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C O N T E N T S :

**What Is at Issue in the Dispute on the
Russian Question?**

Statement of the Minority of the Political Committee

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What Is at Issue in the Dispute on the Russian Question?

A Statement of the Position of the Minority

The character of the resolution on the Russian question presented to the last Plenum of the National Committee by the members of the Minority of the Political Committee was determined by a series of circumstances, not entirely under our control, and referred to in the report of Comrade Shachtman to the New York Party membership meeting on October 15, 1939. Despite the pressure of events under which it was written and submitted, the Minority does not find it necessary to revise the conceptions contained in the resolution in the light of subsequent events or of criticisms directed at it. However, the criticisms and the events make it possible to elaborate more fully the views therein presented in a necessarily terse and compressed form. The present statement therefore aims at amplifying our standpoint on the disputed question, replying objectively to arguments advanced against it, and eliminating as much as we can all possibility of honest misunderstanding or of malicious misrepresentation.

What About the Class Character of the Soviet State?

The Cannon group insists that what is at issue in the present discussion is the class character of the Soviet state. It declares that this being the fundamental theoretical question, the division in the party must necessarily occur along the line taken by the different views on this question. All other questions in dispute, it adds, are comparatively unimportant and at most of secondary importance. Furthermore, that it is impossible to derive a correct position on the defense of the Soviet Union without first deciding the question of the class character of the Soviet state. The Minority, it charges, is an unprincipled bloc because it is composed of comrades having different opinions on this question and it demands that the Minority state what would be the official position of the party in the "unfortunate case" that the "unprincipled bloc" became the leadership of the party.

The Minority welcomes this opportunity to state its position formally on these matters, for it has not, and has not had, any need or desire to evade the questions posed.

The Minority is composed of comrades firmly united in the political position presented in its resolution to the Plenum. It reaffirms this resolution and subscribes to what is set forth in the present statement. The Minority, it is true and this is known to the entire party, is composed of comrades who hold that the Soviet Union is a degenerated workers' state and of comrades who deny that the Soviet Union is a workers' state. But the Minority in general, and the undersigned comrades in particular, are united in saying that they do not propose a revision of the present party position on that question. That was the meaning of our Plenum resolution which stated that "without raising at this time the problem of the class nature of the Soviet state, it is necessary to give immediate answers to the concrete questions raised by the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the ensuing conquest of Poland and matters related thereto." The Minority did not propose a revision of the party program on this question to the Plenum; it does not propose such a revision to the coming Party Convention.

It is true that Comrade Burnham, several weeks before the Plenum of the National Committee, presented a resolution which proposed to revise the party position on the Soviet Union as a workers' state. But it is no less correct that he withdrew this resolution from the consideration and vote of the party. The publication of the resolution in the Internal Bulletin was not on the initiative of Burnham or of the Minority, but on the demand of the Cannon group, which hoped thereby to gain a dubious factional advantage and to muddle up the discussion of the real question in dispute.

Why was this resolution withdrawn and was it correct to do so? Why did comrades having different evaluations of the sociological nature of the Soviet Union unite on one resolution on the disputed Russian question and was it correct to do so?

In his article, "The U.S.S.R. in War," Comrade Trotsky writes: "Our critics refuse to call the degenerated workers' state—a workers' state. They demand that the totalitarian bureaucracy be called a ruling class. The revolution against this bureaucracy they propose to consider not political but social. Were we to make them these terminological concessions, we would place our critics

in a very difficult position, inasmuch as they themselves would not know what to do with their purely verbal victory.

"It would therefore be a piece of monstrous nonsense to split with comrades who on the question of the sociological nature of the U.S.S.R. have an opinion different from ours, in so far as they solidarize with us in regard to the political tasks. But on the other hand, it would be blindness on our part to ignore purely theoretical and even terminological differences, because in the course of further development they may acquire flesh and blood and lead to diametrically opposite conclusions."

The Minority is united on a position which deals with the political tasks of the Fourth International on the Russian question. Regardless of the divergent views held on the sociological nature of the Soviet Union, all members of the Minority believe that it would be monstrous nonsense to split among themselves on this point. The Cannon group points out, however, that it would be nonsense to split with comrades on this point only if the latter are in solidarity with it on the political tasks. That is quite correct. But that simply is another way of saying what we have emphasized from the beginning of the discussion, namely, that the Cannon group opposes ("splits with") the Minority group not because of differences over the class nature of the Soviet Union but because of differences over the political conclusions, the political tasks. By the same token, the comrades of the Minority are united, not because they are unprincipled and wish to conceal or suppress differences on the class nature of the Soviet state, but because of their agreement on the political tasks.

Was it unprincipled to include in the United Opposition Bloc of the Russian Communist Party (1925-1927) comrades who held that Russia was a workers' state and also those who held that it had ceased to be a workers' state, but who were in agreement on the Platform of the Opposition, i. e., on the political conclusions and tasks?

Was it unprincipled to include in that Opposition comrades who held that the class nature of the Chinese Revolution was represented by the formula "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" (Zinoviev) and also comrades who held that its class nature was represented by the formula "proletarian dictatorship supported by the peasantry" (Trotsky), but who were in agreement on the political tasks ahead (independence of the C.P., Soviets, etc.)?

It is true that these "terminological" differences subsequently proved to have a greater importance. It is true in the present case also that, as Trotsky writes, "in the course of further development they may acquire flesh and blood and lead to diametrically opposite conclusions." But it is impossible to write resolutions on the immediate political tasks of the party, or in general to engage in political activities, on the basis of differences that may develop in the future.

Does this mean that the Minority attaches no importance to the question of the class nature of the Soviet state? It means nothing of the kind. This was in no way implied by Burnham's withdrawal of his original document, and the Minority's support of his action. Exactly the contrary was not merely implied, but explicitly stated. The Cannon group is a little imprudent in its present insistence on discussing the question of the class nature of the Soviet state, and only that question, and in its insistence that despite its disagreement with the Burnham document it is nevertheless a "principled position" worth discussing, whereas the Plenum resolution of the Minority is not. When the Burnham resolution was first presented for discussion to the Political Committee, the Cannon group was opposed to any discussion of it in the party. Comrade Cannon, in his letter to the National Committee, denounced a discussion of this resolution, or for that matter, any discussion of the Russian question, as a "luxury we cannot afford." The supporters of the Cannon group voted solidly against all motions submitted by comrades in the party branches in New York asking the National Committee Plenum to permit the opening of a discussion on the Russian question. Before the Plenum, the Cannon group in the Political Committee voted against even a theoretical discussion of the question in the party's theoretical organ, the New International. It was only after this utterly bureaucratic attitude became untenable in the party that the Cannon group became the champion of a discussion on the "fundamental questions" and on those alone.

What did the Minority propose? First, that the theoretical discussion be opened in the pages of the New International. Far from evading a discussion of the sociological nature of the Soviet state, the Minority insisted on it, and insisted on its being conducted in the field and on the plane where it properly belongs. Then, when it became increasingly clear that the differences in the party were not confined to the "terminological" (or, rather, the general theoretical and scientific) question but involved the immediate political tasks and slogans of the party, the Minority proposed a general party discussion. At and following the Plenum, it was finally decided unanimously that the discussion should be divided into two parts, so to speak: one that could and would be conducted publicly in the New International, a discussion inaugurated by Trotsky's article on "The U.S.S.R. in War," and which would be confined to the theoretical ("terminological") question of the class nature of the Soviet state; the other that would be conducted in the membership, and which would deal with the concrete political questions. In this separation, the proposal of the Minority was in accordance with the best tradition and practice of the Bolshevik movement. This proposal was unanimously adopted by the Political Committee. To date, it has been carried out only by the Minority.

But, it is argued, while the Minority may say that it does not propose a revision of the party's basic position on the Soviet state, what assurance can the party have that next month or next year the Minority or any of its spokesmen will not raise the question for reconsideration? On that score, no guarantees can be given by the Minority or by any of its members. Nor should any be asked for, because they would be meaningless. Such guarantees cannot be given by the Minority; they cannot be given by the Cannon group; or by anyone else.

In the period to come, there may be developments in the Soviet Union which, in the opinion of this or that comrade, or group, or of the entire International, have produced such a radical change in the situation as to demand a change in our programmatic position on the question of the class nature of the Soviet state. Such developments may be, for example, the supplementary proletarian revolution in Russia, or, in the contrary case, a bourgeois counter-revolution; or, looking retrospectively at the Soviet Union from a point many months or years removed from the present moment, the International may conclude that the present Stalinist bureaucracy was a new, independent ruling class, as outlined hypothetically in the recent article by Trotsky. To demand assurances now that no one in the future (in the Minority or anywhere else) will propose a revision of the party's position on the sociological nature of the Soviet state, is manifestly absurd. It would, for example, have been equally absurd to demand of the International Left Opposition, several years ago, that it give assurances that it would never revise its basic position in favor of reform in the Soviet Union as against revolution. The Oehlerites were absurd in demanding guarantees that we would never enter the Socialist Party in this country, and just as absurd in demanding that we would never abandon our position on a Labor party. If similar demands are made now to the Minority in the matter under discussion, it is only because it seems to those who make them to be clever factional strategy. We can calmly dismiss the demands with the simple statement: The Minority does not propose a revision of the party's program on this question. It is not the question in dispute. If the Cannon group insists that it is the question, and that if no one else raises it for decision, it raises it in a motion to "reaffirm the fundamental position of the party on the class nature of the Soviet state," then all comrades will vote on this question as they have in the past, namely, according to their opinions and convictions, and there will still be left for discussion and decision the question that is really at issue.

That question deals with the defense of the Soviet Union, and the role of the Soviet Union in the war. How can the party take a position on the defense of the Soviet Union, argues the Cannon group, unless it has first decided the question of the class character of the Soviet state? We will discuss this argument in its proper order in the next section.

"Unconditional Defense of the Soviet Union"

In its Plenum resolution, the Minority proposed "a revision of our previous concept of 'the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union.'" Before the party can decide to substitute a new policy for an old policy, it must first understand what the old policy was, for only then can it determine whether or not it is false, unsuited to the real situation, inadequate, as the case may be, and therefore to be revised.

What was meant in the past by the Fourth Internationalists when they advocated and spoke of the "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union"? By "unconditional" we simply meant that we do not demand, as a condition for our defense of the Soviet Union, the preliminary removal of the Stalinist bureaucracy, that is, we will defend the Soviet Union even if, or in spite of, its domination by the Stalin machine. In the same sense, revolutionists have always said that they defend trade unions in their struggles even when they are headed by conservatives or reactionaries. That did not mean that we defend it in Stalin's way. On the contrary, we have no faith in the bureaucracy, no confidence that it will lead the defense of the Soviet Union effectively, along a consistent class line, in a revolutionary manner. Yet, in our independent class way, with our revolutionary internationalist line, we defend the Soviet Union. "For the Stalinist regime? No! For the socialist fatherland? Yes!"

Did that policy mean that we would support ("defend") every act of Stalinist diplomacy, every act of the Red Army, or the G.P.U., or the other armed forces of Stalin? Of course not. Comrade Lund is entirely wrong when he assumes that the Minority represents the traditional policy of the Fourth International in any other way, thereby disorienting especially the young comrades in our movement as to what has been our conception in the past. Naturally we did not in the past and do not today support the actions of the Red Army (or the G.P.U.) in shooting down revolutionists in Russia or in Spain. Naturally we would not support the actions of the Red Army if it were to suppress a proletarian revolution in the Soviet Union—the political revolution which we advocate. Naturally we would not support the actions of the Red Army if it were to suppress an uprising of Ukrainian workers and peasants fighting for an independent Soviet Ukraine. In other words, our slogan of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" did not mean (nor does it today) that we defend the Stalinist bureaucracy or its Red Army in any war they conduct against the proletariat or against the revolution. On this score, there is no one who proposes a revision of our conception of our policy for the good and simple reason that no revision is needed.

Our slogan did, however, mean that we are unconditionally for the defense of the Soviet Union in any war it conducts against a capitalist power.* And, even though in such a case we did not and would not abandon our political opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy, defense of the Soviet Union meant most specifically that in any such war (i. e., against a capitalist power), we are for the victory of the Red Army and for the defeat of the opposing army. Does the capitalist army invade Soviet territory first? Does the Red Army invade enemy territory first? Is the Red Army the "defender" or the "aggressor"? It does not matter: in any war with a capitalist power, we are for the victory of the Red Army, we urge the workers, peasants and soldiers of the opposing army to facilitate that victory, and to hasten the defeat of their own bourgeoisie and its military forces.

