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From A Scratch—To the Danger of Gangrene

The Meaning of the Present Discussion

by Leon Trotsky

The discussion is developing in accordance with its own internal logic. Each camp, corresponding to its social character and political physiognomy, seeks to strike at those points where its opponent is weakest and most vulnerable. It is precisely this that determines the course of the discussion and not a priori plans of the leaders of the opposition. It is belated and sterile to lament now over the flaring up of the discussion. It is necessary only to keep a sharp eye on the role played by Stalinist provocateurs who are unquestionably in the party and who are under orders to poison the atmosphere of the discussion and to head the ideological struggle towards split. It is not so very difficult to recognize these gentlemen; their zeal is excessive and of course artificial; they replace ideas and arguments with gossip and slander. They must be exposed and thrown out through the joint efforts of both factions. But the principled struggle must be carried through to the end, that is, to serious clarification of the more important questions that have been posed. It is necessary to so utilize the discussion that it raises the theoretical level of the party.

A considerable proportion of the membership of the American section as well as our entire young International, came to us either from the Comintern in its period of decline or from the Second International. These are bad schools. The discussion has revealed that wide circles of the party lack a sound theoretical education. It is sufficient, for instance to refer to the circumstance that the New York local of the party did not respond with a vigorous defensive reflex to the attempts at lightminded revision of Marxist doctrine and program but on the contrary gave support in the majority to the revisionists. This is unfortunate but remediable to the degree that our American section and the entire International consists of honest individuals sincerely seeking their way to the revolutionary road. They have the desire and the will to learn. But there is no time to lose. It is precisely the party's penetration into the trade unions, and into the workers' milieu in general that demands heightening the theoretical qualification of our cadres. I do not mean by cadres the "apparatus" but the party as a whole. Every party member should and must consider himself an officer in the proletarian army.

"Since when have you become specialists in the question of philosophy?" the oppositionists now ironically ask the majority representatives. Irony here is completely out of place. Scientific socialism is the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process; namely, the instinctive and elemental drive of the proletariat to reconstruct society on communist beginnings. These organic tendencies in the psychology of workers spring to life with utmost rapidity today in the epoch of crises and wars. The discussion has revealed beyond all question a clash in the party between a petty-bourgeois tendency and a proletarian tendency. The petty-bourgeois tendency reveals its confusion in its attempt to reduce the program of the party to the small coin of "concrete" questions. The proletarian tendency on the contrary strives to correlate all the partial questions into theoretical unity. At stake at the present time is not the extent to which individual members of the majority consciously apply the dialectic method. What is important is the fact that the majority as a whole pushes toward the proletarian posing of the questions and by very reason of this tends to assimilate the dialectic which is the "algebra of the revolution." The oppositionists, I am informed, greet with bursts of laughter the very mention of "dialectics." In vain. This unworthy method will not help. The dialectic of the historic process has more than once cruelly punished those who tried to jeer at it.

Comrade Shachtman's latest article, "An Open Letter to Leon Trotsky," is an alarming symptom. It reveals that Shachtman refuses to learn from the discussion and persists instead in deepening his mistakes, exploiting thereby not only the inadequate theoretical level of the party, but also the specific prejudices of its petty-bourgeois wing. Everybody is aware of the facility with which Shachtman is able to weave various historical episodes around one or another axis. This ability makes Shachtman a talented journalist. Unfortunately, this by itself is not enough. The main question

is what axis to select. Shachtman is absorbed always by the reflection of politics in literature and in the press. He lacks interest in the actual processes of the class struggle, the life of the masses, the inter-relationships between the different layers within the working class itself, etc. I have read not a few excellent and even brilliant articles by Shachtman but I have never seen a single commentary of his which actually probed into the life of the American working class or its vanguard.

A qualification must be made to this extent—that not only Shachtman's personal failing is embodied therein, but the fate of a whole revolutionary generation which because of a special conjuncture of historical conditions grew up outside the labor movement. More than once in the past I have had occasion to speak and write about the danger of these valuable elements degenerating despite their devotion to the revolution. What was an inescapable characteristic of adolescence in its day has become a weakness. Weakness invites disease. If neglected, the disease can become fatal. To escape this danger it is necessary to open a new chapter consciously in the development of the party. The propagandists and journalists of the Fourth International must begin a new chapter in their own consciousness. It is necessary to re-arm. It is necessary to make an about-face on one's own axis: to turn one's back to the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, and to face towards the workers.

To view as the cause of the present party crisis—the conservatism of its worker section; to seek a solution to the crisis through the victory of the petty-bourgeois bloc—it would be difficult to conceive a mistake more dangerous to the party. As a matter of fact, the gist of the present crisis consists in the conservatism of the petty-bourgeois elements who have passed through a purely propagandistic school and who have not yet found a pathway to the road of the class struggle. The present crisis is the final battle of these elements for self-preservation. Every oppositionist as an individual can, if he firmly desires, find a worthy place for himself in the revolutionary movement. As a faction they are doomed. In the struggle that is developing, Shachtman is not in the camp where he ought to be. As always in such cases, his strong sides have receded into the background while his weak traits on the other hand have assumed an especially finished expression. His "Open Letter" represents, so to speak, a crystallization of his weak traits.

Shachtman has left out a trifle: his class position. Hence his extraordinary zigzags, his improvisations and leaps. He replaces class analysis with disconnected historical anecdotes for the sole purpose of covering up his own shift, for camouflaging the contradiction between his yesterday and today. This is Shachtman's procedure with the history of Marxism, the history of his own party, and the history of the Russian Opposition. In carrying this out, he heaps mistakes upon mistakes. All the historical analogies to which he resorts, speak, as we shall see, against him.

It is much more difficult to correct mistakes than to commit them. I must ask patience from the reader in following with me step by step all the zigzags of Shachtman's mental operations. For my part I promise not to confine myself merely to exposing mistakes and contradictions, but to counterpose from beginning to end the proletarian position against the petty-bourgeois, the Marxist position against the eclectic. In this way all of us perhaps may learn something from the discussion.

"Precedents"

"How did we, irreconcilable revolutionists, so suddenly become a petty-bourgeois tendency?" Shachtman demands indignantly. Where are the proofs? "Wherein (has) this tendency manifested itself in the last year (!) or two among the representative spokesmen of the Minority?" (*Internal Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 7, Jan. 1940, p. 11). Why didn't we yield in the past to the influence of the petty-bourgeois democracy? Why during the Spanish Civil War did we . . . and so forth and so on. This is Shachtman's trump argument in beginning his polemic against me and the one on

which he plays variations in all keys, apparently investing it with exceptional importance. It does not so much as enter Shachtman's mind that I can turn this very argument against him.

The opposition document, "War and Bureaucratic Conservatism," concedes that Trotsky is right nine times out of ten, perhaps ninety-nine times out of a hundred. I understand only too well the qualified and extremely magnanimous character of this concession. The proportion of my mistakes is in reality considerably greater. How explain then the fact that two or three weeks after this document was written, Shachtman suddenly decided that Trotsky:

(a) Is incapable of a critical attitude towards information supplied him although one of his informants for ten years has been Shachtman himself.

(b) Is incapable of distinguishing a proletarian tendency from a petty-bourgeois tendency—a Bolshevik tendency from a Menshevik tendency.

(c) Is champion of the absurd conception of "bureaucratic revolution" in place of revolution by the masses.

(d) Is incapable of working out a correct answer to concrete questions in Poland, Finland, etc.

(e) Is manifesting a tendency to capitulate to Stalinism.

(f) Is unable to comprehend the meaning of democratic centralism—and so on *ad infinitum*.

In a word, during the space of two or three weeks Shachtman has discovered that I make mistakes ninety-nine times out of a hundred, especially where Shachtman himself happens to become involved. It occurs to me that the latest percentage also suffers from slight exaggeration—but this time in the opposite direction. In any event Shachtman discovered my tendency to replace revolution by the masses with "bureaucratic revolution" far more abruptly than I discovered his petty-bourgeois deviation.

Comrade Shachtman invites me to present proof of the existence of a "petty-bourgeois tendency" in the party during the past year; or even two-three years. Shachtman is completely justified in not wishing to refer to the more distant past. But in accordance with Shachtman's invitation, I shall confine myself to the last three years. Please pay attention. To the rhetorical questions of my unsparing critic I shall reply with a few exact documents.

I.

On May 25, 1937, I wrote to New York concerning the policy of the Bolshevik-Leninist faction in the Socialist party:

"... I must cite two recent documents: (a) the private letter of 'Max' about the convention, and (b) Shachtman's article, 'Towards a Revolutionary Socialist Party.' The title of this article alone characterizes a false perspective. It seems to me established by the developments, including the last convention, that the party is evolving, not into a 'revolutionary' party, but into a kind of I.L.P., that is, a miserable centrist political abortion without any perspective.

"The affirmation that the American Socialist Party is now 'closer to the position of revolutionary Marxism than any party of the Second or Third Internationals' is an absolutely unmerited compliment: the American Socialist Party is only more backward than the analogous formations in Europe—the P.O.U.M., I.L.P., S.A.P., etc., ... Our duty is to unmask this negative advantage of Norman Thomas and Co., and not to speak about the 'superiority (of the war resolution) over any resolution ever adopted before by the party ...' This is a purely literary appreciation, because every resolution must be taken in connection with historical events, with the political situation and its imperative needs ..."

In both of the documents mentioned in the above letter, Shachtman revealed excessive adaptability towards the left wing of the petty-bourgeois democrats—political mimicry—a very dangerous symptom in a revolutionary politician! It is extremely important to take note of his high appraisal of the "radical" position of Norman Thomas in relation to war ... in Europe. Opportunists, as is well known, tend to all the greater radicalism the further removed they are from events. With this law in mind it is not difficult to appraise at its true value the fact that Shachtman and his allies accuse us of a tendency to "capitulate to Stalinism." Alas, sitting in the Bronx, it is much easier to display irreconcilability towards the Kremlin than towards the American petty-bourgeoisie.

II.

To believe Comrade Shachtman, I dragged the question of the class composition of the factions into the dispute by the hair. Here too, let us refer to the recent past.

On October 3, 1937, I wrote to New York:

"I have remarked hundreds of times that the worker who remains unnoticed in the 'normal' conditions of party life reveals remarkable qualities in a change of the situation when general formulas and fluent pens are not sufficient, where acquaintance with the life of workers and practical capacities are necessary. Under such conditions a gifted worker reveals a sureness of himself and reveals also his general political capabilities.

"Predominance in the organization of intellectuals is inevitable in the first period of the development of the organization. It is at the same time a big handicap to the political education of the more gifted workers. ... It is absolutely necessary at the next convention to introduce in the local and central committees as many workers as possible. To a worker, activity in the leading party body is at the same time a high political school. ...

"The difficulty is that in every organization there are traditional committee members and that different secondary, factional, and personal considerations play a too great role in the composition of the list of candidates."

I have never met either attention or interest from Comrade Shachtman in questions of this kind.

III.

To believe Comrade Shachtman, I injected the question of Comrade Abern's faction as a concentration of petty-bourgeois individuals artificially and without any basis in fact. Yet on October 10, 1937, at a time when Shachtman marched shoulder to shoulder with Cannon and it was considered officially that Abern had no faction, I wrote to Cannon:

"The party has only a minority of genuine factory workers. ... The non-proletarian elements represent a very necessary yeast, and I believe that we can be proud of the good quality of these elements. ... But. ... Our party can be inundated by non-proletarian elements and can even lose its revolutionary character. The task is naturally not to prevent the influx of intellectuals by artificial methods, ... but to orientate practically all the organization towards the factories, the strikes, the unions. ...

"A concrete example: we cannot devote enough or equal forces to all the factories. Our local organization can choose for its activity in the next period one, two, or three factories in its area and concentrate all its forces upon these factories. If we have in one of them two or three workers we can create a special help commission of five non-workers with the purpose of enlarging our influence in these factories.

"The same can be done among the trade unions. We cannot introduce non-worker members in workers' unions. But we can with success build up help commissions for oral and literary action in connection with our comrades in the union. The unbreakable conditions should be: **not to command the workers but only to help them**, to give them suggestions, to arm them with the facts, ideas, factory papers, special leaflets, and so on.

"Such collaboration would have a tremendous educational importance from one side for the worker comrades, from the other side for the non-workers who need a solid re-education.

"You have for example an important number of Jewish non-worker elements in your ranks. They can be a very valuable yeast if the party succeeds by and by in extracting them from a closed milieu and ties them to the factory workers by daily activity. I believe such an orientation would also assure a more healthy atmosphere inside the party. ...

"One general rule we can establish immediately: a party member who doesn't win during three or six months a new worker for the party is not a good party member.

"If we established seriously such a general orientation and if we verified every week the practical results, we will avoid a great danger; namely, that the intellectuals and white collar workers might suppress the worker minority, condemn it to silence, transform the party into a very intelligent discussion club but absolutely not habitable for workers.

"The same rules should be in a corresponding form elaborated for the working and recruiting of the youth organization, otherwise we run the danger of educating good young elements into revolutionary dilettantes and not revolutionary fighters."

