FOR THE THIRD CAMP!

An Editorial

Why We Must Revise
Our Traditional Policy
of "Unconditional Defense"

JAMES BURNHAM: THE POLITICS OF DESPERATION
A Reply to Trotsky's
"A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition
In the Social Workers Party"

DWIGHT MACDONALD: The United States in the War

SHERMAN STANLEY: India and the Third Camp

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The Voice of the Third Camp Must Be Heard!

Statement by the Editors

THE CONVENTION of the Socialist Workers Party, held at the end of several months of internal discussion, has just been concluded in New York. A majority of the delegates elected to the convention voted for the resolutions on the Russian and organizational questions presented by the Opposition, and which can be read in the post-convention issue of the Socialist Appeal.

How deep-going and vigorous was the discussion in the S.W.P. may be judged by the fact that it has brought the party to the brink of a split, the danger of which is by no means dispelled. What is important to bear in mind, however, is that the discussion revealed the existence in the Party, and in the Fourth International, of two politically irreconcilable tendencies. Yet, though the tendencies were, and are, politically irreconcilable, each group declared that the views of the other group were compatible with membership in the Fourth International.

The problem to resolve, therefore, was how to maintain the unity of the party and at the same time make possible the ideological existence of whichever group proved to be the minority in the convention. We regret to record the fact that the Majority group took the position, in effect, that if the Opposition was voted down at the national convention, it must simply submit and remain silent. Naturally, in view of the tremendous and urgent importance of the issue in dispute, the deep convictions that animated the contending groups and—above all—the feeling among the Opposition that the party regime of the Majority had proved in practise that it did not offer sufficient assurances that the democratic rights of a minority would be preserved—in view of these considerations, we repeat, it was impossible for the Opposition to accept the proposal of the Majority faction.

We proposed, on the contrary, that considering the existence of the two clearly-defined tendencies and of the exceptional situation in which the dispute was going on, the only assurance that a minority could have of the possibility of continued ideological existence was the right to issue a political-theoretical journal of its own and under its own control. The Opposition insisted that it could not concede this demand, although it had made enormous concessions in the past. Primary among them was the care taken by the Opposition not to bring the dispute beyond the ranks of the party itself, although the issues were and are of the most vital concern to the entire radical and even the entire labor public. We did this although it was criminal to keep the sympathizing circles of the Fourth International in this country totally uninformed about the dispute, although it was with the greatest effort that we refrained from condemning the official line of the party (that is, of the Majority faction) which, in our view, served only to give objective support to the war to one of the two imperialist camps.

We must further record with regret that our demand for the right of the minority to publish a political journal of its own—entirely in harmony with the best traditions of the revolutionary Marxist movement but, of course, entirely out of harmony with all the traditions of the Stalinist movement—was met by the Majority faction with the threat that if we published our periodical, even though it was based, as it is, on a defense of the general and fundamental program of the Fourth International except in so far as the question of "unconditional defense" of the Soviet Union is concerned, we would be expelled wholly. Such an interpretation of the revolutionary party principle of democratic centralism, we consider absurd, formalistic at best and bureaucratic at worst. The carrying out of such a threat, we consider catastrophic, above all for those carrying it out. The Opposition represents not less than 40% of the membership of the party and a good three-fourths of the membership of the Youth organization; taking them together as the organized movement of the Fourth International in this country, the Opposition constitutes a clear majority of the total membership.

Under these conditions, to continue to remain silent inside the ranks of the party would be unforgivable in a revolutionaryist. Under these conditions, to place confidence in the democratic guarantees offered by the official party leadership which has given the minority no cause to place confidence in it during the course of the internal party discussion, would be quite unwarranted.

It is inadmissible and therefore impossible to remain silent any longer! The official position of the S.W.P. is wrong, tragically and horribly wrong. Involuntarily, to be sure, but nonetheless surely, this position serves objectively the interests of one of the imperialist camps, however sincerely and genuinely it is motivated by revolutionary and internationalist considerations. It is absolutely imperative that the voice of the third camp be heard! No device, no ruse, no appeal, no threats can sway us from our determination in this respect.

It is upon our readers that we rely for the same generous and warm support they have given us in the past. We need this support now more than ever. We are sure we are not asking for it in vain.

In no sense of the word is ours a "private" undertaking. We speak formally for the Opposition group. But in a truer sense, we speak for the third camp in the war—and that is a camp of millions. Today, it is unorganized, inarticulate, unclear. We shall work unremittingly for its organization under one banner, the banner of the Fourth International; we shall work unremittingly to see to it that its voice is heard; we shall work unremittingly to see to it that its mind is cleared of the poisonous fog of social-patriotism, of class collaboration, of lack of self-confidence.

Long live the Fourth International! Long live the victory of the Third Camp in the war! Long live the struggle for the liberation of all mankind!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOR THE THIRD CAMP! an Editorial..................... 67

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE WORLD WAR, by Max

Macdonald........................................ 68

THE UNITED STATES AT WAR, by Dwight Macdonald...... 72

INDIA AND THE THIRD CAMP, by Sherman Stanley..... 74

THE POLITICS OF DESPERATION, by James Burnham..... 75

Cartoon on page 67 by Carlo.
This is the war that everyone expected and that has taken every one by surprise. Everyone knew there would be a second world war, if not after Munich, then over Czechoslovakia, and if not then, by some miracle, over Danzig. And Danzig did indeed prove to be the spark that set off the powder barrel. But once the war was under way, it produced one surprise after another.

Everyone had assumed that this war would begin like the last, with big-scale military operations, accompanied by a new refinement of civilization: attempts to wipe out the enemy's chief cities by air raids. Instead both sides cautiously parried and fenced, partly because of fear of revolution, partly because it was strategically almost impossible to break through each other's lines. For seven months of "war," Armageddon failed to materialize. At this writing, it looks as though the war is at last entering the "active" stage.

This miscalculation as to the military character of the war led to an equally great error as to the length of time it would take for the United States to enter the war. On the assumption that the Allies would soon need our military help and that Goering's bombers would lay waste London and Paris and thus arouse pro-war opinion over here, the press of the Fourth International—along with most other observers—confidently predicted America's entry in six to nine months. The victim of this illusion himself, President Roosevelt put on an open and intensive war drive in the first month of the war, only to be forced to backwater when the war failed to materialize. Today, in the eighth month of the war, American entry looks farther off than it did in the first.

So, too, above all with the Soviet Union. Of all the surprises of this surprising war, none were greater than the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the partitioning of Poland, and the invasion of Finland. Most people thought the Soviet Union would line up with the "democracies." Some expected her to be neutral. A few—including ourselves—thought she might make a defensive alliance with Germany. But no one—again including ourselves—anticipated that the Soviet Union would take the offensive alongside of the Nazis in Poland or that she would impose her hegemony on the Baltic states and invade Finland. Nowhere in the many pages devoted to the subject in the press and resolutions of the Fourth International is there a single indication that the Soviet Union might conceivably take the offensive in the next war. Every possibility was foreseen except the one that actually came about.

Let us confess it candidly. Our analysis was incorrect, and we
must either shut our eyes to events—the course which Trotsky and the Majority faction of the Socialist Workers Party have chosen—or else we must revise our conceptions of the war to fit in with the data. We have chosen the latter course.

In what terms, then, do we see the war abroad? As a struggle to the death between two mighty contenders for world power, whose conflict, postponed, compromised, patched up for years, has now reached the point where it must be settled by the crushing of one or the other. The ancient, rich, and still powerful British Empire, pulling in her wake the satellite France, is locked in battle with the dynamic, hungry, young Nazi state, provisioned and supported by the Soviet Union. In this war, neutrality has become a grim joke. One nation after another is sucked into the maelstrom: Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Denmark, Norway. Those that are not yet involved in the war are pressed diplomatically and economically by each side to enter its camp. There is no other alternative: either London-Paris or Berlin-Moscow.

But are there in fact only two camps? Certainly one would think so to read the capitalist press, the labor press, and even nine-tenths of the radical press. Just as the warring powers try to force the neutrals to choose between two camps, so the world’s rulers, from Wall Street to the Kremlin, try to convince the masses that there are only two camps and that to be an enemy of one is to give support to the other.

The idea of there being only two camps is put across to the masses in various costumes and disguises. The three most important are:

1. The war is a crusade to save the world for democracy, with England and France playing St. George to Hitler’s dragon. This is the classic line of the last war, merely substituting the word “Hitlerism” for “Kaiserism”. It is going over almost as well in the United States this time as in 1914. We say “almost” because there are hopeful signs that the American masses have acquired a certain scepticism about imperialist wars fought for democracy.

