

DEFENDING THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY AND ITS PERSPECTIVES

DOCUMENTS AND SPEECHES OF THE 1952-1953 FACTIONAL
STRUGGLE AND SPLIT IN THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

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Introduction

Is it realistic for the members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance to think that they can build a mass revolutionary socialist party capable of abolishing U.S. capitalism in our time?

This was the essential issue in dispute in the 1952-53 fight in the Socialist Workers Party. The question is obviously as relevant today as it was then. If Bert Cochran and his supporters were correct in their contention that such a perspective is utopian there would be little basis for changing that estimate today. And that is why students of the politics and history of the SWP must study that fight with the utmost care. For the entire program of the SWP today is predicated, as it was then, on the basic premise that the goal of an American socialist revolution in our time is a realizable one.

The great merit of this present compilation is that it deals with this basic question and also goes beyond it. It is a gold mine of knowledge on the vital question of how to build an effective revolutionary socialist party and what such a party should be like in program, composition and leadership. Taken together with James P. Cannon's book, The Struggle for a Proletarian Party, it is an incomparable handbook of revolutionary socialist organization.

Students of the history of the American Trotskyist movement generally approach the Cochran fight after they have studied the 1940 split with Shachtman and Burnham. I think this is a good approach in that a study of the Cochran fight helps to round out and give balance to the lesson of the Shachtman fight.

The key lesson of the Shachtman fight is that if the revolutionary party is petit bourgeois in social composition it is highly susceptible to the anti-Marxist pressures which are generated in capitalist society and are felt most acutely by the middle class.

As insurance against a repetition of the Shachtman fight, Trotsky and the SWP leadership called for a drive to proletarianize the party. This was clearly a correct and necessary move. But the Cochran fight twelve years later demonstrated that even this is no final guarantee of the revolutionary integrity of the movement. This fight showed that even revolutionary-minded workers, with long experience in the class struggle were also susceptible to anti-Marxist pressures and capable of succumbing to such pressures.

It is good to absorb this lesson of the Cochran fight, particularly for those who may tend to idealize the working class and not understand that it is composed of many stratas and that there are privileged layers of the working class who can be as bourgeoisified in their consciousness as the worst petit bourgeois. And, as the Cochran fight demonstrated, such petit bourgeois moods are perfectly capable of infecting worker cadres in

the revolutionary socialist movement, particularly if the class struggle has been at a low ebb for a long period.

This question has relevance for today when the protracted ebb of labor militancy has convinced many on the left that it is utopian to look to the labor movement as a force for social progress. It is not the purpose of this introduction to refute that completely false notion. But suffice it to say that it can not be correctly and effectively refuted by being unaware of, or closing one's eyes to, the very real problems that confront the workers' movement in a protracted period of relative class stability.

Cannon explains how to combat the effect of such class quiescence within the revolutionary movement when he writes:

"The revolutionary movement is, under the best of conditions, a hard fight.... It is not easy to persist in the struggle, to hold on, to stay tough and fight it out year after year without victory.... That requires theoretical conviction and historical perspective as well as character. And, in addition to that, it requires association with others in a common party."

For the revolutionary socialists who are immersed in the antiwar movement today, the worth of this lesson should be apparent. The record of the contribution of the SWP and YSA in building that movement is based in large measure on the fact that their members go into the movement with a broad political perspective, one that makes it possible for them to combat those who would dilute the struggle.

Their ties with the party and YSA also keep these activists from becoming lost in the antiwar movement in the sense of losing the revolutionary perspective and the confidence in the future that is so essential for building the movement. It also arms them against the periodic pessimism of the timid or inexperienced who are present in the antiwar movement in not insignificant numbers.

In this connection, also, the resolution on American Stalinism is of particular value. A concise picture of the degeneration of the Communist Party, it throws light on that party's role in the antiwar movement today.

Cannon's speech on "Factional Struggle and Party Leadership" is, in my opinion, one of his most valuable contributions. I consider it indispensable for those who aspire to participate in the leadership of the movement. His explanation of how a serious, principled politician approaches the problem of differences within the movement, understands the role of splits as well as unifications, as part of the process of building the movement and, at the same time, takes the most

sober and responsible attitude toward the problem of splits, deserves reading and rereading.

Here too we have a further elaboration of the problem of building the revolutionary socialist party -- the crucial problem of leadership and the conscious approach that is demanded if an effective leadership is to be forged. Here Cannon draws on his long experience in the labor movement, the early Communist movement and the Trotskyist movement whose development he so decisively shaped. (As invaluable further reading on this question of factionalism and party leadership, I strongly recommend his book, The First Ten Years of American Communism.)

Cannon's insistence on the need for a united, inclusive, representative leadership -- a team -- has already proven its worth. There is no question in my mind that the American Trotskyist movement could never have survived the long years of isolation and remained an effective, viable force if it had not built this kind of a leadership. The lessons that Cannon drew from his experience in assembling that leadership are to be found in these pages. You will find it a rewarding study.

Harry Ring
June 20, 1966

Trade Unionists And Revolutionists

by James P. Cannon

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Spring 1954

A speech made at a meeting of the Majority Caucus of the New York Local on May 11, 1953, in the course of the factional struggle within the Socialist Workers Party against the ideological followers of Pablo.

For several months we have been discussing the contrasting proposals of the two sides in our internal party conflict. It is time now, I think, to go a step further; to advance the discussion to an examination of the basic causes of the fight. You will recall that Trotsky did this in the 1939-40 fight with Burnham and Shachtman. At a certain stage of that struggle, after the positions of both sides were made clear - not only what they had to say but what they didn't say, and how they acted, and the atmosphere of the fight, and everything else - when it was fairly clear what was really involved Trotsky wrote his article "Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the Socialist Workers Party."

That article summed up his judgment of the Burnham-Shachtman faction as it had revealed itself in the fire of the struggle - when it had become clear that we were not dealing, as sometimes happens, with a mere difference of opinion among co-thinkers on a given point or two which might be settled by fraternal discussion and debate. Burnham and his supporters - and his dupes - were moved by a profound inner compulsion to break with the doctrine and tradition of the party. They carried their revolt against the party to the point of frenzy, as petty-bourgeois factionalists always do. They became impervious to any argument, and Trotsky undertook to explain the social basis of their faction and their factional frenzy. We must do the same now once again.

The social groupings in the present opposition are not quite the same as in 1940. In that fight it was a case of a few demoralized intellectuals based on a genuine petty-bourgeois social composition of a section of the party, especially in New York, but also in Chicago and some other parts of the country - a petty-bourgeois concentration revolting against the proletarian line of the party.

The social composition of the party today is far better and provides a much narrower base of support for an opportunist faction. As a result of the split with the Burnhamites and our deliberate concentration on trade union work, the party today is far more proletarian in its composition, especially outside New York. Despite all that, the real social composition of the party is by no means uniform; it reflects some of the changes which have taken place in the American working class. This has been strikingly demonstrated in the line-up of the party trade unionists in our factional struggle. The revolutionists among them - the big majority - on the

one side, and the conservatized elements -- a small minority -- on the other, have chosen different sides instinctively and almost automatically.

Since the consolidation of the CIO unions and the 13-year period of war and post-war boom, a new stratification has taken place within the American working class, and particularly and conspicuously in the CIO unions. Our party, which is rooted in the unions, reflects that stratification too. The worker who has soaked up the general atmosphere of the long prosperity and begun to live and think like a petty-bourgeois is a familiar figure in the country at large. He has even made his appearance in the Socialist Workers Party as a ready-made recruit for an opportunist faction.

In our 1952 Convention Resolution, we explained the situation in the American working class as a whole in the two sections, "The Causes of Labor Conservatism and the Premises for a New Radicalization" and "Perspectives of a New Radicalization." In my report at the National Convention, I called these two sections "the heart of the resolution" and centered my report around them.

It appears to me now, in the light of the conflict in the party and its real causes which are now manifest, that those sections of the Convention Resolution, dealing with the class as a whole require further elaboration and amplification. We need a more precise examination of the stratifications within the working class, which are barely touched there, and of the projection of these stratifications in the unions, in the various inner-union tendencies, and even in our own party. This, I believe, is the key to the otherwise inexplicable riddle of why one proletarian section of the party, even though it is a small minority, supports a capitulatory opportunist faction against the proletarian-revolutionary line and leadership of the party.

Examples from History

This apparent contradiction - this division of the working-class forces - in party factional struggle is not new. In the classical faction struggles of our international movement since the time of Marx and Engels there has always been a division, in the party itself, between the different strata of workers. The proletarian left wing by no means ever had all the workers, and the opportunist petty-bourgeois wing was never without some working-class support, that is, working-class in the technical sense of wage workers. The revisionist intellectuals and the trade union opportunists always nestled together in the right wing of the party. In the SWP at the present time we have a repetition of the classical line-up which characterized the struggle of left and right in the Second International before the First World War.

Trotsky told us on one of our visits with him - I think he also wrote it somewhere - that there was a real social division between the two factions of the original Social Democratic Party of Russia, which later became separate parties. The Mensheviks, he said, had nearly all the intellectuals. With a few exceptions,

the only intellectuals Lenin had were those whom the party had trained, a good deal like our own worker-intellectuals for the greater part. The intellectual - I mean the professional intellectual of the Burnham type, the man from the professor's chair, from the universities - was a rarity on Lenin's side, whereas the Mensheviks had shoals of them.

In addition, the Mensheviks had most of the skilled workers, who are always the privileged workers. The printers union was Menshevik even through the revolution. The railroad workers' bureaucracy tried to paralyze the revolution; it was only by military force and the aid of a minority that the Bolsheviks were able to prevent the Menshevik railroad workers' officialdom from employing their strategic position against the revolution.

Trotsky said that the Mensheviks also had most of the older workers. Age, as you know, is associated with conservatism. (In general, that is, but not always; there are exceptions to the rule. There are two different ways of measuring age. In ordinary life you measure it by the calendar; but in revolutionary politics you measure it by the mind and the will and the spirit -- and you don't always get the same result.)

On the other hand, while the older workers, the skilled and the privileged, were with the Mensheviks, the unskilled workers and the youth were with the Bolsheviks; that is, those of them who were politicalized. That was the line of division between the factions. It was not merely a question of the arguments and the program; it was the social impulses, petty-bourgeois on one side, proletarian on the other, which determined their allegiance.

The same line-up took place in Germany. The pre-war German Social Democracy in its heyday had a powerful bloc of opportunist parliamentarians, Marxologists who utilized their scholastic training and their ability to quote Marx by the yard to justify an opportunist policy. They were supported not merely by the petty shopkeepers, of whom there were many, and the trade union bureaucrats. They also had a solid base of support in the privileged stratum of the aristocracy of labor in Germany. The trade union opportunists in the German Social Democratic Party supported Bernstein's revisionism without bothering to read his articles. They didn't need to read them; they just felt that way. The most interesting facts on this point are cited by Peter Gay in his book on Bernstein and his revisionist movement, entitled The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism.

All through the pre-war fight over revisionism, then through the war and post-war days, through 1923 and 1933, the skilled, privileged trade unionists were the solid base of support of the opportunist Social Democratic leaders -- while the communist revolutionaries, from the time of Leibknecht and Luxemburg all the way down to the fascist catastrophe in 1933, were the youth, the unemployed and the unskilled, less privileged workers.

If you will go back and read Lenin again, in case you've forgotten it, you will see how Lenin explained the degeneration

of the Second International, and its eventual betrayal in the First World War, precisely by its opportunism based upon the adaptation of the party to the conservative impulses and demands of the bureaucracy and aristocracy of labor.

We had the same thing in the U.S., although we never had a Social Democracy in the European sense and the working class was never politically organized here as it was there. The organized labor movement, up to the Thirties, was largely restricted to a privileged aristocracy of labor -- as Debs and DeLeon used to call it -- of skilled craftsmen, who got better wages and had preferred positions, "job trusts" and so on. The chief representative of this conservative, privileged craft union stratum was Gompers.

On the other side, there was the great mass of the basic proletariat, the unskilled and semi-skilled, the mass production workers, the foreign-born and the jobless youth. They were without benefit of organization, without privileges, and outcasts of society. It was not without reason that they were more radical than the others. Nobody paid any attention to them except the revolutionists and radicals. Only the IWW of Haywood and St. John, Debs and the left Socialists voiced their bitter grievances, did the organizing work and led the strikes of the mass production workers in those days. If the official labor bureaucracy intervened in the spontaneous strikes of the unorganized it was usually to break them up and sell them out.

The officials of the skilled unions did not welcome the great upsurge of the unorganized workers in the Thirties. But they could not prevent it. When the spontaneous strikes and drives for organization could no longer be ignored, the AFL began to assign "organizers" to the various industries -- to steel, rubber, auto, etc. They were sent, however, not to lead the workers in a struggle but to control them, to prevent the consolidation of self-acting unions. They actually wouldn't permit the auto workers in convention to elect their own officials, insisting that the AFL appoint them "provisionally." The same with the rubber workers and other new industrial unions.

These new unions had to split with the conservative labor fakers of the AFL before they could consolidate unions of their own. The drives behind the 1934-37 upsurge were the bitter and irreconcilable grievances of the workers; their protest against mistreatment, speed-up, insecurity: the revolt of the pariahs against the pariah status.

This revolt, which no bureaucracy could contain, was spear-headed by new people -- the young mass production workers, the new, young militants whom nobody had ever heard of. They were the real creators of the CIO. This revolt of the "men from nowhere" reached its high tide in the sit-down strikes of 1937. The workers' victory in these battles definitely established the CIO and secured stability of the new unions through the seniority clause.

Conservatizing Influences

It is now 16 years since the sit-down strikes made the new CIO unions secure by the seniority clause. These 16 years of union security, and 13 years of uninterrupted war and post-war prosperity, have wrought a great transformation in the unprivileged workers who made the CIO.

The seniority clause, like everything else in life, has revealed a contradictory quality. By regulating the right to employment through time of service on the job, it secures the union militant against arbitrary discrimination and lay-offs. It is an absolute necessity for union security. That is the positive side of the seniority clause. But, at the same time, it also gradually creates a sort of special interest in the form of steadier employment for those unionists who have been longest in the shop. That is its negative side.