From this letter it is obvious I trust that I did not mention the danger of a petty-bourgeois deviation the day following the Stalin-Hitler pact or the day following the dismemberment of Poland, but brought it forward persistently two years ago and more. Furthermore, as I then pointed out, bearing in mind primarily the "non-existent" Abern faction, it was absolutely requisite in order to cleanse the atmosphere of the party, that the Jewish petty-bourgeois elements of the New York local be shifted from their habitual

conservative milieu and dissolved in the real labor movement. It is precisely because of this that the above letter (not the first of its kind), written more than two years before the present discussion began is of far greater weight as evidence than all the writings of the opposition leaders on the motives which impelled me to come out in defense of the "Cannon clique."

IV.

Shachtman's inclination to yield to petty-bourgeois influence, especially the academic and literary, has never been a secret to me. During the time of the Dewey Commission I wrote, on October 14, 1937, to Cannon, Shachtman, and Novack:

"... I insisted upon the necessity to surround the Committee by delegates of workers' groups in order to create channels from the Committee in the masses. . . . Comrades Novack, Shachtman and others declared themselves in agreement with me on this point. Together we analyzed the practical possibilities to realize this plan. . . . But later, in spite of repeated questions from me, I never could have information about the matter and only accidentally I heard that Comrade Shachtman was opposed to it. Why? I don't know."

Shachtman never did divulge his reasons to me. In my letter I expressed myself with the utmost diplomacy but I did not have the slightest doubt that while agreeing with me in words Shachtman in reality was afraid of wounding the excessive political sensibilities of our temporary liberal allies: in this direction Shachtman demonstrates exceptional "delicacy."

V.

On April 15, 1938, I wrote to New York:

"I am a bit astonished about the kind of publicity given to Eastman's letter in the *New International*. The publication of the letter is all right, but the prominence given it on the cover, combined with the silence about Eastman's article in Harpers seems to me a bit compromising for the *New International*. Many people will interpret this fact as our willingness to close our eyes on principles when friendship is concerned."

VI.

On June 1, 1938 I wrote Comrade Shachtman:

"It is difficult to understand here why you are so tolerant and even friendly towards Mr. Eugene Lyons. He speaks it seems at your banquets; at the same time he speaks at the banquets of the White Guards."

This letter continued the struggle for a more independent and resolute policy towards the so-called "liberals," who, while waging a struggle against the revolution, wish to maintain "friendly relations" with the proletariat, for this doubles their market value in the eyes of bourgeois public opinion.

VII.

On October 6, 1938, almost a year before the discussion began I wrote about the necessity of our party press turning its face decisively toward the workers:

"Very important in this respect is the attitude of the *Socialist Appeal*. It is undoubtedly a very good Marxist paper, but it is not a genuine instrument of political action. . . . I tried to interest the editorial board of the *Socialist Appeal* in this question, but without success."

A note of complaint is evident in these words. And it is not accidental. Comrade Shachtman as has been mentioned already displays far more interest in isolated literary episodes of long-ago-concluded struggles than in the social composition of his own party or the readers of his own paper.

VIII.

On January 20, 1939, in a letter which I have already cited in connection with dialectic materialism, I once again touched on the question of Comrade Shachtman's gravitation towards the milieu of the petty-bourgeois literary fraternity.

"I cannot understand why the *Socialist Appeal* is almost neglecting the Stalinist Party. This party now represents a mass of contradictions. Splits are inevitable. The next important acquisitions will surely come from the Stalinist Party. Our political attention should be concentrated on it. We should follow the development of its contradictions day by day and hour by hour. Someone on the staff ought to devote the bulk of his time to the Stalinists' ideas and actions. We could provoke a discussion, and if possible, publish the letters of hesitating Stalinists.

"It would be a thousand times more important than inviting Eastman, Lyons and the others to present their individual sweatings. I was wondering a bit at why you gave place to Eastman's

last insignificant and arrogant article. . . . But I am absolutely perplexed that, you, personally, invite these people to besmirch the not so numerous pages of the *New International*. The perpetuation of this polemic can interest some petty bourgeois intellectuals, but not the revolutionary elements.

"It is my firm conviction that a certain reorganization of the *New International* and the *Socialist Appeal* is necessary: more distance from Eastman, Lyons and so on; and nearer the workers, and in this sense, to the Stalinist Party."

Recent events have demonstrated, sad to say, that Shachtman did not turn away from Eastman and Co. but on the contrary drew closer to them.

IX.

On May 27, 1939, I again wrote concerning the character of the *Socialist Appeal* in connection with the social composition of the party:

"From the minutes I see that you are having difficulty with the *Socialist Appeal*. The paper is very well done from the journalistic point of view; but it is a paper for the workers and not a workers' paper. . . .

"As it is, the paper is divided among various writers, each of whom is very good, but collectively they do not permit the workers to penetrate to the pages of the *Appeal*. Each of them speaks for the workers (and speaks very well) but nobody will hear the workers. In spite of its literary brilliance, to a certain degree the paper becomes a victim of journalistic routine. You do not hear at all how the workers live, fight, clash with the police or drink whiskey. It is very dangerous for the paper as a revolutionary instrument of the party. The task is not to make a paper through the joint forces of a skilled editorial board but to encourage the workers to speak for themselves.

"A radical and courageous change is necessary as a condition of success. . . .

"Of course it is not only a question of the paper, but of the whole course of policy. I continue to be of the opinion that you have too many petty-bourgeois boys and girls who are very good and devoted to the party, but who do not fully realize that their duty is not to discuss among themselves, but to penetrate into the fresh milieu of workers. I repeat my proposition: Every petty-bourgeois member of the party who, during a certain time, let us say three or six months, does not win a worker for the party, should be demoted to the rank of candidate and after another three months expelled from the party. In some cases it might be unjust, but the party as a whole would receive a salutary shock which it needs very much. A very radical change is necessary."

In proposing such Draconian measures as the expulsion of those petty-bourgeois elements incapable of linking themselves to the workers, I had in mind not the "defense" of Cannon's faction but the rescue of the party from degeneration.

X.

Commenting on skeptical voices from the Socialist Workers Party which had reached my ears, I wrote Comrade Cannon on June 16, 1939:

"The pre-war situation, the aggravation of nationalism and so on is a natural hindrance to our development and the profound cause of the depression in our ranks. But it must now be underlined that the more the party is petty-bourgeois in its composition, the more it is dependent upon the changes in the official public opinion. It is a supplementary argument for the necessity for a courageous and active reorientation toward the masses.

"The pessimistic reasonings you mention in your article are, of course, a reflection of the patriotic, nationalistic pressure of the official public opinion. 'If Fascism is victorious in France. . . ' 'If Fascism is victorious in England. . . ' And so on. The victories of Fascism are important, but the death agony of capitalism is more important."

The question of the dependence of the petty-bourgeois wing of the party upon official public opinion consequently was posed several months before the present discussion began and was not at all dragged in artificially in order to discredit the opposition.

* * *

Comrade Shachtman demanded that I furnish "precedents" of petty-bourgeois tendencies among the leaders of the opposition during the past period. I went so far in answering this demand as to single out from the leaders of the opposition Comrade Shachtman himself. I am far from having exhausted the material at my disposal. Two letters—one of Shachtman's, the other mine—which are perhaps still more interesting as "precedents," I

shall cite presently in another connection. Let Shachtman not object that the lapses and mistakes in which the correspondence is concerned likewise can be brought against other comrades, including representatives of the present majority. Possibly. Probably. But Shachtman's name is not repeated in this correspondence accidentally. Where others have committed episodic mistakes, Shachtman has evinced a tendency.

In any event, completely opposite to what Shachtman now claims concerning my alleged "sudden" and "unexpected" appraisals, I am able to produce documents in hand to prove—and I believe have proved—that my article on the "Petty-Bourgeois Opposition" did no more than summarize my correspondence with New York during the last three years. (In reality the past ten.) Shachtman has very demonstratively asked for "precedents." I have given him "precedents." They speak entirely against Shachtman.

The Philosophic Bloc Against Marxism

The opposition circles consider it possible to assert that the question of dialectic materialism was introduced by me only because I lacked an answer to the "concrete" questions of Finland, Latvia, India, Afghanistan, Beluchistan, and so on. This argument, void of all merit in itself, is of interest however in that it characterizes the level of certain individuals in the opposition, their attitude toward theory, and toward elementary ideological loyalty. It would not be amiss, therefore, to refer to the fact that my first serious conversation with Comrades Shachtman and Novack, in the train immediately after my arrival in Mexico in January 1937, was devoted to the necessity of persistently propagating dialectic materialism. After our American section split from the Socialist Party I insisted most strongly on the earliest possible publication of a theoretical organ, having again in mind the need to educate the party, first and foremost its new members, in the spirit of dialectic materialism. In the United States, I wrote at that time, where the bourgeoisie systematically instills vulgar empiricism in the workers, more than anywhere else is it necessary to speed the elevation of the movement to a proper theoretical level. On January 20, 1939, I wrote to Comrade Shachtman concerning his joint article with Comrade Burnham, "Intellectuals in Retreat":

"The section on the dialectic is the greatest blow that, you personally, as the editor of the *New International* could have delivered to Marxist theory . . . Good! We will speak about it publicly."

Thus a year ago I gave open notice in advance to Shachtman that I intended to wage a public struggle against his eclectic tendencies. At that time there was no talk whatever of the coming opposition; in any case furthest from my mind was the supposition that the philosophic bloc against Marxism prepared the ground for a political bloc against the program of the Fourth International.

The character of the differences which have risen to the surface has only confirmed my former fears both in regard to the social composition of the party and in regard to the theoretical education of the cadres. There was nothing that required a change of mind or "artificial" introduction. This is how matters stand in actuality. Let me also add that I feel somewhat abashed over the fact that it is almost necessary to justify coming out in defense of Marxism within one of the sections of the Fourth International!

In his "Open Letter," Shachtman refers particularly to the fact that Comrade Vincent Dunne expressed satisfaction over the article on the intellectuals. But I too praised it: "Many parts are excellent." However, as the Russian proverb puts it, a spoonful of tar can spoil a barrel of honey. It is precisely this spoonful of tar that is involved. The section devoted to dialectic materialism expresses a number of conceptions monstrous from the Marxist standpoint, whose aim it is now clear, was to prepare the ground for a political bloc. In view of the stubbornness with which Shachtman persists that I seized upon the article as a pretext, let me once again quote the central passage in the section of interest to us:

". . . nor has anyone yet demonstrated that agreement or disagreement on the more abstract doctrines of dialectic materialism necessarily affects (!) today's and tomorrow's concrete political issues—and political parties, programs and struggles are based on such concrete issues." (*The New International*, January 1939, p. 7). Isn't this alone sufficient? What is above all astonishing is this formula, unworthy of revolutionists: "Political parties, programs and struggles . . . are based on such concrete issues."

What parties? What programs? What struggles? All parties and all programs are here lumped together. The party of the proletariat is a party unlike all the rest. It is not at all based upon "such concrete issues." In its very foundation it is diametrically opposed to the parties of bourgeois horse-traders and petty-bourgeois rag patchers. Its task is the preparation of a social revolution and the regeneration of mankind on new material and moral foundations. In order not to give way under the pressure of bourgeois public opinion and police repression, the proletarian revolutionist, a leader all the more, requires a clear, far-sighted, completely thought-out world outlook. Only upon the basis of a unified Marxist conception is it possible to correctly approach "concrete" questions.

Precisely here begins Shachtman's betrayal—not a mere mistake as I wished to believe last year; but it is now clear an outright theoretical betrayal. Following in the footsteps of Burnham, Shachtman teaches the young revolutionary party that "no one has yet demonstrated" presumably that dialectic materialism affects the political activity of the party. "No one has yet demonstrated" in other words, that Marxism is of any use in the struggle of the proletariat. The party consequently does not have the least motive for acquiring and defending dialectic materialism. This is nothing else than renunciation of Marxism, of scientific method in general, a wretched capitulation to empiricism. Precisely this constitutes the philosophic bloc of Shachtman with Burnham and through Burnham with the priests of bourgeois "Science." It is precisely this and only this to which I referred in my January 20 letter of last year.

On March 5, Shachtman replied: "I have reread the January article of Burnham and Shachtman to which you referred, and while in the light of which you have written I might have proposed a different formulation here (!) and there (!) if the article were to be done over again, I cannot agree with the substance of your criticism."

This reply as is always the case with Shachtman in a serious situation, in reality expresses nothing whatsoever; but it still gives the impression that Shachtman has left a bridge open for retreat. Today, seized with factional frenzy, he promises to "do it again and again tomorrow." Do what? Capitulate to bourgeois "Science"? Renounce Marxism?

Shachtman explains at length to me (we shall see presently with what foundation) the utility of this or that political bloc. I am speaking about the deadliness of theoretical betrayal. A bloc can be justified or not depending upon its content and the circumstances. Theoretical betrayal cannot be justified by any bloc. Shachtman refers to the fact that his article is of purely political character. I do not speak of the article but of that section which renounces Marxism. If a text book on physics contained only two lines on God as the first cause it would be my right to conclude that the author is an obscurantist.