2. The war is a crusade by the vigorous, healthy young German people to smash the corrupt, decadent old plutocracies and restore liberty and justice to the world. This line gets little support in this country, but it is dangerously effective among the subject peoples of the Near East and the Orient. These peoples have a burning and entirely justified hatred of their French and British overlords. But to follow Hitler-Stalin in this crusade to shatter the British Empire, this would be merely to exchange one yoke for another.

3. The war is an imperialist attack on the Soviet Union. The two camps here are those of the imperialists and that of the workers’ fatherland (with Hitler hovering in the background as a “temporary” and “limited” ally). This is the line of the Daily Worker, the Socialist Appeal, and, with the sincerest regret we say it, of Leon Trotsky. Under the guise of “defending the nationalized economy”, this line ties the workers of the world to the gun wheels of Hitler-Stalin.

For our part, we reject all three of these variations on the two-camp theme. We reject the basic idea they all have in common: that the masses must fight under the banner of one or another of the existing imperialist powers, be it the stars and stripes, the union jack, the swastika, or the hammer and sickle. We say there is in this war a third camp independent of either of the two warring imperialist camps, the camp of the world working class, cut off from all political control, inarticulate, brutally repressed when it raises its head, but ceaselessly in ferment, pushing up from below, breaking through the surface to assert its human rights and needs. This is our camp, the camp of the hundreds of millions of men and women with black and white and yellow and brown skins who have no say about whether “their” country sends them to death. To accept any of the two-camp alternatives, however good and noble one’s intentions may be, is to give aid to the war-makers, since all three slogans are essentially more or less well disguised devices to enlist the masses under one military banner or another. The policy of the third camp, the camp which fights under the banner of world revolution to overthrow all the existing governments of the two imperialist camps, this is the only realistic anti-war policy.

Some will sneer at the term “realistic”. Where is this “Third Camp”? They will ask. Where is its press, where is its army, its cabinet or central committee, its guns, its factories? It is true that the Third Camp has none of these—yet. But it is a reality nonetheless.

What does the Third Camp mean?

It means Czech students fighting the Gestapo in the streets of Prague and dying before Nazi rifles in the classrooms, with revolutionary slogans on their lips.

It means African natives going on strike in the Rhodesian copper mines and fighting bloody battles with the police.

It means the Irish Revolutionary Army keeping green the traditional of the Easter Rebellion with a brilliant and implacable guerilla campaign against British authority in the heart of England.

It means Indian steel and textile and jute workers forcing concessions from the British Raj in militant strikes.

It means the Red Army soldiers who shot their officers and fraternized with their brothers in the Finnish army.

It means the anti-conscription rioters in Australia, the millions of AFL and CIO rank-and-filers whose pressure is causing American labor chiefs to talk isolationism, the Polish peasants who seized the land when the landowners fled and the Polish workers who set up short-lived Communes in Vilna and Lvov before the coming of the Red Army.

No, the Third Camp is not a myth. It exists, and its members are legion: the submerged, smoldering working masses of the world, those who do the working and starving in peacetime and the dying in wartime. It is our aim and our revolutionary duty to organize these, to make our press the voice of the Third Camp.

For the defeat and overthrow of both imperialist camps! For the victory of the Third Camp!

The Soviet Union and the World War

The Outbreak of the Second World War has once more put prominently at the top of the order of the day the “Russian question”. The signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact was followed by the joint invasion of Poland; by the reduction of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to the state of vassals of the Kremlin; by the invasion and seizure of part of Finland by the Red Army; and by speculation and prediction of coming events which, a year ago, would have been waved aside as preposterous.

In bourgeois-democratic circles, these events furnished the occasion for more pious homilies about the identity of communism and fascism. In the labor movement, the patriots skillfully exploited the workers’ indignation against Stalin’s crimes in order to promote the cause of the democratic warmongers. Among the revolutionary Marxists, however, the events provoked an intense and thoroughgoing discussion, resulting in a re-evaluation of the role of the Soviet Union in the war and in a revision of the traditional slogan of the Fourth International, “For the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union.” It is with this discussion that the present article is concerned.
Why Must We Change Our Position on “Unconditional Defense”?

The views of the Fourth International on the question of defense of the Soviet Union in a war, put forward up to the time the present war broke out, may be summarized as follows:

The Soviet Union, existing on the basis of state property and dominated by a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy, is a degenerated workers' state which must be defended (by internationalist, class methods independent of those employed by the bureaucracy) in any war with a capitalist power, regardless of which side appeared to be the "aggressor" and regardless of the immediate cause of the war. This defense is "unconditional" in the sense that it is not conditioned on the abdication or overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy, or even upon its acceptance of a revolutionary policy. The Soviet Union must be defended in a war with a capitalist power not because of the Stalinists but in spite of them; must be defended, however, with our own independent policy which is aimed, among other things, to overthrow the bureaucracy because we have no faith in its ability to organize an effective defense of the Soviet Union. Should the Soviet Union, in a war against one or more capitalist powers, find itself in alliance with one or more other capitalist powers, the slogan of defensism retains its full validity, just as the slogan of defeatism retains its validity both in the countries Russia is allied with and at war with; the only difference in policy in the two capitalist countries would be tactical and practical (for example, we would not oppose the shipment of munitions to Russia from the factories and ports of one of its capitalist allies).

Why is it necessary to revise this point of view, it is asked, above all now, when the war has actually broken out? Is it because Stalin has allied himself with a fascist imperialism instead of with a "democratic" imperialism? Can Marxists allow themselves to make a fundamental distinction between the two? And if such a distinction is made with respect to alliances with the Soviet Union, does it not imply a patriotic position towards the "democracies" with respect to their war with Germany? What, in a word, has changed so fundamentally as to justify a change in our position on the defense of the Soviet Union?

The change which the Marxists must make in their position has nothing whatsoever to do with all the petty-bourgeois lamentations over Stalin's shift from "democracy" to fascists. While allied with France, Stalin was already allied, at least indirectly, with a number of totalitarian regimes and military dictatorships in the orbit of French imperialism. The alliance of the notorious butcher Chiang Kai-shek with the equally notorious butcher Stalin does not eliminate the duty which every revolutionist has to defend China from Japan. The change in position is dictated by far more profound and real considerations.

Tradition vs. Reality

The discussion of the role of Russia in the war during the period of the Franco-Soviet Pact was based on hypotheses and prediction. Reference to the policy proposed by Lenin in 1917 for an "alliance" with France and England against Germany was invalid, and in any case not decisive, among other reasons because the "alliance" never seriously materialized. It was therefore false to generalize from this experience which was never experienced. The discussion of the role of Russia in the war during the Hitler-Stalin Pact is based upon tangible realities. These realities make it as mandatory upon us to reconsider our slogan of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" as the realities of the March, 1917, Revolution in Russia made it mandatory upon Lenin to reconsider the traditional and, up to that point, intransigently defended Bolshevik slogan of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry."

What are these concrete realities?

The 1935 Pact with France was a defensive alliance for the Soviet Union. It was directed against a rising and turbulent German imperialism but it was calculated essentially to maintain the status quo, to keep Germany from precipitating war. The status quo policy of People's Frontism was adopted by the Comintern in accordance with this objective.

Stalin's capitulation to Hitler in 1939 took the form of an aggressive military alliance. This is precisely what was not foreseen or allowed for by us in the past, as Trotsky himself acknowledged at the beginning of the war. In general, it is true, the possibility of a rapprochement between Hitler and Stalin had been envisaged in our literature, but not an aggressive military alliance. The difference between the two pacts does not lie in the fact that one was made with such an illustrious democrat as Pierre Laval and the other with an undemocratic fascist. It lies in the real difference between the two imperialisms, French and German. This difference is in no wise of such a fundamental character as to warrant supporting one against the other, in the manner of the war-mongering social-democrats. But it is sufficiently important to change the character of the alliance made by Stalin. In the past, too, it was sufficiently important for us to distinguish between Hitler and Laval, not fundamentally, not so far as their social role is concerned, but to the extent of characterizing Hitler and not Laval as the "super-Wrangel", that is, the spearhead of world imperialism assault upon the Soviet Union. This difference was not based upon a feeling of tenderness on the part of Laval for Russia, but upon the fact that German imperialism, for a series of historical reasons, was dynamically aggressive and forced, in the most immediate and direct sense, as Hitler himself has said, to "expand or die" (just as England, for example, is forced to hold on to her empire or die).

