, however, that unity, in our opinion, is assured, not only in the U.S. but in the International as a whole, we propose to make very clear to the International what are the consequences of what we consider to be their entirely false position on the Russian question. In the SWP circular it is stated that the line of the Fourth has been "brilliantly analyzed in the new theses of Germain on the Russian question." In our opinion, the theses of Germain represent a serious blow to our movement, particularly because they use a method and arrive at conclusions which we cannot for one moment conceive as being acceptable to Comrade Trotsky. This the Minority proposes to express in no unequivocal terms. But at the same time we wish to affirm our considered political judgment, which is that in the U.S. these questions cannot and should not be allowed to disrupt the work of building the American party.

3) On the question of regime, the Minority, particularly in its resolution on The Task of Building the Bolshevik Party, has made its position absolutely

clear. We would like to add here the following. We approach the problem of fusion on the basis of the principles of our movement and the precedence of politics over organization. When we state the Minority, but for its recognition of the political necessity of unity, would have had no hesitation whatever or fears to fuse with the SWP, we were not defending the regime of the SWP. It is neither the first nor the primary concern of the Minority in the WP either to attack or to defend the regime in the SWP. We have based ourselves always upon this. In our opinion, to state or to imply that in the Fourth International, a particular regime could stand in the way of the development of the revolutionary movement, irrespective of the rightness or wrongness of political positions, was a reflection not against persons but against the very principles, traditions and perspectives on which our movement is based. That there have been and always will be organizational difficulties in a revolutionary movement we are aware of. We do not in the least underestimate that, but we put them in their place and, least of all, are we prepared to accept information and instructions in political conduct on these questions from some of the examples we have been permitted to observe.

It is on this basis, convinced that the future of the movement in the U.S. demanded first of all the unification of the two parties, that we refused under all circumstances to take part or encourage or countenance any split of any kind. We considered the refusal to unify a form of split. We held to our position, confident that an international conference of the movement which, not only in theory but in actions during the past years, had proved its adherence to the principles of the Fourth International would come to the correct conclusion. To have doubted this would have been to doubt far more than the good or bad faith, the correct or incorrect judgment of any individuals. And we held to this point of view when it seemed nothing more than the fantasies of stratospheric visionaries. It is with this method that we approach the problem of the proletarian revolution, it is with this method that we approached the question of unification, and all problems that will arise in a revolutionary movement with differing political opinions. You will recall that when we visited you, which we did only after the WP plenum had decided to accept the offer in principle, that there were suspicions that the offer on your part was only a maneuver in the attempt to win over the Johnson Minority. We told you that we did not believe that it was a maneuver and we should add at once that our conversation convinced us completely of this and of your absolute sincerity in desiring the unification. But we made it clear that if by any chance it should turn out to be a maneuver, the policy that we had held to so firmly in the past would be continued by us. You are able to judge by this that the firmness which we have exercised in holding to our position, which our faction had arrived at only after the most careful consideration, will not be lessened but only intensified in the struggle for the integration and the consolidation of the unified parties as a preliminary to the building of the mass Trotskyist party in the U. S.

There is, unfortunately, another question to which we find ourselves compelled to refer. In the circular of Comrade Shachtman, there is one statement which runs as follows: "Johnson protesting...that he and his political friends." And later in the same paragraph, there occurs the phrase "Johnson and his friends."

This circular by Comrade Shachtman circulates not only in the WP but also in the ranks of the SWP and in the International. This characterization of the Minority as "Johnson and his friends" is unfortunately not new in the WP. But it will give to others a political impression of our tendency which it is our duty to dispel.

The Johnson Minority began in 1941 with an opposition to the theory that Russia was a Bureaucratic Collectivist State. At that time we stated clearly that the theory of Bureaucratic Collectivism was bound to have serious consequences for the Marxist development of the party and for this reason, we held ourselves

strictly aloof from the Carterites despite the fact that they were, like us, for defeatism under all circumstances. In December 1942, a Majority of the WP leadership supported theses which were the basis of the resolution on the National Question, finally adopted by the 1944 Convention. The Minority immediately attacked the theses and made an exposure of the false political principles on which they were based. This we did at a time when we were completely isolated from the European movement, and our articles in the April and May 1943 issues of the New International represent a comprehensive position on the European perspective which are still the basis of our approach.

During this period the Minority developed its position on the Russian question by the most comprehensive study of the Russian economy ever undertaken in the Fourth International. We studied and applied to the problems of the day dialectical materialism as the philosophical basis of Marxism and published also studies in Marxian political economy which have appeared both in the public press and in internal bulletins. In the discussions which preceded the 1944 convention, differences began to appear upon the American question. We were not anxious to accentuate differences. Later, however, the theory of retrogression began to run unchecked in our movement. In our opinion, its influence was made clear in the approach of the WP Majority to the American question and we developed our position on the American question which took final form in our resolution at the convention of May, 1946.

We devoted great care to the serious problem of translating the ideas of the Marxist party into such terms and into such a form as would enable the American workers to grasp within the context of their own national experience the essence of Bolshevism. To this urgent task, which we called the Americanization of Bolshevism, we devoted a preliminary document entitled "Education, Agitation and Propaganda."

We have made during the years a serious study of the Negro question in the United States and in our opinion have made the theoretical elucidation of the principles on which Lenin and Trotsky approached this question. By study we do not merely mean the study of books and resolutions but we have been careful to integrate with these the experiences of the movement and particularly of those comrades in our tendency who are in the organized labor movement and have sought in the combination of theory and practice the reasons for the failure of the Trotskyist movement in the United States to grow in correspondence with the tremendous radicalization of the American workers.

In our opinion, the reception which the theory of retrogression met with in the WP marked a decisive stage in our differences with the Majority. We devoted ourselves to as complete a refutation of this monstrosity as was possible to us and we came to the conclusion that it was necessary to draw as sharp a line as possible between us and them. That we did.

Our political line and organizational procedure on the question of unification you are now familiar with. We have also worked out a method of conducting factional struggles which we believe of great importance not only to the American movement but to the International as a whole. At the last convention seventy-five members voted for us which was at that time approximately one-fifth of the voting membership.

We hope therefore that it will be clear to you that the tendency which has now reconstituted itself as a faction does not consist of "Johnson and his friends." This work could not have been done, it could not even have been conceived of, over six turbulent years except as a struggle for political principles and ideas. As you will be able to judge, a substantial number of our membership are among the best and hardest working, most devoted comrades in the WP and have never allowed their political hostility to the line of the leadership to affect

their devoting. That, with your experience, you will recognize as a very high qualification of those which go to make a good party member. We take the liberty of stating a remark made by Comrade Smith after he had met and discussed with individual members of our tendency. He stated that it was a curious tendency in that it was interested in theoretical questions and yet had a serious attitude toward the building of the party. That is not at all an accident. For us in this particular period, such a combination is a necessity for all who claim to be Marxist revolutionaries. Our numbers may be small but their relationship to the forces which we have to overcome is infinitely smaller than the relationship of the forces of the party to the forces of American and world imperialism. The petty-bourgeoisie has always been frightened by the relationship of numbers. We have never been.

With revolutionary greetings and hopes for a fruitful unification at the earliest possible moment that will be satisfactory for all parties,

J. R. Johnson
F. Forest

(The foregoing March 28, 1947 letter of Comrades Johnson and Forest to Comrade Cannon was presented to the meeting of the Political Committee of the WP on March 28, 1947. At the meeting of the Political Committee on April 3, 1947, Comrade Shachtman asked a number of questions, for the record, to which Comrade Johnson replied. The said questions and answers follow.)

SHACHTMAN: After our last meeting, Johnson made a few slight corrections in the letter, which is now incorporated in the PC minutes. The formal status of the letter is that it is presented to the Committee.

I would like to ask two questions on it. On page 1 of our copy of the letter sent by Johnson and Forest to Cannon, it reads in part: "Johnson's first remark to you (that is, Cannon) on entering the room (that is, where Johnson met with Cannon) was that he hoped this would be the beginning of a long collaboration in the struggle against revisionism of the type of the IKD and of the type of Shachtman and that a substantial part of our conversation proceeded along these lines." My question is this: Did Johnson in any of his reports to the PC on meetings he held with the Cannonites, the SWP, include in the reports that he had proposed a bloc to the SWP against the WP?

JOHNSON: The answer is no.

SHACHTMAN: My second question: In his circular to the SWP, X claims categorically that Johnson informed the SWP that in the event the WP did not accept the proposal of Smith on the unity question and the EPC, Johnson was prepared to leave the WP with his supporters and join the SWP. Since this is one of the main questions that all our members are interested in with regard to the X circular and since in my opinion it is not adequately or properly dealt with in Johnson's and Forest's letter to Cannon, I want to ask the following simple question: Did Johnson or Forest at any time make such a commitment to the SWP comrades or say anything that would warrant X in making that claim?

JOHNSON: The question is adequately dealt with in the letter and previous communications to the PC. That is all.

