

INTERNAL BULLETIN

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COMMENTS ON THE SELECTION OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

By Martin

Canon

In our opinion the most important reason for stretching the convention out for another day is to give adequate time for a free and well deliberated selection by the delegates of the new national committee. This is one of the strongest guarantees of the democracy of the party. Our party has always been more democratic, ten times more democratic in this respect than any other party. But there is room for improvement, and we should consciously seek out the necessary methods. We never went in for any of the rigging, wangling, vote-trading and leadership pressure devices by which, in all other parties the convention delegates are usually defrauded of a large part of their democratic freedom of choice. If one has a self-sufficient revolutionary party in mind, all such methods are self defeating. A revolutionary party needs a leadership that really represents the party, that is really one with the party. Without this democratic corrective, freely brought into play at every convention, centralization and discipline inevitably become caricatures and forms of abuse which injure the organization every time they are exercised. A revolutionary leadership must feel free at all times to act boldly and confidently in the name of the party. For that, it needs to be sure that there is no flaw in its mandate.

No rules exist to guide us in the technical execution of this difficult and delicate task to the best advantage of the party. The democratic selection of the primary and secondary leaders is a sufficiently important question -- nobody knows how much damage can be done by bungling it -- but, as far as I know, nobody has ever written anything about it. Nobody has taught us anything. We are obliged to think and experiment for ourselves.

The democratic impulses of the rank and file incline them to react unfavorably to "slates", as they feel, not without reason, that they narrow down, for all practical purposes, the freedom of choice. The social democratic politicians, who are as undemocratic a collection of rascals as one can ever expect to meet, have always exploited this sentiment by announcing their firm, democratic opposition to slates. Of course, there was a little catch to their virtuous slogan of "no slates". They meant, no openly-avowed slates which would possibly be open to discussion and amendment. Instead of that, the noble social democrats rig up secret slates by means of horse-trades and petty bribes to ensure their control. A good 50% of social democratic convention "politics" is always devoted to this kind of business.

From the first days of American communism, which also coincided with the first appearance on the scene of a new type of leaders with a new conception of "politics", we tried to break through the "no slate" fraud and devise a more honest system by which the leaders would take open responsibility for their proposals and give reasons for their preferences in the make-up of the leading committee. It became rather common practice for the leading committees, in national as well as local conventions in the communist movement, to propose

a slate of candidates for the new committee to be elected. We carried the practice with us in the independent movement of Trotskyism. (During factional struggles the slate-making arrangements were carried on in the separate caucuses of the factions). This method was, without doubt, far superior to the "no slate" tricks of our socialist predecessors, being more honest, and in the essence of the matter, even more democratic.

But this system, also, was not free from negative aspects, and even dangers. I perceived some of them long ago, have thought much about the matter, and from time to time, have tried to devise corrective experiments. What impressed me most of all was the quite obvious fact that, while the presentation of a slate of candidates by the leadership is the most "efficient" way to get through the business of the election of the N.C. -- usually the last point on the agenda, carried through in a great hurry -- it concentrates too much power in the leadership just at that very point -- the convention -- where the democratic corrective of rank and file control should be asserted most strongly. It is not the election of the central, most prominent and influential leaders themselves. That problem solves itself almost automatically in the interplay of party work and internal strife. The problem arises over the selection of the secondary leaders, the new committee members, the potential leaders of the future. As a rule, this part of the slate, if presented by the most authoritative central leaders, is accepted whether enthusiastically or not, by the convention; many delegates are reluctant to oppose them.

It is senseless, of course, to speak of a revolutionary combat party without recognizing the necessity of a centralized, full-empowered leadership. But this states only one-half of the problem. Leninist centralism is democratic-centralism, a profoundly dialectical concept. The other half of the Leninist formula recognizes no less the necessity of subordinating the leadership, really as well as formally, to the party; keeping it under the control of the party. The party constitution does everything that can be done in a formal sense to provide for the interaction of centralism and democracy. The structure of the party is strictly hierarchical. Higher committees command the lower. Full authority over all is vested in the National Committee. But the N.C., like all other committees, is required to render accounts and surrender its mandate at stated intervals to the party convention to which it is subordinated. This is the formal, constitutional guarantee both for centralization and the ultimate control of the leadership. But it is also necessary to think about the spirit as well as the letter of the party constitution. A far-sighted leadership should concern itself with the elusive, intangible factors which can play such a great role in determining the actual relationship between the N.C. and the ranks.

Some of these factors arise from the composition of the N.C. and the division of functions within it. Nominally, this body consists of 25 members, and they all have equal rights. In addition there are 15 alternates. But the majority come to the center only for meetings of the Plenum, which are not held very often. Between Plenums the power is delegated to the Political Committee. From this it is quite clear that one section of the National Committee is in a

position to exert far more influence on the day-to-day work and interpretation of party policy than the other. Again, some are older, more experienced and more prominent than others, and consequently, wield greater authority in the Committee, as well as in the party as a whole. On the other side, the Committee members from the districts and the younger members of the Committee generally, who are active in local work, are closer to the rank and file than the central leaders, of the party are, and represent them more directly and intimately. This gives them a special function in the N.C. of extraordinary importance. Their presence represents a form of continuing rank and file control and supervision over the central leaders. They can fulfill this function, however, only insofar as they are people of independent influence and popularity in their own localities; only insofar as they are freely elected on their own merits, not hand picked.

To be sure, the central leaders cannot be indifferent to the selection of the secondary leadership. In this, as in everything else, leaders must lead. In a certain sense, the central party leaders "select" their collaborators and eventual successors. The question is, how to go about it? It is often easy for politically experienced leaders to convince themselves that they are better judges of the qualifications and potentialities of certain candidates than the rank and file delegates. And, as a rule, it is not too difficult to force their selections through by means of the "slate." This may appear to be the most "efficient" way. But, in my opinion, there is a better way.

Wisdom lies in "selecting" people who have popularity and influence in their own right, and whose promotion coincides with the wishes of the party members who know them best. That means, to select people who are advancing under their own power.

I came to this conclusion a long time ago, and as far as I have been able to influence the course of things, it has been the party method of selecting the N.C. Extensive and varied experiences, with every imaginable kind of experiment, has convinced me that this method, even at the cost of incidental mistakes, works out best in the long run.

The central leaders of the party, who work from day to day without close contact with the internal life of the branches, need such a constitution of the N.C. if they are to lead the party confidently; lead it with the assurance that they know the moods and sentiments of the ranks and are in step with them. When doubt arises, or when some new important step is under consideration, it is only necessary to consult the out-of-town members of the N.C. by mail, or to call a Plenum, in order to get a reliable sounding of the party. Approval of a given course by the Plenum is a pretty certain forecast of similar action by the party. Conversely, when the Plenum finds it necessary to over-rule the Political Committee -- and this has happened more than once, notably in 1938-39 -- it is a sign that the Political Committee is out of line with the party and requires a change in its composition. The 1938-39 National Committee rebuked the P.C. several times and finally reorganized it, and later tests showed that the full Plenum most accurately reflected the sentiment of the party. A serious and conscientious party leadership should deliberately aim

at a National Committee so composed as to be, in effect, a microcosm of the party. When the full Plenum of such a National Committee meets between conventions, to all intents and purposes, the party is there in the room. That is far more useful to responsible political leaders than a roomful of handpicked supporters without independent influence and authority. Bureaucrats who have special interests of their own to defend against the rank and file need to surround themselves with dependent henchmen, but revolutionary political leaders need support of an entirely different kind, the support of people who really represent the rank and file of the party.

There is another, and even more important, reason why the rank and file convention delegates should take over the election of the National Committee and be free from undue pressure and influence on the part of the national political leadership in exercising this function. The free selection of the full membership of the National Committee is perhaps the most decisive way to strengthen and reinforce genuine party democracy. It puts the political leaders under the direct supervision and control of a second line of leaders who are in intimate daily contact with the local and district organizations and, in fact, represent them in the Plenum. This control doesn't have to be exercised every day to be effective. The fact that it is there, and can be demonstrated when necessary, is what counts. Strange to relate, the professional democrats have never once in the history of our party bothered their heads about the method of selecting the National Committee from the standpoint of reinforcing party democracy. This, in my opinion, is because they tend to think of democracy almost exclusively in terms of unlimited and unrestricted self-expression, and forget that control of the central leadership, which in day-to-day practice is limited to a very small group, by a larger group standing closer to the rank and file, is the most important mechanism to assure the democratic half of the Leninist formula: democratic-centralism.

Throwing the floor open for nominations on the last day of the convention is not the only alternative to a slate presented by the outgoing N.C. That only throws the delegate body into disorganized confusion and facilitates the manipulation of the election by means of secret slates and horse trades, the favorite method of Social Democratic pseudo-democrats.