Shachtman does not reply to the accusation but tries to distract attention by turning to irrelevant matters. "Wherein does what you call my 'bloc with Burnham in the sphere of philosophy' differ," he asks, "from Lenin's bloc with Bogdanov? Why was the latter principled and ours unprincipled? I should be very much interested to know the answer to this question." I shall deal presently with the political difference, or rather the political polar opposite between the two blocs. We are here interested in the question of Marxist method. Wherein is the difference you ask? In this, that Lenin never declared for Bogdanov's profit that dialectic materialism is superfluous in solving "concrete political questions." In this, that Lenin never theoretically confounded the Bolshevik party with parties in general. He was organically incapable of uttering such abominations. And not he alone but not a single one of the serious Bolsheviks. That is the difference. Do you understand? Shachtman sarcastically promised me that he would be "interested" in a clear answer. The answer I trust has been given. I don't demand the "interest."

The Abstract and the Concrete; Economics and Politics

The most lamentable section of Shachtman's lamentable opus is the chapter, "The State and the Character of the War." "What then is our position?" asks the author. "Simply this: It is impossible to deduce directly our policy towards a specific war from an abstract characterization of the class character of the state involved in the war, more particularly, from the property forms prevailing in that state. Our policy must flow from a concrete examination of the character of the war in relation to the interests

of the international socialist revolution." (Loc. Cit. p. 13. My emphasis.) What a muddle! What a tangle of sophistry! If it is impossible to deduce our policy directly from the class character of a state, then why can't this be done non-directly? Why must the analysis of the character of the state be abstract whereas the analysis of the character of the war is concrete? Formally speaking, one can say with equal, in fact with much more right, that our policy in relation to the U.S.S.R. can be deduced not from an abstract characterization of war as "imperialist," but only from a concrete analysis of the character of the state in the given historical situation. The fundamental sophistry upon which Shachtman constructs everything else is simple enough: Inasmuch as the economic basis determines events in the super-structure not immediately; inasmuch as the mere class characterization of the state is not enough to solve the practical tasks, therefore . . . therefore we can get along without examining economics and the class nature of the state; by replacing them, as Shachtman phrases it in his journalistic jargon with the "realities of living events" (Loc. Cit. p. 14).

The very same artifice circulated by Shachtman to justify his philosophic bloc with Burnham (dialectic materialism determines our politics not immediately, consequently . . . it does not in general affect the "concrete political tasks"), is repeated here word for word in relation to Marxist sociology: Inasmuch as property forms determine the policy of a state not immediately it is possible therefore to throw Marxist sociology overboard in general in determining "concrete political tasks."

But why stop there? Since the law of labor value determines prices not "directly" and not "immediately"; since the laws of natural selection determine not "directly" and not "immediately" the birth of a suckling pig; since the laws of gravity determine not "directly" and not "immediately" the tumble of a drunken policeman down a flight of stairs, therefore . . . therefore let us leave Marx, Darwin, Newton, and all the other lovers of "abstractions" to collect dust on a shelf. This is nothing less than the solemn burial of science, for after all, the entire course of the development of science proceeds from "direct" and "immediate" causes to the more remote and profound ones, from multiple varieties and kaleidoscopic events—to the unity of the driving forces.

The law of labor value determines prices not "immediately," but it nevertheless does determine them. Such "concrete" phenomena as the bankruptcy of the New Deal find their explanation in the final analysis in the "abstract" law of value. Roosevelt does not know this, but a Marxist dare not proceed without knowing it. Not immediately but through a whole series of intermediate factors and their reciprocal interaction, property forms determine not only politics but also morality. A proletarian politician seeking to ignore the class nature of the state would invariably end up like the policeman who ignores the laws of gravitation; that is, by smashing his nose.

Shachtman obviously does not take into account the distinction between the abstract and the concrete. Striving toward concreteness, our mind operates with abstractions. Even "this," "given," "concrete," dog is an abstraction because it proceeds to change, for example, by dropping its tail the "moment" we point a finger at it. Concreteness is a relative concept and not an absolute one: What is concrete in one case turns out to be abstract in another: that is, insufficiently defined for a given purpose. In order to obtain a concept "concrete" enough for a given need it is necessary to correlate several abstractions into one—just as in reproducing a segment of life upon the screen, which is a picture in movement, it is necessary to combine a number of still photographs.

The concrete is a combination of abstractions—not an arbitrary or subjective combination but one that corresponds to the laws of the movement of a given phenomenon.

"The interests of the international socialist revolution," to which Shachtman appeals against the class nature of the state, represent in this given instance the vaguest of all abstractions. After all, the question which occupies us is precisely this, in what concrete way can we further the interests of the revolution? Nor would it be amiss to remember, too, that the task of the socialist revolution is to create a workers' state. Before talking about the socialist revolution it is necessary consequently to learn how to distinguish between such "abstractions" as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the capitalist state and the workers' state.

Shachtman indeed squanders his own time and that of others in proving that nationalized property does not determine "in and of itself," "automatically," "directly," "immediately" the policies of the Kremlin. On the question as to how the economic "base" determines the political, juridical, philosophical, artistic, and so

on "super-structure" there exists a rich Marxist literature. The opinion that economics presumably determines directly and immediately the creativeness of a composer or even the verdict of a judge, represents a hoary caricature of Marxism which the bourgeois professordom of all countries has circulated time out of end to mask their intellectual impotence.*

As for the question which immediately concerns us: The inter-relationship between the social foundations of the Soviet state and the policy of the Kremlin, let me remind the absent-minded Shachtman that for seventeen years we have already been establishing, publicly, the growing contradiction between the foundation laid down by the October Revolution and the tendencies of the state "super-structure." We have followed step by step the increasing independence of the bureaucracy from the Soviet proletariat and the growth of its dependence upon other classes and groups both inside and outside the country. Just what does Shachtman wish to add in this sphere to the analysis already made?

However, although economics determines politics not directly or immediately, but only in the last analysis, nevertheless economics does determine politics. The Marxists affirm precisely this in contrast to the bourgeois professors and their disciples. While analyzing and exposing the growing political independence of the bureaucracy from the proletariat, we have never lost sight of the objective social boundaries of this "independence;" namely, nationalized property supplemented by the monopoly of foreign trade.

It is astonishing! Shachtman continues to support the slogan for a political revolution against the Soviet bureaucracy. Has he ever seriously thought out the meaning of this slogan? If we hold that the social foundations laid down by the October Revolution were "automatically" reflected in the policy of the state, then why would a revolution against the bureaucracy be necessary? If the U.S.S.R., on the other hand, has completely ceased being a workers' state, not a political revolution would be required but a social revolution. Shachtman consequently continues to defend the slogan which follows: (1) from the character of the U.S.S.R. as a workers' state; and (2) from the irreconcilable antagonism between the social foundations of the state and the bureaucracy. But as he repeats this slogan, he tries to undermine its theoretical foundation. Is it perhaps in order to demonstrate once again the independence of his politics from scientific "abstractions"?

Under the guise of waging a struggle against the bourgeois caricature of dialectic materialism, Shachtman throws the doors wide open to historical idealism. Property forms and the class character of the state are a matter of indifference to him in analyzing the policy of a government. The state itself appears to him an animal of indiscriminate sex. Both feet planted firmly on this bed of chicken feathers, Shachtman pompously explains to us—today in the year 1940!—that in addition to the nationalized property there is also the Bonapartist filth and their reactionary politics. How new! Did Shachtman perchance think that he was speaking in a nursery?

Shachtman Tries to Form a Bloc Even With Lenin

To camouflage his failure to understand the essence of the problem of the nature of the Soviet state, Shachtman leaped upon the words of Lenin directed against me on December 30, 1920, during the so-called Trade Union Discussion. "Comrade Trotsky speaks of the workers state. Permit me, this is an abstraction. . . . Our state is in reality not a workers' state but a workers' and peasants' state. . . . Our present state is such that the inclusively-organized proletariat must defend itself, and we must utilize these workers' organizations for the defense of the workers against their state and for the defense of our state by the workers." Pointing to this quotation and hastening to proclaim that I have repeated my "mistake" of 1920, Shachtman in his precipitance failed to notice a major error in the quotation concerning the definition of the nature of the Soviet state. On January 19, Lenin himself wrote the following about his speech of December 30: "I stated, 'our state is in reality not a workers' state but a workers' and peasants' state'. . . . On reading the report of the discussion, I now see that I was wrong. . . . I should have said: 'The workers' state is an abstraction. In reality we have a workers' state with the following peculiar features, (1) it is the peas-

*To young comrades I recommend that they study on this question the works of Engels (*Anti-Duhring*), Plekhanov, and Antonio Labriola.

ants and not the workers who predominate in the population and (2) it is a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations.' From this episode two conclusions follow: Lenin placed such great importance upon the precise sociological definition of the state that he considered it necessary to correct himself in the very heat of a polemic! But Shachtman is so little interested in the class nature of the Soviet state that twenty years later he noticed neither Lenin's mistake nor Lenin's correction!

I shall not dwell here on the question as to just how correctly Lenin aimed his argument against me. I believe he did so incorrectly—there was no difference of opinion between us on the definition of the state. But that is not the question now. The theoretical formulation on the question of the state, made by Lenin in the above-cited quotation—in conjunction with the major correction which he himself introduced a few days later—is absolutely correct. But let us hear what incredible use Shachtman makes of Lenin's definition: "Just as it was possible twenty years ago," he writes, "to speak of the term 'workers' state' as an abstraction, so it is possible to speak of the term 'degenerated workers' state' as an abstraction." (Loc. Cit. p. 14) It is self-evident that Shachtman fails completely to understand Lenin. Twenty years ago the term "workers' state" could not be considered in any way an abstraction in general: that is, something not real or not existing. The definition "workers' state," while correct in and of itself, was inadequate in relation to the particular task; namely, the defense of the workers through their trade unions, and only in this sense was it abstract. However, in relation to the defense of the U.S.S.R. against imperialism this self-same definition was in 1920, just as it still is today, unshakably concrete, making it obligatory for workers to defend the given state.

Shachtman does not agree. He writes: "Just as it was once necessary in connection with the trade union problem to speak concretely of what kind of workers' state exists in the Soviet Union, so it is necessary to establish in connection with the present war, the degree of degeneration of the Soviet state. . . . And the degree of the degeneration of the regime cannot be established by abstract reference to the existence of nationalized property, but only by observing the realities (!) of living (!) events (!)." From this it is completely incomprehensible why in 1920 the question of the character of the U.S.S.R. was brought up in connection with the trade unions, i.e., particular internal questions of the regime, while today it is brought up in connection with the defense of the U.S.S.R., that is, in connection with the entire fate of the state. In the former case the workers' state was counterposed to the workers, in the latter case—to the imperialists. Small wonder that the analogy limps on both legs; what Lenin counterposed, Shachtman identifies.

Nevertheless even if we take Shachtman's words at face value, it follows that the question over which he is concerned is only the degree of the degeneration (of what? a workers' state?); that is, of quantitative differences in the evaluation. Let us grant that Shachtman has worked out (where?) the "degree" more precisely than we have. But in what way can purely quantitative differences in the evaluation of the degeneration of the workers' state affect our decision as to the defense of the U.S.S.R.? It is impossible to make head or tail out of this. As a matter of fact, Shachtman, remaining true to eclecticism; that is, to himself, dragged in the question of "degree" only in an effort to maintain his equilibrium between Abern and Burnham. What is in dispute actually is not at all the degree determined by "the realities of living events" (what a precise, "scientific", "concrete," "experimental" terminology!) but whether these quantitative changes have been transformed into qualitative changes; i.e., whether the U.S.S.R. is still a workers' state, even though degenerated, or whether it has been transformed into a new type of exploitive state.

To this basic question Shachtman has no answer; feels no need for an answer. His argument is merely verbal mimicry of Lenin's words which were spoken in a different connection, which had a different content and included an outright error. Lenin in his corrected version declares: "The given state is not merely a workers' state but a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations." Shachtman declares: "The given state is not merely a degenerated workers' state but. . . ." . . . but? Shachtman has nothing further to say. Both the orator and the audience stare at each other, mouths wide open.

What does "degenerated workers' state" signify in our program? To this question our program responds with a degree of concreteness which is wholly adequate for solving the question of the defense of the U.S.S.R.; namely: (1) Those traits which in 1920 were a "bureaucratic deformation" of the Soviet system have

now become an independent bureaucratic regime which has devalued the Soviets; (2) the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, incompatible with the internal and international tasks of socialism, has introduced and continues to introduce profound deformations in the economic life of the country as well; (3) basically, however, the system of planned economy, on the foundation of state ownership of the means of production, has been preserved and continues to remain a colossal conquest of mankind. The defeat of the U.S.S.R. in a war with imperialism would signify not solely the liquidation of the bureaucratic dictatorship, but of the planned state economy; and the dismemberment of the country into spheres of influence; and a new stabilization of imperialism; and a new weakening of the world proletariat.