Stalin as Hitler's Satellite

The role of the Soviet Union can be followed and understood only if one is clear about the predominant character of the war. It is not a war of imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union; it is not a "mixed war". It is a war between two big imperialist camps for the redivision of the world, with the Soviet Union as an integral part of one of the imperialist camps.

The strategy of the imperialist camp to which Stalin is subordinated, is fairly clear. It is to keep all sides of Germany protected by herself and her allies, to confine the front to the comparative safety of the Westwall-Maginot lines; to destroy the British Empire for the benefit of the Rome-Berlin-Moscow axis, primarily for the Berlin section of it. Stalin's role in the war, from the very beginning, has been that of auxiliary executant of this strategy.

Hitler did not descend upon Poland until he had assured himself not of Stalin's neutrality but of Stalin's active support. Poland was defeated and partitioned jointly and by pre-arrangement, with Hitler, in accordance with the real relationship of forces between the partners, getting the lion's share and Stalin the tail. The work of covering Hitler's eastern flank from possible attack by the Allies or their vassals, was then completed by Stalin's invasion and subjugation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Far from meeting resistance from Hitler, Stalin was encouraged to proceed along the indicated line in order that Germany might have at its Baltic rear governments no longer subject to the manipulations of Anglo-French imperialism but sterilized governments kept in escrow for him by his friendly sub-partner of the Kremlin.

Of the same order and in accordance with the same imperialist strategy was Stalin's invasion of Finland, presented to us so cynically by the Stalinists press as a "defense of the Soviet Union from imperialist attack" and characterized so naively by the Socialist Appeal in the same terms. Whoever did not understand the real meaning of the Finnish invasion at the time, should surely
understand it in the light of subsequent events. The middle-class journalistic muttonheads who still talk about Hitler being Stalin's captive in the pact, sought to present the invasion of Finland as a "blow at Germany". The truth is just the opposite. Hitler wanted Stalin to invade Finland and Trotsky is without doubt right in saying that Berlin "obviously pushed" Stalin towards Helsinki.

Why? For two reasons which are really one. In the first place, the action involves Stalin more deeply in the war on Hitler's side. In the second place, the occupation or subjection of Finland was needed by Germany as the first step towards closing to the Axis a northern front they were seeking to open against Hitler. Only after Stalin had crushed Finland and enormously weakened Sweden, did Hitler feel able to take those brutal and decisive measures which are calculated to guarantee his northern flank. Denmark and Norway fell to German instead of to Anglo-French imperialism only because Finland fell to Germany's partner. It goes without saying that if Hitler consolidates himself in Norway (as he appears to be doing at this writing), the fate of Sweden, hemmed in between Hitler and Stalin, is a foregone conclusion.

Thus, in two big moves, Hitler, with the Soviet Union at his orders, has succeeded in doing what the Kaiser and Hindenburg were unable to do in the first World War: to confine the conflict to a momentarily "defensive" war of position on a single well-protected front, the West. With Stalin's aid, Hitler has fairly well assured his eastern, northeastern and northern flanks. With Stalin's aid—today in the form of a threat, tomorrow in the form of active military intervention—he is assuring his southeastern flank, in the first place in Romania. The day after, it is not at all excluded that Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union will be fighting jointly for the "defense of the Soviet Union" in the southeast and the Near East—in actuality, for the partitioning of the Balkans and the Near East among the members of the Rome-Berlin-Moscow axis. What the Moscow Izvestia said about Hitler's invasion of Norway, really holds true here: War has a powerful logic of its own.

Alongside of this parallelism of military action, there is a corresponding parallelism of political agitation. Moscow echoes every claim of Berlin, every diplomatic lie, every self-justification. The same "war-guilt" explanation is given by both. The diplomatic offensives which precede military action are carefully synchronized in both capitals. The Stalinist parties, it goes without saying, do their part loyally for the Axis, concentrating all their attacks upon England and France, to the exclusion of Germany. In the colonies Hitlerite and Stalinist agents, whether by formal agreement or by the internal logic of their war alliance, conduct a harmonious campaign for the "liberation" of the oppressed peoples from Anglo-French imperialism (that is, for subjecting them to the yoke of the Axis). This is what the participation of the Soviet Union in the war looks like in reality. Under these conditions, the slogan of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" is tantamount to giving objective political aid to one imperialist camp against another. It is therefore imperative that the slogan be radically altered to read "defense of the Soviet Union in a progressive war".

The Kremlin Is Waging a Reactionary War

Wherein is Russia's participation in the war reactionary? In two respects: (1) it is acting primarily as agent of German imperialism in the war; (2) it is itself fighting a war of bureaucratic expansion, of subjugation and oppression of other peoples. From these follow the reactionary social and political consequences of its participation in the war: instead of the class consciousness of the workers being heightened, their bourgeois-patriotic feelings are intensified; instead of being brought closer to the revolution, they are driven into the arms of their own ruling class, and not the most liberal sections of it, at that (Poland, Finland); instead of becoming more sympathetic towards the principles and achieve-

ments and defense of the Russian Revolution, they become more antipathetic towards them; instead of advancing the interests of the world revolution and weakening world imperialism, the participation of the Soviet Union in the present war retards enormously the former and strengthens enormously the latter.

The two respects in which Russia's war is reactionary are not contradictory or mutually exclusive. In the partnership of the Pact, Stalin is very much the subordinate; it is indeed quite accurate to say that the Stalinist bureaucracy capitulated to Germany in the hope (a) of buying itself off from an immediate attack by Hitler upon the Soviet Union and (b) of escaping complete involvement in the world war. The first hope has been realized, of that there is no doubt. But it has been realized precisely at the expense of the second hope. The very conservatism, the provincial pacifism, the timidity and national-narrowness that have characterized the Stalinist bureaucracy, are precisely the forces that drag it deeper into the war as a tool of one of the imperialist powers. It is no mere literary paradox but a political fact of primary importance that the very fear of war which has dominated the course of the Stalinist bureaucracy has lead it progressively further into war. Not less important is the fact that while serving as an agent of a big imperialist power, the Kremlin bureaucracy pursues an imperialist (expansionist) policy of its own.

The programmatic documents of the Fourth International, in all its pre-history and since its foundation, have never taken into account the possibility of a war of expansion by the Kremlin. Quite the contrary. Our analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy emphasized its national conservatism, its characteristic of staying-at-home-at-all-costs epitomized in Stalin's famous phrase about the weeding out of foreign soil and not yielding an inch of Soviet soil. Throughout our political history, one can find only one or two purely incidental remarks about the possibility of the Kremlin seizing new territory; in our programmatic documents, one cannot, we repeat find any whatsoever. This explains, at least in part, the silence, confusion and equivocation that characterized the press of the Fourth International throughout the initial period of Russia's invasion of other countries. We had not been prepared for such a development. But there is no reason why such a state of affairs should be perpetuated in the revolutionary Marxian movement.

What Do We Mean by Stalinist "Imperialism"?

Is the imperialist policy of the Kremlin of the same nature as the imperialism of Germany, Japan, France, England and America? No, for it has different origins, different bases, different paths of development. Is it based upon the dominance in economy of finance capital, the export of capital and other characteristics of modern imperialism, we have been asked with mispertinently to the present discussion, he insisted on a precise formulation of the question in his article "On the Revision of the Party Program" written in 1917 not as a casual piece of journalism but as a fundamental and critical programmatic document:

Cries, precisely in the form of over-production or of the "stocking up of
market commodities” (if comrade S. prohibits the word overproduction), are a phenomenon which is exclusively proper to capitalism. Wars, however, are proper both to the economic system based on slavery and on feudalism. There have been imperialist wars on the basis of slavery (Rome’s war against Carthage was an imperialist war on both sides) as well as in the Middle Ages and in the epoch of mercantile capitalism. Every war in which both belligerent camps are fighting to oppress foreign countries or peoples and for the division of the booty, that is, over “who shall plunder more and who shall plunder more”, must be called imperialistic. When we say that only modern capitalism, that only imperialism brought with it imperialist wars, that is correct, for the preceding stage of capitalism, the stage of free competition or the stage of pre-monopolist capitalism was predominantly characterized by national wars in Western Europe. But if it is said that in the preceding stage there were no imperialist wars in general, that would be false, that would mean that the equally imperialist “colonial wars” have been forgotten. (Collected Works, German ed., Vol. XXI, pp. 387.)