SHACHTMAN: I would like to put this in the record--

McKINNEY: I would like for that question to be asked Johnson precisely as X put it in the circular, without any decorations. X says deliberately and categorically in the circular that Johnson made certain statements to him. I would like Johnson to say, did he or did he not make that statement. I would like to insist on a "yes" or "no" answer to the statement in the X circular--

SHACHTMAN: Wait a minute - let me conclude first. Since this is a simple and direct question in which all members of the party are interested and in which the political honesty and integrity of Johnson and Forest are involved and since not only I but many other comrades feel that the question is not properly and adequately dealt with in Johnson's letter to Cannon, the refusal of Johnson to answer the question directly and honestly as represented by his diplomatic reply to my question, casts doubt in my opinion for the first time directly on Johnson's loyalty to the Committee and the party and ob-

scures the problem of unity which Johnson has professed to want to maintain in full clarity. I therefore ask the question again for a straightforward and not a diplomatic answer. Is there any warranty or basis for Cannon having made the claim that Johnson committed himself to splitting his group from the WP and joining the SWP under the circumstances indicated by Cannon?

JOHNSON: In the past, Johnson and Forest have always kept the PC and the party fully informed on all questions dealing with negotiations or discussions with the SWP or other representatives of the CIC concerning unity. In our opinion, however, the question in the Committee has now reached a stage where what is at issue is the discrediting of a political opponent and not the advancement of unification or the clarification of the membership of the parties concerned and of the Movement. To the same degree that consistent with political principle we did everything possible in the past to advance the political struggle for the unification of the two parties, so now we do not propose to assist the Committee in diverting the discussion. We would, however, remind the Committee that the relations of Johnson and the Minority as a whole to the Committee and the party have a long history. We are prepared to go into it only, however, when it will have been made plain to all concerned who forced the issue, what purposes it was intended to serve and those who forced it are prepared to bear the full responsibility of the consequences. We are not prepared at this stage to make any statements other than those we have made or protestations of loyalty to this committee. If the Committee is dissatisfied with our statements on the questions at issue, it is in command of a sufficient majority to take whatever steps it pleases. (The above statement, which was read by Johnson, was signed by both Johnson and Forest.)

SHACHTMAN: I have nothing more to add at this time than two comments:

One: It requires a high degree of courage to accuse me, whose record on unity is so flawless that even Johnson has repeatedly acknowledged it, an acknowledgment which he is evidently preparing to withdraw for his own political purposes, of trying to utilize the situation for the purpose of a political attack on the Johnson group in view of the now established fact that Johnson, behind the back of the Committee, behind the back of the party and behind the back of his own faction, proposed an unprincipled bloc with the SWP for the purpose of combatting the WP.

Two: Precisely because Johnson so determinedly evades a simple and straightforward question to which the interests of the party as a whole require a simple and straightforward answer. I can come to only one conclusion: that Johnson, in flagrant repudiation of what he set forth as his principled position in opposing the idea of the Goldmanite comrades leaving the SWP to join the WP, did make a commitment to the SWP that under the circumstances described in the circular of X, Johnson would split from the WP and join the SWP. The prosecution of our course for unity between the two parties is not only not in conflict with the necessity of drawing the political conclusions from this in the WP as a whole but requires that the party as a whole draw these conclusions.

The suggestion in Johnson's last reply that the PC because it is dissatisfied with his declaration can take whatever organizational measures it wants against him is a contemptible suggestion because it shows that he has forgotten already what party he is a member of.

(At the Political Committee meeting of April 3, 1947, a motion was made by Gates to "inform the party membership of the situation which has arisen out of Johnson's refusal to answer the question directly whether or not he intends to split the party." This motion was laid on the table because the members of the PC desired more time in which to consider the whole question. Subsequent to that meeting, several New York Local branches adopted resolutions asking for information about or the publication of the letter of Johnson and Forest to Cannon in view of the importance of the subject and of the rumors current in the party about it. These letters were presented to the PC at its meeting of April 10, 1947, by the Secretariat without recommendation. After waiting for Johnson to take the initiative in proposing that his letter be made public to the party membership so that it would know exactly where he and Forest stand, and after seeing that neither Johnson nor Forest proposed to make their letter available to the membership, a motion to send the letter to the membership was made by Shachtman and adopted by the PC with Johnson abstaining on the motion.

(Following this a letter by Goldman to Shachtman, which had just been received, was read into the records of the PC. Because this letter is germane to the question, it is also being sent to the membership. It is set forth in full below.)

April 8, 1947.

Dear Max:

With reference to Johnson:

By no means should you treat his failure to answer in a straightforward manner as something of great importance which should become the basis of a party discussion. That would play right into the hands of Cannon since there would be nothing better for him than a squabble in our party against a minority that apparently wants unity with him under all circumstances.

A statement is called for but the statement should make it clear that we are not attacking Johnson for his desire to unite with Cannon under all circumstances. He has that right and if he thinks it is essential for the revolutionary movement we must respect him for his attitude regardless of what we think of his sanity.

The center of our attack on him should be that in OUR PARTY it is disgraceful to act in a dishonest manner, for the simple reason that honesty is respected and no one would consider him a traitor to the party if he thinks he should join with Cannon. It is in Cannon's party where duplicity of that type has to be practiced. Even in that party I did not hesitate to state almost in so many words that I would join the WP if there is no unity. The howling of the jackals followed our statements. In our party we would not howl at any one who believe that his place is with Cannon; we would regret it and try to dissuade him but we would not howl at him. In such a party therefore there was

no necessity to dissimulate.

In fact we are building the kind of a party where even those who desire to split can say so openly.

Johnson insulted our party by his attempt to deceive. Johnson shows in fact that he does not belong to our party.

We must utilize his conduct to impress upon every young comrade that in our party honesty need never be feared.

I do not like the kind of statements made by Al Gates, that is, that he is afraid to discuss unity in Johnson's presence. We have nothing to conceal. On this question we are absolutely honest and Cannon himself can be present at our meetings if he so desires. We permitted Smith to be present and everybody should have known that everything we said would be reported to Cannon.

Be sure to include in any statement you issue Johnson's statements to the PC if they are appropriate. Be sure also to emphasize Johnson's right to think as he does and to emphasize that our position on unity is not changed in the least. And do not make the statement too long.

Yours,

Al

1545

By Max Shachtman

* * *

I agree entirely with Goldman's letter and, I think, so will every thinking comrade in the party. Johnson's conduct, which only muddies up the waters of unity, compels a change in our attitude toward him. But precisely because of that, it is worthwhile underlining, at the very outset, the point made by Goldman: it does not and it should not change our attitude toward the question of unity with the SWP. That policy was decided upon by us a long time ago after objective consideration of the problem. It was we who initiated it to begin with, and not Johnson; it was we who worked out every stage of its development, and not Johnson; it was we who did all that was proper and necessary to bring it about, and not Johnson; and at all times Johnson played a positive role in the fight for unity only to the extent that he supported our point of view. And up to recently, it was precisely our policy that Johnson supported all the way through. It would be utterly absurd for us to be swayed from our unity policy by such things as Johnson's recent conduct. As in the case of the circular letter of X, we need only expose it to the light of day. That is our method and everyone in the movement would be well-advised to emulate it. That Johnson, with even less reason than X, preferred that his letter remain unknown to our party membership is understandable from more than one viewpoint; some political documents, like certain flowers, do better in the dark than they do in sunlight. As in the case of X, Johnson's letter merits a few comments. The following will be enough for the time being.

I.- Johnson is preparing a political capitulation to the SWP. This is clear not only from the undignified humility - it is more accurate to say obsequiousness of his letter but by what is much more important, its political content. This political capitulation, as I tried to point out some time ago, has been in preparation for more than a year. The only difference now is that we have brought it into the open where everyone can see it and judge it.

Where two groups or tendencies, regardless of their political origins, approach each other politically after a period of time (in which events, reflection and mutual influence play their parts), and eventually find a more or less common political line, there can be no talk of capitulation on either side. That is not the case here. What is lacking in Johnson's bloc with the SWP against the WP is a basis in principle, and that means everything is lacking. Hence, we are dealing with a capitulation. That Johnson has much in common with the line of the SWP is not to be denied. But what is decisive in this case is that Johnson has in the past period been steadily and, from a political point of view, unjustifiedly bent his own line in order to make the capitulation possible. The SWP has done its share, too, but the truth is that the share of the SWP does not begin to be as great as the share of Johnson.

The share of the SWP in easing Johnson into a capitulation is represented by two obvious facts. The first was the statement of the SWP Political Committee to its last convention ("Revolutionary Marxism vs. Petty Bourgeois Revisionism"). Nowhere in that statement was any reference made to Johnson or his political position or his group. The statement called upon the international Trotskyist movement to reject categorically our party's position on Russia and, so to speak, to outlaw the theory of bureaucratic collectivism from the realm of Marxist thought, if not from the Marxist movement itself. No such harsh treatment was proposed for the theory that Russia is a fascist-capitalist state. That theory of Johnson was not even mentioned.

The second is more recent. It is the dissemination by word of mouth in the SWP of the view that in our party Johnson represents the "left wing." It is true that those responsible for disseminating this joke do not themselves take it seri-

ously. Anyone who knows anything about the SWP leadership is aware that it has no use whatsoever for the political tendency represented by Johnson because, at bottom, Johnson's variety of sectarianism and revolutionary phrasemongering may have a "ceremonial" value in the eyes of the SWP but no practical value. This novel characterization of Johnson, however, does have a practical value or at least a practical purpose.

