

SWP

discussion bulletin

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NOTE: The material in this bulletin has been previously circulated to members of the National Committee as part of the discussion on the regroupment policy. It is now published for the information of the party membership.

Tom Kerry
Organization Secretary

September 25, 1957

Political Committee
National Committee

Re: Weiss Article on Clark

Dear Comrades:

I note with satisfaction the proposal of the Secretariat to initiate a discussion in the PC on the regroupment developments, and to follow it up with a Plenum.

This letter is intended to be a preliminary contribution to the PC discussion.

I want to protest most vigorously against the political line of the article by Comrade Murry Weiss in the September 16th issue of the MILITANT regarding the resignation of Joseph Clark from the CP and as foreign editor of the DAILY WORKER. Comrade Weiss makes the following important points regarding Clark's letter of resignation.

Clark has attacked the Stalinist version of proletarian internationalism as expressed by the Duclos letter to the recent CP convention, and expressed solidarity with the Hungarian insurrection.

Clark made an "open break with Stalinism" even though it "lacks consistency and thought-out conclusions."

Clark bases "his break with Stalinism on a socialist opposition to American capitalism at home and abroad".

Clark "gives promise of playing a vital and constructive role in the current regroupment movement of revolutionary socialist forces in the United States".

On the contrary, the reality of the situation is that Clark is a Stalinist renegade who has cast aside his organizational ties with the Moscow bureaucracy only to reinforce his class subservience to imperialism.

OPEN BREAK WITH STALINISM

No term has acquired such a multitude of different meanings to different people as the term "Stalinism." This is not to be wondered at. For terminology, like all other weapons in the class struggle, serves class ends. The bourgeoisie and the Soviet bureaucracy, for diametrically opposite aims, have both with relentless vigor, systematically palmed off perfidious Stalinism as genuine Communism. In like fashion, but even more

pernicious to the enlightenment of class conscious workers who are trying to free themselves from the ideological shackles of Stalinism, is the deliberate palming off of vulgar, bourgeois anti-Stalinism as good coin for revolutionary socialist opposition to Stalinism.

Thus, when Joe Clark says that he is breaking with Stalinism, the inference gathered by many and implied in the article by Comrade Weiss is that he is breaking with Stalinism in order to move towards revolutionary socialism, or gives the promise to do so.

But let's see how Clark himself differentiates between Communism and Stalinism in this very same letter of resignation to which Comrade Weiss obviously closes his eyes. "Within our country," said Clark, "communism has made an important contribution to the welfare of the people." Indeed, one can say that Communism has made an important contribution depending on whether you mean genuine Communism or its counterfeit, Stalinism.

There was a period when Communism made an important contribution in this country, dating probably from 1917 until 1924; the days when Lenin and Trotsky headed the Soviet State and the Communist International. Then followed the Stalinist perversion from 1924 until the capitulation of the German CP in 1933. This in turn was followed by a period of the crassest opportunism and outright class betrayals of the most monstrous character, the so-called decade of "people's frontism" and support of the imperialist war, the decade roughly between 1935 and 1945.

Now, which of these three different periods does Clark refer to as having been "Communist," as having made a contribution? The period of 1919 to 1924? Oh, no. It is, he says, "the decade of 1935 to 1945." That's when he says "communism" had reached a "high point." The crassest sort of class collaboration and the worst betrayals of Stalinism are passed off by Clark as the heroic age of communism, the glorious days of Popular Frontism and imperialist war.

Is this an "open break with Stalinism?" -- with the class essence of Stalinism?

How could Comrade Weiss have missed this point as being the real tipoff on the direction Clark is traveling. A Stalinist worker could genuinely mistake the role of the Stalinists, but a flunkey like Clark who has decades in the CP leadership behind him, could this be explained as a mere "inconsistency," as mere lack of "thought-out conclusions," as Comrade Weiss puts it?

CLARK AND DEUTSCHER

But Clark, Comrade Weiss says, is seeking a "serious explanation" for the debacle of Stalinism. Proof: "In one of his last columns in the Daily Worker," writes Comrade Weiss, "Clark tried to find the social basis for this rise of an autocratic bureaucracy in the Soviet Union by citing Isaac Deutscher's

analysis of the historical circumstances which gave rise to Stalinism. It is well known that Deutscher, for all his profound differences with Trotskyism, had based his entire analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy on the theoretical work of Leon Trotsky."

Let us for the moment disregard the fact that Deutscher does not base himself on Trotsky's theory, but on a falsification and disembowelment of the revolutionary essence of Trotskyism. To follow Comrade Weiss' reasoning, we thus get this: Deutscher bases himself on Trotsky -- Clark bases himself on Deutscher; ipso facto, Clark is moving in the direction of Trotsky.