In time, with the stretching out of their seniority rights, and their upgrading to better jobs, a process of transformation in the status of the original union militants has taken place. In the course of 16 years they have secured more or less steady employment, even in times of slack work. They are, under the rules, the last to be laid off and the first to be rehired. And in most cases, they have better jobs than newcomers to the shop. All of this, combined with war and post-war prosperity, has changed their material position and, to a certain extent, their social status.

The pioneer militants of the CIO unions are 16 years older than they were in 1937. They are better off than the ragged and hungary sit-down strikers of 1937; and many of them are 16 times softer and more conservative. This privileged section of the unions, formerly the backbone of the left wing, is today the main social base of the conservative Reuther bureaucracy. They are convinced far less by Reuther's clever demagogy than by the fact that he really articulates their own conservatized moods and patterns of thought.

But these conservatized ex-militants are only part of the membership of the CIO, and I don't think that our resolution at the Convention deals specifically and adequately with that fact. In these mass production industries, which are real slave pens and hell holes, there are many others. There is a mass of younger workers, who have none of these benefits and privileges and no vested interest in the piled-up seniority rights. They are the human material for the new radicalization. The revolutionary party, looking to the future, must turn its primary attention to them.

If we, counting on a new upsurge in the labor movement, look to those who led it 16 years ago, we could indeed draw a gloomy picture. Not only are they not in a radical mood now; they are not apt to become the spearhead of a new radicalization. That will take youth, and hunger, and raggedness and bitter discontent with all the conditions of life.

We must look to the new people if, as I take it, we are thinking in terms of the coming American revolution, and not limiting our vision to the prospect of a new shake-up in the bureaucracy and caucus combinations with slick "progressive" fakers for little aims.

This new stratification in the new unions is a feature which the party can no longer ignore. All the more so, since we now see it directly reflected in our party. A number of party members in the auto union belong to this privileged upper stratum. That's the first thing you have to recognize. Some of the best militants, the best stalwarts of the party in the old times, have been affected by the changed conditions of their own lives and by their new environment.

They see the old militants in the unions, who formerly cooperated with them, growing slower, more satisfied, more conservative. They still mix with these ex-militants socially, and are infected by them. They develop a pessimistic outlook from the reactions they get on every side from these old-timers, and, unknown to themselves, acquire an element of that same conservatism.

That, in my opinion, is the reason why they support a crudely conservative, pessimistic, capitulatory tendency in our internal faction fight. This, I am afraid, is not a misunderstanding on their part. I wish it were, for in that case our task would be easy. The miserable arguments of the Cochranites cannot stand up against Marxist criticism - provided one accepts the criteria of revolutionary Marxism.

But that's the rub. Our conservatized trade unionists no longer accept these criteria. Like many others, who "used to be radicals themselves," they are beginning to talk about our "Theses on the American Revolution" as a "crack-pot" idea. They don't "feel" that way, and nobody can talk them out of the way they do feel.

That - and perhaps a guilty conscience - is the true explanation of their subjectivity, their rudeness and factional frenzy when one tries to argue with them from the principled standpoint of "old Trotskyism." They do not follow Cochran out of exceptional regard for him personally, because they know Cochran. They simply recognize in Cochran, with his capitulatory defeatism and his program of retreat from the fighting arena to a propaganda circle, the authentic spokesman of their own mood of retreat and withdrawal.

Just as the older, more skilled and privileged German trade unionists supported the right against the left, and as their Russian counterparts supported the Mensheviks against the Bolsheviks, the "professional trade unionists" in our party support Cochranism in our fight. And for the same basic reasons.

I, for my part, must frankly admit that I did not see this whole picture at the beginning of the fight. I anticipated that some tired and pessimistic people, who were looking for some

sort of rationalization to slow down or get out of the struggle, would support any kind of an opposition faction which would arise. That happens in every faction fight. But I didn't anticipate the emergence of a conservatized workers' stratum serving as an organized grouping and a social basis for an opportunist faction in the party.

Still less did I expect to see such a grouping strutting around in the party demanding special consideration because they are "trade unionists." What's exceptional about that? There are fifteen million trade unionists in this country, but not quite so many revolutionists. But the revolutionists are the ones who count with us.

Losing Faith in the Party

The revolutionary movement, under the best conditions, is a hard fight, and it wears out a lot of human material. Not for nothing has it been said a thousand times in the past: "The revolution is a devourer of men." The movement in this, the richest and most conservative country in the world, is perhaps the most voracious of all.

It is not easy to persist in the struggle, to hold on, to stay tough and fight it out year after year without victory; and even, in times such as the present, without tangible progress. That requires theoretical conviction and historical perspective as well as character. And, in addition to that, it requires association with others in a common party.

The surest way to lose one's fighting faith is to succumb to one's immediate environment; to see things only as they are now and not as they are changing and must change; to see only what is before one's eyes and imagine that it is permanent. That is the cursed fate of the trade unionist who separates himself from the revolutionary party. In normal times, the trade union, by its very nature, is a culture-broth of opportunism. No trade unionist, overwhelmed by the petty concerns and limited aims of the day, can retain his vision of the larger issues and the will to fight for them without the party.

The revolutionary party can make mistakes, and has made them, but it is never wrong in the fight against grievance-mongers who try to blame the party for their own weaknesses; for their tiredness, their lack of vision, their impulse to quit and to capitulate. The party is not wrong now when it calls this tendency by its right name.

People often act differently as individuals, and give different explanations for their actions, than when they act and speak as groups. When an individual gets tired and wants to quit, he usually says he is tired and he quits; or he just drops out without saying anything at all, and that's all there is to it. That has been happening in our international movement for 100 years.

But when the same kind of people decide as a group to get

out of the line of fire, by getting out of the party, they need the cover of a faction and a "political" rationalization. Any "political" explanation will do, and in any case it is pretty certain to be a phony explanation. That also has been going on for about 100 years.

The present case of the Cochranite trade unionists is no exception to this rule. Out of a clear sky we hear that some "professional trade unionists" are suddenly against us because we are "Stalinophobes," and they are hell-bent for an orientation toward Stalinism. Why, that's the damndest nonsense ever heard! They never had that idea in their heads until this fight started. And how could they? The Stalinists have gotten themselves isolated in the labor movement, and it's poison to touch them. To go looking for the Stalinists is to cut yourself off from the labor movement, and these party "trade unionists" don't want to do that.

The people in Michigan who are hollering for us to make an orientation toward the Stalinists have no such orientation on their own home grounds. And they're perfectly right about that. I don't deny that people like Clarke, Bartell and Frankel have heard voices and seen visions of a gold mine hidden in the Stalinist hills - I will discuss this hallucination at another time - but the Cochranite trade unionists haven't the slightest intention of going prospecting there. They are not even looking in that direction. What's amazing is the insincerity of their support of the orientation toward the Stalinists. That's completely artificial, for factional purposes. No, you have to say the orientation toward Stalinism, as far as the Michigan trade unionists are concerned, is a phony.

What is the next thing we hear? That they are full of "grievances" against the party "regime." I always get suspicious when I hear of grievances, especially from people whom you didn't hear it from before. When I see people revolting against the party, on the ground that they've been badly treated by this terrible regime in our party - which is actually the fairest, most democratic and easy-going regime in the history of the human race - I always remind myself of the words of J. Pierpont Morgan. He said: "Everybody has at least two reasons for what he does - a good reason and the real reason." They've given a good reason for their opposition. Now I want to know what the hell is the real reason.

It can't be the party's hostility to Stalinism, as they say - because the Cochranite trade unionists wouldn't touch the Stalinists with a ten-foot pole, not even if you stood behind them with bayonets and lighted firecrackers under their coat tails.

It can't be the "Third World Congress," concerning which they are suddenly working up a lather. These comrades in Michigan have many admirable qualities, as has been shown in the past, but they're by no means the most internationalist-minded section of the party; not by far. They're not that section of the party most interested in theoretical questions.

The Detroit branch, sad to say, has been most remiss in the teaching and study of Marxist theory, and is now paying a terrible price for it. This branch hasn't got a single class going; no class in Marxism, no class in the party history, no class on the World Congress, or anything else.

So, when they suddenly erupt with the demand that the Third World Congress be nailed to the party's mast-head, I say that's another "good" reason, but it's a phony too.

The real reason is that they are in revolt against the party without fully knowing why. The party, for a young militant, is a necessity valued above everything else. The party was the very life of these militants when they were young and really militant. They didn't care for jobs; they feared no hazards. Like any other first-class revolutionists, they would quit a job at the drop of a hat if the party wanted them to go to another town, wanted them to do this or that. It was always the party first.

The party is the highest prize to the young trade unionist who becomes a revolutionist, the apple of his eye. But to the revolutionist who becomes transformed into a trade unionist -- we have all seen this happen more than once -- the party is no prize at all. The mere trade unionist, who thinks in terms of "union politics" and "power blocs" and little caucuses with little fakers to run for some little office, pushing one's personal interest here and there -- why should he belong to a revolutionary party? For such a person the party is a millstone around his neck, interfering with his success as a "practical" trade union politician. And in the present political situation in the country, it's a danger -- in the union, in the shop and in life in general.

The great majority of the party trade unionists understand all this as well as we do. The vulgar "trade unionists" appeal of the Cochranites only repelled them, for they consider themselves to be revolutionists first and trade unionists second. In other words, they are party men, as all revolutionists are.

I think it's a great tribute to our tradition, to our cadres, to the leadership of our party, that we have succeeded in isolating Cochranism to a narrow section of the party membership. It's a great satisfaction, in these troubled and heavy times, to see the great majority of the party standing firm against all pressures. In the further course of the discussion we will strike still heavier blows and chip off a few more here and there. We don't want to see anybody leave the party if we can help it.

But soul-saving is not our main occupation. We are determined to protect the party from demoralization, and we will do that. We are concerned with individuals only within that framework. The rescue of political derelicts can be left to the Salvation Army. For us the party comes first, and nobody will be allowed to disrupt it.

This fight is of the most decisive importance because the prospect before our party is the prospect of war and all that goes with it. We see the dangers and the difficulties - as well as the great opportunities - which lie ahead of us, and just because of that we want to get the party in shape before the worst blows fall upon us.

The party line and perspectives, and the party leadership, will be settled in this fight for a long time to come. When harder times come, and when new opportunities open up, we don't want to leave any doubt in any comrade's mind as to what the party line is and who the party leaders are. These questions will be settled in this fight.

The Socialist Workers Party has the right, by its program and its record, to aspire to a great future. That's my opinion. That was the opinion of Trotsky. There is a line in the document of the Cochranites that sneers at the 1946 SWP Convention and at the "Theses on the American Revolution" adopted there. It says: "We were children of destiny, at least in our own minds." In that derision of the party's aspiration, the whole pessimistic, capitulatory ideology of Cochranism is contained.

In 1929, when Trotsky was deported to Constantinople, the victory of Stalinism was complete, and he was isolated and almost alone. Outside the Soviet Union there were only about 200 people supporting him in the whole world, and half of them were the forces we had organized in the U.S. Trotsky wrote us a letter at that time in which he hailed our movement in the United States. He said our work was of world historical significance because, in the last analysis, all of the problems of the epoch will be settled on American soil. He said that he didn't know whether a revolution would come here sooner than in other places; but in any case, he said, it was necessary to prepare by organizing the nucleus of the party of the future revolution.

That's the line we have been working on. Our cadres have been raised on that doctrine. When I read in the Cochranite document that cynical dismissal of our revolutionary aspirations, I remembered a speech I made to our young comrades 13 years ago in Chicago. The occasion was our Active Workers Conference, held just a month or so after the death of the Old Man, when everybody felt bereft; when the question in the minds of all, here and all over the world, was whether the movement could survive without Trotsky.

At the end of the Conference I gave a speech and I said to the young activists assembled there: "You are the real men of destiny, for you alone represent the future." In the 1946 Convention Theses we put the same concept.

That has been the position of all our militants who are standing together through this long, hard battle. A young comrade in California, one of the leading party activists, pointed the Cochranite sneer out to me and said: "What about

that? If I didn't think our party has a great future, why should I be willing to devote my life and everything I have to the party?" Anyone who low-rates the party and crosses off its future ought to ask himself what he is doing in the party. Is he here on a visit?

The party demands a lot, and you can't give a lot and risk everything unless you think the party is worth it. The party is worth it, for it is the party of the future. And this party of the future is now once again getting its share of historical luck. Once again, as in 1939-40, it has the opportunity to settle a fundamental conflict in open discussion before a war, on the eve of a war.

Before World War II the party was confronted with a faction which threatened its program and, thereby, its right to exist. We didn't have to jump immediately into the war before the question was settled. We were working in the open while the rest of our comrades in Europe were underground or in concentration camps. We, here in America, were privileged to conduct a debate for the whole International over a period of seven months.

The same thing is happening again now. We ought to recognize this historical luck and take advantage of it. The best way to do this is to extend and amplify the discussion. I will repeat what Comrade Dobbs said, that our aim is not to split the party but to break up the split and save the party. We will try to prevent a split by a political fight which hits the opposition so hard that it can have no perspectives in a split. If we can't prevent a split, we will reduce it to the smallest possible size.

Meantime, we will develop the party work on all fronts. No party work is going to be sabotaged. If the attempt is made, we will move our forces in everywhere and take over. We will not permit the party to be disrupted by sabotage or derailed by a split, any more than we did in 1940. We have made a good start and we won't stop until we have won another complete victory in the struggle for a revolutionary party.

American Stalinism -
And Our Attitude Toward It

(Resolution adopted by National Committee
of Socialist Workers Party, May 1953.)
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The Communist Party of the United States is different from its sister parties in such countries as France and Italy. It has all their vices - cynicism, opportunism unrestrained by any consideration of class principle, readiness for any treachery - without their virtue: A firm base of support in the mass movement of the most militant workers which deprives the leadership of a free hand and compels them to take sentiments of the workers into account in every turn of their policy, especially under conditions of war and social crisis and a revolutionary upsurge of the masses.

By contrast, the Communist Party of the United States is isolated from the main mass of the living labor movement, exerts very little influence upon it, and is not regulated or restrained in its policy either by the interests of the workers or their sentiments at any given time.