There is no infallible formula, but the results of our experiments over a period of many years argue most convincingly in favor of a slate prepared by a nominating commission. Of course, there are nominating commissions and nominating commissions. But the best, that is, the most democratic, is not the nominating commission appointed by the outgoing N.C. nor the one elected at random from the floor of the convention. The most efficient, for the purposes set forth above, is the nominating commission selected by the branch or district delegations on a roughly proportional basis -- each delegation selecting its own representatives -- and then ratified by the convention. The nominating commission, thus conceived, is a body actually representing the rank and file delegations from the districts. It would be grossly improper for individual central leaders to intrude themselves upon the commission and seek to dominate its proceedings. That would amount to a circumvention of the democratic process aimed at in the proposal. It is the part of wisdom for the central leaders to

leave the nominating commission to its own devices, respecting the essence of party democracy as well as the form. •

The nominating commission should be selected on the first day of the convention; it should begin its sessions at once, and meet at least once a day thereafter to consider the various nominations, until a slate is decided upon for presentation to the convention when the election of the N.C. comes up on the agenda. In my opinion, the first step of the commission at the 1944 convention should be to discard formally the ruling which paralyzed the work of the nominating commission at the 1942 convention -- the utterly stupid and reactionary principle that every member of the outgoing N.C. was, as a matter of course, to be reelected unless good cause was shown to remove him. That turns things upside down. Nobody can be "frozen" in any position in a revolutionary party. He must stand for election at each convention and the election must be free and open. Room must be left for competition and rivalry and differences of opinion to operate without artificial restraints. Members of the outgoing N.C. should be placed in exactly the same status as new aspirants -- as candidates for election. The nominating commission should adopt a rule to this effect at its first session.

The most practical next step is to take a preliminary poll to ascertain how many candidates are generally favored for election as national leaders who are not counted as representatives of any special district of the party. This will clear the road for the apportionment of the remaining places on the slate for local and district representatives. Here, again, there should be no "freezing" of old representation and no automatic closing of the door to new candidates from districts previously not represented. The object should be to provide the fairest possible representation of the districts in the new N.C.; but the principle of proportional representation should be modified by other considerations; the relative importance of the district; the quality of the candidates; the special role played by certain candidates, etc.

The commission should announce the time and place of its daily sessions, and invite any delegate who wishes to argue for or against any candidate to appear and take the floor. The slate finally decided upon, either by agreement or majority vote, should be presented to the convention as the nominations of the commission. That leaves the floor open for other nominations and free discussion before the ballot is taken. Naturally, one would have to have some good arguments for another candidate to hope to amend the slate of the nominating commission. But if he thinks he has a strong case, there is no reason why he shouldn't make the attempt. Adequate time and patience must be accorded for the presentation of any such proposed amendments. The heavens will not fall if a slate is amended once in a while.

One word more. The convention should not shunt the election of the new N.C. off till the last hurried half-hour of the convention, when impatience of departing delegations would tend to discourage full discussion and ample consideration of the various nominations. The best procedure would be to fix a definite hour and day to take up the election of the N.C. whether the rest of the agenda is finished or not at that time. This decision should be made demonstratively in order

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to call sharp attention to the vital importance of full and careful deliberation in selecting the party leadership. And even more important, the convention will thus give itself time to do the job right.

All these measures will not guarantee the election of an ideal National Committee. But they should help to provide us with the best Committee that a free party can select from the material at hand by the method of party democracy. If the returning delegates go home with the feeling that this has been accomplished, the new N.C. will be able to begin its work with a strong authority. On the other hand, the leadership, precisely because of the care and deliberation taken in the selection of the personnel of the N.C., will feel itself to be more than ever under the watchful supervision and control of the party.

October, 1944.

Note: If my remarks are sent abroad a postscript should be added to the effect that they are designed for the method of selecting the N.C. in our party, as it is today, at the given stage of its development, and are not meant as a universal formula. Every party must work out its own methods on the basis of its own experiences.

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THE INTERNAL PARTY SITUATION

By M. Stein

(Report delivered at National Convention --
November 16-19, 1944)

Comrades: I believe it is our unanimous verdict that this has been one of the most marvelous conventions of our movement. This convention demonstrates the vitality of our party; it demonstrates that we have sunk roots in the labor movement; that we have made great strides forward and that we are all enthusiastic and eager to make new great strides forward. The report I delivered earlier on the party's life for the past two years, on our work and achievements, met with the unanimous approval of the convention. Yet a big ado has been made by a few comrades over what appear to be isolated trivialities in the internal life of the party. This is what I want to deal with this morning. It comes under the heading of the internal party situation.

Now, before I go on to deal with the main issues, let me say a word to the newer comrades in the movement, those who are attending one of our conventions for the first time. Ours is the most democratic party in the world. You can see that by the pre-convention discussion. You can see it by the amount of time we give a minority so insignificant in size -- the amount of patience we exercise in listening to their point of view. This is how it should be. We all speak freely what is on our minds, and that is how it should be. But to new people in the movement this sometimes looks like a squabble, a family quarrel, and they don't take to it very well. Something like it happens to medical students witnessing their first vivisection -- some of them faint at the sight of the body's internal organs. They are taken aback. Medical students must learn, however, to overcome their first feelings of revulsion to vivisection if they are to become surgeons. If you want to be a revolutionist you must, in addition to all other requirements, also learn to examine the internal functioning of the party, its methods of operation. You must be able to examine it all and learn from it all.

Organizational Methods are the Instruments of Program

Organizational methods and practices of the movement have no independent existence. They flow from our program. We do not build the party just to have something to play with. We build it as an instrument for the application of our program. We don't do one thing or another because we get an idea out of thin air to do that kind of thing. What we do or do not do flows from a line, a system of ideas we have on the kind of party we want and need. In short, the whole party organization, its methods of functioning, are subordinate to the program and flow from the program that calls for the overthrow of the mightiest capitalist system and the building of a socialist society.

Our party structure rests on the foundation of democratic centralism. We need democracy in the party, controlling the life of the organization, and we need centralism because it gives us the best medium for an effective fight against a rotten but ruthless system. You can fight this ruthless system only through a party trained to fight ruthlessly. You can fight the centralized power of monopoly capitalism only by a centralized party.

Ours is not the only party built to fit its program. The same applies to all parties, including the capitalist parties. They too are molded by their program. It is their program to maintain themselves in power, by deception, bribery and force and this is exactly how they function. The members of the capitalist parties have no control over the central bodies of their organizations. Wall Street controls them. Similarly, the Stalinist party. It is built for a purpose: to serve the Master in the Kremlin regardless of program and principles. They must be ready for sharp turns at a signal from the top. Democracy would stand in their way; and so they swept democracy out of their organization.

We need both democracy and centralism. We need democracy not merely to give expression to the membership, not merely to give the membership a chance to govern the policies of the party, and to select the leadership. We need democracy also for the development of the membership. At the next stage our comrades will be called upon to lead masses and to make decisions in important matters. They must learn to stand on their own feet. The democratic process of the party present an important educational medium for the development of leadership qualifications.

The Relationship between Democracy and Centralism

How do we adjust democracy to centralism and, conversely, centralism to democracy? This is one of the most delicate problems. It can be resolved only on the basis of experience. Legitimate differences are often possible on this question. For example, some comrades have felt that we over-extended democracy in the pre-convention discussion, that we published too many internal bulletins, that the minority in the party received too much consideration. Out of 395 pages of mimeographed material we turned out, 219 were critical in character, devoted to opposition arguments. The argument might be made that a small minority is given too much of a hearing in our party. The facts would tend to substantiate the argument. As against the 219 pages devoted to criticism, the majority availed itself of only 176 pages. And a lot of this, close to 70 pages, was devoted to resolutions, some not even controversial. I have heard it said that we should devise some sort of regulating mechanism by which the majority would not be cheated of its democratic rights. This is one argument.

Another argument is on the other side. Why didn't we get out the Morrow document when Morrow presented it some ten months ago, when the comrades went to jail? "You are violating democracy in the organization" -- that is what we have heard. "You want a monolithic party" --- that is what we have heard. "You are stifling discussion in the organization" -- that is what we have heard. "You are

introducing germs of Stalinism" -- that is what we heard. Why? Because we didn't get out the Morrow document. You know why we didn't get out the Morrow document. I dealt with this question in my New York speech which appeared in the internal bulletin. I will not repeat it here. I know in Chicago when I presented the reasons, the comrades who had been most viciferous against us had to admit, "Well, you have a case." In fact we had so much of a case that Morrow himself withdrew his request to publish his document. He presented it to the National Committee members only.

In adjusting democracy and centralism, we proceed by and large from the conception that in pre-convention discussion democracy is the watchword. This is why we placed no restrictions or limits on the discussion. When in a period of action, the emphasis by and large is on centralism. When the party functions freely under normal conditions, we have more democracy of course. But one might say that normal conditions will never exist again. Those times are over. We are functioning under conditions of war time reaction and persecution. Such conditions of necessity impose restrictions on unlimited expression in the organization. Summarizing the conduct of our movement over a period of sixteen years, the conclusion is unmistakable that our party didn't suffer from too much centralism, but from the abuse of democracy. This was the balance sheet at the time Comrade Trotsky had a word to say on it during the struggle against the petty-bourgeois opposition. He told them very plainly: "You do not see that our American section is not sick from too much centralism -- it is laughable even to talk about it -- but from a monstrous abuse and distortion of democracy on the part of the petty-bourgeois elements." This was the balance sheet of our movement in 1940 and remains the balance sheet of our movement by and large today.

