

Documents on the “Proletarian Military Policy”

With Introduction by
the International Executive Committee of the
International Communist League
(Fourth Internationalist)



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We dedicate
this bulletin to the memory of
Piet van 't Hart,
leader of the Committee of Revolutionary Marxists,
and to the comrades who fought
alongside him in illegality during the
German occupation of Holland, 1940-1945

TROTSKYIST POLICIES ON THE SECOND IMPERIALIST WAR--THEN AND IN HINDSIGHT

The series of demands centering on the call for "trade-union control of military training," first raised by Leon Trotsky in the last months of his life and adopted by the Trotskyist movement as the "Proletarian Military Policy" (P.M.P.), played no small role in disorienting the small and sometimes isolated sections of the Fourth International in the early years of World War II. The P.M.P. has not been operational since about 1943, when German and Japanese military power began to recede and it became clear that the Allied imperialists would win the war. However, Pierre Broué opened a discussion on the subject in Cahiers Léon Trotsky in September 1985.¹ More recently Sam Levy, a veteran of the British Trotskyist movement, has again raised the subject for critical historical review.² As Levy and Broué both partially document, at the time of its initiation the P.M.P. was a source of some dispute among those claiming the mantle of Trotskyism.

Leon Trotsky's articles and letters on the subject of World War II and the P.M.P. are available in English in Pathfinder Press's Writings of Leon Trotsky series. The key writings and speeches of American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) leader James P. Cannon on this subject are also available in Pathfinder's collection, The Socialist Workers Party in World War II. However, other important documentary materials have long been out of print. We publish some of these here in Prometheus Research Series 2; a listing of the immediately relevant material by Cannon and Trotsky appears in a bibliography appended to this bulletin. The documents we reprint should be read in conjunction with the equally important articles and speeches in the Cannon and Trotsky writings.

The political consciousness of all classes in Europe in the period following WWI was dominated by the victory of the proletarian revolution in Russia in 1917. The spectre of Bolshevism loomed very large for those European sectors that had even one piece of silver to rub between their grubby fingers. For these elements--those who gained the slightest material advantage from the status quo, those with ideological or religious connection to the bourgeois order--fear of Communism dictated necessarily pro-fascist sympathies. After the military defeat in WWI of the most

¹ Pierre Broué, "Trotsky et les Trotskystes face à la deuxième guerre mondiale," Cahiers Léon Trotsky, no. 23 (September 1985), 35-60.

² Sam Levy, "The Proletarian Military Policy Revisited," Revolutionary History, vol. I, no. 3 (Autumn 1988), 8-18.

powerful European state, Germany, and especially after the failure of two successive proletarian revolutions in that country, the stage was set for Nazism, Germany's virulent nationalism, to place itself at the head of European reaction. The proletarian victory in Russia failed to spread to the rest of Europe following the inconclusive war between Russia and Poland in 1920. This failure was largely due to the immaturity of the Communist leadership, as Trotsky pointed out in his brilliant and fundamental 1924 work, Lessons Of October.³ Nonetheless, European reaction continued to feed on the combativity of the working class, particularly in Germany. Since fear of Communism had not been accompanied by its spread, the growing Nazi party, with wide echoes of agreement, offered up the Jews as surrogate Bolsheviks.

When Leon Trotsky launched his call for the Fourth International in July 1933, the approaching interimperialist war already cast its shadow over the world. Hitler's rise to power ensured that German imperialism would sooner, rather than later, embark on a military struggle to reverse the terms of the Versailles treaty which had ended the First World War. Nazism had triumphed in Germany largely because of the treacherous misleadership of the working class by the Stalinists and Social Democrats. Hitler's barbaric regime was widely and acutely hated by the world proletariat. As Hitler crushed the working class under the Nazi jackboot, consolidated a military alliance with Mussolini's Italy and built the war machine with which he would launch a struggle to redivide the world, the opposing imperialist bourgeoisies took advantage of the anti-fascist sentiments of the masses. The French and British ruling classes portrayed their defense of the existing imperialist status quo as a defense of "democracy" against fascism. The American bourgeoisie began to abandon the posture of European "peacemaker" which it had adopted after WWI, aligning itself with the French and British camp and also cloaking its imperialist war aims in "democratic" and "anti-fascist" garb.

"WAR AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL"

When in June 1934 Trotsky authored "War and the Fourth International," a manifesto on the coming imperialist conflagration, he cut through the "anti-fascist" and "democratic" pretensions of the imperialist warmongers:

18. The sham of national defense is covered up wherever possible by the additional sham of the defense of democracy. If even now, in the imperialist epoch, Marxists do not identify democracy with fascism and are ready at any moment to repel fascism's encroachment upon democracy, must not the proletariat in case of war support

³ This work appears in Leon Trotsky's The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25) (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 199-258.

the democratic governments against the fascist governments?

Flagrant sophism! We defend democracy against fascism by means of the organizations and methods of the proletariat....And if we remain in irreconcilable opposition to the most "democratic" government in time of peace, how can we take upon ourselves even a shadow of responsibility for it in time of war when all the infamies and crimes of capitalism take on a most brutal and bloody form?

19. A modern war between the great powers does not signify a conflict between democracy and fascism but a struggle of two imperialisms for the redivision of the world.⁴

Leninists believed that the rise of imperialism had starkly posed before humanity the choice: either socialism or barbarism. The coming world war would be both a resumption and an extension of the first, on a more global scale. If the crisis of proletarian leadership was not resolved with the successful seizure of state power, human civilization would pay dearly. The working class would not shrink from defending its own conquest of power, arms in hand, nor would it shrink from giving all the military support within its means to the struggles of the colonial masses against imperialism. But the proletariat had no interest in this coming war, which would see the slaughter of millions, the mass destruction of industrial capacity, the devastation of agricultural lands and of the infrastructure of civilization--all so that one or another imperialist cabal could be assured of superprofits from colonial exploitation. Extending the revolutionary defeatist policy which guided the Bolsheviks during the First World War and which imbued the documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International, Trotsky wrote:

58. In those cases where it is a question of conflict between capitalist countries, the proletariat of any one of them refuses categorically to sacrifice its historic interests, which in the final analysis coincide with the interests of the nation and humanity, for the sake of the military victory of the bourgeoisie. Lenin's formula, "defeat is the lesser evil," means not defeat of one's country is the lesser evil as compared with the defeat of the enemy country but that a military defeat resulting from the growth of the revolutionary movement is infinitely more beneficial to the proletariat and to the whole people than military victory assured by "civil peace." Karl Liebknecht gave an unsurpassed formula of proletarian policy in time of war: "The chief enemy of the people is in its own country." The victorious

⁴ Writings of Leon Trotsky (1933-34) (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 306-307. The entire manifesto, quoted extensively below, appears on pages 299-329.

proletarian revolution not only will rectify the evils caused by defeat but also will create the final guarantee against future wars and defeats. This dialectical attitude toward war is the most important element of revolutionary training and therefore also of the struggle against war.

59. The transformation of imperialist war into civil war is that general strategic task to which the whole work of a proletarian party during war should be subordinated.

Trotsky made only one addition to the revolutionary program elaborated during World War I--the duty of the world proletariat to militarily defend the gains of the October Revolution despite the usurpation of political power by the bureaucratic caste headed by Stalin:

8. ...Defense of the Soviet Union from the blows of the capitalist enemies, irrespective of the circumstances and immediate causes of the conflict, is the elementary and imperative duty of every honest labor organization.

Trotsky foresaw that a new world war would inevitably draw in the Soviet degenerated workers state, perhaps in military alliance with one of the imperialist camps. In no way would this mitigate either the proletariat's duty to defend the Soviet Union, or the policy of intransigent defeatism toward all the warring imperialist bourgeoisies:

44. Remaining the determined and devoted defender of the workers' state in the struggle with imperialism, the international proletariat will not, however, become an ally of the imperialist allies of the USSR. The proletariat of a capitalist country that finds itself in an alliance with the USSR must retain fully and completely its irreconcilable hostility to the imperialist government of its own country. In this sense, its policy will not differ from that of the proletariat in a country fighting against the USSR. But in the nature of practical actions, considerable differences may arise depending on the concrete war situation. For instance, it would be absurd and criminal in case of war between the USSR and Japan for the American proletariat to sabotage the sending of American munition to the USSR. But the proletariat of a country fighting against the USSR would be absolutely obliged to resort to actions of this sort--strikes, sabotage, etc.

Trotsky's elaboration of the tactical considerations which flowed from Soviet defensism provoked controversy within the international movement. Yvan Craipeau, who held the position that the Russian bureaucracy was a new ruling class, argued that military defense of the Soviet Union in the coming war would inevitably lead the Trotskyists into social-patriotism. In his reply to Craipeau,

Trotsky pointed out that Soviet defensism and revolutionary defeatism had existed as two coequal elements in the program of the revolutionary proletariat since 1918:

In that period [1918-1923] the Soviet state maneuvered on the international arena and sought temporary allies. At the same time, it is precisely in that period that defeatism was made a duty for the workers of all the imperialist countries, the "enemies" as well as the temporary "allies."⁵

Within the basic framework established by "War and the Fourth International," the Trotskyist movement debated and adopted positions upon the various military conflicts which preceded and prefigured the approaching world war (military support to the Republican side while refusing to vote war credits during the Spanish Civil War; the military defense of Ethiopia against imperialist Italy; the military defense of China against imperialist Japan). Trotsky recognized that there was no sharp line of demarcation between the proletariat's policy in war and peace. He insisted that defeatism was simply the extension to wartime of the proletariat's irreconcilable hostility to bourgeois class rule:

To carry the class struggle to its highest form--civil war--this is the task of defeatism. But this task can be solved only through the revolutionary mobilization of the masses, that is, by widening, deepening, and sharpening those revolutionary methods which constitute the content of class struggle in "peacetime."⁶

Within the context of heightened interimperialist rivalry and war there could arise colonial uprisings and proletarian struggles to which one or another of the imperialist camps might give military assistance. This would not mitigate the duty of the international proletariat to give all the military support within its means to these struggles, just as the proletariat would be bound to militarily aid the Soviet Union in the coming war.

The horrible depravity of German fascism, fusing as it did the most base social barbarism with a new technology of mass death, propelled many despairing ex-leftists into the Allied imperialist camp as the war approached. While in the period leading up to the First World War it was the extreme right-wing militarists who pushed for war, in the Allied countries in the pre-WWII period it was the factions on the "left" of the political spectrum who were the most ardent advocates of war (the Roosevelt New Dealers, the British Labour Party, and the Stalinist parties from 1935 until the Hitler-

⁵ "Once Again: The USSR and Its Defense," 4 November 1937, Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38), 2nd ed. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976), 43.

⁶ "Learn to Think," 22 May 1938, *ibid.*, 333.

Stalin pact). The main factions of the French and British bourgeoisies tried to appease Nazi Germany. When, after the abject capitulation of Chamberlain and Daladier to Hitler at Munich in the fall of 1938, some of Trotsky's supporters in Palestine capitulated to popular "anti-fascism" and argued for abandoning revolutionary defeatism, Trotsky labeled the Palestinian comrades' position "a step toward social patriotism." Using the concrete example of Czechoslovakia to unmask the "anti-fascist" rhetoric of the bourgeoisie, Trotsky wrote:

"Could the proletariat of Czechoslovakia have struggled against its government and the latter's capitulatory policy by slogans of peace and defeatism?" A very concrete question is posed here in a very abstract form. There was no room for "defeatism" because there was no war (and it is not accidental that no war ensued). In the critical twenty-four hours of universal confusion and indignation, the Czechoslovak proletariat had the full opportunity of overthrowing the "capitulatory" government and seizing power. For this only a revolutionary leadership was required. Naturally, after seizing power, the proletariat would have offered desperate resistance to Hitler and would have indubitably evoked a mighty reaction in the working masses of France and other countries. Let us not speculate on what the further course of events might have been. In any case the situation today would have been infinitely more favorable to the world working class. Yes, we are not pacifists; we are for revolutionary war. But the Czech working class did not have the slightest right to entrust the leadership of a war "against fascism" to Messrs. Capitalists who, within a few days, so safely changed their coloration and became themselves fascists and quasifascists. Transformations and recolorations of this kind on the part of the ruling classes will be on the order of the day in wartime in all "democracies." That is why the proletariat would ruin itself if it were to determine its main line of policy by the formal and unstable labels of "for fascism" and "against fascism."⁷

THE ORIGIN OF THE "PROLETARIAN MILITARY POLICY"

Trotsky soon saw indications that the Munich capitulation had frightened Stalin into seeking a military alliance with Hitler.⁸ But Trotsky also saw that this alliance would be short-lived. On 23 August 1939 the Hitler-Stalin pact was signed: the Soviet Union

⁷ "A Step Toward Social Patriotism," 7 March 1939, Writings of Leon Trotsky (1938-39), 2nd ed. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), 211-212.

⁸ "Stalin's Capitulation," 11 March 1939, *ibid.*, 216-219.

pledged to stay out of any war between Germany and the Western "democracies." Little more than a week later the pact was consummated when the Nazis invaded Poland, finally provoking Britain and France to a declaration of war. The German Blitzkrieg defeated the Polish forces in three weeks. Meanwhile, Soviet troops occupied eastern Poland, as per their agreement with Hitler. As a result of the Hitler-Stalin pact, the parties of the Communist International did an about-face. The Stalinist Popular Front policy, inaugurated in 1935 with the Stalin-Laval pact, had seen the Stalinist parties following and adding to the mass pro-war sentiment. Now they suddenly discovered the imperialist ambitions of the "democratic" Allies, while ignoring the Italian occupation of Abyssinia and the German invasion of Poland.

The Stalinist about-face produced a sharp break in popular political consciousness in the Allied imperialist countries as the war began: public opinion turned sharply to anti-Communism. A section of the cadre of the American Socialist Workers Party, led by Max Shachtman, Martin Abern and James Burnham, bowed to this wave of anti-Communism and took the first, qualitative step toward reconciliation with their own bourgeoisie, abandoning the military defense of the Soviet Union. As a result, Trotsky and Cannon spent the early months of the war embroiled in a crucial factional struggle over the Russian question. It was resolved only in April 1940 when the defectors split, taking 40 percent of the membership from what had been the largest and most successful section of the Fourth International, to found the Workers Party.

In May 1940, as Hitler's armies rolled through Belgium and Holland and on toward Paris, an emergency conference of the Fourth International was held in New York. Trotsky authored a new Manifesto on the war, which was adopted by the conference.⁹ It is in a passage near the end of this Manifesto that a new element in the Fourth International's program on the imperialist war first appears:

The militarization of the masses is further intensified every day. We reject the grotesque pretension of doing away with this militarization through empty pacifist protests. All the great questions will be decided in the next epoch arms in hand. The workers should not fear arms; on the contrary they should learn to use them. Revolutionists no more separate themselves from the people during war than in peace. A Bolshevik strives to become not only the best trade unionist but also the best soldier.

We do not wish to permit the bourgeoisie to drive untrained or half-trained soldiers at the last hour onto the battlefield. We demand that the state immediately provide the workers and the unemployed with the

⁹ "Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution," Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40), 2nd ed. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 183-222.

possibility of learning how to handle the rifle, the hand grenade, the machine gun, the cannon, the airplane, the submarine, and the other tools of war. Special military schools are necessary in close connection with the trade unions so that the workers can become skilled specialists of the military art, able to hold posts as commanders.

These sentences are the first expression of what became known as the "Proletarian Military Policy," though it appears that Trotsky had, as early as October 1939, been groping for some way to use the war to popularize the need for proletarian military training.¹⁰

Trotsky elaborated this new set of demands in a discussion with leaders of the American SWP on 12 June 1940.¹¹ He also wrote several letters and an article on the subject over the next few months.¹² When his life was cut short by a Stalinist assassin in August, Trotsky was working on a major article designed in part to provide the theoretical justification for the new demands.¹³ In September, the SWP formally adopted a resolution on the new military policy at a conference in Chicago:¹⁴

We fight against sending the worker-soldiers into battle without proper training and equipment. We oppose the military direction of worker-soldiers by bourgeois officers who have no regard for their treatment, their protection and their lives. We demand federal funds for the military training of workers and worker-officers under the control of the trade unions. Military appropriations? Yes--but only for the establishment and equipment of worker training camps! Compulsory military training of workers? Yes--but only under the control of the trade unions!

From October 1940 until March 1945 these demands held a spot in the program box of the SWP's weekly press.

¹⁰ See "On the Question of Workers' Self-Defense," *ibid.*, 99-105. This article was written on 25 October 1939 but not published by Trotsky in his lifetime.

¹¹ "Discussions with Trotsky," 12-15 June 1940, *ibid.*, 251-289. Only the discussion of 12 June deals directly with the P.M.P.

¹² See "We Do Not Change Our Course" (30 June 1940), "Letter on Conscription" (9 July 1940), "American Problems" (7 August 1940), "How to Defend Ourselves" (12 August 1940), "How to Really Defend Democracy" (13 August 1940), "Another Thought on Conscription" (17 August 1940), *ibid.*, 296-299, 321-322, 331-342, 343, 344-345, 392.

¹³ The fragments of this uncompleted article are published as "Bonapartism, Fascism, and War," *ibid.*, 410-418.

¹⁴ Reprinted below, pages 57-62.

The adoption of the "Proletarian Military Policy" did not provoke known opposition within the American SWP. However, Max Shachtman, then only one step down the long road he followed toward reconciliation with American imperialism, wrote some very effective polemics against it, which we reprint here.¹⁵ When some of those who had left the SWP with Shachtman rejoined in Los Angeles, they retained their opposition to the P.M.P.¹⁶

In Britain the P.M.P. was extremely controversial. All wings of the faction-ridden Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), official section of the Fourth International, initially opposed what they called the "American Military Policy." However, a pro-P.M.P. faction eventually developed within the RSL: the Trotskyist Opposition (TO) led by Hilda Lane and John Lawrence. In 1942 the TO was expelled, and opposition to the military policy was made a criterion of RSL membership. In contrast, the British Workers International League (WIL), which had been condemned by the founding conference of the Fourth International for its cliquist refusal to join the RSL, adopted the P.M.P., though not without some internal dissension. When, in March 1944, the WIL fused with the remnants of the RSL, the P.M.P. was still a subject of debate.¹⁷ The new organization, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), adopted the resolution on military policy submitted by the former WIL and TO. In addition to this resolution, we reprint below the motions submitted to the RCP founding conference by the Militant Group and the Left Faction of the former RSL.¹⁸

Communication among the Fourth Internationalists was spotty to nonexistent during the war. The Dutch Committee of Revolutionary Marxists, which produced some of the best defeatist propaganda, appears not to have known about the P.M.P. Where it did become known, however, the new military policy provoked controversy. The Bulletin Mensuel de la IVE Internationale published by the Committees for the Fourth International in Vichy France printed excerpts from the SWP's conference resolution in its April 1941 issue. We print below translations of two articles which accompanied the excerpts. One, a letter by "Comrade C.," objects to the SWP resolution and to the fact that the French leading Committee saw fit to print it. The Committee's reply to Comrade C. also

15 See below, pages 63-82.

16 Cannon mentions this Los Angeles opposition in a letter to Farrell Dobbs written in February 1942. See The Socialist Workers Party in World War II (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 217.

17 For this account of the dispute among the British Trotskyists we have relied on Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, The War and the International (London: Socialist Platform, 1986). See especially pages 12-17.

18 See below, pages 83-93.

takes issue with the SWP's military policy while defending their decision to open a discussion on the question.¹⁹

TELESCOPING THE TASKS

In large part the P.M.P. was based on an exaggerated prognosis of the extent to which the proletariat would engage in struggle against the war early on. Trotsky thought that wartime necessity would rapidly rip the "anti-fascist" and "democratic" mask off the Anglo-American imperialists. He expected that the bourgeoisies of both countries would be forced to impose some variant of bonapartist dictatorship in the face of mounting discontent, leading to social struggle and perhaps situations of dual power. Moreover, Trotsky projected that, faced with internal social struggle, the Anglo-American imperialists would follow the example of their French allies and become "defeatist," viewing Hitler as the lesser evil. In his last article, Trotsky wrote:

The Second World War poses the question of change of regimes more imperiously, more urgently than did the first war. It is first and foremost a question of the political regime. The workers are aware that democracy is suffering shipwreck everywhere, and that they are threatened by fascism even in those countries where fascism is as yet nonexistent. The bourgeoisie of the democratic countries will naturally utilize this dread of fascism on the part of the workers, but, on the other hand, the bankruptcy of democracies, their collapse, their painless transformation into reactionary dictatorships, compel the workers to pose before themselves the problem of power, and render them responsive to the posing of the problem of power.²⁰

Based on this prognosis, Trotsky combined "fighting fascism" in the war with the task of the proletariat seizing power. In his summary speech to the SWP's September conference, Cannon makes the telescoping explicit:

Many times in the past we were put at a certain disadvantage; the demagogy of the Social Democrats against us was effective to a certain extent. They said, "You have no answer to the question of how to fight against Hitler, how to prevent Hitler from conquering France, Belgium, etc."...Well, we answered in a general way, the workers will first overthrow the bourgeoisie at home and then they will take care of invaders. That was a good program, but the workers did not make the revolution in

¹⁹ See below, pages 95-100.

²⁰ "Bonapartism, Fascism, and War," op. cit., 413.

time. Now the two tasks must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously.²¹

In "Bonapartism, Fascism, and War" Trotsky bases the P.M.P. on the experience of the Russian Revolution:

True enough, the Bolsheviks in the space of eight months conquered the overwhelming majority of the workers. But the decisive role in this conquest was played not by the refusal to defend the bourgeois fatherland but by the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" And only by this revolutionary slogan! The criticism of imperialism, its militarism, the renunciation of the defense of bourgeois democracy and so on could have never conquered the overwhelming majority of the people to the side of the Bolsheviks....²²

But Trotsky's use of the post-February Bolshevik example could only be misleading in a situation where there did not yet exist a situation of dual power in any imperialist country.

DEFEATISM AND REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS

After the overthrow of tsarism in February 1917 the Bolsheviks maintained their intransigent opposition to the imperialist war, now being waged by the new "democratic" capitalist government. Lenin's April Theses declare that "not the slightest concession must be made to 'revolutionary defencism'." But the April Theses also state that:

In view of the undoubted honesty of those broad sections of the mass believers in revolutionary defencism who accept the war only as a necessity, and not as a means of conquest, in view of the fact that they are being deceived by the bourgeoisie, it is necessary with particular thoroughness, persistence and patience to explain their error to them, to explain the inseparable connection existing between capital and the imperialist war, and to prove that without overthrowing capital it is impossible to end the war by a truly democratic peace, a peace not imposed by violence.²³

21 "Summary Speech on Military Policy," The Socialist Workers Party in World War II, 98. Cannon's main political report to the Plenum-Conference which adopted the P.M.P. is printed in the same volume, titled "Military Policy of the Proletariat," 66-83.

22 Op. cit., 411-412.

23 V.I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," Collected Works, 4th ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960-1970), vol. 24, 21-22.

Increasingly the Bolsheviks attempted to find a "bridge" to the defensist sentiments of the masses. But this was only possible because the working masses had overthrown the tsar and created the soviets--incipient organs of proletarian state power. The proletariat had in hand a conquest worth defending against the German armies. Correspondingly the Russian bourgeoisie, faced with the revolutionary proletariat, increasingly went over to defeatism (even going so far as to allow German troops to take Riga). "All Power to the Soviets!" became a call for the Russian proletariat to take power, the better to be able to defend the revolution against both internal counterrevolution and the German armies. The Bolsheviks recognized that they might well have to defend a Russian Soviet state after taking power, and they certainly never excluded the possibility that the new state might wage a revolutionary war against Germany.

The shift in Bolshevik propagandistic emphasis led Lenin to remark in 1918 that "we were defeatists under the Tsar, but under Tsereteli and Chernov we were not defeatists."²⁴ Yet the Bolsheviks never abandoned a defeatist posture toward the Russian bourgeois government--they simply varied the tactical application because of the class war then raging in Russia. When the imperialist war is transformed into a civil war, that civil war is fought out on the internal political terrain of the individual nation-state.

Politics is in large part the art of the possible. It is not possible to demand the equivalent of "All Power to the Soviets!" in the absence of that level of class struggle and consciousness which leads to soviets or some other organs of dual power. The general strike which rocked Prague 21-22 September 1938 was certainly a situation which approximated the one foreseen in Trotsky's last, unfinished article on the war: the question of change of regime was imperiously posed when the working class simply (and evidently spontaneously) revolted against the rumored capitulation of the Hodza government to Hitler's demand for the Sudeten. The call for the formation of general strike committees to take power out of the hands of the bourgeoisie--the only measure which could defend the Czech, Slovak and German working masses against Hitler--would have been appropriate here, though it was necessary to couple this with agitation for the democratic rights of the Sudeten Germans oppressed by the Czech bourgeoisie. In the absence of a struggle for proletarian state power, the Czech ruling class, with the indispensable aid of the mass Stalinist party, succeeded in derailing the revolt of the masses. The new Syrovky government promised before crowds of hundreds of thousands to "fight to the end"--and once the

²⁴ Cited in Brian Pearce, "Lenin and Trotsky on Pacifism and Defeatism," first printed in the British Labour Review, vol. 6, no. 1 (Spring 1961), and reprinted in the pamphlet What Is Revolutionary Leadership? (New York: Spartacist Publishing Co., 1970). Pearce relies heavily on Hal Draper, "The Myth of Lenin's 'Revolutionary Defeatism'," an article serialized in the New International, nos. 161-163 (Sept.-Oct., Nov.-Dec. 1953 and Jan.-Feb. 1954).

proletariat was demobilized gave way to the French and British insistence on capitulation, ceding the Sudeten to Hitler.²⁵

But to call in the midst of a potentially revolutionary situation for proletarian state power to defend against Hitler is not the same thing as to call for "trade-union control of military training" when it is the bourgeois state waging war against Hitler. Trotsky erred in attempting to raise a positive set of demands for the war in the absence of a revolutionary situation. As a general rule revolutionaries prefer to raise negative demands on the bourgeois state--these are the most powerful vehicles for mobilizing the masses against the bourgeoisie. Positive demands on the core institutions of the capitalist state--the army, police and courts--are easily bent in the reformist direction of portraying the bourgeois repressive apparatus as somehow class-neutral.

"PROLETARIAN MILITARY POLICY": EITHER UTOPIAN...

In hindsight it is clear that the P.M.P. is shamelessly utopian: the bourgeois state is not about to legislate away its control of military training. The working class cannot "control" any aspect of the bourgeois army, except in a transitory revolutionary situation (e.g. one presenting certain elements of dual power). In such a situation, Leninists seek to win the mass of the soldiers to the side of the incipient proletarian revolution, in the process smashing the institutions of the bourgeois state and thus creating a new proletarian state in its place.

Along the road of struggle leading to the establishment of a proletarian state, the call for the establishment of workers self-defense organizations is central to the revolutionary program. These organizations represent the army of the workers state in embryo--but only if they are completely independent of the bourgeois state. The Transitional Program, adopted at the founding conference of the Fourth International in 1938, couples its call for workers' military schools and military training with the demand for the "complete independence of workers' organizations from military-police control."²⁶ But the P.M.P. demanded that the bourgeois state fund workers' military schools, bending toward a reformist position on the character of the capitalist state. The SWP's ridiculous demand for "trade-union control of conscription" went even further down this road.

²⁵ This account of the September events in Czechoslovakia is based on Karel Kostal, "Munich: l'envers du mythe," Cahiers Léon Trotsky, no. 23 (September 1985), 23-34.

²⁶ The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution, 2nd ed. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), 91.

...OR A CONCESSION TO ALLIED WAR PROPAGANDA

Revolutionary defeatism represents the desire, from an international and strategic standpoint, to turn the imperialist war into a civil war. Yet the origins of the formulation reveal a certain confusion inherent in its use. Lenin first developed the concept during the Russo-Japanese war, when he supported the military victory of nascent Japanese capitalism against the tsarist monarchy (Lenin viewed the war as a repeat of the nationalist wars of 19th century Europe and not as an interimperialist conflict prefiguring WWI). However, during the First World War Lenin clearly generalized "defeatism" into a policy which applied equally to the proletariats of all the imperialist combatants. The use of the term "defeatism" is based on the recognition that: (1) a string of military defeats for an imperialist government helps to bring about domestic social struggle and (2) any significant social struggle in time of war inevitably "aids" the enemy power. The proletariat will not curtail the class struggle for fear of facilitating the victory of the "enemy" imperialist camp. Karl Liebknecht's slogan "The main enemy is at home" best encapsulates the sense of Lenin's revolutionary defeatism.