The leading cadres of American Stalinism are not labor bureaucrats in the ordinary sense: that is, officials of mass organizations in which they exert an independent influence as leaders, and are restrained, and to a certain extent regulated, in their policy by this relationship to the mass. The top cadres of the American CP are functionaries of the Kremlin whose task is to serve the aims of its foreign policy on every occasion. They have no independent power or influence as authentic leaders of an organization or movement.

They depend for their positions on the favor of the Soviet bureaucracy and can be dismissed at its will with hardly any more fear of repercussions than the dismissal of managers and clerks of a local branch office of a national business firm. The case of Browder, who long served as "leader" by appointment, and then was dismissed and disposed of without difficulty when his services were no longer required, was only the most publicized and dramatic illustration of the actual relationship of the official leaders to the party and to the Moscow bosses and paymasters.

Lacking any serious independent influence or mass base to which they would have to be responsive, and being free from any real control by the ranks of the party itself, the leading functionaries of American Stalinism are obliged to carry out any turn of policy required by the momentary interests of Soviet foreign policy, and at the same time are free to do so.

II

The original cadres of the C.P.U.S. originated as a left wing in the Socialist Party in the course of the struggle against

the First World War, and gained a powerful impetus from the victorious Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in November 1917. The left wing of the SP adopted the program of Lenin and Trotsky, came out for the Third International immediately upon its formation in March 1919, and split with the SP reformists and centrists over that issue in December 1919.

The young Communist Party suffered far more severe repressions in the period of the post-war Palmer raids than have yet been invoked in the current witch-hunt. Virtually all the most prominent leaders were indicted, a number of them were convicted and imprisoned. Thousands of rank and file members were arrested in wholesale raids. The party was driven underground right after its formation and did not emerge into full public activity as a legal party until 1923.

The persecutions of the early period decimated the ranks of the party, but its leaders and cadres stood firm and gained thereby a strong moral authority in the eyes of all radically-inclined workers and intellectuals. Armed with the program of the Russian Revolution, and reinforced by its prestige, the CP soon swept all rivals in the radical movement from the field - the IWW, Anarchists, Socialist Party - while assimilating their best elements, and met the outbreak of the 1929 economic crisis with a monopolistic domination of the whole field of American radicalism.

III

The degeneration of the party leadership and cadres, manifested by their unspoken but nonetheless actual renunciation of the perspectives of the socialist revolution in this country, brought them easily and logically to Stalinism, with its theory of "Socialism in One Country." The expulsion of the initiating nucleus of Trotskyists in October 1928 dramatically signaled the definitive transformation of the Communist Party of the U.S. from a revolutionary organization into a controlled instrument of the Kremlin's foreign policy, and the simultaneous transformation of its entire staff from independent leaders of an organization of their own construction into docile functionaries of the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy.

This basic transformation of the character and role of the party remained unnoticed by the general mass of workers and intellectuals, newly awakened to radicalism with the onset of the economic crisis. The American Stalinists appeared to be the most radical, even only "revolutionary" grouping. They also profited enormously from the enhanced prestige of the Soviet Union, resulting from its economic advances under the first five-year-plan. The pioneer Trotskyists were isolated and their criticism ignored in the first years of the depression, when the mass forces for the great radical upsurge were assembling.

The paralysis of the ossified AFL bureaucracy and the Social Democrats on the one side, and the isolation and poverty of forces of the Trotskyists on the other, left a vacuum into which the

Communist Party moved without serious obstruction or competition. It gained a monopolistic domination of leadership in the newly-assembling vanguard - first in the unemployed movement and in the imposing body of students and intellectuals radicalized by the depression; and later in the great labor upsurge which culminated in the formation of the CIO. Even the weak rival movements, the Socialist Party and the Muste organization, which experienced a growth in this period, were heavily influenced by Stalinism and offered no serious resistance to it.

IV

The American Stalinists cynically exploited the new mass movement of radicalism, which had come under their influence and domination, in the interest of Kremlin foreign policy, betrayed the struggle for socialism as well as the immediate interests of the workers, and were directly responsible for the demoralization and disorientation of the richly-promising movement. The Rooseveltian social program was the decisive factor in heading off the mass movement and diverting it into reformist channels. But the Stalinists, who supported Roosevelt for reasons of Kremlin foreign policy, miseducated, betrayed, corrupted and demoralized the vanguard of this movement - a vanguard which numbered tens of thousands of the best and most courageous young militants - and thus destroyed the first great prospects to build a genuine revolutionary party in America on a mass basis.

The American CP reached its peak of membership and mass strength and influence in the early period of the CIO. Its influence began to decline in the latter period of the war, and has been declining steadily ever since. The Stalinists have lost nearly all the influence and control they once held in the unions. Today they are an isolated sect in the labor movement, and the extent of their isolation is steadily increasing.

V

War and post-war events, which have pushed mass-based Stalinist parties in some other countries into class battles and even into revolutionary actions, have not had the same effects on the American Stalinist party. Their policy, dictated by the Kremlin's aim to influence American public opinion in favor of a "co-existence" deal, has been that of a pacifistic nuisance and pressure group. The post-war events have not invested the functionary-leaders of American Stalinism with any revolutionary virtues. The whole post-war course of their policy, centered around the treacherous formula of "co-existence" - which implies an offer to support American capitalism in return for an agreement - has been and remains a policy of class-collaboration. This has not been changed by radical phrases or in the least sanctified or mitigated by the refusal of American imperialism, up to the present, to accept it.

The latest turn of the American Stalinists to the Democratic Party, which they ardently supported in the war-time era, and their

opposition to an independent labor party - is not a revolutionary demonstration, but a continuation of their policy of class treachery. Neither can it be excused as a mere device to seek "cover," for an honest class party of the workers never seeks "cover" in the class party of capitalism.

The formal modification of the American Stalinists' refusal to support the civil rights of Trotskyists - demonstrated in their demand for the prosecution and imprisonment of the SWP leaders; their opposition to the defense of Kutcher; their disruption of the Civil Rights Conference in 1949 over these issues - is not in any respect whatever a sign of "Trotskyist conciliationism." It is merely a temporary lip-service concession to liberal elements whose support they need for the movement in their own defense cases. And this lip-service concession was forced upon them by the independent struggle of the SWP for its own civil rights and the effective united front policy of the SWP directed at the CP as a supplement to our independent struggle.

VI

The Stalinists have suffered heavily from the intimidation of the witch-hunt, which began with the start of the cold war, and the prosecutions and imprisonment of their leading functionaries. But the persecution is by no means the sole cause of their precipitous decline. The persecutions of the CP in its first years, which were far more extensive and severe, drastically cut down its numerical strength, but only strengthened its own morale, and enhanced its moral influence in wide circles. The same was true of the IWW, which was savagely persecuted in the First World War period, and its aftermath. Far more leaders of the IWW were imprisoned in those years than is the case of the CP up to the present. But the IWW came out of it with an enhanced reputation and a greater sympathy than ever in socialist, liberal and progressive labor circles. It was its theoretical and tactical errors, not the persecution, which brought about the decline and eventual eclipse of the once-popular IWW, despite the admirable bravery and self-sacrifice of its cadres.

The decline of the American Stalinists began before the witch-hunt started against them. It got well under way in the latter period of the Second World War when they were still basking in the favor of the government and doing all their dirty work of supporting the war and the no-strike pledge, promoting incentive pay, speed-up schemes, fingering militants for the FBI, and cheering for the imprisonment of the leaders of the Socialist Workers Party.

First, the Stalinists over-played their hand in the fight in the unions around the no-strike pledge, and this brought a revolt of the genuine militants against them. Second, they were out-flanked by the Reutherites, who sponsored the GM strike soon after the end of the war, while the Stalinists sabotaged it. Third, our effective campaign of exposure and denunciation during the war and post-war period alerted many militants to the true character and role of the Stalinists.

Our exposure and denunciation of their stool-pigeon role in the Minneapolis case - recognized far and wide as a violation of the traditional labor ethics - compromised them in the eyes of many thousands of liberals and trade unionists, and fixed upon them a stigma they can never erase. The Stalinists have also been compromised by their support of all the frame-up trials, mass-murders and slave-labor camps which informed American workers hate and despise, and justly so.

The decline of the American CP, which in some respects takes on the nature of collapse, comes primarily from its own moral rottenness. The Stalinists' cynical promotion of characterless careerists, while honest militants were expelled and slandered, finally boomeranged against them. At the first sign of danger these careerists - in the Stalinist unions and peripheral organizations, as well as in the party - began to desert them in droves, and to carry their bits of information to the FBI. Never in history has any radical organization yielded up so many informers, eager to testify against it. Never have so many rank and file workers - who wanted to be revolutionists - been demoralized and corrupted, and turned into cynical deserters and renegades. The most effective and enthusiastic participants in the witch-hunt and purge of the Stalinists from the unions, schools, and all other fields of their operation, are former Stalinists or former fellow-travelers.

The moral rottenness of the CP deprives it of the sympathy which has been traditionally given to persecuted groups, and at the same time deprives it of confidence in itself.

VII

The leadership of the next upsurge of labor radicalism in the United States is not assigned in advance, either to the new labor bureaucracy or the Stalinists. Neither the one nor the other has any progressive historical mission, and both must be regarded as transitory obstacles in the path of the American workers' evolution, through struggles, betrayals and defeats, to the showdown struggle for power under a conscious leadership. Only through the leadership of a revolutionary Marxist party can the struggle for power conceivably be led to victory in this stronghold of world capitalism.

As far as the American Stalinists are concerned, our differences with them are differences of principle which cannot be compromised or blurred over at any time. Our basic relation to them, now and at every stage of the further development of the class struggle, is and will be that of irreconcilable antagonism and struggle for the leadership of the new movement of labor radicalism.

The necessary approach to the Stalinist workers was correctly prescribed by the Convention resolution as a tactic supplementary and subordinate to our main orientation and work among the politically unaffiliated militant workers in the unions. It requires both a policy of united front for action on specific issues consistent with our principles, and fraction work in Stalinist organizations and peripheral circles, where opportunities for good results may be open and we have the necessary

forces to spare for such activity.

The absolute condition for effective intervention in the continuing crisis of the CP or any work in this field is a sharp and clear demarcation of the principled difference between our party and perfidious Stalinism, and an attitude of irreconcilability in our struggle against it. Our work in the Stalinist milieu comes under the head of opponents' work, as traditionally understood and defined in Leninist theory and practice.

Such work in Stalinist organizations and circles, as in any other milieu dominated by political opponents, requires a certain tactical adaptation on the part of individual party members assigned to such work. But it must at all times be understood that this tactical adaptation is not the line, but a method of servng the line.

The united front with Stalinists on specific issues consistent with our program is not a form of friendly cooperation, such as that between two political organizations whose programmatic differences are diminishing to the point where fusion can be contemplated. The united front activities of the American Trotskyists and the Muste organization in 1934 were of this type. The united front with American Stalinists, like that elaborated by Lenin against the Social Democrats, has a two-sided character. On the one hand it is a joint action, or a proposal for joint action, against the capitalist class on specific issues of burning interest to the workers. On the other hand, it is a form of struggle against the corrupt and treacherous Stalinist functionaries for influence over the workers involved in the actions or proposed action.

The absolute conditions for successful work in this field are sharp and clear demarcation of program and independence of our own party organization.

VIII

The struggle of tendencies in the next upsurge of labor radicalism will have the double aspect of continuing struggle for the leadership of the broad mass movement and a simultaneous and continuing struggle for leadership of the vanguard - that is, of the unprivileged, younger, more militant and aggressive workers (and intellectuals) who will be seeking a programmatic formulation of their instinctive revolt.

The three forces which can now be foreseen as the main contenders in this coming struggle are the neo-Social-Democratic labor bureaucracy, the Socialist Workers Party and the CP. It is probable that the labor bureaucracy (or a section of it) will head the upsurge in its initial stages. Even that, however, is by no means predetermined; it depends on the depth, sweep and speed of the radicalization, which in turn will be determined by objective circumstances. In any case the SWP, remaining true to itself and confident of its historic mission and its right to lead, will be an important factor in the situation from the start, and will have every possibility to extend its organization and influence

with the expansion and deepening of the workers radicalization.

The key to further developments will be the struggle for the leadership of the vanguard who will eventually lead the whole mass. In this decisive domain, as far as can be foreseen and anticipated now, our direct and immediate rival will most probably be the Communist Party. (The notion that some previously unknown and unheard of tendencies and parties, without a body of ideology, experience and cadres, can suddenly appear as leaders of the vanguard finds little support in the experiences of the great radical upsurge of the 30's in the United States, as well as in the postwar upsurge in Europe.)

It is by no means predetermined that the CP will have the advantage even in the first stages, of the struggle for leadership of the newly-forming vanguard. And, given a firm and self-confident independent policy of the SWP, its victory over the Stalinists in the further development and unfolding of the struggle can be expected.

In the upsurge of the 30's the Stalinists held the key to every development in every field of radicalization (workers, Negroes, intellectuals) because they monopolized the leadership of the vanguard from the start. It would be absurd to assume that this performance can be easily repeated next time. And it is impermissible for Trotskyists to say that it is predetermined -- for that is tantamount to saying that the Stalinists are endowed with a progressive historic mission; that they represent "the wave of the future" in the United States, which we must accept in advance and adapt ourselves to; and therefore that the right of the SWP to exist is in question.

It is true that the Stalinists outnumber us numerically, that they have more money, more paid functionaries, and a more widely circulated press than we have. This gives them indubitable material and technical advantages which are by no means to be discounted. Nor is it to be excluded that the continuing persecution of the government can have the effect later on of arousing the sympathy of wide circles of workers unacquainted with their past record of crimes and betrayals, although the persecutions have not noticeably had this result up till now.

In the course of a world war the U.S. Stalinists may gain a certain credit in the ranks of the opponents of the war because of the hardship and privations it imposes. On the other hand, it is not excluded that the Kremlin's demands on the American CP -- at any stage of the pre-war period, or even during the war itself -- can propel the CP into flagrant opportunist or adventurist policies which would add to its discreditment and isolation.