Now, whenever we discuss, we discuss for a purpose -- and not for the self-expression as some comrades sometimes think. Some comrades have the notion that whenever an idea pops into their heads they must immediately spill it before the party and demand a party discussion on it. No. We discuss for a purpose; for the purpose of arriving at decisions. For this reason we organize our discussions so that we can arrive at a decision. Once the decision is reached, discussion of the same question is out of order. Should anyone desire to reopen the discussion, such request must be placed before the National Committee for decision.

So this is, by and large, the method by which we proceed. We discuss to decide, and we decide to act.

The Struggle Against the Party's Organizational Practices

Now, in opening up the fight on the organization question, Comrade Morrison and his supporters have done a lot more than they had originally intended. I don't think they have thought the question out to the end. Perhaps they didn't know that they were opening up the whole organization question, that they were opening up the whole question of the concept of a party. But every incident in the dispute, each and everyone of them, no matter how trivial it might appear on the surface, reveals a divergent line. We have spent

many years in the movement, some of us from our early youth. We have spent our whole adult lives in the movement and we have had a lot of opportunities to study the organization question. We have engaged in many internal struggles and factional fights, and we have thought the question out to the very end. We have a line on the organization question, as on every other. When we do something we do it in conformity with our line. When we refuse to do something, it is because it is not in conformity with our line. This applies to the censure of the four New York members and it applies equally to our refusal to print Morrison's attack on Hansen in the public press. The opposition operates with different methods. They do not present a line, only amendments. Their real line is always implied. On the political resolution as well as on the organization question they present just amendments, but an examination of these amendments shows they are trying to amend our line out of existence.

I had occasion, as I said before, to speak on the organization question. It is in the bulletin and, as I said, I take it for granted that the comrades have read my speech and Comrade Martin's letters on this question. I believe we have proved conclusively that the charge of Stalinist germs in our party has no basis in either theory or fact. It is false from beginning to end. The charge is wild and used not as a scientific appraisal of a situation as it exists. It is used as an epithet.

We proved more than that. We proved that if there is any danger of degeneration, as there always is, it comes from another quarter entirely. Not Stalinist germs are now the danger in our movement, but the germs of bourgeois public opinion seeping through the weak spots of the organization and affecting individuals here and there. We proved this by an examination of the world around us and by the whole history of our movement. Many in our movement have succumbed. But not to Stalinism. They succumbed to bourgeois pressure. The surest signs of the pressure of the whole capitalist world, of all its petty-bourgeois intellectualist flunkies, on our ranks is the emergence of a conciliationist tendency. When some comrades begin to conciliate with bourgeois public opinion -- that is when you know you have germs in the organization.

What do we mean by conciliationism? Let me first state what I mean by political irreconcilability and hostility towards the capitalist world around us and its petty-bourgeois formations:

We are Monopolists in the Field of Politics

We are monopolists in the field of politics. We can't stand any competition. We can tolerate no rivals. The working class, to make the revolution, can do it only through one party and one program. That is the lesson of the Russian revolution. That is the lesson of all history since the October Revolution. Isn't that a fact? This is why we are out to destroy every single party in the field that makes any pretense of being a working-class revolutionary party. Ours is the only correct program that can lead to revolution. Everything else is deception, treachery. We are monopolists in politics and we operate like monopolists. Either through merger or irreconcilable

struggle. We have proved this by the whole history of our movement. When we saw a formation on the working-class scene that looked as if it would compete with us, that looked as if it were going to peddle wares similar to our, what did we do? We said, "Listen, either you unite with us or we'll put you out of business." This was the case with the American Workers Party. We did the same thing with the left-wing of the Socialist Party. We made the bold move of entering the Socialist Party in order to merge with the left-wing inside this party. We can't stand competition. We can't tolerate other parties in the same field with us.

How do we decide our attitude toward opponent parties, whether we take the line of merger or the line of irreconcilable struggle? Well, as Marxists we apply the method of dialectics in this question as in everything else. First of all we try to establish the program of the organizations, to see where they stand at the moment. Then we try to find out their origin, where they come from. Then we establish the direction in which they are travelling. In the case of the Muste group, the AWP, the program was, to be sure, centrist. Thus we established: Here is an organization with a centrist program. What was their origin? They were trade union militants, by and large, and leaders in the unemployed struggle. What was their direction? They were moving toward the left. That is just what we wanted.

At the same time that the Muste group was in the field, there was another group, the Lovestoneites. They had a more revolutionary program than Muste at that moment. What was the origin of the Lovestone group? That is the next question we asked ourselves. They came out of the Communist movement. And the direction in which they were travelling was to the right. Therefore this was the group we were going to fight irreconcilably. The Muste group, on the other hand, is the one we sought to merge with. Similarly with the Socialist Party. Here too we were confronted with a centrist group moving to the left. That is why we were interested in them. They were moving from the right to the left, in our direction, while the Lovestone group was moving from the left to the right, away from us.

The Petty Bourgeois Shachtman Group

Now, ask yourself the same question about Shachtman and his group. In politics, you see, there is always an arrow-mark pointing the direction of the groups and tendencies in the labor movement. We must know where the arrow points in each case. Now, what is Shachtman's petty-bourgeois grouping? It has a revisionist program. Nobody denies it. They are renegades from Marxism. Some comrades in our movement may squirm when we say that. They recoil from our use of harsh words. But this is the truth! During the struggle against the petty-bourgeois Shachtmanites, that is, before they split from us, before they fully unfolded their revisionism, Trotsky branded Shachtman as a betrayer of Marxism. "Precisely here," he wrote, "begins Shachtman's betrayal -- not a mere mistake as I wished to believe last year; but it is now clear, an outright theoretical betrayal." This was said at the beginning of the betrayal, what would Trotsky say now?

What is their origin? They started in the same party with us. Where are they travelling? Away from us. That is what decides our hostility towards them. And what a shabby showing Morrison has made on this question. He displays a complete failure to understand politics, and to apply the dialectic method in his estimate of the petty-bourgeois W.P. According to him we are sore at them because they broke from us. If that were all, we should be seeking to unite with them. Are we sore at them solely because they split? Nonsense! That was one of the elements in the struggle. But what has happened since? Where are they going? Have they come closer to us or gone further away from us? That is the way to decide a political attitude. From this method comrades can learn. Any other method can only mis-educate them, and how sadly miseducated Morrison's followers are! It is high time they started to unlearn some of this nonsense so they can become revolutionists. The whole fight initiated by Morrison against the censure of the four was the result of his conciliationism towards the petty-bourgeois Shachtmanites. That is what stands out like a boil on the nose in the whole dispute. He fears that we are prohibiting comrades from shopping around, from having discussions with Shachtmanites. Our comrades in Los Angeles have given an excellent demonstration of carrying on discussions with the Shachtmanites -- discussion for the purpose of breaking them up. This is our idea of discussing with Shachtmanites -- this is our idea of contact with them. It is the kind of contact you need for the purpose of delivering a blow. You know when you are in a fight with someone you have contact with him. That is the way Bolsheviks carry on discussions with such groups.

Morrison's attitude is one of a civil libertarian fighting for the individual rights of the members of our party. He is afraid we are putting a straitjacket on somebody. We put no straitjacket on anybody. All we ask is self-imposed discipline, the discipline which flows from an irreconcilable program, from a firm line, from clear objectives. You don't do what is against your line, merely because you like to do something. What we do flows from our line and what we refrain from doing flows from our line. That is the only kind of restriction we put on our members. And when somebody steps out of bounds we call him or her to order. The four comrades censured stepped out of bounds and they have done it disloyally. Not only did they discuss with the Shachtmanites for the sake of discussion, but they kept it hidden from the party. They didn't report it to the party. They didn't ask for advice from the party. That is disloyalty towards the organization, and we never could stomach disloyalty. Every member must know that his one and only objective in talking to a Shachtmanite, in going to a Shachtmanite meeting, is -- to weaken them and to strengthen our movement. In order to do it best he comes to the party for consultation and advice. The collective experience of the party will help comrades in this type of work.