Lurking not far under the surface of the P.M.P. was the proposition that the proletariats of the world had a greater enemy than their own bourgeoisies--namely German fascism. Hitler's armies were marching toward Paris as Trotsky wrote the May 1940 Manifesto; later Trotsky advocated that the ignominious French capitulation become the centerpiece of P.M.P. propaganda:

It is important, of course, to explain to the advanced workers that the genuine fight against fascism is the socialist revolution. But it is more urgent, more imperative, to explain to the millions of American workers that the defense of their "democracy" cannot be delivered over to an American Marshal Pétain....If the fatherland should be defended, then the defense cannot be abandoned to the arbitrary will of individuals. It should be a common attitude.²⁷

But Trotsky had pointed out as early as 1934 that fascism in power operates in a manner politically akin to a bonapartist military dictatorship.²⁸ To link "defense of democracy" and "anti-fascism" with the Allied imperialist war effort represented a capitulation to false consciousness. It was the job of revolutionaries to expose the anti-fascist pretensions of the "democratic" ruling classes. In 1927 Winston Churchill had declared to Mussolini's government, "If I had been an Italian, I am sure that I should have been wholeheartedly with you from start to finish in your triumphant

27 "How to Really Defend Democracy," op. cit., 344-345.

28 "Bonapartism and Fascism," 15 July 1934, Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-35), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 51-57.

struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism."²⁹ A decade later he was railing about the "bestiality of Nazism." The Fourth International had hammered home the point that the "democratic" bourgeoisie of today will tomorrow employ the fascists as a club against the revolutionary proletariat. While in theory the P.M.P. was based on the idea that the "democracies" would rapidly try to institute some kind of bonapartist dictatorship, in practice it conceded ground to the "anti-fascist" war propaganda of the Allied imperialists. Thus it meant retreat to a profoundly ahistorical view of the war and the regimes prosecuting it.

The new military policy was only applied, and could only have been applied, in Britain, the United States and their ancillary allies (Australia, Canada). Sam Levy at once recognizes and attempts to deny this fact:

The struggle was first and foremost in the original bourgeois democratic countries, even though the struggle for the armed bodies of men was equally necessary in the Fascist countries, though its manner and form would be determined by circumstances, the difficulties involved, etc.³⁰

Levy has to be vague about the concrete application of the P.M.P. to Germany. The May 1940 Manifesto was hardly demanding that Hitler's state establish schools for workers' training under trade-union control.

The world proletariat had every reason to fear and loathe the Nazi jackboot. Naturally this fear was particularly acute in the European nations which were most vulnerable to German conquest and occupation. The Belgian masses had already experienced occupation in WWI. But it was not the job of the Fourth International to accept the Allied bourgeois armies as saviors by declaring that (in the words of the May Manifesto) "We do not wish to permit the bourgeoisie to drive untrained or half-trained soldiers at the last hour onto the battlefield." Trotsky was not referring to the German army in this passage--there is a tacit Anglo-American bias behind the abstraction of "the bourgeoisie."

Yes, Hitler's armies had smashed through Holland, Belgium and France--thousands had died and millions were going to die in this obscene war of imperialist conquest, the renewal and intensification of the conflagration that had wracked the European continent from 1914 to 1918. But far better that intense proletarian class struggle and colonial uprisings paralyze the British and American war effort, perhaps leading to transient German victories, than

²⁹ Cited in Richard Griffiths, Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933-9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 14.

³⁰ Levy, op. cit., 8.

that the proletariat implicitly support the Allied armies by demanding better trained and equipped soldiers! Behind the P.M.P. as it was developed by the British and American Trotskyists lies the insistence that "Hitler must stop at our borders"--that is, the assumption that military defeat, occupation, mass murder, forced labor could or should only happen to the peoples of the European continent and the colored peoples of the colonies.

If mass popular opposition to the war had disrupted the British war effort, leading Hitler to attempt a Channel crossing (as it was, he never mounted a serious effort), the German conquerors would have inherited the problems of the British bourgeoisie, compounded by national resentment at the foreign invader. The colonial slaves of the British empire would doubtless have taken advantage of a humiliating British defeat to declare their independence. It is not hard to imagine the revolutionary world scenario which would have ensued, infecting even the soldiers of the Wehrmacht, many of whom were the sons of Social Democratic and Communist workers.

In fact the masses of India did take advantage of the war to press their struggle for national liberation. Within a few weeks of Britain's bald announcement that India was "at war" with the Axis powers, 90,000 workers were on strike against the war in Bombay, and there were also strikes and mass meetings in Calcutta and elsewhere. If the small Trotskyist forces had demanded, in the midst of this strike wave, that the British imperialists fund special schools under trade-union control so that the Indian masses could "fight fascism" and defend British "democracy," it would have meant their transformation and virtual dissolution into the British administration.

The initial Indian strike wave was derailed, but mass antiwar sentiment did not evaporate. The rapid succession of Japanese military victories in Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and finally Burma impelled even the compradors of Gandhi's Congress Party to action against the war. In August and September of 1942 a massive "Quit India" movement swept the subcontinent. Barricades went up in the streets of Bombay, spontaneous strikes erupted--millions went into the streets shouting "Inquilab Zindabad!" (Long Live the Revolution!). British retaliation was swift and vicious: thousands were killed, entire villages were bombed by the air force, and tens of thousands were rounded up and put in British concentration camps. The Indian Stalinists, now firm backers of the British war effort, helped the imperialists crush the struggle. The young and inexperienced Trotskyist forces organized in the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India (BLPI--led at the time by exiled members of the Ceylonese Lanka Samasamaja Party) intervened heroically. They warned of the treachery of the Congress Party and the Stalinists, advocated the agrarian revolution--and they called for the formation of strike and workers self-defense committees. The P.M.P. had no place in the

BLPI's program, which was headlined with the slogans, "Down with imperialism! Down with the imperialist war!"³¹

The British and American Trotskyists could have pursued these same negative slogans which had been used by revolutionaries in World War I. "Not one man and not one penny for the imperialist army" should have been the basis for their propaganda on the war. Insofar as the Allied imperialists lost during the early years of the war, "fear of foreign invasion" did come to predominate in popular political consciousness in the main Allied metropolitan centers. But the Allied losses weren't terminal. The population was not ground into the kind of despair, desperation and grasping at alternatives (real or illusory) that leads to massive unrest and revolt against a warring government, as occurred, e.g., in Russia in 1917, in Germany in 1918, among the Ukrainian peasantry in June 1941. In any case revolutionaries do not base their program on transitory popular moods, but on the historic interests of the working class. In the early years of the First World War the tiny forces of the Zimmerwald antiwar socialists had to swim against the current of popular pro-war sentiment. They stuck to their guns, awaiting the domestic discontent that the hardships of war (and especially defeat) inevitably engender. This was also the task of the Fourth Internationalists in World War II.

A STEP TOWARD SOCIAL-PATRIOTISM

The American SWP and British WIL used the P.M.P. to blur their propaganda on the nature of the war and blunt the edge of their revolutionary defeatism. A 1941 pamphlet published by the WIL claimed that their newspaper, Socialist Appeal, had "consistently put forward a proletarian military policy whereby the workers will be enabled to wage a genuine revolutionary war against Hitlerism and every other brand of Fascism."³² The SWP's Militant declared: "the real solution is to transform this imperialist war into a war against fascism."³³ The Militant's declaration is made in the midst of an article opposing the new "Lend-Lease" law (which allowed Roosevelt to provide massive material aid for the British war effort) and it is coupled with the statement: "That can only be done by taking all power out of the hands of the capitalist class. The workers can fight and conquer fascism only by taking control of the country into their own hands." Yet when 29 leaders of the SWP and Teamsters Local 544 were tried in Minneapolis under the Smith Act (18 were eventually convicted and sent to prison), Cannon's trial

³¹ "Draft Programme of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India" (1942), reprinted by the Lanka Samasamaja Party (R), December 1970.

³² Cited in Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., 55.

³³ See "Fight Against War Goes On!," Militant, 15 March 1941. Formulations similar to the one quoted appear in a few subsequent issues of the Militant.

testimony also tended toward the call to transform the war into a "real" struggle against fascism:

Q: Is it true then that the party is as equally opposed to Hitler as it is to the capitalist claims of the United States?

A: That is uncontestable. We consider Hitler and Hitlerism the greatest enemy of mankind. We want to wipe it off the face of the earth. The reason we do not support a declaration of war by American arms is because we do not believe the American capitalists can defeat Hitler and fascism. We think Hitlerism can be destroyed only by way of conducting a war under the leadership of the workers.³⁴

In addition, Cannon portrayed "trade-union control of military training" as a simple legislative proposal--a bit of parliamentary cretinism most insincerely delivered. Cannon's trial testimony was a source of controversy in the Trotskyist movement at the time, but the P.M.P. figured in only a minor way. Grandizo Munis' criticism was suffused with striking advocacy of "violence" and "sabotage," revealing a good dose of Blanguism and anarchism. Neither Cannon then, nor Trotskyists today, seek or glory in any general way in "violence" and "sabotage."

Yet Cannon's testimony certainly lacks the sense that imbued the thesis on American imperialism adopted by the founding conference of the Fourth International:

There is every indication that, unless European imperialism is smashed by the proletarian revolution and peace established on a socialist basis, the United States will dictate the terms of the imperialist peace after emerging as the victor. Its participation will not only determine the victory of the side it joins, but will also determine the disposition of the booty, of which it will claim the lion's share....American imperialism challenges the claims of its older rivals to exclusively exploit China's vast rich resources, both natural and human. Behind this "pacific" slogan [the "open door"] is the half-drawn sword--against both Japan and England for an increasing right to exploit China and the Chinese masses. As in all

³⁴ James P. Cannon, Socialism on Trial, 5th ed. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 52. Grandizo Munis' attack on Cannon's trial testimony and Cannon's reply are appended to this edition.

Workers Power's tendentious history The Death Agony of the Fourth International (London, 1983, p. 20) echoes Munis' criticisms. To serve their purposes Workers Power transmutes the reply by Cannon which we have quoted above to "That is unanswerable. We consider Hitler and Hitlerism the greatest enemy of mankind," etc.

other cases, American imperialism in the Far East is a thin cloak for aggressive imperialist expansion.³⁵

In fact the ferocious war between the Japanese and American imperialist forces in the Pacific figured hardly at all in the weekly newspaper of the SWP after Roosevelt finally succeeded in provoking the Japanese to declare war on the United States. The only ideological basis for the Pacific War was intense racism (on both sides)--revolutionaries could hardly find a "bridge" to the defensist sentiments of the masses on that basis.

The imperialist ambitions of Washington and Tokyo in Asia figured prominently in Trotsky's own projections as to the probable course of WWII. From the beginning of the Japanese war against China in July 1937, Fourth Internationalists had given unconditional military support to the Chinese resistance to Japanese conquest, while recognizing that the war in China would become "more and more interlocked with the imperialist war" (May Manifesto). After December 1941 Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist army did subordinate itself to the U.S. imperialist war effort, but Mao Tse-tung's peasant-based forces continued to wage the struggle for national independence. The prescience of Trotsky's December 1939 prediction that the Japanese would move from China into the American, British and Dutch colonies of the South Pacific (and not northwest toward the USSR)³⁶ is startling in light of the fact that it was only two years later that the heroic Soviet spies Richard Sorge and Ozaki Hotsumi finally confirmed that this was the intention of the Japanese high command.

The SWP's adoption of the P.M.P. necessitated a certain blindness to the grinding, racist war being fought in Asia. Yet the Militant condemned the internment of Japanese Americans, and the SWP also conducted extensive agitation for black rights during the war. Prior to the late 1930s the American black population lived largely in the rural South, but the war and the military buildup that preceded it saw a tremendous migration of blacks into industry in the North and West, into Southern urban areas, and into the military. Blacks keenly resented the fact that the armed forces remained rigidly segregated, with the upper echelons of the officer corps heavily drawn from white Southerners and openly racist. While the black population hated everything that Hitler stood for, wartime propaganda about American "democracy" ran counter to their everyday experience. Thus black American response to WWII mobilization was contradictory, ranging from skeptical to cynical to overtly hostile. This latter reaction was captured in the words of a young Southern black quoted in the 19 October 1940 Socialist Appeal as

35 "Thesis on the World Role of American Imperialism," Documents of the Fourth International (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 247.

36 "The Twin-Stars: Hitler-Stalin," 4 December 1939, Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40), 117.

saying, "I only hope I go to the army and stay there long enough to get my hands on a machine gun....All the fighting I'll ever do will be right here at home." The SWP's wartime agitation against Jim Crow won it substantial black recruitment, much of it deflected from the Communist Party, which had abandoned the struggle for black rights when it embraced the imperialist war effort. This exemplary campaign against racism and segregation, especially in the military, tended to cut across the implicit social-patriotism of the P.M.P.

The P.M.P.'s tendency to blur the line between defeatism and defensism was reflected in the statement, first made in the May 1940 Manifesto, that a Bolshevik strives to be the "best soldier." This stands in flat contradiction to the Manifesto's call for fraternization between the troops of the imperialist armies, but it is repeated in the SWP's September 1940 resolution. In contrast, a Manifesto by the Executive Committee of the Fourth International written just after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union calls for workers to be the "best soldiers" in a suitable army--the Red one.³⁷ The revolutionaries imprisoned in Stalin's Arctic camps, among whom there still numbered many Trotskyists, volunteered to serve in the Red Army by the hundreds of thousands. Despite the criminal refusal of the Stalinist bureaucracy to let them fight, the Soviet political prisoners did what they could for the Soviet war effort, relinquishing certain of their rights and agreeing to the extension of the working day to 12 hours.³⁸ This was totally appropriate: Trotskyists were military defensists in the case of Soviet Russia, but they were not supposed to be defensists in the case of the Allied imperialists.

The SWP zealously applied Trotsky's dictum that "any confusion with the pacifists is a hundred times more dangerous than temporary confusion with the bourgeois militarists."³⁹ They dumped their campaign against conscription in favor of a virulent attack on "mealy-mouthed" pacifism, which their September 1940 resolution labels "a debilitating poison in the workers' movement." This in the midst of a major wave of social-chauvinism!

Leninists do not separate themselves from the masses of youth, especially the young workers, drafted in time of imperialist war. If drafted, revolutionaries go into the army with the rest of their generation in order to engage in propaganda and agitation against the war. Individual pacifist resistance is no solution to imperialist war, yet many of its practitioners are courageous individuals whom Marxists want to address with their propaganda--and the bourgeois state's repressive measures against them should certainly be

³⁷ "For Defense of the Soviet Union," August 1941. Published in Fourth International, vol. II, no. 8, October 1941.

³⁸ Joseph Berger, Nothing But the Truth (New York: The John Day Company, 1971), 203.

³⁹ See "Discussions with Trotsky," op. cit., 256.

opposed by revolutionaries. Mass pacifist sentiment can provide a starting point for revolutionary propoganda against the war, as the report of the Canadian section to the Emergency Conference of the Fourth International in May 1940 recognized (there was mass opposition to conscription in French Canada).⁴⁰

The anti-pacifist campaign of the SWP and WIL paralleled that of the bourgeois militarists. After the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact, the pacifist George Orwell became an open social-patriot and he railed that it was left-wingers "trying to spread an outlook that was sometimes squashily pacifist" who had sapped the morale of British imperialism in the face of Hitler.⁴¹ With the Wehrmacht sitting across the Channel, the WIL's emphasis on the need to "arm the workers" had to sound similar to Orwell's call on the British state to "arm the people" against Nazi invasion.

"OUR EIGHTH ARMY"

The bourgeois state desperately fears giving arms to the working class. Historically, the proletariat seizes arms when faced with a felt threat (e.g., the Spanish workers faced with Franco's coup). The use of the slogan "arm the workers" gave a semi-defensist tilt to the WIL's propoganda. Jock Haston, Sam Levy and Millie Lee opposed this tilt, particularly when it cropped up as softness to the bourgeois defense forces of the Home Guard. But Haston would not argue against the P.M.P. itself, since Cannon and Trotsky were its proponents. This led Haston into the dishonest methodology of denying that Cannon and Trotsky meant what they wrote--ludicrously he claimed that the P.M.P. was simply a program for work in the armed forces (as if Leninists had not always opposed individual draft resistance!).⁴² It was apparently Haston's intervention that pulled the WIL back from an early approach to social-patriotism. A subsequent WIL resolution on the military policy drops the demand "arm the workers" and also demands the dissolution of the Home Guard.⁴³

Yet a current conciliatory of defensism continued to run through the WIL's propoganda. We have appended to this bulletin a flyer for a 1942 WIL meeting. This flyer presents workers control of production as the answer to the "chaos" of British war production, and it contains not one word of opposition to the war. In a

40 "The Canadian Section and the War," Documents of the Fourth International, 389.

41 George Orwell, "England Your England" (1941), Inside the Whale and Other Essays (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), 86.

42 See "A Step Towards Capitulation," 21 March 1941, Internal Bulletin of the WIL.

43 Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., 15.

speech to the 1943 WIL conference, Ted Grant went so far as to proclaim:

We have a victorious army in North Africa and Italy, and I say, yes, Long Live the Eighth Army, because that is our army. One of our comrades has spoken to a number of people who have had letters from the Eighth Army soldiers showing their complete dissatisfaction. We know of incidents in the army, navy and other forces that have never been reported, and it is impossible for us to report. It is OUR Eighth Army that is being hammered and tested and being organised for the purpose of changing the face of the world. This applies equally to all the forces.⁴⁴

TROTSKYISTS UNDER THE NAZI OCCUPATION

Especially after the Nazi occupation of France in June 1940, the pressure on the Trotskyists in occupied Europe was enormous. Added to this was the pervasive cliquism which had riddled the European groups ever since their formation in the early 1930s. So it is not surprising that, cut off from senior cadre internationally, and with the death of Trotsky, most individuals and virtually all the groups showed major disorientation, ranging from partial revision of some crucial aspect of Leninism to the total abandonment of Marxism. Jean Rous, who had supported Trotsky's positions in many of the faction fights in the French section from 1934 to 1939, defected to found the "Mouvement National Révolutionnaire" under the slogan "Neither Vichy nor London, neither Berlin nor Moscow." The MNR took the position that Hitler's Germany, like Stalin's Russia, represented a new, higher stage of capitalism. They flirted briefly with Déat's French fascist party, calling on the French state to defend itself against "Judaism, Masonry and Jesuitism."⁴⁵ Most MNR members eventually joined the Gaullist Resistance.

The German section, the International Communists (IKD), which existed during the war only in exile, broke with Leninism toward Menshevism when it claimed that "the transition from fascism to socialism remains a utopia without a stopping place, which is by

⁴⁴ Cited in Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., 89.

⁴⁵ Jean Rabaut, Tout est possible! Les "gauchistes" français 1929-1944 (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1974), 344. See also Jean-Pierre Cassard, Les trotskystes en France pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale (1939-1944) (La Vérité, n.d.), 65-66, and Yvan Craipeau, Contre vents et marées (Paris: Editions Savelli, 1977), 70-77. Rous took a few others with him, including Fred Zeller, who had been a leader of the Socialist Party youth recruited during the entry.

its contents equivalent to a democratic revolution." They espoused a movement for "national freedom" by "all classes and strata."⁴⁶

But even among those who maintained a revolutionary perspective, the reaction to Nazi occupation generated symmetrical deviations on the national question that broke sharply, if episodically, with the tradition of Trotskyism and Leninism. When the P.M.P. did become a subject of debate, it was in the context of this broader debate on the national question.

Colony-starved German imperialism sought, first of all, to subject all of Europe to a savagely brutal imperialist domination. The more agrarian and backward Eastern Europe had long been the object of German imperialist ambitions. But the German occupation of industrially advanced West Europe also raised the issue of national oppression, though not in a way that is simply analogous to the struggle for national liberation in a traditional colonial situation, where the agrarian revolution is a central driving force. After the fall of France, Trotsky himself had noted that "France is being transformed into an oppressed nation....Added to social oppression is national oppression, the main burden of which is likewise borne by the workers. Of all the forms of dictatorship, the totalitarian dictatorship of a foreign conqueror is the most intolerable."⁴⁷

On the eve of the war the French Trotskyists were in political and organizational disarray. The official French section, the Internationalist Workers Party (POI), had fractured in February 1939 over the question of entry into Marceau Pivert's PSOP. The PSOP had recently emerged from the French Social Democracy in opposition to support for the bourgeoisie's war preparations (for much of the preceding period the head of the French Socialists, Léon Blum, had been leader of the governing Popular Front coalition). Entry into the PSOP represented an opportunity to intersect thousands of leftward-moving workers and petty bourgeois. While the minority of the POI, headed by Yvan Craipeau, did enter the PSOP, the majority initially refused to do so, leading to a break with the International Secretariat in June. The Pivert organization disintegrated after the war began.

Craipeau's followers regrouped to form the "French Committees for the Fourth International," which was considered to be the official French section of the Fourth International at the Emergency Conference held in New York in May 1940.⁴⁸ In August, this

46 "Three Theses on the European Situation and the Political Tasks" by German Comrades, dated 19 October 1941, but not printed until September 1942 in International Bulletin, vol. II, no. 3, 6.

47 "We Do Not Change Our Course," op. cit., 296-297.

48 See "Resolution on the French Section," Documents of the Fourth International, 364.

organization fused with Marcel Hic's wing of the ex-POI which had opposed entry into the PSOP. Documents written by Marcel Hic provided the basis for the fusion, though the new organization kept the name "French Committees for the Fourth International." Hic espoused an explicitly nationalist and popular-frontist line, declaring that the Trotskyists "stretch out [their] hands to the 'French' faction of the bourgeoisie."⁴⁹ Hic also called on English workers to abandon revolutionary defeatism and support the military struggle of British imperialism.⁵⁰ However, Hic's positions faced strong opposition from within the fused group, especially from Marcel Gibelin.⁵¹ A period of intense internal debate followed, which resulted in the French Committees abandoning the more extreme class collaboration and social-patriotism expressed in the early documents.

Other groups broke with the Trotskyist program in an opposite direction, by denying that any aspect of the national question existed in Nazi-occupied Europe. This was the position of the "Revolutionary Communist" group composed of Austrians, Germans and Czechs who had fled to France in 1938.⁵² It was also the position of some of the Greek Trotskyists, represented by L. Kastritis of the Workers Vanguard group, who continue to maintain that "occupations during the imperialist war are nothing but a phase, an incident of a smaller or greater significance of the prolonged war....It neither raises a national question and a question of National Liberation, nor, finally, does it change the basic duties of the proletariat, i.e. the transformation of the war into a civil war."⁵³ This general approach was shared by the French Barta group,⁵⁴ precursor of *Lutte Ouvrière*, which withdrew early on into the same kind of sterile economism it maintains today, and by the followers of Amadeo Bordiga, some of whom briefly fused with the Trotskyists in Italy in 1944.

⁴⁹ Rodolphe Prager, ed., L'Internationale dans la guerre 1940-46, volume 2 of Les congrès de la Quatrième Internationale (Paris: Editions La Brèche, 1981), 98 (our translation).

⁵⁰ Cassard, op. cit., 65, and Craipeau, op. cit., 76-82.

⁵¹ Cassard, op. cit., 65.

⁵² See Fritz Keller, "Le Trotskysme en Autriche, 1934 à 1945," Cahiers Léon Trotsky, no. 5 (January-March 1980), 127. This is a translation of large sections of Keller's book, Gegen den Strom: Fraktionskämpfe in der KPÖ--Trotzkisten und andere Gruppen, 1919-1945 (Vienna: Europa Verlag, 1978).

⁵³ See "The War Question and Pabloites Revisionism" (1966) in Documents of the "Workers Vanguard" Greece (1979), 189-190.

⁵⁴ See Craipeau, op. cit., 80.

In August 1940 Henri Molinier, central leader of the International Communist Committee (CCI, the Molinier-Frank group), wrote a document entitled "What Is To Be Done?" which equated the Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany as new, "progressive" forms of "state capitalism." Molinier (for whom Trotsky had always expressed a great deal of esteem, unlike for his brother Raymond) called for work in all mass organizations, including fascist ones.⁵⁵ As might be expected, this document gave rise to an intense faction fight which lasted until the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 eliminated the basis for this eclectic and impressionistic state capitalism.

A little over a year later, the CCI sent to Germany some of its members who had been requisitioned by the Nazis for forced labor (the STO--Obligatory Labor Service).⁵⁶ Some members of the Dutch Committee of Revolutionary Marxists (CRM) also went to work in Germany. The CRM had emerged in 1942 from the remnants of Henk Sneevliet's organization and declared for the Fourth International a year later, though it remained out of contact until the end of the war.⁵⁷ There was mass evasion of STO in most of occupied Europe, but it was either brute force or raw hunger which impelled most of those who participated--and some revolutionaries were forced to go through this experience with the rest of the European proletariat. Working in Germany was anathema to the bourgeois nationalist Resistance movements and their Stalinist collaborators, but another consideration entered into the equation for the Trotskyists: the strategic importance of the German revolution, in which STO workers could be expected to play an important role. The CCI formed a cell near Berlin and attempted to propagandize among French and German workers, while a member of the CRM participated in a strike in Bremerhaven.

Were the Trotskyists such wishful thinkers to expect (and work for) a proletarian revolution to arise from the ashes of a defeated Germany? Only worshippers of the accomplished fact can think so. The Nazi authorities were forced to shoot or hang some 80,000 German soldiers for insubordination or desertion during the war. In 1942 the Militant published two letters which had been smuggled to an American friend by a socialist worker who had been drafted into the Wehrmacht.⁵⁸ This German soldier, a member of the League of

55 Cassard, op. cit., 63-64, 69-72.

56 Ibid., 113-114. See also André Calvès, Sans bottes ni médailles (Montreuil: Editions La Brèche, 1984), 56.

57 See Wim Bot, "Generals Without Troops: Dutch Trotskyism during the Occupation," to be published in the forthcoming Revolutionary History, vol. I, no. 4.

58 "Letter from a Worker in the German Underground," Militant, 18 July 1942, and "A Worker's Message from Poland and the Ghetto," Militant, 1 August 1942. Soon after these letters appeared,

Revolutionary Socialists, spent three weeks in Warsaw at the end of 1941. He records with horror the starvation, despair and utter hopelessness of the Ghetto masses. Managing despite all odds to make contact with some Jewish Bundists and Polish Socialists, when he returned to Berlin this young worker raised 500 marks from among those in his underground resistance group. The money was sent to the Polish Socialist Party, and to the Trotskyists and Bundists active in the Warsaw Ghetto.

The memoirs of André Calvès, one of the Trotskyists who helped build the cell in the German armed forces at Brest, are full of instances of German soldiers' sympathy and material aid for acts of proletarian resistance. What of the German soldier at the Porte d'Orléans who handed over his pistol on demand with an "auf Wiedersehen Genossen" [see you later comrades]? What of the German soldiers and sailors in Brest, shot for their work with the Trotskyists in distributing Arbeiter im Westen?⁵⁹ The putrid and venal nationalism of the mass bourgeois and Stalinist Resistance forces-- "A chacun son boche"⁶⁰--made both fraternization and the task of organizing inchoate opposition within the German armed forces much more difficult than they had to be.

In the face of the overwhelming repressive forces unleashed against the proletariat (and these included the national bourgeois forces of "law and order" and the Stalinists as well as the invading imperialist armies), the Trotskyist cadre, for all their youth, inexperience and episodic disorientation, continued to be animated by the spirit and program of revolutionary internationalism. The reconstitution of a European Secretariat in early 1942 was a tremendous accomplishment. The 1945 Saigon uprising led by the Vietnamese Trotskyists; the publication of Arbeiter und Soldat; the cell built in the German armed forces at Brest; the publication of the Trotskyist newspaper Czorwony Sztandard in the Warsaw Ghetto; the work of the CRM and CCI in Germany; the participation of the Indian Trotskyists in the "Quit India" movement; the American Trotskyists who sailed on the Murmansk run; the involvement of Trotskyists (including British and American soldiers) in the revolutionary wave which swept Italy in 1943; and the participation of both the WIL and the SWP in strikes and other trade-union struggles which objectively cut across the imperialist war effort: all of these are ample testimony to the courage and even audacity of the small Fourth Internationalist forces in the face of almost incalculable odds.⁶¹

the Militant gave prominent coverage to the first reports of the Nazi genocide of European Jewry.

⁵⁹ Calvès, op. cit., 69, 72-78, 84.

⁶⁰ Roughly translated, "Everybody get a Kraut": infamous headline of the French Stalinist paper, l'Humanité.

⁶¹ See Pierre Vert, "Trotskyists in World War Two," pages 53-55 below.

During the war and its immediate aftermath the ranks of the Fourth International were decimated by savage imperialist repression--and Stalinist assassination. Many of the sections were virtually decapitated; some, like the Vietnamese, destroyed altogether. It is almost impossible in hindsight to appreciate the magnitude of the losses. Rodolphe Prager lists names of those known to have fallen--over one hundred--and there were many more.⁶² Of these, almost half were murdered in Greece, especially by the Stalinists in the civil war of 1945. But it wasn't only Greece. The Nazis eliminated the leadership of the French and Belgian parties. They also executed almost the entire Central Committee of Henk Sneevliet's Dutch Marx-Lenin-Luxemburg Front. Of those Trotskyists who did survive the war, many returned from the hell of Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, Auschwitz. The years preceding the war had seen the leadership of the International thinned by a wave of Stalinist assassination (Leon Sedov, Erwin Wolf, Rudolf Klement, Trotsky himself). By 1945 few of the leaders of 1939 survived. Abram Leon, Léon Lesoil, Marcel Hic, Ta Thu Tau, Chen Chi-chang, Walter Held, Pietro Tresso (Blasco)--all were gone.