Johnson's contribution to the bloc is far more substantial and represents a real capitulation. He is not proud of it, because in his ostensibly candid reports to our PC of his conversations with the SWP leadership, he avoided any reference to it; and, as all the members of the Johnson faction knew, he did not inform them of his proposal or get their authorization for it. A very unpromising bloc indeed which has to be cooked up in this dark way!

However that may be, we know about it now. We learn from Johnson's letter that his "first remark" to the SWP leadership when he met with it "was that he hoped this would be the beginning of a long collaboration in the struggle against revisionism of the type of the IKD and of the type of Shachtman." What the SWP leadership said about this humble proposal for a bloc against it, has not yet been revealed. As recently as our last party convention, Johnson indignantly and vehemently denounced as slanderous the charge made by some of us that he was preparing a political capitulation to the SWP, that he was in increasingly substantial political agreement with the SWP or, more accurately, that he was bending his line to the point where it would be closer to the SWP than to us. Comrades in whose memory Johnson's outraged denials are still fresh can judge for themselves whether Johnson's proposal today for a "long collaboration" with the SWP against us is a capitulation or not.

The question of who now acknowledges political solidarity with whom is clearly enough answered, in spite of the distasteful diplomatic language that belongs anywhere but in our movement. Johnson corrects X for writing that Johnson affirmed his "complete political solidarity" with the SWP on all questions except the Russian question. Johnson did not affirm this - at the particular meeting referred to by X. A most important correction: he affirmed it at another meeting. Therefore, he writes, "We take your statements that we are in complete solidarity with you on all political questions to mean what any person in a non-factional situation would take them to mean." (Non-factional situation or factional situation, an elementary knowledge of the English language enables anyone who hears that "we are in complete solidarity with you on all political questions" to take that to mean that...there is complete solidarity on all political questions.) "...we would like to reiterate that we find ourselves in complete solidarity with you in the main question, the strategic approach to the American question especially as outlined in your (Cannon's) speech delivered to the 12th National Convention of the SWP and printed in the Fourth International of February 1947."

So, barring the Russian question, Johnson is in complete solidarity with the SWP on all political questions and especially on the analysis of the situation and the tasks in the U.S. Whoever may welcome this conversion, must at the same time acknowledge that it is so recent as to fall into the category of overnight changes. The SWP position on the situation in the U.S. was known at the time of its last convention, November, 1946. Cannon's speech, outlining this position, was made public in the Fourth International at the very beginning of the year shortly after the miners strike. We have the right to assume that Johnson was acquainted with the "strategic approach to the American question" of the SWP "especially as outlined in your speech." But in spite of this fact, Johnson was able to write practically yesterday, that is, on January 11, 1947, the following stern judgment, not only about us but about the SWP as well: "Neither the WP nor the SWP has the faintest conception (My emphasis, M.S.) of what is propaganda for a social program today in the U.S." (WP BULLETIN, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 22).

That is not all that Johnson wrote about the SWP in January 1947 for publication in February 1947. That is all that he allowed to appear in the party BULLETIN, but it is not all that he originally wrote. Between the writing about the SWP and the mimeographing of the writing, there intervened the new prospect for unity. It is now plain that for Johnson this meant the new prospect for a bloc with the SWP against us. How? By a capitulation to the SWP. That is why Johnson's article on the General Strike, in the party BULLETIN referred to, finally appeared as a severe assault upon our point of view, even though in the original writing there was an equally severe assault upon the SWP point of view. Upon his insistence, he was allowed to delete a page (p. 21) from his original article. The deletion was necessary not on the ground dishonestly claimed. The real ground was obvious. To have made public his criticism of the SWP at that time would have made it impossible even for so agile a man of principle as Johnson to claim, a very few days later, that he was in complete political solidarity with the SWP position on the American question, "especially as outlined" in the speech of Cannon. Which Cannon? The one he attacked with his superb relentlessness on Monday but which a quality quite different from relentlessness impelled him to suppress on Tuesday.

Principle? Principle? What is principle to a hungry man? Johnson has been hungry for the bloc with the SWP for a long time. At last the bloc is in sight! For fear that a heavy load would impede him in the rush for the bloc, he promptly unloaded a little political baggage and buried it in the sand. Disinterred, here is what he wrote in his original article:

"Let us now look at the other section of the vanguard, the SWP. On December 7, an editorial of the Militant on the front page reiterated the following idea. 'In every city and county the labor unions must form their own united labor conferences, mobilize actions on behalf of the miners and demand that the union leaders call a similar conference on a nationwide scale.' I take this opportunity to say that the Johnson Minority is vastly pleased to see the role which propaganda for committees plays in the life of the Fourth International in the U.S. It is not yet understood either in the WP or the SWP, some of it is ridiculous, some of it pure adventurism, but at any rate we are all more advanced here than we were last year. The SWP also seemed to understand the role of the bureaucrats. 'But the top leaders of the CIO and AFL are too narrowminded, too blinded by their own bureaucratic interests to take this imperative step on their own initiative.' This is not too good. The bureaucrats fail because they are afraid of any mass action which even faintly challenges the state power. But at any rate it is a beginning. And what next? Nothing. We said it. Campaign? Education? not a line.

"Cannon, however, is much sharper than Shachtman. By December 14th (the next issue of the Militant), the necessity for the general strike was crying to the heavens. The Detroit workers had decided to call one, Reuther or no Reuther. So in the December 14 issue, on page 1 of the Militant, there is a two-inch box informing the Militant readers that on the day after the decision of the Federal Court to fine the miners, James P. Cannon 'issued a statement' urging the leaders of all unions to call a nationwide 24 hour general protest strike. 'Only such an action will give pause to the big business government conspirators who have launched the attack on the miners as part of a scheme to crush the labor movement.' Isn't this marvelous? Shachtman, the leader of the WP, and Cannon, the leader of the SWP, both of them constituting the vanguard of the vanguard of the vanguard, both decide, one on the 14th and the other on the 16th that the real thing which would have helped to save the miners was a general strike. Cannon says his in five lines and thus is able at any time to show that he proposed it. Shachtman says the same in 5,000 words which enable him to say that he didn't propose it. In theory the difference is great. In practice there is none. It is this feebleness which determines all aspects of the political life of the Fourth International in the United States."

Isn't the rigidly principled basis for the bloc, for the "long collaboration," perfectly clear? The SWP convention took place in November, 1946. That is where the resolution was adopted which came out categorically and unambiguously in favor of a socialist revolution in the United States, that is, for that "strategic approach to the American question" which had such a convulsing effect upon Johnson. But evidently that "strategic approach" was so dumbfounding that it required quite a while before it penetrated Johnson to the point where he found himself in complete solidarity with it. A good two months after the SWP convention, Johnson still attacked the SWP and the WP on the "main question." The unsparing critic found that both are pretty much alike and that neither one of them has the "faintest conception of what is propaganda for a social program today in the United States." In theory, he generously acknowledged, there is a difference. In practice he sternly insisted "there is none" between Cannon and Shachtman. However, "Cannon is much sharper than Shachtman." Sharper! Or better yet, much sharper! There is a real difference for you!

So, I am in complete political solidarity with a man who is much sharper against the man who is nowhere near as sharp. He is the indicated man for me to establish collaboration - a long one. God help anyone who raises his voice against this Great Principled Bloc! Upon him I will turn the full force of all my water pistols.

There still remains the important Russian question. Perhaps we ought to say the question that used to be important. Here are some examples of how important this question used to be:

"Central to the development of the Fourth International is the position of Trotsky on the Russian question. This position was held by the majority of the International all through the war. It resulted in the shocking misleadership of the working class as to the motives and objective results of Stalinist intervention in Europe. The climax came when the Fourth International sowed the most criminal illusions in the minds of the masses in Eastern Europe at the approach of the Red Army. This policy flows neither from the sterility nor the confusion of the Fourth International, in Europe or in America, but is the direct and inescapable result of the attempt to apply an untenable political line based upon the theories of Trotsky.

"Today, when the imperialist aims of Stalinist Russia are patent to the whole world, the Fourth International continues to preach and base policy upon the theory that Stalinist Russia is a degenerated workers state to be defended by the working class. In an effort to defend its indefensible stand that the Stalinist bureaucracy could not survive the rigors of war, the Socialist Workers Party has been driven to the ridiculous position that the imperialist war is not yet at an end. For the same reasons, it disorients the working class and confuses its own position with that of the Stalinists by emphasizing that the expansion of Soviet Russia is due to the necessities of self-defense. By this means, it can do nothing else but strengthen Stalinism in Russia, weaken the critical elements in the Stalinist and other working class parties, handicap itself in its attacks upon Stalinism, grievously disorient the concept of a workers state and associate the Marxist doctrine with the defense of totalitarianism. The persistence in this indefensible doctrine has undermined and will continue to undermine the political and organization strength of the Fourth International.

"By its stand against the defense of Russia in the imperialist war, the Workers Party distinguished itself as the only party in the Fourth International which clearly and consistently warned the masses well in advance against the dangers of Stalinism and the Red Army."

This judgment is severe, but as can be seen, it is both accurate and restrained. I have quoted it, with my own emphasis, from the official Johnsonite resolution (WP BULLETIN, Vol. I, No. 11, April 27, 1948, p. 26), presented to our last convention only a year ago.