Dwight Macdonald

The same conciliationism towards the petty-bourgeois tendencies outside our party and towards petty-bourgeois intellectuals outside our party is revealed in the whole hullabaloo over the Hansen article. Morrison and his supporters not only tell us that the Hansen

article was a crime, but that our refusal to print Morrison's article, which they mistakenly call an article against Macdonald, in the F.I. or The Militant was another crime. That too was a germ of Stalinist degeneration. Crime is heaped upon crime, while the germs multiply. Well, I urge the comrades to read this article of Morrison's which he wanted us to print against Hansen in the F.I. I want you to read it carefully and after you have read it, take it up again and read it once more. What will you find in it? A critical but polite attitude towards Macdonald. Does Morrison ever characterize Macdonald in it? Not at all. Does he pin any labels on Macdonald? None whatever. In Morrison's article the enemy is Hansen. He is ready to label Hansen. He wrote an article in which he defends what? He says he defends Bolshevism against Macdonald. No, comrades. He is defending the personal integrity of Lenin and Trotsky. That is laudable. That is safe enough. But he is certainly not defending the living movement of Bolshevism. On the contrary, he is trying to create the impression that the living movement of Bolshevism embodied in our organization has departed from Bolshevism and that Macdonald has scored a point in attacking it. Well, if this is really Morrison's point of view it represents first of all conciliationism towards Macdonald. In all of Morrison's polemics you will detect the same thing -- an impeccable politeness to the party's enemies; insolence and rudeness towards his own comrades. Morrison puts on a full dress suit when he enters into a polemic with Macdonald. But he strips for a public fight with Hansen. This is not the Bolshevik method of polemic.

There is yet another point involved in this whole controversy. If Morrison holds the opinion of Hansen that he has and wants to launch a personal attack in our public press against him as a "leader-cultist," etc., we say: come to the party first. We will settle such matters in the party first. We value our party organization. Our party public opinion is more precious to us than the public opinion of the whole world combined. We don't give a damn what Macdonald says, because he happens to be an inconsequential windbag. Nothing more. We don't care what anyone of his garrulous tribe says. But we do care what one of our comrades says. This is our party. You must have loyalty towards the party as a whole and also towards your party colleagues. The party is our tribunal. Macdonald isn't going to settle any question for us. Our party is going to solve it. Our membership, our conventions, that is where we go for a decision. That is why we didn't publish Morrison's article in our press. And even Comrade Roland, about whom I shall speak presently, voted with us on this question.

Here is a statement that Roland made on this question, and insisted that it be included in P.C. minutes. I will read it because it is illuminating and because it comes from an opponent of ours;

"The question of leadership in the party involves two separate elements. One is an attitude which is taken internally in party polemics, involving the opinion of comrades concerning each other and concerning various groups that may exist in the party. The other has to do with the opinions of outside elements who may attack one or another section or individual in the party. We do not publicize our own internal struggles on the level of attitude to

leadership. When our leaders are attacked by enemy elements, it is the duty of the party members to defend them even when differences may exist inside the party. Morrison's proposals, while possibly presenting certain correct ideas, in the specific issue tend to confuse the two different approaches. He himself refers to the fact that the Plenum discussion is involved. This should be settled internally in the future, not outside in the press."

James T. Farrell

The same attitude of conciliationism is expressed in the other controversy -- over the James T. Farrell letter. How they get wrought up when we refuse to print James T. Farrell's letter. Why? He is a prominent novelist; he is a friend of the movement, don't you know? Sure, he is a friend of the movement, but we have something better than that. We have a movement. I heard one comrade get up at a New York membership meeting and disgrace himself by showing how he underestimates the party and overestimates the individual outside. You talk about hero-worship? That is where you have it. Hero-worship of a novelist. A good novelist, I admit. But I don't take my politics from him. The comrade in question stated that Farrell has done yeoman's work for the CRDC. This comrade was giving Farrell the credit for the magnificent defense job the party has done. Farrell, to be sure, showed that he has guts when he came to our defense. But it was due to the party that he could play a decent role in the war. Now I don't want to take any credit away from James T. Farrell. But we must not stand questions on their head. He had backbone to stand up. He stood up and our party publicized it and made a hero out of him in the eyes of revolutionists. It is the party that comes first, foremost and above all, and we have got to understand this relationship of individuals outside the party towards the organization.

In his letter James T. Farrell raised two questions. Not only was he dead wrong on both of them, but he raised them at a time when our party was entering a pre-convention period and was going to discuss these questions internally. As I said before, we are party people above everything else, so we told James T. Farrell -- we are on friendly terms with him -- we said, in effect, "We prefer that you hold this over until we settle it within the party because with us this comes first. If we print your piece in the magazine, we would have to answer it. If we answered it as it deserves to be answered, then the minority in our organization might get the idea that we are attacking them." And that wouldn't be a false idea either. Which was our obligation? Whenever we are in doubt we always rather err on the side of giving weight to the needs of the party as against the individual.

Suspicion of the Leadership

The way some of our comrades broke into hysterics at the censure of the four shows a warped attitude on the whole question. They know the leadership of the party; they know their standing in the movement; they know their loyalty to the movement, their defense of program. All this was forgotten the minute they heard about the censure. They attacked us before they ascertained all the facts in

the case. Similarly with the Hansen article. Morrison jumped on the Hansen article before he even read it. He read a few excerpts quoted by Macdonald -- an opponent of the party. I would ask myself, if in Morrison's place, how these quotations selected by Macdonald actually read in context. But not Morrison. He gives the benefit of the doubt to the individual as against the party in this case, as well as in the censure, as well as in the James T. Farrell incident.

Now I want to say a word about comrade Bennett's "polemical" methods. I think the most disgraceful articles in the internal bulletin were written by her. Proceeding from preconceived suspicion that the leadership is permeated with Stalinist germs, she distorts facts and fictionalizes incidents. Everyone of her articles is intended to prove one thing and one thing only, that the party has become Stalinized. We don't object to criticism. But why does Bennett go up in the air the minute she has a criticism of the leadership? Why? Why does she have to become hysterical about it? She could make her criticism in a reasoned way and we would answer it. But when she gets rabid and fights Stalinism in our ranks, picking up all the Old Man's arguments against Stalinism and hurling them at us, at the party of Bolshevism, we have a right to be indignant.

The Chicago Branch

Bennett's attitude has left its imprint on the Chicago branch. I visited Chicago for a discussion with the branch. I know the comrades there have done some very good work. I never questioned it. My objection is to the miseducation of the comrades. When you recruit nineteen new members into the party we are naturally very happy. But the atmosphere in the branch is such that the new recruits as well as the old members are miseducated. You do not make Bolsheviks out of them -- this is what we object to. The Chicago branch is like a cow that yields a lot of milk and then kicks over the bucket. This is the Chicago branch for you, comrades. And I have seen it. I attended a meeting of the branch Executive Committee where a comrade made an open declaration of adherence to the National Committee viewpoint as against the opposition. He is a fine type of worker revolutionist. In effect he said the following; "I have been sitting on the fence because I have been opposed to those who denounce the N.C. as a bureaucracy and I have been opposed to those who are subservient to the National Committee." "Subservient"! That is the spirit that has been drilled into the Chicago branch. Anyone who supports the National Committee is "subservient". In order to assert your independence you must oppose the National Committee, no matter what. "To be smart you have to be anti." You have to be negative. That is the spirit which we are against.

Morrison's articles are permeated with the Chicago spirit. Talk about independent thinking? Why, of course we want comrades who are able to think independently, who can stand on their own feet, who are critical. But we are against anyone making a profession of criticism. We don't want anyone walking around with a medal on his chest merely because he is a critic. Criticize when criticism is in order, when it is deserved.

I am opposed to the spirit of the Chicago branch in which a comrade can get up under the excuse of giving a book review of the "New Course," and launch an attack against our party leadership, charging that there is a bureaucracy in our organization, basing himself on Trotsky's arguments against Stalinism. When a worker comes into the Chicago branch, upon joining the party full of enthusiasm because at last he found the party representing his interests, the first thing he is treated with is the irresponsible charge that this party is saddled with a bureaucracy. The same worker is fighting bureaucracy in the trade union. He joins the party to arm himself properly for this fight and he is told that he must start by fighting bureaucracy in his own party. How is he going to feel about it? If it is true, then by all means do it. I would join you in the fight myself provided you could convince me that the party is indeed saddled down with a bureaucracy. I never could stomach bureaucratism. I have fought it all my life. All you have to do is convince me. Give me the proofs. Give the party the proofs, and you will have the majority on your side. But you conjure up bureaucratism or germs of Stalinism out of thin air. Our party is far too mature to go for this kind of stuff, this is why you find yourselves isolated and out of step with the party as a whole.

Leadership Requires Responsibilities

I spoke earlier of the problem of leadership and the need of developing in our comrades the capacity to lead masses. This involves first and foremost a sense of responsibility. No worker is ever going to follow anyone who behaves like a screwball, who shoots wild. Workers can sense it. They will listen to you and follow you if you have that necessary balance, that necessary capacity to act responsibly. That is what we demand of the Chicago comrades, a responsible attitude; not a campaign of slander.

What is a slander? If you say there is a bureaucracy in the party and you have no basis for your charge and you can't prove your point, then it is nothing but a slander. If you say there are germs of Stalinism in our party when it is false, that, too, becomes a slander.