From the circumstance that the "bureaucratic" deformation has grown into a regime of bureaucratic autocracy we draw the conclusion that the defense of the workers through their trade unions (which have undergone the self-same degeneration as the state) is today in contrast to 1920 completely unrealistic; it is necessary to overthrow the bureaucracy; this task can be carried out only by creating an illegal Bolshevik party in the U.S.S.R.

From the circumstance that the degeneration of the political system has not yet led to the destruction of planned state economy, we draw the conclusion that it is still the duty of the world proletariat to defend the U.S.S.R. against imperialism and to aid the Soviet proletariat in its struggle against the bureaucracy.

Just what in our definition of the U.S.S.R. does Shachtman find abstract? What concrete amendments does he propose? If the dialectic teaches us that "truth is always concrete" then this law applies with equal force to criticism. It is not enough to label a definition abstract. It is necessary to point out exactly what it lacks. Otherwise criticism itself becomes sterile. Instead of concretizing or changing the definition which he claims is abstract, Shachtman replaces it with a vacuum. That's not enough. A vacuum, even the most pretentious vacuum, must be recognized as the worst of all abstractions—it can be filled with any content. Small wonder that the theoretical vacuum, in displacing the class analysis has sucked in the politics of impressionism and adventurism.

"Concentrated Economics"

Shachtman goes on to quote Lenin's words that "politics is concentrated economics" and that in this sense "politics cannot but take primacy over economics." From Lenin's words Shachtman directs at me the moral that I, if you please, am interested only in "economics" (nationalized means of production) and skip over "politics." This second effort to exploit Lenin is not superior to the first. Shachtman's mistake here assumes truly vast proportions! Lenin meant: When economic processes, tasks, and interests acquire a conscious and generalized ("concentrated") character, they enter the sphere of politics by virtue of this very fact, and constitute the essence of politics. In this sense politics as concentrated economics rises above the day to day atomized, unconscious, and ungeneralized economic activity.

The correctness of politics from the Marxist standpoint is determined precisely to the extent that it profoundly and all-sidedly "concentrates" economics; that is, expresses the progressive tendencies of its development. That is why we base our politics first and foremost upon our analysis of property forms and class relationships. A more detailed and concrete analysis of the factors in the "super-structure" is possible for us only on this theoretical basis. Thus, for example, were we to accuse an opposing faction of "bureaucratic conservatism" we would immediately seek the social, i.e., class roots of this phenomenon. Any other procedure would brand us as "Platonic" Marxists, if not simply noisy mimics.

"Politics is concentrated economics." This proposition one should think applies to the Kremlin too. Or, in exception to the general law, is the policy of the Moscow government not "concentrated economics" but a manifestation of the bureaucracy's free will? Our attempt to reduce the politics of the Kremlin to nationalized economy, refracted through the interests of the bureaucracy, provokes frantic resistance from Shachtman. He takes his guidance in relation to the U.S.S.R. not from the conscious generalization of economics but from "observing the realities of living events"; i.e., from rule of thumb, improvisations, sympathies and antipathies. He counterposes this impressionistic policy to our sociologically grounded policy and accuses us at the same time of . . . ignoring politics. Incredible but true! To be sure, in the final analysis Shachtman's weak-kneed and capricious politics is likewise the "concentrated" expression of economics but, alas, it is the economics of the declassed petty-bourgeoisie.

Comparison With Bourgeois Wars

Shachtman reminds us that bourgeois wars were at one time progressive and that in another period they became reactionary and that therefore it is not enough to give the class definition of a state engaged in war. This proposition does not clarify the question but muddles it. Bourgeois wars could be progressive only at a time when the entire bourgeois regime was progressive; in other words, at a time when bourgeois property in contradistinction to feudal property was a progressive and constructive factor. Bourgeois wars became reactionary when bourgeois property became a brake on development. Does Shachtman wish to say in relation to the U.S.S.R. that the state ownership of the means of production has become a brake upon development and that the extension of this form of property to other countries constitutes economic reaction? Shachtman obviously does not want to say this. He simply does not draw the logical conclusion to his own thoughts.

The example of national bourgeois wars does indeed offer a very instructive lesson, but Shachtman passes it by unconcernedly. Marx and Engels were striving for a unified German republic. In the war of 1870-71 they stood on the side of the Germans despite the fact that the struggle for unification was exploited and distorted by the dynastic parasites.

Shachtman refers to the fact that Marx and Engels immediately turned against Prussia upon the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. But this turn only illustrates our standpoint all the more lucidly. It is impermissible to forget for a moment that what was in question was a war between two bourgeois states. Thus both camps had a common class denominator. To decide which of the two sides was the "lesser evil"—insofar as history generally left any room for choice—was possible only on the basis of supplementary factors. On the German side it was a question of creating a national bourgeois state as an economic and cultural arena. The national state during that period was a progressive historical factor. To that extent Marx and Engels stood on the side of the Germans despite Hohenzollern and his junkers. The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine violated the principle of the national state in regard to France as well as Germany and laid the basis for a war of revenge. Marx and Engels, naturally, turned sharply against Prussia. They did not thereby at all incur the risk of rendering service to an inferior system of economy as against a superior one since in both camps, we repeat, bourgeois relations prevailed. If France had been a workers' state in 1870, then Marx and Engels would have been for France from the very beginning, inasmuch as they—one feels abashed again that this must be mentioned—guided themselves in all their activity by the class criterion.

Today in the old capitalist countries the solving of national tasks is no longer at stake at all. On the contrary mankind is suffering from the contradiction between the productive forces and the too-narrow framework of the national state. Planned economy on the basis of socialized property freed from national boundaries is the task of the international proletariat above all—in Europe. It is precisely this task which is expressed in our slogan, "For the Socialist United States of Europe!" The expropriation of the property owners in Poland as in Finland is a progressive factor in and of itself. The bureaucratic methods of the Kremlin occupy the very same place in this process as did the dynastic methods of Hohenzollern—in the unification of Germany. Whenever we are confronted with the necessity of choosing between the defense of reactionary property forms through reactionary measures and the introduction of progressive property forms through bureaucratic measures, we do not at all place both sides on the same plane, but choose the lesser evil. In this there is no more "capitulation" to Stalinism than there was capitulation to Hohenzollern in the policy of Marx and Engels. It is scarcely necessary to add that the role of Hohenzollern in the war of 1870-71 justified neither the general historical role of the dynasty nor so much as its existence.

Conjunctural Defeatism or Columbus and the Egg

Let us now check up on how Shachtman, aided by a theoretical vacuum, operates with the "realities of living events" in an especially vital question. He writes, "We have never supported the Kremlin's international policy . . . but what is war? War is the continuation of politics by other means. Then why should we support the war which is the continuation of the international policy which we **did not** and do not support?" (Loc. Cit. p. 15) The com-

pleteness of this argument cannot be denied; in the shape of a naked syllogism we are presented here with a rounded-out theory of defeatism. It is as simple as Columbus and the egg! Since we have never supported the Kremlin's international policy, therefore we ought never to support the U.S.S.R. Then why not say it?

We rejected the internal and international policy of the Kremlin prior to the German-Soviet Pact and prior to the invasion of Poland by the Red Army. This means that the "realities of living events" of last year do not have the slightest bearing on the case. If we were defensists in the past in connection with the U.S.S.R., it was only out of inconsistency. Shachtman revises not only the present policy of the Fourth International but also the past. Since we are against Stalin we must therefore be against the U.S.S.R. too. Stalin has long held this opinion. Shachtman has arrived at it only recently. From his rejection of the Kremlin's politics flows complete and indivisible defeatism. Then why not say so!

But Shachtman can't bring himself to say so. In a previous passage he writes: "We said—the Minority continues to say it—that if the imperialists assail the Soviet Union with the aim of crushing the last conquest of the October Revolution and reducing Russia to a bunch of colonies we will support the Soviet Union unconditionally." (Loc. Cit. p. 15) Permit me, permit me, permit me! The Kremlin's international policy is reactionary; the war is the continuation of its reactionary politics; we cannot support a reactionary war. How then does it unexpectedly turn out that if the pernicious imperialists "assail" the U.S.S.R. and if the pernicious imperialists pursue the uncommendable aim of transforming it into a colony, that under these exceptional "conditions," Shachtman will defend the U.S.S.R. . . . "unconditionally"? How does this make sense? Where is the logic? Or has Shachtman, following Burnham's example, also relegated logic to the sphere of religion and other museum exhibits?

The key to this tangle of confusion rests in the fact that the statement, "We have never supported the Kremlin's international policy" is an abstraction. It must be dissected and concretized. In its present foreign as well as domestic policy, the bureaucracy places first and foremost for defense its own parasitic interests. To that extent we wage mortal struggle against it, but in the final analysis, through the interests of the bureaucracy, in a very distorted form the interests of the workers' state are reflected. These interests we defend—with our own methods. Thus we do not at all wage a struggle against the fact that the bureaucracy safeguards (in its own way!) state property, the monopoly of foreign trade, or refuses to pay Czarist debts. Yet in a war between the U.S.S.R. and the capitalist world—independently of the incidents leading up to that war or the "aims" of this or that government—what is involved is the fate of precisely those historical conquests which we defend unconditionally, i.e., despite the reactionary policy of the bureaucracy. The question consequently boils down—in the last and decisive instance—to the class nature of the U.S.S.R.

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

Shachtman, as we have already seen, persistently demands the citation of precedents: When and where in the past have the leaders of the opposition manifested petty-bourgeois opportunism? The reply which I have already given him on this score must be supplemented here with two letters which we sent each other on the question of defensism and methods of defensism in connection

with the events of the Spanish Revolution. On September 18, 1937, Shachtman wrote me:

"... You say, 'If we would have a member in the Cortes he would vote against the military budget of Negrin.' Unless this is a typographical error it seems to us to be a non-sequitur. If, as we all contend, the element of an Imperialist war is not dominant at the present time in the Spanish struggle, and if instead the decisive element is still the struggle between the decaying bourgeois democracy, with all that it involves, on the one side, and Fascism on the other, and further if we are obliged to give military assistance to the struggle against Fascism, we don't see how it would be possible to vote in the Cortes against the military budget. . . . If a Bolshevik-Leninist on the Huesca front were asked by a Socialist comrade why his representative in the Cortes voted against the proposal by Negrin to devote a million pesetas to the purchase of rifles for the front, what would this Bolshevik-Leninist reply? It doesn't seem to us that he would have an effective answer. . . ." (My emphasis).

This letter astounded me. Shachtman was willing to express confidence in the perfidious Negrin government on the purely negative basis that the "element of an imperialist war" was not dominant in Spain.

On September 20, 1937, I replied to Shachtman:

"To vote the military budget of the Negrin government signifies to vote him political confidence. . . . To do it would be a crime. How we explain our vote to the anarchist workers? Very simply: we have not the slightest confidence in the capacity of this government to conduct the war and assure victory. We accuse this government of protecting the rich and starving the poor. This government must be smashed. So long as we are not strong enough to replace it, we are fighting under its command. But on every occasion we express openly our non-confidence in it: it is the only one possibility to mobilize the masses politically against this government and to prepare its overthrow. Any other politics would be a betrayal of the revolution."

The tone of my reply only feebly reflects the . . . amazement which Shachtman's opportunist position produced in me. Isolated mistakes are of course unavoidable but today, two and a half years later, this correspondence is illuminated with new light. Since we defend bourgeois democracy against fascism—Shachtman reasons, we therefore cannot refuse confidence to the bourgeois government. In applying this very theorem to the U.S.S.R. it is transformed into its converse—since we place no confidence in the Kremlin government, we cannot, therefore defend the workers' state. Pseudo-radicalism in this instance too, is only the obverse side of opportunism.

Renunciation of the Class Criterion

Let us return once more to the ABC's. In Marxist sociology the initial point of analysis is the class definition of a given phenomenon, e. g., state, party, philosophic trend, literary school, etc. In most cases, however, the mere class definition is inadequate, for a class consists of different strata, passes through different stages of development, comes under different conditions, is subjected to the influence of other classes. It becomes necessary to bring up these second and third rate factors in order to round out the analysis, and they are taken either partially or completely, depending upon the specific aim. But for a Marxist, analysis is impossible without a class characterization of the phenomenon under consideration.

The skeletal and muscular systems do not exhaust the anatomy of an animal; nevertheless an anatomical treatise which attempted to "abstract" itself from bones and muscles would dangle in midair. War is not an organ but a function of society, i. e., its ruling class. It is impossible to define and study a function without understanding the organ, i. e., the state; it is impossible to gain scientific understanding of the organ without understanding the general structure of the organism, i. e., society. The bones and muscles of society consist of the productive forces and the class (property) relations. Shachtman holds it possible that a function, namely, war, can be studied "concretely" independently of the organ to which it pertains, i. e., the state. Isn't this monstrous?