What other conclusion can one draw from this astonishing paragraph? To be sure, there is a common denominator between Clark and Deutscher. But this is exactly what Comrade Weiss fails to disclose. Deutscher, like Clark, is for the complete renunciation of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat, and its substitution by class collaboration. Deutscher like Clark, is for capitalist co-existence. Deutscher like Clark, is for Imperialist democracy as the road for socialism in the West (of course, they're both for genuine proletarian democracy in the East). Deutscher's and Clark's attitude toward the Soviet bureaucracy, like Cochran's and Schachtman's (whether it be in the one case of sympathy, and in the other of antipathy) has its origin in their attitude toward their own imperialist bourgeoisie, and not in their attitude toward the world proletariat. Deutscher's conciliatory approach to the bureaucracy is but part of his conciliatory attitude toward British "democratic" imperialism, and Clark's antipathy for the bureaucracy is based on the current fierce hostility of American imperialism, and is in no way related to the imperious demands of the workers for a revolutionary class-conscious struggle against the bureaucracy.

Trotsky's struggle against the Soviet bureaucracy, on the other hand, is an inseparable part of his revolutionary struggle against the entire imperialist bourgeoisie and all who conciliate with it.

But let us assume Clark knows the social basis of the rise of the Soviet bureaucracy. Does that, in and of itself indicate that he is moving in the direction of revolutionary socialism? Is there a Cochranite, a Schachtmanite, or a Stalinist leader who will not admit, at least in private, the social basis for the rise of the American labor bureaucracy -- who will not tell you that they are labor lieutenants of American Capitalism, who will not grant you the venal role of this bureaucracy? But to proceed from these correct generalizations to carry on a ruthless, merciless fight against the bureaucracy, ah -- that is something else again.

It is precisely in this respect that Clark and Deutscher are lacking. Their "socialism" is in fact a gutless and spineless "socialism," -- harmless to the bourgeoisie. The essence of revolutionary socialism lies precisely in its indomitable will to struggle. Marx was above all a fighter.

DEMOCRACY VS. AUTOCRACY

"My view, is that socialism can be served only by a complete break with Stalinism. The latter perverted socialism by substituting autocracy for democracy. But Marxists have always advocated socialist democracy, which they uphold as more libertarian than any yet attained." Comrade Weiss quotes this approvingly as part of Clark's search for a "serious explanation" for the debacle of Stalinism.

What is at the root of the problem? Democracy vs. Autocracy, as Clark infers? That is the vulgar, bourgeois-radical, non-class approach. Or is it the evolution (degeneration) in class attitudes of Stalin and his clique? Stalin abandoned the class struggle (which is what Clark is doing. This is where he has common ground, not only with Stalin, but with Khrushchev and Foster as well). Stalin conciliated with the world bourgeoisie (which is what Clark is doing) and set up a reactionary nationalist utopia of socialism in one country (to which Clark does not object). It is for this that Stalin needed terror in order to convert socialist democracy into bureaucratic autocracy. Abandonment of the class struggle was Stalin's crime; autocracy was the necessary and inevitable instrument to effectuate it.

"SOCIALIST OPPOSITION TO CAPITALISM"

Comrade Weiss asserts that Clark is "basing his break with Stalinism on a socialist opposition to American capitalism at home and abroad."

Unless all words have lost their meaning, this is a complete misrepresentation of the position held by Clark. One has only to go to the text of Clark's letter of resignation to fully confirm this.

Moreover, Comrade Weiss admits that Clark still stands on the platform of class collaboration. But Comrade Weiss attributes this to a mere failure to "see the relation of Stalinism to the basic policy of the CP in the U.S." -- the class collaborationist concept of a People's Front anti-monopoly coalition "and continued support to 'lesser evil' capitalist politicians."

How can Clark be for "socialist opposition to Capitalism" and still be for class collaboration? Isn't socialist opposition to Capitalism in absolute contradiction to class collaboration? Is this not the most elementary of elementary of Marxist principles? Can one be an exponent of class collaboration and at the same time be a candidate "for revolutionary socialist regroupment?"

"Nevertheless, by calling for a break with Stalinism," says Comrade Weiss, Clark has gone to the root of the problem that faces the disoriented and demoralized ranks of the radical workers who are seeking a revolutionary road out of the crisis of the CP."

But is not the essence of Stalinism, its conciliationist (sell-out) attitude to the bourgeoisie and to all social forces hostile to the proletariat, exactly what Clark shows a preference for? That is what he has not broken from. That is what he tenaciously holds on to.

Is a break with capitalist class collaboration fundamental to a progressive break with Stalinism? Or is it merely incidental, as Comrade Murry implies? When one retains class collaborationist politics, is he breaking in a bourgeois or a socialist direction? Is the mere break from Stalinism, regardless of the direction in which the break is made, progressive in itself? How does this approach differ from Cochran's, etc.

