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THE NEW WORLD REALITY AND THE NEW CONFUSION --
WHAT HANSEN'S DOCUMENT HAS REVEALED

By Harry Frankel

1. Reality and Marxist Thought

During the past decade, the process of world struggle has proved to be far more complex, far more realistic, we might say, than our mental view of it before the fact. This should not be surprising to us. Throughout the entire history of Marxism, mental norms and advance programmatic conceptions have been enriched, modified, concretized, spelled out, complexified by the actual reality as it came to pass. "Theory is gray but the tree of life is eternally green." It is with good reason that Marxists have attached themselves to Goethe's maxim.

The first great modification of Marxist perspective came during the half-century after the publication of the Communist Manifesto. Capitalism, instead of plunging into deeper depressions on the order of the crisis which produced the revolutions of 1848, entered instead upon a period of expansion which restored stability to the system up to the outbreak of World War I. Contrary to the sneers of anti-Marxists, Marx and Engels did not fail to alter their perspective in accordance with the changed reality. Their battles with the emigres who favored the adventurist perspective of continuing as though nothing had happened demonstrate this. Further, Engels and Lenin as well as Rosa Luxemburg, far from ignoring the fact, have left us profound theoretical analyses of the re-stabilization of capitalism in the second half of the 19th century.

The Russian Revolution, which we have come to regard as a norm, was itself a departure from the "normal" in a double sense. Firstly, it clashed with the general Marxist perspective that revolutions would come first in the advanced capitalist countries. Unforeseen and tortuous complexities, including the rise of Stalinism, in turn resulted from the "unnormative" Russian development. Secondly, the development of a proletarian revolution in Russia clashed with the programmatic and strategic concepts of the party which was to lead it. Lenin met the problem of reorientation with his April struggle for a sharp turn, a struggle in which he displayed scorn for the "old Bolsheviks" and their "museum relic ideas."

In The Revolution Betrayed, Trotsky offers us a valuable generalization: "Theory is not a note which you can present at any moment to reality for payment. If a theory proves mistaken we must revise it or fill out the gaps."

There are those who, over the centuries, have gone running to the graves of Marx and Engels waving this "note" and demanding payment. If the founders of our movement could reply, I am sure they would tell these insistent creditors: "we never pretended to be seers; only scientific socialists. We learned from reality. Go thou and do likewise!"

Our world movement has been confronted by a similar problem during the past decade. The complexity of world development, the originality and unexpectedness of the actual course of events, imposes upon us the necessity to rearm our minds so that our movement remains

a real one, connected with the actual problems of the world revolution. The ineluctable punishment for a failure to do this would be, as always in such cases, degeneration into a sect.

Sectarian movements develop not through an abandonment of basic program, but through a failure to connect that program with the ever-fresh problems of life and struggle. They thus live on the fringes of reality, everlastingly buttonholing people in order to try to interest them in the debates and problems of yesterday. Genuine Marxist parties, by contrast, know how to take the lessons of yesterday and plunge with them into the struggles of today. This difference may seem elusive to some, but it represents the real basis on which sects arise. Those to whom the difference is elusive are the victims upon which sects prey and base themselves.

2. What Happened to Our Perspective?

The problem of norm and reality is, to use Hegelian terminology, the problem of essence and phenomenal form. World development has never abrogated the essence of Marxism; on the contrary Marxism has shown itself to be the essence of world development. But this essence has been presented in many twisted, distorted, complex and original phenomenal forms. In all cases the problem of Marxists has been twofold: to discover the essence of Marxism in the peculiar forms and to adjust their thinking to the new forms. A movement neglects this twofold approach only at the peril of its demise as a viable revolutionary tendency.

With regard to Stalinism, our perspective as we entered World War II was this: Stalinism will be destroyed in the war, either through an upsurge of the revolutionary movement or by a crushing of the revolutionary movement and the Soviet Union together with it. In The USSR In War, Trotsky wrote:

"If this war provokes, as we firmly believe, a proletarian revolution, it must inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR and the regeneration of Soviet democracy. . . . If however, it is conceded that the present war will provoke not revolution but a decline of the proletariat, then there remains another alternative: the further decay of monopoly capitalism, its further fusion with the state and the replacement of democracy wherever it still remained by a totalitarian regime. . . . This would be, according to all indications, a regime of decline, signaling the eclipse of civilization." (In Defense of Marxism, p. 8-9.)

This perspective was not validated in the course of the war. Neither, however, was it invalidated. History thus often finds a crevice in the most solid-appearing logical structure, and wriggles through in a peculiar and original way of its own. The revolution did not destroy imperialism, but it cut the ground out from under imperialism's feet in most of Europe and Asia, placing it in its present near-hopeless situation. Similarly, the revolutionary wave did not prove strong enough to destroy Stalinism which emerged seemingly more powerful than ever. Instead, the revolution moved into the Kremlin household, where it now paces like an enraged tiger, keeping the inhabitants in constant panic that it will turn on them and rend them to bits.

Thus while the war did not realize our perspective, it did fulfill its essence by demonstrating that the tendencies we foresaw in 1940 were actually present and were not figments of our imagination. Further, by preparing the circumstances of an inevitable war in which the relationship of forces will be heavily to the disadvantage of imperialism, history has laid the groundwork for the full realization of this perspective of the destruction of capitalism and the doom of Stalinist labor bureaucratism in the process. It would be wrong to conclude, however, that our perspective has been modified only in terms of its postponement. The forms of its realization, particularly as concerns the relation between Stalinism and the revolution, have become far more complex than we had any right to expect before the last war.

Meanwhile, we were left with our incomplete and as yet historically undefined prognosis. Sure enough, as in all other turns of the historic road, there were those who came running to us with their due bill. From all sides we saw people waving the page out of The USSR In War. The demand for payment on our perspective took various forms.

Some said "Trotskyism is bankrupt." (The bank is busted; it can't pay our note.) Felix Morrow is a good example. You have to say this much for him: ~~he tried to~~ act like a decent creditor. He waited until the very end of the war. He gave us every minute he could afford until he became convinced that we weren't going to pay up. Someone ran into him on the subway a year ago, and the first thing he did was pull out Trotsky's prediction and wave it under her nose. "Trotskyism," he explained, "would have been all right if Stalinism were destroyed during the war." This is the classic epitaph on a conjunctural revolutionist who didn't understand that Marxism builds, not for a day or for a single set of circumstances, but for every eventuality of the struggle, no matter how protracted, complex or difficult it may be.

Others thought they could take payment on their note despite the fact that history had not supplied it. Since Trotsky had promised that without the victory of the proletarian revolution the workers' state would be destroyed, they concluded that the workers' state had been destroyed. Such was the case, sadder for us than any other, of Natalia Trotsky. These theoreticians don't want the Soviet Union in the picture to confuse matters, so they destroy it by . . . terminology. The defects in history are filled out with violent language. In the process of dealing harshly with history, they fail to notice that, far from being destroyed, the deformed workers' state added to former complexities by having been joined by other states of a similar kind and by revolutions of a "deformed" type. This has increased the theoretical difficulties confronting us, but in return it has added far more to the difficulties of imperialism. That, for revolutionists, is more than adequate compensation.

Others have reacted in still another way: by refusing to see and understand the changed world reality. They have suffered, together with all of us, from a sharp blow in the form of a break, a deviation in the process. History has dealt harshly with our too-simple perspective. Therefore these comrades have decided to punish

history by getting along without a perspective and by retreating to the world of half-comprehended and unimplemented "basic ideas." It is to this problem that we must now address ourselves.

3. What is New? The Work of the Third World Congress

Comrade Hansen's article, What the New York Discussion Has Revealed, behind the shield of the valid assertion that our fundamental theoretical concepts have not changed, tries to shape the thought of the party in the notion that nothing has changed. Concessions which this document makes at its outset to the analysis of the changed world situation made at the Third World Congress are rapidly nullified and reversed as the document proceeds to its own analysis. It is an article which, if I may predict, will be used as a cover by every enemy of the Congress not only within this party but in the world movement, and moreover outside of it. The Bleibtreu-Lambert grouping, which crippled the development of our French co-thinkers up to the moment of its split, will greet the Hansen article as a validation of its views. It is because of this fact that I emphatically reject the chiding which Hansen's supporters have directed to me because I compared Hansen's political thinking to that of the splitters in France. They have said I would give "comfort" to Bleibtreu-Lambert by my words. This is not so. It is Hansen who gives them comfort by bringing back into the world movement defeated and cast-out views.

Hansen's article is very insistent, as though against some unnamed opponent, upon the idea that the Third Congress did not violate any of Trotsky's basic views. This is quite correct. What is new is not in the doctrine but in the world. The world demands a fresh application of the doctrine.

Marxist doctrine is not in itself an analysis, but a tool and a guide to action. The doctrine is comprehensive, and represents the essence of world development, while reality is many-sided and changing. Not every possibility, not every variant which may be abstractly drawn from the doctrine is dominant in the world at any given moment. The world may be compelled to yield to Marxist analysis, but it can be compelled to do so only if the analysis lays hold of the essential features of reality and grasps them in their complexity, their development and their future possibilities. That is why the work of the great Marxist masters has always been at one and the same time basically consistent with the lines of our theory and also fresh, vivid, realistic, concrete.

In a period of great change, the thought of the party suffers from being bound by past notions, conclusions and perspectives. Moreover, in this present period we are in addition, particularly in this country, subject to an enormous weight of imperialist and Stalinophobic pressures. That is why we must lay such heavy stress upon the Third Congress idea of a rearmament and a reorientation.

The importance of the rearmament cannot be overestimated. Prior to the Congress, our movement was haunted by a growing fear of Stalinist world domination. Wrong attempts to deal with this fear fell under two main heads. There were those who tried to deny either the reality or the progressive character of the big Stalinist-led move-

ments. And there were those who, seeing the reality but bowing to pressure, began to draw revisionist conclusions. The Congress dispelled fears about Stalinism along the correct lines by providing a full theoretical demonstration that the doom of Stalinism is to be expected precisely from its extension and from the revolutionary movements which it now tries to dominate.

Hansen devotes much of his document to sneering at the "thinking" now going on in New York, which I might say is not at all confined to New York or even to the United States. This sneering is out of place. What that thinking consists of is an attempt to grasp world reality and our tasks in the light of the work of the Congress. It is true that we may find thoughts which are not clear or fully thought out or precisely expressed. That is to be expected in a case where comrades do not, and have not for some years, receive the assistance they should get from the majority of the leadership. The reorientation requires cooperation from the entire leadership of the party.

Hansen opens his document with a program which he imputes to a section of the party. I have already pointed out in a previous brief article that this "program" is a false concoction, and that moreover it is precisely the same as that which every skeptic and enemy of the Congress has imputed to the Congress and to its leading participants. In addition, such an alleged "line" has been used by concealed opponents of the Congress in order to provide a platform for a fight against the Congress reorientation in an indirect manner.

In a reply to such a maneuver by Bleibtreu, Comrade Germain wrote:

"The 'essential difference' discovered by Comrade Favre Bleibtreu relates to 'the revisionist estimation of the nature of the bureaucracy in the USSR.' To prove this absurd thesis he unfolds a vast work of exegesis, never discussing concrete documents, but only polemicizing with their possible -- and it must be said slanderous! -- interpretations. The aim he seems to be pursuing is to make the French section believe that because of softness and a spirit of compromise, the entire IS and Comrade Pablo personally and more or less consciously (for unspecified reasons) is beginning to capitulate to Stalinism.

"Such a thesis must immediately strike anyone acquainted with the history of our movement as monstrous. All our sections, all our cadres and primarily our leading cadres have been trained over many years in the struggle against Stalinism and against tendencies toward 'capitulation to Stalinism' in our movement. To prove the existence of a tendency toward 'capitulation to Stalinism' it would be necessary to adduce a mass of proofs or of indications from quotations or of analysis from documents. Now Comrade Bleibtreu is incapable of producing one solitary proof for his terrible accusation." (From "Subterfuges and Confusion, or The Art of Covering One's Retreat" by E. Germain, June 25, 1951. Germain's emphasis.)

Nor has Hansen produced one solitary proof for his terrible accusation either. On the contrary, he has not even tried, as did Bleibtreu, to deal with articles, speeches, documents, but has talked entirely from gossip. There is no tendency towards capitulation to Stalinism in our ranks! If Comrade Hansen can show me, by means of

serious proofs, that such a tendency exists, then I for one will join with him to help crush it. But he is not able and will not be able to do so. Gripped by confusion and unrealism he has created a lifeless dummy in order to use it as a shield behind which to push forward an opposition to the needed rearmament.

Since the discussion we face in the party will not be based upon clear programmatic differences but, very often, upon questions of "emphasis," etc., the party will do well to examine the weighting and slant of the Hansen document. Comrade Germain, in a reply to Bleibtreu called Subterfuges and Confusion, made the following important point: "All his (Bleibtreu's) documents strangely insist on the still very great counter-revolutionary proclivities of the bureaucracy, while ours insist on the limits of the counter-revolutionary capacities of this bureaucracy in the event of a vast revolutionary upsurge." (Germain's emphasis.) Is Hansen's emphasis that of the Congress, or that of its opponents? Is his the emphasis we need, or do we need a Congress-type reorientation? Should Hansen reply that he is merely using this emphasis because there is a "need" for it at present due to an "exaggerated" emphasis on the other side, he would merely be repeating the lame excuse of the Bleibtreu tendency.

Hansen's document may not be successful in picturing the thinking of his opponents, but it is eminently successful in revealing his own thinking. With his article at our disposal, we are now in a position to consider some views which he expresses and which are widespread in the party. We have no new revelations, nothing that cannot be found in the Congress documents. We will try to explain these ideas, and to show the form taken by resistance to them.

4. What is Stalinism?

Hansen begins with a good question: "What is Stalinism?" He sets the following Marxist framework for the analysis: "To discover what it is from the qualitative side, we must find out what its social base is, for it is classes that set the characteristics of the political superstructure." So far so good. Hansen then proceeds to the following:

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

This, as a class starting point, is one-sided and inadequate. It is true that the specific class pressures, class ideologies, and even class base upon which Stalinism arose are those of the petty-bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie inside and outside the Soviet Union. In that sense the Soviet bureaucracy reflects and bases itself upon these alien classes. But none of this alters the fact that the Soviet oligarchy represents, in the last analysis, a labor bureaucracy both in its fundamental social base in the property forms created by the October Revolution and in its place in historic evolution.

This can perhaps be made clearer by reference to a more familiar case, that of a trade union. The union bureaucracy represents the pressure and ideology of alien classes within the labor movement. In

that sense it would be correct to call the union officialdom a petty-bourgeois, even a bourgeois bureaucracy. This does not alter the fact that it is at the same time a labor bureaucracy; i.e., a parasitic crystallization upon the working class. This is what DeLeon did not understand, leading to his sectarian abstentionism.

This contradictory fact simply reflects the nature of any labor bureaucracy. Reflecting alien classes, it is in profound contradiction with its own social base. This is the fact that Hansen omits as he sets forth the class starting point for his analysis. The significance of this omission is this: If we over-simplify the matter as Hansen does, and note only that the bureaucracy is based upon the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois classes, then we over-simplify everything about Stalinism: its social role, its historic position, its politics. Hansen, as we shall see, construes Stalinist politics as the direct extension of the one-sided "social base" which he has set forth. But if we were to accept this view, then in what way would the Soviet regime differ from a regime which is not in conflict with its own social foundations? In no respect, obviously. And, as we shall see, that is precisely Hansen's error.

Hansen shows us the results of his false start when he coolly compares the bureaucratic caste to the U.S. capitalist class in the following symmetrical formula:

"Just as Eisenhower's politics is bound by the frame of the narrow interests of the American capitalist class, so Stalin's politics cannot pass beyond the frame of the narrow interests of the Soviet parasitic caste." (P.25)

It becomes clear that Hansen's mistaken one-sidedness in defining the nature of the Soviet caste was not simply an accidental error of formulation, but an error which is necessary to his analysis. If the Kremlin, arbitrarily wrenched by Hansen from its social foundation and left hanging in bureaucratic mid-air, can determine Soviet policy solely in accordance with the needs of its petty-bourgeois and bourgeois social base, then we have here a new and historically independent ruling class, "just as" the American capitalist class. In fact, events have shown that Stalinist politics have been often compelled, in a most fundamental way, to transgress the interests of the caste and to express the interests of the social foundation. Or perhaps Hansen will maintain that, in nationalizing industry in one-third of Europe, Stalin's politics did not "pass beyond the frame of the narrow interests of the Soviet parasitic caste"? His hasty generalizations are not even in accord with the facts as we all accept them.