This fundamental error is supplemented by another equally glaring. After splitting function away from organ, Shachtman in studying the function itself, contrary to all his promises, proceeds not from the abstract to the concrete but on the contrary dissolves the concrete in the abstract. Imperialist war is one of the functions of finance capital, i. e., the bourgeoisie at a certain stage of development resting upon capitalism of a specific struc-

ture, namely, monopoly capital. This definition is sufficiently concrete for our basic political conclusions. But by extending the term imperialist war to cover the Soviet state too, Shachtman cuts the ground away from under his own feet. In order to reach even a superficial justification for applying one and the same designation to the expansion of finance capital and the expansion of the workers' state, Shachtman is compelled to detach himself from the social structure of both states altogether by proclaiming it to be—an abstraction. Thus playing hide and seek with Marxism, Shachtman labels the concrete as abstract and palms off the abstract as concrete!

This outrageous toying with theory is not accidental. Every petty-bourgeois in the United States without exception is ready to call every seizure of territory "imperialist," especially today when the United States does not happen to be occupied with acquiring territories. But if this very same petty-bourgeois is told that the entire foreign policy of finance capital is imperialist regardless of whether it be occupied at the given moment in carrying out an annexation or in "defending" Finland against annexation—then our petty-bourgeois jumps back in pious indignation. Naturally the leaders of the opposition differ considerably from an average petty-bourgeois in their aim and in their political level. But alas they have common roots of thought. A petty-bourgeois invariably seeks to tear political events away from their social foundation, since there is an organic conflict between a class approach to facts and the social position and education of the petty-bourgeoisie.

Once Again: Poland

My remark that the Kremlin with its bureaucratic methods gave an impulse to the socialist revolution in Poland, is converted by Shachtman into an assertion that in my opinion a "bureaucratic revolution" of the proletariat is presumably possible. This is not only incorrect but disloyal. My expression was rigidly limited. It is not the question of "bureaucratic revolution" but only of a bureaucratic impulse. To deny this impulse is to deny reality. The popular masses in Western Ukraine and Byelo Russia, in any event, felt this impulse, understood its meaning, and used it to accomplish a drastic overturn in property relations. A revolutionary party which failed to notice this impulse in time and refused to utilize it would be fit for nothing but the ash can.

This impulse in the direction of socialist revolution was possible only because the bureaucracy of the U.S.S.R. straddles and has its roots in the economy of a workers' state. The revolutionary utilization of this "impulse" by the Ukrainian Byelo-Russians was possible only through the class struggle in the occupied territories and through the power of the example of the October Revolution. Finally, the swift strangulation or semi-strangulation of this revolutionary mass movement was made possible through the isolation of this movement and the might of the Moscow bureaucracy. Whoever failed to understand the dialectic interaction of these three factors: the workers' state, the oppressed masses, and the Bonapartist bureaucracy had best restrain himself from idle talk about events in Poland.

At the elections for the National Assembly of Western Ukraine and Western Byelo-Russia the electoral program, dictated of course by the Kremlin, included three extremely important points: inclusion of both provinces in the Federation of the U.S.S.R.; confiscation of landlords' estates in favor of the peasants; nationalization of large industry and the banks. The Ukrainian democrats, judging from their conduct, deem it a lesser evil to be unified under the rule of a single state. And from the standpoint of the future struggle for independence, they are correct. As for the other two points in the program one would think that there could be no doubt in our midst as to their progressiveness. Seeking to get around reality, namely that nothing else but the social foundations of the U.S.S.R. forced a social revolutionary program upon the Kremlin, Shachtman refers to Lithuania, Esthonia and Latvia where everything has remained as of old. An incredible argument! No one has said that the Soviet bureaucracy always and everywhere either wishes or is able to accomplish the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. We only say that no other government could have accomplished that social overturn which the Kremlin bureaucracy notwithstanding its alliance with Hitler found itself compelled to sanction in Eastern Poland. Failing this, it could not include the territory in the Federation of the U.S.S.R.

Shachtman is aware of the overturn itself. He cannot deny it. He is incapable of explaining it. But he nevertheless attempts to save face. He writes: "In the Polish Ukraine and White Russia, where class exploitation was intensified by national oppression . . .

the peasants began to take over the land themselves, to drive off the landlords who were already half-in-flight." etc. (Loc. Cit. p. 16) The Red Army it turns out had no connection whatever with all this. It came into Poland only as a "a counter-revolutionary force" in order to suppress the movement. But why didn't the workers and peasants in Western Poland seized by Hitler arrange a revolution? Why was it chiefly revolutionists, "democrats," and Jews who fled from there, while in Eastern Poland—it was chiefly the landlords and capitalists who fled? Shachtman lacks the time to think this out—he is in a hurry to explain to me that the conception of "bureaucratic revolution" is absurd, for the emancipation of the workers can only be carried out by the workers themselves. Am I not justified in repeating that Shachtman obviously feels he is standing in a nursery?

In the Parisian organ of the Mensheviks—who, if that is possible, are even more "irreconcilable" in their attitude toward the Kremlin's foreign policy than Shachtman—it is reported that "in the villages—very frequently at the very approach of the Soviet troops (i.e., even prior to their entering a given district, L.T.)—peasant committees sprang up everywhere, the elementary organs of revolutionary peasant self-rule. . . ." The military authorities hastened of course to subordinate these committees to the bureaucratic organs established by them in the urban centers. Nevertheless they were compelled to rest upon the peasant committees since without them it was impossible to carry out the agrarian revolution.

The leader of the Mensheviks, Dan, wrote on October 19: "According to the unanimous testimony of all observers the appearance of the Soviet army and the Soviet bureaucracy provides not only in the territory occupied by them but beyond its confines—an impulse (!!!) to social turmoil and social transformations." The "impulse," it will be observed, was invented not by me but by "the unanimous testimony of all observers" who possessed eyes and ears. Dan goes even further and expresses the supposition that "the waves engendered by this impulse will not only hit Germany powerfully in a comparatively short period of time but also to one degree or another roll on to other states."

Another Menshevik author writes: "However they may have attempted in the Kremlin to avoid anything which might smack of the great revolution, the very fact of the entry of Soviet troops into the territories of Eastern Poland with its long outlived semi-feudal agrarian relations, had to provoke a stormy agrarian movement. With the approach of Soviet troops the peasants began to seize landlords' estates and to form peasant committees." You will observe: With the approach of Soviet troops and not at all with their withdrawal as should follow in accordance with Shachtman's words. I cite the testimony of the Mensheviks because they are very well informed, their sources of information coming through Polish and Jewish emigres friendly to them who have gathered in France, and also because having capitulated to the French bourgeoisie, these gentlemen cannot possibly be suspected of capitulation to Stalinism.

The testimony of the Mensheviks furthermore is confirmed by the reports of the bourgeois press.

"The agrarian revolution in Soviet Poland has had the force of a spontaneous movement. As soon as the report spread that the Red Army had crossed the river Zbrucz the peasants began to share out amongst themselves the landlords' acres. Land was given first to small holders and in this way about thirty percent of agricultural land was expropriated." (N. Y. Times, January 17, 1940.)

Under the guise of a new argument Shachtman hands me my own words to the effect that the expropriation of property owners in Eastern Poland cannot alter our appraisal of the general policies of the Kremlin. Of course it cannot! No one has proposed this. With the aid of the Comintern the Kremlin has disoriented and demoralized the working class so that it has not only facilitated the outbreak of a new imperialist war but has also made extremely difficult the utilization of this war for revolution. Compared with those crimes the social overturn in the two provinces, which was paid for moreover by the enslavement of Poland, is of course of secondary importance and does not alter the general reactionary character of the Kremlin's policy. But upon the initiative of the opposition itself, the question now posed is not one of general policy but of its concrete refraction under specific conditions of time and place. To the peasants of Galicia and Western Byelo-Russia the agrarian overturn was of highest importance. The Fourth International could not have boycotted this overturn on the ground that the initiative was taken by the reactionary bureaucracy. Our outright duty was to participate in the overturn on the side of the workers and peasants and to that extent on the side of the Red

Army. At the same time it was indispensable to warn the masses tirelessly of the generally reactionary character of the Kremlin's policy and of those dangers it bears for the occupied territories. To know how to combine these two tasks or more precisely two sides of one and the same task—just this is Bolshevik politics.

Once Again: Finland

Having revealed such odd perspicacity in understanding the events in Poland, Shachtman descends upon me with redoubled authority in connection with events in Finland. In my article "A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition," I wrote that "the Soviet-Finnish War is apparently beginning to be supplemented by a civil war in which the Red Army finds itself at a given stage in the same camp as the Finnish petty peasants and the workers. . . ." This extremely cautious formula did not meet with the approval of my unsparing judge. My evaluation of events in Poland had already taken him off balance. "I find even less (proof) for your—how shall I put it?—astonishing remarks about Finland," writes Shachtman on page 16 of his "Letter." I am very sorry that Shachtman chooses to become astonished rather than think things out.

In the Baltic states the Kremlin confined its tasks to making strategical gains with the unquestionable calculation that in the future these strategic military bases will permit the sovietization of these former sections of the Czarist empire too. These successes in the Baltic, achieved by diplomatic threat, met with resistance, however, from Finland. To reconcile itself to this resistance would have meant that the Kremlin placed in jeopardy its "prestige" and thereby its successes in Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Thus contrary to its initial plans the Kremlin felt compelled to resort to armed force. From this fact every thinking person posed to himself the following question: Does the Kremlin wish only to frighten the Finnish bourgeoisie and force them to make concessions or must it now go further? To this question naturally there could be no "automatic" answer. It was necessary—in the light of general tendencies—to orient oneself upon concrete symptoms. The leaders of the opposition are incapable of this.

Military operations began on November 30. That very same day the Central Committee of the Finnish Communist Party, undoubtedly located in either Leningrad or Moscow, issued a radio manifesto to the toiling people of Finland. This manifesto proclaimed: "For the second time in the history of Finland the Finnish working class is beginning a struggle against the yoke of the plutocracy. The first experience of the workers and peasants in 1918 terminated in the victory of the capitalists and the landlords. But this time . . . the toiling people must win!" This manifesto alone clearly indicated that not an attempt to scare the bourgeois government of Finland was involved, but a plan to provoke insurrection in the country and to supplement the invasion of the Red Army with civil war.

The declaration of the so-called Peoples' Government published on December 2 states: "In different parts of the country the people have already risen and proclaimed the creation of a democratic republic." This assertion is obviously a fabrication, otherwise the manifesto would have mentioned the places where the attempts at insurrection took place. It is possible, however, that isolated attempts, prepared from without, ended in failure and that precisely because of this it was deemed best not to go into details. In any case, the news concerning "insurrections" constituted a call to insurrection. Moreover, the declaration carried information concerning the formation of "the first Finnish corps which in the course of coming battles will be enlarged by volunteers from the ranks of revolutionary workers and peasants." Whether there were one thousand men in this "corps" or only one hundred, the meaning of the "corps" in determining the policies of the Kremlin was incontestable. At the same time cable dispatches reported the expropriation of large landholders in the border regions. There is not the slightest ground to doubt that this is just what took place during the first advance of the Red Army. But even if these dispatches are considered fabrications, they completely preserve their meaning as a call for an agrarian revolution. Thus I had every justification to declare that "The Soviet-Finnish War is apparently beginning to be supplemented by a civil war." At the beginning of December, true enough, I had at my disposal only a part of these facts. But against the background of the general situation, and I take the liberty to add, with the aid of an understanding of its internal logic, the isolated symptoms enabled me to draw the necessary conclusions concerning the direction of the entire struggle. Without such semi-apriori conclusions one can be a rationalising observer but in no case an active participant in events. But why did the appeal of the "People's Government" fail to bring im-

mediate mass response? For three reasons: First, Finland is dominated completely by a reactionary military machine which is supported not only by the bourgeoisie but by the top layers of the peasantry and the labor bureaucracy; secondly, the policy of the Kremlin succeeded in transforming the Finnish Communist Party into an insignificant factor; thirdly, the regime of the U.S.S.R. is in no way capable of arousing enthusiasm among the Finnish toiling masses. Even in the Ukraine from 1918 to 1920 the peasants responded very slowly to appeals to seize the estates of the landlords because the local Soviet power was still weak and every success of the Whites brought about ruthless punitive expeditions. All the less reason is there for surprise that the Finnish poor peasants delay in responding to an appeal for an agrarian revolution. To set the peasants in motion, serious successes of the Red Army are required. But during the first badly prepared advance the Red Army suffered only failures. Under such conditions there could not even be talk of the peasants rising. It was impossible to expect an independent civil war in Finland at the given stage: My calculations spoke quite precisely of supplementing military operations by measures of civil war. I have in mind—at least until the Finnish army is annihilated—only the occupied territory and the nearby regions. Today on January 17 as I write these lines dispatches from a Finnish source report that one of the border provinces has been invaded by detachments of Finnish emigres and that brother is literally killing brother there. What is this if not an episode in a civil war? In any case there can be no doubt that a new advance of the Red Army into Finland will confirm at every step our general appraisal of the war. Shachtman has neither an analysis of the events nor the hint of a prognosis. He confines himself to noble indignation and for this reason at every step he sinks deeper into the mire.