“Every war in which both belligerent camps are fighting to oppress foreign countries or peoples and for the division of the booty... must be called imperialistic,” wrote Lenin. Does not the joint invasion of Poland by Hitler and Stalin fall precisely into that category? Does not the joint invasion of Scandinavia (of Finland by Stalin and immediately thereafter of Denmark and Norway by Hitler) also fall into the same category? The Poles are brought under full enslavement by Hitler; the White Russians and Ukrainians, according to Trotsky, under “semi-enslavement” by Stalin. It may be argued, and it is, that in Eastern Poland Stalin carried through the nationalization of property and in Finland he acquired military bases which are valuable to the defense of the Soviet Union from imperialist attack, and that from the standpoint of the international working class these measures are progressive. On October 18, 1939, Trotsky wrote that “the economic transformations in the occupied territories do not compensate for this by even a tenth part!”—meaning by “this” the antagonizing of the world proletariat and oppressed peoples. Even if we granted for the moment the above argument, we would reply, paraphrasing Trotsky: “The nationalization of property in Eastern Poland and the acquisition of military bases in Finland do not compensate by even a tenth part for the enormous strengthening of one of the imperialist camps, for the demoralization of the world working class, for the subjugation of millions upon millions of Ukrainians, White Russians, Lithuanians, Karelians and Finns to the Kremlin yoke.”

Stalinist Imperialism: Three Aspects

Space does not permit a complete elaboration of the question of Stalinist imperialism, which must be reserved for another article. Let us conclude here by touching on a few brief supplementary points:

1. What is the nature of Stalinist oppression in the Soviet Ukraine? In that country, the Fourth International has added to the general, “All-Soviet-Union” slogan of a political revolution against the bureaucracy, the special slogan of the independence of the Ukraine. We not only insist on the Ukraine’s right to separation from the Union, but we advocate its separation. This position, especially applied to the Ukraine, has meaning only on the condition that the Ukraine suffers under national oppression. And what is the nature of this national oppression? We characterize it as a type of imperialist oppression peculiar to the Stalinist bureaucracy.

2. In the “U.S.S.R. in War” (Sept. 25, 1939), Trotsky wrote: “We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historical mission. We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin.” It would be more accurate to say, “We are against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin,” for the simple reason that the question of Stalin seizing new territories was never raised in our movement for either an affirmative or negative reply. That is, we never envisaged the possibility of a war of bureaucratic expansion. Now that we see both the possibility and reality of such a war, we declare our opposition to it. Why? We did not oppose “seizures of new territories” under Lenin (Georgia, 1920). We oppose them now because the Stalinist war of expansion, which we are today compelled to see as a reality, is re-actionary, because, as Trotsky rightly says, we do not entrust the bureaucracy with any historical mission, and because we oppose the national oppression of new millions under the imperialist yoke of the Kremlin.

3. The Stalinist bureaucracy, we were told in the party discussion, is not imperialist, but an agent of imperialism. But that is true, in a sense, also of the internationally-corrupted labor aristocracy of the great capitalist powers. This aristocracy profited directly from the imperialist advancement of the bourgeoisie, although at the expense of the broad masses of the toiling people. It is quite accurate to describe it as an imperialist labor aristocracy. The Stalinist machine is a labor aristocracy elevated to the nth degree, to a new and unheard-of power. Naturally, its ambitions, hopes, appetites are limited, not merely by the economic base on which it rests, but above all by its subordinate position in world politics and economics. This “agent of imperialism” has its own imperialist aims and ambitions. These aims do not have, let us repeat, the same roots as British imperialism, but they exist. The Stalinist bureaucracy is not averse to acquiring oil wells in the Western Ukraine, copper and nickel mines in Finland, stocks of goods however modest, skilled and semi-skilled workers in occupied territories, and—far from least important—a wider basis for the extension of its bureaucratic power (at least a million hard-boiled Stalinist bureaucrats will be placed in power in the occupied East-Polish territories, inhabited by some 13,000,000 people).

The Majority Position: Confusion Worse Confounded

The other arguments of the proponents of the traditional policy, are contradictory and untenable. “We condemn the invasion but we remain for the defense of the Soviet Union,” that is, for the victory of the Red Army, they say in connection with Poland or Finland. They condemn the invasion, but support the invaders! They are against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin, but support those who are fighting to seize them! They are against the invasion before it takes place; they are against it after it has succeeded (once Stalin is triumphant, they will raise the slogan of an independent Soviet Finland); but they are for the invasion (for the victory of the Red Army) while it is taking place.

The attempt to draw an analogy with a conservative trade union on strike misses fire completely. We do not condemn any strike, even if conducted bureaucratically by a reactionary leadership; we may criticize the methods, the timing, etc., of a strike. We do not oppose the “seizure of new territories” (the organizing of the unorganized) even by a reactionary union; on the contrary, we condemn the bureaucrats for not “seizing enough territory” (for not organizing more and more of the unorganized). “It is not a question of ‘little Finland,’” we are told, “since Finland is only an episode in the Second World War. This war will inevitably turn into a war of imperialism, for the sake of the Soviet Union, aimed at reducing it to a colony of world imperialism.” Essentially the same objection, made in reverse, was put forth by ultra-leftists against our policy in Spain. On Sept. 14, 1937, Trotsky replied to the argument about the “episode” as follows:

It can be objected that the two imperialist camps (Italy and Germany on one side and England, France and the U.S.S.R. on the other) conduct their struggle on the Iberian peninsula and that the war in Spain is only an “episode” of this struggle. In the sense of a historical possibility, it is true. But it is impermissible to identify a historical possibility with the actual, concrete course of the civil war today. The intervention of the imperialist countries has indisputably great influence upon the development of the events in Spain. But until today it has not changed the fundamental character of these events as of a struggle between the camp of the Spanish bourgeois democracy and the camp of Spanish fascism. (Internal Bulletin, Oct. 1937, p. 38.)
What is called an “episode” today is indeed an integral episode of the development of the second imperialist World War, in which the Soviet Union is fighting primarily the battle of German imperialism. The present war may be transformed, at a later stage, into an imperialist war against the Soviet Union, in which case it will be the duty of the international working class to defend the Soviet Union even under Stalin. But it is absurd to apply to the war today the policy applicable to the war into which it may be transformed.

Only a sophist (wrote Lenin) could wipe out the difference between an imperialist war and a national war on the grounds that the one can be transformed into the other. The dialectic has not seldom served, even in the history of Greek philosophy, as a bridge to sophistry. We, however, remain dialecticians who struggle against the sophists, not through a denial of every transformation, but rather by means of a concrete analysis of the given instance, as much in its momentary situation as also in its development. (Gegen den Strom, p. 417.)

A concrete analysis of the given instance shows—it is imperative to repeat this time and again—that the Soviet Union under Stalin is participating in the present war as an integral part of one of the two imperialist camps. To defend the Soviet Union in this war, i.e., to be “the best soldier in the Red Army,” to fight for its victory wherever it marches, means, objectively, to work for the victory of one imperialist camp against the other.

The Question of the Nationalized Economy

“It is not Stalin we are defending, but the remaining conquest of October—nationalized property.” In the present war, the nationalized property of the Soviet Union is not what is primarily involved. What is at stake is the world dominance of Anglo-French imperialism on the one side, and the imperialist ambitions of German imperialism and the concern for “power, prestige and revenues” of the Stalinist bureaucracy on the other. In a war between Daladier and De la Roque the fascist, bourgeois democracy would be at stake; the trade union bureaucrats supporting the democratic side would be participating, whatever their motives or methods, in a progressive war against fascism. In a war between Daladier and Hitler, bourgeois democracy would not be at stake but rather the respective imperialist interests of France and Germany; the trade union bureaucrats supporting Daladier on the basis of desiring to defend the French trade unions from Hitlerism, would be participating—again regardless of motives and methods—in a reactionary, imperialist war.