The losses in Europe and Asia underline a critical failure on the part of the SWP leadership--they were unable to take on the leading role in the International, a responsibility that was posed for the SWP after Trotsky's death. The SWP was the one section which had been founded by cadre who came over as part of a faction from the Communist International; the section which had been strengthened most by close collaboration with Trotsky; the section which, because it was situated on the North American continent, had the most material resources, a large maritime fraction and thus some limited ability to move around the globe during the war. Yet they did not see themselves as responsible and barely kept up the pretense of maintaining a functioning International Secretariat in New York. They did not even attempt to set up an outpost in a neutral European country. No doubt the utter disaster of Cannon's 1939 trip to France, made at Trotsky's urging in an attempt to resolve the fracturing of the French section around the question of entry into the PSOP, played a role here.⁶³ In addition, the defection of the Shachtman and Abern faction was keenly felt in the SWP. But they should have tried.

OPPONENTS OF THE "PROLETARIAN MILITARY POLICY"

The British and American Trotskyists emerged from the war relatively intact. The Stalinists had relentlessly condemned the Trotskyists for their defeatism, while both the British and American bourgeoisies had prosecuted Trotskyists for their opposition to the war. Yet the experience with the P.M.P. hardly steeled the SWP

⁶² Prager, op. cit., 459-473.

⁶³ See Cannon's report on the trip in Socialist Workers Party Internal Bulletin, no. 10 (June 1939), 12-24.

and RCP for what lay ahead--its sole redeeming quality was that it didn't work. Its utopian character meant that it was not likely to be implemented, and in any case it had ceased to be the centerpiece of propaganda on the war by the end of 1943. The British and American Trotskyists continued to pursue the class struggle, and to view themselves as antiwar and anti-imperialist.

The documents presented to the March 1944 founding conference of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), reprinted in this bulletin, reflect the lack of applicability of the P.M.P. in the political climate created by certain German defeat. The resolution presented jointly by the WIL and the Trotskyist Opposition of the RSL, which was adopted as the position of the RCP, presents a very mild version of the P.M.P. Point 7 of this resolution, which attempts to detail the "progressive motives" of the defensism of the masses, does, however, reveal the central problem with the policy. The resolution of the Militant Group of the former RSL is correct as far as it goes, but perfunctory and formal.

The resolution of the RSL's Left Faction gives the issue the attention it deserves, making some very cogent arguments for revolutionary defeatism. But the Left Faction errs in equating defeatism with a "neutral" attitude toward the "enemy" imperialist camp in war. Revolutionaries are defeatists toward all the imperialist combatants. Moreover, the Left Faction reveals a fatuous ultra-leftism in opposing democratic demands during wartime (including the demand for air-raid shelters!). Demands to extend to the masses the provisioning and protection privileges enjoyed by army officers can be quite powerful in wartime. Moreover, if won, these measures represent a serious drain on the imperialist war effort. The February Revolution in Russia began as a strike by women textile workers in Petrograd demanding bread.

Max Shachtman's polemics against the P.M.P., also reprinted here, do not suffer from the excesses of those of the Left Faction. Shachtman had recoiled in horror at the Hitler-Stalin pact, which precipitated WWII, and his Workers Party remained highly attuned to the views and moods of the large Depression-bred intellectual milieu typified by the Partisan Review. Shachtman seized on the patent revisionism of the P.M.P. to score some correct points against his bitter factional opponent Cannon, whom he attempted to portray as some kind of simpleton in "theoretical" matters. It was extremely convenient for Shachtman to brush aside Trotsky's role in the elaboration of the P.M.P.: Cannon was a far more useful foil than the newly martyred Trotsky. It should be noted, however, that at the time Shachtman had available to him almost all of Trotsky's writings on the subject--they had been published in the October 1940 Fourth International. By 1950 Shachtman had developed his own, anti-Soviet, version of a "proletarian military policy."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ See "Proletarian Military Policy," pages 45-52 below.

The document of Comrade C. adds a new dimension to the discussion of the P.M.P.--he observes that "trade-union control of national defense" under bourgeois rule could only be instituted in a fascist or corporatist sense. The acuity of Comrade C.'s observation (no doubt the result of first-hand experience of the Nazi jackboot) is borne out by the fact that the only trade-union federation which adopted the program of the P.M.P. during the war was the Confederation of Mexican Workers--the corporatist creature of the ruling party of the Mexican bourgeoisie (today's Institutional Revolutionary Party).⁶⁵ Aside from the too acrimonious debate on the question of whether the SWP's resolution should have been printed, both Comrade C.'s letter and the reply of the leading committee are admirable statements, especially given the context in which they were written.

There were other opponents of the "Proletarian Military Policy." The Indian BLPI evidently published a polemic on the question in 1944.⁶⁶ And according to Rodolphe Prager the Belgian section, initially at least, refused to include the passage containing the demand for "trade-union control of military training" when they published Trotsky's May 1940 Manifesto. Unfortunately, many of the issues in dispute during the war, including the "Proletarian Military Policy," were never fought out to a real conclusion. While the European Secretariat published an informational bulletin on the P.M.P. in April 1945 and invited discussion on the subject, this never materialized.⁶⁷ Jacques Privas attempted to reopen the question at the Second World Congress in 1948 but both the British and American sections evidently opposed this, and Privas' motion referring the question to the incoming International Executive Committee narrowly failed. We can only agree with Prager when he regrets

⁶⁵ Militant, 14 February 1942.

⁶⁶ This polemic, titled "Britain at the Crossroads" (Permanent Revolution, January-March 1944), is cited in Part 1 of Charles Wesley Ervin, "A History of Trotskyism in India," manuscript submitted for publication to Revolutionary History.

⁶⁷ Bulletin du Secrétariat Européen de la IVE Internationale, no. 5: "Discussion sur la politique militaire du prolétariat" (April 1945). This bulletin includes some of Trotsky's last writings on the subject, excerpts from Cannon's September 1940 plenum speech, and a 1916 article by Lenin, "The 'Disarmament' Slogan." Lenin's article raises the demand for "voluntary military-training associations, with free election of instructors paid by the state." Whatever one thinks of this demand, it is hardly relevant to the "Proletarian Military Policy" since the workers militia envisioned by Lenin was clearly not an auxiliary to the bourgeois army, but counterposed to it.

that the issue was never resolved.⁶⁸ In hindsight it is clear that the uncorrected departure from Leninist principle over the P.M.P. facilitated the acceptance of the revisionist campaign of the International Secretariat leadership around Michel Pablo a few years later. Pablo deprecated the role of revolutionary Marxist program and organization, initially in the light of the consolidation of the Russian seizure of Eastern Europe, and he advocated the entry of the small Trotskyist nuclei into the Stalinist parties. This led to a split in the Trotskyist forces, the destruction of the Fourth International, and the subsequent shift of most of the elements involved onto the political terrain previously inhabited by the pre-war London Bureau.⁶⁹

TROTSKY VS. THE SWP

That Trotsky's motivations in putting forward the P.M.P. did not fully coincide with those of the SWP in adopting it, is clear from the series of discussions he held with SWP leaders in June 1940.⁷⁰ In these discussions Trotsky advocated that the SWP give critical support to the presidential campaign of American Communist Party (CP) leader Earl Browder. Trotsky raised this proposal because the CP, as a result of the Hitler-Stalin pact, had temporarily dropped its popular-frontism in favor of exposing the imperialist war aims of the American bourgeoisie. The SWP refused to critically support Browder, and in the discussions Trotsky put his finger on the reason why: the SWP feared to break its bloc with the virulently anti-Communist pro-Roosevelt forces in the American trade unions. This observation by Trotsky lends weight to the view that the SWP's fulsome adoption of the P.M.P. stemmed in part from opportunist appetites. One can see a similar opportunist thread in the workerist trade unionism of the WIL. In all fairness to Trotsky, it must be pointed out that he was murdered before the P.M.P. was fully elaborated by the SWP.

Daniel Guérin has suggested that Trotsky's intransigent Soviet defensism played a role in the genesis of the "Proletarian Military

⁶⁸ Prager, op. cit., 14. For the vote at the Second World Congress, held 2-21 April 1948, see the minutes in Rodolphe Prager, ed., Bouleversements et crises de l'après-guerre (1946-1950), volume 3 of Les congrès de la IVe Internationale (Paris: Editions La Brèche, 1988), 44. Privas' motion failed by a vote of 13 to 16, with three abstentions.

⁶⁹ See "Genesis of Pabloism," Spartacist, no. 21 (Fall 1972), 1-13.

⁷⁰ "Discussions with Trotsky," op. cit.

Policy."⁷¹ Certainly no one reading Trotsky's writings over his last year can doubt that he saw catastrophe approaching as the disastrous effects of Stalin's beheading of the Red Army became apparent in the wake of the Hitler-Stalin pact. Guérin certainly writes well on the startling prescience of Trotsky's predictions as to the course of the war. But Guérin is wrong to posit the existence of "two" Trotskys, one a proletarian revolutionist and the other a Soviet official. Trotsky had since 1917 maintained both elements as integral to his revolutionary proletarian worldview. Yet Guérin is not completely wrong. In a letter to the New York Times on 1 October 1939, Trotsky, arguing that only U.S. entry into the war on the Allied side would break Stalin from his pact with Hitler, did implicitly suggest this course to the U.S. bourgeoisie.⁷² While Trotsky's letter was in no way a programmatic statement of the Fourth International, it indicates that the extreme danger posed by the war to the homeland of the October Revolution loomed very large in his mind. This must have played a role as Trotsky elaborated the P.M.P.

BROUE PICKS UP THE GUN

In his Cahiers Léon Trotsky article, Pierre Broué guts the P.M.P. of its programmatic content, and he is willfully blind to its Anglo-American bias. For Broué Trotsky's last writings on universal imperialist militarism are simply a sort of call to "pick up the gun," and he argues that the Trotskyists should have entered "a mass movement based on national and social resistance" to fascism--that is, the various Partisan movements in Europe.⁷³ He sees the failure of the Trotskyists to enter such formations as central, implying that this determined their lack of success in leading a proletarian revolution in any country at the end of the war.

But Broué avoids a crucial question--the class independence of the proletarian fighting forces. Although the Partisan movements in France, Italy and Greece followed very different trajectories, where the leadership was not simply bourgeois nationalist it was Stalinist, and the Stalinists had subordinated their forces to the military and political alliance with the "democratic" imperialists. Participation by the small Trotskyist nuclei in nationalist bourgeois or Stalinist military formations in a subordinated or assimilated role would have meant abandoning a class position, crossing the line to class collaborationism. Moreover, it would have tended

⁷¹ See the preface and postscript in Daniel Guérin, ed., Léon Trotsky sur la deuxième guerre mondiale (Paris: Seuil, 1974), 7-17 and 212-217.

⁷² "The U.S. Will Participate in the War," Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40), 94-97.

⁷³ Broué, op. cit., 56 (our translation).

to cut across the necessary strategy of subverting the Axis armies through revolutionary fraternization.

Without securing sufficient weight for the class-conscious fraction as would allow the right of veto over the activities of the Partisan group or withdrawal from it, such involvement could only be, and was, a noose around the necks of the revolutionary workers, to be drawn tight sooner rather than later. Many of the Trotskyists who did enter or attempt to work in such formations were simply slaughtered by the Stalinists. This was true particularly in Greece, which Broué upholds as his main example. Only in Yugoslavia did a Partisan struggle against the German occupation forces end in a successful overturn of capitalist property relations, the first of a series of postwar social overturns led by peasant-based guerrilla formations. But what resulted was a workers state deformed from its inception by a bureaucratic regime qualitatively similar to that in the Soviet Union. In West Europe the Partisan forces were made to hand the reins of power back to the bourgeoisie, while in most of Eastern Europe the Soviet Red Army filled the vacuum of state power left when the Nazis retreated.

The question that Trotskyist strategy had to address was: who would prevail upon the collapse of the Axis occupation--the forces of the revolutionary proletariat, or those of the Allied imperialists? The Stalinist forces were still perceived by the masses as the proletarian vanguard formation (the exceptions being Vietnam, Ceylon and Bolivia, countries where the proletariat came to class consciousness after the Comintern adopted an explicit policy of collaboration with the "democratic" colonial powers). The prestige of the Communist Parties had only been enhanced by the military victories of the Soviet army, and the Stalinists used this prestige to tie the masses to the forces of bourgeois nationalist "law and order," building illusions in "liberation" by the Allied armies.

There was a great disproportion between the end and the means: concluding the war through victorious proletarian revolution versus the scattered scores and hundreds that were the Fourth International. During the war the Trotskyist forces were for the most part too small to have anything but a propagandistic orientation to the layers of advanced workers, most of whom followed Stalinist leadership. In hindsight and from afar, we cannot presume to determine exactly what else they might have done, but the policy of the tiny Dutch CRM seems admirable. The CRM opposed political assassination and other individual acts of terror against the Nazi occupying authorities--these acts had no military impact and simply brought down increased German repression on the general population (dealing with proven informers for the Germans was of course another matter). The CRM advocated economic sabotage in the form of working slowly, and strikes and other forms of mass proletarian action where feasible. Defense of the Soviet Union was an important part of their calculations:

Since 90 per cent of the German army has been thrown against the Soviet army, the workers (German and foreign)

have the duty deliberately to weaken German war production, by means of so-called "economic sabotage" in the weapons and munitions factories and in the transports to the Russian front.⁷⁴

The CRM produced some 44 issues of De Rode October from their formation in 1942 until the end of the war. They also produced an internal discussion bulletin. While the CRM had a very small membership--between 50 and 75 by 1945--the biweekly De Rode October had a circulation of some 2,500 in 1943, and at the end of the occupation their cadre emerged virtually intact.⁷⁵

The small Trotskyist forces had to await the opportunities provided by mass proletarian struggle. Such struggle did occur, even under Nazi occupation. A massive strike wave greeted the attempt to impose the forced labor program in Greece in December 1942, and the Nazis had to give way to it. The insurrectionary state of mind of the Greek masses was also reflected in the April 1944 mutiny against the Metaxas-supporting officers of the Greek armed forces in Egypt. In Italy there was an uprising against the German occupying forces in Naples in 1944, and insurrections in several cities in the north after the Allied landing. In Genoa the Germans actually surrendered to the Partisan forces. In the Netherlands there were three major strikes against the German occupation forces: in 1941 a strike in Amsterdam and other northern towns protested the first arrests and deportations of Jews; a two-day general strike in April 1943 protested the sending of Dutch prisoners of war to Germany for forced labor; and in September 1944 there was a national railway strike, called by the bourgeois Resistance in support of the Allied invasion.

The CRM expected that revolutionary resistance would erupt first in the Balkans and Italy--the weakest links in the Axis empire. They were right in their projection, but, as they had also noted, a revolutionary breakthrough in southeastern Europe would probably "bleed to death" unless the German proletariat came to its assistance. As early as February 1943 De Rode October put its finger on the main factor working against such a revolutionary upsurge in Europe--the projected Allied invasion.⁷⁶ The much-heralded Allied "second front" would only be established when the Soviet Red Army had militarily weakened the Wehrmacht, i.e., at the point when a revolutionary development within Germany was most likely. De Rode October warned that it was a race against the clock between a German revolution and Allied-led counterrevolution. If revolution had broken out in Europe, including Germany, prior to the Allied landings, the imperialist armies would have been subject to the disintegrating effects of a major political upheaval, while

74 Cited in Bot, op. cit.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

at the same time the High Command would have made every effort to smash the revolution. As it was, however, the Allied imperialists invaded first. Events after the July 1943 landing in Italy confirmed the CRM in its prognosis--the Allied armies provided the indispensable military might under cover of which the Italian bourgeoisie, with the aid of the Communist Party, was able to disarm the insurrectionary proletariat.

While the CRM hailed the advances of the Red Army, they also repeatedly condemned the nationalism of Stalin, who planned with Churchill and Roosevelt the partition of Europe into spheres of influence. They saw that the division of Europe between Stalin and the Allies would work against a revolutionary revival of the German workers movement at the war's end. While the CRM saw in Stalin's May 1943 dissolution of the Communist International an attempt to guarantee to the Allies that the Red Army would not stand in the way of a capitalist postwar Europe, they also believed it unlikely that Soviet soldiers could be made to turn their guns on an insurgent German proletariat. Thus they thought that the chances of a successful German revolution would be better if the Red Army entered Germany before the Allies.⁷⁷

THE SHAPE OF THE POSTWAR WORLD

The British and American imperialists were able to enter Europe as "liberators" because they had not been forced to resort to much overt and felt military dictatorship during the war. They never had to deal with a recalcitrant domestic population; the morale of their armies remained high, and this played no small role in their victory. The internment of the Japanese Americans, the brutal British repression of the "Quit India" movement, the even more destructive Bengal famine which the British created following the repression--these acts paled beside the genocidal horror of the Holocaust, revealed to the world first as the Red Army advanced into Poland, and especially as the Allied armies advanced into Germany. When the Allied imperialists landed in Italy, the American atom-bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was still two years away. Yet even this atrocity, while it represented a giant leap in the murderous art of killing large populations, is on a qualitatively different plane from the Holocaust--the selective killing of a predesignated people organized on a factory basis.

But if the British and American bourgeoisies had succeeded in hiding their imperialist war aims behind a "democratic" and "anti-fascist" lie, this was also thanks to Stalin. Political support of the Communist Parties for the Allied imperialist war effort after Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941 had helped the imperialists maintain their lies. And if the war remained overwhelmingly popular in the metropolitan centers on the Allied side, it is also necessary to note that the sordid nationalist banner under

77 Ibid.

which the Stalinist-led Partisans conducted the Resistance struggle did nothing to further revolt among the population of the Axis powers. There was no organized mass opposition in Germany, and the Japanese masses seemed to remain loyal to the state to the end.

Nonetheless, it was the Soviet Red Army which broke the back of Hitler's war machine, though the British and American ruling classes now try to pretend otherwise. Churchill and Roosevelt had to share the world with Stalin, and the military relationship of forces was codified in the agreements made at Yalta and Potsdam. The Russians had lost 20 million dead and probably a quarter of their industrial capacity, while the North American continent remained unscathed by the war. As the founding conference of the Fourth International had foreseen, the United States emerged as the predominant power, economically and militarily. The U.S. bourgeoisie was able to dole out the rations it chose to the bourgeoisies of Europe, while granting the British the "special relationship" of junior partner.

Much has been made of the supposed "catastrophism" of Trotsky's prognosis that a revolutionary wave would follow the end of WWII. But as Trotsky himself noted:

Every historical prognosis is always conditional, and the more concrete the prognosis, the more conditional it is. A prognosis is not a promissory note which can be cashed on a given date. Prognosis outlines only the definite trends of the development. But along with these trends a different order of forces and tendencies operate, which at a certain moment begin to predominate.⁷⁸

Revolution is ever a desperate solution to a desperate situation, and should the situation diminish, the possibility of a revolutionary solution vanishes. If proletarian revolutions failed to materialize at the end of the war it was because of the extreme weakness of the Trotskyist forces, the class treason of the Stalinists, and the fact that the imperialist bourgeoisies had also learned some lessons from WWI: the victorious imperialist governments did not leave their defeated class "brothers" with weak and ineffectual governments. The Allied occupations of Germany and Japan, and furthermore the partition of Germany, were designed to prevent the outbreak of any social struggle threatening bourgeois rule. When a massive wave of strikes and factory occupations broke out in Japan in 1946, it was crushed by the combined forces of the Japanese government and the Allied Supreme Command. In early 1947 there were massive demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands of workers in the Ruhr, the industrial heartland of Germany. The workers demanded the expropriation without compensation of the mining, steel and chemical industries and popular control over food distribution, which was in the hands of the Allied occupation

⁷⁸ "Balance Sheet of the Finnish Events," In Defense of Marxism (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1942), 175.

forces. When the Ruhr strikes spread, the French, British and American commands outlawed all strikes and protests, under threat of the death penalty.⁷⁹

In Italy and France the bourgeoisie succeeded in restabilizing its class rule only with the aid of the Stalinists who entered the postwar governments, literally disarming the war-weary and revolutionary-minded masses. In Greece the British army smashed an incipient social revolution.

In South Asia in the early years of the war the armies of the French, British, Americans and Dutch had been shattered by the Japanese. The Asian subjects of the European colonial powers had generally welcomed the Japanese victories (Sukarno collaborated with the Japanese in Indonesia, while Bose's Indian National Army actually fought alongside the Japanese), but occupation generally put an end to any illusions about the beneficence of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. In the British and French colonies of the Middle East the hatred of the masses for their imperialist exploiters was such that there was massive and demonstrative pro-Axis sentiment--the Allies maintained a hold over their possessions only with bloody repression. As the war ended, national independence struggles spread throughout the colonial world.

At this juncture the Anglo-American imperialists were denied the opportunity to fully implement their victory over the Axis powers by repossessing their colonies: a massive "troops home" movement swept their armies at the end of the war. The Trotskyists, few as they were, participated in this movement. When the troops impatiently demanded an early and rapid demobilization, the imperialists were unable to justify continued militarization on "anti-fascist" grounds--they had to give way to the desire of the troops to go home. American troops withdrew from China in 1947, with the civil war still raging there. The British were forced to give way to demands for Indian independence, and also had to withdraw their armies from the Near East. The Dutch attempt to reconquer Indonesia failed, and they were forced to recognize an independent republic in 1949.

The leadership of the Soviet degenerated workers state did not inspire the struggles of the oppressed masses against colonial rule at the end of the Second World War. Stalin feared the colonial uprisings almost as much as the imperialists did--he saw no reason to upset the postwar division of the world agreed to at Yalta. The imperialist Allies were welcomed back to Vietnam by the Stalinists. The Viet Minh worked hand in hand with the British and French to suppress the Trotskyist-led Saigon uprising in August 1945, and it was the Viet Minh who were responsible for arresting and executing the Trotskyist leaders. (Little more than a year later the Viet

⁷⁹ Ute Schmidt and Tilman Fichter, Der erzwungene Kapitalismus: Klassenkämpfe in den Westzonen 1945-1948 (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 1971), 23-30.

Minh found themselves under attack by the French imperialists, who bombed Haiphong in November 1946, thus initiating a campaign of escalating provocation which led directly to a relentless thirty years of war.) French CP leader Maurice Thorez was a vice president in the postwar De Gaulle cabinet which savagely suppressed a nationalist uprising in Algeria in 1945, bombing villages and killing tens of thousands. But Stalin's attempt to conciliate the Allies by betraying other peoples' revolutions did not prevent the imperialists from turning on him. The capitalists had never given up their desire to reconquer the one-sixth of the globe ripped away from the capitalist world market by the October Revolution. And they could not fail to see in the military and industrial might of the USSR the ultimate source of all threats to their class rule.

Churchill, ousted from the British government by the massive Labour victory in the June 1945 election, had inaugurated the Cold War with his famous "iron curtain" speech in March 1946. But public opinion could not be changed, nor weaponry and renewed armies created, overnight. Meanwhile the imperialists made much of Stalin's refusal to integrate the economy of the Soviet occupied zone with that of the rest of Germany. In 1947 the United States both inaugurated the Marshall Plan and sent military aid and advisers to Greece and Turkey under the "Truman Doctrine." There was a not-so-implicit military threat behind these moves (the Red Army still stood on the borders of both countries) and this was concretized by the coming together of the NATO alliance. So Stalin decided to liquidate capitalism in most of Eastern Europe, creating a cordon sanitaire between the USSR and the imperialist armies and establishing a series of states qualitatively similar to that of the Soviet Union. The "Free World's" loss of East Europe sent the imperialists into a frenzy. Then, in 1949, the Chinese Kuomintang collapsed in front of Mao Tse-tung's peasant-based army. The Americans had fought and defeated Japan for the right to exploit China--now they found themselves unable to intervene to stop the Chinese Revolution. This determined Washington on a course of military confrontation and by 1950 it was possible to fight over Korea.

Military conflicts since WWII have largely been expressions of American imperialism's overriding hostility to the Soviet degenerated workers state, and especially of imperialism's hostility toward new overturns of capitalist property relations. The imperialist-backed invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs failed to throw back the Cuban Revolution, and since 1961 massive Soviet economic and military assistance has helped the Cuban deformed workers state maintain itself, 90 miles offshore, a constant thorn in the side of the U.S. imperialist colossus. But above all it is the thirty-year war of imperialist aggression against the Vietnamese Revolution, protracted by Stalinist capitulation at the Geneva negotiating table in 1954, which epitomizes imperialism's desperate attempts to maintain its bloody grip on the world. The world proletariat owes a debt of gratitude to the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants who inflicted a humiliating defeat upon the United States, a blow from which U.S. imperialism has yet to recover. The "Vietnam syndrome"

prevented the U.S. from unleashing the full force of its military machine against the Sandinista insurrection in 1979, though the U.S. has since kept up a relentless and devastating campaign of military and economic pressure on the unstable petty-bourgeois government of Nicaragua.

Most of the struggles against colonial rule in the postwar period have been led by petty-bourgeois nationalist forces who have sought to maintain capitalist property relations, cutting a deal with the imperialists (the Algerian FLN, the liberation movements in the former Portuguese African colonies). Marxists have militarily supported the independence forces in these struggles, while fighting for revolutionary proletarian organization and leadership. Since Marxists have been defensist on the side of the anti-imperialist forces, no one claiming the mantle of Trotskyism has seriously suggested the application of the "Proletarian Military Policy" on the imperialist side.

CONFRONTING WWIII

Today the threat of world war brings with it the spectre of thermonuclear holocaust. The best scientific minds can only speculate as to what might result if even only a small fraction--several hundred to a thousand--of the nuclear warheads in current arsenals were detonated over urban areas. The destruction wrought by two small fission bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki would pale in comparison to that caused by several modern higher-yield fusion weapons.

Those humans who might survive the immediate blast and its aftermath would be faced with lethal levels of radioactivity spreading far beyond the targeted cities. In addition to the fallout spread globally by prevailing winds, firestorms would throw great clouds of dust and ash into the atmosphere, blocking out sunlight and leading to a "nuclear winter." A similar climatic catastrophe caused by meteor impact is thought to have led to mass extinctions 65 million years ago. The effects could conceivably range from the partial destruction of human civilization, to the total reduction of humanity to a qualitatively lower level of social organization, up to the extinction of higher mammalian life on the planet. What is clear is that some truly awful catastrophe is impending. Given the increasing probability that the outbreak of a major war would mean uncontrolled, vastly expanding nuclear exchanges, one ought to look grimly at the greater causes and greater consequences. But even the least is a catastrophe.

However, that doesn't mean they won't push the button. World imperialism has already brought human civilization to the brink of the abyss with two world wars. A rational human being would not consciously embark on a course leading to nuclear world war. But capitalism long ago created economic forces which strain against the boundaries of the nation-states in which they are fettered: world imperialism isn't rational, and neither are the men who rule

over us in its interest. As Trotsky wrote in "War and the Fourth International":

The fear of the consequences of a new war is the only factor that fetters the will of imperialism. But the efficacy of this brake is limited....All governments fear war. But none of the governments has any freedom of choice. Without a proletarian revolution, a new world war is inevitable.

While the irreconcilable hostility of U.S. imperialism to the Soviet Union is the main factor now posing the threat of WWII before humanity, one cannot ignore interimperialist contradictions. The strength of Japanese industry and world trade cannot be suppressed peacefully. And there is evidence that German imperialism is ready for renewed imperialist adventure.

The threat of nuclear war is real and immediate. We don't have a lot of time left before an imperialist government (or one of its desperate and embattled junior partners) triggers a world cataclysm.

The world bourgeoisie has at its disposal enormous political experience and economic reserves. If the history of the 20th century proves anything it is this: within the social context there is no situation in which the bourgeoisie cannot prevail, if there does not exist a revolutionary party capable of wresting power from its hands. Revolutionary proletarian parties are not built overnight: it took two generations of ferment in the Russian intelligentsia, the dress rehearsal of 1905, and years of patient underground work among the proletarians of the tsarist empire to produce Lenin's Bolsheviks. But if the small forces which adhere today to the revolutionary program of Lenin and Trotsky do not succeed in forging themselves into parties with the experience, will and authority among the masses to lead a successful proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries, there will be no future for humanity.

A revolutionary internationalist leadership of the USSR would greatly facilitate working-class revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. But it will take a political revolution, in which the working masses of the Soviet Union oust the bureaucratic caste which usurped power in 1924 and take power back into their hands, to return the Kremlin to the road of Lenin and Trotsky. A successful political revolution in the Soviet Union also requires the forging of a new Bolshevik party, based on the program of the early Communist International.

The Soviet bureaucrats do not believe in the possibility of proletarian revolution against imperialism, and they view those who fight for it as virtual provocateurs intent on destroying "peaceful coexistence." The current Gorbachev policy of abject capitulation to imperialist military pressure in Afghanistan, Indochina and Angola can only embolden the capitalists who seek to "roll back" Communism all the way to the homeland of the October Revolution.