"Only White Guards can be 'against the victory of the U.S.S.R. in the future war against imperialism,'" declared Trotsky at the Russian Central Committee meeting on August 1, 1927. "The Opposition is for the triumph of the U.S.S.R.; it has proved it and it will prove it as much as others by deeds . . . Every genuine oppositionist—I do not speak of pseudo-oppositionists—will occupy, in case of war, at the front or at the rear, the post that the party

*It would be still more accurate to say that even this conception of the slogan represents a change from our position of a still earlier period. Originally, the Left Opposition meant by unconditional defense not only that the Soviet Union could fight only a progressive war against any capitalist power, but also that it could not fight a reactionary war against the proletariat or a colonial people. While the latter conception was gradually and imperceptibly removed from the political documents of the Opposition, it was definitively dropped more than three years ago when we raised the slogan of a political revolution (i. e., a civil war) against the Stalinist regime and its armed forces, later amplified with reference to the Ukraine by our slogan for violent separation from the Soviet Union. That clearly marked a second stage in the development of the content of our slogan for unconditional defense. It signified that while in a war with a capitalist state the Soviet Union could not but play a progressive role, in a war against the proletariat or the Ukrainian masses the Red Army would be playing a reactionary role. What is said above about the manner in which we understood the slogan of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union therefore applies more specifically to the period opened up by our slogan for a political revolution in the Soviet Union. The revision of the slogan that we now propose implies a recognition of that fact that the Red Army can fight a reactionary war even against a capitalist power—as it is now doing.

will entrust him with and he will fulfill his duty to the very end . . ."

That is what was meant concretely by defense of the Soviet Union: the victory of the Red Army in a war against imperialism. Such defense was not, however, confined merely to wars with imperialist capitalist powers; it included all other capitalist countries, even semi-colonial countries like China ruled by nationalist agents of imperialism. When war threatened between the Soviet Union and China in 1929, over the question of the Chinese Eastern Railway, Trotsky declared to the press: "It goes without saying that were the Soviets to engage in war, the Opposition would devote itself completely to the defense of the October revolution." A few days later, on August 4, 1929, in a polemic against temporary supporters of the Opposition in France, Trotsky pointed out that in denouncing as slanderers the Stalinists who had accused him of being a conditional defender of the Soviet Union, "when I delivered my speech, I did not deal with some specific war, but with any war that might be waged against the Soviet Republic."

Although much has changed in the ten years since this statement was made, the Left Opposition (the Fourth International) has introduced but one qualification, if it could be called such, into the formula: "any war"—except a war waged by the proletariat (i. e., a political revolution) against the Stalinist regime. At bottom, however, the formula has remained the expression of our policy of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union: We are for the defense of the Soviet Union in any war against a capitalist power in which it is engaged; we are for the victory of the Red Army in such a war despite Stalin.

What basic conception motivated this clear and categorical position? The view that in a conflict with any capitalist country, the war, on the part of the Red Army, could only be progressive, that is, even under Stalin it would be defending its own (i. e., bureaucratic) way the conquests of the October Revolution. That is how we understood matters in any war—not, to be sure, a war against the Russian Bolshevik-Leninists or the proletarian revolutionists in Spain, but a war with "democratic" England, fascist Germany, or even semi-colonial China.

This is the position that the Minority now proposes to revise. Such a revision is necessary because it has been revealed that the Soviet Union (that is, the Stalinist bureaucracy and its Army) is capable of carrying on not only progressive wars but also reactionary wars. More to the point, in the present dispute, the Stalinist bureaucracy has proved that it is capable of conducting a reactionary war even against bourgeois states. From this does not of course follow that we are defensists in the bourgeois states in question (their war against the Soviet Union is not less reactionary and we remain revolutionary defeatists under the slogan: "the main enemy is at home"); but it does follow that we can no longer hold to our previous concept of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" in a war against a capitalist power or powers.

At this point, the Cannon group interjects: "Your division of wars into progressive and reactionary, however correct it may be, leaves out of consideration precisely that criterion which we consider fundamental, namely, the class character of the state which is conducting the war. Without such a basic criterion, which determines the character of the war, you must inevitably oscillate with every trifling change in the military map instead of following the map of the class struggle. Without declaring your position on the class character of the Soviet Union, you are deprived of a class criterion making possible a basic judgment of the war and the role of the various belligerents."

The class nature of the state involved in a war is the decisive criterion in judging the character of the war, or more exactly, the character of the role played in the war by the given state as it relates to the interests of the world socialist revolution. More than one significant example can be adduced to show that to employ abstractly the criterion of the class character of the state in order to judge the character of its war, is to adopt a sterile and meaningless position, to be trapped by an empty formula. Thus:

"The war of 1870-1871," wrote Lenin, "was historically progressive on Germany's side up to the defeat of Napoleon III, because both he and the Tsar had long oppressed Germany, keeping it in a state of feudal decentralization. As soon as the war turned into a plunder of France (annexation of Alsace and Lorraine), Marx and Engels decisively condemned the Germans." That is, although the class character of the Prussian state remained the same, its progressive war passed over directly into a reactionary war.

Again, the class character of China is the same today as it was in 1929. Yet, in 1929, it threatened to conduct a war against the Soviet Union over the question of the Chinese Eastern Railway, a

war which we denounced as reactionary. In 1939, it is conducting a war against Japan, which we support as progressive.

Again: the class character of the Spanish state under Azana and the People's Front was not one whit less capitalistic and imperialistic than that of Franco and the fascists. Yet we "defended" (in our own independent class way, to be sure) the former regime in the war against the latter. The ultra-leftists, refusing to acknowledge the validity of any criterion other than that of the class nature of the two states, adopted a defeatist position towards both and refused to "defend" the Loyalist regime. We defined the fundamental character of the war as "a struggle between the camp of the Spanish bourgeois democracy and the camp of Spanish fascism" and we supported the one side against the other in the war. Our decisive criterion in that war was not and could not be the class nature of the state involved.

Or will Cannon contend that we supported the semi-feudal, semi-slave state of Ethiopia against the "modern" bourgeois state of Italy on the basis of an abstract counterposing of the class character of the two states?

The argument of the Cannon faction boils down to the ridiculous and unhistorical view that a capitalist state, because of its class nature, cannot ever fight a progressive war, and that a workers' state—even a degenerated workers' state, because of its class nature, cannot ever fight a reactionary war. This is the view of mechanical-minded economic fetishists and not of revolutionary Marxists, for it is based upon the conception that in a war between "nationalized economy" and "private economy" the former automatically assures its own progressivism. This mechanical conception is all the more (not less) erroneous with reference to the Soviet Union. Writing on the difference between capitalist society and the Soviet Union, Trotsky says:

" . . . in general the productive forces, upon a basis of private property and competition, have been working out their own destiny. In contrast to this, the property relations which issued from the socialist revolution are indivisibly bound up with the new state as their repository. The predominance of socialist over petty bourgeois tendencies is guaranteed not by the automatism of economy—we are still far from that—but by political measures taken by the dictatorship. The character of the economy as a whole thus depends upon the character of the state power." —(Our emphasis.)

This entirely correct view applies with equal validity to the question of the war. The character of any war engaged in now by the Stalinist regime "is guaranteed not by the automatism of economy"—as the Cannon group falsely contends—but "depends (at least in large measure) upon the character of the state power," that is, of the political regime of the ruling bureaucracy. It would, however, be just as erroneous to draw the mechanical conclusion that because this bureaucracy is reactionary and counter-revolutionary, it cannot ever conduct a progressive war, any more than the reactionary character of the Chiang Kai-shek regime pre-determines the reactionary character of any war in which it is engaged. The correct formula would be:

The character of the war is determined by the predominant political and social aims of each of the belligerents and their enemy, and their objective consequences, and very often by the character of the regime which is conducting the war. Furthermore, particularly in our epoch, our attitude towards a given war must be based upon the interests of the international proletariat and of the world socialist revolution.

From this basic standpoint we must approach the question: What is the character of Russia's role in the present war—not the war as it was foretold on this or that occasion, and not the war into which this one may or will be converted, but the present war?

Stalin is not conducting a war for the defense of nationalized property from an attack of imperialism which aims to convert the Soviet Union into its colony. On the other side, the imperialists, in this war, are not fighting to divide the Soviet Union among themselves, but, for a series of reasons largely beyond their own control, they are conducting an inter-imperialist war at each other's expense, with one camp seeking to keep the Soviet Union as its ally and the other seeking to win it as its ally.

In the present war, the Stalin regime plays the role of agent of imperialism facilitating the victory of the fascist bandits over the "democratic" bandits; in addition, it pursues (as we shall see later on) imperialistic aims of its own; it does not liberate but rather enslaves and disfranchises the peoples it conquers; it tramples cynically upon the democratic and socialist sentiments of the masses, and drives them into the arms of the reactionary

bourgeoisie. It is pursuing predominantly reactionary aims; it is conducting a reactionary war and therefore the socialist proletariat cannot be for its defense.

But, it is argued, all of Stalin's military actions up to now have been mere episodes, mere incidents. The "real" war has scarcely begun. The present war, says the Cannon group, will inevitably become a war of imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union. One of its many resolutions says: Since "the class antagonism between the capitalist imperialist states and the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state retains its full force,"* therefore, "from this must follow an inevitable attempt on the part of the imperialists of one camp or another, or in a combination, to attack the Soviet Union in order to destroy the economic conquests of the October Revolution and open up the territory of the Soviet Union for capitalist exploitation."

Even if this assertion is granted, it must be pointed out that it is an involuntary admission that the present war is not characterized by an "attack upon the Soviet Union in order to destroy the economic conquests of the October Revolution," etc. The assertion boils down to the argument that the character of the present war (and of the role played in it by the various belligerents) will change at a future date, that it will inevitably become an imperialist war against the Soviet Union. Will change? From what? Become? What is it now? These questions, which relate to the urgent problem of the role played by the Soviet Union (read: Stalin and his army) in the present war, are systematically avoided and evaded by the Cannon group. To the question: Are you for the "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" in the war it is carrying on now?—the Cannon group replies: We are for the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union in the war it will carry on tomorrow, the war into which the present war will inevitably be converted.

Now, the Opposition, despite all slander to the contrary, has from the very beginning of the dispute stated clearly its position on the question of a reactionary imperialist assault upon the Soviet Union: defense of the Soviet Union even under Stalin and in spite of Stalin. In the resolution presented by us to the Plenum of the National Committee, we wrote:

"All of Stalin's hopes and ruses to the contrary notwithstanding, a change in the character of the war into direct imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union by one or more states is not at all excluded. Assuming that the bourgeois counter-revolution, which is now on the order of the day in the Soviet Union,** has not triumphed, the defense of the Soviet Union, even under the rule of the bureaucracy, will again become an immediate and paramount task. In other words, just as wars of national liberation can change

*In passing, it should be noted that the Majority is here again expressing its idealistic and not dialectical understanding of the role of the nationalized economy. Precisely because the state is degenerated, the class antagonism does not retain its "full" force, that is, the counter-revolutionary regime has served to reduce the force of the antagonism and therein, among other things, lies its reactionary character. For example, eight years ago we could write: "On the international arena the Soviet Union is prevented from adhering to the League of Nations by those same social causes which within the national borders makes impossible anything but a pretended 'impartiality' of any government in the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat." (History of the Russian Revolution, Vol. II, p. 157.) Two years ago, precisely because of the deepening degeneration of the Stalinist regime and despite the continued existence of the "same social causes," this estimate had to be modified: "The entrance of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations . . . was in reality acceptable to the bourgeoisie only as a result of the extreme weakening of the revolutionary danger." (The Revolution Betrayed, p. 194.) The "class antagonism" of the two social orders is not automatically maintained at its "full force" by the character of the economy, any more than the character of the war conducted by the Stalinist regime is automatically determined by the economy on which it is based. At least half the political errors of the Cannon group are due to a failure to understand this.

**For this phrase, the Opposition has been taken to task, with mock indignation, for its "pessimism," and the discussion has rung with this disloyal charge. More than two years ago, however, Trotsky wrote (without being subjected to the same charge!): "If the Soviet bureaucracy succeeds, with its treacherous policy of 'people's fronts,' in insuring the victory of reaction in Spain and France—and the C.I. is doing all it can in that direction—the Soviet Union will find itself on the edge of ruin. A bourgeois counter-revolution rather than an insurrection of the workers against the bureaucracy will be on the order of the day." (Revolution Betrayed, p. 290.) There are, evidently, no limits to which the Cannon group will confine itself in its "objective and principled" discussion.

into imperialist wars and vice versa, and imperialist wars into revolutionary wars, so we cannot exclude the possibility of the present imperialist war turning into a war of intervention in the Soviet Union."

We are not, therefore, proposing to face tomorrow and its eventualities without a line of policy. We do not substitute a policy for today for a policy for tomorrow. At the same time, however, we cannot permit anyone to evade the questions of today by reference to the possibilities of tomorrow. A revolutionary party cannot live without first answering those questions which are posed most urgently by events. The most urgent questions are: What is the character of the present war, what is the character of Stalin's role in the war, what are our political conclusions? The very nature of the Cannon faction's answer is as if calculated to prevent a clear-cut policy for our present problems; more accurately, it is calculated to allow (as we have seen in the past months and as we shall prove again presently) for any kind of answer that seems to suit the factional requirements of the majority of the P.C.