Against the CP, as contender for the leadership of the new vanguard, is its record which has been most effectively exposed and denounced by the SWP (Moscow Trials; monstrous bureaucratism and betrayals of workers' interest in unions they controlled; strike-breaking and stool-pigeon role during World War II; eager support of the government in the prosecution and imprisonment of the SWP leaders; betrayals of the Labor Party, etc.) This infamous record

lies deep in the memory of wide circles of workers and will not be forgotten when the new upsurge begins.

The discreditment of the Stalinists has been in no small degree due to our unrelenting, unceasing and systematic exposure and denunciation, which are remembered in wide circles and rise up to confound the Stalinists at every turn. Our exposure and denunciation of the record of the Stalinists has been more effective in this country than anywhere else. It was in this country for example - and due in the first place to the work of our party - that the Moscow Trials were discredited before world public opinion.

The relation of forces between organized Stalinists and organized Trotskyists is more favorable to us in the United States than in any other major capitalist nation. Our cadres are far superior to the cadres of the American Stalinists in quality, and our reputation in the labor movement stands out in shining contrast to theirs. It is a downright insult to the intelligence of the workers who will come forward in the new radicalization - if it is not cynically disloyal - to assume that the criminal record of the Stalinists, which we have advertised far and wide, in some way qualifies them to gain the confidence of the vanguard in the new radicalization, while our unsullied revolutionary record will count for nothing in our favor in direct struggle and competition with them.

Allegations that the American Stalinists are now "in the same class camp with us," and have become our dependable allies in the fight against American imperialism are false in fact and an impermissible painting up of the real face of American Stalinism. In reality, the American Stalinists at the present time preach a class collaboration policy of "co-existence;" follow an ultra-conservative, cowardly, and treacherous policy in the unions and betray independent political action through a labor party by herding their members and sympathizers into the Democratic party of U.S. imperialism.

Assertions that the American Stalinists "can no longer betray" are misrepresentation of reality which can only help perfidious Stalinism. Such sentiments disclose an attitude of conciliationism to American Stalinism that is alien and hostile to our traditions. The Plenum of the National Committee stresses the urgency of educating and re-educating the party in the basic principles of Trotskyism on this vital question.

Internationalism and the SWP

Report at Majority Caucus Meeting, New York, May 18, 1953

by

James P. Cannon

We have heard that the Cochranites are claiming in the party that they have the support of what they call "the international movement." Some comrades have asked, "What about that?" Now as Tom said, we are internationalists from away back. We started our movement twenty-five years ago under the banner of internationalism. The thing that brought us to Trotsky, and got us thrown out of the Communist party in the Comintern, was our belief in Trotsky's program of international revolution against the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country."

Our very first impulse, when we found ourselves out on the street in 1928, was to begin searching for international allies with whom we could collaborate. We couldn't find many of them, because the Opposition had been completely smashed in the Soviet Union; Trotsky himself was in exile in Alma Ata; and in America, as far as we knew for sure, we were about the only representatives on the international field of the banner of the exiled Trotsky.

But eventually we established contacts with some German and some French groups; and in the spring of 1929 Trotsky was deported from the Soviet Union to Constantinople. We wrote to him there as soon as we heard about it, received an answer from him, and, in cooperation with Trotsky, began to tie together the first threads of the new -- and what eventually became the Fourth -- International. On the record, I believe the American Trotskyists can be described, above all others, as internationalists -- to take a phrase from Comrade Hansen -- through and through.

The question of the attitude of the international movement toward us is an important one -- with this understanding: that we are a part of the international movement, despite the fact that we have no formal affiliation, and we are going to have something to say about what the international movement decides on the American question, and every other. We don't consider ourselves an American branch office of an international business firm that receives orders from the boss. That's not us. That's what we got in the Comintern. That's what we wouldn't take. And that's why we got thrown out. We conceive of internationalism as international collaboration, in the process of which we get the benefit of the opinions of international comrades, and they get the benefit of ours; and by comradely discussion and collaboration we work out, if possible, a common line.

Now it isn't possible that the international movement supports the minority in this fight, any more than it is possible

that it supports the majority; because the international movement, as we understand it -- that is the membership in all corners of the world -- hasn't yet heard about the fight; is only just beginning now to get the first bulletins; and cannot possibly have decided the question. The thing narrows down to the claim -- if what we have heard is correct -- that the International Secretariat, which consists of a few people in Paris, supports the minority.

If that's so, we know nothing about it. We haven't been told that. And we don't like the very suggestion that the IS is taking a position on the American question behind the backs of the official leadership. The very suggestion that it is possible casts an insult upon the IS, upon its responsibility and even upon its integrity. Because it is not possible to function as an international organization without proceeding through the official elected leadership in each and every party. As I said, we know nothing of any such decision there. They have never even intimated anything of the sort to us.

In the eight years since the international organization was reconstituted, with headquarters in Paris, after the war, they have never once intimated any serious conflict or any lack of confidence in the American party and its leadership. And that has been the case ever since 1929, when the new international took its first "embryonic" -- to use the Cochranite's term -- form.

Ever since 1929, when the international leadership was a man named Trotsky in Constantinople, and half of his troops in the whole world were those we had organized in the United States -- the International has been, in the essence of the matter, not just a mechanical combination of different parties and groups. There has been an axis in it, an axis of leadership. And in the eleven years from 1929 to 1940, that axis was the collaboration of Trotsky and the American Trotskyist leadership.

That's the essence of the matter. Trotsky made no secret of it. We were his firmest base of support. We weren't by any means "hand-raisers," as Burnham said in "The War and Bureaucratic Conservatism." We had more than one disagreement with Trotsky. But in the general work he carried out; in his efforts to bring about a selection of forces, and to get rid of misfits and people who had wandered into our movement by mistake; and in his fight for a clear political line -- he always had the support of the American party.

The first World Congress of the Fourth International (there had been several pre-congresses of the International Communist League, as it was called) was being organized in 1938. Trotsky leaned so heavily on the Americans, and was so anxious to strengthen their authority in the International, that when he drew up the Transitional Program for this founding Congress, he wrote it first for the SWP. He asked us to adopt it first, and then to sponsor it at the Congress. Thus the very first programmatic

document of the Fourth International appeared as the Resolution of the National Plenum of the SWP held in New York. We spoke at the World Congress as reporters on the Transitional Program.

We had gone to Mexico City, a couple of months before -- a whole delegation, at Trotsky's request -- to talk over with him the contents of the program and work it out together. The points were laid down, discussed and agreed upon. Trotsky then wrote the draft and sent it to us. We called a Plenum, discussed it and adopted it. That's the story of the Transitional Program -- the technical aspects of how it appeared as the resolution of the SWP.

Up to the time of Trotsky's death, and particularly after he came to Mexico, the SWP -- we should be proud to say it -- became Trotsky's own adopted party. He was so much concerned with us and our future, and so confident that we had a great future before us, that he gave thought to all kinds of little problems of the party. As National Secretary, I had a continuous correspondence with Comrade Trotsky about practically everything that arose in the course of our work. One suggestion after another would pour out from him to us. If we disagreed, we would write back, or send delegates down to visit him. So that in the most intimate sense, the leadership of the international movement in that period was, as we called it, the Trotsky-American axis.

From 1940 -- after the death of Trotsky and the suppression of our movement in most parts of Europe by the war -- the center of the international movement, its vocal party, was in the United States -- the SWP. We no longer belonged to the Fourth International because the Voorhis law outlawed international connections. Our role, therefore, could only be advisory and consultative. But even in that capacity, we were regarded throughout the entire world as the informal representatives of Trotskyist internationalism.

Since 1945, with the close of the war, and the reestablishment of the movement in Europe and the setting up of the International Executive Committee and Secretariat there, the same relationship in essence as previously governed our collaboration with Trotsky, has prevailed in the new Paris-American axis on all the big political questions. In the first period after the war, the Russian question aroused a great dispute in our ranks throughout the world. There was a big wave of Stalinophobia, which had understandable reasons. For with the end of the war, there came out the terrible stories of the Stalinist slave-labor camps and the monstrous conduct of the Stalinist armies in Eastern Europe and Eastern Germany.

These tales of horror -- which were not exaggerated but were the living truth -- created such revulsion in the ranks of the advanced workers throughout the world, that there was a big echo in our ranks, and great hesitation in our own ranks in Europe. There was a split in France over the Russian question in the immediate postwar period. Comrades said, "We can't call that any longer a workers state. That's a slave-labor state" -- and all the rest of that.

At that time, the really strong, decisive force, supporting two or three of the leading comrades in Europe, which really decided the Russian question once again in favor of defense of the Soviet Union was the SWP. As far as I know, the first really outspoken, categoric, unambiguous declaration on the question came in a speech by me, made in agreement with our party leadership, on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, in November 1945 in New York. This speech was printed in the paper and was supported as a program by our cothinkers in Europe. It was a factor in stopping all hesitation and in clarifying, once again, the fact that we were defenders of the Soviet Union.

I did not defend the Soviet Union's slave-labor camps, or any of those horrors. I said, paraphrasing Trotsky: "We do not defend what is degenerate and reactionary. But we see, in face of all that, that the power of the nationalized economy was strong enough to prevail during the war and still stands. That's what we see, that's what we defend." That is how we defended our position on the Russian question at that critical time.

In 1947 there was another wave of Stalinophobia, at that time especially in the most advanced circles. We began to get reports not only of what had happened in Europe, but what had happened inside the Soviet Union itself. What those monstrous, unbelievable treacherous scoundrels had done! We began to get such stories as those of Margaret Buberger, the wife of Heinz Neuman -- both of them life-time communists. He was a former leader of the German CP -- not a Trotskyist -- and had been shot by the Russians because of some political disagreement. His poor wife was thrown into a concentration camp in Russia and kept there three years. And then, when the Soviet-Nazi pact was signed and the war started, she and a carload of other veteran German communists, were put into a freight train car, shipped to the border and handed over to Hitler, as a good will gesture from Stalin and his gang. And she then spent five more years in Hitler's concentration camps!

Stories like that came out, one after another - and then began this new wave of Stalinophobia. Morrow and Goldman fell victim to it. They said: "This is too much! We can no longer defend the Soviet Union as a workers state." There were new hesitations also in Europe.

And that is when I wrote the pamphlet "American Stalinism and Anti-Stalinism" -- which these fools are now attacking in their document as some kind of evidence of Stalinophobia. But the whole thing was directed against the Stalinophobes, page after page, chapter after chapter. It was written in reply to Ruth Fischer, who had come out in Shachtman's paper denouncing us because of our position on the Soviet Union, and calling for a united front of everybody against the Stalinists. I wrote that pamphlet to show that we would unite only with genuine socialists against Stalinism -- not with red-baiters and reactionaries.

When Stuart returned from Europe shortly thereafter, I asked him, "How did they receive my pamphlet in Europe?" He replied, "When it came out in the paper, they received it as support of the line, which again strengthened the position of our international movement for the defense of the Soviet Union, with no struggle against Stalinism except on a working class basis."

Our relations with the leadership in Europe at that time were relations of closest collaboration and support. There was general agreement between us. These were unknown men in our party. Nobody had ever heard of them. We helped to publicize the individual leaders, we commended them to our party members, and helped to build up their prestige. We did this first, because, as I said, we had general agreement; and second, because we realized they needed our support. They had yet to gain authority, not only here but throughout the world. And the fact that the SWP supported them up and down the line greatly reinforced their position and helped them to do their great work.

We went so far as to soft-pedal a lot of differences we had with them -- and I will mention here tonight some of the many differences, known for the most part only in our leading circles, that we have had in the course of the last seven years.

One difference was a tendency on their part toward "Cominternism" in organizational matters -- a tendency to set up the International as a highly centralized body, on the order of the early Comintern, which could make decisions, enforce orders and so forth, in the old Comintern fashion. We said to them all the time, "You can't do that. The International is too weak. You can't have that kind of an International under present conditions. If you try it, you will only end up in weakening your own authority and creating disruption."

The old Comintern of Lenin's time had the concept of a highly centralized international organization from the first days, but there was a reason for it then. The reason was that there had been a revolution in Russia, and the whole world movement of socialism was reacting to it. The leaders of the Russian Revolution had an absolutely decisive moral and political authority. There were Lenin and Trotsky and Zinoviev and Radek and Bukharin -- new great names that the revolutionary workers of the world were recognizing as the authentic leaders of the revolution. These were the men who set up, with the aid of a few others, the Comintern, the Third International.

They had state power in their hands. They had unlimited funds, which they poured out generously to subsidize and support the foreign parties. When there was a difference of opinion in any party, with two or three factions growing up, they could subsidize delegations to travel from any part of the world to Moscow. The differing groups could have full representation before the executive body to discuss the issues. The international leaders could get a real picture on the spot, hearing the representatives of the different tendencies themselves, before offering advice. And that's what they mainly offered in the early days -- advice, and very few orders.

Speaking of representation, I was a delegate to Moscow six times. And every time I was there, delegates from other factions in the American CP were also there. At the Sixth Congress in 1928 we had about twenty delegates from the U.S., representing all three factions, and the whole expense was paid by the Comintern.

After the degeneration of the Russian party and the emergence of Stalinism, the centralism of the Comintern -- which Trotsky and Lenin had handled like a two-edged sword, which they didn't want to swing carelessly -- became in the hands of Stalin an instrument for suppressing all independent thought throughout the movement.

Instructed by past experience, we understood the dangers for the present international movement. We believed it would be absolutely wrong to try to imitate a highly centralized international organization when we were so weak; when the ability to send delegates from different parties for common consultation was so limited, and when we could communicate only by correspondence. Under these conditions we believed it would be better for the center there to limit itself primarily to the role of ideological leader; and to leave aside organizational interference as much as possible, especially outside of Europe.

In Europe, where the parties are close at hand, it might be organized a little more tightly. But even there, we had misgivings. Comrades who were there several times had misgivings about the tendency toward organizational centralization and discipline, even as applied to the different national parties close at hand in Europe.

That's one difference we had -- a sort of running smouldering difference. We did not press our criticisms to the very end, although we had many. Such interventions as they made in this country were unfortunate. It was a double mistake that they made in the case of Morrow and in the case of Shachtman. We here have one hundred times more experience -- I don't say it in boastfulness, but that's the fact -- one hundred times more experience in dealing with faction fights and splits than they have had. Besides, we knew the people we were dealing with.