Gorbachev and his predecessors have always been able to exploit the deeply felt fear of war and desire for peace of the Soviet population. But Gorbachev's "new thinking" ignores the fact that American military planners continue to dream up scenarios for WWIII--from total annihilation by ICBMs to "limited" nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union in the Central European plain. Only the eradication of capitalist imperialism from the globe will eliminate the threat of nuclear holocaust for good.

The U.S. imperialist state has in its cross hairs the industrial and military powerhouse of the Soviet degenerated workers state. According to the Brookings Institution, the U.S. threatened in earnest to use nuclear weapons 19 times between 1949 and 1975. It was, after all, the U.S. imperialists who first developed and used nuclear weapons on the hapless civilian population of an already defeated Japan. Since WWII, the American government has always pursued a first-strike strategy, from "quick reaction" bombers in the 1950s, to later silo- and submarine-based ICBMs. A single nuclear sub carries enough weaponry to destroy every large and medium-sized Soviet city; half of the fleet with thousands of warheads is at sea at all times. Not content with this, the imperialists are pushing for space-based weapons. Reagan's "Star Wars" project is but the latest U.S. attempt to gain a technological edge over the Soviet Union--one with no realistic defensive use, but a system of potential value in conjunction with a first strike.

Faced with the incessant U.S. escalation in the nuclear arms race, the Soviets have been forced to keep pace. American bourgeois rationalists such as George F. Kennan and Theodore Draper have observed that this nuclear numbers game has long since become pointless: a modest force (e.g., several hundred warheads) would be sufficient to destroy the USSR as a functioning society and the thousands of bombs currently in place offer no additional deterrence.⁸⁰ True, but it is utopian for Draper and Kennan to address their advice to an irrational ruling class whose avowed policy is to "prevail" in protracted nuclear war. A variant of the rationalists' ideas, however, could serve as a policy model for a rational Soviet government: (1) no first strike; and (2) a matching response to any nuclear attack, kiloton for kiloton, at least as long as Soviet command and control remained in existence to do so. This policy would apply equally against the so-called "independent" British and French forces (both of which will have 500 submarine-based warheads by the mid-1990s) and doubtless against Israel or any other co-participant in an American nuclear first strike against the Soviet Union.

Such a Soviet defensive missile posture (coupled with sufficient upgrading of the weaponry) would have enough teeth to give the imperialists reason to pause before an all-out attack--it means

⁸⁰ See, for example, George F. Kennan, The Nuclear Delusion (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), and Theodore Draper, "Nuclear Temptations," New York Review of Books, 19 January 1984, 42-50.

defense not capitulation. This kind of rational policy might just stimulate some dissension even within the U.S. military establishment against Washington's headlong rush to Armageddon, not to mention generating dissent among the population at large.

In the absence of a successful proletarian revolution, it is certain that Washington will, at some point in the future, prepare to launch its nuclear missiles, no doubt claiming as pretext some supposedly deadly Soviet provocation. If faced with domestic social struggle, the American ruling class could attempt to deflect discontent toward an external Soviet "enemy." This could well backfire: during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, imminent nuclear war was met not with flag-waving patriotism, but with profound despair. Masses of Americans rightly questioned the sanity of their rulers, but in the absence of a workers party to focus the fear and anger into a fight against the bourgeoisie, the result was inchoate individualized apathy and defeat.

After the subsequent 25 years of dirty wars and government deceit, a direct step now toward nuclear war could also engender massive domestic opposition. Obviously, revolutionaries cannot project a sudden spontaneous "general strike against the war" (the slogan of some wishful pacifist thinkers in the Second International before WWI). As Trotsky wrote in 1935, "a general strike can be put on the agenda as a method of struggle against mobilization and war only in the event that the entire preceding developments in the country have placed revolution and armed insurrection on the agenda."⁸¹ The mass-based revolutionary party necessary to bring the latter situation about has yet to be built. But revolutionaries should prepare for a conjuncture in which ruling-class war preparations are met by massive class struggle.

At the first serious moves toward war, pacifist demagogues will switch to "national defense." On the eve of WWII Trotsky stated, "In peacetime, the imperialist 'pacifists' are not sparing of magnanimous phrases; but in the event of a conflict, they will take their stand on the side of their government...."⁸² While the "nuclear freeze" crowd comes "in from the cold," war preparations will undoubtedly engender genuine pacifistic sentiments among the broader masses. In 1915, Lenin noted that "the temper of the masses in favour of peace often expresses the beginning of protest, anger and a realisation of the reactionary nature of the war."⁸³ Communists have to participate in resulting movements and demonstrations,

81 "The ILP and the Fourth International," 18 September 1935, Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-36), 2nd ed. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), 140.

82 "The Congress Against War and Fascism," Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38), 430.

83 V.I. Lenin, "Socialism and War," Collected Works, vol. 21, 315.

not to deceive the people with abstract pacifist twaddle, but to orient popular opposition toward the overthrow of bourgeois class rule.

If, despite our efforts, the bourgeoisie clings to power and confronts us with a situation of incipient WWII, proletarian revolutionaries can have only one policy--defeatism toward their own capitalist governments. Massive and immediate opposition to the war would inevitably spread from the civilian population into the armed forces. If the ruling class believed that a significant portion of military personnel might refuse to launch, the bourgeois state would be compelled to hesitate and turn to massive repression in an attempt to ensure the reliability of its military machine. Civil war would ensue. In this conjuncture, revolutionaries would fight to bring about the scenario outlined by Trotsky:

If a large-scale revolutionary movement is developing in a country, if at its head is a revolutionary party possessing the confidence of the masses and capable of going through to the end; if the government, losing its head, despite the revolutionary crisis, or just because of such a crisis, plunges headlong into a war adventure--then the mobilization can act as a mighty impetus for the masses, lead to a general strike of railwaymen, fraternization between the mobilized and the workers, seizure of important key centers, clashes between insurrectionists and the police and the reactionary sections of the army, the establishment of local workers' and soldiers' councils, and finally the complete overthrow of the government, and consequently, to stopping the war.⁸⁴

Such a revolutionary struggle, based on intransigent proletarian internationalism, would give a powerful impetus to, and in turn be aided by, a political revolution to throw out the nationalist bureaucrats in the Kremlin.

Confronting World War III, revolutionary defeatism and the military defense of the Soviet Union remain the policy of the international proletariat.

International Executive Committee of the
International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)
[formerly international Spartacist tendency]

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84 "The ILP and the Fourth International," op. cit., 140.

"PROLETARIAN MILITARY POLICY"

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The sharpening interimperialist antagonisms, upsurge in imperialist rivalry and "surprising" new alignments pose for the third time in this century the spectre of a world war, this time with thermonuclear weaponry. Imperialist war has always been a decisive test for the communist movement. Such wars are the consummate expression of the inability of capitalism to transcend the contradiction between the productive forces, which have outgrown both national boundaries and private property relations, and the relations of production which define the two great classes of modern society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Imperialist war brings only increased misery, enslavement and suffering to the working class, exacerbating the tensions of class society to a fever pitch. Marxists seek to use these periodic violent disruptions of decaying capitalism to bring about the liberation of the proletariat. This is due not to a "the worse the better" outlook, but rather is the necessary recognition of the objective conditions of crisis weakening bourgeois society which Marxists must seek to utilize in order to drive forward to the socialist revolution.

As the outlines and alignments of yet a third global inter-imperialist war begin to take shape, it is essential to examine the policy of the Trotskyist movement in World War II and to understand the role and nature of the modern bourgeois state and its army, in order to prepare ourselves for the coming period of increasing international conflicts and war. Failure to take the basic Leninist conception of the state as a starting point for any strategy towards the bourgeois army leads almost inevitably to major theoretical errors, as was the case with the Socialist Workers Party's adoption of the "Proletarian Military Policy" (P.M.P.) in 1940. A study of the P.M.P. and of Trotsky's writings on the coming war, fascism and military policy in 1940 reveal a sliding off from basic Leninist concepts of the bourgeois state and army.

The P.M.P. was a misdirected attempt to turn the American working class's desire to fight fascism into a revolutionary perspective of overthrowing its "own" imperialist state. The core of the P.M.P. was a call for trade-union control of the compulsory military training being instituted by the state. The SWP resolution on "Proletarian Military Policy" adopted at the SWP's Plenum-Conference in Chicago in September 1940 states:

We fight against sending the worker-soldiers into battle without proper training and equipment. We oppose the

military direction of worker-soldiers by bourgeois officers who have no regard for their treatment, their protection and their lives. We demand federal funds for the military training of workers and worker-officers under the control of the trade unions. Military appropriations? Yes--but only for the establishment and equipment of worker training camps! Compulsory military training of workers? Yes--but only under the control of the trade unions!

James P. Cannon, leader of the SWP, defended the policy, primarily against the criticisms of Max Shachtman who had recently broken from the SWP and founded the Workers Party. Essentially, the P.M.P. contained a reformist thrust; it implied that it was possible for the working class to control the bourgeois army. The logic of the P.M.P. leads to reformist concepts of workers control of the state--which stand in opposition to the Marxist understanding that the proletariat must smash the organs of bourgeois state power in order to carry through a socialist revolution.

CANNON "TELESCOPES" THE TASKS

It is necessary to see the background against which the P.M.P. was developed, and what the expectations of the SWP and Trotsky were in World War II, as these expectations were the assumptions which led them to the P.M.P. Cannon said at the 1940 SWP Conference:

We didn't visualize, nobody visualized, a world situation in which whole countries would be conquered by fascist armies. The workers don't want to be conquered by foreign invaders, above all by fascists. They require a program of military struggle against foreign invaders which assures their class independence. That is the gist of the problem.

Many times in the past we were put at a certain disadvantage: the demagogy of the Social Democrats against us was effective to a certain extent. They said, "You have no answer to the question of how to fight against Hitler...." Well, we answered in a general way, the workers will first overthrow the bourgeoisie at home and then they will take care of invaders. That was a good program, but the workers did not make the revolution in time. Now the two tasks must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously.

("Summary Speech on Military Policy")

We are willing to fight Hitler. No worker wants to see that gang of fascist barbarians overrun this country or any country. But we want to fight fascism under a leadership we can trust.

("Military Policy of the Proletariat")

Cannon strongly emphasized that capitalism has plunged the world into an epoch of universal militarism, and that from now on, "great questions can be decided only by military means." For Cannon, "antimilitarism was all right when we were fighting against war in times of peace. But here you have a new situation of universal militarism."

Trotsky and the SWP were attempting to take advantage of the intersection of the "universal militarism" of the bourgeois states' preparation for imperialist war with the genuine anti-fascist sentiment of the masses. Trotsky's writings of 1939-40 reveal an apocalyptic vision of the coming war which led him to see the need to develop some strategy to fairly immediately win over the army. Trotsky and the SWP vastly overestimated the extent to which the processes of the war itself would rip the facade off the (Anglo-American) bourgeoisie's ideology of "democracy" fighting "dictatorship." Trotsky, in conversations with SWP leaders in Mexico in 1940, said, "If the bourgeoisie could preserve democracy, good, but within a year they will impose a dictatorship.... Naturally in principle we would overthrow so-called bourgeois democracy given the opportunity, but the bourgeoisie won't give us time" ("Discussion with Trotsky," 12 June 1940).

"REFORMISM CANNOT LIVE TODAY"

As part of his projection, Trotsky also believed that reformism had exhausted all its possibilities: "At one time America was rich in reformist tendencies, but the New Deal was the last flareup. Now with the war it is clear that the New Deal exhausted all the reformist and democratic possibilities and created incomparably more favorable possibilities for revolution." The SWP developed the viewpoint that as a result of the crises resulting from the war, reformism could not survive. A section of the SWP Resolution titled "Reformism Cannot Live Today" stated, "In the first place the victories of the fascist war machine of Hitler have destroyed every plausible basis for the illusion that a serious struggle against fascism can be conducted under the leadership of a bourgeois democratic regime." But following World War II, because of the hatred of the working class for fascism and the broad strike wave, the bourgeoisie was forced to reinstate liberal reformist ideology and parliamentary politics, in an effort to mollify the workers.

The Trotskyists took as the basis and starting point of their new policy, the deeply popular working-class sentiment against fascism. The working class was being conscripted, and part of their acceptance of this conscription was based on their desire to fight fascism, the SWP reasoned, so therefore their acceptance of conscription has a "progressive" character. The P.M.P. was based on the belief that the bourgeoisie would be forced to institute military dictatorships and thus would be forced to expose its reactionary character in the midst of war, in a situation when the working class was armed (by the state itself) and motivated by deeply anti-dictatorship and anti-fascist feelings. This would lead inevitably

to a revolutionary situation, and very quickly at that. These were the primary assumptions of Trotsky and the SWP. They do not serve to justify the adoption of the P.M.P., however, but rather only illuminate the background against which it was developed.

The slogan "For trade-union control of military training," implies trade-union control of the bourgeois army. The P.M.P. slid over the particular nature and role of the imperialist army as the bulwark of capitalism. Shachtman caught the core of the P.M.P.'s reformist thrust and this sliding over when he wrote:

...I characterized his [Cannon's] formula as essentially social-patriotic....Cannon used to say: We will be defen-sists when we have a country to defend, that is, when the workers have taken power in the land, for then it will not be an imperialist war we are waging but rather a revolutionary war against imperialist assailants....Now he says something different, because the revolution did not come in time. Now the two tasks--the task of bringing about the socialist revolution and defending the father-land--"must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously."
 ("Working-Class Policy in War and Peace")

In 1941 Shachtman had not yet been a year on his uneven eighteen-year-long centrist course from revolutionary Marxism to social democracy. In the first years Shachtman's Workers Party claimed to be a section of the Fourth International and argued for the "conditional defense" of the Soviet Union whose "bureaucratic collectivism"--as he designated the degenerated workers state--was still progressive relative to capitalism. And as late as 1947 the issue of unification between the SWP and the Workers Party was sharply posed. His revisionist break with Marxism was nonetheless profound from the outset: a complete repudiation of its philosophic methodology coupled with the concrete betrayal of the Soviet Union in the real wars that took place, first with Finland in 1939 and then the German invasion in 1941. Thus the SWP's departure from the clear principled thrust of Leninism in advancing the ambiguous P.M.P. was for the early revisionist Shachtman a gift which he was able to exploit because it did not center on his own areas of decisive departure from Marxism.

Ten years later, however, under the pressures of the Korean War, Shachtman's revisionism had become all-encompassing and he advanced a grotesquely reactionary version of the P.M.P. of his own. Writing of the anticipated Third World War he asserted that "the only greater disaster than the war itself...would be the victory of Stalinism as the outcome of the war." From this he concluded that "socialist policy must be based upon the idea of transforming the imperialist war into a democratic war [against Stalinism]." And to achieve this transformation he looked to "a workers' government, no matter how modest its aims would be at the beginning, no matter how far removed from a consistently socialist objective" ("Socialist Policy in the War," New International, 1951). Shachtman's "workers' government" is clearly no dictatorship of the

proletariat--without socialist aims!--but rather the blood relative of Major Attlee's British Labour government, fantasized into an American labor government headed by Walter Reuther. Here the class character of the state has been disappeared with a vengeance. (Shachtman's group, by 1949 the Independent Socialist League, entered the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation in 1958. In the early 1960s nostalgic ISL types, most notably Hal Draper, gradually separated from the SP--especially after Shachtman himself defended the Cuban Bay of Pigs invasion. Draper et al. went on to found what has now become the present-day International Socialists.)

TROTSKY ON THE P.M.P.

The fragmentary material that Trotsky wrote on the subject in his last few months makes it clear that he bears responsibility for initiating the P.M.P.; however, he was murdered prior to its full-blown public inauguration and development by the SWP. Trotsky's prediction that the bourgeoisie would not give the workers time to overthrow the bourgeois state before they had to fight against fascism feeds directly into Cannon's ambiguity over revolutionary defeatism and the "telescoping" process of combining national defense with the workers' fight against fascism.

Trotsky writes in "American Problems": "The American workers do not want to be conquered by Hitler, and to those who say, 'Let us have a peace program'....we say: We will defend the United States with a workers' army, with workers' officers, with a workers' government, etc. If we are not pacifists, who wait for a better future, and if we are active revolutionists, our job is to penetrate into the whole military machine." What is left out of this agitational approach is significant. Marxists do not defend the U.S.! At least not until the U.S. is a socialist U.S., only after the bourgeoisie and all its institutions, including the army, have been crushed. Marxists must oppose imperialist war; World War II was being fought not for "democracy" against "fascism" but purely for redivision of the world for imperialist ends. The workers army Trotsky writes of cannot develop organically out of the bourgeois army, but must be built up under conditions of class tension and revolutionary crisis through independent workers militias and by polarization of the bourgeois armed forces--that is, as the counter-posed military arm of the working class organizing itself as the state power dual to the capitalists' government.

The P.M.P.'s thrust was that of supporting a war against fascism without making clear whose class state was waging the war. Because of the popularity of a "democratic war against fascism," the actual effect of the P.M.P. would have been merely to make the bourgeois state's war more efficient and more democratically conducted.

WORKERS CONTROL OF THE ARMY?

The logic of the P.M.P. impelled the SWP to see the bourgeois army as only one more arena of working-class struggle, like a factory, rather than as the main coercive force of the bourgeois state. If Marxists can favor trade-union control of industry, why not trade-union control of military training? We agree that Marxists seek to fight oppression wherever it arises, including fighting for soldiers' rights--but from this it does not follow that we should call for "workers control of the army" as a parallel slogan to "workers control of the factories." There will always be a need for development of the forces of production; the proletarian revolution does not need to smash them for its own purposes. The army's sole function is to maintain the dominant class in power through coercion and repression; during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the revolutionary state will have its own army, organized to serve its own class purposes; a developed socialist society will have no need for this special repressive apparatus, which will gradually dissolve into the whole self-armed population, and then, like the state, it too will wither away. The army is not a class-neutral institution. As part of the "special bodies of armed men" which constitute the basis of the state, it cannot be a workers army unless it is the army of a workers state.

Similarly we do not delude the workers with slogans of "workers control" of the police or of the prisons either, since both are at the essence of the bourgeois state. If we called for "workers control of the prisons," the blood of Attica would be on our hands as well as Rockefeller's. The storming of the Bastille represents the only possible form of "workers control" of the repressive apparatus of the state--i.e., smashing it utterly.

The P.M.P. was a proposal for the unions to make the bourgeois army more democratic and efficient to prosecute the war "against fascism." But the bourgeoisie cannot fight fascism! The U.S. bourgeoisie wanted to fight the Germans and Japanese to further its own imperialist goals, not to "fight fascism."

The P.M.P. error can be most clearly seen in the case of an unpopular war: should we demand trade-union control of military training in order to better fight in Vietnam? Obviously not. But the point is the same. Only those social-chauvinists who support "their" government's war aims can reasonably raise the P.M.P.

As an SWP programmatic demand, the P.M.P. never took life and shortly was shelved, because the SWP did oppose the second imperialist war and therefore the autonomous social-patriotic implications of the P.M.P. did not take hold. But neither was the error corrected in those years, and it has been a source of disorientation ever since for those young militants who seek to counterpose en bloc the revolutionary SWP of the 1940s to the wretched reformist vehicle which today still bears the initials SWP.

The whole authority of the state is based ultimately on its ability to successfully employ its coercive power, which rests on its standing army, police and prisons; the coercive power of the state is the very essence of its structure. This development of state power is linked directly to the development of class antagonisms, so that while the state appears to stand above and outside of class conflict, as a "neutral" third force, in reality it is nothing more than an agent of the dominant, more powerful class in society. These considerations give rise to two major premises of revolutionary strategy: (1) that the existing bourgeois state machinery, including its army, must be crushed, and (2) in order to successfully accomplish this, the bourgeois state must be unable to rely upon its own coercive power; it must be unable to use it successfully against the revolutionary forces who seek to fundamentally change the class structure upon which the state rests. It is impossible to use the bourgeois army for proletarian ends; it must be smashed. The destabilizing of the bourgeois army, turning a section of it to the side of the proletariat, is inseparably linked with, but not the same as, the process of arming the proletariat.

FOR THE INDEPENDENT ARMING OF THE WORKING CLASS!

The SWP was trying to use the bourgeoisie's militarism for its own ends, and so it dropped entirely any fight against bourgeois militarism and patriotism as the main danger to the working class, and instead of exposing the nature of the imperialist armies, concentrated on attacking pacifism. Had the working class had such pacifist illusions of peaceful resistance to war, one could find more justification for this emphasis--however, as Trotsky recognized, the workers were "95 to 98 percent patriotic" in 1940, and thus accepted conscription into the army, because they were willing to fight fascism. Since the workers were for conscription, the pressure on the SWP to blunt a defeatist policy was strong. The SWP should have counterposed at every step the independent arming of the proletariat; but instead it undercut opposition to bourgeois conscription. Cannon attacks the fight of the social-pacifists against conscription because it "overlooked realities and sowed illusions. The workers were for conscription....A certain amount of compulsion has always been invoked by the labor movement against the backward, the slackers....Compulsion in the class war is a class necessity" (Cannon's speech at 1940 SWP Conference). Yes, of course compulsion is a class necessity--but conscription into the bourgeois army is a class necessity for the bourgeois class. The fact that the workers may have supported it does not alter the class nature of the coercion being applied. It is not the job of the proletarian vanguard to help the bourgeoisie wage its imperialist wars, to provide it with cannon fodder. Communists must call for revolutionary defeatism and the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in wars between imperialist powers--not for the working class in each country to "control" the fighting arm of its "own" bourgeoisie. The call must be to "turn the guns the other way," not to control the military apparatus.

As Trotsky wrote in 1934 in his comprehensive systematization of the revolutionary Marxist experience in World War I in application to the approaching Second World War, "War and the Fourth International":

79. If the proletariat should find it beyond its power to prevent war by means of revolution--and this is the only means of preventing war--the workers, together with the whole people, will be forced to participate in the army and in war. Individualistic and anarchistic slogans of refusal to undergo military service, passive resistance, desertion, sabotage are in basic contradiction to the methods of the proletarian revolution. But just as in the factory the advanced worker feels himself a slave of capital, preparing for his liberation, so in the capitalist army too he feels himself a slave of imperialism. Compelled today to give his muscles and even his life, he does not surrender his revolutionary consciousness. He remains a fighter, learns how to use arms, explains even in the trenches the class meaning of war, groups around himself the discontented, connects them into cells, transmits the ideas and slogans of the party, watches closely the changes in the mood of the masses, the subsiding of the patriotic wave, the growth of indignation, and summons the soldiers to the aid of the workers at the critical moment.

The bourgeois state will only arm the workers for its own purposes--while this contradiction can and must be exploited by Marxists, it is utopian to expect that the trade unions could be able to use the bourgeois army for their own purposes. The modern imperialist armies created by the state have a largely working-class composition, but their function is directly counterposed to the interests of the world proletariat. The crucial task of Marxists is to always and everywhere smash bourgeois ideology in the ranks of the working class, to call for the independent arming and struggle of the organizations of the working class.

FOR WORKERS SELF-DEFENSE GROUPS BASED ON THE TRADE UNIONS!
 FOR UNITED CLASS DEFENSE OF MINORITIES AND THE UNEMPLOYED!
 FIGHT FOR SOLDIERS' RIGHTS THROUGH SOLDIERS' COUNCILS!
 TOWARDS THE INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION OF WORKERS MILITIAS!

Trotskyists in World War Two

This article was prepared for publication from remarks made at the meeting of the International Executive Committee of the iSt, held in Paris 30 November-1 December 1985. See meeting proceedings on page 41.

By Pierre Vert

An extremely rich, though somber, discussion on the activity of the international Trotskyist movement during World War II was provoked by an article by Pierre Broué, "Trotsky et les trotskystes face à la deuxième guerre mondiale" ("Trotsky and the Trotskyists Confront World War II") in issue No. 23 (September 1985) of *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*. Comrades noted that this review, published by intellectuals associated with Pierre Lambert's deeply reformist PCI (Parti Communiste Internationaliste, formerly Organisation Communiste Internationaliste [OCI]), is probably the most provocative publication in the world today for archival and historical research on the Trotskyist movement.

Broué presents a critical analysis of the Proletarian Military Policy, advocated by Trotsky just before he was murdered, along with a discussion of the national question in the occupied countries and of the participation of Trotskyists in the Stalinist-dominated Resistance. Broué argues against the view that Trotsky was sliding toward social defensism of the "allies" against the hideous barbarism of the Nazis. Rather, his argument implies that Trotsky was the first Pabloite. To Broué, Trotsky's 1940

call for "militarization" of the anti-fascist, proletarian masses amounts to the liquidation of the revolutionary vanguard party into the "mass movement," a policy actually developed and carried out by Michel Pablo. Moreover, Broué complains that the Fourth International did not take to heart Trotsky's "militarization" policy. Broué summarizes:

"The question that we wanted to raise here is not an academic question. During World War Two, were the Trotskyist organizations, members as well as leaders, victims of an objective situation, which in any case was beyond them, and could they have done no better than they did, that is: to survive, round out the human material they had already recruited and save their honor as internationalists by maintaining through thick and thin the political work of 'fraternizing' with German workers in uniform? If that is so, it would then be well to admit that with his 1940 analysis of the necessity for militarization and his perspective for building the revolutionary party in the short term and beginning the struggle for power, Trotsky was totally cut off, not only from world political reality, but from the reality of his own organization. In that case, Trotsky was deluding himself about the possibility of a breakthrough when the Fourth International was in fact doomed to a long period of impotently 'swimming against the stream,' in the face of the 'Stalinist hold on the masses.' But one could assume the opposite: that the Trotskyist organizations, both the ranks and the leadership, were part and parcel of this and were at least partly responsible for their own failures. In this case one might think, reasoning from the premises of Trotsky's 1940 analysis, that World War Two developed a mass movement based on national and social resistance which the Stalinists took pains to derail and caused to be crushed, as in the Greek example—and that the Trotskyists, having proved incapable of integrating themselves, were unable to either aid or to exploit it, and even perhaps to simply understand the concrete nature of the period they were living through."

Broué, while addressing very real questions, is nonetheless mainly waging a veiled polemic against what he calls party-building by "incantation"—a retrospective justification of the Lambert group's recent dissolution into the "Mouvement pour un parti des travailleurs" ("Movement for a Workers Party"), which explicitly harks back to the pre-Leninist conceptions of the "party of the whole class" of the Second International. The MPPT is a collection of anti-communist social democrats backed by sectors of the Force Ouvrière trade-union federation, a union created with CIA funds in 1947 and still on Reagan's payroll.

Trotsky on Militarization

In the U.S., the Proletarian Military Policy (PMP) was a misdirected attempt to turn the appetite of the American working class to fight fascism into a revolutionary perspective of overthrowing its "own" imperialist state. The central proposition of the PMP was a call for trade-



Heroic Brest Trotskyists bullt cell in German army, distributed *Arbeiter und Soldat*. Gestapo arrested cell members October 1943; German members were shot, others also killed or sent to concentration camps.

union control of the compulsory military training being instituted by the state. But "workers control of the bourgeois state," if other than a routine social-democratic government, has only been an episode in an immediately revolutionary, dual power struggle. The workers army Trotsky wrote of must be forged under conditions of class battles and revolutionary crisis—dual power—through independent workers militias and the splitting of the bourgeois armed forces.

The call for the PMP was in fact soon shelved, but not until after Max Shachtman subjected it to a devastating polemic, "Working-Class Policy in War and Peace," in the January 1941 issue of *New Internationalist*. On this point the left-centrist Shachtman, at the beginning of his 18-year slide toward State Department socialism, was correct against the SWP.

But if Trotsky's 1939-40 writings do reveal an apocalyptic vision of the war which led him to see the need to develop some strategy to fairly immediately win over the army, it is necessary to emphasize that the PMP was nonetheless directed toward the mass organizations of the U.S. working class.

For Broué, "proletarian mobilization" quickly becomes "militarization" pure and simple. For example, he lauds the decision of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, the historic leader of Chinese Trotskyism, to become the political adviser of a division of the bourgeois nationalist *Kuomintang's* army. It's not an accident that after this adventure in 1937, Ch'en Tu-hsiu advocated the building of a "Third Force" between the CP and the Kuomintang on a purely bourgeois-democratic program, turned to defensism on the Allied side in the war and abandoned defense of the USSR, which he no longer considered a workers state. Before his death in 1942 Ch'en Tu-hsiu broke all ties with the Fourth International.