"The only effective posture from which American Marxists can work for American-Soviet friendship -- necessary if mankind is to survive in a time of hydrogen-headed ICBM weapons -- is that of independence," says Clark. What does he mean by "American-Soviet friendship?" Does he mean agitation and propaganda for class solidarity between the American worker and the Soviet worker? Does he mean friendship of the American workers to the Soviet Union as a workers' state and irreconcilable class hatred of the bureaucracy? What Clark means is a rapprochement between Wall Street and the Soviet bureaucracy to maintain "peaceful co-existence." Just like in the good old "collective security" days -- it was necessary to "put pressure on the diplomats" to sign a collective security agreement, so now we must do the same. Clark is consistent. This is nothing but a 1957 version of Clark's (and Stalin's) as well as Khrushchev's idea of a "collective security pact" between the imperialist powers and the Soviet bureaucracy to maintain "peace," -- the peaceful subjugation, exploitation, pillage, plunder of the masses in the interests of predatory imperialism, and the maintenance of the privileges and emoluments of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Can one be for the imperialist status quo by a rapprochement between the Soviet bureaucracy and Wall Street imperialism, and be a candidate for "revolutionary socialist regroupment?"

PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

Let us take up another point -- proletarian internationalism, which is the acid test for a revolutionary Marxist. To be sure, Clark in his letter of resignation rejects the conception of proletarian internationalism as expressed by the French Stalinist leader, Duclos. One must ask, however, what conception does Clark wish to substitute for that of Duclos? On this score, Clark is quite clear. He gives two concrete examples of what he means by proletarian internationalism.

One example is in 1956. In that year, Clark says "proletarian internationalism required solidarity with the Hungarian workers opposing Soviet intervention." The other example is in the year 1939. "In 1939" says Clark, "internationalism required support for the anti-Hitler war..." What does this mean? Clark

is here saying that proletarian internationalism required that the workers of the world support the war of the imperialist "democracies," the war of the "democratic" slave holder against the fascist slave holders for the domination of the wage slaves at home and colonial and semi-colonial slaves abroad.

Since the unspeakable record of the CP's support of the war is only too well known to require documentation, one wonders what Clark's complaint is all about. "In 1939," says Clark (the year of the Stalin-Hitler Pact), "the French and American CP's should not have practised the 'shameful neutrality' which they did during that period." What should they have done? Practised revolutionary defeatism? Lenin's profound doctrine of the prosecution of the class struggle by the workers in war time as in peace time? Oh, no! Perish the thought. What Clark means is that there should have been all-out support by the working-class for the imperialist Allies during that period just as there was during the war. In place of the CP's hypocritical, shameful "neutrality," Clark would substitute outright, unashamed class treachery. Now if a Stalinist worker who had broken with Stalinism said this, one might contain his indignation and patiently explain the A-B-C's of proletarian internationalism, particularly as it pertains to wars of imperialism, whether they be conducted by the fascist or "democratic" varieties.

But it is something else again when this comes out of the mouth of a Stalinist leader, a pen prostitute who for upwards of two decades has been in the inner councils of the CP leadership and knows inside and out the arguments of revolutionary Marxists against the permissibility of supporting one's own imperialist government in any war it conducts.

Clark's apparently contradictory and irreconcilable conceptions of proletarian internationalism, that of the Hungarian insurrection of 1956 and of the Stalin-Hitler Pact era of 1939 present Comrade Weiss with a dilemma. He enthusiastically seizes upon one example, the Hungarian one, naturally, and conveniently omits from his article the example of 1939.

The fact that Comrade Weiss eliminated Clark's virulently chauvinist position on a crucial phase of the second imperialist World War, and hails his position on the Hungarian insurrection as proletarian internationalism, shows that Comrade Weiss does not know which is the acid test of proletarian internationalism. Anyone can be for a foreign revolution, especially if it is hysterically supported by the entire bourgeoisie, as well as the labor bureaucracy from one end of the world to the other. But to be for proletarian class struggle at home, especially during war time, that's another matter.

Worse still, Weiss substitutes for Clark's direct and unequivocal statement, a vague, clumsy and belabored reference to Clark's failure "to connect the policy of Stalinism in the Second World War and the present foreign policy of the Kremlin with the Stalinist perversion of socialism."

Instead of Comrade Weiss trying to think out what lies behind Clark's example Number I (Hungarian insurrection) and its apparent irreconcilability with example Number II (Stalin-Hitler Pact era), Comrade Weiss has succumbed to the easy way out, by eliminating from the article Clark's second example and affirming that Clark's "open break with Stalinism" lacks only "consistency and thought-out conclusions."

Oh, no, Comrade Weiss. It is not Joseph Clark who lacks consistency. On the contrary, he is remarkably consistent. It is you who lack consistency. Clark is only inconsistent in form, but not in class content. In both instances, Hungary and the Stalin-Hitler Pact period, Clark is taking the same, identical class position that his own bourgeoisie is taking. This is consistency with a vengeance!

CLARK AND THE CP CONVENTION

"I was among those who greeted the progress recorded at the last convention of the Communist Party. It affirmed the American character and its dedication to constitutional democracy," said Clark. Its dedication to imperialist Wall Street democracy! The same democracy that is being dished out by Wall Street to Egypt and Jordan, and only yesterday to Korea and China!