The appeal of the "Peoples' Government" calls for workers' control. What can this mean! exclaims Shachtman. There is no workers' control in the U.S.S.R.; whence will it come in Finland? Sad to say, Shachtman reveals complete lack of understanding of the situation. In the U.S.S.R. workers' control is a stage long ago completed. From control over the bourgeoisie there they passed to management of nationalized production. From the management of workers—to the command of the bureaucracy. New workers' control would now signify control over the bureaucracy. This cannot be established except as the result of a successful uprising against the bureaucracy. In Finland, workers' control still signifies nothing more than crowding out the native bourgeoisie, whose place the bureaucracy proposes to take. Furthermore one should not think that the Kremlin is so stupid as to attempt ruling Eastern Poland or Finland by means of imported Commissars. Of greatest urgency to the Kremlin is the extraction of a new administrative apparatus from among the toiling population of the occupied areas. This task can be solved only in several stages. The first stage is the peasant committees and the committees of workers' control.*

Shachtman clutches eagerly even at the fact that Kuusinen's program "is, formally, the program of a bourgeois 'democracy.'" Does he mean to say by this that the Kremlin is more interested in establishing bourgeois democracy in Finland than in drawing Finland into the framework of the U.S.S.R.? Shachtman himself doesn't know what he wants to say. In Spain, which Moscow did not prepare for union with the U.S.S.R., it was actually a question of demonstrating the ability of the Kremlin to safeguard bourgeois democracy against proletarian revolution. This task flowed from the interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy in that particular international situation. Today the situation is a different one. The Kremlin is not preparing to demonstrate its usefulness to France, England, and the United States. As its actions have proved, it has

*This article was already written when I read in the New York Times of January 17 the following lines relating to former Eastern Poland: "In industry, drastic acts of expropriation have not yet been carried out on a large scale. The main centers of the banking system, the railway system and a number of large industrial undertakings were State-owned for years before the Russian occupation. In small and medium-sized industries workmen now exercise control over production.

"The industrialists nominally retain a full right of ownership in their own establishments, but they are compelled to submit statements of costs of production, and so on, for the consideration of the workmen's delegates. The latter, jointly, with the employers, fix wages, conditions of work, and a 'just rate of profit' for the industrialist."

Thus we see that "the realities of living events" do not at all submit themselves to the pedantic and lifeless patterns of the leaders of the opposition. Meanwhile our "abstractions" are becoming transformed into flesh and blood.

firmly decided to sovietize Finland—at once or in two stages. The program of the Kuusinen government, even if approached from a "formal" point of view does not differ from the program of the Bolsheviks in November 1917. True enough, Shachtman makes much of the fact that I generally place significance on the manifesto of the "idiot" Kuusinen. However, I shall take the liberty of considering that the "idiot" Kuusinen acting on the ukase of the Kremlin and with the support of the Red Army represents a far more serious political factor than scores of superficial wise-acres who refuse to think through the internal logic (dialectics) of events.

As a result of his remarkable analysis, Shachtman this time openly proposes a defeatist policy in relation to the U.S.S.R., adding (for emergency use) that he does not at all cease to be a "patriot of his class." We are happy to get the information. But the trouble is that Dan, the leader of the Mensheviks, as far back as November 12 wrote that in the event the Soviet Union invaded Finland the world proletariat "must take a definitive defeatist position in relation to this violation." (Sozialisticheski Vestnik, No. 19-20, p. 43) It is necessary to add that throughout the Kerensky regime, Dan was a rabid defensist; he failed to be a defeatist even under the Czar. Only the invasion of Finland by the Red Army has turned Dan into a defeatist. Naturally he does not thereby cease to be "a patriot of his class." What class? This question is not an uninteresting one. So far as the analysis of events is concerned Shachtman disagrees with Dan who is closer to the theater of action and cannot replace facts with fiction; by way of compensation, where the "concrete political conclusions" are concerned, Shachtman has turned out to be a "patriot" of the very same class as Dan. In Marxist sociology this class, if the opposition will permit me, this class is called the petty-bourgeoisie.

The Theory of "Blocs"

To justify his bloc with Burnham and Abern—against the proletarian wing of the party, against the program of the Fourth International, and against the Marxist method—Shachtman has not spared the history of the revolutionary movement which he—according to his own words—studied especially in order to transmit great traditions to the younger generation. The goal itself is of course excellent. But it demands a scientific method. Meanwhile, Shachtman has begun by sacrificing scientific method for the sake of a bloc. His historical examples are arbitrary, not thought out, and downright false.

Not every collaboration is a bloc in the proper sense of the term. By no means infrequent are episodic agreements which are not at all transformed and do not seek to be transformed into a protracted bloc. On the other hand membership in one and the same party can hardly be called a bloc. We together with Comrade Burnham have belonged (and I hope will continue to belong to the end) to one and the same international party; but this is still not a bloc. Two parties can conclude a long term bloc with each other against a common enemy: Such was the policy of the "People's Front." Within one and the same party close but not congruent tendencies can conclude a bloc against a third faction.

For the evaluation of inner-party blocs two questions are of decisive significance:—(1) First and foremost, against whom or what is the bloc directed? (2) What is the relationship of forces within the bloc? Thus for a struggle against chauvinism within ones' own party a bloc between internationalists and centrists is wholly permissible. The result of the bloc would in this case depend upon the clarity of the program of the internationalists, upon their cohesiveness and discipline, for these traits are not infrequently more important in determining the relationship of forces than their numerical strength.

Shachtman as we said before appeals to Lenin's bloc with Bogdanov. I have already stated that Lenin did not make the slightest theoretical concessions to Bogdanov. Now we shall examine the political side of the "bloc." It is first of all necessary to state that what was actually in question was not a bloc but a collaboration in a common organization. The Bolshevik faction led an independent existence. Lenin did not form a "bloc" with Bogdanov against other tendencies within his own organization. On the contrary he formed a bloc even with the Bolshevik-conciliators (Dubrovinsky, Rykov, and others) against the theoretical heresies of Bogdanov. In essence, the question so far as Lenin was concerned was whether it was possible to remain with Bogdanov in one and the same organization which although called a "faction" bore all the traits of a party. If Shachtman does not look upon the opposition as an independent organization then his reference to the Lenin-Bogdanov "bloc" falls to pieces.

But the mistake in the analogy is not restricted to this. The Bolshevik faction-party carried on a struggle against Menshevism which at that time had already revealed itself completely as a petty-bourgeois agency of the liberal bourgeoisie. This was far more serious than the accusation of so-called "bureaucratic conservatism," the class roots of which Shachtman does not even attempt to define. Lenin's collaboration with Bogdanov was collaboration between a proletarian tendency and a sectarian centrist tendency against petty-bourgeois opportunism. The class lines are clear. The "bloc" (if one uses this term in the given instance) was justified.

The subsequent history of the "bloc" is not lacking in significance. In the letter to Gorky cited by Shachtman, Lenin expressed the hope that it would be possible to separate the political questions from the purely philosophic ones. Shachtman forgets to add that Lenin's hope did not at all materialize. Differences developed from the heights of philosophy down the line of all the other questions, including the most current ones. If the "bloc" did not discredit Bolshevism it was only because Lenin had a finished program, a correct method, a firmly welded faction in which Bogdanov's group composed a small unstable minority.

Shachtman concluded a bloc with Burnham and Abern against the proletarian wing of his own party. It is impossible to evade this. The relationship of forces within the bloc is completely against Shachtman. Abern has his own faction. Burnham with Shachtman's assistance can create the semblance of a faction constituting intellectuals disillusioned with Bolshevism. Shachtman has no independent program, no independent method, no independent faction. The eclectic character of the opposition "program" is determined by the contradictory tendencies within the bloc. In the event the bloc collapses—and the collapse is inevitable—Shachtman will emerge from the struggle with nothing but injury to the party and to himself.

Shachtman further appeals to the fact that in 1917 Lenin and Trotsky united after a long struggle and it would therefore be incorrect to remind them of their past differences. This example is slightly compromised by the fact that Shachtman has already utilized it once before to explain his bloc with—Cannon against Abern. But aside from this unpleasant circumstance the historical analogy is false to the core. Upon joining the Bolshevik party, Trotsky recognized completely and whole-heartedly the correctness of the Leninist methods of building the party. At the same time the irreconcilable class tendency of Bolshevism had corrected an incorrect prognosis. If I did not again raise the question of "permanent revolution" in 1917 it was because it had already been decided for both sides by the march of events. The basis for joint work was constituted not by subjective or episodic combinations but by the proletarian revolution. This is a solid basis. Furthermore in question here was not a "bloc" but unification in a single party—against the bourgeoisie and its petty-bourgeois agents. Inside the party the October bloc of Lenin and Trotsky was directed against petty-bourgeois vacillations on the question of insurrection.

Equally superficial is Shachtman's reference to Trotsky's bloc with Zinoviev in 1926. The struggle at that time was conducted not against "bureaucratic conservatism" as the psychologic trait of a few unsympathetic individuals but against the mightiest bureaucracy in the world, its privileges, its arbitrary rule and its reactionary policy. The scope of permissible differences in a bloc is determined by the character of the adversary.

The relationship of elements within the bloc was likewise altogether different. The opposition of 1923 had its own program and its own cadres composed not at all of intellectuals as Shachtman asserts, echoing the Stalinists, but primarily workers. The Zinoviev-Kamenev opposition on our demand acknowledged in a special document that the 1923 opposition was correct on all fundamental questions. Nevertheless since we had different traditions and since we were far from agreeing in everything, the merger never did take place; both groups remained independent factions. In certain important questions, it is true, the 1923 opposition made principled concessions to the opposition in 1926—against my vote—concessions which I considered and still consider impermissible. The circumstance that I did not protest openly against these concessions was rather a mistake. But there was generally not much room for open protests—we were working illegally. In any event, both sides were very well acquainted with my views on the controversial questions. Within the 1923 opposition, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand if not more stood on my point of view and not on the point of view of Zinoviev or Radek. With such a relation between the two groups in the bloc there might have

been these or other partial mistakes but there was not so much as a semblance of adventurism.

With Shachtman the case is completely different. Who was right in the past and just when and where? Why did Shachtman stand first with Abern, then with Cannon and now back again with Abern? Shachtman's own explanation concerning the past bitter factional struggles is worthy not of a responsible political figure but of a nurse-maid:—Johnny was a little wrong, Max a little, all were a little wrong, and now we are all a little right. Who was in the wrong and in what, not a word of this. There is no tradition. Yesterday is expunged from the calculations—and what is the reason for all this? Because in the organism of the party Comrade Shachtman plays the role of a floating kidney.

Seeking historical analogies, Shachtman avoids one example to which his present bloc does actually bear a resemblance. I have in mind the so-called August bloc of 1912. I participated actively in this bloc. In a certain sense I created it. Politically I differed with the Mensheviks on all fundamental questions. I also differed with the ultra-left Bolsheviks, the Vperyodists. In the general tendency of politics I stood far more closely to the Bolsheviks. But I was against the Leninist "regime" because I had not yet learned to understand that in order to realize the revolutionary goal a firmly welded centralized party is indispensable. And so I formed this episodic bloc consisting of heterogeneous elements which was directed against the proletarian wing of the party.

In the August bloc the liquidators had their own faction, the Vperyodists also had something resembling a faction. I stood isolated, having co-thinkers but no faction. Most of the documents were written by me and through avoiding principled differences had as their aim the creation of a semblance of unanimity upon "concrete political questions." Not a word about the past! Lenin subjected the August bloc to merciless criticism and the harshest blows fell to my lot. Lenin proved that inasmuch as I did not agree politically with either the Mensheviks or the Vperyodists my policy was adventurism. This was severe but it was true.

As "mitigating circumstances" let me mention the fact that I had set as my task not to support the right or ultra-left faction against the Bolsheviks but to unite the party as a whole. The Bolsheviks too were invited to the August conference. But since Lenin flatly refused to unite with the Mensheviks (in which he was completely correct) I was left in an unnatural bloc with the Mensheviks and the Vperyodists. The second mitigating circumstance is this, that the very phenomenon of Bolshevism as the genuine revolutionary party was then developing for the first time—in the practice of the Second International there were no precedents. But I do not thereby seek in the least to absolve myself from guilt. Notwithstanding the conception of permanent revolution which undoubtedly disclosed the correct perspective, I had not freed myself at that period especially in the organizational sphere from the traits of a petty-bourgeois revolutionist. I was sick with the disease of conciliationism towards Menshevism and with a distrustful attitude towards Leninist centralism. Immediately after the August conference the bloc began to disintegrate into its component parts. Within a few months I was not only in principle but organizationally outside the bloc.

I address Shachtman today with the very same rebuke which Lenin addressed to me 27 years ago: "Your bloc is unprincipled." "Your policy is adventurism." With all my heart I express the hope that from these accusations Shachtman will draw the same conclusions which I once drew.