What does the equivocal position of the Cannon group mean? On the basis of its conception, one could very easily deny that Prussia's war against Napoleon III was historically progressive on the ground that it "became" a reactionary imperialist war of annexation. On the same basis, one could (as the ultra-leftists did a few years ago) deny that the Loyalists were fighting a progressive war against Franco on the ground that it "would become" a reactionary war between Anglo-French and Italo-German imperialism.

Or let us take the example given by Comrade Trotsky of a faker-ridden union calling a strike against the admission of Negro workers into a branch of industry. We do not, in general, subscribe to the attempts to draw a conclusive analogy between a reactionary trade union and the Stalinist regime; but we take the concrete example nevertheless. The union fakers throw a picket line, made up principally of their thugs and gangsters, around the factory in question. It is a reactionary strike and a reactionary picket line. It is quite true that the employer may take advantage of the indignation felt by every decent worker over this crime in order, a few weeks or months later, to break every tie with the union, to lock out its members and to break the union altogether. In that case, it would be the duty of precisely the decent workers to join the picket line even of the faker-ridden union and to see to it that the lockout is broken and that the union wins a victory. But suppose that at the time the "strike" is being conducted against the Negro workers in the plant, someone were to argue: "We are for the present strike, for its picket line, because due to the 'class antagonism' between the employer and the 'degenerated union' there 'must follow an inevitable attempt' to smash the union. Therefore, in the name of the defense of trade unionism, and with the understanding that I continue my criticism of the methods and aims and regime of trade union leadership, I shall support the strike and join the picket line." Or suppose he were to add: "These Negroes, for a number of objective reasons beyond even their control, are not yet ready for trade unionism. From a practical, realistic standpoint, it is a question either of the employer winning the strike or the reactionary union leaders. In that case, the victory of the union leaders is a . . . 'lesser evil' and I shall support the 'picket line' with moral and material means."

Would a revolutionary party take such a position in the example given by Trotsky? He says: "Shall we support such a shameful strike? Of course not." If Comrade Trotsky cited the example as an analogy with the Stalinist invasion of Poland or Finland, we must ask: In that case, on what grounds does the Cannon group demand that we support the Stalinist "picket line" in Finland, that we regard the victory of Stalin as the "lesser evil," that we call for moral and material aid to the Red Army?

No, we are not for the reactionary strike called by the "nigger-hating" chauvinists at the head of a union, we are not for the "defense" of their "picket line" and we are not for the defense of the Soviet Union when the bureaucracy launches and conducts a reactionary war. Should the trade union reactionaries be compelled to defend the unions from capitalist attack, even if they defend it in their way, we will join heartily in that defense, we will be the best fighters, and we will avenge ourselves for the crimes of the fakers in our own way and in our own time. And should the Stalinist bureaucracy be compelled to defend the Soviet Union from imperialist attack, again, even if they defend it in their way, we shall be the best fighters against imperialism and avenge ourselves for the crimes of Stalin in our own way and in our own time.

It is hardly necessary to add that just as we would not call on the employer to "protect" the Negro workers from the reactionary picket line and we would not support him in the slightest degree in

a struggle against the union fakers, so we do not call upon the imperialists or their tools to "protect" the Finnish people from Stalin's assault and we do not support them in the slightest degree in their struggle against Stalin.

From this can be seen that even if the analogy with the trade union is accepted as valid, it tells us no more about supporting a given strike than about supporting a given war of the Soviet Union.

The Cannon Line in Practise

In his letter of October 18, 1939 ("Again and Again Once More on the Nature of the U.S.S.R."), Comrade Trotsky writes: "In every case the Fourth International will know how to distinguish where and when the Red Army is acting solely as an instrument of the Bonapartist reaction and where it defends the social basis of the U.S.S.R." (Our emphasis.) It is necessary to introduce into this sentence at least one amendment: In place of "will know how to distinguish" should be placed "should know how to distinguish." The amendment is particularly needed in light of the discussion in the party since its beginning last September, in the course of which the Cannon group, making up the majority of the party leadership, showed that it did not know how to distinguish between the Red Army playing a reactionary or a progressive role, and that in the best of cases, it displayed a disastrous uncertainty, hesitancy, evasiveness.

Whatever may seem to be the merits of a position "in theory," in the abstract, when it is unrelated to any concrete event, it undergoes its real test in direct relation to living events. In a word, it is tested in practise. Let us see how the line of the Cannon group, which lays claim to unambiguity and a principled foundation, looked in practise during the past three-four months.

The reaction of the Cannon majority to the invasion of Poland is already fairly well known to the membership of the party, and has been dealt with in documented detail in the speech of Shachtman to the New York party membership meeting of October 15, 1939. It is not necessary to repeat the details here. It will help to clarify our problem, however, if some objective thought is devoted to an explanation of the reasons behind the obvious paralysis, stammering and confusion of the party leadership in the face of the concrete events and the questions they posed.

If we make the most calculated effort to eliminate all factional and polemical sharpness, and look back upon the September weeks in the party leadership with the utmost possible objectivity, we come to the conclusion that the Pact and Stalin's invasion of Poland caught the party (the Cannon group particularly) unawares and left it tongue-tied during the whole crucial period, so that it presented no policy, gave no answers, and very obviously stalled for time. Why? If we seek primarily to analyze and not to criticize, we must say: Because the events were unexpected and because the position obviously indicated by the events did not conform with the slogan "Unconditional defense of the Soviet Union."

The majority has replied to these assertions with the indignant retort: "We did foresee everything, not in every detail, to be sure, but in all its broad outlines. We even predicted the likelihood if not the certainty of the Pact. Whoever wants to change our position towards the Soviet Union merely because Stalin shifted from a 'democratic' to a fascist ally, is capitulating to People's Frontism. We—all of us—always said we would defend the Soviet Union even if it were allied with a 'democratic' imperialist power; the same fundamental position must hold even if it is allied with Germany. If you propose a change in our policy, show us what is fundamentally new in the situation."

The minority has said a dozen times, in writing, in resolution, in speeches, that it does not base its views on the mere fact that Stalin shifted from a "democratic" to a fascist ally. All other things being equal, this could only mean that the diplomatic or military front has been altered, without requiring any alteration of our fundamental position.

What then has changed with the actual outbreak of the war we predicted? Precisely the fact that, different from our prognoses which were necessarily hypothetical ("algebraic") to one or another degree, the Soviet Union is not engaged in a progressive war or defense of the remaining conquests of the Russian Revolution from imperialist attack, but rather as an integral part of a reactionary imperialist war. The mere fact that the name of Ribbentrop replaced the name of Laval in a diplomatic document, that the former is a Nazi and the latter an eminent "democrat" does not change much. It is the real war that followed that compels us to change our position. Let us see more concretely why this is so.

How did we conceive specifically of the role of the Soviet Union in case of a war breaking out during the period of the Franco-

Soviet Pact and of our position towards it? Let every party and Y.P.S.L. member recall how the problem was posed at that time, how it was discussed in our ranks, and in our press (see, for example, the article by Comrade W. St., in the May, 1938, New International.)

Hitler, in pursuance of his role as the "super-Wrangel" of imperialism, would be engaged in a war against the Soviet Union, and at the same time against bourgeois France. Were it not for the problem of the "two fronts" thus created, it goes without saying that there would not and could not have been any discussion or dispute in our ranks on the question. If the Soviet Union were thus allied with one imperialist power against the other, our International declared that we would defend the Soviet Union without for a moment becoming defensists in the land of its imperialist ally. Concretely: the war between France and Germany would be a reactionary, imperialist war on both sides; Hitler's war against the Soviet Union, however, would be aimed at conquering the Ukraine, dismembering the Union as a whole, restoring private property, etc., and the Stalin regime, willy-nilly, would be fighting a progressive war of defense from imperialist attack. We too would defend the Soviet Union (in our own way, of course); we would be its foremost and best soldiers and defenders.

But the war presented us with a different picture when it finally broke out! And it is that war we must consider, unless, as Lenin once said, we are to be the kind of "Old Bolsheviks" who are "meaninglessly repeating a formula learned by rote instead of studying the unique living reality."

Instead of an attack upon the Soviet Union by imperialism, we had the outbreak of the inter-imperialist war between England, France and Germany. Instead of Stalin "helping" Poland resist Hitler (as he had earlier urged England and France to allow him to do, or at least pretended to urge this), Stalin and Hitler divided Poland between them, after crushing it by preliminary agreement and in military and political collaboration.

Now, in a general way, we predicted the possibility of a Hitler-Stalin pact. But we did not predict, as Trotsky pointed out in the Socialist Appeal of September 11, 1939, a military alliance with Hitler. That in the first place. More important, however, is the correct statement made by Comrade Wright in Internal Bulletin (Vol. II, No. 2, p. 26): "In point of 'seizure' the invasion of Poland constitutes the first violation of Stalin's well-publicized policy. To my knowledge, it was never forecast by Trotsky."

Naturally, it is not a matter here of "reproaching" our movement in general, or Comrade Trotsky in particular, for having failed to "forecast" or to "predict" every single event in all details. What is involved is the question of the character of the war that actually broke out and in which the Soviet Union is participating. Regardless of what this war will or may become, of what it will or may be converted into, Stalin is not defending the Soviet Union from imperialist attack; he is carrying on a reactionary war of annexation in alliance with Hitler. (We leave aside for the moment the question of Stalinist imperialism, which is dealt with below.)

It is only in light of this reality that the conduct of the Cannon faction can be understood. The actual war caught it unawares because it was not expected! The majority could not reconcile itself to the fact that the invasion was being conducted jointly by Hitler and Stalin. It clung to the old prognosis that Hitler was marching to attack Stalin, instead of meeting him half-way through Poland to divide the spoils. It did not, of course, accept the Stalinist lie that the Red Army was "liberating" the Western Ukraine (on this single point, the Cannon group did take a clear-cut position!). But it inclined to accept the "explanation" surreptitiously and apologetically spread by the Stalinists that the Red Army had entered Poland only in order to prevent Hitler from conquering the whole country and in order to head him off from the immediate attack he was planning against the Soviet Union.

This explains, further, the significant motion of Goldman, which was entirely consistent with our old prognosis and the character of the war as we had hypothesized it, but had nothing to do with the character of the war that really broke out. Let us read that motion again: "Under the actual conditions prevailing in Poland we approve of Stalin's invasion of Poland as a measure of preventing Hitler from getting control of all of Poland and as a measure of defending the Soviet Union against Hitler. Between Hitler and Stalin, we prefer Stalin." If we consider this motion thoroughly, it will throw light not only on the position of its author but also on that of his faction, the Cannonites, which did not vote for this particular motion.

Goldman says, in substance, that if Stalin invades Poland against Hitler, he approves the invasion. But, Goldman subsequent-

ly explained in the Internal Bulletin (Vol. II, No. 1, p. 34): "When events showed that the invasion was actually the result of an agreement between Stalin and Hitler I recognized my error. . . . Had Stalin marched into Poland not as a result of an agreement with Hitler but because of a desire to strengthen himself militarily against Hitler I still would support the move."

Now, Goldman here reveals both his own position and that of the majority faction. Goldman thought Stalin invaded Poland without Hitler's support; therefore he endorsed the invasion. Goldman learned (what should have been clear to all from the beginning) that Stalin invaded Poland with Hitler's support; therefore he withdraws his endorsement. And the majority, the Cannon faction? It did not vote for Goldman's motion to endorse the invasion, and it refused to condemn the invasion for the simple reason, as Cannon put it at that time, that it cannot yet be known whether Stalin's invasion occurred with or without Hitler's agreement. To put it differently, the Cannon group could not decide whether Stalin entered the war to defend the Soviet Union from imperialist attack (Hitler) or entered the war with annexationist aims in collaboration with imperialism. It did not "know how to distinguish where and when the Red Army is acting solely as an instrument of the Bonapartist reaction and where it defends the social basis of the U.S.S.R." It was torn between our past hypothesis about the character of the war and the obvious character of the war that broke out. Goldman, in reality, based his motion on the former; the minority based its motion on the latter. Cannon voted against both concrete motions, counterposing to them not a concrete motion of his own, but rather the now familiar motion concerning the class nature of the Soviet state. The old formula did not correspond to what was "new" in the situation (the concrete reality of the war Stalin engaged in), and left the majority marking time and playing for time. Not even a thousand references to the "fundamental question of the class character of the Soviet state" can conceal this painfully evident fact.

But Goldman's motion and subsequent retreat from the motion opens up another important point. Had Stalin invaded Poland without Hitler's blessing, Goldman (and presumably the Cannon faction as a whole) would approve the invasion. But in that case, what happens to the slogan in Trotsky's main article, voted for so firmly by the Cannon group at the Plenum, namely: "We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin." What does this slogan mean? Again according to J. G. Wright: "Trotsky is merely restating here the classic Marxist position on self-determination. We were and remain in favor of self-determination for Soviet Ukraine, and all territories annexed by Stalin. One cannot be in favor of annexation and not be opposed to self-determination."

Let us grant this for the moment (although, in passing, we are not merely for the right of self-determination for the Ukraine; we are for its separation from the Stalinist "union" and the formation of a United Soviet Ukraine). What Wright does not point out in quoting Lenin's pre-war polemics on this question is the latter's insistence that consistent democrats (to say nothing of revolutionary Marxists) must oppose annexation not only after it takes place but also before.