Is the break with imperialist democracy fundamental or incidental to a revolutionary break with Stalinism? Can one be an exponent of imperialist democracy and at the same time be a guide to the "ranks of the radical workers" who are seeking, according to Comrade Weiss' own words, "a revolutionary road out of the crisis of the CP?"

The servile grovelling at the feet of Wall Street democracy is not the only thing Clark applauded with enthusiasm at the CP Convention. Even greater was his enthusiasm for the Convention's coming out four square for "independence" and against "dogmatism and sectarianism." What independence? The rank and file undoubtedly want independence from the monolithic stranglehold of the CP. But what does Clark want? To switch his allegiance from Moscow to Wall Street! !.

But what "dogmatism" was condemned? The reactionary dogma of class collaboration? Of peaceful co-existence? Of popular-frontism? (Including its latest variety, anti-monopoly coalition.) Just to raise the questions is to answer them. And what about sectarianism? Was it condemnation of genuine sectarianism, such as in the Third Period, etc.? Or does it mean condemnation for building the Progressive Party instead of remaining faithful to the capitalist Democratic Party machine?

The long struggle which Trotsky conducted on all these critical issues, is part of the great revolutionary heritage of Marxism, and constitutes the dividing line between Marxism and reformism. Clark is the very incarnation of the latter. Yet Comrade Murry concludes that he "gives promise of playing a vital

and constructive role in the current regroupment movement of revolutionary socialist forces in the United States."

This in turn raises the question of the whole meaning of the regroupment process.

REGROUPMENT

"Many workers in the party," wrote Comrade Weiss in last winter's issue of the ISR, "recoil from the Gates group and tend toward the Fosterites, precisely because of the fear that Gates and his associates want to break with Stalinism only to lead them into the swamp of State Department "socialism." On the other hand, these same workers display a keen hostility towards Foster's thinly disguised plans to turn back the clock and re-establish the power of the old bureaucratic machine in the party."

Now if anybody could be called an ideological associate of Gates at the time Comrade Weiss wrote this article, it was Clark. Only Clark was more outspoken than Gates. Now Clark has broken from the CP. Clark was a Gatesite. The rank and file of the CP feared that he was trying to lead them into the "swamp of State Department socialism." Clark's article of resignation confirmed their fears. "The militants are recoiling from the Gatesites and are either tending toward the Fosterites or dropping out of activity altogether," wrote Murry last winter.

What should be our policy? Expose Clark, while relentlessly stepping up the fight against Foster! Gates is a product of Fosterite ideology, which in no way is distinguished from orthodox Stalinism (if such a term can be employed). Fosterism inevitably brings about Gatesism. The liquidation of Stalinism into bourgeois reformism -- that is what Trotsky predicted long ago. Our appeal to the militants in the CP must be based not only on a ruthless struggle against Fosterism, but against its end product, Gatesism, the tendency towards capitulation to imperialism. To appeal to the latter against the former will only lead us into a morass.

Unfortunately, that is exactly what Comrade Weiss proceeds to do. He in effect transforms Clark from a Stalinist renegade turned bourgeois-reformist, into a desirable candidate for "revolutionary socialist regroupment." To paint up Clark as a would-be revolutionary socialist when he has obviously embraced imperialism, is not only to do a disservice to the Party; it is to close the door of the Party to revolutionary militants in the CP who know Clark's role only too well. To do that is to tighten the reins of the Foster group on the remaining rank and file under his influence, and thereby help not only Foster and Khrushchev, but Wall Street as well. Such is the meaning of Comrade Weiss' article on Clark. It takes a concrete case to show up the actual meaning of a political generalization. It points up sharply the meaning of this whole regroupment business.

As long ago as November 5, 1956, at a PC meeting when I

presented a resolution together with Comrades Grey and Flint on the Hungarian insurrection, in the course of a speech I stated that it was not possible to have in the next period, a genuine regroupment of revolutionary socialists, because all the other tendencies in the labor movement were moving to the Right, and the net effect of the Khrushchev revelations was, under the existing circumstances, to plunge the Stalinist movement further along the path of bourgeois reformism, rather than a break in the direction of revolutionary Marxism. In the absence of a militant resurgence of American labor, based on new catastrophes of either an economic, political or military character, or new developments abroad, no serious regroupment of revolutionary elements could take place on a programmatic basis.

Also, that our orientation should be to redouble our efforts in an assault against the Stalinist leadership, and attempt to win the militant rank and file away from the Fosterites. To do this effectively, we must make it crystal clear that we are in no way holding out a hand to the Gatesite leaders -- to these capitulators to imperialism who had shown their political physiognomy before the Hungarian insurrection.

In a memorandum submitted to the Convention last Spring, I summed up my view of regroupment in point 10:

"Regroupment -- No regroupment on a revolutionary Marxist basis is possible under present conditions because the general tendency among all the so-called socialist groupings is to the Right. They are not the emerging visage of new resurgent radicalism, but rather the rear of an old one."