The corollary argument that Stalin did, after all, nationalize property in the occupied territories is no more valid for the thesis of support of the Red Army. In the first place, property relations remain intact in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, so that the Soviet Union is in the unique position of commanding three capitalist colonies, or rather semi-colonies. In the second place, the fact that property was nationalized in Western Ukraine and Southern Finland only means that the proletariat in conquering those territories (as in the Soviet Union itself) would proceed from this new reality in its struggle to overthrow the Stalinist regime, that is, it would base itself upon statified property and give it a genuinely progressive, i.e., socialist significance. It does not have it in and by itself and under all circumstances. Arab or Irish nationalists might utilize, for their own purposes, material aid which German imperialism might give them for its own purposes; it would not follow that revolutionists must work for the victory of the German army. Finnish revolutionists will not only “accept” Stalin’s nationalization but will extend and deepen and fructify as they grow in power; but it does not follow that they should support the counter-revolutionary troops under Stalin. Capitalism itself, as Marxists have always pointed out, has found itself compelled time and again to take steps which had revolutionary consequences. “Did not the fact that Guchkov and Shulgin (Russian monarchists) brought with them to Petrograd the abdication of Nicholas II play a revolutionary role?” Trotsky once asked. “Did it not arouse the most downtrodden, exhausted, and timid strata of the population? . . . Did not the entire activities of capitalismrouse the masses, did it not rescue them, to use the expression of the Communist Manifesto, from the idiocy of rural life? Did it not impel the proletarian battalions to the struggle? But does our historical evaluation of the objective role of capitalism as a whole or of certain actions of the bourgeoisie in particular, become a substitute for our active class revolutionary attitude toward capitalism or toward the actions of the bourgeoisie? Opportunistic policies have always been based on this kind of non-dialectical, conservative, tail-endist ‘objectivism’.” (Third International After Lenin, p. 175.)

The nationalization of property is not an abstraction and has no absolute merits in and of itself. “Its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum-total of all the other factors.” (Trotsky.) In the present war, it must be considered in its social and political context. It must be considered in the light of the character of Russia’s participation as an integral part of the imperialist war. The conception that since nationalized property is “progressive by its very nature” a regime based upon it must automatically be fighting a progressive war, has as much in common with Marxism as vulgar economic determinism has with historical materialism; the conception is, at bottom, nothing but a variety of immanent idealism.

To sum up briefly in conclusion: That “concrete analysis of the given instance” which Lenin demanded shows the imperative need of revising one of our traditional slogans. If, at a later stage, the present war between the imperialists should be transformed into an assault upon the Soviet Union, the slogan of defense would have to be raised again, for it is not to the interests of the socialist world revolution and the working class to have one-sixth of the world, which the October uprising removed from the control of imperialism, restored to capitalist exploitation. In the present war, however, the world proletariat, the Russian included, cannot take upon itself a shadow of responsibility for the participation of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the imperialist conflict. The revolutionary vanguard must put forward the slogan of revolutionary defeatism in both imperialist camps, that is, the continuation of the revolutionary struggle for power regardless of the effects on the military front. That, and only that, is the central strategy of the third camp in the World War, the camp of proletarian internationalism, of the socialist revolution, of the struggle for the emancipation of all the oppressed.

Max SHACHTMAN

The United States At War

WILL WE GO IN?” is the question in every one’s mind. From one point of view, the answer is a matter of life and death. Yet, historically considered, the question is meaningless. We are already “in”. The precise point at which we will formally “enter the war”—i.e., when the U. S. Government will extend its cooperation with the “democratic” belligerents from the economic to the military sphere—this is a technical detail that will be determined by considerations of imperialist strategy and mass psychol-
ogy. The United States has been in the war since the first shot, and with every month the web of economic interest between this country and the Allies is woven tighter.

The "Peace Scare"

As this is written, it looks as though the war may finally have reached the stage of large-scale military operations. This is welcome news to the American business community. To quote the current news-letter of the National City Bank: "Although peace would be the greatest blessing that the world could possibly receive, the reports of peace moves during the past month (March) have been commonly described as a 'peace scare' and have been a cause of hesitation in the markets." Current events in Scandinavia seem to be laying the dread spectre of peace.

It is easy to understand this attitude if one considers what the war, even in its "inactive" phase, has already meant to the American economy. Last spring there were many signs that business was drifting downward to another serious slump. The mounting war tension that summer and the actual outbreak of war in the fall reversed the downward trend. The mere prospect of big orders from the Allies stimulated in the first two months of the war a 20% increase in industrial production, almost the biggest two-months increase on record. The military stalemate that ensued was reflected in a stalemate of American business, which has been drifting in the doldrums for the past few months. If the fighting in Norway develops into big-scale slaughter and destruction, prosperity will come back over here.

The dynamic effects this would have on our economy can be grasped if one considers that, even in the first six inactive months of the war, American exports have been 33% higher than in the same period a year ago. In February, the increase in exports was 59%, and if the current rate continues, 1940 exports will be $4,500,000,000 as against $3,200,000,000 for 1939. The greatest boom has been in aircraft, where 75% of Allied buying to date has been concentrated, and on which they plan to spend over here a special fund of $1,000,000,000. The national productive capacity has tripled in the past year, now standing at 12,000 planes a year, and by the end of 1940 it is expected capacity will be 30,000. The most optimistic possible calculation of the number of new planes that might be needed per year by our own commercial airines is 7,000—and this total assumes that the air lines would be carrying all the present Pullman passengers, as well as all railway express shipments and all first-class mail. No wonder they talk about a "peace scare".

How admirably conscious of the interests of American imperialism is the occupant of the White House, is revealed by a recent article in Time describing the expansion and transformation of the United States Army under President Roosevelt: "Any foreign military attaché looking at the new U. S. Army will recognize it for what it is: a standing expeditionary force, designed for prompt conscript expansion into an expeditionary army of 750,000 active troops, 250,000 reserves. ... Remembering that the U. S. Army has fought in China, Siberia, Central America, and France, the General Staff has planned an outfit ready to be packed up and sent anywhere. The last place the Army expects to fight is on the U. S. mainland."

New Deal Into War Deal

President Roosevelt exerts his remarkable political talents to maneuver the country into the war on the side of the Allies not because he is personally inhumane or villainous, not because he is in the pay of "Wall Street", but simply because he is a responsible bourgeois statesman.

A review of the last decade of our history shows that war is the only perspective left for American capitalism. The basic problem that has long confronted our capitalist society is how to find big enough markets to absorb profitably the goods produced so plentifully by our superbly rationalized industrial system. The problem became acute with the 1929 stock market crash and the onset of the depression. The Hoover Administration tried, and failed, to solve it by a conservative defense of the status quo. Between 1933 and 1937, the New Deal worked out a temporary solution along reformist lines, based on the theory of the State intervening to moderate the class struggle and to redistribute national income by increasing the purchasing power of the masses. The State tried to prop up the mass market for the products of industry by means of heavy governmental spending, and also, indirectly, by legislation designed to strengthen labor's bargaining position and to bring Wall Street and big business under some degree of State control. But the pressure of the big bourgeoisie, supported by conservative rural and small town elements, made progress in a reformist direction more and more difficult within the framework of capitalism. By the end of 1936, Federal expenditures had been reduced to the vanishing point. In the spring of 1937, the conservatives won the Supreme Court fight, a warning signal to Roosevelt that his leadership, was now, for the first time, seriously challenged. His response, characteristic of reformist politicians, was to try to placate his enemies by even greater concessions. In 1937, the Federal Government, for the first time since the beginning of the New Deal, took more out of the national income in taxes than it contributed in its spending programs. The result was the sharpest business decline in the nation's history: the farm price index stood at 128 in May, 1937, at 92 in May, 1938; the Federal Reserve index of industrial production in that period slumped from 118 to 76.

This 1937 collapse was even more significant than the 1929 crash: it showed that American capitalism could no longer sustain itself within the borders of the United States unless the domestic market received regular blood-transfusions of Government spending. When this reformist course became politically impossible, Roosevelt lost no time in turning to the only alternative under capitalism: an aggressive world imperialist policy to win fresh markets and investment fields for American capitalism abroad.

A war drive, furthermore, would get the support of those big bourgeois interests that violently opposed the "New Deal" reformist program of the New Deal. And it would distract the masses' attention from the collapse of that reformist program. A few weeks after the first big break in the stock market in the fall of 1937, Roosevelt announced his new imperialist policy in the famous Chicago ("Quarantine the Aggressor!") speech.

The War Deal: Four Phases

Since the war began last fall, the Administration's war drive has gone through three phases, and now is entering a fourth.

1. Full Speed Ahead! Beginning in the middle of summer and continuing through the first month of the war, President Roosevelt boldly steered a course for open aid to the Allies and speedy participation in the war as a belligerent. The War Resources Board was set up with much fanfare, patriotic spy hunts were encouraged by the Department of Justice, the Neutrality Proclamation was frankly un-neutral, and the whole weight of the Administration was put behind the campaign to repeal the Neutrality Act. Hand in hand with these war preparations went a frank turn
towards Wall Street. Roosevelt personally intervened to crush the WPA strike; his secretary admitted the "Brains Trust" was "out the window", while in the window came Wall Street bankers and reactionary economists to replace them; the personnel of the all-powerful War Resources Board was about equally divided between "DuPont men" and "Morgan men"; the reactionary Paul McNutt was added to the Cabinet.