You who were in the party at the time know the story. Morrow, who had done a lot of good work in the party before, began in 1945-46 to develop Stalinophobia. I don't know how others deal with that. But I'm the kind of political doctor who says, when I find a case of Stalinophobia, that I've never seen anybody with a cure for it, and it's time to isolate and quarantine it. That disease leads straight to social patriotism and reconciliation with imperialism. That's what Stalinophobia is.

Stalinophobia led Morrow to begin to betray the SWP. He suddenly discovered that the party he used to love and admire so much was no good whatsoever. He was as much against the party record as "The Roots of the Party Crisis" is. The party

was not only wrong then but had always been. Next he began sidling up to the Shachtmanites, acting disloyal and carrying information to the Shachtmanites when we were in struggle with them. He even went so far as to report to them about our Political Committee meetings in which we discussed our struggle with the Shachtmanites, telling them what we said and what we were planning.

One of our young comrades went over one evening to the Shachtmanite headquarters to buy a pamphlet or a copy of Labor Action -- and there was Morrow, sitting with half a dozen grinning Shachtmanites and regaling them with a report of our own Political Committee meeting that he had just come from. We had a number of illustrations of that kind of disloyalty. Finally we yanked up little Felix -- what he is called, the Joan of Arc, the hero-martyr of the Cochranites -- we just yanked him up and said to him in a plenum resolution: "You've been doing so and so, which isn't right, not loyal. We censure you for that, and we warn you to cease and desist."

That's all -- just a little slap on the wrist. A few months went by, and he didn't cease and desist, and we got more evidence of treachery on his part. Finally we reported it to the party. There was no rough stuff, just a general education of the party on the facts. Then we came to the convention in 1946, the convention where we adopted the Theses on the American Revolution, against which he spoke. (I don't know whether there is any coincidence in this or not, but he spoke against it.) And when his case of discipline came up, the convention declared that in view of the fact that loyalty to the party had been violated by Morrow, that he had been warned and had not heeded the warning, he was hereby chucked out -- expelled, by the unanimous vote of the convention.

That's the way we do things in the SWP. You know, it's deceptive. This is such an easy-going party that some people who haven't been in any other party don't know what a paradise they've got. So easy-going, so democratic, so tolerant. Never bothers anybody for anything; never imposes any discipline. Why our National Control Commission has gone by three conventions without having anything to report. The only time the good-natured somnolence of the SWP begins to stir into action on the disciplinary front is when somebody gets disloyal. Not if he makes a mistake, not if he fiddles around, but if he begins to get disloyal and betray the confidence of the party -- then comes the surprise! All of a sudden this somnolent, tolerant party gets out the axe and comes down with it -- and off goes the offender's head!

That's what happens when you betray the confidence and the loyalty of our party. And it causes a little shock -- especially on the head that rolls! But it's a literal fact that the only time we ever expelled anybody for anything was for violating discipline, after repeated warnings not to do it. That's the only time.

Over in Paris, the IS -- which was under the pressure of the right wing of the French PCI, they were in alliance with Morrow -- the IS had no sooner seen what we had done than without waiting for our report, they adopted a resolution which, without saying so directly, amounted to disagreement with the unanimous decision of our convention. It gave the Morrowites a new lease on life in the party. We thought: "That's not right, boys. You ought to consult us first. You ought to take into account the fact that the 1,500 people represented at our convention have some rights to be considered. If you want to be democratic, then you ought to pay some attention to what the majority thinks."

It was a very rash, precipitate action, by a small group in Paris. We just told them: "Please don't do that any more"-- and we didn't pay any attention to their intervention on Morrow's behalf. The only result of their action was to stir into new life a group of former Morrowites in San Diego. They had just about reconciled themselves to the convention decision. But on the assumption that the International was supporting their faction, they stirred into new life, and we lost the San Diego group of the SWP on that account.

Our next difference was in the case of Shachtman. We entered into negotiations for unity with Shachtman in 1947. We laid down strict conditions, which the Shachtmanites signed on the line. First, during the period of the unity negotiations neither side would attack the other. Second, neither side would admit into its ranks any member of the other side -- in other words, we weren't going to raid each other during the unity negotiations. Third, neither side would admit into its ranks anyone who had been expelled by the other side.

A little time went by, and the Shachtmanites promptly printed Ruth Fischer's letter denouncing the SWP for its attitude on Stalinism. Then they printed a letter from Weber, a deserter from our party, in which he said the SWP by its policy on Stalinism was even abetting the GPU. What did we do? We looked first at the signed agreement: "What does it say there, point one, two, three?" We checked and found that the agreement had been violated. Decision: Negotiations off -- finished. And we just put a little notice in the paper: "In view of the fact that the Shachtmanites have violated the agreement in this and that respect, negotiations are hereby discontinued -- goodbye."

That's all. It was settled by the unanimous vote of our committee. We knew exactly what we were doing. The Shachtmanites were not loyal in their unity negotiations, and we didn't propose to let them monkey with our party. We have learned how to handle these questions. It isn't a gift from any divine power. It isn't any great genius on our part. It's just that we have had so much experience with faction fights and splits, that we know what to do with them. It becomes a trade -- just like laying bricks with Pete -- our thirty year man with a trowel.

Do you know what the comrades over in Europe did then? Germain, with the agreement of Pablo -- and again without consulting our people and even without a majority of the people there knowing it -- decided that they would be more clever than we were. Without consulting us, Germain addressed a letter to Shachtman saying that he was sorry negotiations were broken off, but hoped they would be resumed, and that he personally would stand for unity and support the unity movement in the International. It was an open invitation to Shachtman to grab hold of this rope and make more trouble for us in the party and in the international movement.

As I said, that was done without consultation with us. Comrade Stein heard about it only after the letter had been sent -- and we didn't even get a copy of the letter. I don't attribute this to any malevolence on their part, just to their inexperience. They don't know how to deal in the formalities of organization as well as they should.

Now, if Shachtman had known what the score was, he could have used this letter to advantage. But there he became a victim of his own cleverness. He thought he knew too much to be caught in another "Cannon trick." He was convinced that Cannon had put Germain up to this letter in order to inveigle Shachtman again -- but he was out of our clutches, and he was going to stay out. He disregarded the letter with a sneer. So nothing happened. No harm came. But we noted it -- all of this within the framework of our general agreement and collaboration, we noted it as an error on their part, and we let them know that that is not the right way to proceed.

Another difference arose in connection with the developments in the French party. A few months after the World Congress, where the French party had supposedly accepted the Congress decision, we suddenly heard that there was a split -- or a partial split -- in the PCI. The International Secretariat had intervened, upset the majority of the Central Committee and placed a representative of the IS as impartial chairman over a parity committee. This meant, in effect, that they had removed the elected leadership of the French party. Did you know that that really happened?

Well, when we heard that, we hit the ceiling. We didn't sympathize at all politically with the French majority, which I believe was fooling around with the World Congress decisions. But we thought: "How are you going to build an International if you think you can upset an elected leadership of a national party?"

It hit me especially, because I am one of those people who, when he gets burned, like the child, always fears the fire. I had been burned by that very thing in 1925, when the Comintern by cable upset a convention majority of the Communist Party of the United States and ordered us to set up a parity National

Committee. Or rather, they didn't order it, but that's what the representative of the Comintern here, a man named Gusev, said the cable meant -- that we must set up a parity National Committee (even though we had a two-to-one majority) and that he would be impartial chairman. We innocently accepted this decision of the all-high Comintern. The two-to-one majority went into a parity commission, with Gusev as chairman in the name of the Comintern. His first action was to constitute a new Political Committee by throwing his vote to the others, thus giving the Lovestoneites a majority in the Political Committee.

We had had experience with this kind of manipulation, and I didn't like it in the French case. I was fuming, as all of our people were. But the question was: What are we going to do? We were confronted with an accomplished fact, and any attempt to intervene to straighten out an absolutely dangerous precedent in the organization procedure might help a right wing in the French party that we didn't agree with politically.

As the situation developed further, Renard, one of the French majority, appealed to me in a letter. I didn't answer him for months. I didn't see how I could write on the French question without referring to this organizational monstrosity that had been committed by the IS. I finally wrote my answer to him out of purely political considerations, and didn't mention the organizational violation at all. He had raised it in his letter, and I think that's the first time I ever answered a political letter and just pretended I hadn't read certain sections -- those sections where he complained about the organizational violations.

We disagreed with that procedure. Then there was another difference. When Pablo wrote his article about "centuries of degenerated workers states," we again had the most violent disagreement. We said, "What in the world is he talking about -- 'centuries of degenerated workers states?' In a world where capitalism is collapsing, and revolution is on the order of the day and revolution is going to be victorious -- is it going to take centuries to to liquidate the bureaucratic excrescences?"

I told Comrade Stein that I was going to have to write against that, that I didn't believe in that at all. But he said, "If you write against that you will strike at Pablo's prestige and you will make his position impossible. If it appears in the International that Cannon is attacking Pablo, the whole alliance will appear to be broken. The thing is so fragile that you just can't do that."

There were repercussions in the party ranks also. When Arne Swabeck came to the plenum a few days later he said: "What is this -- centuries of degenerated workers states?" And he told us that a girl comrade got up in the Chicago branch and

asked: "What is this? If there are going to be centuries of Stalinism, what's the sense of my going out and selling ten papers on the street corner?" A very good question. And I heard of the same sort of thing in San Francisco.

But we kept quiet about all this in the party. I did speak about it in the Political Committee at some length, when we were discussing the draft resolution of the Third Congress. My remarks were incorporated in the minutes to be sent over there, so that they would know what we thought about this, and that we would not support any implication, in the Congress resolution, of centuries of Stalinism after the revolution. That's as far as we went.

There was another complication, as you know, with the Johnsonites, who were hollering about "Cannonism vs. Pabloism," and trying to exploit the alleged differences. That's the kind of situation you often get into in politics. If you are going to be like Breitman and weigh everything on the finest scale, allow two points here and two points there, you'll never be a political leader. You have to decide which is the main issue and which side you are on, and subordinate the others.

I didn't want to give the Johnsonites any handle, any chance to exploit my name in their fight against the main line of the coming World Congress. So at the 1950 convention, instead of speaking against the "centuries of degenerated workers states" which I would like to have done, I went out of my way to say that this talk of "Cannonism vs. Pabloism" is not right, because we are in fundamental agreement on the main line. Murry Weiss, in agreement with me, did the same thing in the Los Angeles discussions. And we took the wind out of the Johnsonites' sails.

I have spoken of all this to show that we have had differences, and fairly serious ones, but that we have considered them to be within the framework of an overall agreement. We appreciate the great work the leaders in Paris have done, especially their important contributions to the analysis of the postwar world. We appreciate the fact that they are working with a narrow organizational base, and that they are entitled to loyal support and collaboration.

These have been the general considerations. I cite them to show that if there is a Pablo cult in the party, we don't belong to it. No one has the right to assume that we, with all our respect for the work of Pablo, consider ourselves puppets who can be pulled on a string. That's not our conception of proper international relations. When Comrade Warde was traveling in Europe, while this fight was brewing in our party, he had definite instructions as to what we wanted. They asked him, "What shall we do?" His answer was: "It's up to you what you do, but my advice is, let it alone. The American party is a living organism, there are very experienced people there, just let it alone and see how it develops. Wait till everything becomes clear and then, if you want, express your opinion. But

don't jump in, and above all, don't make any decisions, because you might make the wrong ones."

That was our general attitude. The whole implication of their questions was: "What can we do to help you deal with this new faction?" Our answer was: "Nothing, we don't need any help. And if we needed help, it would be very bad; because if we can only be elected and placed in leadership with the help of outside forces, we are not the real leaders of the party. And we won't accept leadership on that basis."

These were the reasons for our not wanting intervention on their part. First, we didn't need their support. Second, we don't want leadership that is not the natural and normal and voluntary selection of the rank and file. And third, if they should intervene with any kind of decision to support the Cochranites, we would have to tell them that we would pay no attention whatsoever.

Now don't take that to mean some kind of anti-international sentiment; that's just putting the cards on the table. Why wouldn't we pay any attention? Because we don't believe parties which will permit proconsuls to be imposed upon them as leaders are worth a damn. We don't think a revolutionary party anywhere amounts to much until it is able to throw up a cadre of indigenous leaders, who have grown up out of its struggles, who are known to its members and trusted by them. You can't monkey with the question of leadership.

We came out of the Comintern, as I said, and we remembered the crimes of the Comintern. "Socialism in one country" was not the only crime. One of the greatest crimes was the destruction of the self-acting life of the individual Communist parties. The Stalinist Comintern overthrew the indigenous leaders everywhere. Where they couldn't overthrow them directly, they would conspire against them, set faction on foot, with secret backing, to undermine and finally get rid of all the independent characters in the leadership.

That is what they did in this country. They first got rid of the so-called Cannon group of leaders (the Trotskyists); then they got rid of the Lovestoneite leaders; and then they tamed the Fosterite leaders and reduced them to the ignoble status of functionaries. When they had reduced the whole party to a docile herd, they said who should be the leader -- Browder. It was only under those conditions that Browder could become the leader; he was a man of such weakness of decision, such lack of independent character, that he couldn't fight his way to leadership. He became an appointed leader and ruled the party all these years as nothing more than a proconsul of Moscow. The proof that he had no power of his own was that when they got ready to ditch him, they just snapped their fingers -- and out went Browder.

That's the kind of business we don't like. We didn't have anything like that with Trotsky. Not at all. Trotsky wrote

about this question once -- I am not quoting literally because I don't have the document before me, but I remember it almost word for word -- about the Comintern practice of getting rid of leaders. He didn't mean only Trotskyist leaders; he referred also to Germany, for example, where the right wing, the Brandlerites, were thrown out by organizational machinations and a new set of puppets placed in. Trotsky said: "Leadership is the natural growth out of a living party organism. It cannot be arbitrarily removed by outside forces without leaving a gaping wound that does not heal."

That's what Stalinism did to all the Communist parties throughout the world -- it inflicted wounds that never healed. After Stalinism came to power there was never anywhere a really authoritative, native leadership that had grown up out of the struggles of the party and stood on its own feet. That's why the CP leaderships so easily became puppets of Moscow.