Has Johnson changed his mind on this? In a sense, no. In his letter he still speaks of the "entirely false position on the Russian question" of the Fourth International. In another sense, however, Johnson has made a "little" change. In his letter to Cannon he says that he told the SWP that the differences between them on the Russian question were "serious enough." To this, they agreed. Then follows the sentence which absolutely deserves to be rescued from oblivion. It shows how wonderful is the English language and how delicately the words in it can be strung together by a literary person. (That is only one of the things it shows.) Johnson writes: "But we both considered that our respective points of view represent Marxist analyses." Joking apart, isn't this priceless? Isn't this a pearl, in fact, a whole string of pearls? Think of all the winged phrases in the literature of Marxism and tell me of one you can compare this with. You couldn't find one if you spent a month looking for it.

I say Russia is a fascist state, the most fascist of all fascist states, the most highly developed, that is, the most degenerated of all capitalist states, the ultimate outcome of capitalist barbarism. You say Russia is a workers' state, somewhat degenerated, to be sure, but a workers' state just the same. Come, let us be honest because we are honest people. There is a difference between us and it is "serious enough." A fact is a fact. But what the hell, shall we make a mountain out of a molehill, when it is so much more convenient to make a molehill out of a mountain? We are not only honest people, but, damn it all, we are Marxists. And what is important to a Marxist? The important thing is that an analysis should be a Marxist analysis. Let someone deny that! And I say that "our respective points of view represent Marxist analyses." Let somebody deny that!

I say this fascist state must be defeated in peace or in war. You say Russia must be defended. I am for unconditional defeatism. You are for unconditional defensism. The difference is "serious enough." There are some people who say that this difference puts us on opposite sides of the barricades. Bah, malicious people! Not Marxists! They don't understand what is important. The important thing is that our respective viewpoints represent Marxist analyses. It is true, and more than a little embarrassing: I shoot in one direction and you shoot in another direction. But what does that matter? No one is going to get hurt because, you see, after all, at bottom, in the last analysis, and looked at objectively, both of us have Marxist analyses.

And what is the red color you see on my face now? The blush of shame? No, the blush of shamelessness. Or perhaps it is nothing but the flush of excited eagerness to achieve abloc which, by the old standards, used to be called unprincipled. That is what it is still called. And a capitulation is still called a capitulation.

II.- Johnson's maneuvers for a bloc against us - for a political success which he was unable to achieve in our party after years of free, open, democratic and continuous discussion - have their importance, but they are secondary. Of primary importance is the question of unity between the two parties and of how the unity is to be achieved.

We are for a solid unity, a lasting unity, a healthy unity that will build up a healthy party. To allay the apprehensions of the SWP, we have told their representatives repeatedly, for two years, that we would be the biggest political idiots, and would stamp ourselves as such ineradicably, if we had in mind the idea of uniting on Monday and splitting on Tuesday - or the next day or the next year. Such an utterly irresponsible plan would compromise the movement terribly, and us along with it. We are not just for unity "in general." We are for this unity, we are for unity now, not only because we think it is necessary in the abstract but because we are convinced that it will work - to the benefit of the working class, to the benefit of the Trotskyist movement, and to the benefit of our tendency within it. But it will work only if the foundation of the unity is

sound, only if we go about it the right way. The right way means; an irreducible minimum of diplomacy and maneuvering, and a high maximum of frankness and mutual understanding. We have followed the policy of saying to our membership exactly what we say among ourselves in the leadership; and of saying to the SWP exactly what we say to our membership. We have not concealed the differences between us; we have not artificially magnified them or artificially minimized them. We have said openly why unity was impossible or impractical at one time, and why it is necessary and practical today. Among the results of this course was not only the overwhelming approval of all the comrades who support the party leadership politically, but the approval of every single step we took and every single document we wrote in the unity by the political opponents of the leadership inside the party, the Johnson group.

We have consistently taken the position that we know that the differences are between the two parties, and that these differences are significant and deep. We added, the only cement strong enough to hold together in fruitful union comrades holding these different views, is a full and genuine party democracy which assures any minority an unrestricted ideological life and the necessary possibilities of becoming a majority in a normal way. We take this occasion to say for the hundredth time: without this cement, a real unity cannot take place or, if it does take place, will not be solid. And we may add further, anyone who denies this, may be talking for unity in the most sincere way, but he is not really working to make the unity effective.

Party democracy, Trotsky pointed out more than once, is meaningless unless the membership is kept continuously informed of all the facts relevant to the problem before it. A decision taken without a knowledge of the facts is sure to be a wrong decision. So also with a decision taken on the basis of falsified facts, regardless of whether the falsifications are deliberate or unwitting.

These considerations, too, have decided our policy on the unity question. From the very beginning to the present day, we kept all the comrades informed of the facts, both in circulars and in oral reports delivered to the membership by the representatives of the National Committee. We made public every single document; even the "confidential" letters sent to the comrades of the Minority while they were still in the SWP were published in our party BULLETIN, which is available not only to our party members but also to the SWP. How good could a unity be if a membership entered into it without an understanding of all of the relevant facts?

That is one of the considerations which caused us to insist so much upon the need of a collaboration between the two parties and their memberships as a test of the practicability of the unity and a preparation for its achievement. Without prejudice to either party, we argued: the two memberships must get to know each other and to work side by side with each other. In the course of this collaboration, they will be able to judge each other not merely on the basis of what they have been told or have read, but by what they see in practice with their own eyes. They will be able to check with each other on "stories" that are circulating. They will be better able to judge the extent to which the theoretical or political differences makes possible common practical work in the class struggle, which is another way of saying, they will be able to see how practical unity is. A unity which is made or even prepared exclusively at the top, already has at least one strike against it.

Let us be more concrete. All our comrades are now acquainted with the circular letter of Comrade X to the leading militants of the SWP. What was contained in it was communicated orally to virtually the entire SWP membership. As I wrote in my circular to our own party (March 8, 1947), the letter of X did not and could not change our position on the unity question. But you have to be blind not to see that such a letter affects - and affects adversely - the prospects of the unity. This should be evident not only to the most ardent supporters of unity but precisely and primarily to such comrades. Why? The answer is simple and clear.

If I give the membership of my party an utterly incorrect picture of why I am in favor of unity or of why the other party is in favor of unity, I am, it is true, swing some doubting people in favor of the idea of unity, but obviously the unity itself will have a very sandy foundation. When the true picture is revealed, as eventually it is, I find I have gained nothing because the comrades will say: This is not why I took a position for unity - I was for unity on an entirely different basis, I had an entirely different impression of the situation.

If it is reported that an ambidextrous opponent forced the CP leadership to accept unity against its will by putting a "knife at its throat" and "a pistol at its head," the results are equally bad in both parties. In the SWP membership, the report will necessarily produce an attitude toward our comrades which, as everyone of us who has encountered it knows, does anything but create an atmosphere conducive to unity. In our own party, this report, if it remained uncorrected, would necessarily produce confusion, contempt for the leadership (which would be entirely justified if the report were true), and even opposition to unity. To avoid this, a circular was immediately sent to all our members in which the facts were corrected and the record set straight insofar as we were able to do this. Do we thereby serve the interests of a solid unity or not?

Now, what is Johnson's attitude? Here is a situation that calls for political honesty and forthrightness. Neither at the PC meeting, where the letter of X was first read, nor at the New York membership, which was held after we had seen the letter of X, did Johnson or his friends (oversensitive people, please note: I mean, as usual, political friends) find it necessary to make a single comment on it or a single proposal with regard to it. The X letter speaks repeatedly of Johnson's position and makes all sorts of allegations about it. Some of the points made in that letter cannot be dealt with by us; they can be dealt with only by Johnson. The membership is naturally and properly interested - for good political reasons and not out of idle curiosity - in the truth or falsehood of these allegations, which only Johnson can establish, or which he is in a better position to establish than we are. He is under a political obligation to speak up, without anyone having to tug at his tongue. But Johnson does not feel any necessity for speaking.

It is only when he is boxed off into a corner that he says something. He writes the letter to Cannon which the PC requested. Even then, the letter says: "We wish to say, however, that in our opinion nothing said there (i.e., in the letter of X) required any special intervention on our part."

Nothing said in the X letter required a statement from Johnson! Why not? Doesn't it matter whether the statements, the allegations, made about us and especially about Johnson are true or false? Doesn't it matter whether the statements, the allegations, made about us and especially about Johnson are true or false? Doesn't it matter if the readers of the X letter - which means the members of the SWP - accept false statements as true, and base their position on unity upon such statements? Doesn't it matter if the members of Johnson's own party are keenly interested in the truth or falsity of X's allegations about Johnson? Does Johnson believe that misrepresentation or falsification or duplicity is as good as any other basis on which to establish a united party?

Johnson complied with our request that he express himself on the X circular. He finally handed the PC a copy of the letter sent to Cannon. The question of Johnson's position on this score was already being discussed among the membership, at least in New York, as was only proper. The next meeting of the PC had several resolutions from New York branches inquiring about Johnson's statement. We waited in vain for any proposal from Johnson to make his letter to Cannon available to the membership. That motion had to be made by me. It was adopted with Johnson abstaining in the vote.