I deliberately put this in the form of a prognosis, and voted for the majority resolution, so as to make sure that my position could in no way be interpreted as obstructive of any effort the Party may make concretely to reach the mass of disillusioned workers in the Stalinist movement.

However, ever since the regroupment process started, it has become more and more clear to me that the objective role of the so-called "regroupers" -- this motley crew of ex-Stalinists, ex-Trotskyists, Pacifists, Social Democrats and God-Knows-What -- is not to resuscitate the class consciousness of the socialist-minded workers, but to entrap them -- to push them on some sort of puerile and harmless non-class struggle, non-Marxist and non-Leninist "socialism" -- the type of socialism that is perfectly acceptable to the bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, I am for participation in it for purposes of weaning away the militants from these renegades. But our participation has to be based on a merciless, persistent and consistent struggle to expose them publicly for what they are. This does not at all mean non-participation in concrete cases where civil liberties or other forms of working class action are possible, or debates where our attitudes are clear on the fundamental issues.

Comrade Weiss' article is evidence of a conciliatory attitude to all those tendencies in the labor movement which it is our duty to mercilessly and publicly expose.

Comradely

/s/ Sam Marcy

Buffalo
9/25/57

November 22, 1957

TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

Re: Howard Fast

The Militant, by printing the two excerpts from Howard Fast's "Writer and Commissar," November 11th and 18th, tends to build up Fast's political reputation, when the main job should be to expose him.

Howard Fast, like Joseph Clark, broke from the CP in order to adapt himself more comfortably to imperialism. This is perfectly obvious from his writings, from his press interviews, and from his demeanor on TV. And it is also clear from the excerpts published in the Militant.

Fast was a bourgeois liberal who became a Stalinist. He is now once again a bourgeois liberal, or more precisely at the moment, a bourgeois Stalinoid liberal, with a sentimental socialistic goal that no "man of good will," not even Eisenhower, Dulles, or Eastland could possibly oppose: namely the "total brotherhood of man, the world-wide entity of love and creativity." (November 11th, Militant.)

It is true that the second excerpt gives some interesting material on what has been going on in the CP. But this material could be passed on to our readers without dignifying Fast's petty bourgeois laments with extensive coverage in the Militant. His theme -- "I was betrayed; I was a puppet; but now I am a man," with all its breast-beating tone, would at least have some justification, if it meant that now he wanted to be a revolutionist. (It would be too much to expect that he would know how to be one.) But it is clear that this is not the case.

The mistake of printing no editorial comment on the first excerpt was corrected at the time of the second, November 18th. The editorial states that we have differences with Fast, and mentions the question of co-existence. There is another and more important difference: the world revolution. The most glaring and fundamental difference with Trotskyism in these excerpts is Fast's rejection of the world revolution. For example:

"There is nothing conceivable of creation in the Soviet Union that its people, the workers and engineers and scientists, the teachers and artists -- cannot create.

"Rid of the parasitic burden of the Communist Party, given a democratic government under their industrial base, they could in short order turn their land into a garden of plenty. ...

"History appears to have spelled out the finish of the Communist Party and perhaps the dawn of socialist democracy and humanism. But only the peoples of the lands ruled by the Communist Party can decide the issue." (Militant, November 11th.)

This is a formula for socialism-in-one country. One of the main reasons the Soviet workers did not get rid of the bureaucracy and support Trotsky was precisely because the bureaucracy promised them a "garden of plenty" at home, while Trotsky offered them further struggle and a perspective of greater sacrifices for the success of the world revolution, without which, Trotsky said, their own "garden of plenty" would never be realized.

When the Soviet workers eliminate the bureaucracy, the surplus now stolen from the state will be divided among the whole population in a renascent equalitarianism. But that will be all the workers will get in the way of material advantages for quite a period. The elimination of bureaucratic mismanagement will be a more intricate and ponderous thing than it would have been in the thirties. The workers will correct it by wholly new planning, complete re-training of administrators, etc. In the meantime, there are some much greater stresses on the economy than the bureaucratic mismanagement, great as that is. And under a revolutionary workers government, these stresses would be increased rather than decreased.

A revolutionary government will not spend less than the bureaucracy on the upkeep and expansion of the armed forces. It will not send less supplies to China. It will not send less to the Mideast or to Eastern Europe. On the contrary, being internationalist, it will more likely increase its aid to those countries, and greatly step up the aid to nationalist Africa as well.

Moreover, the new leadership would follow an international revolutionary policy, and it would undoubtedly have the following and devotion of at least the millions in Asia and Africa and Europe who now follow Moscow. Therefore, revolutions which are now artificially held back, would break out overnight. The regenerated workers state would have to strain itself to the utmost to aid these revolutions. We call the workers of the world first to a struggle, and only later to Utopia.

Of course, it is always in order to talk about the socialist goal, and in the midst of the struggle, too. If the poets can describe it more vividly than the warriors, so much the better. But our main theoretical contention against this particular poet (Fast) and his former friends is that they either blur over or deny the necessity of the world struggle, they base themselves statically on the Soviet example, and therefore, they find it easy to betray the world struggle.