To lead the successful revolution we need a program -- and this we should repeat tirelessly -- we need a revolutionary program. We need a revolutionary policy. But we also need a revolutionary party that is firm, strong, that knows how to act unitedly. We need a leadership that has the respect and the support of the organization. If you feel the leadership does not deserve your confidence, throw it out and get another leadership. But you can't get along without a leadership. This is why those who would denigrate leadership actually act to undermine the party. Especially, when the leadership has consistently proved over a period of many years that they have stood up, that they have met whatever tests the situation presented.

It is fortunate, of course, that we have a different type of party today than we used to have in the old days. We have a party of workers and not of petty-bourgeois intellectuals and screwballs. The attempts to denigrate our party leadership can't get very far. The party workers can sense that the party has been led firmly and wisely,

and that is why they are supporting the leadership. All the articles of Comrades Morrison and Bennett in the internal bulletins have left no impression on the party because the living experience of the party is proof enough against all their charges. All their articles, no matter how well written, and all their speeches, no matter how glibly delivered, fail to make an impression because they fly in the face of the facts. This is why the party is so resentful about the whole performance. This is why the party is so indignant about the shabby showing of the opposition in the whole pre-convention discussion.

Roland

Now let me come to Roland. We have been waiting here for three long days -- this is the fourth day -- for Comrade Roland to show up and honor us with his presence at this convention. Our membership does not know the man. Very few -- only the old-timers -- remember him. We wanted him to present himself as the author of his document and to defend himself because we are going to attack him. He disdains to put in an appearance. On the eve of this convention we held a Plenary Session of the N.C. At this meeting I charged Roland with peddling falsehoods. I took one specific point in his document on which there is all the documentary evidence to prove the falsehood and asked the Plenum to select a subcommittee to investigate and establish the facts. I had hoped the Plenum sub-committee would be in a position to render this convention a report of its findings. But Roland showed up neither for the Plenum meeting nor for the subcommittee investigation nor for the convention itself.

The first I knew that Roland had any intention to differ with us, was at a pre-convention discussion membership meeting in New York. At this meeting he made a speech saying we were creating a split atmosphere in the party. This charge has a very familiar ring to us. We know from long experience that anyone raising the split issue in our movement is as a rule preparing to split himself, and is trying to place the onus on others. We had that experience in the fight with the Shachtmanites. Here is how splitters reason: Every comrade in the party wants to preserve unity. If you maintain that somebody is trying to split, you gain supporters. In Roland's case, though, I don't think he is interested in supporters when he raises the split issue. Roland wants no supporters. He wouldn't know what to do with them. Supporters impose responsibility. They expect leadership. This is precisely what Roland is trying to get away from. He is not seeking to give leadership; he is running away from it.

Roland followed up his speech at the N. Y. membership meeting with a long document. I want to speak freely and not mince words. We have no reason for it with this individual. He submitted his document several days before the convention and insisted on its immediate publication. Our whole apparatus was tied up with the last minute convention preparations. But he was in a great hurry. He finally got the comrades of the minority to help him with the technical work. I don't hold that against them. They thought they had something there. That they were getting badly needed reinforcements. The document made its appearance and then its author disdains to show up for the party convention, for the Plenum; and when we have specific charges against him he doesn't come to answer them either. What is he doing but demonstrating his contempt for the party. Why should we mince words with him?

The specific charge we made against Roland at the Plenum, dealt with his concoction of a fable about an alleged exchange of telegrams we were supposed to have had with Natalia. That these telegrams were part of a plot to hide something from the party. Let me briefly state the facts. Comrade Natalia sent us a letter criticizing our line on the Russian question. The letter was written in haste. I can state this without hesitation. Comrade Natalia says so herself. We didn't quite understand her letter. But we knew what she meant. We discussed it and sent her a letter of reply. Roland wanted us to print Natalia's letter for the membership. We told him that her letter was open to misinterpretation. She refers to the slogan of the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union as "outlived". This was a careless formulation and open to misinterpretation. It was our proposal to hold off publication of the letter and find out first if she had intended it for publication. Following that Natalia sent another letter representing her real position, and several days later another letter asking us to accept the second letter as "my letter, not the first." She says, "Don't send my first letter to Jim. Send only my second letter." She wouldn't even have it before the party leaders not alone the party ranks. In compliance with her own request we immediately issued the second letter in an internal bulletin. Now, Roland says, we sent a telegram to Natalia asking her not to make the first letter public and that it was upon our request that she agreed not to publish her first letter. He says, furthermore, that he knows the content of the telegram. All we want from him is to tell us where he got it. Because we never sent any such telegrams. We never received any such replies to telegrams. Furthermore, this is not our practice. But he says: "Thereupon, for the first time in our movement, so far as I am aware, the Committee acted in the manner of the old C.P. when it used to send telegrams to Moscow -- with the object of 'putting something over'. . . The convention should demand that this telegram and the reply be produced and read." We cannot produce any telegrams because there has been no such exchange of telegrams. Roland is the one who owes an accounting to the convention. But he refused to come for such an accounting, even though he is right here in this city. He is the one who must do all the explaining. He must tell us why he resorts to cheap invention, to outright falsehoods as a substitute for political argument.

I don't want to take too much of your time with Roland's document. It isn't of too much consequence because of the individual concerned. The only reason we are discussing it at all is because someone may say: "Well, supposing he is no good. Supposing he is contemptuous of the party. What about his arguments?" When I first read this document I thought we had another Rip Van Winkle case -- that Roland went to sleep in 1941 while reading an article of Wright's and the noise of the 1944 pre-convention discussion awakened him. He then tried to relive all those years, and must have gone back to 1941 and collected all the quotations of all the articles written by Wright and others since 1941. But then I remembered, he couldn't have been asleep all those years, because I saw him during this

period. Not too often, it is true. But I did see him. I remember this distinctly. I remember him coming around as a visiting nurse with a thermometer, taking the party's temperature. If there was a slight rise in temperature he was elated. Temperature normal? No good. One such meeting he attended was last February. We had under discussion an article that Comrade Wright had written for The Militant. We didn't agree with this article. It wasn't exactly in line with the requirements of the situation. Roland came to this meeting. He took the temperature, thought it had risen a little, and immediately launched a barrage against Comrade Wright to show that not only the article in question was wrong, but that Wright had been wrong all his life. At this meeting Wright said to him quite correctly, "Why didn't you bring this up at the Plenum recently concluded?" Roland couldn't answer that kind of argument.

I remember him again at another meeting of the P.C. when the Russian question was under discussion. The basis of the discussion was a letter from Farrell Dobbs and the letter from Natalia referred to earlier. Here too he came with his thermometer. The temperature in the room had risen a little. There were some differences. That was his chance of a life-time. He had been waiting for precisely this sort of opportunity. He again launched an attack on Wright and others. We told him what Wright had told him at the earlier meeting. If our line was wrong in 1941, why didn't you bring this up at the convention in 1942? We were then begging for discussion. Why didn't you come before the party and tell us what was wrong with our line? We had a Plenum after that, and numerous meetings of the Political Committee in between where he could come, present his line, argue for it, and thus correct us. If we refused to be corrected, he would at least have a record of his efforts to correct our mistake with which to come to a party convention at a later date and say, "I tried to correct the party line but the leadership resisted. Now I must come to the membership. You must correct the line." But this wouldn't be like Roland.

This document is supposed to deal with the defense of the Soviet Union as it applies at present. What is he trying to prove? Is our policy wrong? Is he out to correct our line? But he starts out by saying that he agrees with our present line. If it is his opinion that we made mistakes on this question in the past and that we corrected those mistakes, he could easily have presented his point of view for the education of the party. If he wants to draw the lessons of our position on the Russian question, he could have done that. But not by stringing together quotations out of context with the events at the time of writing. He would have to show how, in what particular historical juncture our position was wrong. Roland doesn't do that. As a matter of fact, his document uses the Russian question only as a peg. It is really a document on the organization question.

His document is entitled; "We arrive at a line." You want to find out how we really arrive at a line. You read the 36 mimeographed pages of his piece. But you can never learn this from Roland. He relates that for years he had conducted a running fight with the editors of The Militant. That he apparently succeeded in smuggling

in his line. He quotes many of his own articles we printed. But at the same time he alleges that we printed other articles contradicting his line. How was all this possible? Were we asleep at the switch? Was it a case of careless editing of our press, or of political confusion? Roland knows that we do not permit anarchy in our publications. Our press expresses the line of the party and not of individuals. But Roland is not interested in presenting a coherent, reasoned point of view.

The whole object of the document is to sow confusion. This is why he makes no reference to the Political Committee meeting in February, 1944, at which we made a definite decision to place major emphasis on the danger to the European revolution emanating from Stalinism. Why doesn't he refer to that? Because any reference to that would shatter his whole argument. Yet he was present at that meeting. We followed up the decisions of that meeting with a long front-page editorial in the paper, proclaiming to the world where the immediate danger was and what the tasks were. He might argue that we should have sent a letter to the branches calling attention to the editorial. If somebody had made the proposal, we might perhaps have accepted it. When no one on the Committee disagrees with a line or a proposed change in line, there is no dispute to take to the membership. Fight with whom? On what? Everyone agreed. We printed the editorial. Every comrade knew what was involved. They read the proclamation of the line printed on the front page.