5. The Nature of Stalinist Politics

In his haste to track down "revisionism" in the party, Hansen does not notice that he himself has started with a revision of our past conception of the bureaucracy. Fquipped with this wooden musket, he now starts out on the trail of Stalinist politics. He sets his view forth as follows:

"Let me summarize -- the Kremlin's politics derive from the enormous caste of millions upon millions of privileged bureaucrats on which it rests and are in strict accord with the interests of that caste as a social formation. It is the parasitic caste that deter-

mines the objective course of Stalinism in relation to both world capitalism and the international working class. Marxist method, analyzing the social base of Stalinism, yields this as its first and main result. Further differentiation can reveal some modifications such as restraint by Stalin of the most unbridled bourgeois wing of the caste but nothing in the main 'law' will be changed essentially." (P. 15)

We see that, in Hansen's conception, Stalinist politics, like Stalinism in general, has a purely "caste" character. This, we are told, is "the first and main result" of Marxist method, even a "law," inexplicably in quotation marks, but a law nevertheless! Hansen's direction is becoming clearer as we proceed. He endows the Kremlin with an independent base because he is in haste to endow Kremlin politics with an independent character. The caste "determines the objective course of Stalinism in relation to both world capitalism and the international working class."

In reality, it would be more correct to say that the inter-relationships between the major classes determine the course of the Kremlin, than to put it the other way around, as Hansen does. Kremlin politics do not and cannot have an independent and self-sustaining character precisely because of the very fact that Hansen takes such pains to conceal in his earlier section, namely: that the Kremlin is not a class but a parasitic growth upon a class which expresses the interests of its social foundation in a distorted way, and in a way which furthermore reflects through itself the interests of alien classes. The Kremlin does not make independent class policy, but mirrors it in a crooked glass, showing us therein both its social foundation and the pressures of the major classes. This has always been our conception.

This same debate was conducted between Trotsky and Shachtman in 1940. On Page 124 of In Defense of Marxism, we find Trotsky's view as follows:

"'Politics is concentrated economics.' This proposition one should think applies to the Kremlin too. Or, in exception to the general law, is the policy of the Moscow government not 'concentrated economics' but a manifestation of the bureaucracy's free will? Our attempt to reduce the politics of the Kremlin to nationalized economy, refracted through the interests of the bureaucracy, provokes frantic resistance from Shachtman. He takes his guidance in relation to the USSR not from conscious generalizations of economics but from 'observing the realities of living events'; i.e., from rule of thumb, improvisations, sympathies, antipathies. He counterposes this impressionistic policy to our sociologically grounded policy. . . "

Hansen began his "frantic resistance" to "our attempt to reduce the politics of the Kremlin to nationalized economy refracted through the interests of the bureaucracy" even before we made that attempt, although we fully intended to do so.

The Third World Congress took Trotskyism as its starting point. Not only did it continue to view Stalinism as a labor bureaucracy in its fundamental social character, but it employed this view as the basic tool in the analysis of Stalinism and its politics. Even more, Comrade Pablo quite correctly derived the proletarian character of the Chinese and other Stalinist parties from their allegiance to the Krem-

lin bureaucracy. At the 11th Plenum of the IEC he spoke as follows: "Insofar as the Stalinist parties are concerned, what is decisive for characterizing them as working class parties is their allegiance to the Kremlin bureaucracy, that is to say, to the bureaucracy of a degenerated workers state." Would Hansen be in a position to draw this conclusion from his conception? Far from it. He and all who think like him have shown us how they reason from "improvisations, sympathies, antipathies" instead of from "a sociologically grounded policy."

The Soviet bureaucracy, since it is not itself a class but is an outgrowth upon a progressive class reflecting the pressure of alien class forces, cannot pursue any consistent or independent political line. Eisenhower's politics, while passing through occasional maneuvers, is essentially independent in character. Kremlin politics, while showing an occasional flash of proletarian independence (under unavoidable constraint; i.e., nationalizations in Eastern Europe, etc.) is essentially opportunist in character. Unlike the maneuvers of a proletarian vanguard which proceeds from class independence, Stalinist maneuvers represent an endless attempt on the part of the bureaucracy to escape from its class foundations.

Thus Marxism brings us to exactly the opposite conclusion to that which Hansen attempts to force upon us. Kremlin politics, unlike those of Eisenhower, undergo considerable change and feverish switches in accordance with the play of class forces on an international scale. This is not only theoretically accurate but conforms with all our experience with Stalinist politics since 1923. The social base of Stalinism has proved to be compatible both with the policy of aiding imperialism and the policy of destroying imperialism.

The key to this riddle is not so difficult as might seem at first glance. The bureaucracy has its own permanent and independent interests but it does not possess its own permanent and independent class forces corresponding to those interests. Thus it must try to give expression to its own interests by dependent and conjunctural policies, by trying to adjust them to the interests of the two major social classes. The interests of the bureaucracy drive it to pursue the will-of-the-wisp of bureaucratic self-preservation through unstable and shifting policies in accordance with the possibilities left open by the class struggle.

6. The Contradiction of the Kremlin

Comrades who see only one side of the contradiction upon which the Kremlin rests emphasize the following thought: Revolution will destroy the Kremlin; thus the Kremlin must fight against revolution. This is correct, but these comrades overlook another generalization: Imperialism will destroy the bureaucracy by destroying its social base; hence the Kremlin must fight imperialism. This is equally correct. In reality, however, both generalizations are very incomplete. Nor can we understand Kremlin policy by making a mechanical combination between the two. That is why we have always had to muster all our abilities for dialectical thinking to solve this anomaly.

For formal thinking the solution is impossible. If the Stalinist regime is threatened from both sides by ineluctable forces, it must rest in a state of complete paralysis. What can it do? Every move against imperialism aids the revolution and every move against the

revolution opens the way for the other gravedigger, imperialism. Apparently in the world of strict logical categories Stalinism can only lie down and die. That would be very good, and we would certainly see to it that the keys to the kingdom were turned over to its rightful heirs, the Marxist-led Soviet working class which faces no such insoluble problem. It would be excellent for humanity if the Stalinist bureaucracy could be persuaded to recognize its hopeless position and commit suicide, but unfortunately history doesn't work that way. The bureaucracy retains power and will continue to do so until removed by superior power. In the meantime it continues to pursue policies and causes Comrade Hansen no end of trouble in comprehending them.

Its historically hopeless position forces the bureaucracy to flee from the plainly visible theoretical alternatives and take refuge in empirical thinking. It lives from day to day, trying to solve its gigantic problem for the moment and piecemeal, since it cannot solve the problem permanently and at one blow. The bureaucracy as a social grouping has no historical perspective. This is true both of its objective situation and of its thinking as well. It has instead only the extremely limited and temporary perspective of immediate survival. Like the caste as a whole, the individual Stalinist bureaucrat hopes to find a way to cheat history long enough for personal survival. In this, as in much else, Stalin showed the way to his followers. Those who come after him will not be so fortunate.

Hansen writes on Page 28 of his document: "In its desperate efforts to survive, the privileged Soviet caste will use any means that do not conflict with its own interests." That is dead wrong. As a matter of fact, almost every means it uses conflicts with its interests. That resides in the nature of its position in the world. Despite the indubitable fact that the imperialist world prepares the destruction of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin sides with and aids imperialism in its search for a moment's breathing-time (Stalin-Hitler pact, etc.). Despite the equally indubitable fact that the revolution prepares doom for the bureaucrat, the bureaucrat has to grit his teeth and try to live with and utilize the revolution against imperialism (Korea, Indo-China, etc.) or is even compelled to give an impulse to the revolution (Eastern Europe) while hoping to find a way to strangle, subvert or limit it on the morrow. It is in this dialectic way that history maps out its course between rigid alternatives that seem to formal minds to dominate.

The dialectic of history is not suppressed by the empiricism of the bureaucracy; on the contrary, that empiricism, the effort to cheat the historic dialectic, merely gives expression to it. Thus the entire Kremlin planning apparatus can be said to be divided into two branches: "The Department for Stopping Imperialism" and "The Bureau for the Suppression of Revolutionary Dangers." These two departments carry on an incessant warfare -- most of all against each other. Do we not see this every day?

The bureaucracy moves in response to the greatest threat. When imperialism gave the appearance in 1941-46 of arranging its affairs in such a way as to "co-exist" with the Soviet Union (a false appearance as we predicted at the time), the Kremlin collaborated with imperialism against the revolution. In the present period, from 1947 to now and into the indicated future, imperialism signifies by actions

too plain to be ignored or misinterpreted its immediate intention of destroying the Soviet Union. The bureaucracy, again reacting to the great immediate danger, defends itself, and in so doing is compelled to countenance mass movements and even revolutionary property changes. It does this not because that is its nature, but for two reasons: because it is compelled to and because such actions are not incompatible with its basic class nature. Imperialist powers, in sharp contrast, have never been able, no matter how great the need, to warm their hands at the fires of revolution, even if limited or "controlled."

The ideal situation for the bureaucracy was the period between the two world wars. This was marked by the inconclusive stage of the world class struggle with the edge in the hands of imperialism, and the growth of inter-imperialist conflicts. This is the situation which the bureaucracy helped to maintain and to which it would like to return, but that world is gone for good. Thus, since 1946, the Kremlin has been trying to work out some new course, an effort that has been marked by bewilderment and stumbling. For the first time the bureaucracy finds itself giving orders to Communist parties that are not obeyed, and can do nothing about it. It ordered the Yugoslavs to collaborate with the bourgeoisie; it ordered the Chinese to collaborate with Chiang Kai-shek, and in both cases precisely the opposite happened. Its next step, taken in Yugoslavia, was an attempt at the immediate Stalinization and subordination of the new revolutionary force. This met with rebellion, from which the Kremlin learned something in precisely the same way as a child learns when it gets a bump on the head. At present we see the Kremlin trying to live with the Chinese revolution, biding its time in the hope of gaining the upper hand. This has produced an unprecedented situation in world Stalinism; one not seen since 1928: a sharing of power.

The course which has been forced upon the bureaucracy is one of living with the revolution in the hope of subverting it and dominating it bureaucratically. Wherever it cannot strangle the revolution, or dare not do so lest it open the way at once for imperialism, it must do this. Comrade Hansen is in a good position to instruct the bureaucracy that it can't continue this forever, because in the long run the revolution will emerge stronger than any bureaucracy. But this will prove of little value to Malenkov, Beria and Molotov unless he shows them some other way to operate. One can be sure they are aware of the eventual fatal consequences of the growth of the world revolution, but they must have some alternative course which will not be fatal. Anyone who can supply them with this will, we can be sure, have no difficulty in walking off with the next Stalin Peace Prize.

If comrades are now disappointed that we cannot present to the world working class the clear-cut alternatives of revolution on the one side against a Kremlin-imperialist coalition on the other as we could in the past, then we must say plainly that there is no balm for this disappointment other than the clear recognition of the truth and the reorientation of our thinking and propaganda in the changed situation. If we had our "rathers," I am sure that we could map out a clearer and more favorable world situation. One young comrade, after posing to me a fanciful possibility which she at once had to admit would not come to pass, could not resist saying to me the other day: "Yes, but it's nice to think about those things." I told her: "It's better to think about the real world." I hope I am still in company with the majority of the party in that sentiment.

We are now in a better position to return to Comrade Hansen's simplification: "Stalinism has not changed." On Page 11 he writes:

"All these decisions of the (Third World) Congress were important and far-reaching, but abstracting them from the concrete world events under analysis, and looking at the decisions in the light of our theoretical heritage, not a single change was made in the fundamental position laid down by Trotsky, particularly Trotsky's theoretical appraisal of the character of Stalinist politics."

My grandfather had a beard, but abstracting him from his concrete beard he was a clean-shaven man. Lenin altered the policy of the Bolsheviks sharply in April 1917, but abstracting his new policy from the concrete situation, there was no change at all. Abstraction is a sharp theoretical tool, but like a keen chisel it should be used carefully.

The nature of Stalinism has not changed, but as we have shown it is precisely because the nature of Stalinism remains the same that its politics retain a changing character. Nor is this in conflict with Trotsky's analysis of Stalinist politics, which he explained as the erratic and self-contradictory course of a bureaucracy bent on retaining power in a world of exploding class struggles and imperialist threats. Had Stalinism changed its character to become a new exploiting class, then we could properly expect that this changed nature would result in relatively stable politics aimed at an attainable goal. We can examine the following supposition: Assume that, contrary to our appraisal, the counter-revolutionary tendency of the Kremlin had gone deep enough by 1946 to result in either capitalist restoration or a new exploiting class. This changed Stalinism would not have found it possible to meet the imperialist threat of 1947-53 with a leftward turn. A change in the nature of Stalinism would in that case have prevented its course from changing.

The Stalinist bureaucracy has not changed, but the world and the position of Stalinism in it have altered sharply. Only those who hold to the basic Trotskyist analysis of the nature of Stalinism can understand its changed role in the altered situation. Shachtman, Johnson, the POUM, etc., who think the nature of Stalinism has changed, cannot begin to understand this. They know there has been a change in the position of Stalinism in the world, but that doesn't help them to comprehend its present role because they have abandoned the fundamental views which alone can explain this role. Hansen, on the other hand, claiming to retain the Trotskyist view of the fundamental nature of Stalinism, doesn't have the means to understand its present role because he refuses to recognize the changed reality in the world and the changed position of Stalinism in it.

The renegades have a false basis in their fundamental views on Stalinism: they start from preconceived norms of the workers' state, etc. Hansen has a preconceived notion of reality into which he arbitrarily tries to jam all facts in an effort to make them fit the world of 1940. While the error of the renegades is far more fundamental, both types of errors can prevent an accurate picture of reality and a realistic approach to it.

7. Capitalist Restoration?

We have pictured a certain and merciless contradiction in which the Kremlin, by its lack of independent mission or place in the world, is caught. We now confront the question: Can the bureaucracy, by a wilfull act, fracture the jaws that grip it and escape into the capitalist world? I refer of course to the possibility of capitalist restoration in the coming period by the bureaucracy itself. Such a development would certainly alter the entire world picture, and if we were to conceive that it is an important alternative in the coming struggles then the perspectives mapped out by the Third World Congress would be considerably changed and possibly invalidated.

Hansen intrudes this theme into the discussion by repeated references to it which are never explained or followed up. On Page 14 he says: "The usurpation of power by this caste represents the first stage of the bourgeois restoration in the degenerated workers state." On the same page he says: "It (the "horde of rapacious gangster-minded bureaucrats constituting the caste") is still (My emphasis -- H.F.) forced to operate through property forms that are socialist in principle. . . It has progressively undermined these property forms inherited from the October Revolution until today they are extremely weakened and from the viewpoint of socialist content scarcely recognizable." On Page 19: "It (Stalinism) fosters the tendencies within the Soviet Union towards bourgeois relations." Again: "The parasitic caste that is devouring the remaining consequences of the October Revolution."

It is unmistakably true that the destruction of the Bolshevik Party and the seizure of power by a reactionary bureaucracy opened up the danger of capitalist restoration. Thermidor is thus a step on the road back to capitalism. In that sense, Hansen's scattered remarks are not wrong. But we are interested in examining the problem more fully, in order to see what relation it has to the present situation and to our discussion. A number of comrades have already rallied under this flag in an attempt to find some other perspective to counterpose to that of the Third Congress.

A union bureaucracy which destroys rank-and-file control carries with it the possibility of the destruction of the labor organization and its conversion into a company union. But is the union bureaucracy always and everywhere carrying on toward this end? Does this possibility come to the fore at such times as the bureaucracy is forced to defend the union in order to defend itself? When it is in the midst of strike struggles or organizing drives? Does this possibility always become a reality? Even more, does it usually become a reality?

Bureaucratization of unions has hardly ever led, except in cases where the entire class is crushed by a bourgeois offensive, to conversion of those unions into company unions. Similarly, historic instances of Thermidor do not show it to be at all common that the Thermidoreans manage to reconvert the revolutionary nation back to its pre-revolutionary social condition. We should weigh this lesson of history carefully, particularly in view of the fact that the Soviet bureaucracy has, from all evidence, been lashed by events to the nationalized economy since 1941 more completely than ever before. In the Thirties Trotsky pointed to the existence of a restorationist wing within the bureaucracy, which he emphasized was the smallest of all

its tendencies. Has this trend enlarged, or grown stronger? On the contrary side we see the prodigious efforts in the recent period to enlarge and fortify the nationalized economy.