Now, there cannot be any doubt that Stalin's invasion of Poland, like his subsequent invasion of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland, has as its purpose the annexation of these countries (or their transformation into military "protectorates," which is tantamount to the same thing, in the three Baltic countries). The Stalinists may claim that these invasions merely anticipate an imperialist attack on Russia, that they are undertaken for the defense of the Soviet Union from imperialism. Whatever position the Cannon group may take on this claim, they are nevertheless on record in opposition to the "seizures of new territories by the Kremlin," to "annexations." How then can Goldman, or the Cannon faction in general, "approve" the invasion (provided it is "not as a result of an agreement with Hitler") and at the same time oppose the annexation? Evidently, on the basis of opposing the annexation only after it has been accomplished. After Stalin has annexed the "new territories," we call upon the masses to fight against the annexation, for the right of self-determination, for separation; presumably also, we call upon the Russian masses to help the people of the new territories in this fight. But before the annexation of the new territories (according to the Cannon group), we call upon their population to fight for the defense of the Soviet Union, we support the invasion (which aims at annexing the new territories!), and we call upon the Soviet workers to give Stalin's army moral and material assistance in the invasion! We shall see where this preposterous line leads us in the case of Finland.

But before dealing with the invasion of Finland, let us consider

another aspect of the problem which is not often mentioned. The Cannon group, which had no answer to any question and denounced those who posed the urgent questions of the day as "speculators" and "riddle-posers," began demanding of the Minority (only after the Plenum received Comrade Trotsky's article) a reply to the question: "Now that Stalin has nationalized the Western Ukraine, will you defend it if Hitler attacks it tomorrow?" Although it can hardly be said that this is the most burning question of the moment, it is not difficult to deal with it, and the Minority has no need or desire to evade it. The Western Ukraine stands now on the same footing as the rest of the Soviet Union into which it has been incorporated. The Minority proposes to apply exactly the same basic policy towards the Western Ukrainian part of the Soviet Union as towards the Eastern Siberian part (except, of course, in so far as the question is accentuated by the national aspects of the struggle against Stalinism). We are puzzled to understand why this question is presented so "crushingly."

There is, however, another question which will be found more difficult. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are now what we call "military protectorates" of the Soviet Union (i.e., of the Stalin regime). The bourgeoisie has not been driven out of these countries; the landlords have not been driven out of these countries; the landlords have not been expropriated; industry and banking have not been nationalized; the army has not been crushed or dispersed. Large detachments of the Red Army, strong enough to dominate these countries, are now quartered in them; the local governments are of course pawns in Stalin's hands.

Firstly: the proletarian revolutionists in these countries have the task of overthrowing their own bourgeoisie. The struggle to accomplish this task must, however, be directed against both armies in these countries, for the Stalinist army (and G.P.U.) will be at least as violent in suppressing any revolutionary workers' movement as the Estonian (or Lettish or Lithuanian) bourgeoisie and its army.

Secondly (and probably less remote in point of time): suppose Hitler or Chamberlain were to attack one of the three countries, say, Estonia. The Stalinist and Estonian bourgeois armies would be indistinguishable in the actual struggle. Would the Cannon group put Estonia on the same footing as conquered Western Ukraine? Would it call for "moral and military aid" to the Soviet Union and the Red Army? Would it tell the Estonian workers that their main enemy is at home, not least of all in the form of the Estonian army, which is closely intertwined with the Red Army? Or would it say in such a case, as would the Minority: Patriotism now is a reactionary trap; continue and sharpen the class struggle against your rulers regardless of the adverse effects on the military front!

Let us, however, return from the realm of what the majority calls "speculation" to the realm of living reality—Finland—and see how the Cannon line looks in practice again.

In less than two weeks, the Cannon faction, which prides itself on the firmness of its basic position, has presented the party with no less than two documented positions on the invasion of Finland—with two and a half positions if one adds the latest contribution to the discussion by Goldman.

The first position was contained in the Appeal editorial on December 1, 1939. In no sense was this editorial the product of Comrade Morrow alone; it was edited and approved jointly by a number of leaders of the Cannon faction. This editorial's characterization of Stalin's invasion of Finland leaves nothing to be desired: "That the Kremlin's military intervention serves **only** the interests of the Kremlin and its imperialist ally (Hitler in Poland); that it is carried out without consideration of the will and feelings of the workers of the Soviet Union or the occupied territories or the international proletariat; that it compromises the Soviet Union and disorients the world working class—these are our criticisms. . . ." (Our emphasis.) If these words are not meant as a literary flourish but as a political analysis of the war, they are equivalent to the declaration: the invasion is reactionary in every respect (it serves "**only**" the interests of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy and of Hitler—**only** those interests!). That is the analysis. And the logical conclusion? "If a struggle breaks out between bourgeois Finland and the Soviet Union, it is the duty of the Finnish workers to be Soviet partisans in that struggle." In the war between Finland and the Soviet Union, Stalin and the Red Army pursue **only** reactionary aims and serve **only** reactionary interests; therefore, the Finnish workers must support the Red Army and the invasion!

This is the mumbo-jumbo to which we have been brought by the slogan of "unconditional defense" and it is sanctified in the eyes of its authors by the fact that they make the sign of the cross before

the formula: Russia is a workers' state. It is with such a position that the Cannon faction believes that it will be able to combat the wave of chauvinist hysteria which the imperialists and democrats and social democrats are cleverly creating among the masses over "poor little Finland." It is a policy capable only of repelling workers—not the worst but the best—and of driving them closer into the arms of bourgeois patriotism.

How thoroughly untenable this position was (to say nothing of the reaction of the party membership), may be judged from the fact that even the Cannon group found it necessary to beat a retreat conducted in its own characteristic way. The statement of policy of the P.C. (Appeal, December 9, 1939) was first presented to the meeting of the Committee without a word of explanation or justification. Not one word was said about the relation of this statement to the line of the editorial of December 1—whether the lines coincided or conflicted. It was only on the insistent and formally recorded questioning of the Minority that 3 out of 4 Cannonite spokesmen replied: "This editorial, while the general line of it is more or less correct, is too loosely written to be considered a party position. The section which speaks of the Finnish workers as Soviet partisans is incorrect in its formulation. The statement which we have just adopted corrects the editorial and is to be considered the party line on the question."

But how is the average party or Y.P.S.L. member, who does not see the minutes of the P.C., to know that the first editorial on the not unimportant question of Finland was "loosely written," that the much-commented-on and much-disputed phrase about the Finnish workers being Soviet partisans "is incorrect" and does not correspond to the official party line? So far as he knows, he must still defend the policy of the first editorial as the party position; and moreover, he must defend it as in harmony with the second editorial which "is to be considered the party line on the question." Considered such by whom? Who knows about it? What party member or Y.P.S.L. member? What reader of the Appeal? How are they to know about it? The party leadership does not deign to inform the membership or the Appeal readers that the slogan to the Finnish workers—"Be Soviet partisans in this invasion"—is "incorrect" now. It refuses to give any indication that it is "incorrect" in the party press. Such an indication might reflect somewhat on the carefully guarded prestige of the party leadership, that is, the Cannon faction. To all intents and purposes, therefore, and particularly so far as the readers of the Appeal are concerned (the facts will be learned by the membership only by reading the present statement), the Socialist Workers Party position on the Finnish invasion is represented by the December 1st statement (which is "incorrect") and also by the December 9th statement (which is "correct"). As for the fact that our enemies cunningly exploit the first editorial for their own reactionary ends, that is only another trifle compared with the considerations of bureaucratic prestige-politics.

Just what, however, and how much does the second position correct in the first position? The December 9th statement characterizes the Stalinist policy in Finland as follows: "the protection of the interests and privileges of the bureaucracy in utter disregard of the sentiments and interests of the world proletariat." The characterization of the December 1st editorial is more exact and ample by far, but let us for the moment accept the second version. What follows from it? "In the present military struggle a victory of the Red Army is a 'lesser evil' than the victory of the army of the Finnish puppet government of Wall Street and London."

What is the concrete meaning of this conception of the "lesser evil" in Finland? In the first place, it means that there is no other choice facing the Finnish proletariat but these: **Either** the victory of the Finnish bourgeoisie and its army, **or** the victory of the Red Army. Since the revolutionary proletariat of Finland is too weak, unorganized, demoralized to fight for its independent Soviet power now, and since it is inadmissible in principle for it to support the Finnish bourgeoisie, "a victory of the Red Army is a 'lesser evil'." In that case, the slogan of the December 1st editorial—"Finnish workers to be Soviet partisans"—far from being "loosely written," is absolutely exact, far from being "incorrect" is absolutely correct. Why then does the Cannon group now repudiate the slogan? If "a victory of the Red Army is a 'lesser evil'" then the Finnish workers must be Soviet partisans. What species of political cowardice dictated the omission of this slogan from the December 9th editorial?

Paragraph "c," dealing with the tasks of the Fourth Internationalists in the Soviet Union, calls for "unceasing criticism and exposure of the Stalinist methods of starting and conducting the war, but not the slightest relaxation of material and military sup-

port." Good. Stalin's invasion of Finland is reactionary, it serves only the interests of the counter-revolutionary Bonapartist clique and of Hitler; its aim is the "protection of the interests and privileges of the bureaucracy"—and for those reasons the Russian workers and revolutionists must not relax in the slightest their material and military support to it. But why only the Russian workers? Why aren't the Finns (and for that matter the Americans) called upon to give the same material and military support to the Red Army?

In the Spanish Civil War, we rightly regarded the victory of the People's Front regime (bourgeois democracy) as the "lesser evil" compared with the victory of Franco (fascism). "Everywhere and always, where and when revolutionary workers are not powerful enough immediately to overthrow the bourgeois regime, they defend from fascism even the rotten bourgeois democracy and especially do they defend their own positions inside bourgeois democracy." (Crux). Bourgeois democracy was conducting a progressive war against fascism; we were open, unashamed defensists in the former camp and defeatists in the latter. We said openly: For the victory of the Loyalist army; for the defeat of Franco's army. Moreover, we were **military defeatists** in the Franco camp. We called upon the workers and peasants and soldiers in the Franco camp to sabotage his war, to desert to the Loyalist side, to facilitate the victory of the Loyalist army (what else can be seriously meant by "defensism"?). In both camps, we called for material and military aid to one camp, namely, the Loyalists. Why doesn't the Cannon group say the same thing plainly about Finland? There was nothing mealy-mouthed about our position on Spain. The same cannot be said for the position of the Cannon group today. It is **shame-faced defensism**.

The December 16th editorial in the Appeal seeks to "popularize" the Cannon line. This is attempted by means of the much-abused comparison between the Stalinized Soviet Union and a bureaucratized trade union. With one such comparison we have already dealt above (the trade union "striking" against Negro workers). We do not need to enter here into a detailed discussion of the extent to which such a comparison is valid and the extent to which it is false and misleading. Suffice it for the moment to say that in order to have a meaningful comparison, it would be necessary to find here a trade union something like this: Its leadership is not only corrupt and an agent of the bosses in general, but it is openly allied with one corporation against a smaller rival of the latter; as an agent of the former, and in company of its uniformed thugs, a joint picket line is thrown around the rival's plant, which is then divided between the trade union fakers and the big corporation; the fakers, we say, cannot be removed except by an armed insurrection of the workers; furthermore, we condemn any attempt by the fakers to bring into the union workers in those territories which are unorganized ("against the seizure of new territories"); we stand for the separatism of a number of state organizations of the union from the main body of the union; etc., etc. . . . But let us return to the "popular" editorial.

"In spite of their corruption, these unions get into big struggles with the bosses. Because we hate and abhor John L. Lewis and all that he stands for, we don't therefore go out and cross the picket lines of the United Mine Workers! If we did, the miners would call us scabs, and they would be right. That goes for the Soviet Union too. . . ."

The editorial reveals again the shamefaced defensism of the Cannon line. When bureaucrat Lewis is forced to call a strike against the mine owners, we may not agree with his class-colaborationist policies, his dampening of strike militancy, his bureaucratic methods, his terrorizing of the left wing, but we do not say that the strike "serves only the interests" of Lewis and the mine-owners, that it protects only the interests and privileges of the Lewis family and completely disregards the interests of the workers. We do not oppose the "annexation" of unorganized (un-unionized) territory by the United Mine Workers. We do not give a separatist slogan to the unorganized men in Colorado, let us say; we do not tell them to form a separate union in their state, unaffiliated with the Lewis union; on the contrary, we are in the forefront of the campaign to unionize them, to facilitate their entry into the union, if necessary, by fighting against Lewis to get them in. And we do not tell the unorganized miners that the victory of the union is a "lesser evil" compared with a victory of the coal barons!