But perhaps it is unfair to hold Fast to the full theoretical implications of the sentences I have quoted? After all, we must recognize he has just emerged from the theoretical prison of Stalinism, must we not? After all, Fast is a novelist and lyrical type rather than a precise political, is he not? This is generally true, but his lyricism about the Soviet political revolution (for that appears to be his meaning to the extent one can make it out) is matched very strangely with his attitude toward the revolution against capitalism.

In the very same work (second excerpt, November 18th) describing the feeling of relief and freedom that swept over him after the 20th Congress, he adds:

"I wrote about my love and admiration for my own native land, the United States, and comrades of twenty and thirty years in the party came to me with tears in their eyes to thank me."

He is obviously not speaking about his enjoyment of fishing trips or ball games in the United States. He is making a political point. And he drives it home by referring to the attitude of other CP members as well. Of course, Fast could be referring to the workers of the United States. But he does not say so. Nor does he say he hates the capitalists of the United States. It is not necessary to be "fomenting" class hatred at every moment of course. But since he desires to show that he loves the United States more than the bad Stalinists do, he cannot prove he is more radical than they, unless he loves the workers more and the capitalists less.

No doubt he looks to the "brotherhood of man and the world-wide entity of love and creativity" to permeate the United States as well as the rest of the world. But whereas he wants to "get rid of the parasitic burden of the Communist Party" in the Soviet Union (which will of course entail a little bloodshed), no such harsh note of action obtrudes itself in his "love and admiration for...the United States."

Yet he felt impelled to speak about the United States in the same essay in which he dealt with the political (?) revolution in the Soviet Union. But if he feels that the collaborationist bureaucracy had been unfairly compelling him to oppose US capitalism during the Cold War, what would he think about the Trotskyists, who are not opposed to U.S. capitalism conjuncturally or diplomatically, like the bureaucracy, but fundamentally and irreconcilably, as proletarian revolutionists?

Everybody and his brother is suddenly (apparently) agreeing with the SWP slogan of political revolution in the USSR. But this slogan is utterly reactionary outside the context of the world socialist revolution -- and utterly hypocritical, cowardly and class-collaborationist, when peddled by an American who is not at the same time clearly for the American Revolution.

To the Soviet workers, the bureaucracy is an obstacle to a more democratic, more socialistic type of state. But to the American workers, the Soviet bureaucracy is an obstacle to the American socialist revolution. An American Communist Party member who now wants to overthrow the Soviet bureaucracy has indeed made progress. But only if he wants that end in order to fight American imperialism more effectively. But if he publishes this brave new desire, taking care to embroider it innocently with "the brotherhood of man" and love and admiration for the United States, he is simply a scoundrel.

Fast tells some truths about Stalinism. But there are thousands of reporters and hundreds of bourgeois scholars who have written oceans of words, and all more or less true, about Stalinism. We don't print these writers. Why print Fast?

The net effect on our readers is not to receive more education on Stalinism -- but to assume that the Militant in spite of "differences" applauds the stand of Fast, gives him a slap on the back, a word of encouragement, and a wisp of hope that he might -- who knows? -- become a Trotskyist.

And, of course, this last is absolutely fantastic and diametrically opposite his real course, which is to the Right.

Gross.

A FOOTNOTE ON REGROUPMENT

-- by V. Grey

A principal, although now almost forgotten, feature of the 20th Congress was a turn toward a new "popular frontism." This was supposed to begin with a unity and if possible, even a fusion, with the Social-Democrats. Communist parties all over the world made overtures to the Socialist parties in 1956.

The most awkward of these was the effort made by the American CP. Consider for example the Carnegie Hall symposium held by Muste in the summer of 1956 -- the biggest of the post-20th Congress symposiums in America. At this meeting Eugene Dennis humbly endured a vicious red-baiting, as well as Stalinist baiting, attack from Norman Thomas, and then meekly spoke about the possibility of getting together with Thomas later on, even if Thomas wouldn't consent right away. The period of this kind of approach to the SP was necessarily a short one because of the bourgeoisie's -- and consequently the Social Democrats' -- intransigence.

Moscow changed its line back again under bourgeois pressure, and in America, W.Z. Foster began making gestures against orientation to the SP. (The cynical tactic of support to the Democratic Party is of course another matter.) But a large number of CP members were now determined to get some kind of bourgeois-radical respectability -- not now as a stooge-tactic for Moscow, but as a new orientation for themselves as individuals. Unlike their former leaders in Moscow, these individuals did not turn away from the SP orientation when the bourgeoisie and its Social Democratic lackeys repulsed them. They conceived a parallel orientation. They dreamt of some new party more "American" than the CP, but not quite so far to the right as the SP. It was to be a mass party, far bigger than the now discredited and "sectarian" CP with its paltry few thousands. These people called this concept "Regroupment." And neither the revelations about Stalin, nor the events in Hungary had any fundamental connection with the concept.