We must take into account the trends and developments in the decade-and-a-half since the start of World War II. In The USSR In War, Trotsky wrote:

"Let us for a moment conceive that in accordance with the treaty with Hitler, the Moscow government leaves untouched the rights of private property in the occupied areas and limits itself to 'control' after the fascist pattern. Such a concession would have a deep-going principled character and might become a starting point for a new chapter in the history of the Soviet regime; and consequently a starting point for a new appraisal on our part of the nature of the Soviet state."

Since that time, many such possible starting points have been missed by the bureaucracy. As a matter of fact, far from a tendency towards restoration (beginning in the occupied areas) setting in, the tendency has been for the introduction of the nationalized economy and Soviet state patterns into one-third of Europe by bureaucratic-military means. Considered in the light of Trotsky's absolutely correct projection on this matter, these facts have an enormous weight in any discussion of capitalist restoration.

We must also take into consideration the fact that the bureaucracy has recently come through a war in which support of the people was mobilized for defense of the nationalized economy. It is now mobilizing for another war on that same basis. Further, great toil has been extracted from the people in the work of rebuilding and extending the nationalized economy. We would have to be blind not to see that the bureaucracy would be ringed with an enormous hostility if it gave any hint of such an action as restoration. Here again the possible decision on the part of the bureaucracy to convert itself into a capitalist class must be weighed, not in the scale of desires, but in the scale of the possible. Such a decision would bring the bureaucracy face to face with civil war against the people as a whole, a war for which the bureaucracy does not possess independent resources. It is even doubtful to what extent the bureaucracy could carry a unified regime into the struggle. If the bureaucracy possesses within itself those contradictions and tendencies to breakup to which we have often pointed, then such a struggle would certainly rupture the bureaucratic unity of today. How then is this course possible?

Far from offering an avenue of escape from their historic impasse, such an attempt might only seal the doom of the bureaucrats with the greatest rapidity. The flood gates of civil war would be opened by such a move. Of all the alternative roads to death which the bureaucracy may choose, this would in my opinion be the swiftest and surest, and moreover, this form of suicide would require the Soviet bureaucracy to thrust its neck into the noose of the enemy it hates and fears most -- the Soviet proletariat. The day has certainly long since passed when the Thermidoreans could dream of opening the way to capitalism with impunity to themselves. Perhaps they could have done this before the war; perhaps there are those among them who are sorry they did not do so then. It appears to be too late now.

It is not totally excluded that in the last phase of a desperate struggle, the bureaucracy, reduced to its final shifts, will attempt fantastic adventures such as "offers" to imperialism. But if imperialism then has the upper hand it will pay even less attention to such offers than it does today. If on the other hand the proletariat has the upper hand, such offers will have no more significance to history than Hitler's Berchtesgaden death pact with Eva Braun. In any event, the possibility of a last-minute cry of desperation has nothing in common with the problem we must analyze seriously, which is that of a Kremlin course directed towards restoration in this present period, at such time as it could have some important effect upon the relationship of forces and the course of the struggle.

The fact that the bureaucracy has not taken the course of restoration does not in the least violate any of our basic conceptions. We only pointed to that as a possibility opened up by Thermidor. We always emphasized far more the attempts of the bureaucracy to defend the nationalized economy with its own means, in order to thereby defend itself.

Our documents on perspective are not schoolboy copy-books in which we sloppily record every random thought, every theoretical possibility. Such remarks must have a purpose. Can we now set as a realistic variant for the coming period that Stalinism will attempt to solve its problems by a capitulation to world imperialism in the form of a bourgeois restoration? If not, the hasty phrases of Hansen's document and the arguments being advanced by some comrades can serve no purpose other than to so paralyze the thinking of some comrades with "variants" and "possibilities" that they can no longer reason scientifically about the main lines of world development.

8. Stalinism and the Post-war Revolutions

Comrade Hansen says he is in favor of the decisions of the Third World Congress, which he is defending against "inside-dope" artists. Good! Let us now see how Comrade Hansen continues the rearmament, so inauspiciously begun in his discussion of the nature of Stalinism and Stalinist politics, when he gets to other questions.

No sooner does he apply himself to the present world than he runs up against a formidable barrier in the form of facts which his theory of a "caste" state with "caste" politics cannot solve. He takes care of this by assigning these facts to his opponents -- making them "factional facts" -- and for the rest maintaining an air of non-committal aloofness combined with a touch of skepticism; as much as to say: "I am not at all sure these things ever happened, but in any event they are not my problem. Let others explain them, and I'll sit around with a long stick ready to whack them on the shins if they make any mistakes." This is particularly marked where he deals with the post-war revolutions. I could cite many instances, I will confine myself to a few. On Page 4, where Hansen is busy "synthesizing a structure" for his opponents, he says:

"Certain comrades are already making far-reaching generalizations by combining their views about the revolutionary role of Stalinism with their conclusions about the sectarian impasse they think our party faces."

Then Hansen lists five "generalizations" made by "certain comrades." (What he really gives in these five points is the sectarian-Stalinophobe picture of the Third Congress. You can find those five "generalizations" attributed to the Fourth International in a score of articles in the Shachtman press, in Johnson's bulletin, and in the charges of the Bleibtreu-Lambert group as well as in many similar places.) Hansen gives as generalization No. 1, as the sole thought which proves that "certain comrades" attribute a "revolutionary role" to Stalinism, the following statement:

"1 Three revolutions have taken place in the post-war period -- Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China. But the Trotskyists did not lead them."

What is so heretical about that? So far as I can see, it is nothing more than a statement of fact, long accepted by our entire movement and not just by "certain comrades." Three revolutions have indeed taken place: a revolutionary transformation by military-bureaucratic means in one-third of Europe, a proletarian revolution in Yugoslavia, and the Chinese revolution which has produced a workers' and peasants' government on the road to proletarian dictatorship. Moreover, there are other revolutions in progress; Korea, Indo-China, etc. None of these revolutions have had a Trotskyist leadership. Of all the revolutionary upheavals in any advanced state of development in the world today, only the Bolivian shows a predominance at this time of Trotskyist leadership.

Comrade Hansen confines himself to attributing these revolutions to his opponents in the discussion! Can it be that there is anyone in our movement today who does not recognize these facts, or who is willing to make obscure references to them as "far-reaching-generalizations" made by "certain comrades" in the hope of thus painting to the party a picture of pessimism on our part, when in fact all that is involved here is the recognition of reality?

Hansen may reply: "This is an error. I put this down as the starting point of the thinking of certain comrades not because I deny it, but because I want to point to conclusions they draw from it." But Comrade Hansen's tale of "conclusions" can be of no interest to the party so long as he has nothing more than gossip and distortion to base himself upon. Our conclusions are very fully established in writings and speeches, and we shall make them still plainer by repetition if by nothing else. What is now of interest to the party are Comrade Hansen's conclusions. His document does not make it clear whether he recognizes the facts, or, if he does, what conclusions he draws from them. If Hansen points to his repeated "conclusion" that "Stalinism is counter-revolutionary in essence," then he will have to permit me to say that the party cannot take this seriously. We knew that long before the post-war revolutions. The Third World Congress certainly would have been a barren gathering had it assembled solely for the purpose of drawing this conclusion.

Does Hansen recognize the facts? Does he deny them? Does he ignore them altogether? Does he draw any conclusions at all? What conclusions? That Stalinism is counter-revolutionary? We knew that quite well before Yugoslavia, China, Eastern Europe, Korea, etc. Our whole effort has been to supplement our thought, to make it more precise and adequate in relation to these matters and what they have re-

vealed. Is Comrade Hansen going to help the party in this reorientation or is he going to throw rocks at our feet?

There may be an inconclusive nature about the foregoing example. We all want to give Comrade Hansen the benefit of the doubt. But consider the following exchange from his document, which is fully conclusive. Hansen quotes Comrade Bartell on Page 8 as follows: "How do parties which are 'counter-revolutionary through and through' become transformed into parties which lead revolutions?" That is a good question posed by Bartell. It was basic in the deliberations of the Congress. Here is Hansen's treatment:

"These cautious questions do not help the discussion very much; least of all do they help Comrade Bartell. . . Don't they imply that a force which can 'lead revolutions' is not counter-revolutionary? Isn't the leadership the subjective factor in a revolution? Isn't Stalinism therefore subjectively revolutionary? . . . And if Stalinism is both objectively and subjectively revolutionary, isn't it revolutionary 'through and through'?"

When presented with similar logic, Trotsky wrote in reply to Shachtman: "The completeness of this argument cannot be denied; in the shape of a naked syllogism we are presented here with a rounded-out theory. . . It is as simple as Columbus and the egg!"

This really is a rounded-out theory as simple as Columbus and the egg. Stalinist parties have led revolutions; the leadership is the subjective factor in revolutions, hence Stalinism is subjectively as well as objectively revolutionary. Comrade Hansen can reply now by interjecting: "Hold on there. I never said that these parties led revolutions. I deny it." In that case he is impaled on the other, equally formidable horn of his dilemma: a complete refusal to recognize facts. For, insofar as these revolutions had a leadership, it took the form of Communist parties. Hansen may now belatedly assert this is very formal logic, to which we can only reply: It is Hansen's own logic, and therefore very formal, as usual.

Obviously, Comrade Hansen should have thought a great deal more about these problems before writing about them. It is becoming plain to him, we hope, that the Third World Congress did not address itself to such trifles as he tries to pretend. These are the most formidable problems in the history of Trotskyism.

9. The Role of Some Stalinist Parties

What conclusions must we draw from the fact that some Stalinist parties, even without formally breaking from the Kremlin, have served as the subjective factor in several revolutions? If this proves, as Hansen says, that Stalinism must be both "subjectively and objectively" revolutionary, then sarcasm heaped on Comrade Bartell's head will help us little. We would have to conclude that the political instrument for the revolutionary tasks is already formed in the main, and our contribution to this epoch would have to be confined to a fight against errors and hesitations on the part of this instrument, and to a defense of the proletariat against Stalinist bureaucratism. We must not fear to draw all our thoughts out to the end. If Hansen's reasoning is adequate, it leads inescapably to this conclusion.

In fact Hansen's reasoning is not at all adequate, but shallow and superficial in the extreme. It is here that his failure to learn from the Congress demonstrates itself in an inability to aid the party in comprehending the dynamic world process. We had better return to Comrade Bartell's serious and important question which Hansen unfortunately treats so flippantly: How do counter-revolutionary Stalinist parties become transformed into parties which lead revolutions?

The role of these parties has reflected a complex interaction between three main forces: the Soviet state power, the Stalinist parties and the powerful mass movements. Not any one, but all three of these considerations are essential to an understanding of this problem. The source and reservoir of the revolutionary course is the mood and actions of the mass. However, the greatest swelling of the mass movement would be, as we have seen many times, insufficient to compel any party to enter upon a revolutionary struggle for power. The specific Stalinist nature of these parties must be understood. They are not and have never been precisely the same as the traditional workers' reformist parties. Insofar as they have reformist ties with the bourgeoisie, it is not independently and directly, but through the needs and policies of the Kremlin bureaucracy. Further, these parties have built their base, in the main, among the most oppressed and rebellious sections of the population, in contrast with the traditional reformist parties which develop their greatest support among privileged layers closest to the petty-bourgeoisie and hence most class-collaborationist in their mentality. Thus the Stalinist parties pursued collaborationist and counter-revolutionary policies in the past with this important difference: that these policies reflected the needs of the Kremlin far more than they reflected reformist tendencies in the class and also more than they reflected the pressure of the national bourgeoisie. This was proven in the failure of any serious tendencies to develop in these parties to go over to "their own" imperialism. They have remained with the Kremlin.

This is not to give any "credit" to the Kremlin. In general the Kremlin deserves no "credit" even for the anti-imperialist course which opens the way to individual Stalinist parties. Imperialism itself must get all the credit inasmuch as it compels the Kremlin to that course. Moreover, the Kremlin has done its best to close the revolutionary road to its parties; only its failure to do so redounds to its "credit."

The important thing to understand here is that mass pressure by itself is not adequate to explain the changes in Stalinist parties. They have known how to harden themselves against mass pressure. What must also be understood is the specific nature of these parties as tied to the bureaucratized workers' state, and the specific world situation in which the Kremlin finds itself. The great revolutionary mass movements would probably have developed a different, in all likelihood a genuine Bolshevik, leadership in the post-war period had the situation been such that the Kremlin could continue to use these parties for straight class-collaboration and counter-revolution. But the mass movements coincide with a concerted imperialist drive against the USSR that cuts the Kremlin off from the possibility of deals with imperialism. In the enforced left turn that follows, movements can slide through the crack left open by the Kremlin's equivocal position, pass beyond its control and evolve independently of its wishes.

What happened to these parties? Did they become fully revolutionary, that is conscious Bolshevik parties as Hansen hastily concludes must have been the case if they "led revolutions?" That would be an unwarranted conclusion, as further facts show. Rather they became receptacles for the revolutionary outpouring of the masses that, despite an inadequate program and consciousness, served as adequate in certain special situations for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. This was possible because of still another specific fact: the extreme weakness of the bourgeoisie, its state of advanced collapse and the consequent revolutionary possibilities. Thus Stalinist parties, transgressing the Kremlin limits and in the process assuming a centrist character, were able to overthrow bourgeois regimes. This is nothing more than a statement of fact which is not at all nullified by their mis-steps and hesitations, by their insufficient programmatic consciousness, and by their obvious inadequacy to the further tasks of the revolution, something which is most clearly evident in Yugoslavia.

How can "centrist consciousness" be enough to accomplish revolutionary tasks? Centrism always was understood by us to contain a measure of subjective revolutionary consciousness which was hedged and frustrated by the inability of centrist thought to draw its revolutionary feelings to the end and solidify them in a thoroughly Bolshevik outlook and party program. This measure of revolutionary consciousness, inadequate to the tasks of our epoch as history has shown and will show further, proved adequate for specific and limited revolutionary struggles against a collapsing ruling class.

If there are any comrades who disagree with this analysis, they are at perfect liberty to supply one of their own. It is not enough to throw up one's hands in horror at complex and confusing facts, and it is far worse to point an accusing finger at every comrade who tries to supply a Marxist explanation of these facts.

We are satisfied that the Third World Congress has drawn all the necessary and justified conclusions from these events. But I must add that this work has been done almost entirely without the aid or participation of the majority of the United States Trotskyist cadre and this must temper our pride in the splendid work of our European co-thinkers. It is now time to call a halt to the retreat and confusion that have characterized our thinking! This refers not only to such lamentable obstruction to the rearmament as we find in the Hansen document, but also to the emptiness of our past thinking. The American cadre can yet make a significant contribution to the solution of the problems which the struggle has raised. This we will do, together with Hansen and his associates if possible, in polemic against them if necessary.

To return to Hansen for one concluding point on the problem of the role of these Stalinist parties. In his "summary statement about Stalinism" on Page 13, Hansen says not one word about the possibility that under exceptional circumstances Stalinist parties can sketch out a revolutionary orientation and enter upon a struggle for power. Instead he puts his thought as follows: "The mounting war danger tends to produce differentiations within the Communist parties and within the caste itself. It is not excluded that a part of the Stalinist structure will split and take the road toward a revolutionary orientation."

Now we must ask: is this really the problem? Is this the new development in Stalinism that requires our rearmament? Have we ever had any doubt about what to do in the case of a revolutionary split in a Stalinist party? Moreover, is this the trend which the Congress analyzes; which we see in the world today? Hansen misses the main problem which is new, and substitutes for it an old and familiar idea which, moreover, has no special application today. This in his "summary statement." Comrade Hansen gives us more of this when he takes up some quotations from the Congress documents.

10. "Sketch Out a Revolutionary Orientation."

Hansen quotes in his document the Congress conclusion about the possibility that Stalinist parties can enter upon a struggle for power as follows:

"Finally it (the Congress) visualized the possibility 'under certain exceptional circumstances' -- and this limitation is underlined in the original -- of Stalinist parties under the impact of mass upsurges 'projecting a revolutionary orientation, i.e., of seeing themselves obliged to undertake a struggle for power.'"

We have enough to do in dealing with big matters; it is harassing to have to take time out to deal with petty literary pranks, of which this document contains other examples. But this one is somewhat instructive. Hansen says "and this limitation is underlined in the original." Not just the limitation, but the entire idea is underlined in the original. Hansen's object is obviously to make it appear that the idea of Stalinist parties undertaking a struggle for power is the unimportant one, while the new and important discovery of the Congress is that this can only be done under exceptional circumstances.