Roland tries to create the impression that we changed our line in the dark of night. He reports a conversation or an alleged conversation with me. He says that I told him "we took Wright over the coals at a private meeting," and that is how we corrected the line. False from beginning to end. It is another of his concoctions. But it is a very revealing concoction. He says the truth is "that Wright had been 'hauled over the coals' for his whole line when events had broken over the head of the Committee and shown how disastrous that line was." What events broke over our heads in February 1944? Why couldn't he find space in a voluminous document to specify what he is talking about? The truth is that we held a Political Committee meeting in which we decided the line. Comrade Wright agreed with us. There was no need to haul anybody over the coals. There was no private meeting of any sort. Roland fictionalizes further; "M. Stein informed me concerning this fact and was himself taken aback when I expressed astonishment that this should be done in hidden form among a group of 'friends' not even in the P.C.!"

He is trying to prove that he really has the membership at heart. He wants to educate members, while I have the bureaucracy at heart. If he has the education of the membership at heart he should have come to the Political Committee and proposed that we have a discussion in the membership on the Russian question. But he never did it. Having no record of such proposal, he has to concoct this kind of conversation and word it so as to make it appear as a conversation between one who is a party democrat and one who is a party bureaucrat. He spouts about the education of the party members. Words fail me, comrades. What has he done to educate even a single member in the party? Can you educate comrades by remote control? Perhaps science

will sooner or later devise some way of doing it. Roland hasn't attended a branch meeting in years. He is not in contact with the party membership. He doesn't know the membership and they don't know him.

When a comrade in the N. Y. Local had a difference with us on our attitude towards the Stalinists, he came to us and asked for a discussion. We didn't turn it down. We had such a discussion. Similarly, when Comrade Morrison asked to have a discussion on the united front. If Roland had proposed to educate the party members through a bulletin on the Russian question, we would most likely have had such a discussion. As it was, we educated the party through the press. A very good way of educating. The Militant and F.I. are not only for the outside world. Members and leaders alike can learn from our press.

Roland makes the charge that when we published the letters of Comrade Natalia and Martin in the internal bulletin that here, too, we put something over on the membership. He says we left out the date in Martin's letter. Why? Because we believe in prestige politics. Had we printed the date on Martin's letter, it would apparently show that Martin is not an independent thinker, that he wrote his letter not on his own initiative but on Natalia's initiative. Roland tells us; "The publishing in this fashion of the Natalia and Martin letters serves, does it not, to make it appear that both together were motivating a turn in our course, with a new emphasis, a different one, on the European revolution and the question of defense of the USSR." When you have a leader cult in the party, you must give the impression that every proposal emanates from the leader. This is why we scheme all the time, resort to all sorts of tricks. We omitted the date on Martin's letter, according to Roland, to leave the impression that Martin's letter came first, and it was only then that Natalia raised these questions. But there is no perfect crime. And the criminal in this case too is Roland. Date or no date, Martin's letter starts out with the sentence, "In reply to Natalia," and Natalia's name appears several times in the text of the letter. In other words, Martin's letter is an answer to Natalia. This is stated specifically and clearly. Why then this nonsense of Roland's? Whom does it benefit? This is anti-party stuff. It is not merely anti-leadership. It is anti-party. He is trying to besmirch the organization for which he has no use.

Now, comrades, comrade Cannon once said very pointedly, democracy has three parts to it; One third of it is the right to criticize. We never deprived anyone of this right. Our party provided the platform and the internal bulletins for criticism. The second part is the right to answer criticism. And that is what we are here for. And I believe we have answered the various criticisms. There is yet a third part, and that is the right of the membership to pass judgment on the criticism and the answers, and that is what you are here for, comrades, in convention, to pass judgment on the critics and those who are criticized, to pass judgment on the content of the criticism and the content of our reply. And it is your decision that we are concerned with. It is your decision that will decide the course of the party. If the criticisms are upheld -- it would mean

a departure from the Bolshevik course in the party. It would mean the breakdown of our methods of functioning, the methods of Bolshevik organization, the methods of irreconcilability, the method of struggle against all opponents, with all the weapons at our command.

The verdict of the party is known in advance. The overwhelming majority supports our views and not the views of our critics. It is now up to our critics to decide whether they shall attune themselves to the party as it is. They must fall into step with the party which is confidently marching forward, sure of its line of march and certain of victory.

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LETTER FROM NATALIA

November 6, 1944

Dear Friends,

I shall not dwell on the section of your letter which contains information, limiting myself to a grateful acknowledgement. I must tell you, however, that it supplied me with hardly anything new. The tireless work of our friends and its successes are a guarantee of its viability and we have all the more grounds for a fearless review of our slogans. I must come to the defense of those friends whom you condemn, in connection with differences of views, for having altered the character of the mutual (personal) relations, coloring them with sharpness, hostility and impoliteness. This is quite human. We are united by unity of ideas. Whenever this is disrupted, the internal interrelations, and together with them also their external forms become altered.

After an exposition contained in the informational section in your letter, you pass on to the controversial question of the defense of the USSR; and you begin with a declaration of your complete agreement with me in the evaluation of the Soviet bureaucracy. I never entertained the slightest doubts about it. This has been firmly established through the greatest experience over many years; this was and remains the basis of our successive conclusions. Your declaration, as well as, incidentally, the exposition in the informational section (of your letter) was necessary in order to facilitate for you the road of further discussion. But, after all, the criticism of the Russian bureaucracy does not exist of and by itself, no more than does the slogan of the defense of USSR. One must not incessantly repeat one's condemnation of Russian bureaucracy, without drawing corresponding conclusions from it. Criticism may undergo change during this or that segment of time, corresponding with the changes in the conduct of the bureaucracy itself; we criticize with greater force now one, now another of its sides. It is impermissible to confine oneself to an absolute adjustment once and forever. Criticism of this sort becomes transformed into a worthless, lifeless trinket which serves to lull oneself and to shut one's eyes to the occurring changes. By your declaration -- and thereby you seek to bring about appeasement -- you rid yourself of any genuine living criticism of the situation that has been created.

"Yes, yes, I am in agreement with the criticism of the Soviet bureaucracy," you say to yourself and by this lamentation -- you free yourself from the analysis of the current events, current facts which are bound up with the deeds of the bureaucracy.

You behave similarly with the slogan of the defense of the USSR. You ignore the profoundest changes both in the domestic and foreign situation of the Soviet land. For you the slogan of the military defense of the USSR is fixed once and for all, you do not notice changes that have been introduced into the concept of defense by the general surrounding background; that the direct need of it has

fallen away and that in view of the altered conditions now comes to the fore with all its force not the military defense of the USSR but its defense against the internal enemy, the mightiest and most dangerous one.

You forget the essence of the slogan of the defense of the USSR. It includes at one and the same time the military defense against foreign intervention and internal (defense) against the usurping bureaucracy -- the latter conditions the former. I do not propose as I have already -- not once -- written to take off the slogan of the defense of the USSR. But in view of the altered general situation I did propose to remove military defense to the background in view of its needlessness in the present conditions and to advance to the forefront with full force that on which military defense is grounded: the struggle against the Stalinist regime. Once again, the slogan of defense contains a two-fold meaning and depending upon the circumstances of the general political situation its center of gravity shifts now to one side, now to the other. It is you and not I who reduce to zero the meaning of the slogan of defense as a whole, when you incessantly repeat it in a situation in which the first part of the slogan does not find application; I say as a whole, because the actual situation with its full force demands a stress on the second part. By continuing in uncorresponding conditions to advance the slogan of military defense, you wholly annul the slogan of defense. Whereas I propose to preserve it by removing its first part to the third plan, saving thereby its most important ground (the second part).

"Whither the USSR?" This question must be placed in the center of our attention, of our propaganda, of our agitation. It is impermissible to plead lack of knowledge concerning what is taking place in Russia, (to cite) lack of information, Russian censorship, and so on. With respect to information, the conditions at the present time are much more favorable than was the case a few years ago, which did not prevent us (at the time) from analyzing the internal situation of the USSR, determining the character of the first workers state in this or that period of time, analyzing the tendencies of its development, and drawing conclusions and sketching out perspectives. Recall the numerous articles of LD on this subject; -- articles -- elucidatory, persuasive, and outlining the possible perspectives. His variant of the revolution in the USSR which would overthrow the bureaucracy, clearing the road for the defense of the Soviet Union against the onslaught of the capitalist environment, rallying the international proletariat to its aid. And the other variant: the military successes of the bureaucracy, its temporary strengthening, the mighty entrenchment of its position, but its inevitable fall, all this notwithstanding. You recall the caution with which LD each time analyzed the political condition of the workers state in order to determine its further evolution. Absolutely correct. But caution served him for a definite aim: to carry out the analysis on the basis of carefully selected material. Caution in and of itself, just as criticism of the Soviet bureaucracy in and of itself, just like the slogan of defense in and of itself, becomes transformed into something just the opposite, something harmful, and incautious (it is at least incautious in the given conditions not to deal with burning questions) into a fear of seriously undertaking the analysis of the most important Russian question: this "bad" caution prompts you to adduce such arguments as lack of information concerning the USSR, absence of materials for

arriving at judgments, and so on. And the result is that we, with excessive lack of caution have kept silent over the Russian question in the course of four years. In your letter, you absolutely correctly take note in your letter of this most onerous omission. Unjustified caution obstructs the road to a review (an analysis) of the slogan of the defense of the USSR. We have delayed exceedingly with it, too.