Johnson's conduct in this matter, while inexcusable, is understandable. His

letter to Cannon, for all its diplomacy (which ought to be left to the United Nations where it belongs), and all its ambiguity and all its "clever" Philadelphia-lawyer formalations, convicts him of what we have successfully made unpopular in our party - political duplicity. His proposal to the SWP for a bloc against us was made in the dark, was never reported to us, or, so far as we know, even to the members of the Minority group. His amnestying of the SWP on the Russian question was made in the dark, and was never made known until we forced it into the open. He continues to diplomatize with the party and its leadership on the simple question, which requires only a simple and honest answer, as to whether or not he committed himself to the SWP to split from the WP if we did not "capitulate" to unity. Diplomacy and small-time maneuvers behind the scenes are not calculated to smooth the road to unity.

Finally, Johnson, regardless of what motivates him, is encouraging an attitude which militates against the healthy unity and the kind of party that we have always had in mind. The self-suppression of the criticism of the SWP in his article on the general strike symbolizes it. It should be offensive to the SWP as it is offensive to us. Ostensibly, Johnson eliminated the criticism of the SWP from his article in the interests of unity. The suppressed section has been quoted above in full. Read it again. Agree with it or not, it is nevertheless obviously a political judgment, vigorous but not violent. If such an objective criticism (again, be it right or wrong) has to be suppressed from a publication which has, after all, such a limited circle of readers, because its appearance would presumably have an adverse effect upon unity - then what is so clearly implied by the suppression cannot but be offensive to the SWP and its leadership. For Johnson is saying in effect that the SWP's support of unity will diminish when it sees even so restrained a criticism of it published for even so restricted an audience. The implication for the SWP is not very flattering! Especially when at the same time Johnson does not suppress his criticism of us, evidently feeling that political discussion and criticism can have no effect upon our party's support of unity. It is a distinct disservice to foster the idea that discussion and mutual criticism are somehow incompatible with collaboration or unification with the SWP. This idea is being fostered sufficiently without Johnson's aid. It is a disservice because it can only strengthen the belief of many SWP comrades that discussion and criticism are some sort of "luxury" in the movement that can be tolerated only at rare intervals; and because it can only strengthen the apprehensions of those of our own comrades who believe - wrongly, in my opinion - that unity can be achieved only by the suppression of their political views and that this is too high a price to pay even for unity.

We say for the hundredth time that we are not for converting the movement into a mere debating society, that we are not for endless discussions, that we are not for discussion as a substitute for activity in the class struggle, that we are not for interminable dilettante or academic debates on what is the sex of every angel and how many can dance on the point of a pin. Everyone who knows our party and its life knows that this is true. But we also repeat for the hundredth time that we are for a party which assures a full and free ideological life, which assures all the necessary rights and possibilities of development for any and all tendencies that are a legitimate part of the revolutionary movement, which considers discussion and criticism not as a luxury or as something tolerated when there is nothing better to do but as an inseparable part of the life-blood of the movement. That is what we have in our party now. That is what we want the united party to be - that and nothing else.

Those who have contrary ideas are entitled to them, but far from yielding to them we intend to combat them with all the necessary vigor and a full sense of our responsibilities. We have never concealed this, not from anyone. Our proposals in this respect are no secret, and that is attested among other things by the fact that my circular of March 8 to the party members was also sent to the comrades of the SWP leadership and the leading comrades all over the world. We have no use for pottifogging, cheap-jack maneuvers, fancy diplomacy or duplicity and we have no need for them. Whoever employs these devices stamps himself ac-

cordingly.

* * *

In connection with the questions asked him in the PC for the purpose of a simple clarification of the facts, Johnson made a statement that what we are aiming at "is the discrediting of a political opponent and not the advancement of unification." This accusation is made by the comrade who just wrote in his letter to Camron "that Johnson's first remark to you on entering the room was that he hoped that this would be the beginning of a long collaboration in the struggle against revisionists of the type of the IKD and of the type of Shachtman and that a substantial part of our conversation proceeded along these lines." The accusation, consequently, is a little rash.

By Ernest Erber

Though no one in the leadership of our party proposed that the party advocate a general strike as labor's counter-move to the court action against the miners*, the question was raised in a number of branch discussions. Though the older comrades, with whom the question of the general strike is ABC, dealt with the matter adequately in the discussions I have heard about, it is well that we devote some space to a written presentation of our long-established and fundamental point of view on the subject, particularly as it relates to the party's estimate of the American labor movement today. This is made all the more necessary by some of Comrade Johnson's remarks on the general strike in his article in a recent issue of the Bulletin. (Vol II no 1) Those of Johnson's remarks that are unintelligible will harm no one. But since some people will insist upon extracting some ideas on the general strike from this article, it can only be considered a contribution to general confusion on the subject. We will reserve specific reference to Johnson's formulations for the latter part of the article. (We almost wrote "Come to grips with Johnson's formulations. This we confess is not quite possible. Trying to 'come to grips' with Johnson leaves one somewhat in the position of the character in a Russian drama whom Lenin often quoted somewhat as follows: "I seize the fellow by the collar! and what do I find? The rascal has no collar!")

What is a general strike?

Unless we are clear on what is referred to under the heading of the general strike we can expect no clarity in a discussion of its role. There really should be no dispute, however, on the meaning of the term "general strike" among Marxists. It has a long history and has achieved a most specific definition. We might add, that anarchists, syndicalists and most bourgeois ideologists have shared this definition with the Marxists. The need for extra care in clarifying what we are talking about arises from some curious passages in Johnson's article. (We have in mind, for instance, his reference to an alleged general strike in the U.S.A. in 1936)

The essential feature of a general strike is that it is directed against the state. Because of this, it has a specifically political character, regardless of what gave rise to it originally or what the formal demands of the strikers are. The aim of a general strike is to paralyse the economy (industry, transport, communication) and keep it paralysed until the state yields to the demands of the strikers.

*There appears to have been a mistaken impression on the part of some members that Comrade Johnson favored the slogan for a general strike. Though Johnson may have said or written things that contributed to this impression, a careful reading of Johnson's article in the Bulletin as well as the minutes of the PC meeting on the miners' crisis give no grounds for imputing this false position to Johnson.

But do not some general strikes have economic demands?

In some general strikes the formal demands have been economic. But this has not in any way altered the fact that it was a political strike, i.e. aimed at forcing the state to yield. An example of this is the British General Strike of 1926. The strike arose out of the long drawn out dispute between the miners and the coal operators. However, from the very outset the real spokesman for the operators was the government. The real negotiations that preceded the general strike were between the leaders of the General Council (Bevins-Thomas) and Prime Minister Baldwin. The government had set up a Royal Commission on the Coal Industry headed by Lord Samuel which, along with other recommendations, had asked that the wages of the miners be cut or that their hours be lengthened. The operators, of course, quite agreed. The government was determined to force the Samuel formula down the throats of the miners. It gave its complete support to the operators when the latter broke off negotiations with the miners' national leadership and stated that they would only negotiate on a district basis. When the miners' union refused, the operators began a campaign of lock-outs. The general strike of British labor was aimed against the government's attempt to force the Samuel Report upon the miners' union. Labor's cry of "not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day" was most certainly an economic demand. But the General Strike was a gigantic test of strength between organized labor and the capitalist state. It was in every sense a political struggle.

The strike movement that broke out in France upon the victory of the People's Front in the 1936 elections was similarly a political strike that made formal economic demands. Though the strikes were directed against each individual enterprise, the key demands of a 40-hour week and two-weeks vacation with pay unified the strike movement and made it immediately a question of national governmental policy. The whole sense of the strike movement was to say: "We have won the elections. It is our government. Let our government force the bourgeoisie to grant our demands." While the sit-in strikers occupied the capitalist's properties, the real intent of the strike was to hold a club over the head of the Blum cabinet.

Whether the demands of the strikers are for the right to vote, the release of class war prisoners, the dismissal of an unpopular minister, the granting of a constitution, or similar obviously political demands, or whether their demands are for more wages, less hours, paid vacations, or similar economic demands, the essential feature of a general strike is that the workingclass seeks to force its will upon the state by extra-parliamentary methods, i.e. the economic paralysis of the nation. Whether the formal demands are political or economic is therefore not decisive. An action undertaken by the entire working class against the capitalist state (as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie as a whole) is by virtue of that fact alone a political struggle.

Can a general strike be successful?

Marxists have held that it is highly improbable that a general strike as such can gain its demands. The best argument for this contention is supplied by the bourgeois ideologists. They have greeted every general strike with the cry that the workers are

seeking to dictate to the government, that this constitutes the end of government by law (i.e. their law) and the beginning of government by "mob rule", etc. For the capitalist state to concede to the pressure of the general strike means for it to abdicate its position as the sole source of political authority. It must then admit that it can wield the power of government only so far as the organized working class permits it to. This is the same as saying that a government that yields before a general strike is already in a revolutionary crisis. It cannot merely yield and go on governing as if nothing had happened to fundamentally alter its status.

When the Tzarist government yielded before the strikes in 1905 it deepened the revolutionary crisis. However, the Tzarist government yielded only in order to gain a breathing space in which to prepare the counter-revolution which would restore the government as sole ruler in the land. Had the Baldwin government been forced to yield before the General Strike of 1926, a full-blown revolutionary situation would have developed in Great Britain. The left-wingers would have swept into the leadership of the General Council on the wave of triumphant enthusiasm of the working class. The local Councils of Action would have emerged as sources of dual power, performing the functions fulfilled by Soviets in the Russian Revolution. The position of the capitalist state would have continued to deteriorate unless it was able to strike a counter-blow and recoup the status it lost in the strike. No matter what the specific issue, the method of the general strike is inherently revolutionary. A successful general strike immediately places on the order of the day the question: who is master in the land? A successful general strike therefore, is but a prologue to the struggle for power.