Broué never once distinguishes between workers militias, petty-bourgeois guerrilla formations (such as that of Tito whose seizure of power created a *deformed* workers state) and guerrilla formations under the discipline of a bourgeois general staff, as in the case of the French Resistance. This permits him to generalize from the Greek example, which followed a completely different trajectory from that of France or Italy. Despite popular-frontist capitulation, the Stalinist-controlled guerrilla army was



Militant

Greek resistance fighters in Athens' seaport Piraeus after they were attacked by British troops, December 1944. Greek Trotskyists warned of Imperialist British aims; for this hundreds were murdered by Stalinists.

headed toward an inevitable confrontation with the British-backed monarchy after the withdrawal of the Nazi occupation forces. This would have posed, as in Yugoslavia, the possibility of a deformed workers state if the Stalinists had won. Of course, Broué is not interested in this aspect of the question (the Lambertist tendency, to which he belongs, took 20 years to discover that Cuba was, in fact, not capitalist).

Broué cites a 1943 document from the fragmented Greek Trotskyist movement which warns, "The Anglo-Americans will come to hand state power back to the bourgeoisie. The exploited will only have traded one yoke for another." Hundreds of Greek Trotskyists were murdered by the Stalinists for telling the truth about the designs of the imperialist Allies. Yet for Broué:

"If this was indeed as it was, it is clear that the Greek Trotskyists, by contenting themselves with negative prophecies and not enrolling in the mass movement, would have condemned themselves to death."

This shows clearly enough where Broué wants to go, which is not at all where Trotsky, whatever the faults of his PMP, wanted to go.

Consideration of these questions among the comrades of



Scherschel/Life

At least seven SWP merchant seamen were killed during WWII, some on the Murmansk run. Freighter hit by German torpedo near Murmansk (above). High casualty rates led SWP Political Committee to stop party members from participating in Murmansk convoys, late 1942.

the IEC provoked a discussion of the national question and in what sense it was posed in fully formed, bourgeois industrial nations overrun by a particularly savage imperialist conqueror like the Nazis. The question that interested our cadres very specifically was "what is to be done" by a Marxist propaganda group, an organic part of the proletariat, in the face of cataclysms like WWII when, at least initially, the winds of chauvinism blow strongly against us. As one comrade noted:

"There's a very big difference between being a propaganda group and a mass party. Very big indeed. If you are a mass party you not only must fight but you *can* fight and you can win. In major agitational struggles. If you're a few dozen or a few hundred people, you'd better hold your cadres...."

"The Bolsheviks were not, after 1905, a little propaganda group. They were a contending party for power. And because you can read their manifestos it does not make you the equal of them. They had the bulk of the industrial proletariat of their country."

The sobriety of the discussion derived from the fact that the tactics and strategy being debated were factors of life and death to our comrades 45 years ago. A French comrade said:

"The party was destroyed. There were a few people who remained during that long period—because it was very long, you know, five years in those kinds of circumstances is very long. A lot of people were killed, destroyed. A lot of people were not prepared at all for these kinds of issues. A lot of people wavered."

Trotskyist Heritage

It is very difficult to draw a balance sheet, but some acts we embrace as part of our heritage. One of the most well-known and heroic attempts at revolutionary defeatist fraternization was the distribution by a French Trotskyist cell in Brest of the paper *Arbeiter und Soldat*. This operation was aimed at German naval personnel, the children of communist and socialist workers. The American SWP lost merchant marine comrades who had been on the dangerous supply run to Murmansk. And on the West Coast of the United States, American dockers and seamen tossed cigarette packs containing Trotsky's "Letter to Russian Workers" in Russian onto Soviet freighters that came in from Vladivostok. Before Togliatti retook control of the Italian CP in 1943, American Trotskyist seamen were acclaimed by CP crowds in Naples, then in the throes

Vietnamese Independence fighters jailed and executed by French colonial troops in late 1945 after Trotskyists led Saigon Insurrection. Inset: Vietnamese Trotskyist martyr Ta Thu Thau.



Keystone

of a mass uprising against the Nazis. At the IEC meeting, a comrade from Italy explained:

"So you have this completely paradoxical situation where the most important resistance group in the left in the city of Rome was a semi-Trotskyist grouping.... Mussolini had come too early [for the CP base to have been thoroughly Stalinized]—in Rome you would have CP members going around and writing on the walls "Long Live Lenin! Long Live Trotsky! Long Live Stalin!" There was no sense that there had been a split.... [The group] Red Flag had the majority of the working-class elements in the resistance and they were an eclectic group, but they didn't have cadre, they didn't have a clear program, so that could be taken over by the CP at one point."

And we stand on the work of the Vietnamese Trotskyists. As one comrade put it:

"They [the Vietnamese Trotskyists] knew what to do. They waited until 1945 in Saigon and Hanoi. That was the time to move... when the British and then later also the French army came in. And we were killed for that. But not to be killed stupidly by Stalinist assassins in Greece [1943-1944] and in Spain in 1937 and '38. And I think that Trotsky became overwhelmed by the horrors of Nazi totalitarianism and, without a qualitative capitulation to victory or defense between the inter-imperialist powers, he wanted an overly forward policy which would have and in fact did destroy our cadres in the hands of Michel Pablo."

The IEC meeting voted to re-endorse the 1934 document "War and the Fourth International."

We are a tendency which is very much preoccupied by the question of continuity with our revolutionary forebears. And we do understand that if the successive American sections—Cannon's revolutionary SWP and now the Spartacist League/U.S.—have had to make an enormous contribution to the reconstruction of the continuity of the international communist movement, one of the reasons is that more than a hundred senior European and Asian cadres were killed in the period from 1937-1946 at the hands of the fascists and the Stalinists. ■

Stalinism and Trotskyism In Vietnam

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SWP RESOLUTION ON PROLETARIAN MILITARY POLICY

This text is taken from Proletarian Military Policy of the Socialist Workers Party, an undated bulletin issued by the National Education Department of the Socialist Workers Party. The resolution was adopted at a Plenum-Conference held in Chicago 27-29 September 1940. The resolution was also published in the Socialist Appeal of 5 October 1940.

1. Capitalism has plunged the world into a horrible vortex of war and militarism. This testifies not to the vitality of capitalism but to its fatal weakness, its incapacity to regain stability. The epoch of the death agony of capitalism and the beginning of social transformation is an epoch of universal militarism. It can be brought to an end only by the definitive victory of the proletariat. This is the essential feature of the present world situation.

2. The intervention of the United States in the present war, or its clash with a victorious Germany or Japan at a later date, is predetermined by all the circumstances. All the realistic leaders of American capitalism clearly understand this. Only a few pacifist fools have the slightest doubt about it. The two main groups in the camp of U.S. imperialism--interventionist and so-called isolationists--differ only in regard to military strategy. Both are agreed on the policy of preparing to fight and grab. The stupendous arms program adopted by Congress has and can have only one meaning: military aggression in the near future on a world scale.

The question whether German imperialism, having conquered Europe, can or cannot "attack" the United States has nothing to do with the real issue. The very existence of one aggressive and expanding imperialist power in the modern world is an "attack" on the others. The United States, as an imperialist power having its foundations throughout the world, is "attacked" anywhere a rival power attempts to seize a market, a piece of territory or a sphere of influence.

Whether the United States directly intervenes in the present European war, or defers open military action for another point of attack is only a secondary consideration in evaluating the perspective. The real course is clear: U.S. imperialism is preparing with all possible speed to put its strength and its weakness to the test of war on a colossal scale.

THE FUNDAMENTAL LESSON

3. In the epoch of militarism great questions can be decided only by military means--this is the fundamental lesson of the developments of the present war.

The agents and apologists of democratic imperialism--the social democrats, the centrists, the trade-union reformists and the pacifists--fill the air with lamentations over the smashing military victories of Hitler and spread the sentiments of pessimism and prostration.

We Fourth Internationalists thrust aside these traitors and panic mongers with hatred and contempt. Our task is to ascertain what has been destroyed and what has been proved by the momentous events in Europe and to draw the necessary conclusions for the future struggle.

REFORMISM CANNOT LIVE TODAY

In the first place the victories of the fascist war machine of Hitler have destroyed every plausible basis for the illusion that a serious struggle against fascism can be conducted under the leadership of a bourgeois democratic regime. The war in Europe, as previously in the Spanish rehearsal, has shown up the hollowness, the rottenness and the contemptible cowardice and greed of the whole ruling stratum of the bourgeois democrats. They are unwilling to sacrifice anything but the lives of the duped masses. To save their personal lives and their property they were ready in one country after another to capitulate to fascism and seek its protection against the wrath of their own people.

No less complete and devastating has been the destruction of the traditional reformist labor movement. At best, this traditional movement--the parties and the trade unions--was pacifist in character. That is, it was designed for peace, not for war. Parties which confined themselves to protests against the horrors of war, and did not seriously conduct a struggle for power to end the system which causes war--such parties were completely helpless when submitted to the test of war. The same proved true of the outwardly imposing trade unions. All concepts of peaceful, gradual, reformist progress within the framework of capitalism, and all parties and organizations which represented these concepts in any degree, were smashed like a house of cards.

BOLSHEVISM ALONE STANDS UP

The war in Europe has once again, and more categorically than ever, posed the fundamental alternative of the epoch of wars and revolutions: either the dictatorship of fascist capitalism, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. The attempt of the European workers under the influence of the reformist labor bureaucracies, to find in democratic capitalism a third alternative, led to catastrophe. The third alternative has been destroyed in blood and fire. But the program of the workers' fight for power has not been destroyed. When the workers of Europe rise again--and rise they will--that program will be their banner. These are the fundamental lessons of the war.

4. Bolshevism alone, which aims to direct the workers' movement to the seizure of political power by revolutionary means, stands up and gains strength under the test of the great new events. War and militarism, which crush all other organizations and discredit all other programs, only provide a new verification of the premises of Bolshevism. The military epoch has room only for parties which inspire the workers to scorn all half measures, to stop at nothing, and to carry their struggle through to the very end. These are parties of a new type having nothing in common with the reformist-pacifist parties of the traditional labor movement. Such a party is the Socialist Workers Party. Its program can be described in one phrase: dictatorship of the proletariat.

RIDDING OURSELVES OF PACIFISM

5. The certainty that the United States also will be dominated by militarism confronts the party with the categorical necessity to purge itself of all remnants of liberal, petty-bourgeois pacifist tendencies and conceptions carried over from the past, in particular from the left social-democratic movement. Pacifism is a debilitating poison in the workers' movement. Pacifism, in all its forms, is no more than a protest in time of peace against war; in the face of actual war it thrusts the workers like sheep, unarmed and defenseless and without a program, into the slaughter. In our epoch, which is completely dominated by militarism, negative protests against war are of no avail whatever. The proletariat requires a positive program which takes the facts of war and militarism, the characteristic features of decaying capitalism, as the starting point for practical actions.

The first impact of the war in Europe revealed a petty-bourgeois centrist tendency in the Socialist Workers Party which took shape as a faction. Under the leadership of Burnham and Shachtman this minority faction waged a disruptive struggle in the party and attempted to overthrow the Marxist doctrines in favor of journalistic improvisations. The disruptive struggle of the Burnham-Shachtman faction culminated in their desertion of the party in a typical petty-bourgeois recoil against the discipline of the proletarian majority of the party. The open repudiation of socialism by Burnham within less than two months after he had deserted the party was only the logical sequel to the course he followed in the party struggle. Burnham's betrayal of socialism confirmed to the hilt the party's characterization of this pretentious mountebank and the petty-bourgeois faction he organized and maneuvered into a split.

Since the party convention the seceding faction has evolved consistently in the direction of traditional left socialist anti-militarism which at bottom is only a form of pacifism. The resolute struggle of the party majority against the Burnham-Shachtman faction, and its decisive victory in the struggle, were the necessary conditions for the survival of the party. An unrelenting antagonism to the deserters on every point is no less necessary. The party

cannot have the slightest reason for conciliation on any point with the faction of deserters inspired by petty-bourgeois fright before the stern realities and complexities of the developing war.

ADAPTING OUR TACTICS TO WAR

6. The imperialist war is not our war and the militarism of the capitalist state is not our militarism. We do not support the war and militarism of the imperialists any more than we support the capitalist exploitation of workers in the factories. We are against the war as a whole just as we are against the rule of the class which conducts it, and never under any circumstances vote to give them any confidence in their conduct of the war or preparation for it, not a man, not a cent, not a gun with our support. Our war is the war of the working class against the capitalist order. But only with the masses is it possible to conquer power and establish socialism; and in these times the masses in the military organizations are destined to play the most decisive role of all. Consequently, it is impossible to affect the course of events by a policy of abstention. It is necessary to take capitalist militarism as an established reality which we are not yet strong enough to abolish, and adapt our practical tactics to it. Our task is to protect the class interests of the workers in the army no less than in the factory. That means to participate in the military machine for socialist ends. The proletarian revolutionists are obliged to take their place beside the workers in the military training camps and on the battlefields in the same way as in the factory. They stand side by side with the masses of worker-soldiers, advance at all times and under all circumstances the independent class point of view, and strive to win over the majority to the idea of transforming the war into a struggle for their socialist emancipation.

WE GO WHERE THE WORKERS GO

Under conditions of mass militarization the revolutionary worker cannot evade military exploitation any more than he can evade exploitation in the factory. He does not seek a personal solution of the problem of war by evading military service. That is nothing but a desertion of class duty. The proletarian revolutionist goes with the masses. He becomes a soldier when they become soldiers, and goes to war when they go to war. The proletarian revolutionist strives to become the most skilled among the worker-soldiers, and demonstrates in action that he is most concerned for the general welfare and protection of his comrades. Only in this way, as in the factory, can the proletarian revolutionist gain the confidence of his comrades in arms and become an influential leader among them.

The total wars waged by the modern imperialists, and likewise the preparations for such wars, require compulsory military training no less than the appropriation of enormous funds and the subordination of industry to the manufacture of armaments. As long as the masses accept the war preparations, as is indubitably the case in

the United States, mere negative agitation against the military budget and conscription cannot, by itself, yield serious results. Moreover, after Congress had already appropriated billions for armaments and was certain to pass a conscription bill without serious opposition, such negative agitation against conscription was somewhat belated and easily degenerated into mealy-mouthed pacifism. This proved to be the case with the organizations (Thomasite Socialists, Lovestoneites, etc.) affiliated with the preposterous conglomeration which calls itself the "Keep America Out of War Committee"--a vile and treacherous tool of the "democratic" imperialists. The hypocrisy of their pacifism is indicated by the fact that, simultaneously, they declare themselves in favor of the victory of Britain. Equally treacherous is the purely pacifist agitation of the Stalinists, employed today on behalf of Stalin's foreign policy under the Hitler-Stalin pact; and certain to be abandoned tomorrow when Stalin so orders, if he finds it necessary to switch partners. The pacifism of Browder and the pacifism of Thomas stem from different roots but are identical in their betrayal of the interests of the working class. Under the rule of a modern imperialism which is already arming to the teeth, an abstract fight against militarism is at best Quixotic.

OUR PROGRAM FOR THIS PERIOD

The revolutionary strategy can only be to take this militarism as a reality and counterpose a class program of the proletariat to the program of the imperialists at every point. We fight against sending the worker-soldiers into battle without proper training and equipment. We oppose the military direction of worker-soldiers by bourgeois officers who have no regard for their treatment, their protection and their lives. We demand federal funds for the military training of workers and worker-officers under the control of the trade unions. Military appropriations? Yes--but only for the establishment and equipment of worker training camps! Compulsory military training of workers? Yes--but only under the control of the trade unions!

Such are the necessary concrete slogans for the present stage of the preparation of U.S. imperialism for war in the near future. They constitute a military transitional program supplementing the general political transitional program of the party.

7. U.S. imperialism prepares for war, materially and ideologically, without waiting to decide in advance the date when actual hostilities shall begin or the precise point of attack. The workers' vanguard must likewise prepare for war without dependence on speculative answers to these secondary questions. The militarization of the country in preparation for war is taking place before our eyes. All our work and plans for the future must be based on this reality.

THE FUTURE BELONGS TO US

The first stages of militarization and war present enormous difficulties to our party because we have to swim against the stream. The party will be tested in a preliminary way by its capacity to recognize these difficulties and hold firm when the struggle is hard and the progress slow. Only a party fortified by the great principles and world associations of the Fourth International will be able to do this.

We are not a party like other parties. We alone are equipped with a scientific program of Marxism. We alone retain an unshakable confidence in the socialist future of humanity. We alone are ready to meet the universal militarism of decaying capitalism on its own terms and lead the proletarian struggle for power accordingly.

The war in its course will utterly destroy all other workers' parties, all half-and-half movements. But it will only harden the bona fide party of the Fourth International and open the way for its growth and eventual victory.

The future belongs to the party of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the party of the Fourth International. It needs only to be true to itself, hold firm, dig in and prepare the future.

FASCISM AND THE WORLD WAR

by Max Shachtman

This is the second in a series of six articles under this title written by Max Shachtman from late 1940 to early 1941. It appeared in Labor Action, 4 November 1940.

Fascism's rise to power in Germany, its consolidation, and above all the spectacular victories it has won in the war, have had a decisive influence in shaping the thoughts and actions of the working class. Especially in the democratic countries, the labor movement is increasingly aware of the peril to its existence represented by Hitlerism, increasingly anxious to fight it to the death. The worker's hatred of fascism and all it stands for is sound to the core.

Up to the present, however, the revolutionary vanguard elements have been unable to give this hatred a clear-cut class expression. Rather, it has been cunningly and effectively exploited by every capitalist demagogue, every professional "democrat" and every one of their retainers in the labor movement. It has been basely perverted in the interests of a decadent social order, for the preservation of capitalist rule, for the promotion of the profits and privileges of one imperialist gang against another. The most detestable form of this exploitation of a progressive sentiment for reactionary purposes is the use made of it to lead proletarian cannon-fodder docilely into supporting the capitalist democracies in the present war.

We didn't do so well against fascism in Germany when we had the chance in 1931 and 1932 and 1933--say the social-democrats--but we're ready to make up for it now under the sacred leadership of Daladier or Churchill or Roosevelt.

War is a terrible thing; it threatens the standards of living and even the existence of the working class--say the labor lieutenants of imperialism--but fascism, which we ourselves, cannot fight, is worse and so we must fight it under the banner of imperialism.

We used to have some confidence in the working class and socialism--say the intellectuals who have completed their retreat to capitalism--but now everything, especially the class struggle and all idea of revolution, must be abandoned in the interests of the holy war against fascism.

Our traditional principles and beliefs held in the past--they all say in one way or another--but they hold no longer because fascism makes it necessary for us to revise them or to drop them altogether.

The tragic hordes of refugees fleeing before the mechanized armies of Hitler have as their no less tragic counterpart the flight from working-class principles of virtually everybody in and around the labor movement. Some are moving fast, and some faster, but almost all of them are in flight.

It would be somewhat surprising if even the most revolutionary section of the working class were not affected in one degree or another by the atmosphere thus created. We know from the last world war that those revolutionists who were able to resist the impact of the powerful chauvinistic wave, not give a single inch to it, were exceedingly few in number and remained in total isolation for a long time. Others either plunged into the war current or drifted with it and landed far from the shores of the working class. In those days, the pretext for abandoning Marxism was the need of preserving labor from the horrors of Kaiserism or Czarism; today, it is the horrors of fascism.

THE CANNONITES DECIDE ON A CHANGE OF FRONT

Among the recent examples of change of front is the unfolding of a new policy towards the war and militarism by the Socialist Workers Party (Cannon group). It is worthy of detailed examination precisely because it is calculated to appeal to those revolutionary workers who were educated in the spirit of Lenin's uncompromising ideas. Let us see just what it has and what it has not in common with these ideas.

The policy, specifically described as a new one, has its origin in a point of view developed by Trotsky shortly before his assassination. It is presented publicly, with characteristic amplifications, one-legged analogies and other improvements, in two speeches delivered by Cannon at the last meeting of the S.W.P. National Committee in Chicago and a resolution adopted there, all of which appear in recent numbers of the Socialist Appeal.

Our examination could not possibly dwell on all the ludicrous theoretical boners with which Cannon's contribution is studded and which have always been a source of polite merriment among his less awed colleagues. That would be too long a task for one or even two articles. Insofar as it is possible to crash through the commonplaces and pomposity that surround its central points, we shall deal only with those points.

"These are new times," says Cannon. "The characteristic feature of our epoch is unceasing war and universal militarism." So far--even if not very new--so good. And what new policy does the revolutionary Marxist movement need for these new times which it did not have yesterday? "The workers themselves must take charge of this fight against Hitler and anybody else who tries to invade their rights. That is the whole principle of the new policy that has been elaborated for us by comrade Trotsky. The great difference between this and the socialist military policy in the past is that

it is an extension of the old policy, and adaptation of old principles to new conditions." (Emphasis in original.)

Having read what the "whole principle of the new policy" is, we rub our eyes for the first time. "The workers themselves must take charge of this fight against Hitler and anybody else who tries to invade their rights." Just what is new in this policy, at least so far as the Marxist movement, or the modern Trotskyist movement, is concerned? Of which old policy is it an extension? Liberals, social-democrats and Stalinists in the past (and today) placed the fight against fascism in charge of the bourgeoisie. That is true. But not we.

Especially since the rise of the Nazis in Germany in 1931, Trotsky above all taught the movement that "the workers themselves must take charge of this fight against Hitler" and Hitlerism, both on a national and an international scale, both in the case of civil war in one country and in the case of imperialist war between bourgeois-democratic and fascist nations. That thought runs through every document of the Fourth International, every document of Trotsky, from 1931 down to the thesis on "The War and the Fourth International" and "the Transitional Program of the Fourth International." If that is the "whole principle of the new policy," what was the principle of the "old" policy?

JUST WHAT WAS THE BOLSHEVIK POLICY?

We have learned, in politics, that the attempt to present an old policy as a new one, or a new policy as merely an old one, usually conceals something quite different. But before we look to see if that is so in this case, let us inquire into the reasons, the premises, for a new policy.

We must rid ourselves, says Cannon, of a hangover from the past of our own movement. "We said and those before us said that capitalism had outlived its usefulness. World economy is ready for socialism. But when the World War started in 1914 none of the parties had the idea that on the agenda stood the struggle for power. The stand of the best of them was essentially a protest against the war. It did not occur even to the best Marxists that the time had come when the power must be seized by the workers in order to save civilization from degeneration. Even Lenin did not visualize the victory of the proletarian revolution as the immediate outcome of the war." (Emphasis in original.)

Now, having read what the premises for the "new" policy are, we rub our eyes for the second time. One would think that the need of imposing the new line on his party did not require such an insistent display of contempt for commonly-known facts. We restrict ourselves to the term "contempt" only because it is not quite clear to us whether it is falsification that is involved or merely ignorance.

Not even "the best of them," not even "the best Marxists," and not even Lenin looked forward to the proletarian revolution in the last war? Let us see:

In one of its very first manifestoes following the outbreak of the war, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party declared in October, 1914: "The war has placed on the order of the day (in the advanced European countries. M.S.) the slogan of a socialist revolution." The resolution of the Bolshevik conference in Switzerland, March, 1915, declared: "Civil war to which revolutionary social-democracy calls at the present period is a struggle of the proletariat, with arms in hand, against the bourgeoisie for the purpose of expropriating the capitalist class in the advanced capitalist countries, for a democratic revolution in Russia (democratic republic, eight-hour work-day, confiscation of landowners' lands), for a republic in the backward monarchist countries in general, etc....A revolutionary crisis is approaching."

Cannon now tells us that "the stand of the best of them was essentially a protest against the war." If the above perspective and program of the Bolsheviks ("the best of them") was only a protest against the war, what, if you please, would a program of revolution look like?

Again, in his article of October 11, 1915, Lenin wrote, precisely against those who did not have a revolutionary perspective: "...We are really and firmly convinced that the war is creating a revolutionary situation in Europe, that all the economic and socio-political circumstances of the imperialist epoch lead up to a revolution of the proletariat...(therefore) it is our bounden duty to explain to the masses the necessity of a revolution, to appeal for it, to create befitting organizations, to speak fearlessly and in the most concrete manner of the various methods of forceful struggle and of its 'technique'..." And a year later, at the end of 1916, the same "not-even-Lenin" wrote in his criticism of the German Marxists: "In the years 1914 to 1916 the revolution stood on the order of the day." And above all, what in heaven's name was the meaning of Lenin's slogan, repeated a thousand times during the last war, "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war"?

TRYING TO RECONCILE THE IRRECONCILABLE

Now why is Cannon compelled to resort to so transparently false an argument to motivate the change in course? The answer is not hard to find. His problem is to reconcile the irreconcilable: adherence to the revolutionary anti-war tradition of Lenin and Bolshevism, with advocacy of a new and different policy towards the present war crisis that has little in common with that tradition. He resolves his problem very simply--by a complete misrepresentation of the views and tradition of the Bolsheviks in the last war. Once that is done, he is ready to proceed with his "new" policy. We have already seen that his first attempt to describe what is "new"

in the policy adopted by the S.W.P., is simply a failure. Let us see how he fares with his other attempts.

Pacifist opposition to war is futile or misleading or even reactionary. Good, and like most of the commonplaces of which Cannon is qualified master, true. Moreover, it is worthwhile repeating and explaining this truth over and over again. The working class, and revolutionists in particular, are not and cannot be opposed to war as such and therefore to all wars. We were for the war in Spain; we are for the war of a colonial people against an imperialist power (China vs. Japan); we are, above all, for the war of the workers against their oppressors. The professional pacifists are at best utopians (disarmament, or abolition of war, under capitalism!) and at worst, as a rule, they disarm the exploited in face of the enemies of the people. But Marxists have pointed this out for almost a hundred years. The whole modern revolutionary movement was brought up, especially by Lenin and Trotsky, in the last quarter of a century with a keen appreciation of these ideas. Repeat it today? Emphasize it more and more? Yes. But that is not new--at least not to the Marxists.

Individual abstention from imperialist war is futile and reactionary. Good, and again, true. We are not "conscientious objectors." If the imperialist government, because of our weakness, compels us to enter the army, we enter. If it compels us to participate in its war, we participate. We do not claim "exemption" on grounds of conscientious objection. Such opposition to imperialist militarism and war is futile because it is based on individual action instead of action by the organized masses. And if the masses were conscious and strong enough to impose a demand for "exemption," they would be strong enough to take power and put an end forever both to militarism and war. Such opposition is reactionary, because, if carried out by us, it would mean eliminating revolutionists from the aggregate of the workers in uniform, thus leaving them prey to chauvinists and reactionaries. But these views are at least twenty-five years old in the Marxist movement. When Cannon says of us, the Workers Party, that "They were primarily concerned about the various ways of evading the draft," he merely adds another monstrous falsehood to the one he tells about Lenin in the last war, doubly monstrous because of the interest which "perspicacious" authorities would show in the lie...But be that as it may, wherein is what he says on this point new--that is, new to the Fourth International, for it is a new policy for the International that he is proposing?

The interests of the workers-in-uniform must be defended. Good, and true, and an elementary duty of the revolutionary movement, of the working class as a whole, both inside and outside the army. We demand decent living standards for the soldiers. We demand full political, democratic rights for the soldiers. We demand an end to all arbitrariness and abuses by the officer caste. We demand the election of officers by the soldiers. We demand an end to the division between the barracks and the civilian population. All these and similar demands have been put forth in Labor

Action. But we do not claim that they are "new." They represent the position of the modern revolutionary movement since the beginning of the last World War and, for that matter, for many years before it.

AND FINALLY--THE "NEW POLICY"

But if these things, to which Cannon devotes slabs of lead in the Socialist Appeal, are not the "new policy" demanded by the "new times," what is it? We finally come to it in Cannon's summary speech, tucked away in a few modest little sentences. We will quote them so that the reader may have them right before him:

Was our old line wrong? Does the resolution represent a completely new departure and a reversal of the policy of the past? It is not quite correct to say that the old line was wrong. It was a program devised for the fight against war in time of peace. Our fight against war under conditions of peace was correct as far as it went. But it was not adequate. It must be extended. The old principles, which remain unchanged, must be applied concretely to the new conditions of permanent war and universal militarism. We didn't visualize, nobody visualized, a world situation in which whole countries would be conquered by fascist armies. The workers don't want to be conquered by foreign invaders, above all by fascists. They require a program of military struggle against foreign invaders which assures their class independence. That is the gist of the problem.

Many times in the past we were put at a certain disadvantage; the demagogy of the social democrats against us was effective to a certain extent. They said: "You have no answer to the question of how to fight against Hitler, how to prevent Hitler from conquering France, Belgium, etc. (Of course their program was very simple--the suspension of the class struggle and complete subordination of the workers to the bourgeoisie. We have seen the results of this treacherous policy.) Well, we answered in a general way, the workers will first overthrow the bourgeoisie at home and then they will take care of invaders. That was a good program, but the workers did not make the revolution in time. Now the two tasks must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously. (Socialist Appeal, No. 43. Our Emphasis.)

There is the new policy of Cannon! There it is, along with the real reason for it. At the beginning we were told that the "new military policy" cannot be found in the records of the Marxists during the last war, because "not even Lenin" visualized a revolution coming out of the war, whereas in the present war we do visualize it. The argument was spurious and Cannon implicitly acknowledges it in his summary. What is new is what Jay Lovestone and Sidney Hook say is new, what all the social-patriots say is new,

namely, the dramatically speedy advance of the Hitlerite armies which "we didn't visualize, nobody visualized."