You write that "the Russian proletariat has not yet spoken its final word." To whom do you address this assertion? Precisely because the Russian proletariat has not spoken its final word, I proposed to review the question of military defense by transferring the center of gravity to the internal struggle against the most dangerous and, at the given time, the one and only enemy of the Russian proletariat -- the Soviet bureaucracy, summoning it (the Russian proletariat) daily and hourly to "speak its final word."

In The Militant, No. 34 there appeared a very good article on the actions of the Red Army (the Soviet bureaucracy) in Poland, with this exception, that, in my opinion, it is incorrect to consider partisan detachments as revolutionary. Both in their origin and in their composition they bear a purely nationalist character. If one takes into account the point of view expressed in your letter, it is possible to conclude that your attitude to the article is a negative one. Is that the case? In this connection I can adduce a quotation from the Bulletin of the Russian Opposition No. 72, 1938:

"Those who under the pretext of the war danger recommend the cessation of war against Stalinism (the Kremlin) are actually deserting revolutionary tasks, covering themselves with loud phrases about a world catastrophe. We have nothing in common with this utterly false view."

You pose the questions: (1) What is the degree of degeneration reached by the workers state? (2) How long can the period of degeneration endure? (3) What form can it take? (The first two questions are scholastic.) Into the first question it would be possible to introduce greater precision: has the development of the tendencies of the workers state to the side of capitalism been deepened in the last four years? The time terms of its degeneration can hardly be indicated with precision, and essentially this is not important. The third question is determined by the first -- complete degeneration can lead only to capitalism. Regeneration is possible through revolution which will overthrow the bureaucracy and lead to socialism. The questions posed by you ought to be combined into a single one: "Forward to Socialism or back to Capitalism?" And a number of articles should be written on this subject. It is also necessary to pose the question of the Red Army; it must enter into the above-mentioned unified question, but one ought to deal in greater detail with it in a special article or pamphlet. Because there are among us the greatest errors on this score. Here is what was written as far back as May-June 1938 in the Bulletin of the Russian Opposition Nos. 66-67:

"The transition from a barracks army to a militia army was systematically prepared for over a decade. But from the moment when the bureaucracy completely crushed all manifestations of independence

by the working class, it proceeded openly to transform the army into an instrument of its rule. The militia system was completely set aside. An officer caste with generals and Marshals has been reinstated. From an instrument of socialist defense the army has become the instrument for the defense of the privileges of the bureaucracy." (My emphasis.)

This was written, as I have already said, in 1938. But what has happened since then? You are acquainted with it. The example of Bulgaria which you adduced in your letter, undoubtedly indicates the revolutionary spirit of the Bulgarian masses, seeking the Red Banner. But not the revolutionary spirit of the Red Army.

To all your questions, you can already now receive answers from the articles in the Bulletin of the Russian Opposition. They wholly retain their actuality. The anti-revolutionary tendencies of the USSR, outlined in them, have been and are deepening year by year; they have deepened catastrophically in the recent war years. I cite still another quotation from the same source:

"The evolution of the Soviet state therefore proceeds in complete contradiction with the principles of the Bolshevik program. The reason for it is that society, as has already been said, is evolving not toward socialism, but toward social contradictions. If in the future the process continues along this same road (and it is proceeding along this road -- N.), it will inevitably lead to the re-generation of classes, the liquidation of planned economy and the restoration of capitalist property. The state regime will in that case inevitably become fascist."

Permit me still another quotation: "Thus, while it is impermissible to reject in advance in rigidly specific cases the possibility of a "united front" with the Thermidorian section of the bourgeoisie against the open offensive of capitalist counter-revolution, the chief political task in the USSR still remains: the overthrow of the Thermidorian bureaucracy itself. (This appears in bold face -- N.) Every additional day of its rule shakes apart the socialist elements of economy and increases the chances of capitalist restoration."

Articles from the Bulletin of the Russian Opposition on this subject could be very instructive now. It is incomprehensible why they have remained unutilized in the course of four years. Not only were they not read in their entirety, but they were never quoted, nor referred to -- this is very indicative. Only our Spanish friends have occupied themselves with this question. While the articles are being written on the subject treated by us: "Whither the USSR?" I would propose that a number of articles from the Bulletin of the Russian Opposition be translated both for the magazine and for the paper; and that they be carried from issue to issue. One could begin say with the article "Does the Soviet Government still continue to follow the Principles Adopted 20 years Ago?" (Bulletin of the Russian Opposition, Nos. 66-67). The Bulletin ought to be studied and everything necessary taken from it.

Finally, a few more words about the Russian masses. There cannot be any doubts that the Russian masses are dissatisfied; that there exist oppositional elements and illegal organizations in the USSR. The Master of the Soviet land cannot pass over to capitalism without a counter-revolution, failing this he will not be able to tear away from the peasants the land for which they struggled for ages. It is still more difficult to perform this operation at a time when Europe is seized by a revolutionary movement. "There cannot be any reason to doubt that the overwhelming majority of the communists as well as of the population do not want a return to capitalism, especially now that capitalism has plunged mankind into a new war." (Bulletin of the Russian Opposition, Nos. 82-83). From this flows the vital need of intensified propaganda on the above-described subject. Let us warn against the mortal danger threatening the Russian proletariat, let us explain to them the causes of it, let us summon them to a struggle against the usurpers and gravediggers of the great revolution, basing ourselves on the European revolutionary movement.

One additional comment: the article, "Does the Soviet Government Still Continue to Follow the Principles Adopted 20 Years Ago?" should be supplemented with detailed notes, pointing out the road of further degeneration 1938-1944, and corroborated with the corresponding (enormous) materials which are at our disposal: and this should be done as quickly as possible.

With friendly greetings,

Natalia

ON ATROCITIES

By Dan Shelton

With the war in Europe approaching its inevitable military climax, more and more details as to the actual mechanics of the Nazi domination over Europe are beginning to seep out. With every new advance of the Allied armies, more and more Nazi death camps and atrocities are uncovered and a barrage of impressive reports is hurled at the American and other peoples to convince them of the barbaric bestiality of the Hun and the angelic qualities of the Anglo-American liberators offering candy to Europe's poor little orphans. Intent on hiding their own counter-revolutionary crimes, the Allied imperialists divert the masses' attention to crimes in the opponent's camp. Recently discovered Nazi death camps in Poland, Belgium, Lithuania, and Rumania, are reported on in great detail by bourgeois correspondents, and all the means and methods of high-pressure modern propaganda are used to impress the masses with the "fact" that these are German crimes; that all Germans are responsible for them; that therefore Germany must be subjugated and dismembered.

In all this maze of inter-imperialist struggle and falsification of facts and issues on both sides, it becomes imperative for us Trotskyists to assume a correct attitude on the general problem of atrocities; to evaluate the truth or falsehood of these atrocity stories; and to analyse the use to which they are put in the Allies' ever-growing Anti-German hate campaign. To contribute to a clarification of the issues involved is the purpose of this document.

The Militant of September 16, 1944 carried one of my articles entitled "Lublin Mass Murders. Reveal Rotting Capitalist Society". In it, it was stated that about 1,500,000 people had been killed by the most inhuman methods in the Nazi death camp at Lublin; it was pointed out that these were not "German" crimes but methods of a fascist regime that could be duplicated in other countries; and it went on to expose the hypocrisy of the Allies in their dealings with the victims of fascism.

One week later, the Militant of September 23 carried an editorial on "Atrocities", criticizing certain aspects of my article. Finding myself in disagreement with the larger part of this subsequent editorial, I asked that the Workers' Forum print a letter of mine explaining my attitude to the problem. This was agreed to by the editor and the letter was submitted. Let it be stated here that what is involved in this issue is not an article by this or that individual, but the by far larger question of atrocities, and our attitude towards them. This was further proven when the Sunday Worker of October 29, 1944 carried a full-page vicious slander article against us, entitled "Trotzkyite 4th International Used By Nazi 5th Column". The above mentioned Militant editorial to which I had taken exception for my own reasons, was there photostatically reproduced by the Stalinists to prove us to be Nazi agents and in no less than 3 places in the article was our editorial "dissected". In view of this Stalinist attack, it was agreed to by the Militant and myself that my own criticism not be printed in our press at this time.