Hansen continues in the same way by pointing out on the next page that Trotsky, in the Transitional Program, foresaw this when he said that "the petty-bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie." This is a quotation cited by Pablo to show that we were not in absolute and direct conflict with our previous basic conceptions in making our new appraisal of events. Trotsky had the genius to foresee not the fact, but the "theoretical possibility" in his own words. He called it a "highly improbable variant." He did not build the Transitional Program around this possibility but around its opposite. Certainly it cannot be claimed that our thought in the past concentrated itself around this "highly improbable variant," this "theoretical possibility."

But now this subordinate and highly improbable variant has come to life in the cases of Yugoslavia and China, in a bureaucratized form in one-third of Europe and may take further shape in the world. Indeed there are certain Communist parties which are even now involved in armed struggles for power. From this unexpected elevation of the "highly improbable" to the realm of fact lies the need for rearmament.

Without this rearmament our movement will be totally unable to comprehend what has happened in the past, what is going on today, and what may happen in the future. The exceptional circumstances which are required for the development of this variant are not so impossible as Hansen tries to make it appear. An invasion from Mars is not re-

quired; we know the circumstances quite well and there is no need to be vague about them: attack on the Soviet Union, war, mass revolutionary upsurge, collapse of imperialist strength in the war, impending defeat, mass Communist parties, etc. These are exceptional circumstances, but they form part of the immediate potential world reality today. Those comrades who have not prepared their thinking, for example, against the possibility of a Stalinist-led struggle for power in France or Italy stand a good chance of being caught off guard. In that event they will flounder in a crisis deeper than that in which they have already been trapped.

It is also important to understand the connection between the foregoing analysis made by the Congress and the tactics worked out by it. Many comrades accept the idea of an entry of a special kind into the Stalinist parties of France and Italy entirely on the basis that they are mass parties. That is a completely one-sided view that misses the point. Both of these parties were bigger mass parties, far bigger, in 1945-46, but we did not propose entry then and it would have been wrong and anticipatory to do so. We built then on the other variant: that the revolutionary movement would take channels outside these parties, or in splits from these parties. It is the changed political situation as well as the mass character of these parties that dictates the tactic. It would be liquidationist to enter these parties if these conditions did not exist. It would have been fatal to enter those Communist parties in 1945, and it would be fatal to stay out of them now.

We see in the invasion of the revolution into Stalinist parties not an historic mission for Stalinism but its downfall. However, we must also see the very important place that the revolutionary cadres assembled in the Stalinist parties have for us in our struggle to build Bolshevik parties. The struggle to fashion a Bolshevik leadership, which alone can guarantee both the victory of the world proletariat and the consequent destruction of bureaucratism, has turned out to be infinitely more complex than we had imagined, and may even in some cases have to be accomplished after the first stages of revolution have deposed the capitalist class from power. To those comrades who find this thought "shocking" we must point out that this is already the case in China, Yugoslavia, Korea, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, partly in Eastern Germany, and finally, in . . . the Soviet Union itself where this has been the case for many years! -- although this case originated in a different way. In any event, Hansen's exhortations to "build Bolshevik parties" are hardly required. What we need now is more understanding of how this can be done, and on this score Hansen has added nothing but confusion to our discussion.

11. Korea -- Hansen's Line in Practice

A section of Hansen's article called "Applied in Practice" is devoted to the Korean war. One's eyes blink with astonishment upon reading this most deplorable section of a deplorable tract. It is all wrong, in fact, in analysis, in method and in conclusions.

Hansen undertakes to reply to a question which he says was posed in the New York discussion: "What are you going to tell a North Korean worker -- that his leadership is counter-revolutionary?" This question is both specific and general. It raises a certain point of

propaganda and it also raises more general questions of tactics and strategy in the revolutionary situation in Korea, and in similar situations, such as Indo-China, Malaya, Iran, and in the prototypes of all such situations, China.

Hansen replies by shifting over to a discussion of the role of the Kremlin itself, which we all know to be treacherous and limiting. But our problem in this instance is not the Kremlin. It is the Chinese-Korean Stalinist parties in Korea, parties which have been "pushed out of the strict orbit of imperialism" and have projected "a revolutionary orientation," that is, entered upon a struggle for power, in the terms used by the Third Congress. Do we label these parties and their role as "counter-revolutionary"? What estimates do we make, what tactics do we adopt toward those parties and in those situations? The Congress said in this regard that "the Fourth International cannot permit itself a repetition of the errors of evaluation committed in the past regarding Yugoslavia or China." It is significant that Hansen, in his treatment of this major problem, has not one single word to say regarding these major errors of the past.

Hansen's entire section on Korea draws only one lesson: Stalinism undermines the revolution. In order to restrict himself to this lesson, he leaves out of consideration entirely the civil war character which the Korean war assumed from the very beginning despite Stalinism and against Stalinism, or even working through Stalinist parties against the wishes of the Kremlin. That fact is the starting point for revolutionary work in the colonial upsurges and elsewhere where Stalinism dominates. It is at one and the same time the true source of revolutionary optimism and confidence in the destruction of Stalinist bureaucratism.

Hansen tries to obscure this point not only by leaving it out entirely, but by a comparison between Korea and. . . the Russian October! This method is no more valid in discovering the true character of the Korean events than previous attempts we have seen to work out the character of, let us say, the Yugoslav state by comparisons with Russia under Lenin and Trotsky. In general, our thought must work, not through "norms" but through the direct analysis of reality. But even for the moment accepting the comparison, Hansen is by no means correct in his discussion of this point.

He explains on Page 23 that in Russia of 1918-21, "the imperialist powers were compelled to withdraw because on the political plane the Bolsheviks were more powerful than they were." He then tries to make it appear that in Korea, the situation is not only quantitatively, but absolutely different. That is not true. The North Korean regime and the Chinese ally have scored victories in Korea against overwhelming material odds, or have held their own against them "because on the political plane" they are and have been "more powerful" than Syngman Rhee and U.S. imperialism! Their superiority in this respect is not equal to that of the Bolsheviks in their civil war, but it is of the same order, as it was also in the Chinese civil war. It is this fact that Hansen neglects to note in his discussion of Korea, despite the fact that the paper has hammered at this point from the beginning. For example, in the July 31, 1950 issue there is a statement by Comrade Cannon which points out:

"Whatever the wishes of the Kremlin, a class war has been unfolding in Korea. The North Korean regime, desiring to mobilize popular support, has decreed land reforms and taken nationalization measures in the territories it has won. The establishment of peoples' committees has been reported.

"These reforms, these promises of a better economic and social order have attracted the peasants and workers. This prospect of a new life is what has imbued a starving subject people with the will to fight to the death. This is the 'secret weapon' that has wrested two-thirds of South Korea from U.S. imperialism and its native agents and withstood the troop and bombing fleets of mighty Wall Street."

We have seen this spirit maintained to this day, even in the prison camps of the U.S. Army in one of the most remarkable displays of revolutionary ardor in the annals of the struggle of oppressed peoples. It is certainly true that the revolutionary regime and its ally have been stronger than its opponents on the political plane. That is just about the only plane on which it has been stronger. Not to see this is to see nothing about Korea. Nor does this detract from the far greater and more consciously planned achievements of the Bolsheviks in their civil war.

Hansen complains about elements of chauvinism against American troops that have been contained in Stalinist propaganda. If you want to see real chauvinism, examine the treatment of German soldiers in the war against Hitler. There you had an almost unrelieved anti-German chauvinism by the Kremlin. The German soldiers were treated as beasts and their captured generals were elevated to "free Germany" committees. In Korea the civil war character breaks through in the fact that the captured U.S. soldiers are given good treatment (which they testify to and no one disputes) and instruction in "communism," while the Korean PW's themselves capture American generals and squeeze them for concessions!

The real comparison that must be made if our party is to learn from the Korean events is not between Korea and October but between Korea and Spain. In Spain GPU gunmen shot down revolutions who wanted to give a civil war character to the struggle against Franco. In Korea the Communist parties unleashed the civil war and the Kremlin was forced to go along. The difference is in the fact that the revolution here is proving stronger than the Kremlin. Hansen points to the fact that the Kremlin withheld arms from Korea during the first stages of the struggle. But in Spain they withheld arms too, and then doled out inferior arms for money. In Korea, the differences has been that side by side with the Kremlin there now lives the Chinese revolution which came to the aid of Korea with arms, planes, tanks, guns which it itself had squeezed out of the Kremlin, and with great armies in addition!

The events in Korea are not novel in that they demonstrate counter-revolutionary proclivities on the part of the Kremlin, but in the fact that they show the tendencies of October breaking through once again in the world despite Stalinism. This reenforces our movement as against all others, none of which foresaw this or built upon it. It also gives our movement a new starting point in the colonial world in the existence of great revolutionary movements. The strategy which follows from this is penetration of those movements, which

first and above all means participation and self-establishment through becoming the best fighters in the existing struggles. Without that all talk of "strategy" and "tactics" and "pointing things out" is nothing but empty verbiage. It is this that is required to put ourselves in the position to take advantage of dissatisfaction with Stalinist policies or with bureaucratic domination and come to the fore as leaders on our own program.

Along these lines we can approach the tactical and strategic problems of our work. Within this framework, we are in a position to return to the question which Comrade Hansen says was advanced in New York: Do we tell a North Korean worker that his leadership is counter-revolutionary? It would seem to me that this question should be easy to reply to, particularly in view of the fact that the Third World Congress has described this leadership not as "counter-revolutionary" but as outside the orbit of imperialism and as having projected a revolutionary orientation. But Hansen does not answer this question in that way. Instead he strongly hints that, were we in a position to do so, we should indeed tell North Korean workers that their leadership is counter-revolutionary, in Hansen's words "according to time and place and with due regard for his own safety and the sensibilities of those he hopes to win to his views."

What is my answer to the New York comrade? It is this: that such a line would be the purest sectarian windbagism, having nothing in common with a Bolshevik course. I would not advise him to do this any more than I advised miner-comrades during the wartime and post-war coal strikes, either in their unions or in personal discussion with miners, to peddle the line that John L. Lewis is a strikebreaker. I would not be governed here by considerations of "his own safety" or "the sensibilities of others" only. I would consider such a line wrong in fact in this situation and criminal in practice. Such a line would represent a mis-construction of the role that the Korean and Chinese CPs are playing in this struggle, and would close the road to progress for us. This would be true if our comrades carried this line into action and speech, but it would be just as true if they only carried it in their heads. With such an attitude it would be impossible to make a future for Bolshevism in the East, whether in China, in Korea or anywhere else in those struggles. This must be understood very clearly, because we have already had too many sectarian disasters.

The task of building a rival leadership, of building a nucleus for Bolshevism within these Stalinist-led revolutionary movements, is a necessary and indispensable task. In all probability sections of the present CP membership and even leadership will play a role in this process as rifts within Stalinism arise. The Bolshevik will aid in this process by opposing false policies or bureaucratic rigidity and suppression of proletarian initiative as they arise in the process of the struggle itself. Those who think that this process can be forced faster than the masses themselves are willing to go are making a big mistake. It is necessary above all in such a struggle to guide our tactics by the view which the masses take towards their own leadership. We cannot impose our view upon them from the outside, but must help them to learn from their own experiences. In this process, nothing could be a worse handicap than a sectarian and ultra-left evaluation of the Chinese-Korean Stalinist parties as "counter-revolutionary."

12. Bolivia Turned Upside Down

Hansen's misunderstandings about Korea find their complement in his discussion of Stalinism in a Trotskyist-led mass upsurge. Hansen writes of Bolivia on Page 19 as follows:

"You might think that of all places the Kremlin would be especially concerned here to give an active revolution a push -- at least a bit of nominal aid. After all Bolivia can prove to be the Achilles heel of U.S. imperialism -- it is only necessary to visualize the consequences of that revolution catching on in other Latin American provinces of Wall Street's empire. Yet the Bolivian Stalinists are in the camp of President Paz who is now receiving aid from the State Department which obviously hopes to utilize him to contain the revolution and later liberate the tin mines."

There are many misunderstandings in this paragraph. In the first place no one has said that the Kremlin has become revolutionary or even that the Kremlin projects a revolutionary orientation under exceptional circumstances. All of this is Hansen's invention. The Kremlin does not project any such struggles for power on the part of its parties; on the contrary it does its best to prevent this. Stalinist parties have done this only against the will of the Kremlin and only under exceptional circumstances. In Bolivia the exceptional circumstances are not only missing but one exceptional circumstance, Trotskyist predominance, makes it extremely improbable that any but an absolutely exceptional Stalinist party, ready to break at once with the Kremlin, could join in the movement which we dominate.

This attempt to use Bolivia as a shield against the problems raised by Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, Korea, Indo-China, Malaya, etc., calls to mind the manner in which Shachtman tried to use the Baltic countries as a shield behind which to hide from the reality of Poland, etc. Trotsky replied:

"Seeking to get around reality, namely that nothing else but the social foundations of the USSR forced a social revolutionary program upon the Kremlin, Shachtman refers to Lithuania, Esthonia and Latvia where everything has remained as of old. An incredible argument! No one has said that the Soviet bureaucracy always and everywhere either wishes or is able to accomplish the expropriation of the bourgeoisie." (In Defense of Marxism, Page 131.)

Nor has anyone said that Stalinist parties always and everywhere either can or will take the road of a struggle for power.

Exactly the case of Bolivia, where the Trotskyist movement is strong and plays the leading role, where a revolutionary upsurge is entirely out of the control of the Kremlin, is a case where the Kremlin, redoubling its usual efforts, would do everything to prevent a revolutionary orientation on the part of a Stalinist party. Hansen's estimate, that "You might think that of all places the Kremlin would be especially concerned" to push the Bolivian revolution, is not at all what I think. I think that in Bolivia of all places the Kremlin would be concerned to keep the Trotskyist-led movement out of power.

Whether in Latin America in the future any movements will develop under Stalinist leadership which will go over to a revolutionary of-

fensive under the impetus of the masses and thus lay the groundwork for a break with the Kremlin or for a semi-independent status in the Chinese manner is something that remains to be seen. Secretary of State Dulles recently took a good look at Latin America and said that it looks to him about like China looked in the Thirties. The Guatemalan CP today appears to hold the balance of power in that country and has been the motive force behind the continuation of the revolution into the present stage of agrarian reform. We do not have too much information about this party, and have no way of determining whether it will be possible for this party to divest itself of the bourgeois-coalition policy which it today follows and of Kremlin limitations and strike out for independent power.

The analysis of Stalinist parties, the forces that work upon them and the course they may be compelled to take cannot, in any event, be decided by mechanically fixed abstractions. Unfortunately, that is what Hansen tries to do, both in Korea and Bolivia. He operates with the rigid abstraction: "counter-revolutionary," and tries to attribute to his opponents the opposite category as their working tool: "revolutionary." The Stalinist parties, particularly where they lead mass movements, are profoundly contradictory, and analyses of any of these parties must, besides starting from correct theoretical premises, be quite concrete and related to the relationships and pressures within the specific country, the nature of the other forces, the international situation, etc. The abstraction "Stalinism" used to serve us quite well when Stalinism was relatively homogeneous; the process of differentiation makes this too-general term far less useful today. It must give way to a more concrete examination of the particular phenomenal forms taken by Stalinism: the Kremlin, Chinese CP, British CP, etc. But Hansen continues to try to operate with rigid concepts and we have seen how he runs up against extreme difficulties.

13. The "Credit" of the Soviet Union

On Page 17, Hansen discusses the attitude of the workers outside the Soviet Union to the Soviet state:

"What have been the consequences since the end of World War II of the repeated purges inside the Soviet Union and the GPU's encirclement of the Soviet workers against the workers abroad? The renewed credit won by the victory of the Soviet Union in the struggle against German imperialism was dissipated in a few short years."

There is another important mis-estimate here, and one which moreover can have serious consequences in the form of a misunderstanding of the crisis in the Stalinist movements which lies beneath the surface. Although there are millions of workers who have been repelled by Stalinist dictatorship, and in Europe this is especially true in West Germany, it is not correct to say that "the renewed credit" has been dissipated. In the first place, the credit was won not only by military victory but also by the enormous economic progress of the Soviet bloc, and also by revolutionary successes on the part of movements remaining within the Kremlin orbit and thus casting reflected glory on the Kremlin, which is not at all averse to taking credit for victories it tried to prevent. This credit has been gathered since the victory over Hitlerism and is by no means dissipated.