The Cannon faction, which is "principled," which is under no democratic or patriotic pressure, and which stuffs the minds of the party members with the "simple" trade union analogy in place of a concrete political analysis, ought to speak out flatly: The Finnish

workers must facilitate the victory of the Red Army; it is the "lesser evil"; they must give it material and military aid; they must be Soviet (Red Army) partisans. As such, they must make a united front with the Kuusinen regime and the Finnish C.P. in order to speed the victory of the "lesser evil." They—especially the Finnish revolutionary vanguard—must retain their organizational and political independence, to be sure, but as an independent force they must make a united front with the Stalinists, social democrats and anarchists in Spain in order to speed the victory of the Loyalist army. That would not be the present shamefaced defensism of the Cannonites, but genuine defensism as we preached and practised it in Spain.

The final twist to the Cannon line is given, as usual without authorization or responsibility, by Goldman. He advocates now nothing more and nothing less than the slogan of the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Finnish soil! Furthermore, he asserts that this slogan is not only in harmony with the position of the Cannon group (which he supports) but is actually "implicit in it." So implicit is that slogan in the Cannon line that the caucus meeting of the faction voted it down. Whereupon Goldman, who of course acts only on objective political considerations, withdrew his position and along with it, his pledge to write an editorial for the Appeal embodying this slogan. He is presumably content with "subordinating" the explicit to the implicit.

The fact is that this slogan, entirely in accordance with a genuinely revolutionary policy on the invasion of Finland and really implicit in it, is anything but implicit in the position of the Cannon group. During the Brest-Litovsk period, Lenin, for example, initiated and supported the slogan of "peace" with German imperialism and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the territory dominated or desired by Germany. But the slogan of peace at that time was not based at all on the conception that the victory of the Red Army was a "lesser evil"—or an evil of any kind. Quite the contrary. It was based on the conception that a victory of the Germany army in the territory under dispute was a lesser evil than the total destruction of the Soviet Republic which would be risked by refusing to sign the peace (the "Tilsit peace") and continuing the revolutionary war. Lenin did not present his peace slogan as a means of obtaining the victory of the Red Army; he spoke frankly and bitterly of the need—imposed by an unfavorable relation of forces—of a capitulation to imperialism, i.e., of an unavoidable retreat before superior enemy forces. In such a "capitulation" there was nothing shameful, as we know. On what conceivable basis can the Cannon group or any of its spokesmen, given their political line, put forward the slogan of peace and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Finnish soil? What then happens to the "lesser evil"?—It is simply replaced—by the magic power of the "implicit" slogan—by the "greater evil," i.e., the victory of the Finnish bourgeois army.

Again: When Lenin advanced the slogan of peace in 1918, he was part of the government of Soviet Russia. He was not seeking to arouse the masses against that government. What would the Goldman slogan of peace, of withdrawal of troops from Finland, mean now in the Soviet Union? Presumably, the slogan is put forward as one to be raised by our comrades in the Soviet Union. But they are an anti-government party. They would have to raise that slogan against the government (the Stalin regime), against its policies, against its conduct of the war and those who support it. "We are not a government party; we are the party of irreconcilable opposition, not only in capitalist countries but also in the U.S.S.R. Our tasks, among them the 'defense of the U.S.S.R.', we realize not through the medium of bourgeois governments and not even through the government of the U.S.S.R. but exclusively through the education of the masses through agitation, through explaining to the workers what they should defend and what they should overthrow." (Trotsky, "The U.S.S.R. in War.") In that case, the slogan of peace in the Soviet Union is the concrete slogan of revolutionary defeatism. "The experience of the years 1914-18," says our theses on The War and the Fourth International (p. 26), "demonstrates at the same time that the slogan of peace is in no wise contradictory to the strategic formula of 'defeatism,' on the contrary, it develops a tremendous revolutionary force, especially in case of a protracted war."

That is why the Minority can and does advocate that slogan. That is why the Cannonites voted down the slogan Goldman said was "implicit" in their position (which did not prevent Morrow, another Cannonite, from advocating it publicly at a party mass meeting—anything goes once you swear by the "fundamentals"!). The slogan could not be adopted by the Cannon faction for the simple reason that its line boils down politically to trailing behind

Stalinism in the best case and capitulation to it in the worst.

The line of the Cannon group as a whole, and of its individual spokesmen singly, demonstrates in practice that once you consent to swear solemnly and regularly that Russia is a Worker's state, you are thenceforward permitted the most liberal experimentation with slogans and policies of the day and, at the same time, you acquire the right to accuse the Minority of "improvisation."

The position of the Minority on the invasion of Finland can be stated very simply, since it is based on the resolution it presented to the September Plenum of the National Committee, which foretold the subsequent events and indicated the line to follow.

Our position in the United States, where the main enemy remains American imperialism and its democratic and social-democratic apologists and recruiting sergeants, is of course unaltered, and we will not dignify the disloyal insinuations about our having relaxed the struggle against our bourgeoisie and its retainers by elaborating on this position.

To the Finnish worker we must say: Your main fight is against your own bourgeoisie and the imperialists whose pawn it is. You are not fighting for the independence of Finland, for its sovereign integrity, but for the bankers and bandits of London, Paris and Washington. We know why you are fighting with such vehemence against the Stalinist forces. We understand fully your sentiments, for we know only too well what a victory of Stalinism would mean to you—the same slavery and oppression that your Russian brothers now endure. But do not react to the threat of Stalinist enslavement with such unthinking bitterness that you become blind cannon fodder of your main enemy, your class enemy. We know that Stalin aims to annex Finland for his own power, prestige and privilege. You must resist that; you must crack every dirty Stalinist finger that is outstretched now to enslave you. You have a right to a free and independent Finland. But you cannot conduct much less win that fight as tools of Mannerheim, under the domination of your bourgeoisie. First things come first. And your first job is to crush your ruling class, win over the army or create your own, establish your own power which will not be a tool of imperialism or the bankers and landlords but in which you can have full confidence. Then you will be able to resist the Stalinist invader. We cannot tell you, we Fourth Internationalists, to give material and military aid to the Red Army now fighting a reactionary war, for its victory means annexation of Finland by Stalin, and its subjugation to the counter-revolutionary Kremlin. The day after that happened, we would have to tell you again to fight for your freedom, against annexation, against the Red Army which maintains it. On with the class struggle regardless of the results on the military front! Perhaps you will not win this time, but in the course of the war the Finnish bourgeois regime will collapse, as did the Polish regime, and your chance will come then. Then be doubly careful, for the Red Army will act as agents of the counter-revolution in the Kremlin, trying to cheat you of the fruits of your struggle. Seek also, therefore, to win over the Russian worker and peasant in uniform; fraternize with them; help establish mutual and comradely understanding. And when the day comes that you have the strength, strike against your oppressors.

To the Russian worker we must say: Stalin is conducting a reactionary war, which discredits and disgraces the Soviet Union and the working class movement. That war is conducted only in the interests of the bureaucracy; it serves only the Kremlin gang and Hitler. It is not your war. Stalin wants to annex Finland and deprive its people of the right of self-determination. What interest can you have in that? You want peace, you want an end to the rule of the bureaucratic assassins who abuse and degrade you in the name of "socialism." If Stalin were really defending the Soviet Union from imperialist attack, we would have to clench our teeth and help him all we could, settling accounts with him later. But this war is reactionary and we should not give him an ounce of political or material or military support. Does that mean you must shoot your officer tomorrow? Does that mean you refuse to fight? Does that mean you take Mannerheim's help against the Stalinists? Nothing of the kind. A thinking worker is not a putschist, an adventurist, or an individualist. Although we are too weak for anything like that now, let us educate our comrades in the Army and back home; to tell them the truth; to organize secret cells; prudently to promote every movement of mass discontentment against the perfidious regime; prudently to advocate fraternization with our Finnish brothers and the speediest calling off of this rotten war. We had nothing to do with the calling of this war, secretly planned by the bureaucracy in cahoots with Hitler.

We must continue and expand our struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy regardless of the results on the military front.

With such a policy, no tremendous successes will be achieved overnight on either side of the front. It "cannot give immediate miraculous results"—it is entirely in place to quote Trotsky here. "But we do not even pretend to be miracle workers. As things stand, we are a revolutionary minority. Our work must be directed so that the workers on whom we have influence—even should they at first number no more than two or three—"should correctly appraise events, not permit themselves to be caught unawares, and prepare the general sentiment of their own class for the revolutionary solution of the tasks confronting us." (The U.S.S.R. in War.)

But what if the Red Army should win before the Finnish workers can make their own revolution, as is the more likely variant? And what if the Stalinists, for reasons of their own, should nationalize industry, or the land, or establish "Soviets"? We would still follow substantially the same policy towards the Stalinists. We would say to the Finnish workers: We must start now from the new situation. The old capitalists have been driven out, but the nationalization of industry and land can become really progressive only if you have workers' control and management of the plants; only if you drive the Kremlin commissars out of the factories and the land; only if you drive them out of the fake Soviets or rather set up genuinely democratic Soviets in their place; only if you fight for separation from the Soviet Union, for the right of self-determination. No aid to Stalinism while it fastens the yoke on your necks; no aid to Stalinism while you are unfastening that yoke.

But, we are asked finally, suppose the imperialists, using the Finnish invasion as a pretext, launch a real attack upon the Soviet Union, with the aim of carving it up among themselves, of restoring capitalism, of smashing not only Stalinism but everything that remains of what we fought for 22 years to maintain—will you then be for the defense of the Soviet Union? To which we answer simply: yes, if the character of the war really changes into a war of imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union, we shall take a clear-cut position of defensism—not the shamefaced defensism of the Cannonites in the present war, but unconditional defense of the Soviet Union. So we acted in Spain; so we would act in the Soviet Union. Our slogan is: Defense of the Soviet Union in any progressive war!

The Cannon group would like to dismiss such questions as the invasion of Finland with the epithet: "an incident" or "an episode" in the preparation for the imperialist war against Russia which is coming. How many more such "episodes" are required before they cease being mere "episodes"? First Poland, then Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, now Finland, tomorrow and the day after somewhere else.

The Cannonite line is a simple inversion of—but not an improvement upon—the line of the ultra-leftists in the Spanish civil war. They dismissed the civil war as an "episode" which already contained the elements of an inter-imperialist world war (England-France-Russia versus Italy-Germany) and which would inevitably be transformed into such a world war. From this they deduced the conclusion that the policy applicable to the war that was coming was applicable to the war that is here. They were defeatists in the Spanish civil war because it would be correct to take the defeatist position when the world imperialist war broke out.

"It can be objected," Comrade Crux wrote in reply to the ultra-leftists on September 14, 1937, "that the two imperialist camps (Italy and Germany on one side and England, France and the U.S.S.R. on the other) conduct their struggle on the Iberian peninsula and that the war in Spain is only an 'episode' of this struggle. In the sense of a historical possibility, it is true. But it is impermissible to identify a historical possibility with the actual, concrete course of the civil war today. The intervention of the imperialist countries has indisputably great influence upon the development of the events in Spain. But until today it has not changed the fundamental character of these events as of a struggle between the camp of the Spanish bourgeois democracy and the camp of Spanish fascism."

The Cannon group inverts the ultra-leftist position by saying that since the policy of defensism is applicable in the war to come it is also applicable in the actual, concrete war ("episode") Russia is now fighting.

Then the Minority stands for the position of defeatism—cries the Cannon group. One is either a defensist, at least a half-hearted one as we are, or one is a defeatist. To which we reply:

In the present war we have made it quite clear that we are not defensists; rather, we adopt a form of defeatism. We speak of a "form" of defeatism for reasons that will be made clear in the following section.

Forms of Defensism and Forms of Defeatism

In the course of the discussion in the party, the Cannonites have falsely characterized the position of the Minority on the question of defensism and defeatism, in some cases out of disloyalty and in others out of ignorance. For example, our rejection of defensism in the Soviet Union in the present war has subjected us to the charge that our position boils down to advocacy of victory for the Finnish army, that is, bourgeois patriotism. "The Minority prefers the victory of Finland to the victory of the Soviet Union," according to the Cannon group. This charge is based (1) on a false conception of the meaning of defeatism, and (2) on the conception that there are only two camps in the war, with the third camp (the international proletariat) unable to play an independent and separate role, with independent objectives.

Defensism and defeatism—these are sometimes military, sometimes political (or social, that is, class) conceptions, and sometimes both. In all cases, however, what is involved is a position of class patriotism, that is, the position which best serves the interests of your class in the course of a war.

In the course of the last war, Briand, Painlevé and Caillaux, at the head of the war-time regimes of French imperialism, were all bourgeois patriots; they were for the victory of France over the German imperialist rival and its army. Clemenceau was no less a French bourgeois patriot; rather, he was a bolder, more consistent and relentless patriot. Yet he refused to give the government any political support. He conducted a fierce campaign of opposition against it, charging it with pusillanimity, incompetence, vacillation, and compromise—not so much toward the enemy abroad (Germany) as towards the class enemy at home (the working class and its revolutionary vanguard). Neither governmental persecution nor demagogic appeals for "national unity" could cause him to suspend his fight. He argued that just because the Germans were advancing on Paris and threatening the victory of France, it was necessary to overturn the existing French government. In the end, that is precisely what he succeeded in doing. Under the ruthless Clemenceau government, the full resources of imperialist France were mobilized, all opposition to the war mercilessly suppressed, and firmer guarantees given the bourgeoisie that it would triumph in the war. Despite his fight, or rather precisely because of it, Clemenceau proved that he was not a defeatist, but rather a defensist. He was not merely a patriot of his class, but the best patriot.