But the CP Regroupers (Gates, etc.) were doomed to failure, just as the Bartell-Clarke regroupers of an earlier vintage were doomed. -- Why?

An ironic aspect of liquidationist opportunism in the modern American radical movement is that it has had no place to liquidate into. It is one kind of opportunism that hasn't paid off. Consider the sad state of the reformist SP. It is 100% American, never witch-hunted nor red-baited. It is very easy to belong to, but hardly anybody belongs to it. And all those who have started out to build anything remotely resembling that petty bourgeois melange have so far ended in oblivion.

The truth is that without a real upsurge and radicalization of the American masses there is absolutely no room and no possibility in America for any sizeable "socialist" (Norman Thomas type) or even "centrist" formation. The petty bourgeois radicals who are looking for an "American" radicalism corresponding to "American" traditions are today compelled to adapt themselves to the dominant American tradition, which today is not a radical one.

Trotskyism itself exists in America chiefly as a heritage of the great Russian Revolution. And Stalinism exists chiefly as an instrument of the degeneration of that same revolution. The drive to internationalize these two opposite poles of the Russian Revolution, and to integrate them with the native American class struggle -- this drive is the only real radical force which has survived the

long witch-hunt. "Socialism" as well as "Communism" still seems un-American to the American masses. Norman Thomas may be accepted by the State Department, but even his Socialist Party is at this point still foreign to the American workers.

(This, incidentally, is why the subjective task of taking socialism to the workers is even more important in America than it was in Russia at the time Lenin wrote "What Is To Be Done." We must plant new roots in the proletariat lest the next inevitable upsurge be again blind and leaderless.)

The tendency of people leaving Stalinism at this time has been in the direction of political inactivity, because they cannot see a revolutionary perspective for America, and they tend to fall victim to one or another aspect of "American Exceptionalism." These people need the inspiration of great mass movements to revive their tired-out optimism and repair their jaded appetite for struggle.

We should try unceasingly to win some of these individuals to Trotskyism before they have lost all their spark. We should try constantly to re-orient them to the class struggle. We should patiently explain the world-revolutionary outlook of Trotskyism to them. But the only "Regroupment" that can be in order at this time is a regroupment of whatever would-be revolutionaries there are among these radicals into our own party. The time for fusions and entries is still in the future.

If there is no early labor party development, then some non-Stalinist, non-Trotskyist, "American" socialist formation may have a large growth during a renaissance of labor. In this event, we would shape our tactics accordingly. But at present, there is no room and no possibility for such a development on the American scene. The creation of a semi-Trotskyist party, for example, will not attract appreciably more recruits at this time than a fully Trotskyist party. Some comrades may think that if there is no centrist grouping for us to work in, that we should turn the SWP itself into such a centrist grouping. Others may think that the SWP should merge with the Guardian group on a new centrist program. But to take either one of these two courses would be wrong. It would not even be clear-headed opportunism. It would be unthinking adventurism, and in today's conditions would end in catastrophe in spite of good resolutions to retain Trotskyism as an ideology. The demise of the Bartell-Clarke liquidators, our original "Regroupers," should provide a sharp warning.

May 1, 1958

Los Angeles, California
November 3, 1957

Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

Like Comrade Marcy, I too note with satisfaction the proposal of the Secretariat to initiate a discussion on the regroupment developments. It is obvious from Marcy's contribution to this discussion (his letter to the PC of Sept. 25, 1957) that serious misunderstandings exist and need to be clarified for the whole party.

Since the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union broke up Moscow's monolithic control of world Stalinism by creating vast questioning and opposition currents within this movement, we have had the first opportunity in our history to approach such currents and influence them with our program and theory. During this same period opportunities to do fruitful political work in mass movement have been limited and in many cases non-existent thereby freeing us to concentrate on the Communist Party and its periphery with the least amount of distraction. Where our branches went into the regroupment work with a correct understanding of our perspectives the results have been satisfactory.

Very early in the regroupment period we said we did not expect any large-scale mergers of parties and groups. We noted, like Marcy, that all the other tendencies among the radical parties were moving to the Right. But we also noted that individuals and groups within these parties were setting themselves up against their own leaderships and looking around for new ideas and in very many cases examining our ideas for the first time. It was towards these elements that we made a turn.

We see the regroupment atmosphere lasting a long time, that is, it will remain possible for us to approach the other radical parties and to influence some of their people for a period of years. Until political events once more cut through the radical tendencies, like they did in 1917, and compel a re-division all up and down the line, it should remain possible for us to continue to exert a strong influence upon new layers of radical thinking elements that are at present affiliated with or sympathetic to other organizations.

No one in our ranks, I hope, will contest the fact that out of the developments in the regroupment work of the last year and one-half, we have been the only gainers. We did not expect a large faction to organize itself in the C.P. and fight for our program, but we did recruit individuals and smaller groups that are a valuable addition to our cadre. We have carved out an impressive sympathetic periphery for our party all the way from well known national figures to people who have been out of the C.P. for many years while remaining friendly towards it. Out of all the events, dissident groupings in non-CP circles have formed and have moved closer to us. These are highly gratifying developments.