In the second place this is not only a question of credit but of power. The vast growth of Soviet power holds many millions in the Soviet orbit everywhere because this seems to them to be the force which can aid in the victory of socialism in Europe and Asia. Thus the present attractive power of the Soviet Union, which undeniably is very great, consists of a mixture of "credit" for victories and for economic growth, and of respect for and reliance upon Soviet power without which the revolutionary workers see U.S. imperialism dominating the world. This is not the same as the enormous moral and programmatic power wielded by the Bolsheviks in the days when they shook the world and founded a new international. But we must analyze it for what it is in order to see how things may proceed from here and how we may proceed with them.

With the growth of this form of "credit" and respect, a new element has been mixed into the alloy of world pro-Soviet movements. That is the element of suspicion, doubt, mistrust and outright antipathy directed against the bureaucracy. No longer does the Stalinist movement consist solely of docile and trusting blinded people. As the movement has grown larger to embrace substantial segments of the best elements of the class, and as these elements feel a showdown struggle approaching and the hope for victory grows, dissatisfactions with the bureaucracy assume a more prominent place in their thinking. The monolithism of the apparatus shows cracks under the strains thus produced. Muffled contests go on over line and leadership. Moods and feelings which reject the prospect of a totalitarianism on the Soviet style grow, perhaps with the added amendment: "That kind of stuff may be all right for them, but we don't want it."

We must never forget that by incorporating millions into its parties abroad, Stalinism has taken into the Kremlin camp a potentially explosive force in the form of large numbers of independent-minded workers who were not trained in the tight groups of the pre-war days, but in the World War II underground, and in the great swell of struggles of the post-war period. Monolithic discipline cannot control the minds and feelings of these workers.

However, and this is very important to understand, their mood has not become one of rejecting either the struggle for socialism or the Soviet camp of which they are now a part. Rather, the moods of dissatisfaction express themselves in grumbling and oppositional tendencies within the Stalinist parties: This is above all the lesson of the recent Marty-Tillon events in France. I asked a French Stalinist, a young wartime partisan commander (moreover not sympathetic to Marty-Tillon), how much support these two leaders had. He told me: "They have no organized support. But they have half the party. Half of every member is with them." This same Stalinist, for whom Thorez is the French Lenin, spoke in the most disparaging terms of the Russian and the U.S. Communist parties. He knew, I might add, that he was talking to a Trotskyist. And he was ready to discuss and even criticize his own movement, but showed no present mood to leave that movement.

It is in this form, not in the form of "dissipated credit" that the crisis of mass Stalinist parties exists as a potential factor in Europe and Asia. And it is very important to understand this in order to comprehend the work that our small forces can do. Here again, Hansen's comments are nothing but a signpost pointing to confusion.

14. What Is the Danger?

Hansen has embarked upon a crusade to safeguard the political integrity of our movement. He even calls one section of his document by the pretentious title "In Defense of Trotskyism." But he never once stops to make a really serious analysis of the dangers threatening our movement and the class pressures at work upon it in the U.S. He does not see our Marxist line threatened by the hammer blows of American imperialism or the heavy weight of the dead hand of tradition that always holds a movement back when a new political situation comes into being, but he expresses great fears over the (relatively speaking) pin-pricks of the U.S. Stalinist party and sees a threat of all kinds of disorientation from that side. He fails to notice which side persecutes us and robs us of members and possible recruits by its pressure. And finally, he fails to notice that we have fallen into a series of political errors in the last years, all on one side and all of them in the direction of vulgar anti-Stalinism. Hansen arms himself with the latest thing in the way of psychological tools and goes to work on the "moods" and "pessimism" of "a section of the party." Is this the materialist approach to be expected from a disciple of Trotsky?

One of the planks in the program set forth by Hansen in the closing pages of his document reads as follows: "We are prepared to take full advantage of the difficulties faced by Stalinism. This requires (a) opposition to Stalinophobia and (b) opposition to conciliation toward Stalinism." If all problems were as simple as Comrade Hansen makes them, life would certainly be a bowl of cherries.

We must first ask: If opposition to Stalinophobia is placed by Hansen on an equal level with opposition to Stalinism, why is it that his document centers all its fire against a "pro-Stalinist" tendency which does not exist in fact, which he cannot produce in corporeal documented form but only in the ghostly form of corridor gossip, slander and distortion? This doesn't look to me like equal-handed justice. Has Hansen failed to see the existence in the party of tendencies which to this very day refuse to recognize the overturn in Eastern Europe which created new workers' states? Has he failed to see a trend of thought which wants to pretend that nothing has changed, that there has been no left turn by the Stalinist movements, which believes that we can meet the Stalinist movement today in exactly the same way we met it in its past period? Does he not recognize that this trend of thinking has prevented many of our movements from comprehending reality, and has led to disaster in a number of important countries? He does not have so much as a single word to say about this matter!

We might be willing to compromise, in the present situation, for Comrade Hansen's golden mean. Let him give us at least as much education against Stalinophobia as he does in the opposite direction. In reality, however, the main danger in our party has for years been from the quarter opposite to that on which Hansen has trained his artillery. This is the pressure of U.S. imperialism and its Stalinophobe allies in the union movement. It is easy to furnish proof for this even without going into details, for all our members know the picture.

We have lost many hundreds of people to the imperialist camp and its pressure during the last 15 years. This has even taken the form of sizeable Stalinophobe splits. Moreover, even among worker-recruits there were not a few who showed this pressure. Could it be otherwise in this country? I personally have heard good worker-militants, former members of our union fractions, explain that they are worried by "the menace of Stalinism" and that "we must defend ourselves against Moscow." I have never seen any workers leave us to go to the Communist Party.

Walk out into the streets of downtown New York and try to throw a rock in any direction without hitting some confirmed Stalinophobe ex-member who will explain how "terrible" Stalinism is and also add a few words for your edification about the "good sides" of American capitalism. You can hardly miss. Union staffs across the country, fancy Wall Street magazines, right-wing political groups, government bureaus -- all of these exhibit in their show windows a few ex-Trotskyists who would satisfy our most demanding critics by their "hardness" against Stalinism.

But I don't know of a single person who has left our movement for the Communist Party since the spring of 1936 when Reich, Hallet and Arnold Johnson, at least two of whom were Stalinist agents, went to the CP. And I don't see any exodus in that direction right now, although I do see some here and there taking their bows before they leave for the Catholic Church, the social democracy or the union bureaucracy, or simply to settle down in a quiet (and solidly anti-Stalinist) obscurity. In this situation, Hansen observes his golden mean of equal-handed education against both Stalinophobia and pro-Stalinism by directing every bit of his argument, most of it wrong, against his hand-tailored pro-Stalinist dummies.

In his reply to Bleibtreu called The Unadmitted Objectives of a Diversionist Attack, Comrade Pablo wrote:

"Bleibtreu and his tendency (to the degree that it follows him consciously) are tinged with the sectarian anti-Stalinism which has developed in our movement as a result both of our isolation from the masses and of the lack of understanding of the contradictory nature of Stalinism.

"The new conditions which have arisen following the last war, the absolutely new situation in several respects in which our movement was obliged to function have accentuated the confusion and disorientation of these elements.

"This tendency, which is not homogeneous, which comprises a broad range of shadings, has nevertheless a certain number of characteristics in common: resistance to recognizing the objective revolutionary merit of the movements which have been led by Stalinist leaderships or of those which are still Stalinist-influenced (not yet having formally broken with the Kremlin) or of social changes which have been carried through by the bureaucracy itself (examples: Yugoslavia, China, Soviet buffer zone); underestimation of the revolutionary objective merit of the mass movements still led by the CPs; sectarianism toward this movement in the tactical manner of approaching it (how to write, how to speak to the Stalinist workers, how to criticize); tendency to empty the defense of the USSR (to which is

now added defense of the buffer zone) of all practical, real content and to relegate it to the position of a formal, ritual task, which no longer has any practical meaning.

"Bleibtreu now discerns two tendencies in the International, one of which rejects defense of the USSR and the pro-Stalinist tendency against which he, observing the golden mean, directs all his fire. In reality, the tendency which has led our movement to disaster in a number of countries (I have weighed these words very responsibly) was the sectarian anti-Stalinist tendency which we have been combating for a number of years in the International.

"The people who even today have not yet perceived what has happened to the Trotskyists in a number of countries in Europe and Asia, who have drawn no conclusions, and who turn the question upside down by polemicizing against a so-called Stalinist tendency in the International which has never existed (Pablo's emphasis) are themselves tinged with this anti-Stalinism."

This same misdirected attention is to be seen throughout Comrade Hansen's document. He sees the "dangers" everywhere but where he should. On Page 18 he writes:

"The unfavorable turn in Yugoslavia after the promising beginnings. . . should serve to remind us to be doubly cautious about China. There the relations between Peking and Moscow remain enigmatic and the leadership of the Chinese revolution up to the present stage has far from made clear what its ultimate program will turn out to be. I for one am not yet prepared to give them a vote of political confidence -- and that does not alter my recognition of the colossal significance of the Chinese revolution and its world-shaking potential."

What is the meaning of this? None of us give a vote of "political confidence" to Mao, but in what sense are we to be "doubly cautious?" Are we to be twice as cautious as we were in the past in China, when "caution" about Stalinism led to disaster (I use the word which Pablo said he weighed responsibly)? Are we to be twice as cautious as we were in relation to Yugoslavia, where we failed to recognize a revolution for a time after it was completed? (We still have some leading comrades who are being "cautious" about Yugoslavia and who haven't seen the proletarian revolution that took place there yet!)

Are we to be twice as cautious as we were about Korea, when the paper carried a "cautious" third camp line at the start. Are we to be twice as cautious as we were about the negotiations over Germany last year, when the paper carried a cartoon placing Moscow on an equally reprehensible level with Washington? Are we to be twice as cautious as we were in relation to Eastern Europe?

This party has had just about as much of Comrade Hansen's brand of "caution" over the past few years as it can take. If Comrade Hansen's remark about China means that we are in for a double dose of the same thing, then we must say that we face a tendency which threatens the political integrity and the entire future of the SWP.

Hansen's warning is all wrong and directed in the wrong direction. That is not our danger. There is not one among us who would

fail to recognize a Stalinist betrayal in China if it comes, whether in the form of capitulation to U.S. imperialism on the Yugoslav model, or in any other form. What we have needed, above all in the Chinese party but elsewhere as well, is a double dose of something that would purge our thinking of every trace of Stalinophobia, every element of sectarian narrowness, every tendency to lag behind events.

15. Tactics Toward U.S. Stalinism

There is not and has not been any proposal in our party for a major orientation towards the Stalinists in this country. In reality, the dispute over this problem as it arose in the New York local fell under two main heads: 1. How much attention should be given to this specific field of work? and 2. By what methods should this work be carried on?

The first of these problems is a concrete question which must be decided, as always in such matters, by each branch upon the basis of the particular circumstances, opportunities, other fields of work, forces available, etc. There is no blanket solution that holds for all branches. I should like to point out that, as can be seen from reports in the paper, most branches even now give special attention to covering all Stalinist meetings with literature. Some branches, where opportunities exist, do heavier concentrating in the form of attending Stalinist meetings, hunting for Stalinist contacts, fraction work, etc. These branches can even show some successes in the way of recruiting from the Stalinist movement and periphery.

Hansen raises for discussion the question of the extent of our opportunities in the New York Stalinist movement. I shall not follow him into a discussion of concrete New York details, a field that is better left to the comrades directly involved in the work. Comrade Bartell has discussed these matters thoroughly and well. But inasmuch as we have some information from other branches also, I will add a few observations on my own.

Hansen quotes the following remark made by Bartell: "Indeed, their movement, the C.P., could be said to be rife with Trotskyist conciliationism." He demands to know what I think about this remark. I must point out first that Comrade Hansen neglects, as usual, to give his own appraisal of the situation in the Stalinist ranks. He confines himself to pointing out what others say. But the party already knows what Bartell says about this. What does Hansen say? That nothing has changed in the relation between the Stalinist ranks and ourselves? Or that perhaps there has been a considerable change, but Bartell exaggerates? We may be able to arrange a compromise with Hansen if only we can get some idea of his estimate.

Permit me to quote a couple of paragraphs from the report of the organizer of the Seattle Branch, Comrade Clara Kaye, who is herself, if I understand her views, friendly to Hansen's viewpoint:

"The efforts of the Stalinists and Progressives to get across their class-collaborationist peace line, met with little success outside their own circles, a few ministers and pacifists excepted. This was due not only to the witch-hunt atmosphere, but to the fact that the Stalinists are thoroughly discredited in the eyes of most union militants and liberals. Their line on peace and civil

rights, or both, was rejected by more and more prominent individuals and sections in their periphery, who recognized that this line amounted to a betrayal of socialist principle, class-struggle methods and a united front policy." (page 8)

"We have thoroughly succeeded in scandalizing Stalinist anti-united-front procedure, and in putting them sorely on the spot before concerned people. Their attacks on us have collapsed. They have been forced to pretend that our assistance is welcome and that they support our civil rights; but this 'turn' was made necessary by considerations of tactical expediency rather than any fundamental conciliationism in their leadership towards Trotskyism. They have temporarily conceded to their ranks and to public opinion, because of the tight spot they find themselves in, but we cannot afford to relax our vigilance towards them and we must be prepared for further villification. Their probable attempt to send an agent into the branch availed them nothing that they could use. Some of their prominent front men are currently friendly and will discuss with us; this is all to the good.

"We continue pounding them or offering our help, or both, as the case may be, keeping in mind possible tactical penetration. Our offers of support to the Rosenberg case were received in silence, with no attacks forthcoming. Their ranks are more than ever inclined to welcome our aid and to resist slander attacks against us. However, many are still cautious about discussing with us, especially those Stalinists in the unions who are under strong orders not to do so, and these unions are our best bet of reaching their proletarian elements, slowly breaking down their personal barriers against us, and persuading them into discussion, as we have successfully done in the past." (pages 11-12. All emphasis mine -- H.F.)

If "their attacks on us have collapsed," if "they have temporarily conceded to their ranks" on questions of Trotskyism, if "their ranks are more than ever inclined to welcome our aid and to resist slander attacks against us," how are we to characterize this absolutely new situation, one which we have never had before in this country. We have excellent grounds to suppose that the CP leaders, their hands tied so far as moving against us is concerned by pressure from their ranks and periphery, are worried about "Trotskyist conciliationism." This must at least be the case in Seattle, and appears to be the same in New York.

How do we meet this opportunity? Comrade Hansen is all for "hardness" and accuses Bartell of "softness" in approach. Let us see. Some comrades think that vituperation is the best weapon to use on Stalinists today. Others, having already tried vituperation and found that it does not work, conclude that if the "hardest" means are inadequate, nothing will do any good. But unmeasured vituperation is not the best weapon to use on Stalinists these days; actually it is the poorest. Comrades who have had occasion to deal with Stalinists and have met with some success will affirm this.

What is a "hard" approach? Do we walk into a Stalinist meeting and, first crack out of the box, throw a knife on the table, and demand war to the death. To hear Comrade Hansen shout about "hardness" one would think that this is what he wants. But we know that such a deed would end our work before it is begun. The Stalinist leaders would say to their people: "You see, it is just as we said.

These people are impossible. We want to fight against the war, and they want to fight us and disrupt everything. They only pretend to be against the war in order to do this. They are agents of Wall Street, etc. etc."

We don't want to help Foster and Co. cut us off in that fashion, so we must work a little more carefully. We move a trifle slowly until we find clear opportunities to hit the Stalinists or until we can make such opportunities. The recent anti-Semitic trials offered such a chance, and we took advantage of it in a New York Compass Club to secure an officially sponsored debate between Comrade Clarke and a Stalinist speaker. But we could never have gained that if not for some months of careful work by a Brooklyn comrade who, during this entire period, has been known as a Trotskyist.

There is nothing in this mode of work, traditional in our movement, to entitle anyone to shout about "conciliation to Stalinism." There is no other proper way, and we should so advise any comrade who undertook to do this work in a serious, and not in a playboy, spirit.