Twelve years ago, the Left Opposition in Russia, particularly Comrade Trotsky, applied the "Clemenceau thesis" to the problem of the Soviet Union in war. Trotsky rightly contended that this "thesis" applied to the Soviet Union even though it represented a different social order and a different ruling class. Should war break out, he said, we do not believe that the Stalinist clique will be able to conduct it well, with sufficient class consistency, with sufficiently good results for the defense of the Soviet Union. And, should the imperialist enemy advance within striking distance of Russia's heart, as a result of the incompetence and vacillations of the Stalinist regime, it is precisely at that moment that the Opposition, as the best and most resolute defenders of the Soviet Union, will intensify its efforts to change the regime. Was Trotsky less a Soviet (proletarian class) patriot than Stalin? Quite the contrary; he represented a more consistent class policy. The application of the "Clemenceau thesis" to the Soviet Union did not mean the abandonment of the slogan of "unconditional defense" for the simple reason that it did not mean refusal to defend Russia even if Stalin was at its head. At the same time, it did mean the continuation and even intensification of the struggle against Stalin and Stalinism.

(In passing, here again may be seen how groundless is the charge made in the recent articles of Lund and Trotsky that the Minority does not understand what we meant in the past by "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union." Lund and Trotsky are quite right in pointing out that this slogan never meant the suspension of the struggle against Stalin, or the "defense" of every action taken by Stalin or the army. It is not, therefore, in this sense that we propose a revision of the slogan, but rather in the sense indicated in the preceding sections.)

Thus, Caillaux and Clemenceau, Stalin and Trotsky—all represented different forms of defensism, of class patriotism. Clemenceau was not a "disrupter" or a "German agent" but a good

French bourgeois patriot. Trotsky was not an "agent of imperialism" but the only consistent Soviet (proletarian-internationalist) patriot.

Similarly in the case of defeatism, which assumes different forms depending upon the group or class involved and the aims it pursues.

During the Russo-Japanese war of 1904, the Bolsheviks (and many Mensheviks) adopted the position of revolutionary defeatism. Not so widely known, however, is the fact that the Russian bourgeoisie took a defeatist position in the war. What was the nature of its defeatism? The bourgeoisie feared and hated the proletariat and the possibility of a proletarian revolution; but at the same time it wanted to be free of the rule of the Czarist regime and its reactionary, semi-feudal bureaucracy. It wanted to establish its own political rule. It did not have the social guts to conduct a revolution against Czarism by itself; it refused to arouse the "lower depths" for such a revolution, out of fear that such an uprising, once started, would not end with the overthrow of the Czarist bureaucracy but would continue with the overthrow of capitalist rule itself. Although outwardly and hypocritically "patriotic," the bourgeoisie was nevertheless desperately defeatist. Its position was summed up in the anguished cry: "God, help us be defeated!" In other words, the bourgeoisie (even many of its conservative sections) were for the victory of the Japanese forces in the hope that the resultant demoralization and collapse of the Czarist regime would end in the assumption of full political power by this very defeatist bourgeoisie.

Was the Russian bourgeoisie patriotic in the war, was it for the victory of Russian arms? No. But it was patriotic to its class. Military defeatism, in this case, tinged with the cowardly "revolutionary" defeatism of the Russian bourgeoisie, proved to be in no conflict with class patriotism. Similar instances of this form of defeatism may be found in the history of the middle of the last century in the United States, especially in connection with the Mexican wars.

There is another form of defeatism which is essentially military. When Woodrow Wilson's agents during the last world war sought to finance the German Spartacists, it was not because Wilson favored a proletarian revolution in Germany but simply because he was for the military defeat of an imperialist rival. When German spies in the United States helped to organize and finance "radical" unions, it was not because they sought to promote the class struggle in this country but simply because Germany was for the military defeat of American imperialism. The "strikes" they tried to organize were on a par with the exploding of American munitions works.

There is still a third form of defeatism, which is at once military and revolutionary. In the war between Japan and China, we are for the unconditional defense of China. It is the elementary duty of the Japanese revolutionist at home to promote the military defeat of "his" country, regardless of the means employed. Individual action and mass action are equally permissible; political action and military action are both valid. He is for strikes; he is for demonstrations; he is for Japanese troops deserting to (not merely fraternizing with) the Chinese army; he is for sabotaging the military supply system and lowering the military efficiency of the Japanese forces. He is for the victory of the Chinese army and for the defeat of the Japanese. If the defeat of Japan can be accomplished by revolutionary political means employed by the Japanese proletariat (revolutionary defeatism), so much the better. But even if that is not possible at a given time, the defeat of Japan accomplished by military means alone (military defeatism), would still signify the accomplishment of his class duty.

This same policy applies in case of a war between Nicaragua and the United States; between the Soviet Union and the imperialist powers; between India or Ireland and Great Britain; between Negrin and Franco—in other words, in every case where the revolutionists are for the defense of one country against another, that is, where one country is fighting a progressive war against a reactionary enemy. The revolutionists prefer the victory of one country against the other; they prefer the defeat of one country by the other.

Does this form of defeatism apply in cases where both camps, both armies, both countries are fighting a reactionary war, as for example during the last World War, in a war between the United States and Japan or between England and Germany? NO!

In such cases the revolutionary proletariat makes no choice between the two camps; neither one is a lesser evil as compared with the other. It gives neither political nor military, neither moral nor material aid to any of the two camps. It is for the victory

of the **third camp**, be it a colonial people over whose bodies the war is being fought, or the proletariat in the home country. It is for **revolutionary defeatism**—neither more nor less.

What is the meaning of revolutionary defeatism in such a case? Does it mean the employment of military-technical means to bring about the defeat, as is the duty of the revolutionist in Japan is the case cited above? Does it mean "blowing up bridges" or otherwise deliberately destroying the military efficiency of one's "own" bourgeoisie? Does revolutionary defeatism mean the defeat of "our" army by the "enemy" army—the American army by the Japanese, or the British army by the German, or the Italian army by the French?

Not at all! It means the defeat of one's "own" bourgeoisie by one's own proletariat! It means, more concretely, the continuation and intensification of the class struggle at home regardless of its effects on the military front. It means the struggle against "civil peace" and "national unity." That is the meaning of Liebknecht's formula: "The main enemy is in our own country." Defeatism in this sense means further that we take advantage of every crisis of the ruling class to press home our struggle, to promote the revolution until, by overturning the government, we establish either the social or political regime which we can and will defend from all enemies.

Does this defeatism mean working for the victory of the enemy? No, because in the case of war that is reactionary on both sides, the slogan of defeatism is not a national but an international slogan. The proletariat on both sides is for the defeat of its regime not by the opposing army but by the revolution at home. "We have recognized defeatism only with reference to one's own imperialist bourgeoisie," wrote Lenin, "and on the other hand have always rejected, as a fundamentally inadmissible and generally improper method the victory that is achieved in a formal or actual alliance with a 'friendly' imperialism." (In passing, special note should be taken of this quotation by those comrades who accepted as the "lesser evil" in Poland the Stalinist victory "achieved in a formal or actual alliance with a 'friendly' imperialism.")

Now, what application has the foregoing to such cases as the war now being conducted by the Stalinist regime?

In the present conflict, the Stalinist bureaucracy and its army are conducting a reactionary war. They do not represent the interests of the world proletariat, or the socialist revolution, or the Soviet Union. They represent the interests, on the one hand, of German imperialism, and on the other of the counter-revolutionary anti-Soviet bureaucracy. In the present war, these interests are reactionary. "The economic transformations in the occupied provinces," writes Trotsky, and quite rightly, "do not compensate for this by even a tenth part!" We do not support this war, any more than we would "support such a shameful strike" as one organized "against the admission of Negro workers into a certain branch of industry" (Trotsky). If we do not support it, we oppose it.

What form does our opposition take? Revolutionary defeatism. That means: the continuation and intensification of the revolutionary struggle against the Stalinist regime and for its overthrow, regardless of the effects on the military front. Does this mean an alliance with the Finnish bourgeoisie? Does this mean the victory of the Finnish army? Nothing of the sort! In a war that is reactionary on both sides, our slogans are not national but international. The Finnish proletariat must overthrow (defeat) its own bourgeoisie and its army. The Soviet proletariat must overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy and its army.

"But the war is on now. Which way shall the workers in the Red Army shoot?" The Cannonites ask this question of us with an air of triumph.

We are not putschists or anarchists. We do not believe that the armed uprising can be called into existence by mere will of the small vanguard. We do not believe that the actions of individuals can be substituted for the actions of the vanguard, or those of the vanguard for those of the class as a whole. It is not at all a question of what this or that worker or a little group of workers should "do with his rifle." Until the vanguard has been brought together in an ideologically and organizationally distinct and powerful force, until it has acquired mass support, the question of a decisive action remains a perspective; that is, the **propaganda** slogan has not yet developed into a **slogan of action**. The whole question, however, is how to realize this perspective, what steps to take, what line to follow, in order to facilitate the progress of the vanguard. The argument: If there were an independent revolutionary movement already in existence we would support it; but since there is not we support the Stalinist inva-

sion as the "lesser evil"—is essentially reactionary. The point is precisely this: The independent revolutionary movement cannot be brought into existence and advance if we support the Stalinist invasion. The forces of the **third camp are already at hand**—scattered, demoralized, without program or perspective. The problem is to bring them together, to infuse them with morale, to supply them with a program and perspective. To argue that these forces are small and insignificant, has no political meaning, for the argument could apply both ways (if they are insignificant, they can no more "defend" than they can "defeat"). Political meaning is contained only in the line upon which we expect the vanguard to come together and along which we urge them to act.

That is the meaning of the section of the Minority resolution on the war in Finland which declares that we must take into account "the military situation, the moods of the masses and also the differing economic relations in Finland and Russia." The concrete moment when a propaganda slogan can be turned effectively into a slogan of action, often depends upon the shifts in the military fronts. This has been observed in virtually every country where a revolutionary situation has developed, notably in the Russian revolution of 1917 and the German and Austrian revolutions a year later. (An army that records nothing but crushing victories is rarely inclined to listen to slogans calling for the overthrow of the regime that commands it.) Again, the concrete tactical forms of the slogans aimed at reaching a given strategical goal will always differ with the change in the moods of the masses, which are in turn affected by a whole series of objective factors. To have a strategic objective is decisively important, but not enough; it is necessary also to be able to translate this objective into specific slogans suitable for every conjuncture. From this alone follows the absurdity of the question—"What should they do now with their rifles?" "They" will do what the soldiers in every army must do, namely, obey the orders of their all-powerful officer-command until such a time when the officer-command is not all-powerful, that is, when the masses are strong and conscious enough to refuse to obey their orders. Again, the whole problem is: What political line shall we adopt in order most speedily to reach that time in the struggle.

Finally, our resolution pointed out the need of taking into account the different economic relations in the two countries. In other words, while the proletarian revolution in Finland will have the task of nationalizing industry by expropriating the bourgeoisie, the revolution in the Soviet Union will merely free the already nationalized property from the reactionary stranglehold of the parasitic bureaucracy.

The line of the Cannon group means that the third camp, however embryonic, must resign itself "for the present" to the victory of the Stalinist reaction. This is equivalent to a political capitulation to the Kremlin bureaucracy. The line of the Minority means that the third camp, however embryonic or weak, must orient itself at the very outset towards a decisive struggle not only against world imperialism, but also against the Stalinist reaction. An indispensable part of the preparations for this decisive struggle is the struggle against the Stalinist clique in the present war—for the peace slogan, for fraternization on the war front, for re-establishing the genuine Soviets in which the workers and peasants themselves can decide the questions of war and peace, for the conquest of the Red Army, for the overturn of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy, etc.

Imperialist or Agent of Imperialism?

"We often seek salvation from unfamiliar phenomena in familiar terms," Trotsky once wrote. And naturally so. Our epoch is so rich in new phenomena and the social-political lexicon is so limited, that we frequently characterize the new phenomena in terms of similar, even if not identical, phenomena of the past. Terminological "experimentation," while often risky and at times pointless, is sometimes the only way of illuminating, by analogy, a new phenomenon or an old phenomenon in new forms and of relating it, with the necessary changes, to phenomena with which we are already familiar. Let us see if, in this sense, it is permissible to speak of Stalinist imperialism.

The fact that all varieties of Menshevik, liberal and bourgeois politicians speak, and have spoken for twenty years, of "red imperialism" is not in itself an argument against the employment of the term "imperialism" to describe the present foreign policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Almost from the beginning of the Russian Revolution, the Mensheviks declared that what had triumphed in November 1917 was not the proletarian revolution but the Thermidorian counter-revolution. With the increasing restric-

tions on Soviet democracy and the growth, during the civil war, of the Red Army, the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists even spoke of the triumph of Bonapartism in Russia, giving very learned and very stupid comparisons between the evolution of the Russian proletariat and the French bourgeois revolutions.