2. Backwater. As the Congressional debate on repealing the Neutrality Act opened, the Administration began to backwater on its war drive. Roosevelt had miscalculated, like practically every one else, the speed with which the war would develop; when it became clear that a long stalemate had begun and that the Allies would need no armed aid from America for a while, Roosevelt put the war drive into reverse. He found he had also miscalculated as to the temper of public opinion; the unprecedented flood of anti-war letters and telegrams which descended on Congress as the neutrality debate opened was a surprise to the Administration—and also food for serious thought. Roosevelt stopped talking in public about his sympathy for the Allies, leaving the fight against the Neutrality Act in the hands of the Administration's floor leaders, who worked quietly behind the scenes. The War Resources Board was hastily disbanded, and Roosevelt refused to release its report on the grounds of "no public interest". The "Brains Trust" flew in the window again, and Messers. Baillie of J. & W. Seligman, Burgess of National City Bank, and other such went back to Wall Street. The Neutrality Act was repealed, but the Administration was forced to yield important concessions.

3. Proceed with Caution. As the war settled into a stalemate, with diplomatic and economic strategists replacing the generals, and as the strong anti-war sentiment of the masses became ever clearer, the Administration resumed its pressure for war, but with the greatest caution. Its energies were devoted mostly to making easier the purchase of airplanes by the Allies and to building up our own war machine. This was a period of watchful waiting, with eyes on Europe for the signal that slaughter had really begun and that American armed aid was needed.

4. Full Speed Again? Already the fighting in Scandinavia has had its effect over here. American interests in Norway and Denmark are not great: a total investment of $221,000,000; exports of $30,600,000 to the three Scandinavian nations in the first two months of this year, out of a total of $715,000,000 exports; only one Scandinavian product which is of major importance to American industry—Norwegian wood pulp, used in rayon manufacturing. But the point is not, of course, Scandinavia itself but far greater interests. Already pressure is being put on Dewey to disavow the quasi-isolationist stand which has made him the best vote-getter in the race for the Republican nomination. Already there are rumblings in the press about the Nazi flag being planted in Greenland, Denmark's possession. (President Roosevelt, after consulting various atlases and encyclopedias, has now pronounced Greenland to be definitely a part of the North American continent and hence within the scope of the Monroe Doctrine.)

Two days after the first news of the Nazi invasion, the N. Y. World-Telegram editorialized: "Congress has been chipping corners off the national defense program. The news from Northern Europe ought to put a stop to that. In fact, the Senate Appropriations Committee took one look at the newspapers yesterday and restored to a War Department bill the $15,000,000 fund for starting a third set of Panama Canal locks—an item which the House had dropped." The next day the Senate Appropriations Committee reported out without any cuts a naval bill for $967,400,000 for the coming fiscal year, biggest in history. Up to the Scandinavian flare-up, Congress had been following a course most distasteful to the Administration, of cutting army and navy appropriations and increasing farm, relief, and other non-military appropriations. However, "the news from Northern Europe ought to put a stop to that".

The interests of American capitalism require our participation in the war. But there is an increasingly powerful pressure of mass sentiment against participation. (How much this will be changed by the actual outbreak of major hostilities, with possible large-scale Nazi bombings, remains to be seen.) This sentiment has greatly increased since the beginning of the war. Early in September, Gallup asked: "If it appears that Germany is defeating England and France, should the U. S. declare war on Germany and send out army and navy to Europe to fight?" Two out of five answered: "Yes". But when the same question was asked in February, only one out of five said "Yes". The American masses share the apathy and cynicism of their European brothers as to the war aims of the "democracies".

Dwight MACDONALD

India and the Third Camp

"We want neither the rule of London or Berlin; nor the rule of Paris or Rome; nor that of Tokyo or Moscow."—The Congress Socialist of India, Sept. 1939.

THe MOST SIGNIFICANT and hopeful aspect of this strange Second World War which, with the creation of a new front in the Scandinavian areas, is about to assume a greatly intensified military nature, has been the political and economic actions of the colonial peoples.

In the colonial empires of England and France there live hundreds of millions of native people whose lives and daily activities are molded solely by their foreign imperialist oppressors. These people now find themselves at war. Against their will and with no consultative voice in the matter, they have been drawn into the imperialist struggle in which they are the main bone of contention.

But they have not accepted their fate quietly this time! From the war's inception, the Third Camp of the colonial people for national independence and peace has begun intense mobilization against both imperialist war camps. Headed by the people of the sub-continent of India, the colonial workers and peasants of French Indo-China, Burma, Ceylon, Cyprus, Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa, British West Indies, Syria, Palestine, etc., have displayed in one way or another their hostility to the war.

The Anti-War Struggle

It has been primarily the 400,000,000 workers and kisans of British and Native India who have led the forces of independent Third Camp action. The series of strikes and political actions that have swept over this country have typified the course of events in the colonies we have mentioned. That is why it is worth describing in more detail the development of the Third Camp in India.

When Chamberlain announced in September of last year that the British Empire was at war, India automatically became a belligerent power.

On that very day began the anti-war fight. A meeting of 100,000 workers in Madras assembled to hear Subhas Chandra
Bose, left-wing nationalist leader of the All-India Nationalist Congress, plead for the launching of an immediate anti-war civil disobedience movement. This mass meeting was the signal for similar demonstrations in the provinces of Madras, Bengal and Punjab. The people of India had commenced their reply to the imperialists’ war plans.

Before many weeks went by it became clear how England intended to utilize the man-power and resources of the world’s greatest colony in its war aims. The promulgation of the Defense of India Act by the British viceroy created a military dictatorship over the country. A call for military volunteers was issued and recruiting officers went to work in India’s military areas (Punjab and Northwest Frontier). Large garrisons were rushed to the fortifications on the Northern front and troop transports carried tens of thousands of Moslem and Sikh soldiers to Egypt, Palestine, Aden, France and other areas of the Near East where they swelled the colonial forces of the Empire.

Among the population the effect of the war was instantly felt. Food prices, especially the price of grains and fruits which are the staple consumptions of the people, skyrocketed an average of 25%! The government, however, saw to it that the profit derived from these increased prices went solely to the merchants. The sale price of farm produce was standardized by governmental decree. The net effect was a sharp reduction in the living standards of the Indian workers and the already super-exploited Indian peasant.

Indian industry, which first began during the last war, soon received its war stimulus. An order for 500,000,000 sand bags was placed with the India Jute Mills Associations at Calcutta. The effect of this was a raising of the mill workers’ hours from 48 to 60 per week with no pay increase. In the Chota-Nagpur steel and iron area of Central India, British capitalists poured in millions of English pounds for plant expansion and extension. By December of 1939 the number of peace-time munition workers had trebled! Indian factories can now supply England with a variety of war products: munitions and airplanes, iron and steel finished goods, jute for sand bags, tents, etc., chemicals and explosives, railway rolling stock and numerous raw materials (rubber, cotton, oil seeds and fats, manganese, etc.). This is exactly the role designed for India by its slave masters—to supply an endless amount of its wealth and products for the imperialists. But the people have said otherwise!

Indian Labor on the March

Beginning with small, local strikes a strike movement has spread rapidly from one end of the country to the other. It has involved hundreds of thousands of industrial workers in the jute, steel, cotton, printing and transportation fields. Cities as far apart as Bombay and Calcutta have been affected. The demands of the strikers have been well summarized in a resolution drawn up at a general conference of 52 unions representing the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress. These demands were for (1) 40% war allowance to make up for the rise in food prices; (2) control of food prices; (3) opening up of cheap grain shops throughout the city of Bombay and the Province. A campaign launched by these unions has already forced the opening up of 19 grain shops.

At the present moment, the strikes are fanning out and assuming a more general and nation-wide character. There are general strikes of textile workers in progress in Bombay (185,000), Cawnpore and Allahabad. Steel mill workers in Calcutta and Patna, street cleaners in Calcutta, printers in Cawnpore, etc., are all engaged in strike activity. Although victory has as yet only been attained in the smaller strikes, the desperate Bombay general strike now in progress for 6 weeks is the center of the strike struggle. A victory here would be followed by a series of major strikes all over India.