A certain trepidation about the prospect of hand-to-hand combat with the Stalinists on a serious basis is evident in the remarks of Comrade Hansen. He says he is for the work, but fears that our "scouts and foragers" will be "absorbed," we will "end up in disaster," etc. I don't see any signs of such "disasters" occasioned by this kind of work. But if we have such a defect, it will never be cured by insulating our people from the Stalinists; on the contrary, that would only make it worse. A cadre is best hardened in struggle, and struggles of this kind, involving political debate and personal discussion with Stalinists, are the best hardeners. Comrade Hansen appears fearful that, instead of convincing the Stalinists, our people would be convinced by them. But that hasn't been happening up to now. The Stalinist leaders, moreover, have always been convinced that they would suffer more damage in political debate with us than we would, and that is why they have done their best to make political debate impossible. Now that we have broken the fences a little, we should use our advantage, engage in debate and united front maneuvers where warranted, harden some of our cadres in this kind of political struggle, educate them further, and leave the worries as to who will come off second best to those who have always had them.

16. Marxist Optimism

Much is being said in the present discussion about "optimism" and "pessimism". Hansen gives Bartell and his supporters a good beating around the head and shoulders as being "pessimistic about the American workers," etc. Curiously enough, he then accuses the same people of being such incurable optimists as to feel absolutely certain of the coming world victory of socialism, which is an optimism that Hansen thinks is injurious to our work. Before dealing with the "pessimism" let us turn to the latter charge: that of over-optimism.

In his pamphlet Capitalism or Socialism: The Coming World Show-down, Comrade Pablo sketched the meaning and prospects of the present epoch as follows:

"The coming world-wide conflict by its class nature, by the given relation of forces in which it will break out, will be both a War and

a Revolution, a War-Revolution, which will really be the road to the final struggles and the decisive victory of the World Socialist Revolution over world capitalism. Such is the significance and scope of the coming conflict. This historical process began with the Russian Revolution of 1917. The war of 1939-1945, which remained fundamentally an inter-imperialist war, was indecisive and incomplete. It halted halfway. However mutilated, capitalism was able to survive. This time, instead of there being only one as before (the Soviet Union), the non-capitalist states will be powerful and numerous. But, along with all the other forces of the Revolution, they will yet have to go through another furious assault from capitalism which is fighting desperately for its survival.

"This new conflict in preparation will decide once and for all which camp will definitively wind up an entire historical epoch. New half-way solutions are extremely unlikely. And what if imperialism manages to conquer in spite of everything? The whole analysis we have presented actually demonstrates that this hypothesis belongs in the domain of theoretical speculation, and not of practical possibilities." (page 42)

This is the prospect open before the world working class today, a century after the Communist Manifesto. Many struggles and difficulties lie between the working class and its goal, but the goal is definitely taking shape in a tangible and realizable form on a world scale. And since we, as Marxists, have no special interests of our own separate from our class to defend, we have every reason to feel buoyant about the world trend toward the victory of our class.

While we have great confidence in our world prospects, it goes without saying that we shall have to pass through many difficulties, repressions, ebbs in the struggle, etc. We are in a period of such difficulty in the U.S. right now.

There are those in our party who feel that morale can only be maintained by a bumptious gasconade intended to "cheer up" members in difficult times. The truth is somewhat different. Party morale derives from two things: a theory and a class; Marxist understanding and connections with the class struggle. While literary and oratorical effects can be used to put the best possible face on these sole solid grounds for optimism, they are not and cannot be the source of optimism. Any outlook that seeks to ground itself mainly in grandiloquence and fanfaronade is bound to produce either fake optimism or sectarian bocksureness. The one is as bad as the other. Both of these kinds of "optimists" live on the ragged edge of despair and desperation.

Lenin, who was the greatest party-builder in the history of the working class, was profoundly steeped in socialist optimism, but was at the same time the most businesslike and unpretentious of men. This is true of his personal characteristics, but it is even more true of his political methods. In the dark hours he addressed himself to the task at hand, that of finding some starting point for work, without canonical assurances or exhortations to faith. In the days of glory and victory, he hammered insistently at the party to purge it of all elements of self-satisfaction and complacency. He was particularly bitter against the "com-boasts," the communist

boasters who were the Babbitts of the revolutionary era, and he shocked many members of his party repeatedly by raising the possibility of defeat in the civil war and of capitalist counter-revolution.

Lenin never preached optimism as a creed; nor did he ever make the fatal fool's error of trying to derive a political line from the word itself, as we see being done in our party today. He did not preach optimism, but he did supply the grounds for it with his analytical work. People who studied Lenin could come away with a more optimistic view, not because of any bombast, nor even because the perspective of the moment happened to be a good one (it could be dark) but simply because they came away better-equipped for their tasks. Leaders who do not do this cannot really give us optimism. They can give us something else, the contagion of personality, the emotion of the moment perhaps, but no more.

There are those who do not care for Lenin's method and prefer a different "tone" of work. That is their privilege. One thing to be said for Lenin's sobriety as an approach to problems of "optimism" and "pessimism" is that it worked quite brilliantly. We are not speaking here of variations in tone and approach. Different people are compelled by factors of background, temperament and training to work differently. But when we are asked to carry on a discussion in the midst of shouts of "optimism, optimism uber alles," then we must draw the line at such uncritical hoopla and at attempts to stam-pede a party discussion by roseate belligerency used as a substitute for analysis. We cannot derive a line and perspective from "optimism"; rather, we can only begin to be optimistic if we have been able to work out a correct line and perspective.

Shouts about "optimism" and "pessimism" in the party discussion have concentrated around two main themes: prospects in the U.S., and world Stalinism. With regard to the first of the two, there is a clamor about our "defeatism" and "pessimism" about the American working class. In reality, we do not have any such pessimism in our ranks, but only a perfectly correct spirit of resistance against those who misread the mood of the working class today and who have fantastic illusions about "starting to build the left wing in the unions now," about significant radical currents in the population, etc. Comrade Hansen enters this discussion with his usual half answer, half feint. He says on page 28:

"The same basic error is apparent in the unfounded pessimism (even cynicism) over the character of the mass movement in America. The defeatist mood, sluggish mentality, concern for privileges and reactionary politics of the trade union bureaucracy are identified with the ranks it heads. The American workers, in fact, preserve their full revolutionary potential and are even now gathering their forces in molecular fashion for great new steps forward that can place the whole question of the socialist revolution on the agenda in the not too distant future."

Comrade Hansen has the right, if he does not already do so, to pride himself on being a master of "click" terminology, and on being able to throw in phrases that confuse and obscure more than they clarify and reveal. His first sentence makes an accusation (pessim-

ism about the workers). His second sentence sets forth his interpretation of what comrades are saying about the present mood of the American workers. Then, as we wait for an opinion from Comrade Hansen about the mood of the American workers right now, he skips off and goes into a song and dance about their future. Again Hansen leaves us completely in the dark as to his whereabouts. That is the way a sniper operates; from ambush against a public target.

We base our program, even our very existence, upon the future of the American working class. But we do not base our tactics upon future events but upon present conditions and possibilities.

The process of mass upsurge in the world will continue and deepen until it includes the American proletariat. That is not determined by our course, but independently of our course, by forces over which we have no power. We can only determine the role we shall play in that revolt and our role may determine the success or failure of the movement. We have no guardian angel that assures us of our role, nor is there any automatism in history that does so. Since we are neither religionists nor fatalists, but dialectical materialists, we must understand this. It is true that history requires the creation of a revolutionary party, but unless we conduct ourselves as such a party should we will not be that party.

To succeed in playing our role in history we must purge our movement of every trace of sectarian narrowness, of every element of thoughtless bluff and bluster, of every bit of false confidence that does not derive from objective fact and Marxist analysis. We must fight for our goal with tenacity and realism; we must not permit complacency to invade our ranks. We must not place all our hopes in being "clean" and "separate"; the workers are far less interested in the betrayals we didn't commit than they are in what we actually have done and can do. "Purity" and "independence," when they reduce themselves simply to not doing anything wrong or compromising, become purely negative qualities which can never build a mass party.

There are some comrades who think it the height of revolutionary optimism to preach the outbreak of a depression, mass radicalization and even revolution in this country prior to a war. This would of course be a fine variant, the best of all possible, but have we the right to count on it? When Lenin in March 1918 was confronted by those who wanted to be "optimists," who wanted to count on the outbreak of a German and international revolution, he answered very sharply:

"Yes, we will see the international world revolution, but for the time being it is a very good fairy tale, a very beautiful fairy tale -- I quite understand children liking beautiful fairy tales. But, I ask, is it becoming for a serious revolutionary to believe fairy tales?" (Sel. Works, Vol. VII, p. 297)

It is unfortunate that we have grown to shrink from the Leninist habit of characterizing leftist chatter in these forthright terms. And yet the prospect of a German and European revolution in 1918 was stronger than the present prospect of an American uprising prior to the developing war. What effect can such "fairy tales" as we hear circulated today in the party about "building a mass party" before the war, about "building the left wing in the unions now", etc., etc.;

what effect can such tales have other than to disorient the vanguard and prepare for demoralization? This is done in the name of "optimism."

Marxists have no need for fairy tale optimism. We need a far more serious view of reality, and we need the fortitude that can develop only from such a view. That is our optimism, and that is the optimism that can build the party of victory in America.

With regard to pessimism about Stalinism and our world prospects, the situation in our party is somewhat different. There is such a mood of pessimism in our ranks. While there is no trend toward capitulation to Stalinism, there is a trend to capitulation before Stalinism. Increasingly, comrades tend to abandon that portion of the world and of the mass movement dominated by Stalinism. The theory appears to be taking hold: wherever the Stalinists are on top, all is lost. The conception of a world which can be redeemed from bondage only in one specified way, by our victory in other portions of the globe, is rapidly taking hold in our movement.

It cannot be denied that the chief immediate prospects of our movement are in those places where Stalinism does not predominate. But we abandon nothing to Stalinism. We do not surrender before the monolithism of the bureaucratic apparatus because we know that the class struggle is stronger than any such apparatus. The very victories of Stalinism prepare its doom.

Everything in this epoch which does not rest upon the forward march of the proletariat is mortal and will die. In this sense Stalinism is just as mortal as any other tendency within the labor movement which draws its strength from the existence of capitalism, the pressure of alien classes, and the immaturity of the working class.

We for our part do not retreat, do not become downhearted, do not take refuge in any one-shot "now or never" perspectives, which see a possibility for Marxism "only if" the revolutions in Western Europe are not led by Stalinist parties, "only if" we can manage to build mass parties before the war, "only if" rebellion breaks out in the Soviet Union, or any other "only if." There are no "only ifs" for us. Difficulties will not crush us. We have confidence in our analysis of our epoch. That analysis and the confidence which flows from it are twofold: The revolution will conquer, and the revolution will right itself! We cannot know what the precise forms and tempo of this process will be, and how its two facets will work out in relation to one another. We do know the moving forces of this twofold process. Knowing this enables Marxists to live without illusions, without whining, without desperate hopes for "quick changes." Ill-founded hopes and last-ditch perspectives only sow the seeds of disillusionment, despair and desertion.

We base ourselves upon the objective forces in the world, and feel sure that these objective forces will in the long run remedy subjective defects. This gives us our confidence in the world triumph of the Marxist program. Beyond that, we have a guarantee of our future role only in our own comprehension, skill and energy; our loyalty to our doctrine and our class and our ability to apply that doctrine within that class. These are the only guarantees of the growth of our ideas and forces, and these are the only guarantees Marxists need.

New York, N.Y.
April 2, 1953

A NOTE ON THE JUNE, 1940 DISCUSSION WITH TROTSKY

We submit the following transcript of a hitherto-unpublished discussion with Leon Trotsky as a document in the present party discussion partly because of its considerable historical interest, but above all because of its relevancy to some of the important issues now in dispute in the party.

The discussion occurred during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact when the Stalinists in the United States had shifted to a pseudo-left line of opposition to imperialist war. Their chief slogan was "The Yanks Are Not Coming," and, branding Roosevelt as a "fascist," they had entered Earl Browder as their own candidate for President. In a number of cases they came into open clash with the Roosevelt administration, as, for instance, in the North American aviation strike in Inglewood, California under their leadership, where federal troops were mustered to break the strike. Browder was arrested, tried and condemned to prison on passport charges. The period was of brief duration, lasting in all slightly less than two years and ending with Hitler's attack against the Soviet Union in June 1941. The fact, as revealed in the discussion, that Trotsky was aware of this possibility, lends added importance to the conceptions he held and to the sharpness with which he advanced them.

It should be immediately apparent to the reader that the discussion was not, as Comrade Cannon said at the last convention, primarily a discussion of election policy, that is, the question of granting critical support to the Stalinists as against running our own independent candidate. It was a discussion concerning our attitude toward the Stalinist workers and of the need of making some tactical turns in their direction when their party was in opposition to imperialism, in keeping with the Kremlin's policy at the time, and when they were following a pseudo-left line. When the comrades persisted in their opposition to his proposal of critical support to Browder, Trotsky declared: "I don't insist on this plan, understand, but we must have a plan. What plan do you propose?"

In the course of the discussion, the range of the argument extended to include the problem of "progressive" anti-Stalinism in the ranks and leadership of the trade union movement. Trotsky's proposal on the election was obviously introduced in a desire to implement by the best means available at the moment the tactical orientation he was advocating toward the Stalinist rank and file. This becomes even more obvious when in the latter part of the discussion, in view of the adamant opposition of the other participants, he proposed a compromise consisting merely of writing a manifesto in order "to turn our political face to the Stalinist workers."

Furthermore one gets the clear impression from reading the transcript that Trotsky's proposal for critical support to Browder was more in the nature of a foil, of posing the question in its sharpest form in order to get at the bottom of the thinking of the comrades, to dig out the deeper reasons for their resistance to any tactical approach to the Stalinist movement. In this, it is also clear that he succeeded in his aim. What is significant in the attitude of his opponents is that it duplicates almost word for word today the furious opposition to proposals of a far more restricted nature than critical support of a CP presidential candidate. The con-

trast is further highlighted by the fact that the Stalinist movement has been in a pseudo-left turn for more than five years, and the ferment in their ranks is obviously much more deepgoing than in the brief period of the Hitler-Stalin pact.

We hope that what Trotsky says about our role as an independent party and the relationship that formula had to our SP maneuver, and to the maneuver he was proposing to the CP, will help to dispel some of the confusion that has been created by the torrent of demagogy flooding the party on this point at the present time. We hope also that his opposition to many of the false attitudes toward both Stalinists and "progressive" anti-Stalinists, then projected for the first time, will help serve as an antidote to their far more virulent manifestation in our press and party today. -- G.C.

* * *

(The following is a rough stenographic draft -- uncorrected by the participants -- of discussions with Trotsky on the Stalinists held on June 12-15, 1940.)

Cannon: . . . The general perspective is quite optimistic. The Stalinists are the problem. By their change in line they dealt a heavy blow. We were forging ahead when they made the switch, paralyzing our work. The workers are unable to distinguish the real difference between us, especially with the faction fight compelling us to give undue emphasis to our defense of the Soviet Union. We need a line of agitation to distinguish ourselves from them. The Stalinist party still has a power cadre of militants. It has a strong trade union machine which draws the workers. The pact seemed to disintegrate them, but it was losing just the democrats. The old militants are more devoted than ever. They believe that the party now has the "real revolutionary" line. We need a more effective counter-attack against the Stalinists.

Trotsky: We don't participate in the presidential elections?

Cannon: There are very rigorous election laws which prevent small parties from getting on the ballot.

Trotsky: And the CP?

Cannon: The CP buys its way onto the ballot. For example in upper New York where it is extremely reactionary, the CP simply buys signatures from those who make a business of dealing in signatures. For us there is no way to get on the ballot.

Trotsky: Your attitude toward the other parties?

Cannon: We are running local campaigns in some places for minor offices.

Trotsky: What do we tell the workers when they ask which president they should vote for?

Cannon: They shouldn't ask such embarrassing questions. We tried write-in campaigns in previous elections, but it is not serious. Nor can we support either the Stalinists or Thomas.

Trotsky: I see there is no campaign in the Socialist Appeal for a workers' candidate. Why haven't you proposed a congress of trade unions, a convention, to nominate a candidate for the presidency. If he were independent we would support him. We cannot remain completely indifferent. We can very well insist in unions where we have influence that Roosevelt is not our candidate and the workers must have their own candidate. We should demand a nation-wide congress connected with the Independent Labor Party.

Dobbs: For awhile some people thought Lewis would run. But Lewis never seriously intended to run. He attempted to bargain with the Roosevelt administration. Now it appears certain that Roosevelt will run.

Trotsky: With the centrists the situation is clear. For a long time in the United States, the socialist movement was not necessary. Now with changed times when it is necessary, it can't have a reformist nature. That possibility is exhausted. At one time the United States was rich in reformist tendencies, but the New Deal was the last flare-up. Now with the war it is clear that the New Deal exhausted all the reformist and democratic possibilities and created incomparably more favorable possibilities for revolution.