We should anticipate new layers of radicals that we have not yet reached to come out of our persistent work directed towards them. Coming political events will assure us a hearing from presently indifferent and even hostile people. But if we want to get a hearing and to recruit, we must conduct ourselves in a certain manner.

Marcy's position on this question, as he sums it up in point 10 of his memorandum submitted to the last convention and which he quotes in full on page 9 of his letter of September 25 to the P.C., represents sterility in current politics. It is a typically sectarian and ultimatic view of the entire regroupment question. Of course, Marcy quickly states that "...my position could in no way be interpreted as obstructive of any effort the Party may make concretely to reach the mass of disillusioned workers in the Stalinist movement." To be entirely fair, it must also be mentioned that Marcy states he is in favor of participating in the regroupment process.

Superficially, it appears that we and Marcy both view the regroupment process similarly. We both say we do not expect any large-scale mergers or unifications; we both say we want to win the militants away from Stalinism and social democracy. But the similarity is only in the appearance; in reality we approach the work from opposite sides.

Our approach has been to patiently explain, to get on friendly terms with those radical elements that show any signs of questioning their past and present course. We do not expect anyone to make a leap from Stalinism or social democracy to a complete Trotskyist position. We expect it to take some time, many explanations, discussion, debate, study, etc., before anyone schooled in Stalinism or reformism can come over to us. Unfortunately, Marcy doesn't see it that way.

In point 10 of his memorandum he states "...the general tendency among all the so-called socialist groupings is to the Right." That is true enough so far as the leaderships of these groupings is concerned but how about the others? How does Marcy explain a socialist grouping that emerged out of the YSL? What is its direction? To the Right or towards us? How about our recruits from the CP and its periphery? These require some explanation that Marcy seems to avoid.

Marcy has imprisoned himself in the formula that "No regroupment on a revolutionary Marxist basis is possible under present conditions." With this as a guiding line, people who are now for the first time giving us a hearing become in his words "this motley crew of ex-Stalinists, ex-Trotskyists, Pacifists, Social Democrats and God-Knows-What." Naturally, it follows that as soon as someone breaks with any of the foregoing it is incumbent upon us to denounce him as an imperialist agent or a Stalinist dupe unless by some fluke he has made a direct leap to Trotskyism. Again unfortunately, life teaches us not to expect to pick ripe Trotskyists from Stalinist and reformist trees.

What attitude should we take towards people who begin to question their past political course and break with their traditional organizations? Should we denounce them as soon as they have made a public statement? Or should we seize upon anything in such a statement from which we can try to draw them closer to us? If we follow the first course, we will convince everyone who is watching that we are sectarian and impossible to work with. But if we follow the latter course, give ourselves a chance to influence someone who has just broken with his party, some progress is possible although not guaranteed. It may turn out that some, even many, of those leaving the CP will wind up in the camp of imperialism. But it hardly follows from this that it is our duty to help them get there.

Our party has followed developments in other radical organizations closely in the last year and a half. In our press, we have reported these developments and commented on them. We have to borrow a phrase from Marcy, "mercilessly" exposed

their shortcomings of all kinds. In addition, no one has charged that we have altered our fundamental positions on any questions in order to accommodate ourselves to any tendencies in the regroupment. This is a decisive question. If it could be demonstrated that in our general activity and our propaganda we have watered down our class struggle position on any question, we would have to reconsider what we have been doing. But no one has or can demonstrate this.

I mentioned that we have been the only gainers among the radical parties in the period since February 1956. But that is only one side of the picture. To my knowledge we have not lost a single person to any of the other parties or groups. I have not heard of a single member of our party who wants to join the CP or go with Shachtman to the Socialist Party. Is this an insignificant fact to be ignored? I don't think so. On the contrary, it speaks volumes if it is properly understood. Among other things, it shows clearly enough that there is no conciliatory mood towards Stalinism or social democracy in our ranks.

Marcy reminds us that "Marx was above all a fighter." True enough. But Marx was also a thinker. In fact, he was, as we should be, a thinker before he was a fighter. It is necessary to think first, if we are to act correctly. It is not just a question of whom to fight but of how, with what methods. For decades our method towards the CP, dictated by objective circumstances, was of a certain kind. Now, with different objective conditions, where the CP is in the process of disintegration, where other tendencies such as the Shachtmanites, are in convulsive crises, where some of their members and periphery are open to our ideas, other methods are required.

Fortunately, our party has met the new opportunities correctly and has gained enormously as a result. More gains will come to us in the future as new, untouched elements begin to react to coming political events. Every new addition we can make to our cadre in this period will be worth 100, perhaps 1,000 when the radicalization of the mass of American workers comes.

Comradely,

/s/ Milton Alvin

Milton Alvin