As with all social phenomena, one cannot arbitrarily say that a general strike that achieves its demands without creating a revolutionary situation is an impossibility. However, it would have to be compounded of such unusual circumstances as to be considered a rarity.

What is there about the method of the general strike that makes it revolutionary?

Formally considered, the general strike is nothing but a cessation of work carried on, not in a single industry, but in the entire economic life. If bricklayers decide not to do any work until their demands are met it is considered their legal right. No one would propose that they be driven to work at the point of a bayonet, no matter how much their action may be denounced in the bourgeois press. Then what is so terrible if bricklayers decide to stay at home together with auto workers, railroad men, trolley operators, waiters, clerks, truck drivers, telephone workers, and all other sections of the working class? Formally considered, nothing.

However, a general strike is not weighed by its legal formality. It is weighed by the consequences in the realm of economic activity and political authority. What is the aim of a general strike? To paralyse economic life. All economic life? Obviously not, since the workers are as much in need of certain economic activity as any other section of the population. In addition, humanitarian considerations demand that hospitals keep open, that mortuaries continue to operate, that services essential to health continue to function, etc. Or to

put it more bluntly: workers have to eat, too, general strike or no general strike.

We discover then, that a general strike is not a complete cessation of economic life. It is, rather, a planned reduction of economic activity to the minimum determined by the general strike leadership.

What does this mean? It means that the general strike leadership takes into its hands the power to determine which wheels shall turn and which wheels shall stand still. Babies need milk. The strike committee must therefore grant a permit for a specified number of trucks to move milk into the cities. A substantial section of the population lives in premises without cooking facilities. They must have access to restaurants. The strike committees must, therefore specify that a certain number of restaurants are permitted to remain open. Essential trucks require gasoline. Permits must be granted to specified gas stations to remain open. How is this done in practice? The strike committee establishes a sub-committee on permits which plans the essential services, listens to complaints, requests, etc. The committee prints permit placards to be displayed on vehicles and on business establishments in operation by permission of the strike leadership.

What does this mean in practice? It means that the control of economic life has passed out of the hands of the bourgeoisie and is concentrated in the hands of the organized working class. Permission to engage in economic activity must now be secured from a body that is extra-legal, that is nowhere recognized in law. A capitalist cannot appeal from the decision of a strike committee. He can only take steps to overthrow its de facto authority. This authority is implicitly a challenge to the authority of the capitalist state. The mechanics of a general strike soon pose the question of which authority will prevail.

This question is posed because the steps taken by the capitalist state soon transform the role of the strike committee from an implicit challenge of the state power to an explicit challenge. The state, as the rallying center of the bourgeoisie, sets about to organize its forces to break the strike. For this purpose it needs, above all, communications and transport. The question arises: shall telegraphers transmit government orders, communiques etc. Shall radio stations be permitted to operate to spread anti-strike propaganda? Shall trains be operated that move troops into strategic locations for use against the strikers? Shall airports be permitted to function that service planes carrying government officials on anti-strike missions? Shall printers be permitted to work on government proclamations against the strike? The strike becomes, therefore, not only a paralysis of bourgeois economic life but also of the capitalist state.

But this question has another side to it. Just as the state needs communications and transport to disorganize the strike, so the strike leadership needs the same facilities to organize the strike. The strike leadership must remain in constant contact with its sub-divisions, like a general staff of an army. It must supply general information and inspiration to the ranks. It must use the telegraph, radio and newspapers. It must use planes and automobiles to dispatch its couriers, organizers, etc. It must decide to say to the state: you may not use these facilities but we shall. Or

we shall share these facilities.

It should now be apparent why it follows that a state that yields to the demands of a general strike has abdicated its position as the sole source of governmental authority.

What steps does the state take under these circumstances to break the strike? Though every act of the strike may be strictly legal, the state acts, not on the legal formality involved, but upon its political essence. It sees the latter in terms of a civil war, a revolutionary challenge of its authority. The state consequently waives all constitutional and legal procedures (or quickly passes such emergency laws or executive orders as to give a legal fig-leaf to its actions.) It brings into play the entire state apparatus, mainly the armed forces, plus such volunteer forces it can gather from the population, mainly the middle class. It commandeers railroads, seizes communications systems, takes over newspapers, etc. In other words, it seeks to deprive the strike leadership of the materials of war and gather these in its own hands. It floods the country with propaganda and misinformation about the strike. It arrests strike leaders on any flimsy pretext. It incites "Incidents" for purposes of firing upon crowds and terrorizing them. It spreads suspicions of one sections of the workers against another, Negro against white, skilled against unskilled, etc. The state need not use all of these tactics. History reveals, however, that every general strike has been fought with some combination of them.

It now becomes apparent why the general strike cannot easily succeed as a general strike. The workers cannot wage a strike when the bourgeois state is waging a civil war. If the workers are to prevail, the methods of civil war must be answered with -- the methods of civil war.

Do Marxists then discard the general strike as a tactic?

Not at all. The only stricture the Marxists insist upon is that those who speak of a general strike know what is involved and do not play with the slogan. For the Marxist, the general strike (at least on a nation-wide scale) is imminently related to the revolutionary crisis and the struggle for power. It follows therefore that one voluntarily embarks upon a general strike only when one is prepared also for the revolutionary crisis and the struggle for power.

However, there are situations in which the revolutionary party has no choice but to embark upon a general strike because the consequences of not striking can leave the working class in a position that is far worse than any that could ensue from a defeated general strike.

Another situation is the immediate threat of a fascist seizure of power. If this danger finds the working class divided and under a non-revolutionary leadership, a general strike can bring about a situation in which the workers forge a fighting unity, heighten their morale and prepare to go over to the offensive. If the fascist or reactionary forces are not very strong, the general strike itself may disrupt and destroy their attempted coup, as happened in Germany in 1920 with the Kapp putsch. However, if the fascist threat finds the workers united under the leadership of a revolutionary party,

the latter would be most foolish to begin the struggle with a general strike. Under these circumstances the party must prepare the working class for civil war. A general strike which in theory, paralyzes both sides equally usually paralyzes the workers freedom of maneuver more than the enemy in practice. The experiences in Spain in July 1936 testify to this. In those cities and areas where the fascist uprising succeeded, the general strike was quickly broken by troops manning transport, etc. In those cities and areas where the issue was in doubt, the general strike was more of a hindrance to the workers than to the fascists. Trotsky offered the German Communists some sound advice on this score in 1932 in his pamphlet, "Germany -- What Next".

Another circumstance under which the general strike can play an important role is as the first blow against a dictatorship. Where the working class movement has been illegal and unity of action on a nation-wide basis is difficult, the general strike slogan serves ideally as the means to combine their opposition to the regime and give it a unified and organized force. It permits the workers, who begin in a state of disorganization, to organize in the course of the strike while simultaneously disorganizing the forces of the state. It is highly probable that the decimated working class movement of Spain will again find a common voice and a unified front in a general strike movement against the Franco regime. Here too, the success of the general strike can have only one outcome -- the overthrow of the regime.

What would have resulted from a general strike against the court action against the miners?

The greatest likelihood would have been a disastrous defeat for U.S. labor. To seek to reverse a court decision by a general strike is a serious undertaking. The government would have to be in desperate straits to yield under these circumstances. It would have to be in such a serious position that it would be prepared to practically dissolve the authority of the courts over labor. It would take this step only in order to gain a slight respite from the pressure and to prepare a counter-revolutionary blow that would not only aim to restore its own authority but also to render labor impotent to repeat its action for a long time. However, any serious examination of the scene in the United States today will reveal that a strike led by the labor bureaucracy would have such slight chance of being effective enough to make the government back down that the probability of catastrophe would be related to a defeated strike and not to the aftermath of a victorious strike.

The consequences of a defeated general strike for American labor today would be far more serious than those for British labor in the years after 1926. Nor is it correct to regard the possibility of a general strike led by Lewis, Murray and Green as sheerly utopian. It is, of course, the last thing they would want. But history shows many examples of the most conservative labor leaderships being pushed into actions they could not avoid. There was slight prospect of this occurring in the course of the recent crisis. But it must, nevertheless, not be excluded from our calculations.

With this review of the general strike and its relationship to the American labor scene today, it becomes apparent why no responsible leader of our party (and that includes the entire Leadership) advocated the general strike as the answer to the court action.

But could not the unions have gone on a 24-hour strike in protest?

Yes, most certainly. This may have been one of the means we would have advocated in the joint labor councils called for by the party (The motion of the PC on December 6 called for the organization of local and national joint labor councils, constituted by delegates from various unions. Johnson sought to amend this to make these bodies Soviets. The impossibility of having Soviets this year should be apparent to Johnson. His own convention resolution of a year ago said "within two years".)

Such a 24-hour strike, however, has nothing to do with what has always been spoken of under the heading of a general strike. Such a 24-hour strike is a gigantic labor demonstration. What is a demonstration? A show of force, a threat. What is a general strike? An extra-parliamentary action to force a demand upon the state. No one who has been in our movement more than a year could possibly confuse these two decidedly different tactics. Just as soon confuse a picket line before the White House and its seizure.