While Indian industrial labor is on the march, a bitter struggle is underway in the sharply split Indian Nationalist Congress. There are, in reality, two Congress movements in India today. The Compromise wing led by Gandhi has completely capitulated to British imperialism and more openly than ever supports the war of the British. It has been this sabotaging action by Gandhi and his followers that has contributed most to dampening the militancy of the Third Camp. But around the dramatic figure of Subhas Bose, a radical bourgeois nationalist and former president of the Trade Union Congress, a new group of anti-compromise nationalists have rallied. At the recent All-India Congress sessions this group staged an anti-compromise demonstration with undoubtedly good results. Centering primarily in the radical province of Bengal, the Bose “Forward Bloc” is preparing intensified action for Indian independence at the moment. The economic and trade-union activity of the Third Camp is far in advance of its political action today, but it is clear that the Bose Anti-Compromise Congress must soon attempt to give political direction to the spontaneous strike struggles of the Indian workers.

This is India today—world center of the Third Camp, living symbol of independent action of the colonies against imperialism and for peace. The story of India is being duplicated to one degree or another in all the colonial countries of the world. It is these people whom the American forces of the Third Camp must constantly bear in mind and prepare to assist at every appropriate moment.

Sherman STANLEY

Archives of the Revolution

DOCUMENTS of the HISTORY and THEORY of the WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

The Politics of Desperation

Some Notes on the Article, “A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the Socialist Workers Party.”

We are publishing herewith, for the information and study of our readers, the complete text of one of the political documents circulated in the ranks of the Socialist Workers Party by the Opposition group during the discussion that has just closed. We think this document is of more than purely internal-party interest, and we hope to be able, in future issues of the review, to make public other key documents of the S.W.P. discussion.—Ed.

WHAT A COMFORT it will prove to Max Eastman! For ten years he insisted that what separated him from us was—dialectical materialism. For ten years we replied: No, Max Eastman, you are only fooling others and yourself, and trying to fool us; what separates you from us is your unwillingness to accept the political program of the international revolution, and the practical political consequences that flow from that program. We will not permit you to evade the political issues by turning the debate aside into the abstract regions of speculative metaphysics.

But Eastman, it seems, was right all along. The real root of the matter, the ineluctable heart and core—it is now Trotsky who makes it at last clear to us—precisely—dialectical materialism. Eastman rejects dialectical materialism: from this original sin flows, like the conceptual links of the endless closed chain of the Hegelian universe, all the errors and crimes of the party opposition.

But, we recall, it is not today or yesterday that Burnham rejected
Dialectical materialism. Indeed, since he never accepted it, he can hardly be said ever to have rejected it. His opinion of dialectical materialism has been a constant: it has not been unknown in the burning and all-vital importance.

Trotsky must, I would feel, now propose a Special Commission to investigate and weed out all traces of anti-dialectics, since he never accepted it, he can hardly be said ever to have rejected it. His opinion of dialectical materialism has been a constant: it has not been unknown in the burning and all-vital importance.

Discontent, dissent, the opposition raised questions with reference to the war, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the policies of the Soviet government.

The remarks on it of Whately—a contemporary of Darwin, by the way—are not, however, themselves irrelevant: various kinds of authority which proof is required; ... .

Let us suppose, however, that I accept the entire first half of Haldane's thesis, that I answer Eastman and defend the theories of the Fourth International, I did). I was neither more nor less of a dialectician than today. My views on the subject were as well known to Trotsky as to Eastman. How can I even say whether I agree or disagree with, for instance, the "law of the change of quantity into quality", when no one yet has told me or anyone else what that law says? Of what use are all the metaphors (good and bad) and the "vague words" brought forward to illustrate the "law" when no one has yet stated what they are supposed to be illustrating?

It would be the easiest thing in the world to make me take dialectics seriously, and to persuade me of its truth, if it is true. All that would have to be done is the following: Formulate its laws in a clear and unambiguous manner, in such a manner that the terms of the hypothetical formulation refer directly or indirectly to objects or events that are perceived or can be made about the future on the basis of deductions from these laws.

But the investigation will unearth even more curious, and ironic circumstances. It will find, to take one instance, that at the founding convention of the Socialist Party (which split Europe over the question of the "workers' state"—written by Burnham. All, that is, of the concrete activity of Trotsky make this proposal to me? By what right did he entrust that I answer Eastman and defend the theories of the Fourth International, I did). I was neither more nor less of a dialectician than today. My views on the subject were as well known to Trotsky as to Eastman. How can I even say whether I agree or disagree with, for instance, the "law of the change of quantity into quality", when no one yet has told me or anyone else what that law says? Of what use are all the metaphors (good and bad) and the "vague words" brought forward to illustrate the "law" when no one has yet stated what they are supposed to be illustrating?

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the second half of his article? Nothing has been changed a centimeter. Everything remains just as it was when dialectics had never been heard of. Trotsky does not need to refer to Writings, and the argumentative logic which he establishes makes any connection between what he says about dialectics in the first part of his article, and what he says about the defense of Russia, the Party, and the international workers' movement, impossible in the second half. Does anyone doubt this? Let him re-read the article, and see for himself. It follows therefore that the entire discussion of dialectics is irrelevant—Trotsky's histrionics, the recurring questionings of the political questions. "Consciousness grew out of the unconscious, psychology out of physiology, the organic world out of the inorganic, the solar system out of nebulae..." Very well; let him ask himself how many of the other doctrines of such type it follows—even by the most dialectical of logics—that... the Red Army is introducing workers' control in Finland and we ought to defend it.

The fact that Trotsky thinks and says there is a necessary connection between his dialectics and his politics has nothing to do with the men who have to defend it. If there actually is such a connection, through history, men have thought and said that there were connections between their scientific investigations or practical decisions on the one hand and their theologies or metaphysics on the other. So what? They are not to know it, to study it, to test it in their own conscious and deliberate experience: that is excluded as "lifeless pedantry." But may they then consider it unimportant, or reject it? Not on your life; then they are alien class elements. No, they must believe, they must have faith. As for the doctrine itself, it is safe in the hands of the elite; they will bring it out in appropriate elaborations (a party factional fight, for example) to smite and confound the Enemy.

For my own part, I do not believe in Faith.

My friend and colleague Max Shachtman (may he forgive me for his political errors) has recently written about me: I do not really understand much about dialectics; I am only a humble student of the subject; of course, that is how Trotsky-must, the Trotskist must, if he wishes to be consistent and clear-headed revolutionary socialist. Or must we seek another kind of explanation for Trotsky's dictum? There is one doctrine—the secret doctrine—for the elite, the leaders, the inner circle; and another—the vulgar doctrine—for the mass, the ranks, the followers. What is the relation of the followers to the secret doctrine? They are not to know it, to study it, to test it in their own conscious and deliberate experience: that is excluded as "lifeless pedantry." But may they then consider it unimportant, or reject it? Not on your life; then they are alien class elements. No, they must believe, they must have faith. As for the doctrine itself, it is safe in the hands of the elite; they will bring it out in appropriate elaborations (a party factional fight, for example) to smite and confound the Enemy.

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I conclude on dialectics with a challenge: In the letter dated January 3rd it is clearly implied that my attitude toward dialectics is incompatible with my being editor of the theoretical journal of the party. In the article (p. 11) it is stated explicitly that my rejection of dialectics represents the influence of some party leader. And then (p. 12), in asking a question, the writer says: "First I want to ask: Where in the program of the Socialist Workers Party or the Fourth International is a belief in dialectics made essential to the program of the movement, the acceptance of which defines the conditions of membership?" If there is not, by what right does Trotsky or any one else attack me politically or object to my editorship of an organ of the International on the ground that my attitude is incompatible with the party's? Is not our movement founded on its program, decided by conventions representing the membership? Or—do we communists hide our banners, is our real program something different from our public and adopted program?

But if Trotsky is justified in what he says about dialectics, and the influence of the Party leader, and dialectics, I say further: Let him propose to the forthcoming convention some concrete measures to carry his lack in our program be filled, that the convention adopt a specific clause, to be added to the Declaration of Principles, affirming acceptance of the necessity of dialectical materialism. If he does not make such a proposal, then only one of his conclusions is possible: either what he is now writing about dialectics is not meant seriously, is mere polemical rhetoric for the faction fight of the moment; or dialectics is indeed an esoteric doctrine, not suited for the public opinion of the party to pass upon, but a private monopoly of the party grapevine. If he does make the proposal, it is true that he will have only one precedent in the history of labor politics: Stalin's program adopted at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, in which the abandonment of Marxism was summarized. It is not, I think, as an observer of his move, but to feel that our movement is ready to regard such a precedent as appropriate.