In one of his very first polemics against the ruling faction in Russia ("The New Course"), Trotsky argued that the attempt to make a comparison between the French and Russian revolutions was untenable. "The historical analogies with the Great French Revolution (the fall of the Jacobins) which liberalism and Menshevism establish and with which they console themselves," he wrote in 1923, "are superficial and inconsistent." And so they were, and remain, in our opinion.

But that did not for one moment prevent our own movement several years later from making legitimate comparisons, from which legitimate conclusions were drawn. Allowing for the necessary changes, we threw considerable light on the evolution of the Soviet regime by the analogy with the French Thermidor of more than a century ago. Polemizing against our use of the term "imperialism" Trotsky now writes that in 1920 "the Mensheviks at that time already spoke of Bolshevik imperialism as borrowed from the traditions of Czarist diplomacy. The petty bourgeois democracy willingly resorts to this argument even now. We have no reason, I repeat, for imitating them in this." There is no doubt that the same argument was made, in its time, to the use of the term "Soviet Thermidor"; in fact, the official polemics against the Left Opposition in Russia of 10-12 years ago contained precisely this objection.

Again, on the employment of the term "Bonapartism" to characterize the Stalinist regime. The fact that all varieties of anti-Marxists had (and still do) used this term did not deter us from using it with the necessary qualifications to indicate the limits of the analogy, even though there was no lack of objection in our own ranks when Trotsky first formulated the characterization.

"The matter is complicated," he wrote early in 1935, "when we apply the term Bonapartism to the Stalin regime and speak of 'Soviet Bonapartism.' 'No,' exclaim our critics, 'your Bonapartisms are too many; the term is becoming impermissibly extensive . . . ' etc. Such abstract, formal, verbal objections are usually made when there is nothing to say about the essential. Incontestably, neither Marx, Engels nor Lenin applied the term Bonapartism to the workers' state; no wonder: they had no occasion to (that Lenin did not hesitate to apply terms of the bourgeois regime to the workers' state, with the necessary limitations, is proved, for example, by his expression 'Soviet state capitalism'). What is to be done, however, in those cases where the good old books do not give the necessary indications? In such cases you have to rely on your own common sense." Trotsky's conclusion: Bonapartism is the "scientific-sociological definition" of the Stalin regime.

Again, although confusionists of all sorts speak glibly of the similarity between Russia and Germany, Trotsky, in "The Revolution Betrayed," declares: "Stalinism and fascism, in spite of a deep difference in social foundations, are symmetrical phenomena."

It will be argued that in all these comparisons and analogies, the essential differences are also indicated. Quite right. This only means that if we speak of Stalinist imperialism it is necessary to point out wherein it differs from British or French or American or German imperialism, that is, from modern capitalist imperialism.

For some time now, the Fourth International has characterized the Stalin regime as an "agent of imperialism." That is correct. Up to yesterday, it was an agency of French imperialism, with its new alliance, it is an agency of German imperialism. And in general, the Stalinist bureaucracy is the agency through which world imperialism oppresses the Soviet proletariat and peasantry. In this respect, the Minority has no different appreciation of the position of Stalinism than does Comrade Trotsky. Furthermore, we reject the view that it is impermissible for a workers' state to maneuver among the imperialist powers, and even to make a bloc with one against another. But there is a fundamental difference between the "blocs" made by Lenin and the "blocs" made by Stalin.

In his discussion of essentially the same question with a Chinese comrade two years ago, Comrade Crux pointed out: "The present (Chinese) government can't oppose Japanese imperialism without becoming a servile tool of British imperialism. They will answer: the Bolsheviks also used one imperialism against the other and why do you criticize us for our bloc with Great Britain? A bloc depends on the relationship of forces, if I am the stronger I can use it for my purposes; if I am the weaker, I become a tool."

Only a revolutionary government could be the stronger." (Internal Bulletin, Dec. 1937, p. 34.)

That is precisely the question. In utilizing the contradictions in the imperialist camp, Lenin did not thereby become a tool of imperialism. Stalin, representing a counter-revolutionary government, does act as an agent of imperialism. But this "agent of imperialism" is not at all like such an agent of imperialism as, let us say, the comprador national bourgeoisie of China. It not only rests on a different economic foundation, with contradictions and problems peculiar to it, but it also has different ambitions, appetites, national and international aims. It is not merely an agent of imperialism; it follows, or tries to follow, an imperialist policy of its own.

In the above-mentioned discussion with the Chinese comrade, the following statements occur:

"Crux: A military alliance against Japan would be in any case preferable for China even with the (Soviet) bureaucracy as it is. But then we must say that we demand that the Soviet Union delivers munitions, arms for the workers and peasants; special committees must be created in Shanghai in workers' centers; the treaty must be elaborated with the participation not only of the Kuomintang but also with the workers' and peasants' organizations. We ask for an open proclamation from the Soviet bureaucracy that at the end of the war no point of China would be occupied without the consent of the Chinese people, etc.

"Li: Do you then think that the Soviet Union could be capable of conducting an imperialistic policy?

"Crux: If it is capable of organizing frame-ups, killing the revolutionaries, it is capable of all possible crimes." (Internal Bulletin, Dec. 1937, p. 38.)

The Stalinist bureaucracy is capable of conducting an imperialistic policy! This concept and expression was first used in the Fourth International not by the Minority which is "imitating the petty bourgeois democracy," but by Comrade Crux.

Does this mean that Stalinist imperialism stands on the same level with French or German imperialism? Not at all! Does the use of such a characterization for the Stalinist regime violate the conceptions of Marxism? Not at all! It is quite true that we have generally used the term "imperialism" to describe modern imperialism, that is, the expansionist policy of capitalism in its last stage, of monopolistic finance capital. But Marxists have pointed out time and again that imperialist policy has characterized regimes and societies other than that of finance capitalism, and that each was distinguished from the others by properties peculiar to it. There is no doctrine of Marxism that prevents us from speaking of a "counter-revolutionary workers' state" or of "Soviet Bonapartism"; there is no doctrine of Marxism that prevents us from speaking of an imperialist policy peculiar to the Stalinist regime which has reached an unprecedented depth of degeneration, unforeseen by Marx or by Lenin. Trotsky himself writes: "The driving force behind the Moscow bureaucracy is indubitably the tendency to expand its power, its prestige, its revenue. This is the element of 'imperialism' in the widest sense of the word which was a property in the past of all monarchies, oligarchies, ruling castes, medieval estates and classes. However, in contemporary literature, at least Marxist literature, imperialism is understood to mean the expansionist policy of finance capital which has a very sharply defined economic content." (Internal Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 2.)

The first two sentences of this quotation allow, theoretically, for the employment of the term "imperialism"—"in the widest sense of the word"—to the Stalinist bureaucracy. As for the last sentence quoted, one can only reply that in contemporary Marxist literature, Bonapartism, for example, was limited to the scientific-sociological definition of the rule of the bourgeoisie at a certain stage in its development. Its extension to cover the Stalinist regime, with the necessary qualifications, was in no way an offense against Marxism.

Similarly in the case of the term "imperialism." But what is the nature of Stalinist imperialism? What are the necessary qualifications that must be borne in mind in employing this terminology? And above all—this question is the most justified—what is the economic basis of this imperialism?

It would of course be absurd to identify it with the imperialism that prevails in the modern capitalist world. Monopolistic finance capital does not dominate the Soviet Union; the Soviet Union exports very little in commodities and even less in capital. The concept of Stalinist imperialism cannot be based on these familiar phenomena of modern capitalist imperialism. Nor can the con-

cept be based upon what Trotsky calls the 'historical-geographical argument' which he groundlessly attributes to the Minority, namely, the fact that Stalinist expansion is following more or less the same geographical lines followed by the old Czarist empire. We are not among those who readily cry "imperialism" the minute the troops of one country cross the frontiers into another . . .

The nature of Stalinist imperialism must be sought in the contradictions of the transitional economy of the Soviet Union and the relations of the "bourgeois bureaucracy" to this economy.

Our fundamental objection to the theory of "socialism in a single country" has been that the contradictions inherent in its economy cannot be solved within the borders of one state. To the national-limitedness and Utopianism of the Stalinists, we counterposed the international socialist revolution. By that we meant: the Russian revolution must expand or die! Without "state aid" from the working class in power in the economically and technologically more advanced countries of the world, the Russian revolution could not maintain itself. Although this prognosis did not materialize in exactly the form it originally had, it nevertheless remained fundamentally correct. If the Russian revolution did not collapse under the direct blows of the (internal or external) bourgeois counter-revolution, it has experienced a terrible degeneration.

Stalin has not been able to establish socialism in the Soviet Union, that is, a harmoniously balanced, planned, crisis-free economic order. All the contradictory successes of the first Five Year Plans are turning into their opposite under stress of economic and social forces beyond the control even of the all-powerful bureaucracy. The bureaucracy which first stimulated the development of the productive forces is now the principal brake on their development. The fixed capital of the early plans is reaching exhaustion. "The tendency toward primitive accumulation created by want breaks out through innumerable pores of the planned economy" (Trotsky); the thirst for "primitive accumulation," for more privileges, for more wealth, for an increase in the national income and for a greater share of this income for itself, burns in the throats of the bureaucracy. The growth of Soviet industry has not brought the country closer to the Stalinist Utopia of autarchy, of economic self-sufficiency, but into greater dependence upon world economy.

Under Lenin and Trotsky, the inherent contradictions of Soviet economy were to be solved on the international arena by revolutionary means. In those days, the dilemma—"Expand or die"—was to be solved by extending the Russian revolution throughout the world. That "policy of expansion" was in complete harmony with the interests of the world proletariat. It was directed consciously against world imperialism, and not as an agency of imperialism; it meant the liberation of workers in other countries and not their enslavement. That is why the "invasion" of Poland in 1920 and the "invasion" of Georgia in the same period were of a fundamentally different character from Stalin's invasion of Poland hand in hand with German imperialism.

Under the Stalinist regime, the inherent contradictions of Soviet economy have not been and could not be resolved by the purely military-bureaucratic measures of the apparatus "in one country." Nowadays, too, and in a sense, far more acutely, the dilemma is still—"Expand or die!" But the Stalinist policy of expansion differs fundamentally from that of the revolutionary workers' state years ago precisely in that it is reactionary and counter-revolutionary. This policy is not based solely on the desire of the bureaucracy to assure itself militarily from attack by the imperialist powers. One of the main driving forces behind the policy of the bureaucracy is "the tendency to expand its power, its prestige, its revenues." We call this policy Stalinist imperialism.

To be sure, the Bonapartist bureaucracy cannot yet even hope of realizing the power or the dreams of the old capitalist imperialisms. To be sure, its own (comparatively) feeble base at home does not make possible the acquisition or domination of an empire in any way comparable to the British or French. But—"to each his proportionate share." The agent, or rather the minor partner, of imperialism must be content with a smaller share. The bureaucracy does not scoff at even such trifles as the oil wells of Western Ukraine, the timber and nickel of Finland, the modest wealth of Vilna, every factory and store of which was sacked by the Stalinists before they turned over the city to Lithuania, the commercially important ports of the Baltic and the North of Finland, to say nothing of the thousands of workers of Lvov shipped under guard to work in the Donetz coal mines, etc., etc.

Marxists have analyzed and spoken of "social-imperialism" as

the policy of one section of the world working class (the labor aristocracy and the bureaucracy) corrupted by imperialism and enjoying a small share of the fruits of imperialist expansion. With even greater reason is it possible to speak of Stalinist-imperialism as the policy of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy in the Soviet Union.

How can a workers' state follow an imperialist policy? Or, as some comrades put it, how can a nationalized economy follow (!!) an imperialist policy? The "secret" lies in the fact that the nationalized economy does not "follow" any policy; the automatism of Soviet economy is not at all guaranteed; its character as a whole "depends upon the character of the state power." The state power is in the hands of a gluttonous, counter-revolutionary bureaucracy which, for a series of objective reasons, has acquired an enormous (relative) independence from its economic base. Just as Stalinist imperialism differs from modern capitalist imperialism, so Stalinist Bonapartism differs from classic bourgeois Bonapartism. The first Bonaparte, according to Marx, "preserved the social power" of the bourgeoisie. Bismarck, another exemplar of Bonapartism, remained, according to Trotsky, the first Bonaparte, in order to preserve himself and the social rule he never betrayed." The counter-revolutionary character of Stalinist Bonapartism, according to our program, lies, among other things, precisely in the fact that he undermines the social power of the proletariat; it is not the "unchanging plenipotentiary" of the proletariat, but its perfidious and mortal enemy. Where the first Bonaparte, in order to preserve himself and the social rule of the bourgeoisie, "swept away everywhere the establishments of feudality, so far as requisite, to furnish the bourgeois social system of France with fit surroundings of the European continent"—Stalinist Bonapartism, in order to preserve itself, does not "sweep away everywhere the establishments" of world capitalism. On the contrary, it helps maintain capitalism; it rightly fears the proletarian revolution abroad like the devil fears holy water, for the international revolution means the finish of its power; it proudly proclaims itself, and with justice, as the guardian of private property—in Spain, in Estonia, in Lithuania, in Latvia, in Finland; and if it did not maintain private ownership in the Western Ukraine and Western White Russia it is essentially because the private owners (capitalists and landlords), who were ninety percent Polish in nationality, had either fled to safer regions or had already been driven out by the insurrectionary peasants who rose on the land even before the arrival of the Red Army.