On page 21 of Johnson's article there appears a section under the imposing title of The General Strike in Theory. I defy anyone, including the bright, young theoreticians in Johnson's faction who know about everything there is to know, to make head or tail out of what Johnson has set down there upon the ever-patient paper.

(For a time I was convinced that the preceding section which appears as a blank space must have been even more wierd. I was sure that even the paper had rebelled and had refused to have any further nonsense printed on it.. However, inquiry has revealed that this blank section was originally an attack upon the SWP but was deleted by Johnson in the course of a unity delirium. All we can say is that Cannon got off easy. All he needed to be rerieved from Johnson's withering pen was a nod toward unity. Since we have not only been in favor of unity with Johnson but have practised it these many years, we are somewhat at a loss as to what we can do to gain refuge from his wrath.)

Writes Johnson: "The general political (underlined in original) strike and the Soviets appeared in 1905 owing to the stage of development of production."

Where? In Russia? Because its development was so low? Or, so high? If so high, then why not in the United States during the 1860's or 1870's? If so low, then why not in Rumania or Turkey?

Next sentence: "In 1936 in France and in the U.S. appeared a new stage, the general strike for economic demands (increase in wages, holidays with pay, etc.)"

Was this new stage a higher or lower one? If higher, do we go from political strikes in 1905 to economic strikes in 1936? What about the strike movement for an eight-hour day in the US in 1886? Or was this a lower stage? General strikes for political demands and those for economic demands are all political strikes. The Russian strikes in 1905 also had economic demands. If someone told Johnson that there was a general strike in the US in 1936 he was pulling Johnson's leg and its about time that Johnson caught on. 1561

Next sentence: "Today as I have explained in outline, particularly in the US, the whole economic development and the social form it engenders, poses before the workers the general strike and the formation of committees for their economic demands."

Yes, it "poses" the general strike. But should we advocate it? Should we hasten it? Encourage it? Not only does it "pose" the formation of committees for the workers economic demands, but the workers already have such committees in most industries; Shop steward councils, shop committeemen, etc. Our task is to pose before the workers the political demands of labor.

Next sentence: "This is the social structure, the mould which gives form to the exploding wrath of the workers."

This is also a bit of rhetoric without content.

Next sentence: "The workers in the Commune behaved as they did because of the social structure determined by the stage of development of production".

How did the Commune sneak in here under the heading of "The General Strike in Theory"? And just how did the workers in the Commune behave? "as they did". Why? Because of the social structure." And what was that? "Whatever was determined by the state of development of production". (Faintly) Oh, I see.

Next sentence: "The same applies in 1905".

Without a doubt.

Next sentence: "The same applies to the US in 1946".

And in 1947, too, we bet.

Next sentence: "It is within this framework that a party functions. What framework? "The social structure, you dice, Above all as determined by the "stage of development of production."

Next sentence: "That is why the US bourgeoisie and the workers are concerned empirically with the general strike."

Good. As long as they don't get tangled up in the theory of the general strike. Gets quite confusing, you know.

Next sentence: "That is why the minority makes this its basic strategic orientation."

What? The general strike? Then why doesn't someone propose it? Its quite evident that Johnson has no such intentions.

Next sentence: "The party of the Fourth International does as we have seen."

Pardon us, Comrade Johnson, as you have seen. How could we see when you delete the section on the party of the Fourth International?

A QUESTION TO COMRADE FOREST -

By Irving Howe

In her reply to comrade Gates' criticism of her Outline of Capital, comrade Forest raises an interesting problem. She attempts to rebut Gates' criticism of her statement that her outline fell into an "idealist" trap on the question of the "inevitability of socialism." Now this problem is rather complicated, and something of a chestnut too; I don't wish to discuss it here at all. What interests me is Forest's defense of her statement that Marx's analysis of capitalism is based on his concept of "the inevitability of socialism."

Forest's original statement as Gates noticed and as anyone just re-motely acquainted with historical or philosophical methodology cannot but help noticing, is "pure idealism." Forest wrote:

"It is because Marx based himself on the inevitability of socialism that he could discern the law of motion of capitalist society, the inevitability of its collapse."

To deny this as did Gates and as must any Marxist at all concerned with the simplest aspects of scientific method, is, Forest infers, "to bury the dialectic in the debris of pragmatism." She then offers a most interesting but quite irrelevant quotation from Rosa Luxemburg to buttress her point.

But let us try to get to the heart of the matter; quotations or no. If it is true, as Forest says, that the discernment of the laws of motion of capitalist society was possible for Marx because he based himself "on the inevitability of socialism"; then we must ask how did Marx deduce "the inevitability of socialism" to begin with? If it is "undialectical" to deduce something from present-day events, trends and facts; which it is claimed will be inevitable in the future, that is if it is "undialectical" to deduce future possibilities, probabilities or inevitabilities from contemporary actualities -- then how the devil does one deduce them?

Forest declares that to deny her conception is to use "a similar point of departure" as did "the bourgeois and petty bourgeois critics of Marx" who claimed "that Capital is an unscientific work because Marx believed in Socialism long before he gathered data about the economic organism of capitalism." To which Marxists have always replied that Marx's economic data and theories in Capital are verifiable apart from his socialist beliefs; that they retain objective scientific validity apart from Marx's political inclinations before writing Capital.

From an examination of what exists, of what has existed and what we see developing -- that is, the tendencies, the possibilities of development within capitalist society -- Marxists deduce the necessity, the possibility, and, if you will, the "inevitability of socialism" (whatever that last phrase may mean, or whatever meaning may be assigned to it.) Why this method is "unadulterated American pragmatism" (why "unadulterated" and why "American"?) and if so, why there is anything wrong with it and contrary to Marxism, I leave other, profounder minds.

Forest -- in her own small way is doing what Marx said of Hegel: standing the matter on its head -- states a concept: the "inevitability of socialism." To deduce this "inevitability" from contemporary social development is, she tells us, pragmatism. From where, then, does she deduce it? From society, from social development? But in that case, she with poor Gates is lost among "the debris of pragmatism" From her wishes? Then she is simply a philosophical idealist!

But we shall not belabor the point anymore. By now, I think, it should be fairly easy to see. If not...

Since I lay no claim to scholarship, I cannot say how many crimes have been committed in the name of "inevitability of socialism". But surely never anything quite as ridiculous as comradé Forest's insistence that a belief in that theory is necessary in order to examine capitalist society in a Marxist way. Which just goes to show that as you live, you learn.

Note: The following amendment to the document "The Fourth International and the European Social Democracy" (Party Bulletin Vol 11 No 1) was presented to the Political Committee by S Berg on February 7, 1947. The amendment was not carried.

AMENDMENT TO DOCUMENT: THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

(Insert on page 6 of M.S. document in place of the sentence dealing with France.)

There are serious considerations which would make it an error at the present time to propose the application of this general European perspective of entry into the Social Democracy to France. It must be remembered that while the 4th Internationalists can influence loose centrist tendencies and leftward moving elements inside the Socialist Parties, they are themselves subject to pressures under such circumstances. The Trotskyist cadres are for the most part very young and inexperienced in continental Europe, especially because of losses under the Nazi occupation. Before considering the risks that these cadres would run in entry, consider the difficulties faced by the Trotskyist groups in the Social Democratic parties in 1934-1936, when these groups had leadership of a high political caliber developed in five years of the intense political life of the small Left Opposition.

These groups had some success within the Socialist Parties. Nevertheless, examining the results of this earlier entry in France, we find that the Bolshevik-Leninist Group gave birth to a centrist tendency at that time, which resisted any parting of the ways with the centrists in the SP, and in the end caused a disaggregation of the 4th International's forces in France in 1936, when we attempted to create an independent revolutionary party there. The Trotskyists emerged only slightly enlarged, and from 1936 to 1939 the centrist tendency in the SFIO remained the main pole of attraction for revolutionary and militant workers.

Does this mean that entry was wrong in the first place? No, but it does mean that entry is not a get rich quick scheme, but only a rather depressing, though unfortunately necessary, alternative to continued isolation as a small sect.

Therefore, where a section of the 4th International does show serious progress in size and connections with the masses, even though not taking giant strides, entry is not justified. This is the case in France. Our French section, which has grown from 500 to 1000 members in a little over a year, consists almost entirely of young inexperienced elements. The present majority tendency in the French section manifests opportunist tendencies on some questions, and the party is divided into at least five tendencies with additional sub-tendencies. Such a party could probably carry through the tactic of entry/with

a serious split in its ranks both on the way into the French SP and on the way out later. Meanwhile, the party would have largely cut itself off from its present sources of growth. The PCI reported that 90% of its recruits came directly from the ranks of the Communist Party. These elements will ^{not} break from the CP to join a faction of the SP.

In the unions close working cooperation has been achieved between the Trotskyists and unaffiliated revolutionary workers through organization of groups of supporters of "WorkersFront," the paper of the revolutionary minority in the CGT (which the Trotskyists share responsibility for editing). That this tendency is not small is indicated by the fact that at the last CGT congress, its platform received the votes of half of the opposition to the Stalinists, thus being as large as the reformist opposition tendency at the congress.

The results of the French elections demonstrated that there now exists a large minority of French workers that prefers to "throw away" its votes on the PCI, yet is almost entirely unorganized politically. Furthermore, the election figures, district by district, indicate that these particular workers vote Stalinist when unable to vote PCI. They also cannot be effectively reached if we are inside the SP.