The Finnish Invasion and the Perspective of the Third Camp

If by a "workers' state" we mean that form of society transitional from capitalism to socialism, then Russia today can be considered a workers' state only on the basis of its nationalized economy. Of course, one major difference between this form of society and the one described in advance (in State and Revolution, for example), no one, absolutely no one in any political camp except that of the Stalinists, maintains that any factor remains in Russia today except the nationalized economy. Nationalized economy, must, therefore, in the view of those who hold that Russia is a workers' state, be a sufficient condition for so characterizing it, and by a workers' state Marxists have always meant, from Marx on, that form of society which is transitional from capitalism to socialism.

The assumption therein involved, of course, reject. I hold that a workers' state, whether Marxist or otherwise, is a new form of society which is transitional to socialism—namely, workers' democracy; and that therefore Russia today is incorrectly characterized as a workers' state. This was Marx's conclusion, and his opinion has been entirely confirmed by the experiences of the last fifteen years of Soviet history.

Even if the assumption is granted, if it is thus further granted that Russia today is a workers' state, this will not at all suffice to motivate a tactic of defense of the Soviet State and the Red Army in the present war (just as, conversely, if the assumption is denied and it is thus denied that Russia is a workers' state, this will not by itself suffice to motivate a tactic of defeatism). We cannot deduce a tactic of defense from our definition of the Soviet state any more than we could deduce it from the "law of the negation of the negation." Nor are we aided further in determining our tactic by the assumption that nationalized economy, in and by itself, divorced from the concrete social and political and historical relations—which form the context of the nationalized economy—is "progressive" (an assumption which is involved in the initial assumption of our "dialectical" defenders of the workers' state doctrine—which, in point of fact, is an attempt at the falsification of actual reality which they say dialectics teaches us to take into account, and substitutes: a static, abstract category).

The general social movement is the world proletarian revolution (and socialism). We all hold (in words, at any rate) that this aim is now a goal not for the indefinitely remote future, but for the present. It is, for the war and the post-war period. We concretize our goal in the defense of our "war aims"—united socialist states of Europe, the Americas, a free Asia united into a federation of socialist republics. Presumably we mean these seriousness.

Any tactic we propose, therefore, can be justified only by proof that, directly or indirectly, it is in fact the best available means for reaching our general goal of world socialism.

Even granted, then, Trotsky's assumptions, granted that Russia is a workers' state, the tactic of defense can be justified only if certain additional assumptions are made.

These would have to include: (a) Defense of the Red Army is in fact the best available means of defending the nationalized economy
In Poland, important manifestations of the class struggle, including struggles for national liberation and independence, have risen and marched and independently of Russia—with the military and civil breakdown of the Polish bourgeois government. This is a normal and natural occurrence in all countries, whatever the character of the oppositionary, when the bourgeoisie is not the class to which the number of towns (including, apparently, Vilna and Warsaw itself) embryo “soviet” arose on a loose basis, with labor and other popular organizations assuming the task of the struggle. Thus, the capitalists have not the power; in the villages, peasants began ousting the landlords—or, more exactly, the landlords had already run away. In theory, of course, possibility (the workers of Red Army, from clear) that in some sections the march of the Red Army excited certain hopes—at least hope in comparison to the fears of the advance of the Reichswehr. But even if there were such hopes in occupying the land of their former masters (who were no longer there to oppose them). These hopes were in the shortest time liquidated, together with the persons of any peasants or workers hardly enough to provide the means of 生存 the small Baltic countries—now Russian provinces, in the declaration of the White Army government, and for that matter in Poland, or in which we estimate the probable effects of increasing economic collaboration with Germany.

But let us consider the two propositions (b) and (c) which are crucial; and any child should be able to realize that all the evidence from the beginning of the war, far from giving any remote likelihood of their truth, shows them to be undeniably false.

Trotsky, correct in his sociology and psychology of polemics, does not recognize explicitly the nature of the scientific problem posed in the dispute. Nevertheless he is compelled to give it implicit recognition. He seems to sense that all the thousands of words he has been writing since September on the “workers’ state” and dialectics are beside the point; and he tries to introduce at last—a few advanced workers, Marxists, workers thousands (chiefly in the mimeographed version of the article I am now discussing) of some evidence for the truth of the key proposition (c).

What is this alleged evidence? I will quote the central sentences: “The two propositions required by Trotsky to justify the tactic of intervention will undoubtedly provoke a veritable outburst of genuine revolutionary passion by so much as a word that the Red Army is not our ally. The propaganda campaign began against Finland, and then the invasion. For a number of days, the Red Army triumphantly advanced. Mr. Kuusinen declared that the Russian army—embryo (a bourgeois, not a proletarian program, by the way, in spite of Trotsky’s dialectical deduction that the Kremlin must use social revolutionary policies—bureaucratically carried out; the Kremlin did not consult Trotsky).

What was the effect—the actual effect that happened, not the effect that we can read about in our former theses (which coincides with what Trotsky wrote in the present article) or deduce from theories? The effect was, not to stimulate, but to wipe out what there had been of the class struggle (and there had been more than a trace of bourgeois fighting enthusiasm. All the contradictions and antagonisms will seem overcome or at any rate relegated to the background. The imperialists, ruling out the third alternative (an independent struggle for freedom and power against the main enemy, at home, and the invading enemy) excluded, they chose what appeared to them as the “lesser evil”. Those responsible for this reactionary conclusion are the imperialists on the one hand and the Stalinists on the other (and all others!) who, ruling out the third camp, posed the choice exclusively between the other two alternatives. Who is it who is closest to socialist consciousness: those Soviet soldiers and workers who recognize the reactionary character of the
April 1940 THE NEW INTERNATIONAL Page 79

war, are rescenthal and distrustful of it, and show no enthusiasm for it; and including the G.P.U. who are already simmered up into a frenzy of Stalinist-patriotism for it? We, the opposition, say: the former. Trotsky is compelled by his doctrine to say: the latter.

Hitler's New Year speech was far more than a bland re-statement of the Kuusinen government. True enough, the nation employing "socialist" propaganda is capable of "socialist" complications in the enemy nation, but only the substitute being usually borrowed from Trotsky.

The policy of the Kremlin (through "compulsion" or "voluntary" effort) does not matter in reality so much as the times struggle the social revolution? If so, then Marxism has been wrong from the beginning, for then the struggle for socialism can be carried on by bureaucratic-military means as a substitute (good or bad) for the popular and deliberate and deliberate mass struggle of the workers and peasants. To accept Trotsky's interpretation of the events of the present war is to accept the theory of the Bureaucratic Road to Socialism. This reader to Trotsky's explanation of this point in his recent reply to this same article of Trotsky's.

But is it the Kremlin stimulating the social revolution by its new "agitation"? First, he wonders if the nation employing "revolutionist" policies—the workers and peasants—will join in common struggle against their oppressors with the Finnish workers and peasants—other to obey the orders of the Kremlin and to join in common struggle against their oppressors with the workers and peasants of Finland to a new type of slavery.

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International—Trotsky made no public statement to the press. He then gave out two short and very general statements in which he did not attempt any analysis or prediction; in fact they summed up to little more than the view that there was nothing much to be said about the agreement. They issued to the same extent as a note on Poland—on the outbreak of the second world war, the most momentous event in the history of mankind. In fact, he has to this day made no general analysis of the war and its meaning, a lack which has been widely remarked among the general public.

Since the war began, Trotsky has made only two specific predictions of any importance. The first was when the Red Army was mobilizing on the borders of Poland, when Trotsky stated that Stalin did not know why the army was mobilizing. A short time later he was compelled to recognize that the Polish invasion had been carried out by prior agreement with the Czar, and before the Polish invasion, Trotsky was preparing an article for a magazine. According to an outline of this article which was received in New York, he therein predicted that there would be no Finnish invasion (that year at any rate) but that the issues would become “compromised”.

The first major article written by Trotsky was the one which was published in the New International (The U.S.R. and the War). This did not concern itself in a single sentence with the problems and prospects of the war already started, but with the most general possible theoretic issues. The second (published in an internal bulletin) was on the class character of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile (and continuing through the present) have been numerous shorter documents dealing with the internal factional struggle, the overwhelming percentage of which was concerned with such issues as the character of the groups in the party and their methods, etc. The next long document (the one here under discussion) brought in one new subject: the dialectics; and a new document (the Open Letter to me) on the same subject is now promised. The only specific statements about current prospects of the war already started, but with the most general possible theoretic issues. 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