The Factions in the Struggle

Shachtman expresses surprise over the fact that Trotsky "the leader of the 1923 opposition" is capable of supporting the bureaucratic faction of Cannon. In this as in the question of workers' control Shachtman again reveals his lack of feeling for historical perspective. True, in justifying their dictatorship the Soviet bureaucracy exploited the principles of Bolshevik centralism but in the very process it transformed them into their exact opposite. But this does not discredit in the least the methods of Bolshevism. Over a period of many years Lenin educated the party in the spirit of proletarian discipline and severe centralism. In so doing he suffered scores of times the attack of petty-bourgeois factions and cliques. Bolshevik centralism was a profoundly progressive factor and in the end secured the triumph of the revolution. It is not difficult to understand that the struggle of the present opposition in the Socialist Workers Party has nothing in common with the struggle of the Russian opposition of 1923 against the privileged bureaucratic caste but it does instead bear great resem-

blance to the struggle of the Mensheviks against Bolshevik centralism.

Cannon and his group are according to the opposition "an expression of a type of politics which can be best described as bureaucratic conservatism." What does this mean? The domination of a conservative labor bureaucracy, share-holder in the profits of the national bourgeoisie, would be unthinkable without direct or indirect support of the capitalist state. The rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy would be unthinkable without the G.P.U., the army, the courts, etc. The Soviet bureaucracy supports Stalin precisely because he is the bureaucrat who defends their interests better than anybody else. The trade union bureaucracy supports Green and Lewis precisely because their vices, as able and dexterous bureaucrats, safeguard the material interests of the labor aristocracy. But upon what base does "bureaucratic conservatism" rest in the S.W.P.? Obviously not on material interests but on a selection of bureaucratic types in contrast to another camp where innovators, initiators and dynamic spirits have been gathered together. The opposition does not point to any objective i.e., social basis for "bureaucratic conservatism." Everything is reduced to pure psychology. Under such conditions every thinking worker will say: It is possible that Comrade Cannon actually does sin in the line of bureaucratic tendencies—it is hard for me to judge at a distance—but if the majority of the National Committee and of the entire party who are not at all interested in bureaucratic "privileges" support Cannon they do so not because of his bureaucratic tendencies but in spite of them. This means that he has some other virtues which far outweigh his personal failing. That is what a serious party member will say. And in my opinion he would be correct.

To substantiate their complaints and accusations the leaders of the opposition bring up disjointed episodes and anecdotes which can be counted by the hundred and the thousand in every party and which moreover are impossible to verify objectively in most instances. Furthest from my mind is indulgence in a criticism of the story-telling section of the opposition documents. But there is one episode about which I wish to express myself as a participant and a witness. The leaders of the opposition very superciliously relate how easily, presumably without criticism and without deliberation, Cannon and his group accepted the program of Transitional Demands. Here is what I wrote on April 15, 1938 to Comrade Cannon concerning the elaboration of this program:

"We have sent you the transitional program draft and a short statement about the labor party. Without your visit to Mexico I could never have written the program draft because I learned during the discussions many important things which permitted me to be more explicit and concrete. . . ." Shachtman is thoroughly acquainted with these circumstances since he was one of those who took part in the discussion.

Rumors, personal speculations and simple gossip cannot help but occupy an important place in petty-bourgeois circles where people are bound together not by party ties but by personal relationships and where no habit has been acquired of a class approach to events. It is passed from ear to ear that I have been visited exclusively by representatives of the majority and that I have been led astray from the path of truth. Dear comrades, don't believe this nonsense! I collect political information through the very same methods that I use in my work generally. A critical attitude towards information is an organic part of the political physiognomy of every politician. If I were incapable of distinguishing false communications from true ones what value could my judgments have in general?

I am personally acquainted with no less than twenty members of Abern's faction. To several of them I am obligated for their friendly help in my work and I consider all of them, or almost all, as valuable party members. But at the same time I must say that what distinguishes each of them to one degree or another is the aura of a petty-bourgeois milieu, lack of experience in the class struggle and to a certain extent lack of the requisite connection with the proletarian movement. Their positive features link them to the Fourth International. Their negative features bind them to the most conservative of all factions.

"An 'anti-intellectual' and 'anti-intellectuals' attitude is drummed into the minds of party members," complains the document on "Bureaucratic Conservatism" (*Internal Bulletin*, Vol. 2 No. 6 January 1940, p. 12). This argument is dragged in by the hair. It is not those intellectuals who have completely gone over to the side of the proletariat who are in question, but those elements who are seeking to shift our party to the position of petty-bourgeois eclecticism. This same document declares: "An anti-

New York' propaganda is spread which is at bottom a catering to prejudices that are not always healthy" (idem). What prejudices are referred to here? Apparently anti-Semitism. If anti-Semitic or other race prejudices exist in our party, it is necessary to wage a ruthless struggle against them through open blows and not through vague insinuations. But the question of the Jewish intellectuals and semi-intellectuals of New York is a social not a national question. In New York there are a great many Jewish proletarians, but Abern's faction is not built up of them. The petty-bourgeois elements of this faction have proved incapable to this day of finding a road to the Jewish workers. They are contented with their own milieu.

There has been more than one instance in history—more precisely it does not happen otherwise in history—that with the transition of the party from one period to the next those elements which played a progressive role in the past but who proved incapable of adapting themselves with timeliness to new tasks have drawn closer together in the face of danger and revealed not their positive but almost exclusively their negative traits. That is precisely the role today of Abern's faction in which Shachtman plays the role of journalist and Burnham the role of theoretical brain trust. "Cannon knows," persists Shachtman, "how spurious it is to inject into the present discussion the 'Abern question'." He knows what every informed party leader, and many members know, namely, that for the past several years at least there has been no such thing as an 'Abern Group.' I take the liberty of remarking that if anybody is here distorting reality it is none other than Shachtman himself. I have been following the development of the internal relations in the American section for about ten years. The specific composition and the special role played by the New York organization became clear to me before anything else. Shachtman will perhaps recall that while I was still in Prinkipo I advised the National Committee to move away from New York and its atmosphere of petty-bourgeois squabbles for a while to some industrial center in the provinces. Upon arriving in Mexico I gained the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with life in the United States, of becoming better acquainted with the English language and thanks to many visits from my northern friends of arriving at a more vivid picture of the social composition and the political psychology of the various groupings. On the basis of my own personal and immediate observations during the past three years I assert that the Abern faction has existed uninterruptedly, statically if not "dynamically."

The members of the Abern faction, given a modicum of political experience, are easily recognizable not only by their social traits but by their approach to all questions. These comrades have always formally denied the existence of their faction. There was a period when some of them actually did try to dissolve themselves into the party. But they attempted this by doing violence to themselves, and on all critical questions they came out in relation to the party as a group. They were far less interested in principled questions, in particular the question of changing the social composition of the party, than in combinations at the top, personal conflicts, and generally occurrences in the "general staff." This is the Abern school. I persistently warned many of these comrades that soaking in this artificial existence would unfailingly bring them sooner or later to a new factional explosion.

The leaders of the opposition speak ironically and disparagingly of the proletarian composition of the Cannon faction; in their eyes this incidental "detail" carries no importance. What is this if not petty-bourgeois disdain combined with blindness? At the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democrats in 1903 where the split took place between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks there were only three workers among several scores of delegates. All three of them turned up with the majority. The Mensheviks jeered at Lenin for investing this fact with great symptomatic significance. The Mensheviks themselves explained the position the three workers took by their lack of "maturity." But as is well known it was Lenin who proved correct.

If the proletarian section of our American party is "politically backward," then the first task of those who are "advanced" should have consisted in raising the workers to a higher level. But why has the present opposition failed to find its way to these workers? Why did they leave this work to the "Cannon clique"? What is involved here? Aren't the workers good enough for the opposition? Or is the opposition unsuitable for workers?

It would be asinine to think that the workers' section of the party is perfect. The workers are only gradually reaching clear class consciousness. The trade unions always create a culture medium for opportunist deviations. Inevitably we will run up

against this question in one of the next stages. More than once the party will have to remind its own trade unionists that a pedagogical adaptation to the more backward layers of the proletariat must not become transformed into a political adaptation to the conservative bureaucracy of the trade unions. Every new stage of development, every increase in the party ranks and the complication of the methods of its work open up not only new possibilities but also new dangers. Workers in the trade unions, even those trained in the most revolutionary school, often display a tendency to free themselves from party control. At the present time, however, this is not at all in question. At the present time the non-proletarian opposition, dragging behind it the majority of the non-proletarian youth, is attempting to revise our theory, our program, our tradition,—and it does all this light-mindedly, in passing, for greater convenience in the struggle against the “Cannon clique.” At the present time disrespect for the party is shown not by the trade unionists but by the petty-bourgeois oppositionists. It is precisely in order to prevent the trade unionists from turning their backs to the party in the future that it is necessary to decisively repulse these petty-bourgeois oppositionists.

It is moreover impermissible to forget that the actual or possible mistakes of those comrades working in the trade unions reflect the pressure of the American proletariat as it is today. This is our class. We are not preparing to capitulate to its pressure. But this pressure at the same time shows us our main historic road. The mistakes of the opposition on the other hand reflect the pressure of another and alien class. An ideological break with that class is the elementary condition for our future successes.

The reasonings of the opposition in regard to the youth are false in the extreme. Assuredly, without the conquest of the proletarian youth the revolutionary party cannot develop. But the trouble is that we have almost an entirely petty-bourgeois youth, to a considerable degree with a social-democratic, i.e., opportunist past. The leaders of this youth have indubitable virtues and ability but, alas, they have been educated in the spirit of petty-bourgeois combinationism and if they are not wrenched out of their habitual milieu, if they are not sent without high-sounding titles into working class districts for day-to-day dirty work among the proletariat, they can forever perish for the revolutionary movement. In relation to the youth as in all the other questions, Shachtman unfortunately has taken a position that is false to the core.

It is Time to Halt!

To what extent Shachtman's thought from a false starting point has become debased is to be seen from the fact that he depicts my position as a defense of the “Cannon clique” and he harps several times on the fact that in France I supported just as mistakenly the “Molinier clique.” Everything is reduced to my supporting isolated individuals or groups entirely independently of their program. The example of Molinier only thickens the fog. I shall attempt to dispel it. Molinier was accused not of retreating from our program but of being undisciplined, arbitrary, and of venturing into all sorts of financial adventures to support the party and his faction. Since Molinier is a very energetic man and has unquestionable practical capacities I found it necessary—not only in the interests of Molinier but above all in the interests of the organization itself—to exhaust all the possibilities of convincing and reeducating him in the spirit of proletarian discipline. Since many of his adversaries possessed all of his failings but none of his virtues I did everything to convince them not to hasten a split but to test Molinier over and over again. It was

this that constituted my “defense” of Molinier in the adolescent period of the existence of our French section.

Considering a patient attitude towards blundering or undisciplined comrades and repeated efforts to reeducate them in the revolutionary spirit as absolutely compulsory I applied these methods by no means solely to Molinier. I made attempts to draw closer into the party and save Kurt Landau, Field, Weisbord, the Austrian, Frey, the Frenchman, Treint, and a number of others. In many cases my efforts proved fruitless; in a few cases it was possible to rescue valuable comrades.

In any case I did not make the slightest principled concession to Molinier. When he decided to found a paper on the basis of “four slogans” instead of our program, and set out independently to execute this plan, I was among those who insisted upon his immediate expulsion. But I will not hide the fact that at the Founding Congress of the Fourth International I was in favor of once again testing Molinier and his group within the framework of the International to see if they had become convinced of the erroneousness of their policy. This time, too, the attempt led to nothing. But I do not renounce repeating it under suitable conditions once again. It is most curious that among the bitterest opponents of Molinier there were people like Vereecken and Sneevliet, who after they had broken with the Fourth International, successfully united with him.

A number of comrades upon acquainting themselves with my archives have reproached me in a friendly way with having wasted and still continuing to waste so much time on convincing “hopeless people.” I replied that many times I have had the occasion to observe how people change with circumstances and that I am therefore not ready to pronounce people as “hopeless” on the basis of a few even though serious mistakes.

When it became clear to me that Shachtman was driving himself and a certain section of the party into a blind alley I wrote him that if the opportunity were mine I would immediately take an airplane and fly to New York in order to discuss with him for seventy-two hour stretches at a time. I asked him if he didn't wish to make it possible somehow for us to get together. Shachtman did not reply. This is wholly within his right. It is quite possible that those comrades who may become acquainted with my archives in the future will say in this case too that my letter to Shachtman was a false step on my part and they will cite this “mistake” of mine in connection with my over-persistent “defense” of Molinier. They will not convince me. It is an extremely difficult task to form an international proletarian vanguard under present conditions. To chase after individuals at the expense of principles would of course be a crime. But to do everything possible to bring back outstanding yet mistaken comrades to our program I have considered and still consider my duty.