I talked with E. a few weeks ago. For Roosevelt, but absolutely helpless about further possibilities of democracy. When I questioned him he was absolutely incapable of answering, and I thought he was going to break down in tears like a little boy.

The entrance into the war is the end of the last remnants of the New Deal and Good Neighbor policy. The Roosevelt of the third term will be completely different from the Roosevelt of the first two terms.

Dobbs: In the CIO and the AFL the leaders have been affected by Roosevelt's war drive, becoming more and more outspoken for unity. Tobin has become more expressive, more deeply involved. Behind the scenes he moves in coordination with the war moves. Dubinsky, one of the original CIO leaders voted to reaffiliate with the AFL thus weakening Lewis. Hillman, a CIO leader, negotiated a jurisdiction agreement with Dubinsky and is cool toward Lewis. There is grave danger of capitulation on the part of the top bureaucrats, weakening the industrial workers. Lewis may have to reach unity at the expense of Industrial unionism. All these leaders are jumping as Roosevelt cracks the whip.

Trotsky: The Stalinists are clearly the most important for us. E. says they lost 15 percent but that the workers remain true to the party. It is a question of attitude. Their dependence on the Kremlin was of great value to the national leaders. Their line was changed from patriotism to anti-war. In the next period their dependence on the Kremlin will create great difficulties for them.

They are anti-war and anti-imperialist, but so are we in general. Do we have a nucleus among them?

Cannon: We have a small nucleus in New York and in one or two other places.

Trotsky: Sent in?

Dobbs: No. They came to us and we advised them to stay and work within.

Cannon: We got some with our campaign against the fascists.

Trotsky: Theoretically it is possible to support the Stalinist candidate. It is a way of approaching the Stalinist workers. We can say, yes we know this candidate. But we will give critical support. We can repeat on a small scale what we would do if Lewis were nominated.

Theoretically it is not impossible. It would be very difficult it is true -- but then it is only an analysis. They of course would say, we don't need your support. We would answer, we don't support you but the workers who support you. We warn them but go through the experience with them. These leaders will betray you. It is necessary to find an approach to the Stalinist party. Theoretically it is not impossible to support their candidate with very sharp warnings. It would seize them. What? How?

Kay: But in Boston the Stalinists wouldn't even permit us to enter their hall. They even threw our comrade outside.

Trotsky: I know. They have even shot at us. But some tens of thousands of workers are with them. I don't know exactly how many. It is very difficult to determine. Of course we would suffer the indignation of Burnham. Shachtman would say, "See, I predicted it -- capitulation to Stalinism." There would even be considerable aversion in our ranks. But the question is the Stalinist workers. The working class is decisive. With guarantees, warnings, why not consider it? Is Browder a worse rascal than Lewis? I doubt it. Both are rascals.

Cannon: The Stalinist movement is peculiar. In France we could approach the Socialists and join them. The Stalinists are large compared to us but small compared with the CIO. The Stalinists are hated by the militants. It is not the psychological attitude of our members but the broad anti-Stalinist movement. If we started to play this kind of politics we would run into this indignation of these militants. For example, the food workers in New York. Our comrades succeeded in creating a strong progressive faction. They may possibly be elected to posts. We built our strength on opposition to Stalinist control of the union. Such a line would disrupt our work. The same is true in the maritime unions and in the auto union. The Stalinists are the main obstacle. A policy of maneuver would be disastrous. What we gained from the Stalinists we would lose otherwise.

Trotsky: Before entrance into the Socialist Party we tried to analyze the situation in the same way. Before entrance into the Socialist Party we had the perspective of exhausting all the possibilities. We were not closer to Thomas than we are to Browder. Those advocating entry predicted that we would finish with the SP and then turn to the CP. Imagine the CP without holding a specific hatred toward it. Could we enter it as we did the SP? I see no reason why not -- theoretically. Physically it would be impossible but not in principle. After entrance into the SP there is nothing that would prevent our entrance into the CP. But that is excluded. We can't enter. They won't let us.

Can we make this maneuver from the outside? The progressive elements oppose the Stalinists but we don't win many progressive elements. Everywhere we meet Stalinists. How to break the Stalinist party? The support of the progressives is not stable. It is found at the top of the union rather than as a rank and file current. Now with the war we will have these progressives against us. We need a stronger base in the ranks. There are small Tobins on whom we depend. They depend on the big Tobins. They on Roosevelt. This phase is inevitable. It opened the door for us in the trade unions. But it can become dangerous. We can't depend on these elements or their sentiments. We will lose them and isolate ourselves from the Stalinist workers. Now we have no attitude toward them. Burnham and Shachtman opposed an active attitude toward the Stalinists. They are not an accident but a crystallization of American workers abused by Moscow. They represent a whole period from 1917 up to date. We can't move without them. The coincidence between their slogans and ours is transitory, but it can give us a bridge to these workers. The question must be examined. If persecutions should begin tomorrow, it would begin first against them, second against us. The honest, hard members will remain true. The progressives are a type in the leadership. The rank and file are disquieted, unconsciously revolutionary.

Dobbs: It is not quite correct to say that the "progressives" include only the tops of the unions. The progressives include the rank and file, especially is this true in the big unions.

Cannon: They are not cohesive, but in revolt against the Stalinists. Where the Stalinists control the union that is where a real anti-Stalinist movement is strongest. The Stalinists control the maritime unions by and large and we have a powerful experience in development of a progressive revolt against them.

Harold: The trade union movement grew by the millions. A new bureaucracy was formed, there was a new stream of union conscious members. In this there were two currents, the Stalinists and the anti-Stalinists. Both streams included both rank and filers and bureaucrats.

Trotsky: But why the difference?

Harold: The differences began in 1934 when the Stalinists emerged from the red unions and were taken as a revolutionary movement. Many were corrupted. Many thought the New Deal swing a maneuver. The Stalinists made a deal with the CIO tops. They led many unions. They had a reputation of militancy. No one policy it is true, but they recruited as revolutionists. Now they are not considered revolutionists. Many of the best have dropped out. Those remaining are bureaucrats or confused.

Cannon: The problem is to get the CP out of the road. There is not a large percentage of revolutionary material in its ranks. They have discontented workers who saw no other force. They attract through the sheer inertia of a big apparatus and a big party. They use corruption where they do not already control the machinery. They use economic terrorism. They do everything the old-time bureaucrats did but on a conveyor system. Unquestionably there are good workers among them, but only a small percentage. It is a terrible danger to risk the condemnation of non-Stalinist workers for the sake of a

maneuver that would win little. The progressive movement is composed of anti-Stalinists and legitimate rank and file forces organized by us. The Stalinists even buy old-time fakers. They provoke a legitimate movement of protest which is our main source of recruitment and which comes during the struggle against the CP. In the Los Angeles auto movement, for example, some ex-CPers organized a counter-movement from which we recruited. The Stalinists have built up a terrible hatred against themselves. Seventy-five percent is genuine worker's grievances and consists of many former Stalinists animated by a terrible bitterness. A complicated maneuver giving the possibility of identifying us with the Stalinists would be wrong. Our main line must be toward the non-Stalinist workers. We must handle the Stalinist question within this frame-work.

Jeb: I am against the maneuver. Perhaps I am not entirely rational about this. Perhaps it is mostly from inertia. Cannon wrote about the Stalinists that they are an alien movement in the workers movement, irresponsible. Our influence in the progressive groups is a top movement, not a rank and file movement, especially in New York. Our position is very precarious. Not something that we can look forward to as a big recruiting ground. The Stalinists influence in the unions is quite solid. They make deals with the old-time fakers, but also have a rank and file following. In the painters union they made a deal with the gangsters but also were supported by the anti-gangster following. We built up a movement, kicked out the Stalinists but couldn't consolidate or recruit. Stalinists operate with corruption but different degrees of corruption. A worker in the TWU who quit the CP in 1938 told us that they are disillusioned with the CP but not enough to join us. They use corruption by degrees -- the best jobs are given to the Stalinists, lesser jobs to the group surrounding them, lesser jobs to sympathizers. The militants don't regard themselves as corrupt -- just members of the CP. "If we don't get the jobs, the reactionaries will." That seems to be their attitude.

But we don't have contact with the Stalinist rank and file. Before we could make such a maneuver we need to organize a nucleus in the Stalinists.

Trotsky: If the results of our conversation were nothing more than more precise investigation in relation to the Stalinists it would be very fruitful.

Our party is not bound to the Stalinist maneuver any more than it was to the SP maneuver. Nevertheless we undertook such a maneuver. We must add up the plusses and minuses. The Stalinists gained their influence during the past ten years. There was the depression and then the tremendous trade union movement culminating in the CIO. Only the craft unionists could remain indifferent. The Stalinists tried to exploit this movement, to build up their own bureaucracy. The progressives are afraid of this. The politics of these so-called progressives is determined by their need to meet the needs of the workers in this movement, on the other hand it comes from fear of the Stalinists. They can't have the same policy as Green because otherwise the Stalinists would occupy their posts. Their existence is a reflex of this new movement, but it is not a direct reflection of the rank and file. It is an adaptation of the conservative bureaucrats to this situation. There are two competitors, the progressive bureau-

crats and the Stalinists. We are a third competitor trying to capture this sentiment. These progressive bureaucrats can lean on us for advisors in the fight against the Stalinists. But the role of an advisor to a progressive bureaucrat doesn't promise much in the long run. Our real role is that of third competitor. Then the question of our attitude toward these bureaucrats -- do we have an absolutely clear position toward these competitors? These bureaucrats are Rooseveltians, militarists. We tried to penetrate the trade unions with their help. This was a correct maneuver, I believe. We can say that the question of the Stalinists would be resolved in passing insofar as we succeed in our main maneuver. But before the presidential campaign and the war question we have time for a small maneuver. We can say, your leaders betray you, but we support you without any confidence in your leaders in order to show that we can go with you and to show that your leaders will betray you. It is a short maneuver, not hinging on the main question of the war. But it is necessary to know incomparably better the Stalinists and their place in the trade unions, their reaction to our party. It would be fatal to pay too much attention to the impression that we can make on the pacifists and on our "progressive" bureaucrat friends. In this case we become the squeezed lemon of the bureaucrats. They use us against the Stalinists but as the war nears call us unpatriotic and expel us. These Stalinist workers can become revolutionary, especially if Moscow changes its line and becomes patriotic. At the time of Finland, Moscow made a difficult turn, a new turn is still more painful. But we must have contact and information. I don't insist on this plan, understand, but we must have a plan. What plan do you propose? The progressive bureaucrats and dishonest centrists of the trade union movement reflect important changes in the base, but the question is how approach the base? We encounter between us and the base, the Stalinists.

Kay: To support the Stalinists in the presidential campaign would kill us. They shift their line --

Trotsky: Nothing can kill us, Comrade Kay.

Kay: Our sympathizers would be driven away. The Stalinists cannot even talk with us. They are expelled for talking with us.

Trotsky: That is a blow against the party. They say that we are agents of this and that power. We say, if your leaders are serious against war then we are with you, but your leaders will betray you. It is the politics of critical support. Tobin, for example, is a faker combined with a reactionary stupid petty bourgeois, but would we vote for him if he were running on an independent ticket for president? Yes.

Kay: But Tobin or Lewis wouldn't kill us.

Trotsky: I am not so sure. Lewis would kill us very efficiently if he were elected and war came. It is not a sentimental question. It is how to break this hypnosis. They say the Trotskyites are agents -- but we say if you are seriously against the war we are with you. Even the problem of making them listen to us -- we meet that by explaining. It is a very daring undertaking. But the cohesion of our party is such that we could succeed. But if we reject this plan, then we must find another policy. I repeat then we must find another policy. What is it?

Carl: We must keep aware of the main task, to present ourselves to the American workers. I think that we would be swallowed up in this maneuver because of the size of the party. Now we are becoming able to separate ourselves from them -- but this maneuver would swallow us up. We must be careful to make an independent stand, not as an opposition movement to the Stalinists.

Trotsky: It is not a question of entry. And such a maneuver would be very short and very critical. The maneuver itself presupposes that we are an independent party. The maneuver is a measure of our independence. The workers of the Stalinist party are in a closed milieu, hypnotized by lies for a long time. Now the persecution from the war begins. Our criticisms seem part of the persecution and suddenly we appear to support them -- because of the bourgeois persecutions. I don't say even that we will actually vote for them -- by November the situation can change. The leaders can carry out their betrayal.

Hansen: The maneuver seems to me to bear some resemblance to our united front proposal to the CP at the time of the anti-fascist demonstration. At the first demonstration, we made no such proposals. Many of the rank and file of our party criticized us. At the second demonstration we made such a proposal. It brought immediate response from the Stalinists. The rank and file were favorably impressed and questioned their leaders. The leaders were forced to launch a new campaign against us. We gained some members as a result.

Trotsky: The analogy holds except that then we had the initiative. Now they have the initiative. Good, we support this initiative. An investigation is needed, a small conference. I don't wish to exaggerate this maneuver. It is not our strategic line, but a tactical question. It is one possibility.

Dobbs: It seems to me you are considering two aspects of the question: One, you are weighing the question as to whether more is to be gained in numbers and quality than would be lost among the anti-Stalinists. Two, the maneuver is possible only while they have an anti-war attitude.

Trotsky: Yes. The Stalinist machine makes different turns and maneuvers in obedience to Moscow. Now they make a turn corresponding to the most intimate feelings of the rank and file. Now we can approach them or remain indifferent. We can give support to them against their leaders or remain aside.

There is a presidential campaign besides this. If you are an independent party you must have politics, a line in relation to this campaign. I have tried to combine the two in a not decisive but important period. It combines the honest feelings of the Stalinist rank and file and also touches the masses at election time. If you had an independent candidate I would be for him, but where is he? It is either complete abstention from the campaign because of technical reasons, or you must choose between Browder and Norman Thomas. We can accept abstention. The bourgeois state deprived us of the possibility of running our candidate. We can proclaim that everyone is a faker. That is one thing, but events confirming our proclamation is another. Shall we follow negative or dynamic politics. I must say that during the conversation I have become still more convinced that

we must follow the dynamic course. However, I propose only a serious investigation, a discussion, and then a conference. We must have our own politics. Imagine the effect on the Stalinist rank and file. It would be very good. They expect from such a terrible enemy as us that we will throw very cold water on them. We will surprise them with some terribly hot water.

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June 14, 1940

Trotsky: Toledano's speech, reported today in the press, is important for our policy in America. The Mexican people, says Toledano, "love" the United States and will fight the Nazis arms in hand. Toledano indicates complete fraternization with the democracies. This is the first announcement of a new turn by Moscow. I have a concrete suggestion, that we publish a letter to the Stalinist workers: during five years your leaders were protagonists of the democracies then they changed and were against all the imperialisms. If you make a firm decision not to permit a change in line then we are ready to convoke a convention to support your presidential candidate. You must give a pledge. It would be a letter of propoganda and agitation to the Stalinist workers. We will see. It is probable that the line will change in some weeks. This letter would give you free possibilities without having to vote for their candidate.

Cannon: They will probably make a change before we return.

Trotsky: Yes it is quite likely.

Cannon: We must exercise great caution in dealing with the Stalinists in order not to compromise ourselves. Yesterday's discussion took a one-sided channel regarding our relations in the unions, that we act only as attorneys for the progressive labor fakers. This is very false. Our objective is to create our own forces. The problem is how to begin. All sectarians are independent forces -- in their own imagination. Your impression that the anti-Stalinists are rival labor fakers is not quite correct. It has that aspect, but it has other aspects too. Without opposition to the Stalinists we have no reason for existing in the unions. We start as oppositionists and become irreconcilable. Where small groups break their necks is that they scorn maneuvers and combinations and never consolidate anything. At the opposite extreme is the Lovestone group.