Of course the rejection of entry in France should not mean ignoring the symptomatic importance of the centrist group, which has developed in the French SP, and achieved a majority of the last congress. Fraction work, especially in the Socialist Youth should be intensified, together with every possible attempt at local united front action. The pressure of events may result in a split in the French SP. Since there is no Stalinist tendency in the party (unlike Italy), this would mean the coming into existence of an independent left centrist party, similar to the PSOP of 1938-1939. Speedy entry into such a party before it crystallized would be mandatory.

Saul Berg

1566

ON GUARD!

By Munis and Peralta

* * *

In its report to the October session of the IEC, the International Secretariat deals with the preparation of the World Congress of the Fourth International (Internal Bulletin, December 1946). We must say right at the outset that this document satisfies us in no wise because it contributes not the slightest substance to the discussion that ought to precede the Congress - quite the contrary - and in the absence of this discussion, the Congress, instead of leading to the constitution of a genuine world party of the socialist revolution, will be the introduction to its organic decomposition.

In this document is felt a timidity which is in striking contrast with the scope of the tasks that devolve upon us. Unlike Jean Sarmant ("I am too big for myself."), the comrades of the IS and the IEC repeat to themselves, "I am too small for myself," all the live-long day. Indeed, we are told that the Congress "must be primarily a Congress of the organizations that have abided by international discipline and which maintained normal relations with the leading bodies." They are trying here to cover up with the word "discipline" the blows inflicted upon the very principles, upon the written program of the International by, for example, the Canadian section. In the eyes of the comrades of the leadership is not that loyalty to revolutionary principles which constitutes our reason for existence a thousand times more important than the observance of discipline and "normal relations with the leading bodies," even though a lot could be said about normal relations so far as the Canadian section is concerned? We, however, accuse this party of having violated surreptitiously the principles of the International on the question of the war and of having had an opportunist attitude toward it during the last imperialist conflict ("non-support" instead of an active and consistent opposition). Besides, what is a discipline which clings to the external organizational forms (normal relations) in order the better to violate the principles upon which they rest? In reality, if the discipline were adhered to in the full sense of the word, the IEC would be obliged to forbid the Canadian section, and no doubt other sections, admittance to the Congress for having violated the ideological discipline which is certainly more important than the formal discipline which is dealt with here.

What exactly does the IS understand by "normal relations?" The position adopted with regard to the great revolutionary problems or the courteous letters that are exchanged with it? For a revolutionary leadership, it would have to be the position adopted with regard to the great revolutionary problems and, in that case, we would be obliged to set ourselves against, at the very least, the participation of the Canadian section in the Congress and - who knows? - of the IS. As to the former, we can assert that it held an opportunist position during the war; as to the latter, its inertia in the investigation of this matter permits us to assume ideological complicity with the former.

Between the Founding Congress of the Fourth International and the Congress now being planned stand all the war years, during which the IS was cut off from all contact with the major portion of our sections in Europe and Asia, and during this time it was unable to

play the leading role for which it was designated. As a consequence, most of the sections found it impossible to maintain the "normal relations" in question with the leadership. Are they going to be excluded from the Congress? In reality, what is hinted at here by "normal relations" is the acceptance without a murmur of our particular war program in its entirety. So true is this that in the following paragraph the report of the IS declares that organizations "which set conditions for their membership in the International" cannot participate in the Congress. What conditions are involved? We are not told and this very silence reveals their nature. All that can be involved are demands relating to the reconsideration of this or that point of the program. These demands we support unreservedly, even if they touch upon certain points of the program which we continue to consider valid. Nothing is lost by discussing them; on the contrary, we will gain by having them further clarified for the whole of the International.

In fact, the whole attitude of the IS on the preparatory discussion of the World Congress discloses that its primary interest is to safeguard the prestige of the leadership from which the International suffers to the point of being incapable of playing the revolutionary role it should have in the struggles now being heralded. We are not the only ones who say this; other voices are being raised in the International to alert the various sections against the maneuvers being prepared behind the scenes. The Minority of the Canadian section already speaks of the Stalinist methods of the C. leadership, shows the capitulatory consequences of the policy followed by the present leadership of the International whose procedure "betrays bureaucratic designs." Today it is the Mexican section which is obliged to protest against Comrade Smith who, in the name of the IS, insists that Comrade Red, expelled after having resigned from the organization, be put back in the position of leader which he formerly occupied in the Mexican section. Why? Because - although Comrade Smith's letter does not breathe a word about it - Comrade Red supports unconditionally the policy of the leadership of the International. In addition, Comrade Munis is confronted with veiled threats of expulsion by the leadership elected by the pre-conference with the sole mission of preparing the envisaged discussion of the World Congress, even though it has not the right to expel anyone because of its restricted authority. We could also speak at great length on the circular of February 22 last, addressed by the IS to all the sections of Latin America, which plainly reveals the same maneuvering spirit. All these indications and facts show that an unhealthy atmosphere prevails in the summits of the International. It must be dissipated immediately if we want the next Congress to be in a position really to define the revolutionary policy incumbent upon us in the present period. Instead of employing all sorts of subterfuges for the purpose of evading or restricting the discussion which is the very condition for the effectiveness of the Congress, and that with the aim of preserving the prestige of leaders whom these very precautions reveal as being conscious of their guilt - the leadership should organize the discussion loyally, and extend it so that none of the principal problems of the workers movement may be neglected. The IS and the IEC should intervene in the discussion to launch and organize it and not to restrict it.

It is indispensable to draw up a sincere, precise and detailed balance sheet, to examine thoroughly what was the attitude of the various sections during the imperialist war. The IS in no way motivates its refusal to put on the agenda the question of the position of the sections toward the imperialist war and the national movements.

Thereby it acknowledges that all the sections had a correct position toward this problem and wants to have this thesis acknowledged by the International. Even if all the sections had followed an intransigent revolutionary policy, this examination would be necessary. That is not the case, however, and it would be too hard to show that this happened because of the youth of our movement, the complex problems presented in the course of the war, like that of the occupation of Europe by Nazi imperialism and by the Anglo-American and Russian imperialisms. This question of the position of our sections during the war, therefore, deserves to be discussed in detail. The mistakes must be denounced and a resolution must be adopted on this question. We are of the opinion that the decision of the IS to devote a part of its report to this problem does not permit the ample discussion which is necessary, and clearly reveals the desire to cover up mistakes that the International as a whole ought to know in order to be in a position to avoid them in a similar case and if a healthy regime is to prevail in the International. Thus, nobody knows what was the attitude of the French section during the war. What position did this section have toward the "national liberation movement," the guerrillas, etc.? Nobody knows in detail, except for the well informed circles at the top. The rank and file of the whole International not only has the right to know it but it must know it in order to be able to draw the indispensable lessons from it.

All these restrictions that the IS wants to impose upon the discussion get their full meaning if we consider the limitations that the IS, in its circular of February 22, sets for the participation in the Congress of the sections and groups of Latin America. If the IS has reason for promoting the unification of the various groups existing in different countries, to the extent where no serious political difference separates them, this is not a reason why the groups that have not achieved unity should be pushed out of the Congress. As for the condition imposed of accepting in advance the discipline of the majority of the Congress, it is unique in the annals of the workers movement and the comrades of the Minority of the Canadian section are perfectly right in judging that it is "not very wise and false." That is the least you can say about it! We consider this demand absurd because it is patently imposed to prevent a militant or a group of militants from rising up against this or that decision taken by the majority once they are expelled because of their disagreement. Besides, this condition betrays the fear of factions whose legitimacy is nevertheless acknowledged and it aims at the constitution of a monolithic point of view. We protest against this demand and ask the IS to reconsider the decision it has taken on this point.

If the IS does not see the need of entrusting the plenipotentiary World Congress with the discussion of the conditions in which various tendencies may coexist in the International it is because its bureaucratic tendencies make it prone to deciding all problems by the application of a formal discipline which may have a nice effect upon inexperienced eyes but which bears within it a germ of degeneration whose effects will not be long in making themselves felt throughout the International, impeding all progress of the sections, ruining all possibility of ideological renovation for the International, striking it with sterility and impotence in face of the revolutionary events which are in preparation. That is almost inevitable if the IS succeeds in maneuvering the Congress as it has up to now.

Finally, we ask that all the groups and parties which adhere to the ideas of the Fourth International be invited to participate in the Congress with all rights. We have nothing to fear - quite the contrary - and by this the Fourth International will give an example of revolutionary democracy which will have the effect of helping dispel the accusation of sectarianism so often hurled at us.

In summary, we demand:

1. That the documents enabling us to judge the attitude of the principal sections toward the imperialist war and toward the "national resistance" movements, as well as those concerning the question of the Sino-Japanese war, be placed in discussion. This must be the first point of the agenda.

2. That the transition program be reexamined and brought up to date. All the IS wants is a discussion on the means of applying the program. However, several points of this program are outlived (we refer above all to the slogans of the SP-CP government, the united front with Stalinism, nationalization, etc.) and must be replaced by others. What reasons can be put forward for refusing to discuss these questions?

3. That all the groups adhering to the ideas of the Fourth International be invited to participate in the Congress with all rights and without conditions.

4. That the IS launch the discussion without placing any obstacles in its way.

Mexico, D. F.
April 3, 1947