From that very Trade Union Discussion which Shachtman utilized with such glaring irrelevance, I quote the words of Lenin which Shachtman should engrave on his mind: “A mistake always begins by being small and growing greater. Differences always begin with trifles. Everyone has at times suffered a tiny wound but should this tiny wound become infected, a mortal disease may follow.” Thus spoke Lenin on January 23, 1921. It is impossible not to make mistakes; some err more frequently, others less frequently. The duty of a proletarian revolutionist is not to persist in mistakes, not to place ambition above the interests of the cause but to call a halt in time. It is time for Comrade Shachtman to call a halt! Otherwise the scratch which has already developed into an ulcer can lead to gangrene.

L. TROTSKY

January 24, 1940.
Coyoacan, D.F.

On Comrade Cannon's Formula of Revolutionary Defeatism

by Sylvia Remarre

(Downtown Branch, N. Y. District)

The present discussion in the Party brings to the fore once again the meaning of revolutionary defeatism. On this score, I regret, that Comrade Cannon has added very much confusion, by the formula which he presented on two different occasions during the Russian discussion. Once at a Party meeting, and another time at a meeting of the YPSL, he stated that revolutionary de-

featism meant, that we work for the victory of the opposing army. That is, in France our comrades work for the victory of the German army and in Germany for the victory of the French army, by any means that will further the defeat of “your” bourgeoisie.

Since the Minority is for revolutionary defeatism in the Soviet Union in the present Finnish-Soviet War, Comrade Cannon accuses

the Minority of telling the Red Army to work for the victory of the Finnish bourgeoisie. (It is interesting to note that Comrade Cannon never accuses us of telling the Finnish workers to work for the victory of the Soviet Union over the Finnish bourgeoisie, although this would be perfectly consistent with his formulation.) It would appear that Comrade Cannon is using the whole question of revolutionary defeatism as a factional issue and as a result is mis-educating the Party and youth on this extremely important question.

The question of revolutionary defeatism has been a point of controversy between some of the greatest theoretical leaders of our movement, beginning with the Lenin-Trotsky polemics during the last war.

There was an extended discussion on the question following the Dewey Commission Hearings in Mexico. There then ensued a very interesting exchange between Vereecken on the one hand, and Comrades Trotsky and Camille on the other. In the process of the discussion, and in the articles in "The New International" (Trotsky's "Learn to Think," July, 1938, and W. St. "Principles and Tactics in War," May, 1938) it seemed a clear understanding of what we mean by revolutionary defeatism, and military revolutionary defeatism had been evolved. However, this doesn't seem to be the case at all.

Comrade Cannon's formula reverts back to the dispute in the international Socialist movement, particularly its Russian section of 1914.

Lenin-Trotsky Dispute in Last War

In "Socialism and War" written in 1914, Lenin, in discussing the question says, "A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot help wishing the defeat of its government. . . ." In addition to this, however, he formulated the question in other speeches or articles that would indicate other conclusions. In other words, the ambiguity of his remarks on revolutionary defeatism, makes it difficult to determine what his real position was.

Trotsky polemicized against Lenin's formula by calling it inverted nationalism. He said to wish Russia's defeat is "an uncalled-for and unjustifiable political concession to the methodology of social-patriotism which substitutes for the revolutionary struggle against war and the conditions that cause war, an orientation along the lines of the lesser evil, an orientation which, under given conditions, is perfectly arbitrary." Trotsky raised the slogan of "Neither victory nor defeat." Lenin polemicized against him, accusing him of "the methodology of social-patriotism" and not having a perspective of revolutions ending the war.

If we look back at the slogans that the Bolsheviks raised at the time of the Russian Revolution, we cannot conclude that their slogans were of such a character as to indicate that they wished and worked for the defeat of the government, but rather that they carried on the struggle against the Russian bourgeoisie regardless of the effect on the military front.

I do not want to discuss the question of what Lenin meant by his formulas here, but from a reading of the various ways in which he stated what he meant, it is not possible to glean a comprehensive concept. (In part this may have been due to the fact that Lenin based his formulas on the experiences of the Russo-Jap War, in which not only the Social-Democrats, but even the Russian bourgeoisie—Cadets, etc.,—were military revolutionary defeatists.)

Cannon Revises Program of 4th International

Comrade Cannon, however, bases himself on an ambiguous formula of Lenin, and not upon the program of the S.W.P. or the 4th International. NOWHERE do we speak of wishing or working for the defeat of "our" bourgeois army by the opposing army.

If one were to use the polemical methods of Comrade Cannon, we could paraphrase his speeches by saying the following:

"If Comrade Cannon wants to change the program of the 4th International why doesn't he introduce a motion to that effect?"

"If Comrade Cannon wants to revise the program of the 4th International, why doesn't he write a book on the subject. Our movement will not have the smuggling in of revisions of our fundamental program.

"Remember that differences on this important question has led people outside the ranks of the 4th International.

"We will not tolerate tampering with our basic program.

"Comrade Cannon should remember that Oehler and Vereecken who espoused his position now find themselves outside the ranks of the 4th International."

In "War and the 4th International" we say: "In those cases where it is a question of conflict between capitalist countries, the

proletariat of any one of them refused categorically to sacrifice its historic interests, which in the final analysis coincides with the interests of the nation and humanity for the sake of the military victory of the bourgeoisie. Lenin's formula: 'defeat is the lesser evil' means not that defeat of one's own country is the lesser evil as compared with the defeat of the enemy country; but that a military defeat resulting from the growth of the revolutionary movement is infinitely more beneficial to the proletariat and to the whole people than military victory assured by "civil peace." Karl Liebknecht gave an unsurpassed formula of proletarian policy in time of war: 'the chief enemy of the people is in its own country.' The victorious proletarian revolution will not only rectify the evils caused by defeat but will also create the final guarantee against future wars and defeats. This dialectic attitude toward war is the most important element of revolutionary training and therefore also of the struggle against war." (Emphasis my own—S.R.)

The program of the S.W.P. puts this concept into an unambiguous and clear form:

"The S.W.P. will advocate the continuance of the class struggle during the war regardless of the consequences for the outcome of the American military struggle; and will try to prepare the masses to utilize the war crisis for the overthrow of U.S. capitalism and the victory of socialism."

Now let us see what the formula of Comrade Cannon would mean if we applied it to a concrete situation. Let us take the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Hitler.

Comrade Cannon would tell the Czech workers that they must work for the defeat of their own bourgeoisie at the hands of Hitler. This defeat, he will reason, will create better revolutionary situations which we, the revolutionists, will take advantage of so that we may set up a Soviet Czechia.

But—"War and the 4th International" (first sentence quoted) says that the international struggle against capitalism, the international overthrow of capitalism is the aim of the working class of all countries. THE WORKERS UNDER CAPITALISM HAVE NO FATHERLAND, they are not orientated consciously or otherwise toward working for the victory of any bourgeoisie—all workers work for the victory of the working class. Otherwise, Comrade Cannon, would, if he understood the implications of his formula, tell the German workers, and the Czech workers to be agents of each others bourgeoisies.

"War and the 4th International" (in the second sentence quoted) means that the defeat of Czechoslovakia is an evil, but it is a greater evil, if the workers give up the class struggle for national defense. In other words, it will be an evil if Czechia is defeated (or Germany), but only the proletarian revolution can set the various countries to rights and see that there will be no more wars. For instance, the defeat of Czechia by Hitler was an evil, it set the consciousness of the working class back in that the class struggle was now blurred with the issue of national liberation. It remains for the revolutionary party to point out the role of the Czech bourgeoisie and how their rule let Hitler subjugate the Czechs.

"But"—says the Czech worker who remembers the formula of Comrade Cannon—"what do you mean by condemning the Czech bourgeoisie as responsible for the catastrophe that has overcome the Czechs. Didn't you, the 4th Internationalists, tell the Czech workers to work for the victory of the German bourgeois army?"

"But," the 4th International will say, "we never said that, only Comrade Cannon did. The 4th International told the Czech workers during the struggle against Hitler: the Czech bourgeoisie wants us to stop our class war against them. They want us to defend Czechia from Hitler. They want us to stop our struggle against them, so that after defeating Hitler they can continue to subjugate us. They want us to stop Hitler—Good! Arm the proletariat. We will build a People's Militia based on the factories. We will form our own Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets. We will only defend what is ours. Today, however, THE MAIN ENEMY IS AT HOME! (the Czech bourgeoisie). And what is more, the international proletariat will help us defend a workers' Czechia because they will not be disorientated by working either for the victory of their own bourgeoisie, OR THE VICTORY OF THE OPPOSING BOURGEOIS ARMY."

Oehler and Vereecken on Defeatism

Oehler and the other splinter groups attack our movement for the formulation in "War and the 4th International." Vereecken couldn't understand the question at all, (and the CC of our Belgium section seemed to be confused too.—see Internal Bulletin No. 3, 1938.) The Oehlerites say:

"The Trotskyists have a centrist position on the question of

defeatism. In the pamphlet "War and the 4th International" Trotsky presents only one (their emphasis) part of Lenin's position on defeatism. Lenin recognized that defeats accelerate revolutionary developments and are therefore preferable to victories which strengthen the "victorious" bourgeoisie against its workers. He concluded that revolutionists must work for defeats. . . .

"Revolutionary defeatism means to work not for the victory of the capitalist government, but for its defeat. This has a two-fold character. It means for struggle of the working class to turn the imperialist war into a civil war against the oppressors. This is from the point of view of the workers fighting inside their country against "their" own bourgeoisie. But revolutionary defeatism means at the same time to work for the military defeat of their "own" army by the "enemy" army." ("Workers Answer to Boss War.")

This is in essence the concept of Comrade Cannon, and I must repeat that this concept is alien to the program of the 4th International.

If Comrade Cannon is really serious about his formulation then in the present war between the Soviet Union and Finland, England France and the United States, (that is stated in the headline in the "Appeal" of December 23, "Powers in Undeclared War Against USSR, League, Allied Council, U.S. backing Finland.") then he must be for acts of **MILITARY REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM** in the United States today in order to facilitate the victory of the Soviet Union.

The Bourgeoisie and Defeatism

Defeatism is also practiced by the bourgeoisie. In most cases, in the bourgeois army, anyone employed in this manner is a spy.

There have, however, been cases where bourgeois nationalists fought for the bourgeois enemy of their own oppressors on the basis of deals for their national independence. Such was the case of the Czechs who fought for Russia against Austria in the last war. This was not, and is not condoned by revolutionists.

On the other hand, revolutionists sometimes undertake acts of sabotage in relation to the bourgeois armies in which they are fighting. (Here I refer all comrades to Comrade Trotsky's very concise formula at the hearings in Mexico in "Not Guilty," p. 289)

In China, where the Japanese imperialists are waging a struggle against the semi-colonial country China, the Japanese soldiers,

who understand that this is a progressive struggle on the part of China, will do everything to aid China, and to facilitate its victory. In the United States, for instance, if a strike is called on the West Coast and there are boats with munitions bound for China, the sailors would see that those boats got there.

When this problem came up in the hearings in relation to France allied to the S.U. and both opposed by Germany, Comrade Trotsky answered that in Germany he would have as his immediate aim the disorganization of the whole military machinery. While in France, Trotsky has only the aim of the proletarian revolution. Vereecken and all the sectarians saw in this formula the end of the Trotskyist movement. We had succumbed to social-patriotism, making differentiations between fascist and "democratic" nations, etc. To Vereecken, revolutionary defeatism means "sabotaging the war-machine of one's 'own' country" in every war.

Different Formula—Different Tactics

To the revolutionist who understands his task in relation to the given war, his understanding finds expression in the different tactics he uses.

In Czechoslovakia, the revolutionists told the German and Czech soldiers to fraternize. Fraternization is a great crime in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. For the revolutionist it is a method by which the worker learns that his "foe" is a worker too. It leads to the break-up of the morale of both armies involved in combat.

On the other hand, in Poland in 1920, we find an excellent example of what military revolutionary defeatism is. There, in a progressive struggle, Krivitsky tells of how the Cheka sent agents into Poland to disorganize the transport of ammunition, how they tried to stir up strikes and other manifestations of revolutions and upheavals during the war. The Polish Communists took every opportunity to aid the victory of the Red Army by sabotage and any other methods assuring the victory of the Red Army.

How does Comrade Cannon make the differentiations that Comrade Trotsky does in reference to military revolutionary defeatism and revolutionary defeatism? From all indications he does not. His formula, "we work for the defeat of 'our' bourgeois army by the opposing army," is at complete variance with what our Party program stands for, and with what we in the YPSL have been taught is the essence of revolutionary struggle against imperialist war.

CORRECTION

In the article by Comrade Trotsky, "A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the Socialist Workers Party," (Internal Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 7, January 1940) in the section "The ABC of Materialist Dialectics" (p. 5) the sentence: "The axiom "A" is equal to "A" on one hand is the point of departure for all the errors in our knowledge"—should read as follows: "The axiom "A" is equal to "A," appears on one hand to be the point of departure for all our knowledge, on the other hand the point of departure for all the errors in our knowledge."