In one union we began without any members, the way we usually begin. Up to the time of the war it was hard to find a more fruitful ground than the anti-Stalinist elements. We began with this idea, that it is impossible to play a role in the unions unless you have people in the unions. With a small party, the possibility to enter is the first essential. In this union we made a combination with syndicalist elements. It was an exceptional situation, a small weak bureaucracy, most of whose policies were correct and which was against the Stalinists. It was incomprehensible that we could play any role except as an opposition to the Stalinists who were the most treacherous elements in the situation. We formed a tacit bloc with the one possibility to enter the union freely. We were weak numerically, strong politically. The progressives grew, defeated the Stalinists. We grew too. We have 50 members and may possess soon 50 more. We

followed a very careful policy -- not to have sharp clashes which were not necessary anyway so far, so as not to bring about a premature split -- not to let the main fight against the Stalinists be obscured. The maritime unions are an important section in the field. Our first enemy there is the Stalinists. They are the big problem. In new unions such as the maritime -- which in reality surged forward in 1934, shattering the old bureaucracy, the Stalinists came to the fore. The old-fashioned craft unionists cannot prevail against the Stalinists. The struggle for control is between us and the Stalinists. We have to be careful not to compromise this fight. We must be the classical intransigent force. The Stalinists gained powerful positions in these unions, especially in the auto union. The Lovestoneites followed the policy outlined by Trotsky yesterday -- attorneys for the labor fakers, especially in auto. They disappeared from the scene. We followed a more careful policy. We tried to exploit the differences between the Martin gang and the Stalinists. For a while we were the left wing of the Martin outfit, but we extricated ourselves in the proper time. Auto is ostensibly CIO but in reality the Stalinists are in control. Now we are coming forward as the leading and inspiring circle in the rank and file that has no top leaders, that is anti-Stalinist, anti-patriotic, anti-Lewis. We have every chance for success. We must not overlook the possibility that these chances developed from experiments in the past period to exploit differences between the union tops. If we had taken a sectarian attitude we would still be there.

In the food unions there was an inchoate opposition to the Stalinists. There were office seekers, progressives, former CPers. We have only a few people. We must link ourselves with one or the other to come forward. Later we will be able to come forward. Two things can compromise us: One, confusion with the Stalinists. Two, a purist attitude. If we imagine ourselves a power, ignoring the differences between the reactionary wings we will remain sterile.

Dobbs: The general situation leads me to believe that we would lose more than we would gain from giving the impression that we are locking arms with the Stalinists. We have made connections with reactionary people but at the same time we have gained some very good trade union elements, bringing them closer to true Bolshevism. We have gained additional footholds. In one basic union we have 22 comrades in the rank and file movement. Some playing a very important role. At the last convention one comrade especially got the biggest ovation at the convention when he made his speech. Prior to the convention we had only a small nucleus. Since then we have grown among the rank and file.

Trotsky: Can we get them to go against Roosevelt?

Dobbs: Yes.

Trotsky: For whom will they vote?

Dobbs: I don't know. Maybe Roosevelt. For us to turn to the Stalinists will sow real confusion in their minds. It should not be rushed in any case.

Trotsky: I believe we have the critical point very clear. We are in a bloc with so-called progressives -- not only fakers but hon-

est rank and file. Yes they are honest and progressive but from time to time they vote for Roosevelt -- once in four years. This decisive. You propose a trade union policy not a Bolshevik policy. Bolshevik policies begin outside the trade unions. The worker is an honest trade unionist but far from Bolshevik politics. The honest militant can develop but it is not identical with being a Bolshevik. You are afraid to become compromised in the eyes of the Rooseveltian trade-unionists. They on the other hand are not worried in the slightest about being compromised by voting for Roosevelt against you. We are afraid of being compromised. If you are afraid, you lose your independence and become half-Rooseveltian. In peace times this is not catastrophic. In wartimes it will compromise us. They can smash us. Our policy is too much for pro-Rooseveltian trade unionists. I notice that in the Northwest Organizer this is true. We discussed it before, but not a word was changed; not a single word. The danger -- a terrible danger -- is adaptation to the pro-Rooseveltian trade unionists. You don't give any answer to the elections, not even the beginning of an answer. But we must have a policy.

It is not necessary now to vote for Browder. We are against Roosevelt. As for Norman Thomas he is just a political misunderstanding. Browder however is a tremendous handicap because he has a "revolutionary" attitude toward the imperialist war, etc. And our attitude? We turn our backs and give no answer. I understand that the situation is difficult.

What I propose is a manifesto to the Stalinist workers, to say that for five years you were for Roosevelt, then you changed. This turn is in the right direction. Will you develop and continue this policy or not? Will you let the leaders change it or not? Will you continue and develop it or not? If you are firm we will support you. In this manifesto we can say that if you fix a sharp program for your candidate, then we will vote for him. I see no reason why we can't say this with these ifs. Does this signify that we have changed our trade union policy? Not at all. We continue to oppose them as before. We say, if you seriously consider your attitude to Roosevelt you would have such and such a policy in the trade unions. But you don't have such a policy there. We can't go along with you in the trade unions.

I would be very glad to hear even one single word from you on policy in regard to the presidential election.

Cannon: It is not entirely correct to pose the problem in that way. We are not with the pro-Roosevelt militants. We developed when the Stalinists were pro-Rooseveltian. Their present attitude is conjunctural. It is not correct that we lean toward Roosevelt. Comrade Trotsky's polemic is a polemic for an independent candidate. If we were opposed to that then his account would be correct. For technical reasons we can't have an independent candidate. The real answer is independent politics.

It is a false issue: Roosevelt versus the Stalinists. It is not a bonafide class opposition to Roosevelt. Possibly we could support Browder against Roosevelt, but Browder would not only repudiate our votes, but would withdraw in favor of Roosevelt.

Trotsky: That would be the very best occurrence for us. After laying down our conditions for support, this capitulation would win us a section of the Stalinists. It is not a strategic policy but a policy for the presidential campaign only.

The fact is that they have developed this anti-war propaganda. We must consider this important fact in the life of the American workers. We begin with nothing being done about the Stalinists.

The "progressive" rank and file are a kind of semi-fabrication. They have class struggle tendencies but they vote for Roosevelt. They are not formed politically. The rank and file Stalinists are not worse. They are caught in a machine. They are disciplined, political. Our aim is to oppose the Stalinist worker to the machine. How accomplish this? By leaving them alone? We will never do it. By postponing? That is not a policy.

We are for an independent labor ticket. But we don't even have this expressed in our press. Why? Because our party is embarrassed. It has no line on the elections.

Last January we discussed a campaign in the unions to have our own trade union presidential candidate. We were to start in Minneapolis. We were to address Tobin. We were to propose to him that we would vote for him if he were nominated. Even Lewis. We were to begin the campaign for a labor president. But not a thing was done. Nothing appeared. Nothing in the Northwest Organizer.

Dobbs: Perhaps it was my fault --

Trotsky: No. That is the bad Hitler theory of history --

I can't explain it by negligence. Nor just because it is a trade union paper with just a trade union policy. The members of the party could write letters to the editor. What do their trade union leaders believe. Why can't our comrades write to the Northwest Organizer? We discussed in detail the technical details. But nothing was done. Why? It signifies an immediate clash with the Rooseveltians -- not the rank and file -- but a clash with our allies, the machine, the conscious Rooseveltians, who would immediately attack, a clash with our own class enemies such as Tobin.

Cannon: It is necessary to counterpose trade union candidates in the field. That would retain our following. But what I can't accept is Browder as a symbol of the class struggle.

Trotsky: That is a bit false polemic. In January I didn't propose Browder. But you are reduced to Browder or Roosevelt. Why this lack of initiative? Why were these six months not utilized? Why? It is not reduced to an individual fight, it has general reasons. I discussed with O'Shea two years ago on this same problem and this same necessity. With Jones too. But the Northwest Organizer remains unchanged. It is a photograph of our adaptation to the Rooseveltians.

Understand, I don't believe that it would be advisable for important comrades to start such a campaign. But even totally unknown comrades could write such letters. He could write the Executive Board of the union, asking them what will be the fate of the workers. What

kind of a president do we need? At least five months were not utilized. Completely lost. So we should lose two or three months more?

And Browder suddenly becomes an ideal political figure for me! A little false polemics!

How reach a compromise? I ask two or three hundred Stalinist workers. That is the minimum requirement. We can get them by holding their leaders to a class struggle policy. Are you ready to impose this class struggle line on your leader, we ask. Then we will find common grounds.

It is not just to write a manifesto, but to turn our political face to the Stalinist workers. What is bad about that? We begin an action against the Stalinists; what is wrong with that?

I propose a compromise. I will evaluate Browder 50 percent lower than I estimate him now in return for 50 percent more interest from you in the Stalinist party.

Cannon: It has many complications.

Jeb: On the question of adaptation to Roosevelt's program by our trade union comrades. Is it true? If so it was necessary for our trade union work. The trade unionists are for Roosevelt. If we want to make headway we have to adapt -- by not unfolding our full program -- in order to get a foothold for the next stage. We are still at the beginning despite all the work done. That is one thing, but to make it a permanent policy is another thing. We are against that. What is the right time to make the break. Have we exhausted the period of adaptation?

Cannon: The failure of the campaign to develop an independent ticket is due to inertia at the center, the faction fight, the tendency to wait in place of energetic application of policies, a feeling of smallness of the party -- psychological faults rather than conscious or unconscious adaptation to the Rooseveltians. The bloc in the trade unions is not a political bloc but a bloc over trade union policy. It is possible to have an active policy in opposition. In 1936 we supported the Socialist Party, not Roosevelt, despite the trade unionists giving open support to Roosevelt. The ideal situation would be for Comrade Trotsky to use his influence with the government to change the laws.

Trotsky: That is the job of the SWP.

Cannon: We should have started a campaign six months ago. During the faction fight there was a congressional campaign. Browder was running. Our policy was that it would be best to have our own candidate. We proposed this, but it was sabotaged by Abern.

But to go out and campaign for Browder, just at the time of war, when we are trying to explain our policy --

Trotsky: It is precisely one of the elements of explaining that theirs is a false policy.

Cannon: Support for a labor candidate can be justified, but the CP is entirely different. The CP is not a genuine workers party.

Dobbs: We are caught short. The criticisms are very pertinent. They will be productive of better results you may be certain. But we feel that this policy would be completely disastrous. We would prefer to sacrifice the maneuver for Jimmy Higgins work and put our own candidate on the ballot. It is not a question of Roosevelt. We will do anything short of supporting the Stalinists in order to go against Roosevelt.

Trotsky: Good. But why not write a manifesto, addressing them? Give them arguments understandable to them?

But we don't have a candidate. It is now too late to have a candidate. What is your policy?

Good -- we will abandon voting for Browder. We will abandon a manifesto. We will make a leaflet. You would agree with a leaflet on the above lines? We can state our differences with the CP: your party accepts the class struggle only on accidental grounds. . .

And if the Stalinist worker comes up to you and asks, will you vote for our candidate? We are a serious political party where do you stand? We must give him a serious answer. We must say, yes we will vote for him.

No party is homogeneous, not even the Stalinist party. We cannot change the party but only introduce a wedge to start some of them moving toward us.

Cannon: In 1920 in the first year of the CP in this country, we had a situation similar to this. We were in illegality. A few months before the election and impossible to run our own candidate. We openly boycotted the elections. It was completely ineffective.

Lenin wrote us a letter. He held that we should have voted for Debs. But at that time there was a strong psychological separation from the SP. Lenin's statement produced quite a shock. And Debs was in prison -- not a Browder.

Trotsky: Yes. Although Browder is condemned to prison.

Cannon: There has not been a direct attack or approach to the Stalinists for some years. Could it be possible?

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June 15, 1940

Hansen: Yesterday Comrade Trotsky made some remarks about our adaptation to the so-called progressives in the trade unions, he mentioned the line of the Northwest Organizer and also our attitude in connection with the elections and the Stalinists. I wish to point out that this is not something completely new on Comrade Trotsky's part. More than two years ago during the discussions over the Transitional Program, he discussed exactly these same points and had exactly the same position, with due regard for the difference in time and that

then it was not the elections but the farmer-labor party that was to the fore. Comrade Trotsky has also written some letters regarding the Stalinists and the need for a more positive line toward them. In the past faction fight too, Comrade Trotsky mentioned in his polemic "From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene" the following point, which he underlined: "More than once the party will have to remind its own trade unionists that a pedagogical adaptation to the more backward layers of the proletariat must not become transformed into a political adaptation to the conservative bureaucracy of the trade unions." I am wondering if Comrade Trotsky considers that our party is displaying a conservative tendency in the sense that we are adapting ourselves politically to the trade union bureaucracy.

Trotsky: To a certain degree I believe it is so. I cannot observe closely enough to be completely certain. This phase is not reflected in the Socialist Appeal well enough. There is no internal bulletin for the trade unionists. It would be very good to have such a bulletin and to publish controversial articles on our trade union work. In observing the Northwest Organizer I have observed not the slightest change during a whole period. It remains a-political. This is a dangerous symptom. The complete neglect of work in relation to the Stalinist party is another dangerous symptom.

Turning to the Stalinists does not mean that we should turn away from the progressives. It means only that we should tell the truth to the Stalinists, that we should catch the Stalinists beforehand in their new turn.

It seems to me that a kind of passive adaptation to our trade union work can be recognized. There is not an immediate danger, but a serious warning indicating a change in direction is necessary. Many comrades are more interested in trade union work than in party work. More party cohesion is needed, more sharp maneuvering, a more serious systematic theoretic training; otherwise the trade unions can absorb our comrades.

It is a historic law that the trade union functionaries form the right wing of the party. There is no exception to this. It was true of the Social Democracy; it was true of the Bolsheviks too. Tomsky was with the right wing you know. This is absolutely natural. They deal with the class, the backward elements; they are the party vanguard in the working class. The necessary field of adaptation is among the trade unions. The people who have this adaptation as their job are those in the trade unions. That is why the pressure of the backward elements is always reflected through the trade union comrades. It is a healthy pressure; but it can also break them from the historic class interests -- they can become opportunists. The party has made serious gains. These gains were possible only through a certain degree of adaptation; but on the other hand we must take measures to circumvent dangers that are inevitable. I have noticed only some serious symptoms which indicate the need for more cohesion, more emphasis on the party. Our comrades must be in the first line party members, and only in the second line trade union members. This is especially true for trade union functionaries and editors. . .

Before we go on -- I have just received the latest number of Labor Action. Shachtman is calling for a new slogan, "Let's have a program for peace not war." But it is war not peace. This is a pacifist tendency. It is no program for war which is inevitable.

Cannon: Can the Stalinists be regarded in any important sense as different from any other labor party or grouping? Are tactics applicable to the socialists, etc., also applicable to them? There is a strong tendency to regard the Stalinists as different. Not as a labor tendency. The crassest expression of this tendency is exhibited in the American Labor Party in New York. They regard the Stalinists not as a working class party but as an agency of a foreign power. This was the position of Lovestone and Hook on the Browder passport case. It was Burnham's position in the CC. We held for critical defense. If O'Neal for example were arrested we would defend him similarly. There is no fundamental difference between O'Neal of the Second International and Browder as representative of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Both are treacherous in the labor movement. Burnham held that the Stalinists are not a labor movement at all. That they are like the German Nazis. We should defend neither. This point is important in elaborating our general political tactics. So long as the Social Democrats represent a force we must have not only direct opposition but a policy of maneuver. Can any fundamental distinction be made between them and Lewis, Green, etc.? In my opinion we at least subjectively have made a distinction. We have not had a policy of maneuver since 1934, neither nationally nor internationally. In general should we not re-examine this again? Your proposal raises this drastically.

Trotsky: Of course the Stalinists are a legitimate part of the workers' movement. That it is abused by its leaders for specific GPU ends is one thing, for Kremlin ends another. It is not at all different from other opposition labor bureaucracies. The powerful interests of Moscow influence the Third International, but it is not different in principle. Of course we consider the terror of the GPU control differently; we fight with all means even bourgeois police. But the political current of Stalinism is a current in the workers' movement. If it differs, it differs advantageously. In France the Stalinists show courage against the government. They are still inspired by October. They are a selection of revolutionary elements, abused by Moscow, but honest. If they are persecuted in the United States and remain anti-patriotic because Moscow delays its new turn, this would give them considerable political authority. Our revulsion from the Kremlin will not destroy this political authority. We must consider them objectively. We must consider them from the objective Marxist viewpoint. They are a very contradictory phenomenon. They began with October as the base, they have become deformed, but they have great courage. We can't let the antipathies of our moral feelings sway us. Even the assailants on Trotsky's house had great courage. I think that we can hope to win these workers who began as a crystallization of October. We see them negatively: how to break through this obstacle. We must set the base against the top. The Moscow gang we consider gangsters but the rank and file don't feel themselves to be gangsters, but revolutionists. They have been terribly poisoned. If we show that we understand, that we have a common language, we can turn them against their leaders. If we win five percent, the party will be doomed. They can then lead only a conservative existence. Disintegration will set in, because this five percent connects them with new sources from the masses.

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