"The workers don't want to be conquered by foreign invaders, above all by fascists." Quite true, and in that the workers are quite justified. But that was true also in the last world war. The German workers, with their socialist traditions and institutions, did not want to be conquered by the invading Cossack representatives of Czarist absolutism. The French workers, with their republican and revolutionary traditions, did not want to be conquered by the invading Prussian Junkers and the Hohenzollern dynasty. And not only the workers in general, but we, the revolutionary Marxists, in particular, and that both in 1914 and in 1940.

But what follows from that for Marxists? The policy of the social-patriots, of Scheidemann and Cachin and Henderson in 1914, Blum and Bevin and Oneal in 1940, the policy of supporting the imperialist war in the name of "defense of the fatherland" (or "defense of the working class and its institutions and rights") from the "invading aggressor"?

Not for a minute! We have always replied, and we still do: This is a war between imperialist bandits for the re-division of the world and its spoils, and not at all a war between democracy and fascism, between defender and invader. The latter is a vicious imperialist lie, and if you believe it you are a dupe of the ruling class and its apologists. But you want to fight fascism? Yes, of course we do. However, there is but one road in that fight--all others lead to the triumph of fascism. That road is the overthrow of the imperialist ruling class, the establishment of workers' power, of the socialist nation, which will resist all counter-revolutionary aggressors and invaders with arms in hand.

That has always been the position of the revolutionary Marxists. Cannon confirms it. What if we are attacked by a foreign power? he is asked. He says he used to answer: "The workers will first overthrow the bourgeoisie at home and then they will take care of invaders." That is, from the revolutionary standpoint, the right of national defense in war is conferred upon the working class only after it has taken power from the imperialist ruling class, and has a nation to defend. This, and nothing else, is what has always distinguished the revolutionary Marxists, the socialist-internationalist, from all varieties of social-patriots and social-chauvinists. The argument of the latter, from 1914 to 1940, has been, contrariwise, that the workers must defend "their" country from "invaders" whether or not they have yet succeeded in overthrowing the bourgeoisie.

Now, however, Cannon calls for a different, a new answer to the demagoguery of the social-democrats. "Now the two tasks must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously." What two tasks? Task One: "Overthrow the bourgeoisie at home" and Task Two: "Take care of the invaders," i.e., national defense. No amount of sophistry--and we look forward to the usual quota--can wipe out this fact:

Up to now, Cannon, together with all other partisans of Marxism, declared that national defense in an imperialist war was permissible only after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Today, in virtue of the "new" policy, Cannon declares that national defense is permissible "simultaneously" with the struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie. In other and simpler words, national defense in imperialist war is permissible while the bourgeoisie still rules!

There is the "new" policy of the Cannonites and nothing else! And so far as the Fourth International and its precursors are concerned (we cannot speak for other groups in the labor movement!), it certainly is new!

A SLOGAN WITH CLASS-COLLABORATION OVERTONES

What about the slogan of "control of military training by the trade unions," which the Cannonites seem to present as the "new" element in their policy? Nonsense! That is not what is essentially new in the policy; it is only an offshoot of the "new" course. Military training of the workers and underworkers' control? Of course! What else is our already pretty-well-established slogan of a people's army based on the trade unions? Yes, we were and remain for the arming of the workers, for a people's army based on the most authentic organs of the masses today, the trade unions. That's the army we rely upon to fight our battles, to defend our interests against reaction at home and abroad. As a separate and class institution of the workers, we want it to be completely independent today of the capitalist state machinery, of its military apparatus in particular. Tomorrow, if the people are ready for it, we want it to replace that apparatus.

Of our slogan we can truthfully say: we are reviving (not revising!) Lenin's old "proletarian militia" slogan of the last war, "modernizing" it neither in principle nor tactically, but only agitationally, from the standpoint of the concrete situation in our day. Our slogan of a people's army based on the trade unions is the indispensable complement of the fight we carried against conscription, that is, against the building and consolidation of imperialist militarism. (Parenthetically: Cannon knows this, of course; but that does not prevent him with characteristic disloyalty and malice from putting our fight against conscription into the same category with that of Norman Thomas and other pacifists!)

Is this, however, what Cannon's slogan amounts to? It is sometimes hard to say--reading the Appeal--because "military training under trade-union control" is presented there with deliberate ambiguity. At times, it seems to call for the establishment of a separate armed force, brought together, armed, trained, directed and controlled by the class organizations of the workers, the trade unions, and not as a part of the imperialist army. Given that sense, the slogan is identical with our slogan of a "people's army" and is one hundred percent correct.

Elsewhere in the Cannonite press, however, the slogan is interpreted as a demand for trade-union "control" of the conscript imperialist army--which is something quite different! Thus--to take the most striking sample from the Appeal--the headlines in No. 39: "N.J. Survey Shows Workers Want Union Control of Military Training. Approve Enactment of Conscription, But Also Favor Union Control of It." The story that follows corresponds to the headlines.

Why is this second interpretation different from the first? The first--a separate, independent, army of the workers, a "proletarian militia"--is a slogan of class struggle. It stands on the same social feet, so to speak, as a trade union itself. It may be and at the outset it would be, shaded by class-collaborationist officials, just as, for example, the pre-1933 independent social-democratic military organization in Germany, the Reichsbanner, or the Red Front-Fighters League of the Stalinists. Yet it remains, like the unions, a class organization of the proletariat, and it can always be "reformed" of its defects, i.e., transformed peacefully into a revolutionary institution. The second--"trade-union control" of the conscript army--is a slogan of class collaboration, especially in view of the present trade-union leadership (for in this slogan, the reformist character of the officialdom is involved). This slogan stands on the same social feet as a call for "trade-union control" of the Roosevelt government. That is why revolutionary Marxists have never put it forward and do not put it forward today. The bourgeois army cannot be "reformed," transformed into an institution or instrument of the working class. The proletarian analysis of it, and attitude towards it, is the same as it is towards the bourgeois state, of which the armed forces are the principal physical constituent and characteristic.

Cannon, with vulgar disregard for Marxian theory, compares the army with a factory, a political with an economic institution. His comparison is significant. The working class will take over the factories; it will not take over the imperialist army any more than it will take over the imperialist state. According to the "out-lived" Lenin and, before him, Marx and Engels, it will "shatter" the existing state apparatus and replace it with an entirely new and different machinery. Meanwhile, to be sure, revolutionists will no more "abstain" from participating in the armed forces of the bourgeoisie than they abstain from participating--allowing for obvious changes--in the parliament of the bourgeoisie.

"Trade-union control of military training" in the present army is essentially class-collaborationist, finally, because the trade-union "controllers" would only be captives of imperialism, could only be the executors of the policy and purpose of the army, both of which are decided or determined by the imperialist bourgeoisie and its executive committee--the government, the President-Commander-in-Chief and his Staff. It is tragic to think that such ABC's have to be re-stated not in a polemic against social-democrats but in a polemic against a...Bolshevik.

DANGEROUS SYMPTOMS MANIFESTED IN PRACTICE

In their anxiety to find a "practical" program, to adapt themselves to the patriotic, anti-fascist moods of the workers (that is, to the anti-fascist moods which the bourgeoisie have subverted to the needs of bourgeois patriotism), the Cannonites have given an important finger to the devil of national defensism. It would be stupid to put them in the camp of the social-patriots, of course. But while they are not in flight from revolutionary internationalist principles, they are moving away from them. The "two tasks" which they want to carry out "simultaneously"--there is a treacherous trap they have set for themselves. That trap is all that is new in Cannon's "military policy of the proletariat."

It is in light of this overwhelmingly important fact that the recent other "peculiar" developments among the Cannonites must be judged. We list a few of the more significant ones made understandable only by understanding the main point we have made:

1. Dropping the fight against conscription like a hot potato--weeks before it became law. Worse: the sabotaging of that fight by repeating every week that it is useless, that conscription is "inevitable," that all its opponents are miserable, poisonous pacifists. Worse yet: deliberately falsifying the facts to suit the "new" policy. For example: Before the "new" policy gained its full impetus, the Appeal recognized (No. 32) what everybody knew: "There is today a great wave of popular opposition to the conscription bill now being debated in Congress...millions of workers and farmers oppose conscription." Two months later, the Appeal discovered (No. 41) that "it is a hopeful fact that the great mass of the workers who are required to do so will go to the registration places on Wednesday seriously and without whining or empty regrets. They go to the army as they go to the factory." And two weeks later, Cannon writes (No. 43) that "the workers were for conscription." The type of lie is a bad symptom; the lie itself is a bad symptom.

2. The unprecedentedly furious assault on "pacifism" by the Cannonites. The "pacifism" of the broad masses is healthy and sound--let the Cannonites shout all they please about this in their newly-acquired stage-sergeant's bluster! It has little, if anything, in common with the professional and "theoretical" pacifists, like the patriotism of the masses, their "pacifism" is progressive, at any rate, potentially progressive. It represents the justified suspicion that fills the people about the imperialist war-mongers and their wars. It represents their hatred and dread of the horrors of war which has become a permanent phenomenon of a rotten social order. It represents their yearning for peace, for security. It is often possible, necessary and right to make a bloc with pacifists against social-patriots, for example; never possible to make one the other way around!

And Cannon? Not a word about all this. Instead, his Plenum resolution states curtly: "Pacifism is a debilitating poison in the workers' movement." That, and nothing more! Jim Oneal could

scarcely improve upon the formulation. And oh! another discovery. Do you know what destroyed the European labor movement in the present war? According to Cannon, it was its pacifism! Yes, yes, black on white. We thus learn (high time!) that pacifism is the greatest danger to the working class and the labor movement. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Supplies in His Majesty's Imperial Government, is, you see, a pacifist, and not a social-patriot.

3. But not a single word from the Cannonites about social-patriotism! Exaggeration? Polemical overstatement? No, that is literally the case. The Appeal has printed both of Cannon's speeches on "military policy" and his resolution. In all three documents, there is not one single solitary word, not a syllable, which mentions social-patriotism. We repeat, not one! Blum and Company in France, and the European labor movement he represented, collapsed, you see, because of pacifism--but not because of social-patriotism! Pacifism is a terrible poison ruining the American workers' movement, but social-patriotism is not even serious enough to be mentioned as a pimple.

The present writer cannot be endorsed by the Socialist Appeal as candidate for Congress on the platform of the Workers Party because he represents a "petty-bourgeois pacifist sect"; the A.L.P. and Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party candidates are endorsed although the Appeal criticizes their "false, opportunist programs." How delicately put! Their "opportunist" but not their "social-patriotic" programs. Is all this mere accident, or is it a case of the old German proverb: In the house of the hanged, you don't talk of rope....

4. We used to speak of the "war program" and "war industries" and we still do. The imperialist patriots, deliberately, speak of the "defense program" and "defense industries." Deliberately--because they must imbue the people with the lie that this is a "defensive" war. The Cannonites used to speak our language on this point. Here, too, we record a change, evidently in accordance with the "new times" and the "new policy." The front page "box" demand of the Appeal (No. 32) called for "Trade-Union Wages on All Defense Work!" Accident? The Election Platform of the Minnesota S.W.P. (Appeal No. 42) calls for "Trade-union hours and wages on all defense and public works programs....Take over without compensation the national defense industries...." In No. 34, we read that "Instead of allowing the [American] Legionnaires to monopolize the defense movement, every trade union ought to set about to form Union Defense Guards." It is nice to learn that the much-maligned Legion has been taking care of "our defense"--even "monopolizing" it. Merely loose language? We hope so!

5. The proposal, made in a letter from Goldman to Trotsky, that the S.W.P. drop the slogan of a "People's Referendum on War" (a proposal Trotsky rebuffed). Yet, why not? Drop the fight against conscription because it is "inevitable" then drop the fight against the war, for it is even "more inevitable"! Is it not rather "strange" that for the last month or more no attention or space has

been devoted by the Appeal to criticizing or condemning the new steps Roosevelt takes every day to bring the country closer and closer to participation in the imperialist slaughter? Is it, perhaps, because, this being a "new epoch" of war and militarism, we no longer fight against war and militarism? The fact that Goldman could even make his proposal--surely not in his name alone--is of ominous significance.

WHY THE "NEW POLICY"?

6. The startling contrast between the speed and wholeheartedness with which Cannon accepted Trotsky's basic thesis (to say nothing of Cannon's contributions to it--historical, theoretical, tactical, analogical) and the curt, even violent opposition Cannon manifested towards Trotsky's other proposal, namely, to give critical support in the elections to Browder and the rest of the Stalinist ticket? On the military policy, Cannon speaks of Trotsky with tenderness, praise, even veneration. On the election policy, Cannon uses the--for him--unprecedented language: "Trotsky...put forward a shocking proposal....We took the position that such a drastic change in the middle of the election campaign would require too much explanation, and would encounter the danger of great misunderstanding and confusion which we would not be able to dissipate." Would it not be simpler to put the difference in Cannon's reaction to the two proposals in these terms: (a) to storm against "pacifism" and to shout for "compulsory military training under union control" may not meet with one hundred percent approval of our patriotic union officialdom, but at the same time they would scarcely regard it as terribly "subversive"; whereas (b) to call for critical support of the Stalinists in the unions, even though it is fully in line with the rest of the Cannonite position, both on the war question and the question of defense of the Soviet Union (Trotsky was quite consistent in his proposal), will not sound pleasant in the ears of those "progressive fakers" in the unions with whom Cannonites are collaborating.

At the time of the factional struggle in the S.W.P. which ended in the mass expulsions of the minority and the formation by us of the Workers Party, Cannon pretended that he wanted nothing more than unity, that the split would be injurious to the movement, and more of the same. In his speech, Cannon now admits his real feelings about the split: "It is a great advantage for us that we got rid of this petty-bourgeois opposition." When Cannon speaks of "us" he uses the word like an editorial writer. Therefore, in this case, he is telling the simple, sincere truth. His "new policy" on war and militarism, represents a real departure from the principles of revolutionary Marxism. It is hard to believe that it can go unchallenged in the S.W.P., for there must be in it a group of thoughtful Marxists capable of speaking their convictions and ready to exercise this capacity. If Cannon is able to deal with them as he tried to deal with us he certainly will have a greater advantage in his party than he already has.

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Working-Class Policy in War and Peace

*Once More on the New Policy Towards Militarism and
War of the Socialist Workers Party.*

THE SECOND WORLD WAR is here, and it is only a matter of time before the United States is an open belligerent in words as well as in deeds. Of all the havoc caused by the war, none is so tragic as that produced in the working-class movement. Suppressed, atomized, corrupted, demoralized or misled, labor has missed its second great opportunity in the twentieth century to lift society out of the dreadful morass in which it is floundering and to reorganize it socialistically, on the foundations of orderliness, brotherhood, abundance, security and peace for the peoples.

The weight of the old parties, the old leaderships, the old theories and programs, has again proved so heavy a burden on the working class as to prevent it from rising to its feet and acting as the revolutionary savior of society threatened by barbarism. The fate of mankind is being fought out on the battlefields of the Old World. The American working class, still comparatively fresh and free, can play a decisive if not the decisive rôle in determining the outcome of the war in favor of world revolution and world socialism. But only on one condition, the all-importance of which is emphasized by labor's defeats in Europe: that it develops as speedily as possible a revolutionary Marxist party capable of leading the oppressed to victory. An indispensable prerequisite and concomitant of this task is the maximum of clarity and preciseness—hence, of effectiveness—of such a party's theory and program. Especially now, in the midst of war, ambiguity and carelessness in this domain can become crimes for which punishment will not be lacking. Errors and worse which had only white paper as their background in yesterday's peace times, have a far greater importance today with the flames of war as their background, and a still greater one tomorrow when the irresistible revolution rises to throw its light upon them.

With these thoughts in mind, I began a few weeks ago to write a series of articles in *Labor Action* on proletarian policy towards war and fascism, the subjects uppermost in everyone's mind. In the articles, I reviewed briefly the representative views on these subjects held by some of the radical publicists and organizations in this country—Dwight Macdonald, the Socialist Workers Party, Sidney Hook, the Lovestone group. I submitted them to a criticism from the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism, and ended with an exposition of our own views, those of the Workers Party. On these two most vital of all current problems, war and fascism, the articles aimed at eliminating some of the prevailing confusion, opportunism and even treachery, and at

reaffirming and fortifying the revolutionary internationalist position by means of arguments related to present-day realities.

The article criticizing the Cannonite position on the war and war policy (*Labor Action*, Nov. 4, 1940) elicited a reply in the form not of one but of three articles in the *Socialist Appeal* (Nos. 47, 48, 49), written by Cannon himself. If it were merely a question of a debate with Cannon, the matter could be safely allowed to rest with the last of his articles, for the sufficient reason that there has seldom been any point or profit in a debate on fundamental theoretical or political questions with one who lacks most of the elementary equipment for it. He usually enters such a discussion, to use his own words, with "a pair of hip boots and a shovel," noble proletarian tools in their field, handy for spraying a debate with such compliments as "unscrupulous twister", "perverter of historical incidents", "political underworld", but yet not quite enough for a political debate. But much more than Cannon's touching plight is involved in this discussion. It is a matter of clarity in the policy of a section of the Fourth International on vital questions of our period. This alone warrants a return to the discussion of Cannon's position.

Let us first recall this position, as formulated by Cannon in two speeches delivered at the S.W.P. Plenum in Chicago last September. "These are new times," he said. "The characteristic feature of our epoch is unceasing war and universal militarism." The workers must be armed, and trained in the use of arms, for every important problem of our epoch will be settled with arms in hand. Even before the first world war, socialists said capitalism was outlived and ripe for socialism. But when the war broke out "none of the parties had the idea that on the agenda stood the struggle for power. The stand of the best of them was essentially a protest against the war. It did not occur even to the best Marxists that the time had come when the power must be seized by the workers in order to save civilization from degeneration. Even Lenin did not visualize the victory of the proletarian revolution as the immediate outcome of the war." The present war is not our war, but as long as the mass of the proletariat goes with it, we will go too, raising our own independent program in the army, in the same way as we raise it in the factories. The workers do not want the country overrun by Hitler's hordes; neither do we. Because workers must be armed and trained, and because we have no confidence in the ruling class and its officers, we are for compulsory military training but under trade-union control.

"The workers themselves must take charge of this fight against Hitler and anybody else who tries to invade their rights. That is the whole principle of the new policy that has been elaborated for us by comrade Trotsky." (See *Socialist Appeal*, Oct. 12, 1940.)

Except for the utterly false estimation of Lenin in the last war, and the more than ambiguous slogan of trade-union control of military training, there was little to be quarreled with in the above exposition. But what, we asked in our criticism, was the "new policy" that it marked? To this, we concluded, Cannon gave sufficient answer in his summarizing speech at the Plenum:

The gist of the problem, said Cannon, is that the workers "require a program of military struggle against foreign invaders which assures their class independence." If Hitler attacks us, the social-democrats used to ask, what will you do about it? "Well, we answered in a general way, the workers will first overthrow the bourgeoisie at home and then they will take care of invaders. That was a good program, but the workers did not make the revolution in time. Now the two tasks must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously." (See *Socialist Appeal*, Oct. 26, 1940.)

This "new" position—that the workers should be for "national defense" while the bourgeoisie is still in power, and "simultaneously" fight against the bourgeoisie—I characterized with restraint as a concession to social-patriotism and a corresponding abandonment of the revolutionary internationalist position.

I hope the reader will forgive me and not interpret what I say as cheap boasting or as anything but a simple statement of fact if I write that I regarded my criticism of Cannon's views as so elementary, conclusive and unassailable that I freely predicted Cannon would not reply to it. Frankly, I expected that he would strike a posture and reply to those of his members who are perturbed by the "new line" with one of two statements: "Trotsky himself was for our line; he even originated it; and that's good enough for us"—or, "We are too busy doing mass work to bother with the criticisms of a sect." I was wrong, but at least in part. He said both these things, to be sure, but he did write a series of three articles for his public press, commenting on the criticism in *Labor Action*. He even said in the first of his series: "His entire article from beginning to end is a mixture of confusion and bad faith—a Shachtman 'polemic'. Not a single one of his 'points' can stand inspection. In my next article I shall undertake to prove this, point by point." But while I was wrong, as indicated, yet I was right. Cannon's reply is no reply. What he undertook to do, he did not do, either in the next article or in the third and last article. And, as will be shown below, he not only failed to take up my criticism "point by point" but deliberately omitted *any reference whatsoever* to the principal point I made.

In contrast, I intend to deal with all of the very few points Cannon does make, both the relevant and the irrelevant. Let us take them one by one, beginning with the latter.

Military Policy? What About Burnham?

I write a criticism of Cannon's "military policy" which is either good, bad, or indifferent. Cannon's first retort is: What about Burnham? Shachtman's article, you see, "is not directed at Burnham; it is intended to drown out the

question of Burnham by shouting loud and long against others." The reader here gets his first example of what Cannon means by replying to a criticism "point by point"!

Yes, Burnham deserted the socialist movement and socialism. He is not the first deserter and probably not the last. But just what is that supposed to prove against our party and its political position? Does Cannon want to say that Burnham's desertion is a logical outcome of his previous adherence to that party and its position? That will take a bit of proving.

Maria Reese was received and hailed by us when she quit the German Stalinists. When she deserted to the Nazis, the Stalinists argued that her desertion was the "logical outcome" of her adherence to Trotskyism. The proof that they were disloyal and unscrupulous liars lay in the fact that the condition for Reese's flight to the Nazis was her renunciation of everything the Trotskyist movement stood for.

Diego Rivera was "protected" by us—by Trotsky, Cannon and me—for years from the criticisms of the other Mexican Fourth Internationalists. Suddenly, he turned up in the camp of the reactionary wing of the Mexican bourgeoisie, even arguing that this was the only way effectively to fight Stalinism. What the Stalinists said about Rivera and Trotskyism is known, or can also be easily imagined.

Similarly with Chen Tu-hsiu, whom we elected a leader of the Fourth International despite the criticisms of the Chinese comrades. He has now passed into the camp of the imperialist democracies. Suppose I were to say about Cannon's article: "It is not directed at Rivera and Chen; it is intended to drown out the question of these deserters by shouting loud and long against Shachtman."

Similarly with virtually the whole leadership of the Russian Opposition, who, with the renowned exception of Trotsky and a few others, deserted the fight and went over to Stalinist counter-revolution. In reply to those, who like Souvarine, concluded from these desertions that the distinction between Trotskyism and Stalinism is insignificant and that the one leads easily to the other, we always pointed out that for the capitulators to go to Stalinism they had to break with the Opposition, its platform and traditions, and that there was not "development" from one to the other.

With due respect to the difference in proportions, the same holds true in the case of Burnham. A *scrupulous* and *loyal* commentator would say: "I have read the Workers Party statement expelling Burnham and I have read Burnham's statement. I must take note that he broke with the Workers Party, in his own words, precisely because it was a Marxist party, precisely because it rejected (as Burnham truthfully points out) every attempt to revise or undermine its Marxian position. I must take note, likewise, of the fact that Burnham did not take a single member of the Workers Party along with him in his desertion, that he did not find a single supporter in the party's ranks, that his departure did not create the slightest disturbance in its midst—all of which would indicate that, so far as the character of the Workers Party is concerned, his desertion had a purely individual and not a broader political or symptomatic significance." That is what a scrupulous and loyal commentator would say. A demagogue, of course, would speak differently. But our cruel times, and long years of them, have inured us against demagogues.

Lenin Has a Defender

One of the motivations for the "new policy" (which really isn't a new policy at all, we are assured, but only "an extension of the old policy, and adaptation of old principles to new conditions"), is that in the first world war, not even Lenin—much less others—had the perspective of revolution breaking out in direct connection with the war, that "even Lenin did not visualize the victory of the proletarian revolution as the immediate outcome of the war." Cannon seeks to justify his present policy (otherwise, why the reference to Lenin?) by contrasting to Lenin's perspective of 1914-1916, the 'immediacy of the revolutionary perspective in connection with the present war.'

In my *Labor Action* article, I quoted from Lenin to show that his whole course in the last war was based on the conception of a socialist revolution in Europe (in Russia, a "democratic revolution") in direct connection with the war, a fact which we thought was generally known in the Marxist movement. But this is too much for a patient and tolerant Cannon, who will stand for a lot, but not for anybody tampering with Leninism. Choking with indignation, he accuses me of literary charlatanism, quotation-twisting, distortion, mutilation and common forgery. "It is a matter of simple respect to his [Lenin's] memory to protect him from the hypocritical support of an advocate who is known among Leninists only as a betrayer of Leninism." As a betrayer, and what's more, only as a betrayer of Leninism. The steam behind these blows is terrific and they are delivered with all the weight and effectiveness of a Tony Galento boxing with his own shadow for the benefit of the customers assembled at his bar. But not even a graceful fighter ever hurt anybody shadow-boxing.

It seems, you see, that I left a sentence out of the middle of my quotation from Lenin, and ended when I should have continued. And what did I omit? Nothing less than Lenin's reference to the need of revolutionary propaganda "independent of whether the revolution will be strong enough and whether it will come in connection with the first or second imperialist war, etc." The italics are triumphantly supplied by Cannon. This triumph is buttressed by two other quotations from Lenin in 1916 and early 1917, straight from the original Russian edition: (1) "It is possible, however, that five, ten and even more years will pass before the beginning of the socialist revolution," and (2) "We, the older men, will perhaps not live long enough to see the decisive battles of the impending revolution." Cannon is so carried away by his researches into the original Russian, that where Lenin said "it is possible" and "perhaps", he sums it up by saying: "Lenin wrote in Switzerland that his generation would *most probably* not see the socialist revolution." (My italics—M.S.)

Now, what is the point of this otherwise absurd counterposing of quotations? We shall soon see that it has more of a practical than an academic aim. Let us begin by examining what Cannon set out to prove by his reference to Lenin in the last war.

In the first place, he declared that "when the World War started in 1914 none of the parties had the idea that on the agenda stood the struggle for power. The stand of the best of them was essentially a protest against the war. It did not occur even to the best Marxists that the time had come when the power must be seized by the workers in order to save civilization from degeneration."

In reply I quoted several statements made during the war by Lenin and the Bolsheviks which sound as though they were uttered in anticipatory refutation of the assertion by Cannon. According to the latter, none of the parties, not even Lenin's, had the idea that the struggle for power, the socialist revolution, was on the order of the day. In October, 1914, the Bolsheviks wrote: "The war has placed on the order of the day the slogan of a socialist revolution" in western Europe. At the end of 1916, Lenin wrote: "In the years 1914 to 1916 the revolution stood on the order of the day."

Cannon wisely ignores this and takes refuge in his second assertion: "Even Lenin did not visualize the victory of the proletarian revolution as the immediate outcome of the war." To make even plainer what he meant by this statement made at the September Plenum, he points out to me in his *Appeal* articles that Lenin of course had a revolutionary program during the war—but, he had been preaching revolution since 1901, as Marx had since 1847; more to the point, he was not dead certain that "we, the older men" would live to see the victorious revolution, that it was possible for the revolution to be postponed to a period long after the first world war. "Shachtman twisted it [i.e., what Cannon said] and distorted it into a denial that Lenin had a 'program of revolution,' during the war. But I think it is thoroughly clear to a disinterested reader that I was speaking of something else, namely, Lenin's *expectations* as to the *immediate outcome* of the war, and not at all of what he wanted and what he advocated."

But Cannon is no better off with his second assertion than with his first. He either does not understand or does not want to understand what is involved, either in Lenin's time or now, by the conception of "revolutionary perspective." In the first world war, Lenin *did* have a revolutionary perspective. He did believe and he said that the socialist revolution is on the agenda. But he did not and could not divorce this belief from the state of the *living revolutionary forces* at hand for realizing this perspective. He knew then, as he put it years later, that there is no "absolutely hopeless" situation for the bourgeoisie—either in the last war or in the present one. That, and that alone, is why he could say, not only in January, 1917, a few weeks before the uprising in Russia, but from the beginning of the war, that it was "possible" that years and even decades would pass before the socialist victory, that his generation would "perhaps" not see it. In October, 1914, he wrote to Shliapnikov about the slogan of converting the imperialist war into a civil war: "No one would venture to *vouch* when and to what extent this preaching will be justified in practice: that is *not* the point (only low sophists renounce revolutionary agitation on the grounds that it is uncertain when a revolution would take place). The point lies in such a *line* of work. *Only* such work is socialistic and not chauvinistic and it *alone* will yield socialistic fruit, revolutionary fruit." All his writings and doings in the period of the war were equally animated by this conception and spirit.

In other words, while Lenin *had* a revolutionary perspective, and repeated that the struggle for power *was* on the order of the day, he did not *guarantee* that the actual proletarian rising would occur on this or that day, and he did not guarantee either that the first rising would lead to victory. He would not and could not say whether the revolution "will come in connection with the first or second imperialist war". Not only Lenin, but Trotsky as well. Dealing

in his *War and the International* in 1915 with the alternatives of revolution or capitalist peace and temporary stabilization, Trotsky wrote: "Which of the two prospects is the more probable? This cannot possibly be theoretically determined in advance. *The issue depends entirely upon the activity of the vital forces of society*—above all upon the revolutionary social democracy." (My emphasis—M.S.) And so it does today also.