Now we got thrown out of the Comintern for our independent opinions, in 1928, as I quoted from Foster's book the other day. We wouldn't support the line of the Comintern, which we thought was wrong. We asked the privilege of expressing our opinion in discussion. We didn't create any disruption. We just said that we thought Trotsky was right in the dispute and we would like, after the election campaign was over, the privilege of a limited organized discussion where we could present our point of view -- and they threw us out of the party.

We remembered that, and we didn't want any of that in the new International. We wondered, especially I personally, how it was going to be in the new International with Trotsky. Was he going to push us around like manikins, or would he give us a little leeway and show us a little respect? I wondered.

Our first experience was very good. Friendly letters, advice, full and careful explanations, from 1929 until 1932. Then we had a little case, the case of B.J. Field, whom I wrote about in my History of American Trotskyism as the later leader of the hotel strike. But two years before that he belonged to our party. He organized a private study class outside of the branch activities, selected his own students and refused to submit his curriculum to the Branch Executive Committee. The Branch Executive Committee -- which looked in the constitution and saw that it says the branch controls all activities within its jurisdiction -- called on Field to submit his curriculum and let the committee know how things were going there.

Well, the branch was a little touchy -- personally I didn't have anything to do with it -- but anyhow Field refused. Here was a big-shot intellectual, who had worked on Wall Street journals, who had condescended to join a little Trotskyist movement -- and now all of a sudden a bunch of young, unimportant people wanted to put him under discipline. So he said, "No." They said "Yes. It says so in the constitution, and everything goes by law here." He insisted, No. So they put him on trial in the New York branch (I remember the meeting well, and so does Sylvia) -- put him on trial, heard the report of the committee--

and chucked him out. That's all. Expelled him.

It wasn't a very good case, and it would have been better if it could have been adjusted. But the branch said, "Against the constitution" -- and out he went. So Field, this man with his great knowledge and ability -- he decided he was going to show these New York yokels a few things. And he was a very learned man, a statistician of distinction, a good writer, a really first-class intellectual who knew economic data thoroughly because he had dealt with it all his life.

Anyhow, he decided -- and he had the funds -- to take a personal trip to Constantinople, he and his wife, to visit Trotsky. Trotsky, who was so isolated, of course welcomed all visitors then. Field had all kinds of data that the Old Man was thirsting to get hold of, so as to give them some political interpretation. Being a man of action, very impulsive, he immediately sat Field down, got him to write out his data and collaborated with him on it. And the first thing we knew, a number of long, serious, important articles on the economic situation in America and its perspectives appeared in the French Trotskyist paper under the name of B.J. Field -- who had just been expelled from our organization!

We said to ourselves: "Oh, now it has come!" And that's when I got what you might call my Irish up. I said, "If Trotsky thinks he's going to treat our organization that way, he's got another guess coming." We sat down and wrote him a letter and told him: "This B.J. Field who was working in your Secretariat and whose articles you are having published in Europe: (1) has been expelled from the New York branch of the Communist League; (2) the constitution of our branch says so and so, and he violated the constitution and was expelled; (3) it is inadmissible for any other party in the International to give access to its ranks or to its press to an expelled member of our party because that is an act of hostility against our discipline. We therefore demand that you discontinue your collaboration with B.J. Field, and that the French organization does the same."

I will admit that this was the greatest emotional crisis of my life. I fully expected that Trotsky was going to write back an arrogant letter and tell us what a bunch of shoemakers we were; that the importance of Field's articles so far outweighed the constitution of the New York branch that we should wake up and recognize what time of day it was. I thought I could never accept that, because that would reduce the American party to nothing but a puppet; and you could never build a party that hasn't any rights of its own, any rights to enforce its own discipline.

We waited with resignation for the answer. And then the letter came from the Old Man, a most conciliatory letter: "I'm so sorry, it was a big mistake on my part. I was so eager to get this material that I didn't realize I was violating anything. By no means do I want to infringe upon the disciplinary regulations of the New York branch. I will discontinue collaboration

with Field unless I have your specific approval to continue. Your criticism is correct"-- and so on.

"But at the same time," he said, "Mr. Field has a lot of economic knowledge, and the very fact that he came to see me shows he has a will to do something in our movement. I would propose, if it is agreeable to you, that when he returns to New York you do not take him back in the organization, but allow him to work as a sympathizer for six months, then consider admitting him back into the party."

That's the way our fight with Trotsky over authority and autonomy was settled. And I tell you it was a happy day when we got that letter. That convinced me that we could get along with Trotsky, that we could live with him, that we could have a party of our own which would have its own leaders, and that even the great Trotsky would have respect for our rights. That was the first incident.

Now, the minority did us a great favor when they printed the stenogram of our 1940 discussion with Trotsky. I am going to speak about that in the debate, so I won't go into it in detail here. But one thing that discussion shows is that, instead of our being mere puppets and hand raisers of Trotsky, as they say, who visited him in Mexico just to ask, "What are the orders?" -- and then clicking our heels and saying "Righto" -- instead of that, we had a big argument and discussion, a real difference of opinion.

Not only that, but a discussion which ended with Trotsky's saying in effect: "If you don't agree on this, I will not raise the question for discussion in the party. I will leave it to your judgment as to what you do about the candidacy of Browder." And so on.

Trotsky spoke with me later, in personal conversation, and said: "I won't do anything about it at all. You settle it. I don't want to create any discussion." He didn't want to let the party get the slightest intimation that he was against the leadership. The discussion concerned a question of tactics, and an important one -- but in it he showed his attitude of absolute loyalty to us.

We never had to fear that someone might go around saying, "Trotsky is against the party leadership." We never had to fear that we might suddenly get a blow in the dark. Not from Trotsky. When Trotsky had anything to say to party leaders, he would write. He would write to me about it. When he had any correspondence with people with beefs in the party -- and he had a lot -- he would always send me a copy of his letter. So I always knew what was going on, and I never had any ground to fear that there was some kind of an underhanded, double game being played. That wasn't our experience with Trotsky.

Now that's the kind of relationship we want. We don't want any orders. We didn't want orders from Trotsky, and certainly do not want them from people lesser than Trotsky. No

orders for the SWP. Advice, counsel, collaboration -- fine. But Cominternist instructions will never be accepted by this leadership. The kind of relationship we had with Trotsky is the kind we want; collaboration -- and that's all we'll accept.

Many have tried to give us orders. I think there is a Jewish proverb that says, "If you live long enough you will see everything." And one of the things one learns as he gets experience in life, is that there are a number of people in this world who have the habit of mistaking good nature and patience for stupidity. We have always been good-natured and patient in international relationships, and more than once it has been taken for stupidity; and people who were not quite qualified to give us instructions undertook to do so. If we have any difficulty now, it won't be the first time.

I think some of you remember Logan. He was secretary of the International Secretariat, he had been secretary to Trotsky, and he was a learned man. But he undertook to instruct the American leadership as to what to do. We said, "No, no. We won't take that." Then there was the German group called the IKD, the "Three Theses" retrogressionists, who wrote theses a mile long. I couldn't even read them, to say nothing of understanding them. But they were awfully long theses -- and those people demanded we carry them out right away. I said, "No, no. First, I haven't read them; second, I don't understand them; third, I don't agree with them. And fourth, if you are so smart that you can write stuff I can't understand, you are just too damn smart for our party."

And then there was Munis -- you remember the great God Munis, in Mexico, who sent us all those wonderful orders and commands and criticisms, and all the rest. We patiently printed them, I'm sorry to say -- we patiently printed a lot of the stuff that preposterous, bombastic jackass wrote on the assumption that he was the successor to Trotsky. But we didn't accept it.

And finally there was Natalia. Natalia actually, I believe, fell victim to the propaganda of the Shachtmanites and the Goldmanites -- that all you have to do to get Cannon lined up is to put forth some international authority that he respects -- remember how he always just followed Trotsky? So they needled Natalia into sending me instructions on what to do. You know the sad, tragic result of that; we couldn't accept instructions even from Natalia.

As a matter of fact, we are not going to accept it from anywhere, from anyone, under any circumstances. We regard the International Secretariat -- who are a group of comrades we esteem -- we regard them as collaborators, but not as masters and not as popes. We are going to speak out against the revelation of the minority, that all you have to do is quote a sentence from Pablo, and that settles everything. Pablo is not our pope. He is just a collaborator. He is welcome to give us advice.

But what if Pablo and the International Secretariat should come out in support of the minority? If such a thing should occur -- and I'm not saying it will; I'm just assuming that the absolutely incredible arrogance of the Cochranites is based on some rumor that they are going to have the support of the International Secretariat -- if that should occur, it wouldn't oblige us to change our minds about anything. We wouldn't do so.

I was disturbed when I heard some comrades saying that if there should be a decision of the International Secretariat in favor of the minority, it might swing some of our people over to the minority. I remember what Trotsky wrote when he was fighting in the Russian party and the Comintern to mobilize the comrades to dare to have a thought and stand up for it. In his appeal to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, Trotsky said: "That party member who changes his opinion at command is a scoundrel." He meant by that, that such a member is disloyal to the party; because the least the party can expect from the most inexperienced, the newest rank-and-file member is that he be honest with the party, tell the party honestly what he thinks, and not change his opinion when he gets the command from this or that leader, or this or that committee.

This is not to say that the party member doesn't have to obey discipline. But one's opinions should be sacred to himself. I hope it will be this way in our party, no matter where the instructions come from -- from the Political Committee, from the Plenum or from the Convention. No one should change his mind because authority tells him to. That is not the mark of a revolutionist. You are obliged to submit to discipline, you are obliged to carry out the decisions of the majority. But if you think you are right, then, as Trotsky said, you bide your time until new events occur and a new discussion opens up.

Trotsky said that a Bolshevik is not only a disciplined man but also an independent thinking man, who will raise his point of view again and again, until either he convinces the party that he is right, or the party convinces him that he is wrong.

We understand what the fight in our party here means. This party, comrades, is the most important party in the whole world. Not because we say so, not because we are braggarts, as Cochran says whenever anyone puts in a good word for the party. It is because we are operating in that section of the capitalist world which is not collapsing. We are operating in that section of the world which is a concentration of all the power of capitalism -- the United States. The revolutions which are taking place in other parts of the world, in China, Korea, and other areas of the colonial world -- those revolutions cannot be definitive. They can only be provisional -- so long as capitalism rules the United States.

That is what Trotsky meant when he said, in his first letter to us in 1929, that in the final analysis all the problems of this epoch -- all the problems of capitalism and

socialism -- will be settled on American soil. If that is true -- and it certainly is -- then those who set out to build the revolutionary party within the citadel of imperialist power, where the issues will be finally decided -- those who set out to build the revolutionary party here, with confidence in the revolutionary future, are by that fact building the most important party in the world.

They are the people of destiny -- not in the sneering phrase of the contemptible Cochranite document, which makes a joke of the assertions of our 1946 Convention -- but in the real essence of the matter. If that is the case; if this party is in a crisis, and we know what the crisis is about; if it is a crisis not only of program and perspectives, the perspectives of the country and the labor movement and the party; if that is involved, and not some little difference over this or that; and if involved also is the problem of leadership, which is the decisive question of every party and every workers movement, and every revolution, in the last analysis -- if all that is involved, then this fight has to be carried through to its conclusion by the people who know what the fight is about, who know the people, who know the answers, and who are determined to carry out the answers.

That is what we are committed to. We hope to have the sympathy and support of the whole international movement. But if we don't have the sympathy and support of one individual here or there, or one group or another, that doesn't mean we give up our opinions and quit our fight. Not for one moment. That only means that the fight in the SWP becomes transferred to the international field. Then we take the field, and look for allies to fight on our side against anyone who may be foolish enough to fight on the side of Cochran. Then it would be a fight in the international movement.

I am absolutely sure that we will be victorious here, and I don't see any reason why we wouldn't be victorious on the international field, if it should come to a fight. We hope to avoid such a fight. We are not looking for it. We have no tangible evidence to prove that there is any conspiracy against us, or any actions against us, on the international field. But if a fight should come, we will be prepared for it. That is the way we size this thing up.

Factional Struggle and Party Leadership

by

James P. Cannon

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(Speech by James P. Cannon at the Open Plenum of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, November, 1953, New York, New York)

We all recognize, comrades, that we have come to the end of the long faction fight in the party. Nothing remains now but to sum up the results.

This has been a long faction fight, and it was not brought to a definitive conclusion until it was fully ripe. The Cochranite minority were given a whole year to carry on underground factional work and organization in the party. A whole year. Then we finally dragged them out into the open; and we had intensified discussion for five months, with more Internal Bulletins published even than in the great fight of 1939-40. Then we had the May Plenum and the truce, which the Cochranites signed but did not keep.

Then five more months of struggle during which the Cochranites developed their positions to their logical conclusion and showed themselves in action as an antiparty, anti-Trotskyist tendency. They organized a campaign of sabotage of party activities and party funds, culminating in the organized boycott of our 25th Anniversary meeting. Then we came to this November Plenum where the Cochranite leaders were indicted for treachery and suspended from the party. And that's the end of the faction fight in the SWP.

In the face of the record nobody can justly say that we were impatient; that anything was done hastily; that there wasn't a free and ample discussion; that there were not abundant proofs of disloyalty before discipline was invoked. And above all, nobody can say that the leadership hesitated to bring down the ax when the time came for it. That was their duty. The rights of a minority in our democratic party have never included, and will never include, the right to be disloyal. The SWP has no place and no room for strike-breakers.

Unifications and Splits

Trotsky once remarked that unifications and splits are alike methods of building the revolutionary party. That's a profoundly true remark, as experience has shown. The party which led the Russian Revolution to victory was the product of the split with

the Mensheviks in 1903, several unifications and splits along the road, and the final unification with Trotsky in 1917. The combination of the splits and the unifications made possible the party of victory in the Russian Revolution.

We have seen, in our own experience, the same principle working out. We began with a split from the Stalinists. Unification with the Musteites in 1934 and later with the left-wing of the Socialist Party were great milestones in the building of our organization. But these unifications were of no more importance, and stand rather on an equal plane, with the split of the leftist sectarians in 1935 and of the revisionist Burnhamites in 1940, and with the split of the new revisionists today. All these actions have been part of the process of building the revolutionary party.