Here too it has been shown that there is no mechanical relationship between the nationalized property existing in the Soviet Union and the policies—even the economic policies—of the Stalinist regime. There is not the slightest doubt that if the Polish bourgeoisie and landlords had consented to collaborate with the Stalinists, their private property would have been preserved intact by the Kremlin and its army—exactly as was the case in Spain, and as is the case in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The program of the Kuusinen "government" in Terijoki, with its explicit opposition to expropriating the bourgeoisie, represents an assurance from the Stalinists that it will protect the social interests of the Finnish bourgeoisie if the latter will act like the bourgeoisie of the three Baltic countries.

The peculiar relationship of the Stalinist bureaucracy, of the political regime which has acquired such an enormous degree of independence, to the contradictions of Soviet economy, enables it and to a growing extent compels it to pursue an imperialist policy, not only as an agent of capitalist imperialism, but an imperialist policy of its own.

Is this not a mere matter of terminology—a desire to avenge ourselves for Stalinist crimes by the employment of "strong" language? No. Without an understanding of this new phenomenon, a clear political line is impossible; and that for several reasons.

1. The majority has, for example, shown a complete inability to analyze and understand the "new turn" of the Communist International. The official analysis made of the "turn" by the representative of the Cannon group in the *Socialist Appeal* was woefully superficial—that is the best that can be said of it. This "analysis" said (1) that the new "turn" was calculated to help German imperialism, just as the policy of the "fourth period" (People's Frontism, etc.) was calculated to help Anglo-French imperialism; and (2) that it marked a return to the "leftism" of the "third period." The analysis is wrong on both counts. The policy of the "third period" was indeed essentially a frightened bureaucratic reaction to the results of its own opportunism of the preceding period. It coincided with and reflected

a general (if uneven) wave of radicalization of the masses. It was ultra-leftist and adventurist, to be sure, but—so we analyzed it at the time—it represented in a Stalinistically-distorted way, the irreconcilable antagonism between the Soviet Union and the imperialist world, on the one side, and the Soviet Union (the socialist revolution) and the social-democratic props of capitalism, on the other side. It was aimed, ineffectually of course, against the world imperialist status quo and its social-democratic supporters.

The "fourth period" was decisively unlike the "third," among other things, in that it was based (a) on the support of one set of imperialists against another, and (b) on the preservation of the imperialist status quo. In turn, to be sure, this was based on the desire of the Stalinist bureaucracy to preserve itself from its more immediate enemies, Germany and Japan.

The "fifth period," marked by the latest "turn" of the C.I., has only this in common with the "third," namely that it is also opposed to the old imperialist status quo. But while the Stalinists hoped, in the "third period" to change the world relationship of forces by ultra-leftist and adventurist (i.e., by "revolutionary") means, nothing of the sort holds true today. It would, however, be equally wrong to argue, as do the Cannonites, that the new pseudo-radical "turn" of the C.I. is calculated only to serve the interests of German imperialism, of the Berlin-Moscow axis at one end of which is the master, Hitler, and at the other, the agent, Stalin. No; although Stalin capitulated to Hitler, he is no mere tool of Germany. The "agent" plays an independent role in the "axis." Not only does the Comintern allow itself a few guarded but nonetheless significant remarks about the need of a "revolution" in Germany (something it spoke and acted against in the most violent manner in France, during the "fourth period"), but it is also carrying on a "revolutionary" agitation in those countries into which the Stalinist bureaucracy hopes next to direct its expansion.

Does this mean that the Stalinists have turned revolutionary? Not for a minute! The Stalinist bureaucracy, its regime, its policies, its Comintern, remain fundamentally counter-revolutionary. Its "rousing of the people" in such countries as Rumania, Yugoslavia, Iran, Irak, India and elsewhere has essentially the same significance as Hitler's or Mussolini's "rousing of the people" ("support" of the nationalist movement) in Great Britain's Arabian empire. (In passing, it does not follow that the independent revolutionary movements in these countries should refuse to accept and use Stalinist aid for their own purposes, just as the Irish in 1916 accepted and used German aid; but in return they need not facilitate the victory of Stalinism and the Red Army!) Whatever revolutionary struggle is developed by the masses in these countries will be crushed by the Stalinist counter-revolution, if it intervenes, and the peoples will be brought under the oppressive domination of the reactionary bureaucracy and its imperialist ambitions. The service which the "new turn" of the C.I. is doing to the Berlin-Moscow axis as a whole (more specifically, to German imperialism), is not the main objective of the "new turn." It is calculated to serve the expansionist interests of the independent (i.e., semi-independent) Stalinist bureaucracy. It is in this light that the "turn" must be explained to the masses so that their revolutionary interests may be properly safeguarded.

2. "We were and remain against the seizures of new territories by the Kremlin." As already mentioned above, one of the theorists of the Cannon group has explained that "Trotsky is merely restating here the classic Marxist position on self-determination." In other words, the seizure of new territories (Western Galicia, Estonia, Finland, etc.) is a violation of the right of self-determination and that is why "we were and remain against" such seizures.

In the past, however, we did not object to the violation of this right provided it was in the interests of the defense of the Soviet Union. "No Marxist who does not break with the fundamentals of Marxism and socialism," wrote Lenin in 1918, "will be able to deny that the interests of socialism stand higher than the interests of the self-determination of a people." Quite correct. Self-determination is a bourgeois-democratic right. We defend this right with the utmost intransigence against reactionary bourgeois or imperialist interests and "rights," and in the interests of democracy and socialism. But in those cases where this bourgeois-democratic right conflicts with proletarian-internationalist rights (with socialist interests), and only in those cases, we subordinate the former to the latter and are even prepared to violate the former in the interests of the latter. To quote Lenin again: "If the concrete situation has shaped up so that the existence of the socialist

republic is imperilled at the present moment because of the violation of the right of self-determination of certain peoples (Poland, Lithuania and Courland, etc.), then the interests of the maintenance of the socialist republic naturally stand higher."

According to this entirely correct Marxian point of view, the formula of Trotsky should read: "We are against the seizure of new territories by the Kremlin because it violates the right of self-determination. But we are for the violation even of this (democratic) right if it serves the (socialist) right of the defense of the Soviet Union." But in that case, it would be necessary to say one of two things, and not both: (a) What is involved in the present case is the defense of the Soviet Union, and the violation of the right of self-determination in Poland, Estonia and Finland is either of secondary or no importance; consequently, the formula—"We are against the seizure of new territories by the Kremlin"—has no concrete meaning or purpose now; or (b) What is involved in the present case is not the defense of the Soviet Union; consequently, we are for the right of self-determination in Poland, Estonia and Finland and against Stalin's seizure of these territories, and Trotsky's formula does have concrete meaning and purpose. In the first case, we would have to say that despite the violation of the right of self-determination, it is necessary to give material and military aid to those who are violating the right; in the second case, we would have to say that because we are for this right, we do not give material and military aid to those who are violating it. In other words, in the concrete case, it is impossible to maintain and support both.

However, it is necessary to judge not by what we believe Trotsky's formula and Wright's interpretation of it should read, but by the way in which it does read. If we do not subordinate the (basically democratic) right of self-determination (if we do not support the seizure of new territories by Stalin) to support of the Red Army in the present war, it can only be because it is not a (basically socialist) war for the defense of the Soviet Union. It is, as the Minority has emphasized, a reactionary war for the realization of the Stalinist bureaucracy's aims at imperialist expansion. To the interests of that war, of those aims—we cannot and must not subordinate the right of self-determination.

It need hardly be added that the Finnish bourgeoisie, which is conducting the war against the Soviet army, is not fighting to maintain Finland's right to national independence, any more than the Servian bourgeoisie was fighting Austro-Hungary in 1914 for Servia's right to national independence. In both cases, the national independence of the country is a myth; in the latter the country was a vassal of Russian imperialism and in the former the country and its bourgeoisie are vassals of Anglo-French imperialism. The struggle for the genuine national independence of Finland can be conducted only by the independent Finnish proletarian struggle for power, since the struggle for national independence in that country is inseparably bound up with the working class struggle for a socialist Finland. Hence, the main enemy of the Finnish masses remains at home—the Finnish bourgeoisie.

The problem of the Ukraine may be understood and posed more clearly in the light of our standpoint. The Fourth International favors the right of self-determination for the masses of the present Soviet Ukraine, for their separation from the Soviet Union, and their unification with other Ukrainian peoples into a United Independent Soviet Ukraine. Why? Because the Stalinist regime oppresses the Ukrainian masses. But it oppresses the Russian (Great Russian) masses, too. That is true, our opponents will reply, and that is why we raise the slogan of the political revolution against the Kremlin bureaucracy, a slogan applying to the whole of the Soviet Union. But the point is that for the Ukraine we have added to the slogan of political revolution the slogan of separation, precisely because in the Ukraine Stalinist oppression is also national oppression. What is the character of this national oppression? Is it sufficient to say that it is "bureaucratic"? But that would not distinguish it from Stalinist oppression in the rest of the Soviet Union which is—like oppression in general—also bureaucratic. For the distinguishing slogan in the Ukraine a distinguishing reason must be found. It lies in the fact that the Stalinist Muscovite bureaucracy, with its Great Russian nationalist outlook (detected by Lenin in Stalin years ago!) and ideology, with

its contempt for and repression of Ukrainian national culture, with its exploitation of the resources of the country mainly in the interests of the Kremlin parasites, oppresses the Ukraine in an imperialist manner. It is not accidental that the Fourth International has raised for the Soviet Ukrainian masses the same slogan that it raises for the Ukrainian masses who are imperialistically oppressed in countries like Hungary, Rumania, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

3. The analysis of Stalinist imperialism makes it possible for the revolutionary vanguard more easily and clearly "to distinguish where and when the Red Army is acting solely as an instrument of the Bonapartist reaction and where it defends the social basis of the U.S.S.R." (Trotsky.)

But your position, it may be said, completely excludes any defense of the Soviet Union under Stalinist domination, for how can we defend imperialists? Not at all. The social-imperialist labor bureaucracy can lead the working class into a reactionary, imperialist war and (as in Czechoslovakia, for example) we are not defensists even when the attacking imperialism threatens to destroy not only the native bourgeoisie but also the labor bureaucrats and even the unions. The same labor bureaucracy may, however, be compelled out of self-interest to defend the organized labor movement with arms in hands in a civil war against fascism (Austria, 1934), in which case we are defensists. We were not defensists while Kerensky was continuing the imperialist war in 1917 (although Lenin, taking into account the situation at the military front and the moods of the masses, did withdraw the slogan of transforming the imperialist war into a civil war as a slogan for action). Yet when the same imperialist Kerensky, after having conspired with Kornilov, was compelled to take up arms against the semi-fascist, semi-Bonapartist Kornilov, the Bolsheviks "defended" Kerensky. We were not defensists under the bourgeois imperialist democracy of Spain when it was controlled by the first People's Front government. But when the same imperialist regime was compelled to defend itself with arms in hand from a fascist attack—in a war which we characterized fundamentally as a war between democracy and fascism—we became defensists even under such swine as Negrin.

Similarly in the case of the Soviet Union. When the social-imperialist bureaucracy is conducting a reactionary war of expansion, we are not defensists; we subordinate the defense of the Soviet Union to the intensification of the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the Stalinist regime, we are revolutionary defeatists. When the same bureaucracy is compelled to conduct a war to defend the Soviet Union from imperialism, and therefore to deal (willy-nilly) a blow at the latter's hope to restore itself to new vigor by dismembering the Soviet Union, it is playing an objectively progressive role and we are for the defense of the Soviet Union; that is, retaining our full political independence, we give material and military aid to the Soviet's armed forces in spite of their domination by the bureaucracy.

The slogan of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" as understood and interpreted by the Fourth International up to now, as still understood and interpreted by the Cannon group, makes it impossible for us to adopt officially the position which has been elaborated in this document. Our past slogan must be revised.

Defense of the Soviet Union when it is conducting a reactionary war, a war solely or predominantly in the interests of the bureaucracy and its imperialist expansionism, a war against the interests of the world revolution? NO!

Defense of the Soviet Union when it is conducting a progressive war against imperialism, in the interests of the world revolution? YES!

* * *

The Minority will propose to the national convention of the party a brief political resolution in which the position presented in this document will be contained in succinct thesis form.

Minority of the Political Committee
ABERN
BERN
BURNHAM
SHACHTMAN

Dec. 26, 1939.