"Lenin," writes Cannon, "obviously was not arguing about the immediacy of the revolution as we visualize it in connection with the present war, but about the necessity of *advocating* it and *preparing* for it." Cannon's persistency in arguing this point is noteworthy. Lenin didn't see revolution as the *immediate* outcome of the war. Presumably, Cannon's repetition of this statement means that he, on the contrary, *does* have the perspective of an *immediate* revolution in connection with the war. Lenin wasn't entirely sure of "the victory of the proletarian revolution as the immediate outcome of the first world war", whereas Cannon is sure of the victory this time. And it is this difference that apparently warrants the "new policy" which, remember, is only an "extension," an "adaptation" of the old.

But is it not obvious that the only "difference" that Cannon could establish with Lenin's perspective in the last war is if Cannon *did guarantee* that "victory of the proletarian revolution" which Lenin did not visualize? "I was speaking of something else, namely, Lenin's *expectations* as to the *immediate outcome* of the war," Cannon repeats. But it is clear that he hasn't read his own program, or else doesn't remember it. Trotsky's last important political document was the *Manifesto* on the war written for the Fourth International less than a year ago. There we find (1) on Lenin's perspective in the last war: "Only the Russian party of the Bolsheviks represented a revolutionary force at that time [the outbreak of the first world war]. But even the latter, in its overwhelming majority failed, except for a small émigré group around Lenin, to shed its national narrowness and to rise to the perspective of the world revolution." (Remember Cannon on Lenin? that the position of even the best Marxists in 1914 "was essentially a protest against the war"?!) And (2) on the Fourth International's perspective in the present war: "The capitalist world has no way out, unless a prolonged death agony is so considered. It is necessary to prepare for long years, if not decades, of war, uprisings, brief interludes of truce, new wars and new uprisings." Long years, if not decades—that is entirely correct, not because we believe the revolution's triumph will be postponed for decades, but because we cannot *guarantee* that the victory will come six months from now or a year.

If Cannon had wanted to say that world capitalism has less right to expect long life in connection with the second world war than the first, that its *objective* possibilities of stabilization are fewer in our time than in Lenin's, he could have done it without all his revealing juggling with words and quotations about Lenin's "expectations" and "perspectives". If he were concerned in reality with the objective question of perspectives and tasks in Lenin's time and in our own, he would simply have said: "Like Lenin, we of the Fourth International today have the same revolutionary perspective. The socialist revolution is here, on the order of the day. Only, the working class is not prepared for it. The revolutionists are few in number, and isolated. The task, now as then, is the preparation of the revolutionists and the mobilization of the working class, for the realization of this

perspective which is, always was and always will be indivisible from our own policies and activities."

But that is not the point with which Cannon is concerned. He pursues much more practical aims than the somewhat academic dispute over what Lenin's expectations were and what his perspectives were. His aims relate precisely to "policies and activities." The reference to Lenin is only calculated to "prove" that "we" must have a *different policy* in the second world war because Lenin had a *different perspective* in the last one. The fact that Cannon had to distort Lenin's views in the last war already speaks badly for the "new policy" he is currently advocating.

Before proceeding to it, let us deal with one other little matter, in accordance with the promise that no point made by Cannon will be left unanswered.

Trotsky, Too, Has a Defender

"Against whom is Shachtman really defending Lenin?" asks Cannon. "To be sure, he mentions only 'Cannon' but it is perfectly obvious that Cannon in this case is only serving Shachtman as a pseudonym for the real target of his attack. My remark about Lenin's perspective during the first world war were no more and no less than a simple repetition of what Trotsky said on the subject." And further: "Shachtman's attack on 'Cannon' in behalf of Lenin is in reality aimed against Trotsky in a cowardly and indirect manner. He wants to set Lenin against Trotsky, to make a division in the minds of the radical workers between Lenin and Trotsky, to set himself up as a 'Leninist' with the sly intimation that Leninism is not the same thing as Trotskyism. There is a monstrous criminality in this procedure. The names of Lenin and Trotsky are inseparably united in the Russian Revolution, its achievements, its doctrines and traditions, and in the great struggle for Bolshevism waged by Trotsky since the death of Lenin. 'Lenin-Trotsky'—those two immortal names are one. Nobody yet has tried to separate them; that is, nobody but scoundrels and traitors."

There it is, both barrels, but the reader can sit quietly in his chair. The noise is nothing but stage thunder, the brandished sword is only a lath, and the theatrical posturing is nothing but theatrical posturing.

My article did not aim at polemizing against Trotsky. It did not even aim with monstrous criminality to intimate slyly that the names of Lenin and Trotsky should be separated. I know fairly well where and on what points and in what struggles the two names are inseparable; I know also on what points the names represent differences of opinion, even sharp ones. If Cannon wants to set up a privately-owned two-headed deity exempt from profane criticism, he may be allowed to imitate the Stalinists in this procedure as he has in others. But that is not my concern here any more than it was in my original article.

I did not criticize Trotsky explicitly in my article, although I stated that Cannon's policy apparently *originated* (but was not necessarily identical) with Trotsky. Why didn't I? What Trotsky's views were on the questions covered in Cannon's new policy, I know only from a couple of brief letters reprinted in the *Fourth International*, and from a few paragraphs in the disjointed notes drafted for an article which Trotsky's death prevented him from elaborating and completing. From these fragments I have not the possibility nor the right to formulate a rounded opinion of what Trotsky's views on the subject really were, nor to

what extent they jibed with the views developed by Cannon at his Plenum after Trotsky's death. Assassination prevented Trotsky from developing his point of view, from motivating it fully, from defending it critically or polemically, and from revising it in one or another direction in the light of further reflection or of criticism. I feel perfectly free in polemizing against Trotsky's views on the class nature of the Soviet state, for example, because they are views that he had the opportunity to state elaborately and over a period of years. The same does not hold for views which, so far as I am aware, are presented in the course of a few paragraphs or pages, and no more; views which, moreover, it is no longer possible for their author to elaborate upon or to defend from criticism. Hence, I refrain from criticizing Trotsky on the question at issue, and direct my remarks instead at Cannon.

And Cannon? He makes no serious effort to answer the criticism. He weaves and bobs around a bit, but in the end he starts whining and running to hide behind Trotsky's skirts. "It wasn't I who said it, it was Trotsky." Let us suppose that Trotsky did say what Cannon writes, although that is not quite the case. That would be beside the point. Our dispute is not over what Trotsky said, but over what Lenin said, what his views were. And in this particular instance, I consider it preferable to conduct the discussion by referring to Lenin's own words than to have Cannon cut off the discussion by referring to what Trotsky is supposed to have said and meant about Lenin.

Finally, I have never considered it a mark of distinction or a special virtue to go around "disagreeing" with Trotsky, or Lenin, or Marx. At the same time, in my twelve years in the Trotskyist movement, I always voiced my opinion when I believed that I had grounds for a serious disagreement with Trotsky, and I argued for my views until one or another of us was convinced otherwise. The organizational separation that occurred last year was not of our choosing and was not consummated without regret. But whatever views we held we stated openly, and whatever steps we took we prepared and took openly. I never went about secretly, among a few close chums, laying the basis for an organizational split with Trotsky over some difference or grievance, real or alleged. As Cannon knows, he cannot say the same.

Trade-Union Control—Of What Army?

In Trotsky's fragmentary notes referred to above, he points out that Lenin's concept of "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war" was "the basis for propaganda and for training the cadres but it could not win the masses who did not want a foreign conqueror." The Russian masses were won to the revolution by such simple slogans as "Land, Bread, Peace, All Power to the Soviets." We tried in vain to explain this to Cannon during the last discussion in the S.W.P.

The transitional program of the Fourth International adopted three years ago, while animated through and through with revolutionary internationalism, at the same time took into account the progressive, or potentially progressive, anti-fascist patriotism of the masses. At present, this sentiment is hideously exploited by the ruling classes for the most reactionary objectives. It is necessary, we said, to utilize this sentiment of the masses, their hatred and fear of fascism, for working-class objectives. Given the world social crisis and the imminence of the second world war, knowing from

old times the futility and worse of pacifist opposition to militarism and war, we raised the slogan of Workers' Defense Guards and a People's Army. In effect, we said to the workers: You want to fight fascism, to preserve your rights and labor institutions? Good, so do we. We even want to go further, and extend those rights, make them more genuine and durable. Only, we warn you that under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, and in the course of the war that it will carry on in the democracies against Germany, we will merely end up under a totalitarian régime in our own country. Organize armed and trained forces of your own, under your own leadership and control, and then you will not only be able to meet the threat of fascism at home and abroad, but you will be assured that in the course of the fight imperialist interests will not be served and all democratic rights destroyed.

These ideas, and the slogans represented by them, were and remain entirely correct and we, for our part, continue to put forward and defend them.

The new policy of the Cannonites, however, is something else again. First, with the adoption of the new policy, they dropped entirely the fight against bourgeois militarism represented concretely by the drive to impose conscription upon the American people. Not only dropped the fight, but by their repeated nonsense in the *Socialist Appeal* about how the workers were overwhelmingly in favor of conscription, by their ridicule of any opposition to conscription as "poisonous" and "sinister" and "petty-bourgeois pacifism," they sabotaged any fight against it, introducing, at best, only confusion among the radical workers. On the score of this indictment I made of the Cannonite policy, Cannon, who is to answer "point by point", is utterly silent.

In the midst of the bourgeois conscription campaign, the Cannonites came forward with the slogan of "Trade-union control of conscription" or "Compulsory military training under trade-union control." The objective effect of this slogan, in so far as it would have an effect among the workers, could only be to facilitate the drive of the imperialists. The slogan could represent one of two ideas, but not both at the same time. (1) It means that the trade unions and other workers' organizations should take the initiative in organizing their own training camps, their own armed and trained forces, entirely under their control and management and democratically run by the workers themselves. But if this is what Cannon means by the slogan, wherein, except in words, does it differ from the slogan the S.W.P. had up to yesterday and which we still advocate, namely, Organize a People's Army? In my article, I asked that question specifically of Cannon. There is no reply. Or (2) the slogan means that the trade unions should demand of the government that they be put in control of the present U.S. army. Such a slogan, however "attractive" and "practical" it may seem, no Marxist could support. As I pointed out, it can only have class-collaborationist significance, it can only help preserve capitalist illusions among the workers.

Cannon tries to explain in a vague sort of way that advocating the socialist revolution is a propagandist task, whereas pressing the transitional program and slogans is agitation, calculated to bridge the gap between the present working-class mentality and the revolution and to lead the workers across this bridge. Good. But a transitional slogan must bring them across the bridge and not keep them where they are. It must help break down bourgeois and reformist prejudices among the workers, and not preserve these prej-

indices. If the Cannon slogan has the second meaning we indicated, then it does the latter.

Why? The basic distinction between reformists and revolutionists, according to Lenin and to all the lessons of modern history, is that the former believe or say that the bourgeois state machine can be taken hold of by the workers and, with some reforms, be used as the instrument for ushering in socialism, whereas the Marxists point out that the bourgeois state machine must be shattered and an entirely new and different one erected in its place before any serious progress to socialism is possible. The army and the police, the armed forces in general, are the principal prop of the bourgeois state machine. To tell the workers that they can reform this machine is to abandon one of the principles of revolutionary Marxism. The latter calls neither for "trade-union control of the government" nor for "trade-union control of the army." These are essentially *slogans of reform*.

Whatever may be said about Lenin's "perspective" before the February, 1917, revolution, it would surely take a bolder historian even than Cannon to deny that Lenin had an immediate and direct revolutionary perspective after that revolution—the struggle for state power which culminated in October of that year. Yet, while Lenin and the Bolsheviks put forward the slogan of "workers' control of production", they never advanced the slogan of "workers' or Soviet control of the army"—not even of the disrupted Czarist army, not even during the period of dual power. Why? We demand workers' control of the factories because the socialist revolution has no need or desire to replace factories with any substitute. We do not demand workers' control of the army because we do not want to foster the illusion that the proletariat can reform the imperialist military machine, because it is *the* instrument of the capitalist state, because that state, in Lenin's view, has to be shattered and cannot be reformed.

It is interesting to note, that before Lenin's return to Russia, Stalin and the right wing who controlled the Bolshevik party and its press, did put forward a slogan analogous to Cannon's: The Soviets should control the Provisional Government. But Lenin, who was a Marxist and who had a revolutionary perspective, made short shrift of the slogan immediately upon his arrival.

Now, in my article, I asked the Cannonites which of the two meanings indicated above is the one they give to their slogan of "Trade-union control of military training"? The question was calculated to open an avenue for explanation. Cannon wrote three articles in reply. One would think that so bold and forthright a politician, who does not, like his critics, stoop to "sly intimation", would give a categorical answer to the question. But it is clear: whatever Trotsky may have had in mind with regard to the slogan of military training for the workers, Cannon is not sure enough of himself to say, simply and directly, that it is the one thing or the other. The reader must lumber through a thick mass of verbal undergrowths and tree-stumps, so unusual in Cannon's style when he has something straightforward to say, before he comes to the inescapable conclusion: The Cannonite slogan means "Workers'" control of the imperialist army, and not the agitation for an independent People's army. Which was to be expected. As we pointed out weeks ago, that has been the line of the Cannonite press, even if there also with what, we must repeat, can only be deliberate ambiguousness.

Yet the two slogans, the two concepts, are as different as

day and night. Each stands on a different class basis, as we have indicated. The social-democrats consider that the present national bourgeois state is, fundamentally, theirs, the people's. Hence, they demand that the people control it. If that were possible—not just theoretically, but in actual life—then reformism could bring about the socialist society and revolution would be superfluous. What applies to the state as a whole, applies with equal if not more force to the army of that state.

Does a policy of "boycotting the army" follow from our rejection of the reformist concept? That is an accusation the social democrats have hurled at us with reference to participation in bourgeois parliament. It is groundless, however. We are for participating in elections. We call upon the workers to elect their own class representatives to Congress and Parliament and Reichstag. But we know, alas, that the proletariat cannot capture the bourgeois state; at best, it can remain its captive. Hence, we do not delude the working class with slogans of "workers' control" of Parliament or Congress. Again, the same with the army. When the proletariat is conscripted, naturally, we go along with the working class. We do not conduct an individual struggle against the bourgeoisie. In the army, we continue to represent the best interests of the working class. We stand for the extension of the democratic rights of the soldiers. We stand for their right to organize and present their demands collectively. We stand for their right to elect their own officers. But we do not delude them or ourselves with slogans of "workers' control" of the army. Quite the contrary, the slogans we do put forward have a distinctly different objective . . . At the same time, we continue to popularize the idea of a People's Army, an army organized, trained, led and controlled by the workers and their organizations. Utopian? Yes, to those for whom only war in permanence, capitalist domination for another century, working-class servitude forever, barbarism and misery are *not* Utopian! But the German workers built up their Reichsbanner and Rotfrontkämpfer Bund, the Russian workers their Workers Guards and Red Militia. The relationship of these movements to the German Reichswehr and the Czarist Army, respectively, is the way we understand the relationship between the People's Army and the present imperialist army. They are the organs of different classes.

Cannon, who was so insistent on dealing with the class nature of the Soviet state as a substitute for answering the questions raised by Stalin's invasion of Poland and Finland, is muzzled as a sphinx when it comes to the class nature of the army he wants "controlled." More accurately, he implies that the army is or can become a working-class institution. Indeed, one of his satellites whose ignorance of Marxism and politics has already qualified him for the appointment as editor of Cannon's theoretical organ, writes a truly venomous polemic against the conscientious objectors in the *Socialist Appeal* (Nov. 23, 1940) and says:

"These pacifists who oppose military training must be rejected with the utmost contempt by the class-conscious worker, just as he would reject with scorn and hate a scab who said: 'Unions? No, I will have nothing to do with them. They lead to tear gas! I choose independence!'"

Roosevelt's army is like—a union! Whoever refuses to go along with the army-union must be treated by the workers like a scab. And what about the Fellow-worker Judge who sentenced the eight pacifist-student-scabs of the Union Theological Seminary to a year and a day in prison—doesn't

he deserve a kind word for the thorough promptness with which he administered justice? And Roosevelt—shall we forget him altogether, after the vigorous way he established the conscript-army-union?

The reader may say: After all, the quotation is only an accidental outburst by an overzealous dunderhead who was mistakenly allowed to write on political questions. The reader may be right, at least with reference to the accidental nature of the outburst. But, as I pointed out in my original article, we have already had from the Cannonites the accidental reference to the war industries as “defense industries.” We have already had the accident of the *Appeal* stating at first that millions of workers and farmers opposed conscription, only to change its tune to say that “the workers were for conscription” as soon as Cannon changed the line. We have already had the accident of Goldman’s proposing to drop the slogan of a People’s Referendum on War, a proposal rejected by Trotsky. We have already had the accident of Goldman proposing that “once conscription is made into law, we cease to struggle against it”, a proposal also rejected by Trotsky. We have already had the accident of the Cannonites giving up completely, yes, completely, any struggle against social-patriotism. Now we have the accident that the army is like a union. We are ready to call all these things “accidents,” but we refuse to ignore the fact that *all* the accidents are of *one* type, that they all lead in one direction.*

We Used To, But We Don’t Any Longer

Armed with his favorite weapons, “a pair of hip boots and a shovel,” Cannon assured his readers that he would answer my article “point by point”.

I asked Cannon, who calls us petty-bourgeois pacifists, to specify just what is pacifist in our program or activities—our opposition to imperialist war and to bourgeois conscription, our advocacy of workers’ defense guards and a People’s Army, our economic and political demands for the drafted workers? No answer from Cannon, not a word, unless bluster is an answer.

I asked Cannon why there was not one single, solitary syllable in his two speeches at the Plenum and in the Plenum resolution, and, nowadays, in general in the *Socialist Appeal*, about *social-patriotism*, about the need of combating it. The answer he made to this point is satisfactory enough—complete and unrelieved silence.

I asked Cannon if he really believed, and could motivate this belief, that what caused the downfall of reformism in Europe was Blum’s “pacifism” (and not his social-patriotism and class collaboration), and that the main danger in the American working class today, in connection with the war, is pacifism. The answer made by our “point-by-point” answerer was, once more, silence.

Perhaps these are, after all, minor points. But what about the principal point that I indicated in Cannon’s new line? I refer to the section I quoted at length from Cannon’s summarizing speech in Chicago. In it, Cannon says: We used to answer the social-democrats by saying *first* we would overthrow the bourgeoisie and *then* we would be for national defense. “*That was a good program, but the workers did not make the revolution in time. Now the two tasks*

must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously.”

I argued that this, and this mainly, was what is new in Cannon’s policy, and I characterized his formula as essentially social-patriotic. And what do we hear in reply from the “point-by-point” man? Not a word, nothing but the swish and slosh of his hip boots and the dull thud of his shovel. He just pretends I never mentioned it. He does not give the slightest hint that he ever said what I quoted or read what I had to say about it. Yet, these sentences are the most important part of his two speeches.

In my earlier article I already pointed out their meaning. Cannon used to say: We will be defensists when we have a country to defend, that is, when the workers have taken power in the land, for then it will not be an imperialist war we are waging but rather a revolutionary war against imperialist assailants. But that is only what he *used* to say. Now he says something different, because the revolution did not come in time. Now the two tasks—the task of bringing about the socialist revolution and defending the fatherland—“must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously.” Evidently, not even Cannon’s ability to squirm and twist sufficed to explain away his new formula, and silence became the better part of valor. For if the formula means what it says, and it cannot possibly mean anything else, it signifies: We will continue to fight capitalism and at the same time (“simultaneously”) we will defend the Fatherland, that is, support the war.

What part of Lenin’s garments can Cannon hide behind in defense of this formula? What part of Trotsky’s writings, what little fragment of them, can Cannon find now to enable him to say, “Shachtman is attacking Trotsky although he names only Cannon”? It would be interesting to get an answer, if not a “point-by-point” answer, then at least some kind of answer.

In his first article, Cannon “answered” everybody. The Ochlerites, he points out, are against his line. What they say about it, he does not even hint at. But they have a sectarian mentality in general, and so he passes on to his next critic. Who? The S.L.P. What do they say about Cannon’s line? He doesn’t know. “The S.L.P. will surely reject our military program if they have not already done so. (God forgive me, I don’t read the *Weekly People* as attentively as I should and don’t know whether they have yet expressed themselves).” This disposes of the S.L.P. in that effective manner which marks out Cannon from ordinary men. Then, before proceeding to his annihilating, “point-by-point” answer to Shachtman, he lingers for a fanciful moment with the Lovestoneites. “The Lovestoneites have not yet commented on our military resolution, as far as I know. But if they find it possible to take time off from their frenzied defense of Great Britain, they will surely attack our resolution ‘from the left’ . . .”

Ah, Cannon, you spoke too soon, forsooth! The Lovestone paper, *Workers Age*, of the same date as the *Appeal* carrying Cannon’s above-quoted remarks (Nov. 23, 1940) prints an article which gives Cannon’s new line the *salut fraternel* on both cheeks. It is written by one Donald Graham, a finished social-patriot who is hell bent for leather to get England all the aid she needs in the war. In his article, he defends Lovestone from his critic, Wolfe. He knows, mind you, that it’s an imperialist war. He is not, God forbid, a mere British patriot. Oh no, he’s as revolutionary as the next man and just as much for socialism now as yesterday. He would have liked to see the workers in power in

*As we go to press, we have the latest accident. The leading article in the *Appeal* after Roosevelt’s Fireside Chat and Message to Congress has not one word to say in criticism of the President’s latest and longest step to war—not one word.

England and even in this country, but, you know, "the workers did not make the revolution in time," as Cannon says. Now, the foreign invaders must be driven off, Hitlerism—"counter-revolution on the march"—must be halted. The reader will surely allow the importance of the quotation from Mr. Graham to excuse its length:

"The struggle to defeat fascism is inseparable from and inextricably related to the struggle for socialism. Only the victory of socialism, as the majority resolution states, could solve the problem of the menace of fascism in a 'fundamental' sense. Hitlerism cannot be defeated by suspending the class struggle. On the contrary, the taking of socialist measures is required to ensure the defeat of Nazism. As Lovestone points out, the slogan of Laski (which is also that of the I.L.P.), 'Through Socialism to Victory over Hitlerism' is a correct one. This does not mean that you do not begin to struggle against a Hitler invasion until the day you have socialism in England. It means that the struggle for socialism and against Hitlerism are inseparable. Therefore, the duty of the socialist is not the simple one of aiding England to defeat Hitler, but also one of aiding the struggle for socialism in England, America and every other country in the world. There is no contradiction."

Lovestone-Graham also used to say, "the workers will first overthrow the bourgeoisie at home and then they will take care of invaders." But the war came, and not the revolution. Now, says Lovestone-Graham, "the two tasks must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously." We must "take care of invaders" ("struggle against a Hitler invasion") and "simultaneously" we must fight for socialism.

"There is no contradiction," for it is all done with the aid of mirrors.

Here we can just see Cannon striking another posture: "Shachtman, scoundrel and traitor, dares call me a social-patriot," and so on to the usual point. The indignation will be wasted. I do not call Cannon a social-patriot for the good and simple reason that I do not believe he is one. I do say, however, that Cannon put forward an essentially social-patriotic position in the vitally-important sentences we quoted. He has neither explained, defended nor withdrawn this position. One or the other he will have to do.

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We said at the beginning of this article that just because we are in the midst of wars and revolutions, ambiguity, lack of preciseness, theoretical confusion are less permissible than ever. Such vices are paid for heavily. It means nothing for us to have an "immediate revolutionary perspective" unless there is a revolutionary vanguard so trained up in theory and activity as to enable it, at the right moment, to reduce that perspective to reality. One uncorrected error, Trotsky once wrote, leads to many others. Cannon has already imposed more than one error upon his party, the most serious of which are now involved in his "new" military policy. His resistance to correction is notorious, but not always very consequential. In the given case, it can prove to have the most harmful effects on the future of a party which, as another section of the Fourth International, is of direct concern to us.

MAX SHACHTMAN

RESOLUTION ON MILITARY POLICY

submitted by WIL and TO

The text of this resolution is taken from three undated, mimeographed pages entitled "Conference Discussion Material." The resolution was adopted by the March 1944 founding conference of the British Revolutionary Communist Party.

1. The Second World War into which capitalism has plunged mankind in the course of a generation, and which has been raging for more than four years, is the inevitable outcome of the crisis of capitalist methods of production, long predicted by the revolutionary Marxists, and is a sign of the impasse out of which capitalism cannot lead the mass of humanity.

2. The war of the British ruling class is not an ideological war fought in the interests of democracy against fascism. This has been demonstrated clearly by their support of Hitler against the German working class; their acquiescence to the seizure of Austria and Czechoslovakia; by their cynical policy of non-intervention in Spain which enabled Franco to massacre hundreds of thousands of Spanish anti-fascist proletarians; and by their support of Darlan in North Africa and Badoglio and Victor Emmanuel in Italy. The British ruling class is waging the war to maintain its colonial plunder, its sources of raw material and cheap labour, its spheres of influence and markets, and to extend wherever possible, its domination over wider territories. It is the duty of revolutionary socialists to patiently explain the imperialistic policy of the ruling class and expose its false and lying slogans of the "War against Fascism" and the "War for Democracy."

3. The victory of German fascism and Japanese militarism would be a disaster for the working class of the world and for the colonial peoples. But no less disastrous would be a victory for Anglo-American imperialism. Such a victory would perpetuate and intensify the imperialist contradictions which gave rise to fascism and the present world war and will inevitably lead to new fascist and reactionary regimes and a Third World War.

4. The British working class, therefore, cannot support the war conducted by the ruling class without at the same time opposing its own class interests on a national and international scale. Our party is opposed to the war and calls upon the working class to oppose it. Only by overthrowing the capitalist state and taking power into its own hands under the leadership of the Fourth International, can the British working class wage a truly revolutionary war and aid the German and European working class to destroy fascism and capitalist reaction.

5. By their support of the war the Trade Unions, the Labour Party and the Communist Party, with their satellite organisations, have betrayed the historic interests of the working class and the interests of the colonial masses oppressed by British imperialism. It is the duty of revolutionary socialists to mercilessly expose the leadership of these organisations as agents of the ruling class in the ranks of the workers and to win over the broad mass of the workers from the leadership of these organisations to the party of the Fourth International.

6. The outbreak of the war created a new objective situation in which the revolutionaries had to conduct their political activity. Millions of workers--men and women--the most youthful and virile section of the population, are conscripted into the armed forces. The war not only changed the way in which millions of workers are forced to live, but also their level of political consciousness. War and militarism has penetrated every phase of, and become the basis of, their lives.

7. It would be a mistake on the part of the revolutionary socialists to lump the defencist feeling of the broad mass of the workers together with the chauvinism of the Labour and Stalinist leadership. This defencism of the masses stems largely from entirely progressive motives of preserving their own class organisations and democratic rights from destruction at the hands of fascism and from a foreign invader. The mass chauvinistic enthusiasm of the last war is entirely absent in the present period. Only a deep-seated suspicion of the aims and slogans of the ruling class is evident. To separate the workers from the capitalists and their lackeys, is the principal task of the revolutionary party.

8. The policy of our party must be based upon the objective conditions in which we live, including the level of consciousness of the masses, and must help the masses in the process of their daily struggles along the road to the seizure of power.

9. In the present period all great social changes will be made by military means. Our party takes the capitalist militarisation of the millions, not merely as the basis for the restatement of our fundamental principles and aims, but for the purpose of propagating positive political ideas and policies in the ranks of the working class as an alternative to the class programme of the bourgeoisie. This necessitates the supplementing of our transitional programme with a policy adapted to the needs of the working class in a period of militarisation and war. Our attitude towards war is not based merely on the rejection of the defence of the capitalist fatherland but on the conquest of power by the working class and the defence of the proletarian fatherland. From this conception flows the proletarian military policy of the Fourth International.

10. In the last war socialist pacifism and conscientious objection were progressive and even revolutionary in opposition to the policy of national unity and support for capitalist militarism which was advocated by the chauvinists. But thirty years of class struggle

have clearly and decisively demonstrated that such policies act as a brake on the socialist revolution and serve only to separate the conscious revolutionaries from the mass of the working class caught up in the military machine. To this negative policy must be counterposed a positive policy which separates the workers from their exploiters in the military organisations.

11. The working class and the revolutionary socialists are compelled to participate in the military organisations controlled by the capitalist state. But to the capitalist militarism for capitalist ends, the revolutionary socialists must counterpose the necessity of proletarian militarism for proletarian ends. Our military policy defends the rights and interests of the working class against its class enemy; at every point we place our class programme against the class programme of the bourgeoisie.

12. The Labour Party, the Communist Party, the I.L.P. and the sectarians have also policies for the workers in arms. But these policies are reformist, based upon the perspective of the continued control of the state in the hands of the bourgeoisie. These policies contain only a series of minor democratic and financial reforms which do not lead to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the conquest of power by the working class.