This law enunciated by Trotsky, that both unifications and splits are alike methods of building the party, is true however, only on the condition that both the unification and the split in each case is properly motivated. If they are not properly prepared and properly motivated they can have a disrupting and disorganizing effect. I can give you examples of that.

The unification of the Left Opposition under Nin in Spain with the opportunist Maurin group, out of which was formed the POUM, was one of the decisive factors in the defeat of the Spanish Revolution. The dilution of the program of Trotskyism for the sake of unification with an opportunist group robbed the Spanish proletariat of that clear program and resolute leadership which could have made the difference in the Spanish Revolution in 1936.

Conversely, the splits in the French Trotskyist organization before World War II, several of them, none of which were properly motivated -- contributed to the demoralization of the party. It has been our good fortune that we have made no false unifications and no false splits. Never have we had a split in which the party did not bound forward the day after, precisely because the split was properly prepared and properly motivated.

The party was not ready for a split when our Plenum convened last May. The minority at that time had by no means extended their revisionist conceptions into action in such a manner as to convince every single member of the party that they were alien to us. For that reason we made big concessions to avoid a split. By the same reasoning, because everything was clear and everything was ripe in November, we made the split here -- without the slightest hesitation. And if, in the reminiscences of the fight, you give the party leadership credit for their patience and forbearance in the long struggle, don't forget to add that they deserve just as much credit for the decisive, resolute action taken at this Plenum to bring things to a conclusion.

The Split of 1940

I think it would be useful for us to make a comparison of this split, which we consider to be progressive and a contribution to the development of the revolutionary party in America, with the split of 1940. There are points of similarity and of difference. They are similar insofar as the basic issue in each case was revisionism. But the revisionism of 1940 was by no means as deep and definitive as the revisionism that we have split with today. Burnham, it is true, had abandoned the program of Marxism but he did it openly only in the last stages of the fight when he took off the mask. And Shachtman did not go along fully with him. Shachtman, up to the point of the split, did not openly revise our program on the Soviet Union, which was the central issue in dispute.

He left the question open and even stated in one of his last documents that if the imperialists would attack the Soviet Union he would come out for defense. As for the third leader, Abern, he did not yield anything theoretically to revisionism at all. He still considered himself an orthodox Trotskyist, and thought the whole fight was over the organization question. He was greatly mistaken, but the definitive struggle between orthodox Trotskyism and revisionism was by no means as clear-cut and deep in 1940 as it is this time. That was shown by the fact that when Burnham carried his revisionism to its logical conclusion and abandoned the movement altogether a couple of months later, Shachtman and Abern drew back.

The two splits, this one and that of 1940, are similar in that they were both unavoidable. The differences in each case had matured to the point where we could no longer talk the same language or live in the same party. When the Shachtmanites gave us their plain ultimatum and demanded that they be allowed to have their own paper, their own magazine, their own public expression, they were only expressing their deepest conviction that they had to talk a different language from ours; that they could not conscientiously circulate what we wrote in our press along orthodox lines. And since we could not tolerate that, the split was unavoidable.

The present split is different from 1940 in that it is more definitive. There is not a single member of this Plenum who contemplates any later relations in the same party with the strike-breakers of the Pablo-Cochran gang. Any doubt on this score is excluded. It is an absolute certainty that from yesterday morning at eleven o'clock, when they left the hall -- not with a bang but a giggle -- that they left for good. The most that can be contemplated is that individual members who have been caught in the under-currents may drift back to the party one by one, and of course they will be received. But as far as the main core of the minority faction is concerned, they have broken forever with us. The day they were suspended from the party, and released from further obligations to it, was probably the happiest day of their lives.

The Shachmanites, on the other hand, continued to protest for a long time that they would like to have unity. And even six-seven years after the split, in 1946 and 1947, we actually conducted unity negotiations with the Shachtmanites. At one time in early 1947 we had a unification agreement with them, illustrating the point I made that the split of 1940 was by no means as definitive and final as is the split today. We are finished and done with Pablo and Pabloism forever, not only here but on the international field. And nobody is going to take up any of our time with any negotiations about compromise or any nonsense of that sort. We are at war with this new revisionism, which came to full flower in the reaction to the events after the death of Stalin in the Soviet Union in East Germany, and in the French general strike.

Differences in the Splits

There are differences between the two splits in other respects, very important ones, and more favorable for the party. First, as to the size of the split. In 1940 the Shachtmanites had not less than 40% of the party and a majority of the youth organization. If you count the youth, who were not voting members of the party, it was almost a 50-50 split. This group takes out a bare 20%. That is one difference.

A second difference is that in 1940 the split was a split of the leading cadre right down the middle. Not just a sloughing off of some people that you can easily get along without. For years in the central leadership of the party, the central political nucleus had been Burnham, Shachtman and Cannon. They took two out of the three. They had a majority of the Political Committee of the party as it was constituted up to the outbreak of the fight in September 1939. We had to reorganize the Political Committee at the Plenum in October 1939 in order to establish the majority rule in the PC.

Shachtman and Burnham were by no means mere ornaments in the Political Committee. They were the editors of the magazine and of the paper, and they did practically all the literary work. There was a division of labor between them and me, whereby I took care of the organizational and trade union direction, administration and finances -- and all the rest of the chores that intellectuals don't like to bother with as a rule -- and they did the writing, most of it. And when they were on the right line they wrote very well, as you know.

So in 1940 there was a real split, not only in the political leadership but in the working cadre as well. At the time of the split there was a lot of apprehension on the part of some of our comrades. What in the devil would we do without these first class intellectual forces, efficient writers, etc? And there was great jubilation on their part, and a profound conviction that we would never be able to get along because they took all the writers.

Why, practically all the comrades who are now leading the party and doing all the work of the leading cadre -- very few of them were even members of the National Committee at that time. Those who were members, were only getting their first experience and had not yet gained recognition as writers, orators and politicians. Comrade Dobbs, for example, coming out of the mass movement, had been only a couple of months in New York. A number of other comrades, who were members or alternates of the National Committee, had not yet considered themselves or been considered as actual members of the leading political cadre of the party. In 1940 the split of the cadre went right down the middle.

And then there was a third feature of the 1940 split. The petty-bourgeois opposition went out of the party with the majority of the youth who, as Comrade Dobbs said, have more bounce to the ounce. They were confident that with their dynamism, with their ability to jump and run, with their conception of a "campaign party," and with their writers -- they would soon show that they could build a party faster, bigger, better -- and in every other California way -- then we could. We didn't agree with them, but that's what they started with.

And don't forget, they started almost the next week with a new party. They called it the "Workers Party" and they came out with a new weekly paper and with a magazine which they stole from us. For a considerable period they thought they were serious rivals of ours in the struggle for the allegiance of the workers' vanguard in this country. That is what we were up against in 1940. We had to take a new cadre of previously inexperienced comrades and push them into places of responsibility in the Political Committee and the press, and begin their training for leadership in the fire of struggle.

The Party Rolls Along

The 1953 split is quite different in various respects. First, I mentioned size. It is much smaller. Second, the cadre is not split down the middle this time, as might appear to some people when they see these names -- Cochran, Clarke, Bartell, Frankel, and so on. They are talented people; they were part of the cadre; but not an indispensable part. We have had five months of experience of the "cold split" since the May Plenum to test that out. During that entire period the Cochranites have done no constructive party work whatever. Inspired by the Great God Pablo, they have devoted their efforts exclusively to factionalism, obstruction of party work and sabotage of party finances. And what has been the result? We have found in the five months since the May Plenum that these people are in no way indispensable to the literary work of the party, to the political work of the party, to the organizational work of the party, or to the financial support of the party.

The party has been rolling along without them and despite them for five months. The split of the cadre turned out to be a splinter. We tested it out for five months in a cold split

before we finally confronted it in a hot split, and we know. There will be absolutely no disruption in the leadership, no scurrying around to find who is going to fill the places vacated by these former Trotskyists turned revisionists. The places are already filled, filled to overflowing, so to speak. Everything is going O.K. That's the experience of the drawn-out cold split since May.

Third, nobody can imagine these people even daring to contemplate the idea of launching a new party and an agitational paper. First of all, they don't believe in their own capacity to build a party. Second, they don't believe in the capacity of anybody to build a party. And in the third place, they don't believe in a revolutionary vanguard party. So they are not going to confront us with a rival party, claiming to be the Trotskyist vanguard and the nucleus of the future mass party of the revolution.

They are, in their own maximum optimistic plans, aiming at a small propaganda circle which will publish a little magazine, in which they will observe and analyze and explain things for the benefit of the "sophisticated political elements," i.e. the Stalinists and "progressive" labor skates. Sideline critics, observers, analysts and abstainers -- that is the kind of an opposition they will present to us. No rival party.

They will not be an obstacle to us in our struggle as a party in election campaigns -- because they don't believe in election campaigns. In the first period after we split with the Shachtmanites, they used to run their own candidates against us in New York and other places; and in general they tried to compete with us, their party against our party. That will not be the case with the Cochranites. If we want to have any debates with these people, I think we will have to hunt them up wherever they may be hiding. And in some places that is going to be a difficult proposition, especially in Detroit and San Francisco.

A Test of Leadership

A factional struggle is a test of leadership. Factional struggle is a part of the process of building the revolutionary party of the masses; not the whole of the struggle, but a part of it.

Some comrades, especially mass workers, who want to be all the time busy with their constructive work, who are upset and irritated by arguments, squabbles and faction fights, have to learn that they can't have peace in the party unless they fight for it. Factional struggle is one way of getting peace.

The party, as you know, enjoyed internal peace and solidarity over that entire period from 1940 to 1951; eleven years, barring that little skirmish with Goldman and Morrow, which did not amount to much -- eleven years of peace and normal internal

life. This "long peace" carried the party through the war, the trial and the imprisonment of the 18, the post-war boom and the first period of the witch-hunt. That internal peace and solidarity didn't fall from the sky. It was not "given" to us. We fought for it and secured it by the factional battle with the petty-bourgeois opposition in the eight months from September 1939 to April 1940.

Every serious factional struggle, properly directed by a conscious leadership, develops in progressive stages; it has a beginning, a middle, and an end; and at every stage of the struggle the leadership is put to a test. Without a conscious leadership, factionalism can devour and destroy a party. Headless factionalism, sometimes even the smallest squabble, can tear a party to pieces. We have seen this happen more than once. Everything depends on the leaders, on their consciousness. They must know how and when to begin the faction fight; how to conduct it; and how and when to finish it.

The first two stages of the struggle against the revisionist-liquidators in the SWP -- the beginning and the middle -- are already behind us. Now comes the end. We will have plenty of time to reflect on the experiences of the first two stages later. I think it would be ill-advised and worse than a waste of time, at this stage of final action in finishing the fight, to begin reminiscing and examining how many mistakes were made, and who made this and that mistake and so on.

The essential thing is that the leading cadre of the party as a whole saw the problem in time, took hold of the situation and brought it out in the open, for five months of free discussion. Then, at the May Plenum we offered the minority a truce in order to give them a chance to reconsider their course or to establish the issues more clearly in objective discussion. Then, when the Cochranites broke the truce, we went through five months of the "cold split," and finally brought it to an end at the Plenum.

All that was done successfully, without disrupting or demoralizing the party. That is the essential thing. We can leave for later the reminiscences or examinations or analyses of whether a little mistake was made here and there by this one or that one. That does not count now. The third point is what counts now -- how to finish the faction fight. And here again it is a question of leadership.

The Question of the Party

Leadership is the one unsolved problem of the working class of the entire world. The only barrier between the working class of the world and socialism is the unsolved problem of leadership. That is what is meant by "the question

of the party." That is what the Transition Program means when it states that the crisis of the labor movement is the crisis of leadership. That means, that until the working class solves the problem of creating the revolutionary party, the conscious expression of the historic process which can lead the masses in struggle, the issue remains undecided. It is the most important of all questions -- the question of the party.

And if our break with Pabloism, as we see it now clearly; if it boils down to one point and is concentrated in one point, that is it -- it is the question of the party. That seems clear to us now, as we have seen the development of Pabloism in action. The essence of Pabloist revisionism is the overthrow of that part of Trotskyism which is today its most vital part -- the conception of the crisis of mankind as the crisis of the leadership of the labor movement summed up in the question of the party.

Pabloism aims not only to overthrow Trotskyism; it aims to overthrow that part of Trotskyism which Trotsky learned from Lenin. Lenin's greatest contribution to his whole epoch was his idea and his determined struggle to build a vanguard party capable of leading the workers in revolution. And he did not confine his theory to the time of his own activity. He went all the way back of 1871 and said that the decisive factor in the defeat of the first proletarian revolution, the Paris Commune, was the absence of a party of the revolutionary Marxist vanguard, capable of giving the mass movement a conscious program and a resolute leadership. It was Trotsky's acceptance of this part of Lenin in 1917, that made Trotsky a Leninist.

That is written into the Transition Program, that Leninist concept of the decisive role of the revolutionary party. And that is what the Pabloites are throwing overboard in favor of the conception that the ideas will somehow filter into the treacherous bureaucracy, the Stalinists or reformists, and in some way or another, "In the Day of the Comet," the socialist revolution will be realized and carried through to conclusion without a revolutionary Marxist, that is, a Leninist-Trotskyist party. That is the essence of Pabloism. Pabloism is the substitution of a cult and a revelation for a party and a program.

The Leading Cadre

The problem of the party has another aspect. The problem of the party is the problem of the leadership of the party. I believe, that just as truly as the problem of the party is the problem the working class has to solve before the struggle against capitalism can be definitively successful -- the problem of the party is the problem of the leadership of the party.

You cannot build a revolutionary party without the program. We all know that. In time the program will create the party. But herein is precisely the role of conscious leaders--to save time. Time is "of the essence" in this epoch when years count for centuries. It is certainly difficult to build a party without leadership, without cadres. As a matter of fact it can't be done.

Look over the world, look over all the experiences of the last quarter of a century, in one country after another, where the writings and teachings of Trotsky were available, where the program was known, and what do you see? Where they lacked the leaders to build the party, where they lacked cadres, the party did not amount to much. On the other hand, those parties which threw up leaders capable of working together as a cadre remained firm and solid and consciously prepared their future.

The leading cadre plays the same decisive role in relation to the party that the party plays in relation to the class. Those who try to break up the historically created cadres of the Trotskyist parties, as the Pabloites are doing in one country after another are in reality aiming to break up the parties and to liquidate the Trotskyist movement. Take note: I said "trying" and "aiming," I didn't say "succeeding." They will not succeed. The Trotskyist parties will liquidate the liquidators, and the SWP has the high historic privilege of setting the example.

Given the program, the construction of leading cadres is the key to the construction of revolutionary parties; and the former requires an even higher degree of consciousness and a more deliberate design than the latter. Of course, every party is every generation since the Communist Manifesto has had a leadership of a sort. But there has been very little consciousness about its selection, and for that reason, among others, the real problem remained unsolved. The experiences of the past in this respect are rich in lessons on the theme of what not to do.

The present generation of the revolutionary vanguard, which has the benefit of Lenin and Trotsky, has the supreme duty now to examine the tragic mistakes of the past in this respect in order to avoid them and to replace haphazard methods by a conscious theory and a deliberate design in the construction of leading cadres.

Kinds of Leadership

First, and perhaps worst, of the kinds of party leadership which we have seen and known, even in the Fourth International, is the unplanned leadership of talented individual stars, pulling in opposite directions, squandering their energies in personal rivalries, quarrelling over trifles, and

incapable of organizing a sensible division of labor. That has been the tragic experience of many sections of the Fourth International, in particular of the French section. I don't know how things are in France today, but I do know that the French section of the Fourth International will never become a real party until it learns to discipline its individual star performers and make them work together.

A second kind of leadership is the leadership of a clique. In every leadership clique there is a certain co-ordination, a certain organization and division of labor, and it sometimes looks good -- while it lasts. But a clique is bound together by personal associations -- what Trotsky, who hated cliques, called "chumminess" -- and has in it, by that very fact, a fatal flaw -- that it can be broken up by personal quarrels. That is the inevitable fate of every political clique.

There is no such thing, and can be no such thing as a permanent clique, no matter what good friends and chums may be drawn together in a tight, exclusive circle and say to themselves: "Now we have everything in our hands and we are going to run things fine." The great winds and waves of the class struggle keep beating upon this little clique. Issues arise. Personal difficulties and frictions develop. And then come personal quarrels and squabbles, meaningless faction fights and senseless splits, and the clique ends in disaster. The party cannot be led by a clique. Not for very long, anyway.

There is a third method of leadership which I will confess to you frankly I noticed only after I passed my sixtieth birthday. That is the leadership of a cult. I will admit that I lived sixty years in this world before I stumbled over the fact that there are such things as political cults. I began rubbing my eyes when I saw the Johnsonites operating in our party. I saw a cult bound to a single person, a sort of Messiah. And I thought, "I'll be damned. You're never too old to learn something new."

A cult requires unthinking fools for the rank and file. But that is not all. In order for a cult to exist, it is not enough for a leader to have personal followers -- every leader has personal influence more or less -- but a cult leader has to be a cultist himself. He has to be a megalomaniac who gets revelations outside the realm of reality. A megalomaniacal cult leader is liable to jump in any direction at any time, and all the cultists automatically follow, as sheep follow the bellwether, even into the slaughter house.

That is what happened with the Johnsonites. The cult followed Johnson, not simply for his theory of the Soviet Union -- other people have that theory; a lot of people in the world have that theory about "state capitalism." The Johnsonites were personal cultist followers of Johnson as a Messiah; and

when he finally gave the signal for them to jump out of this party for reasons known only to himself, but allegedly because of some personal grievance he imagined, of which they had no knowledge and which they had just heard about, they all left the party at the same hour, Eastern Standard Time. That is a cult. The Pabloite cult, like any other, is capable of jumping in any direction at any time, whenever the leader gets a revelation. You cannot trust the party of the workers' vanguard to a cult or a cultist leader.

There is a fourth method of leadership which has been very common. I have seen much of it in my time -- that is the leadership of a permanent faction. Here is something that we have to be on our guard about, because we have just gone through a very severe faction fight, and in the course of the fight we have become tightly bound together. It is absolutely necessary for the leadership to see clearly what a temporary faction is, what its legitimate purposes are, what its limits are, and the danger of the faction hardening into permanence.

Hardening of Factions

There is no greater abomination in the workers' political movement than a permanent faction. There is nothing that can demoralize the internal life of a party more efficiently than a permanent faction. You may say, that is contradicted by the experience of Lenin. Didn't he organize a faction in 1903, the Bolshevik faction, and didn't that remain a hard and fast faction all the way up to the revolution? Not entirely. The faction of Lenin, which split with the Mensheviks in 1903 and subsequently had negotiations with them and at various times united with them in a single party, but nevertheless remained a faction, was a faction only in its outward form.

In the essence of the matter, the nucleus of the Bolshevik Party of the October Revolution was the Lenin Bolshevik faction. It was a party. And the proof of the fact that it was a party and not an exclusive faction of Lenin was that within the Bolshevik faction there were different tendencies. There were left-wing and right-wing Bolsheviks. At times some of them openly polemicized with Lenin. The Bolsheviks even had splits and re-unifications among themselves. Lenin did not consider the Bolshevik faction something he was going to keep with him all his life as a closed corporation.

In the decisive days of 1917 when he brought out his April Theses, he showed that his conception was really that of a party by uniting with Trotsky, which made all the difference in the world. It was a party action. And a few months later, when Zinoviev and Kamenev, the very closest collaborators of Lenin, went wrong on the insurrection, he combined with Trotsky to smash them. Lenin's faction was in reality a party.

We have seen factions which grew out of a separate struggle, crystallized and hardened, and held together after the issues which brought them into being no longer existed. That was in the old Communist Party.

Its leading cadre, as a whole, was a fusion of people with different backgrounds. There were the New Yorkers, and some others, who came out of the Socialist Party, whose experience had been in the field of parliamentary socialism, election campaigns, etc. -- a purely "political" grouping. Ruthenberg, Lovestone, etc., represented this background. There was another tendency in the party represented by the "Westerners" -- those who had a syndicalist background, a background of work in the trade union movement, in strikes, in the "direct action" of the class struggle. Foster, Bill Dunne, Swabeck, myself, etc., represented this origin.

We naturally formed different tendencies -- each partly right and partly wrong -- and from the beginning were always in skirmishes with each other. Eventually these tendencies hardened into factions. Then later, after several years of experience, we learned from each other and the real differences narrowed down. But the faction formations remained. Time after time, the two factions would agree on what was to be done; agree on every resolution for the convention; and still the factions would continue to exist.

Degeneration of Factionalism

In such circumstances the factions degenerated into gangs struggling for power, and the degeneration of the Communist Party was greatly facilitated by that. The Comintern should have helped us to unify the cadre, but instead it fed the flames of factionalism in order to fish in the troubled waters to create its own Stalinist faction. Those were bitter times. I began to rebel against that sterile kind of struggle and I made several attempts -- years before we were thrown out of the party for Trotskyism -- I made several attempts to break up the politically senseless faction formations. A number of us broke away from the Foster gang and formed a separate grouping and united with a group that Weinstone had split off from the Lovestoneites, with the same revolt against this purposeless gang factionalism. We formed a "middle grouping" with the slogan: "Dissolve the factions."

We carried on a fight for a couple of years to dissolve the factions into the party. But by that time both the Lovestoneites and the Fosterites had become so hardened in the gang and clique spirit that it was impossible to do it. That contributed to the degeneration of the Communist Party, because permanent factions become cliques and they exclude everybody else. If a permanent faction happens to get control of the leadership of the party and runs the party as a faction, it is bound to exclude others from any real place in the leadership. By that very fact it drives the others into the organization of counter-cliques and counter-factions, and there is no longer a single cadre in the leadership of the party. We saw that happen in the CP. We have to learn something from that experience.

In our party, basing ourselves on our experiences and our studies, we have had a conception of the leadership not as a number of uncoordinated individual stars; not as a clique; not -- in God's name -- as a cult; and not as a permanent faction. Our conception of the leadership is that of a leading cadre.

It is a conscious design, patiently worked at for years and years. A leading cadre, in our conception, has the following basic characteristics: It consists of people who are, first of all, united on the program; not on every single question that arises in daily work but united on the basic program of Trotskyism. That is the beginning.

The second feature is that the leading cadre is an inclusive and not an exclusive selection. It does not have a fixed membership, but deliberately keeps the door open all the time for the inclusion of new people, for the assimilation and development of others, so that the leading cadre is flexibly broadening in numbers and in influence all the time.

Our cadre has another feature. It constructs the National Committee as a widely democratic representation of the party. I do not know how the leadership is constructed in other parties, but our party here is not led exclusively by the central political working group in New York. The leadership we have always emphasized, is not the Secretariat. It is not the Political Committee. It is not the Editorial Board. It is the Plenum. The Plenum includes the Secretariat, the Political Committee and the Editorial Board, plus the leading comrades from all the districts of the party.

Leadership Really Representative

These district representatives, as you know, are not handpicked in New York and promoted by special maneuvers. We all know how to do that sort of thing and deliberately refrain from doing it. The central leaders never interfere with the deliberations of the nominating commission at party conventions. The district representatives are freely selected by the delegates from their districts and confirmed by the nominating commission. They really represent their branches or locals, and when they sit in the Plenum you have a really democratic representation of the entire party. That is one reason why our Plenums have such a commanding authority in the party.

When the Plenum meets, we can say that we are the leadership because we really are. It is a small convention every time we have a meeting of the Plenum of the National Committee. That is part of our deliberate program of constructing a representative leadership which is democratically controlled.

A third feature of our conception of the cadre, which we work on consciously and deliberately all the time, is to cultivate among all the leading people the ability to work together; not to be individual stars; not to be wiseacres who make problems of themselves -- but people who fit into a machine; work with others; recognize the merits and respect the opinions of others; recognize that there is no such thing as an unimportant person, that anybody who stands for the program and is sent into the National Committee by his branch or local has got something to give. The task of the central leaders of the party is to open the door for him, find out what he can do, and help him to train himself to do better in the future.

The ability to work together is an essential feature of our conception of the leading cadre, and the next feature is that of a division of labor. It is not necessary for one or two wise guys to know everything and do everything. It is much better, much firmer, much surer if you have a broad selection of people, each one of whom contributes something to the decisions and does a specially selective work for which he is qualified, and coordinates his work with others.

I must say, I take great satisfaction in the way the leading cadre of our party has evolved and developed in the period since the open fight with the Pablo-Cochran revisionists began. I think they have given the world movement a model demonstration of a strong group of people, of varied talents and experiences, learning how to coordinate their efforts, divide the labor between them, and work collectively so that the strength of each one becomes the strength of all. We end up with a powerful machine, which combines the merits of all its individual members into a multiplied power.

And you not only combine the merits and get good out of them. You can sometimes also get good and positive results from a combination of faults. That also takes place in a properly organized and coordinated cadre. That thought was expressed to me in a letter from Trotsky. What I am telling you here is not exclusively what I have seen and experienced and thought up in my own head. It is not only the experience, but also a great deal of personal instruction from Trotsky. He formed the habit of writing to me very often after he found out that I was willing to listen and did not take offense at friendly criticism.

Trotsky's Advice

He kept advising me all the time about the problems of leadership. As far back as 1935 and 1936, in the fight with the Musteites and the Oehlerites, he gave us such advice. He always referred to Lenin, how Lenin had put his cadre together. He said, Lenin would take one man who had an impulse for action, smelled opportunities and had a tendency to run ahead

of himself, and balance him off against a man who was a little more cautious -- and the compromise between the two got a balanced decision, which redounded to the benefit of the party.

He told me, for example, in one letter where he was advising me to be very careful and not to make an exclusive slate for the Committee, and not to eliminate people who have some faults which I especially don't like, such as hesitation, conciliationism and indecisiveness in general; he said, you know Lenin used to say about Kamenev, that he was a constitutional vacillator; he always tended at the moment of decision to "soften up," to vacillate and conciliate. Kamenev, as a matter of fact, belonged to the faction of Bolshevik conciliators in the period after 1907 to 1917, with a tendency toward conciliation with the Mensheviks, but he remained in the Bolshevik Party.

And Lenin used to say -- as Trotsky explained it to me -- we need Kamenev in the Central Committee because his tendency to waver and conciliate is the reflection of a certain tendency of that kind in the party ranks that we want to keep our finger on. When Kamenev speaks we know that there is a certain sentiment within the party of the same kind that we have to take into consideration. And while we do not accept Kamenev's wavering and conciliationism, we go slow and take it into account because when we move we want to take the whole party with us. If he raises too many objections, we stop awhile and devote a little more time to education in the party ranks to make sure that our ranks will be solid.

Our strength is in our combination, both of our faults and of our virtues. That, taken on the whole, is what I call the cadre concept of leadership. This cadre, for the last year almost, has been constituted as a faction -- that is, the great majority of the cadre. We have engaged in a faction struggle. But what was that cadre organized into a faction for? It was not the whole cadre; it was the majority, but not all. It didn't include the comrades from Buffalo and Youngstown -- there were some differences there at first but they have been virtually eliminated in the course of the struggle; the decisions of this Plenum are all unanimous. But at the start, the majority of the cadre constituted itself into a faction, meeting by itself, making its own decisions, and so on.

However, this faction was not formed for the purpose of having a faction. It was not formed as a permanent combination of good fellows who are going to stick together from now to doomsday and not let anybody else join. It is not a gang, nor a clan, nor a clique. It is just simply a politico-military organization formed for a certain purpose. But what was the purpose? The purpose was to defeat and isolate the revisionist faction of Pablo-Cochran. That aim has been achieved.

Dissolution of Majority Faction

That being the case, what is the duty of this faction now? Are we going to hold together for old time's sake, form a sort of "Grand Army of the Republic" -- the only ones allowed to wear ribbons, demand special privileges and honors? No. The duty of this faction now is to say: "The task is finished, the faction is no longer needed, and the faction must be dissolved into the party." The leadership of the party belongs henceforth to the cadre as a whole, assembled at this Plenum. All problems, all questions for discussion should be taken directly into the party branches.

I would like to start off this new stage of party life by announcing here, in the name of the majority faction of the National Committee, its unanimous decision: The majority faction that was formed for the purposes of the struggle, having accomplished its tasks, thereby dissolves itself into the party.