13. Our party is for the arming of the working class under the control of workers' organisations, the trade unions, workers' committees and political parties.

We are against the special schools controlled by the capitalists for the training of their sons and agents for the highest posts of command and technicians of the military arts.

We are for state-financed schools, controlled by the trade unions and workers' organisations for the purpose of training worker-officers, who will know how to defend the interests of the working class.

We are against the selection of the officers in the armed forces, including the Home Guard, by the bourgeoisie and its state machine. This selection takes place on the basis of class loyalty to the capitalists and hatred of the working class. We are for the election of officers in the armed forces by the men in the ranks.

These are the positive steps which our party advocates in its proletarian military policy, and which supplements our general transitional programme in the struggle for power. Such a policy, not only caters for the needs of the workers in uniform in their day to day struggle against the reactionary officer caste, but by its thoroughly anti-pacifist character, prepares the working class for the inevitable military attacks which will be launched against it by the exploiters at home, and for the defense of the proletarian fatherland against reactionary war of intervention.

ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

submitted by the Militant Group

The text of this resolution is taken from a bulletin entitled "Resolutions submitted by the Militant Group (R.S.L.) to the R.S.L.-W.I.L. Fusion Conference," dated March 1944.

1). This Conference declares that there must be no room for ambiguity in our organisation with regard to our attitude in the event of the invasion of imperialist Britain by the forces of a rival imperialist power. Our attitude is determined by our estimation of the war as an imperialist one. In such a war, "national defence" means defence of colonial booty and imperialist exploitation. Furthermore, defeats of British Imperialism, by weakening it, facilitate its overthrow at the hands of the revolutionary proletariat.

2). As Lenin put it, "We will not become partisans of national defence until after the seizure of power by the proletariat, until after the offer of peace....Until the moment of the seizure of power by the proletariat, we are for the proletarian revolution, we are against the war, we are against the 'defencists'." (August, 1917)

3). Consequently, we must reject, on grounds of revolutionary principle, all policies stating or implying that the British proletariat should resist a foreign imperialist invasion before it, the British proletariat, has obtained state power. We reject such policies, regardless of whether they advocate class-collaboration in an open form, e.g., working-class support for the bourgeois state against invasion, or in a concealed form, e.g., "independent" working-class military struggle against invasion within the bourgeois state, that is, before the proletariat has seized power.

ATTITUDE OF THE PROLETARIAT TOWARDS IMPERIALIST WAR

The text of this resolution, which was submitted to the March 1944 founding conference of the British Revolutionary Communist Party by the Left Faction of the former RSL, is taken from six unsigned, undated pages headlined only with the title of the resolution.

I. THE VALIDITY OF LENINIST POLICY

This Conference declares that the policy of revolutionary defeatism as laid down by Lenin during the First World War is entirely applicable to the present conflict. No new factors have arisen which can justify a departure from this fundamental proletarian policy towards Imperialist War.

The view that the rise of fascism constitutes a new factor warranting the abandonment of the policy of revolutionary defeatism and the adoption of a defencist policy is a manifestation of petty-bourgeois ideology and is irreconcilable with the profession of socialist internationalism. The policy of revolutionary defeatism is applicable in all belligerent imperialist powers irrespective of the state form--whether fascist or democratic.

The existence of the Soviet Union warrants only tactical changes. It cannot justify an abandonment of the basic expression of the class struggle in war time--the policy of revolutionary defeatism.

II. THE FUNDAMENTAL PREMISE OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTION IN WAR TIME

The policy of revolutionary defeatism constitutes an assurance that there will be no capitulation to bourgeois ideology. It guarantees that the struggle for socialism will be carried on unaffected by fears of it facilitating "national disaster."

The fear of "National disaster" is the main weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie for the maintenance of its hegemony in war time for it is the source of all opportunist (chauvinist) deviations, hence the Leninist axiom--"A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot but desire the defeat of its own government" constitutes the premise of every truly revolutionary action in war time.

Such a desire and only such a desire is compatible with genuine class struggle. Revolution in war time is civil war, and the transformation of war between governments into civil war is on the one hand facilitated by military reverses (defeats) of governments, on

the other hand it is impossible really to strive for such a transformation without thereby facilitating defeat.

The desire of defeat must not be relinquished even where it is clear that such defeat carries with it the military victory of the enemy bourgeoisie. Defeat, even though it be by a "fascist" country, demoralises not the proletariat but the bourgeoisie hence such a defeat constitutes not an aid but an obstacle to the victory of fascism.

Fascism can in no wise be imposed by an army of occupation. Fascism is based on the demoralisation of the working class and the destruction of its organisations and must not be confused with a military dictatorship. The demoralisation of the proletariat which is the fundamental condition for the victory of fascism can derive only from its failure to achieve socialism after a favourable opportunity has presented itself. Then and only then does the "initiative" pass to the frenzied petty bourgeoisie--which acting as agents of the big bourgeoisie, vents its despair--in the form of hate, upon the proletariat. Under a military occupation the petty bourgeoisie is more inclined to direct its hate against the foreign army, not against the proletariat. Fascism can only be "home grown." Nor is the victory of democratic imperialism in any way other than that of disintegrating and demoralising the bourgeoisie whose power is exercised through a fascist state, conducive to the restoration of "democracy."

In the conditions of imperialist war the distinction between decaying democracy and murderous fascism disappears in the face of the collapse of the entire capitalist system. From the point of view of the British Workers the victory of German Imperialism is preferable to the victory of "democratic" Britain and conversely from the point of view of the German workers the victory of Britain is preferable to the victory of "fascist" arms. The class conscious proletarian sees in such victories only the defeat and humiliation of his own exploiters which he ardently desires.

The proletarian does not regard imperialist war as simply a war between governments hence he does not consider that to desire the defeat of one's own government is the same as desiring the victory of the "enemy" government. In a war between governments he is neutral, but imperialist war is a manifestation of the class conflict within society consequently he is not neutral towards his own bourgeoisie, he is not impartial towards the military fate of his own oppressor but desires the defeat of his own ruling class--the class which directly exploits him.

To his own bourgeoisie he is related by the fact of direct exploitation, to the enemy bourgeoisie he is related on the one hand by the fact of it being the enemy of his own bourgeoisie in a war between governments, and by the fact of it being the oppressor of his class brother--the proletarian of the "enemy" country. Thus his only real enemy (sole enemy if allied countries are excluded) is his own bourgeoisie, in relation to the imperialist war he is

neutral to the enemy bourgeoisie (desiring neither victory nor defeat), but of course desires its defeat by his brother proletarian. Thus also is it impossible for the proletariat to strike a blow in war time at the enemy bourgeoisie without striking at the proletariat of the "enemy" country and aiding its own bourgeoisie.

International action in war time is directed solely against one's own bourgeoisie.

Lenin's axiom is the prerequisite for serious revolutionary action, not because revolution is impossible without military defeat, history proves only that defeats are more advantageous to the revolutionary proletariat than victories, but because the proletariat and in particular the vanguard of the proletariat is rendered impotent unless it desires the defeat of its own government.

III. APPLICATION OF THE POLICY OF REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM

Revolutionary defeatism counterposes to the bourgeois necessity of achieving victory the necessity of the proletariat desiring the defeat of its own government. To the bourgeois lie that the enemy country is the cause of the war it counterposes the concept of our own bourgeoisie bearing to us sole responsibility for the war and its effects. To hatred of the enemy--fraternisation, to imperialist war--civil war for socialism. The task of the revolutionary party is to destroy the influence of bourgeois ideology upon the masses and to impose a socialist ideology upon the struggles of the proletariat. In war time the most pernicious and dangerous illusion is defencism. Defencism is a manifestation of nationalism--revolutionary defencism of national socialism. It is an insuperable obstacle to fraternisation and the achievement of international socialism. Hence the substitution of defeatism for defencism is of vital importance. The destruction of the elements of chauvinism can be accomplished only by counterposing the class needs of the masses to the national needs--the needs of the bourgeoisie.

The defencism of the masses is mixed with many progressive sentiments and class instincts. The development of these features into a socialist consciousness cannot be accomplished simply by supporting the progressive features for to the masses they are inextricably mixed with the defencist illusions, but only by counterposing the one to the other.

Failure to bring the class features into opposition to the nationalistic features means to give a "left" covering to patriotism. This is the role of charlatans. Attempts to capture the leadership of the workers on any other basis than that of revolutionary defeatism will lead to social-patriotism, to the destruction of the Revolutionary Party. This is not to say that the masses can be won to the banner of the Fourth International on the slogans of "turn imperialist war into civil war," etc., but slogans which are evasive and ambiguous with regard to the proletarian attitude to the war are a betrayal of socialist internationalism.

The value of all slogans, demands, etc., must be measured by the extent to which they enlighten the masses, destroy bourgeois ideological influence, raise socialist consciousness. During an imperialist war--especially prior to the revolutionary upsurge this means above all the raising of the internationalism of the workers. Therefore it is necessary to patiently explain the nature of the war, its incompatibility with working-class interests, and the necessity of fraternisation with the workers in the "enemy" country on the basis of class struggle each against his own ruling class. At first the Revolutionary Party can expect only to swim against the stream, but on its ability to do this depends its whole future. If it makes the smallest concession to defencism and fails to correct it, it is irretrievably lost.

IV. REVOLUTIONARY DEFENCISM

Revolutionary Defencism constitutes an attempt to reconcile the socialist tasks of the proletariat with the bourgeois task of resisting defeat. It is an expression of petty-bourgeois ideology. Revolutionary Defencism seeks to present the revolution as a means of defeating the imperialist enemy, or of opposing defeat of one's own country by the enemy. The socialist revolution is not a means of solving bourgeois national problems, but of resolving the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeois nationalist problems of the imperialist belligerents were solved nearly a century ago. The policy of revolutionary defencism might possess some justification in a colonial war, at least if undertaken in a spirit of internationalism, but its application to an imperialist war is nothing but the policy of the social-chauvinist Kautsky, the "internationalism" of which serves only to justify the working class in every country with the defence each of its own fatherland. It is a betrayal of international socialism.

Such a policy, notwithstanding its "revolutionary" flavour, cannot advance the working class one real step forward. Defencist illusions do not constitute a means of achieving the socialist revolution, they only bar the way to an internationalist attitude which is the prerequisite for fraternisation and the transformation of imperialist war into civil war.

Revolutionary defencism has found numerous specious formulations--telescoping the tasks of winning the war and the revolution, defeating one's own bourgeoisie first. The use of such general formulas as "The workers everywhere are the enemies of the bourgeoisie everywhere and working-class action in our own country encourages working-class action in the enemy country," serve as a cover for defencism. The former as a justification of "neither victory nor defeat," and the latter to justify a desire for the military defeat of the enemy. Even fraternisation has been presented as a weapon, not against our own bourgeoisie but against the enemy bourgeoisie also. The practical results of this "internationalism" in the spirit of Kautsky have been the American Military Policy, demands for efficient military equipment, deep shelters, better

rationing, increased production, etc. Slogans which can only drive the workers further into the blind alley of defencism, into disillusionment and demoralisation.

The American Military Policy (Chicago Conference Policy) is not a working-class policy but a petty-bourgeois hotch potch. It represents a fundamental departure from the traditions of the Fourth International. It adopts the view that this imperialist war would be progressive if it were under workers control, "we never...give them (the capitalists) any confidence in their conduct of the war." As a general formula it is true a workers state wages progressive wars but we are confronted with specific conditions--not abstractions. This war is an imperialist war in which millions of workers are engaged in the slaughter of their class brothers at the behest of their own exploiters. It is reactionary to demand that this bloody slaughter, this crime should be conducted "under workers control." Moreover the fact of the workers in each country demanding of its own bourgeoisie that it be made responsible for the slaughter of its fellow-workers cannot lead to international socialism, hence the "workers control" can never be realised, it remains an empty phrase. All that remains is support of the imperialist war.

The American Military Policy advocated that the workers should "fight against sending of worker-soldiers into battle without proper training and equipment." This is alleged to be a translation of Trotsky's Military Policy. However the class-conscious proletarian can distinguish between not wishing to permit one's own bourgeoisie recklessly to squander the lives of workers even though it be in the slaughter of brother workers and demanding the efficient prosecution of that slaughter.

The demand for deep shelters--a specific demand which flows from acceptance of the American Military Policy can only be distinguished from the demand for superior weapons of war by drawing an absolute distinction between offence and defence and between military personnel and civilians. The demand springs from the masses because they accept the necessity of winning the war and desire to protect their lives. The necessity of winning the war is a product of bourgeois deception and is reactionary. The desire to protect one's life is not specifically working-class--nor for that matter specifically human. It becomes specifically working-class only if it means protection of working-class lives (soldiers no less than civilians) from the attacks of one's own bourgeoisie, i.e., if one's own bourgeoisie is held responsible for the war and its effects (bombing); but in this case the demand for shelters is non-sensical. The demand for shelters is in fact directed only in form against one's own bourgeoisie, in essence it is an act of aggression against the proletariat of the "enemy" country. It is a betrayal of international class solidarity.

Similarly the demand for "increased production" springs from the desire to "defeat fascism," i.e., German imperialism and as such it possesses no progressive content. The addition of the words

"under workers control" does not alter the general character of the slogan. It only adds a "socialist" covering to the bourgeois lie of "defeating fascism." The outcome of bourgeois lies can never be socialism, not any step towards it. The demand for "increased production" to aid the Soviet Union did possess a certain progressive feature--the desire to aid a workers state. But this feature could possess no value to the workers despite its class nature until it was counterposed to the defencist--i.e., bourgeois features. Failure to counterpose the desire of the workers to aid a workers state to their desire to prevent the defeat of "their own" country, e.g., by demanding that all existing arms be sent from Britain without regard to the interests of national defence, left the workers at the mercy of the Stalinists. In a slogan such as "Total Aid to the Soviet Union," the addition of "under workers control" would not be a deception of the working class.

The demand for the ending of the Party truce may be progressive or reactionary. Progressive if counterposed to the bourgeois task of winning the war, reactionary if advanced as a means to the better prosecution of the war.

In circumstances in which the masses are dominated by defencist illusions it is valueless to adopt slogans which fail to oppose such illusions. It is necessary to place the working-class necessity of ending the truce in as sharp opposition as circumstances will allow to the "national interest," to "winning the war."

The idea that to call upon the workers to seize power can never be reactionary whatever the purpose is in its very essence unmarxist. No slogan can possess an intrinsic progressiveness. The call to the workers to seize power must be evaluated not in accordance with some Kantian virtue of the "slogan in itself" but by the purpose--the aim for which the slogan is advanced. "To seize power in order to defeat fascism" is in existing circumstances no more progressive than support of the imperialist war. The aim of "defeating fascism" is the aim of our own bourgeoisie even though the original deception practised by the bourgeoisie is cloaked by a "socialistic" demand to "seize power." A slogan cannot alter the character of the imperialist war.

V. DEFENCISM OF THE LEADERS AND OF THE MASSES

Defencism is a manifestation of bourgeois ideology. It infects the Revolutionary Vanguard through the capitulation of the masses to the intense ideological pressure exerted by the bourgeoisie through the instrumentality of the reformist leadership. But a "Revolutionary Vanguard" which succumbs to such influences and is unable to extricate itself is worthless. A failure of a "leadership" to resist an alien ideological pressure implies a failure to analyse the class origin of this pressure, that is, that it adopts a non-marxist, non-proletarian standpoint. It is petty-bourgeois. The masses on the other hand slowly but surely overcome their defencist illusions. The ideological pressure of the bourgeoisie is

counteracted by the demands made by the bourgeoisie upon the proletariat. The sacrifices made by the workers in the interests of winning the war so sharply conflict with their class interests that the desire for the defeat and humiliation of their exploiters becomes the dominating factor in their attitude to the war. It is entirely untrue that the masses are unable to comprehend and accept the Leninist policy of Revolutionary Defeatism. The masses can assimilate every marxist theoretical question, but they do it in their own way, by testing it "under fire," in the same way they test the Revolutionary Leadership. Those "leaders" who have been unable to swim against the stream, who have capitulated to defencism and been unable to extricate themselves, are lost to the movement. The masses will never accept them as the Revolutionary Vanguard.

VI. DEFENCISM AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Defencist tendencies in the Fourth International have manifested themselves most markedly in precisely those countries in which the proletariat has more than its chains to lose--those countries which possess or possessed at the outbreak of the war colonial empires on the basis of which the bourgeoisie could grant its proletariat a privileged position. Hence it is not surprising to find that one feature of this defencism is expressed as a desire to "defeat fascism"--i.e., as opposition to the loss of a privileged position--as a pampered slave.

Such opportunism must inevitably infect and is in fact infecting every aspect of Fourth International policy. In America and Britain the Fourth International is following in the footsteps of the 2nd., and 3rd., Internationals and it is useless to attempt to appeal to the absence of a distinct social strata in the Fourth International as the basis for degeneration. "History knows degenerations of all sorts" and the ideological influence of a "parasitic" proletariat may yet provide the basis for the death of Trotsky's International.

If the Fourth International is to live it must purge its ranks of all defencists. Not the slightest concession must be made to revolutionary defencism. At the core lies the need for a firm internationalist leadership which can resist the pressure of alien interests. This, not "objective conditions," is the only guarantee that the Fourth International can fulfill its historic role.

BRITAIN'S War !
Production is in Chaos !

*Britain's Millionaires pile up profits whilst
British Soldiers go to the front ill-equipped.*

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TED GRANT, Editor "Socialist Appeal"
G. HEALY in the chair.

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A PROPOS OF "TRADE-UNION CONTROL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE"

(Letter sent to the Committee by Comrade C.)

The French text of this letter was taken from Bulletin Mensuel de la IVe Internationale (zone libre), No. 2, April 1941. The translation is by the Prometheus Research Library. Quotations from the SWP resolution have been changed to conform to the English original.

The army plays an important role in the capitalist system: one can say that it forms the backbone of the state. For the bourgeoisie, the army has a dual role: it serves as an instrument to conquer new territories--this inevitable law of the system is the reason the army exists--and at the same time it is a means of coercion against the working class when capitalism comes up against its own internal problems.

Recognizing that the army is the clearest expression of the class division of society means admitting that the highest levels of the capitalist state direct its organization and functioning toward the dual goal we mentioned. Military discipline is merely subservience fabricated by the bourgeoisie to serve its interests and requirements.

In every case, whatever the state of demoralization in the army may be, in order to find a solution to a revolutionary situation the working class must win over this instrument which will facilitate its seizure of power. The proletariat should never even think that the capitalist army can evolve, can be transformed, into an army of the working class.

There is no doubt that we are at a stage preparatory to the revolution. In such a stage, the orientation that should be adopted by a party claiming to be working-class and revolutionary, to be advocated by militants claiming to be Marxists, is to make the proletariat see clearly the contradictions of the capitalist regime, to sharpen those contradictions to the point of creating a situation that impels the masses to fight for power.

And that is where we, as Marxists, find reason to confront the SWP leadership, which says: "We fight against sending worker-soldiers into battle without proper training and without equipment. We oppose the military direction of worker-soldiers by bourgeois officers who have no regard for their treatment, their protection or their lives. We demand federal funds for the military training of workers and worker-officers under the control of the trade unions. Military appropriations? Yes--but only for the establishment and equipment of worker training camps! Compulsory training of workers? Yes--but only under the control of the trade unions!"

American capitalism is working feverishly to enter the war under the best circumstances. What it lacks is not just stockpiles of arms and equipment, but also pro-war hysteria among the masses. What prevents this hysteria from being created is formal democracy in the USA (as in France and England)--that is why, as events unfold, the American bourgeoisie will gradually have to rid itself of democratic impediments. So it cannot grant relative control of the workers by trade-union tops. Supposing, however, that the American bourgeoisie did decide to make this concession, the "management" of the working class would have a corporatist, fascist character.

In the area of production in general, in certain situations the workers movement has demanded control of production. It goes without saying that the revolutionary vanguard never viewed this control as a way to help capitalism to resolve its crisis, but as a way to deepen it even more and to demonstrate and expose to the working class how the surplus value is allocated. Fascism has been able to heighten its demagogy by granting the workers not "control" but "direct participation" in running the factories. One must not, of course, confuse a factory with a regiment and the army with the capitalist regime as a whole, but the control the American comrades demand does not go in the direction of exposing the very purpose of the army, nor does it further the disintegration of the army. Rather it results in maintaining the cohesiveness of this powerful instrument of the capitalist state whose goal is to resolve the crisis of the system.

Classical "soldiers' committees" are the instruments to fight for the democratic demands that soldiers can and should always raise. To concede this mission to the American trade unions means reverting to the position of "parity committees" that we have seen in the area of production. Experience has proven that this path leads not toward intervention by the working class into the affairs of the state, but on the contrary state intervention into the affairs of the working class. Is the SWP giving Roosevelt the chance to form some sort of "parity committees" within the army, that is, to drag the working class into war? In that case, Roosevelt himself, not the SWP, would be the one most concerned with ensuring that soldiers have good material conditions and are well equipped (look at the example of the German army).

The strikes taking place in the United States demonstrate the existence of a working class fighting for transitional demands, which for the moment distance it from the union sacrée with its bourgeoisie. So these strikes are political in character and the role of a true vanguard party must be to push the movement toward a revolutionary outcome. There is a sharp contradiction between the fact of the strikes and the slogan advanced by the SWP leadership.

Here in Europe, lacking detailed and precise information, we are not very well able to measure the workers' resistance to the bourgeoisie and to the trade-union bureaucracy. We know the dangers that such a conflict entails, but once it is begun--and we should push to begin it--the revolutionary party must fight to win

political leadership of it. The workers' independence from the interests of their own bourgeoisie underscores the contradictions--which at that point can be resolved only by extreme solutions. At this time, we do not know what the practical result will be. Either we will be faced with favorable prospects or subjected to severe restrictions on the possibilities for struggle. In any case, the position of the SWP will prove wrong, whatever the result of the current strikes.

Revolutionary policy should always be clearly defined for the working class which is waiting for an orientation. If the American comrades agree with us on the characterization of the imperialist war, we ask them: what interests of the working class does the militarization of that class correspond to? Especially considering that militarization corresponds precisely to preparation for participation in the war. Such a position does not go beyond that of social democracy which exposes the working class to the warmongering demands of capitalism--which during a period of crisis can resolve matters only by imperialist war.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks taught us that situations change and tactics change with them, but they taught us fidelity to principles, including always steadfastly opposing intervention in an imperialist war. The ideological future and historical prospects that the convulsions of capitalism promise the proletariat are well beyond those offered by the most carefully elaborated opportunism.

The current strikes have a clear class content, as does the imperialist war. The American workers will not avoid being dragged into the slaughter and the SWP's current line (trade-union control of national defense after the "Referendum on War") does not assist them in setting out on a path other than the one that leads to the battlefield.

The revolutionary possibilities for the world proletariat will arise when the consequences of the conflict begin to become clear. The means to bring forth and ripen these possibilities have been defined by Marxist revolutionaries on many occasions: first, explain the class character of the imperialist war, then total independence of the working class taken to its most extreme conclusions (revolutionary defeatism).

The opportunism we are condemning here is the reflection the masses produce in a small group. Being enmeshed in trade-union activity has led the American comrades to put tactics appropriate to a simple demand and the conquest of power in the same bag.

Our local Committee published the SWP's position without giving its opinion, since we don't think the remark that it represents a new sort of tactical tendency which is "original" constitutes an opinion. We won't discuss the question of "originality," for us it

is quite relative (Jaurès talked a lot about a certain "New Army," etc.), but we do accuse the local Committee of aiding in sowing confusion, of not opposing something that is contrary to the principled positions of Bolshevism.

THE COMMITTEE'S REPLY TO COMRADE C.

The French text of this document was taken from Bulletin Mensuel de la IVe Internationale (zone libre), No. 2, April 1941. The translation is by the Prometheus Research Library.

It is true that the Committee has not yet written down its opinion in black and white concerning the SWP's position. It felt, perhaps wrongly, that first the discussion should be started on the American documents, which already happened a few months ago. In cell meetings, comrades were unanimous in condemning the famous phrases: "We fight against sending into battle..." etc. And for the benefit of comrade C. we would point out that it was members of the Committee who were the first to stress the inappropriateness, the unfortunate nature of these phrases, to point out the more or less utopian character of the slogan "trade-union control of the army," the all-too-obvious contradiction between the first part of the Manifesto ("not one man, not one penny, not one rifle for the bourgeois army") and the second part, which was the "original" contribution (we maintain the epithet: everyone is free to interpret it as he wishes). It was our intention to subject this document to the most searching criticism--so much so that we didn't include this first part in the Bulletin, since it merely confirmed our traditional position on war and the bourgeois army.

Once this critical assessment had been made--an assessment which C.'s informant R. did not contribute to--it seemed to us wise to await new information and documents. It was all the more wise in that the SWP seems to us to still have a clearly BL [Bolshevik-Leninist] position: genuine opposition to the war, anti-Anglophilia (but also clearly setting themselves off from the pacifists and isolationists), in a word an independent class policy. To date there has been no trace of union sacrée. And that is why their position on the army seems to us--pending further information--to be a gross tactical error if you will, but nothing more, at least for the moment.

In addition, this position seems to us sufficiently open to criticism as it is, without having to find ways to distort it or even make it say what it doesn't say. Don't forget (and what follows is not written with the intention of making excuses for the American position, but to clarify matters) that for our comrades it is a question of transitional slogans. C. counterposes trade-union control over the army to "Soldiers' Committees." That's wrong! Control is only a slogan for an immediate demand, like our "Down with two years" [length of army service] or "Five francs pay" [for soldiers]. We say this, to reiterate, without calling into question the incorrectness of the slogan "trade-union control of the army."

But if the first two slogans are agitational, all the more so should the latter one be agitational. Comrade C. sees a "sharp contradiction" between the fact that there are strikes and the slogan put forward by the SWP leadership. Now the CIO (headed by Lewis) generally supported the strike movement. Well, it is that same CIO which would probably be named by the SWP to "control" the army-- because the union remains a union, even if its leader supports a reactionary candidate in the elections. So where is the contradiction between strikes and "control"?

Finally, we would point out that although trade-union "control" of the army seems to us a utopian slogan, without practical application and as such wrong (even isolated from its dubious context), we also know that for the last few months the American fraternal party has been at the cutting edge of the strike wave, and that it has been doing nothing but "pushing this movement toward a revolutionary outcome."

The Committee

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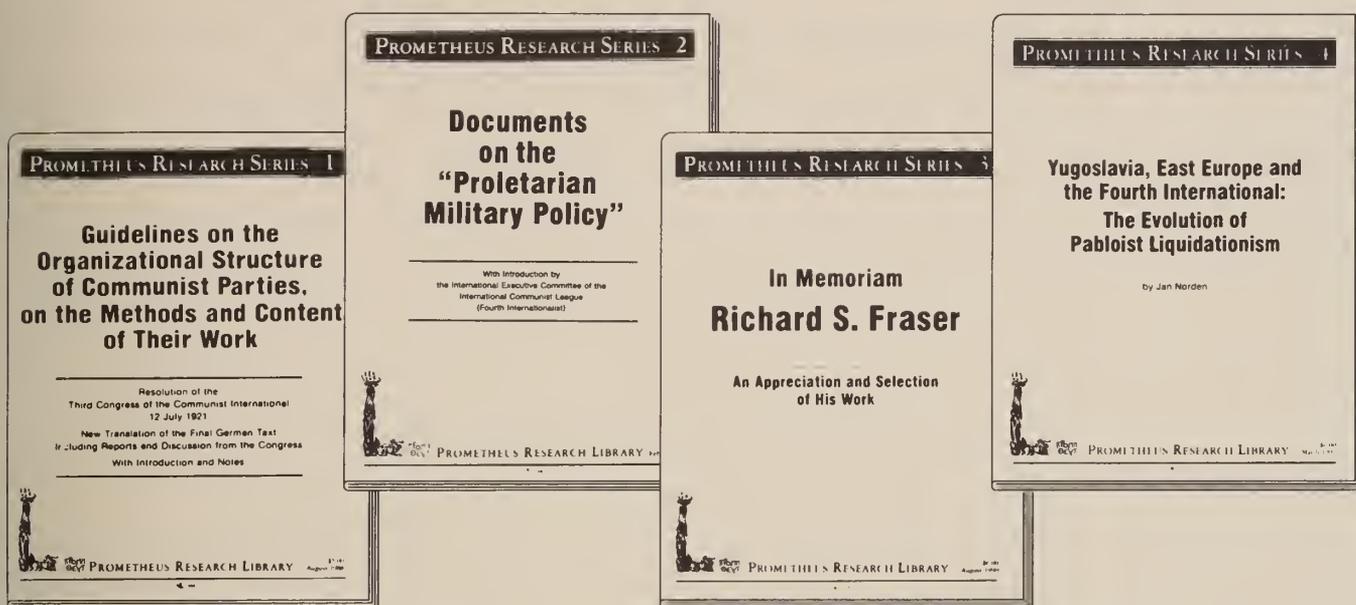
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