Our refutation of the Stalinist slander article in the November 11th Militant -- while excellent in all other respects -- contained not a single reference to this issue which had so prominently figured in the Sunday Worker article. I consider this omission most unfortunate, the more so as by the same token the previously mentioned Militant editorial on "Atrocities" still stands uncorrected, as an editorial embodying the party's line. It is for this reason that I find it necessary to turn to the membership for a discussion of the issues involved.

First it is necessary to fully expose the hypocrisy and counter-revolutionary intents of the Allies in their use of these Nazi atrocities. To begin with, the Allied imperialists, in spite of all their righteous indignation over the victims of fascism, have done absolutely nothing to alleviate their suffering. Their "sympathy" is hypocritical to the core. This subject has been dealt with exhaustively in our press on previous occasions.

Secondly, the Allies remain completely silent about their own atrocities. There have been undercover reports of atrocities perpetrated by U.S. soldiers on Japanese which, of course, fail to reach the bourgeois press. This must be coupled with the barbaric treatment meted out by the Allied imperialists to their colonial slaves over decades; coldblooded murder, tortures and concentration camps.

Thirdly, the Allies are deliberately publishing these stories at a moment when military victory over the Nazis is secured and when it becomes imperative to convince the homefront of the necessity for their imperialist designs of a "hard" destructive "peace" for the Germans. Although these atrocities have been going on for years, only now do the Allies see it fit to publish them for their own treacherous purposes. This again reveals their completely hypocritical and coldly calculated approach to the human tragedy embodied in these reports.

Fourthly, in analysing the use made of these atrocity stories by the imperialists, there is one fundamental point which only we Trotskyists with our class analysis of modern society can fully grasp. It was this which represented the main point of the Militant editorial with which I am in full agreement. It must be emphatically stated that these reports on Nazi atrocities are used by the Allies to stir up anti-German feeling, to convey the impression that all Germans -- not just all Nazis -- are savage beasts that must be dealt with accordingly. In exposing this vicious amalgam, the editorial gives an excellent Marxist analysis of the problem.

However, presumably to "strengthen the argument", the major part of the editorial is written in such a form as make all these Nazi mass murders appear as so many lies manufactured by the Allies for their own infamous purposes. This unfortunate impression has been created in the minds of several readers by the use of quite peculiar formulations. After first preparing the reader by informing him that a hate campaign is being whipped up against the Germans, the editorial then continues; "Soviet Authorities claimed to have discovered a Nazi death factory. . . in which it was alleged (!) that

about 1,500,000 had been put to death." (My emphasis) This "luridly detailed" story becomes "further suspect" to the writer of the editorial when he remembers "similar atrocity stories" manufactured by the Allies in the first war. The "independent observers" whom I quoted in my article as having verified the story, were "merely newspapermen" who viewed the camp after the expulsion of the Nazis and "simply" wrote into their dispatches "supposed" facts supplied by Soviet officials.

As compared to the three-fourths of the editorial written in this vein, it is only in a subsequent 6-line paragraph that the editorial almost reluctantly, I am forced to say, concedes that atrocities, indeed, occurred at the camp, and that people were "even" (!) tortured to death.

If the editorial was not merely poorly phrased, as I tend to think, but also meant to imply that these atrocities were at least partly invented by the Allies, if not entirely, I must strongly protest. These atrocities are facts. Anybody at all acquainted with the nature and methods of Nazi fascism will have not the slightest doubt on this score. It is unfortunately true that in this war the so-called democracies do not have to invent atrocities in the other camp, even though they remain silent about their own. The Nazis have in the course of the last few years killed between 5-6 million representatives of "inferior" races, of whom at least four millions were Jews. These massacres must not become a source of petty suspicion to our Trotskyist press that correctly prides itself in "saying what is".

I am quite willing to admit that the formulation "confirmed by independent observers", as it appeared in my article, was incorrect. At another place, I referred to the "bourgeois press" carrying these reports, thus showing that the designation "independent observers" was merely a loose formulation on my part that even slipped by the editors.

But here I shall go a step further and state that these massacres were not only confirmed by bourgeois correspondents, but also by such international help organizations as the Joint Distribution Committee, the Quakers, the International Red Cross, the Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, the Jewish Congress and others. Last July the internationally known Fluechtlingshilfe refugee organization of Zurich officially published a closely documented report on the two death camps for Jews at Auschwitz and Birkenau, detailing the methods of extermination and reporting the "disposal" of no less than two million Jews there within the last two years.

It may be pointed out that again I am relying on testimony given by bourgeois organizations which are merely tools of their respective ruling classes, to be used against the German people and the German revolution. But to carry this correct formulation to its absurdity by stating that whatever these organizations do or report is so much poppycock, would be thoughtless formalism. The namelists at the HIAS and the Red Cross, naming literally tens of thousands deported and murdered by the Nazis are facts, our sceptics notwithstanding. Furthermore, in restating these facts, I find myself in

excellent company. In 1943 in an official statement on "The Slaughter of European Jewry", the Fourth International took open cognizance of this wholesale extermination. Must it be pointed out that the Fourth International had no reporters of its own in Europe checking on these reports, but relied exclusively on the testimony given by aforementioned bourgeois organizations and bourgeois correspondents? There are not many people left in this year 1944 who prefix the word "alleged" to reports of Nazi death camps.

The editorial referred to "similar" atrocity stories manufactured in the first war. This "similarity" has yet to be proven. Not one Belgian mother came forward after the first world war to state that her baby's hands had been cut off by the Germans, as had been claimed in the Allied press. But there will be and there are already hundreds and thousands of people in Europe and all over the world who can testify to the extermination of their entire families by the fascist scourge.

Furthermore, at no time did the Allies attempt to invent atrocity stories presumably committed by the Germans, prior to 1914. Contrast this with today. Since 1933 horror stories have been coming out of Hitler Germany, together with broken refugees whose very existence testified to the validity of these stories. Do the Nazi concentration camps represent Allied inventions? Or do they simply depict the workings of fascism, on this basis worthy of an analysis in our press?

It was Trotsky who once stated that the leaders of the coming European revolution are to be found in the Nazi concentration camps. And it was the Militant itself which has throughout these years constantly referred to the killings and deportations of our European comrades by the Nazis. This in itself is proof of the reality of Nazi terror in Europe. Surely we are not naive enough to believe that the Gestapo confines its activities and mass apparatus to our European co-thinkers.

On the contrary, on the basis of submitted evidence and close acquaintance with the actual workings of the Nazi terror, one is forced to conclude that even if some individual reports are "doctored" or "colored" by the Allies, and some probably are, in general, the bourgeois press does not and cannot present all the horror that is perpetrated in decaying European capitalist society today. In short, it is my contention that whatever the bourgeois press reports, it errs on the side of too little, rather than too much. Whatever little it presents, it completely distorts for its own infamous aims. But whatever little it presents, is only part of the full picture -- the reality of the workings of a fascist regime.

To people reared under the relatively greater "freedom" of bourgeois-democratic U.S., it is often inconceivable that the Nazis should be able to slaughter hundreds of thousands in cold blood, by poison gas and cremation, in specially designed "death factories". Even revolutionists sometimes tend to reject this as propaganda, though they should know better.

The truth of the matter is that the workings of a fully organized terror regime such as the Nazi fascist dictatorship are hard to believe for one who has not experienced them.

The goal of the fascist dictatorship is the preservation of the tottering capitalist structure and the prevention of the proletarian revolution.

The means used by the fascist dictatorship in its attempt to realize this goal, is the institution of planned mass terror. Half measures against the opposition are discarded. Complete annihilation of all real or imaginary opponents of the regime is the goal. An all-pervading secret police controls the whole of society down to the last individual. With its own police force and special army units (the S.S.) it creates the network of concentration camps, "protective custody", mass intimidation, agents provocateurs, and as its highest accomplishment -- the scientifically perpetrated extermination of millions of human beings at specially organized death camps. Tortures in all its forms, the killings of hostages, the mass shootings of workers on strike, are necessary and unavoidable concomitants of any fascist regime -- and not mere inventions on the part of bourgeois pen prostitutes.

The greater the realization by the fascist rulers of their own impending defeat by either internal revolution or external military attack, the more repressive and revolting their terror methods. This is the point at which Fascist Germany stands today. This is the reason for its ever greater reign of terror. And, conversely, it is only by our realization of the reality of this terror on the part of the fascists, that we can fully understand the counter terror now being waged by the European masses in the first stages of their revolution; the lynching of Caretta in Italy; the killings of the FFI in France; and the all-pervading slogan of the European masses to purge, to destroy the fascist collaborators -- a slogan so cleverly misdirected by the perfidious Stalinists. One has only to observe the reaction of the European masses to be convinced of the reality of the fascist crimes.

The strength of the revolutionary party lies in its telling the truth. It is not being served by denying the truth. The prestige of our party among the Jewish masses is not being enhanced by an editorial of this kind. The party can alienate, but cannot hope to attract Jewish workers on the basis of even partly denying the mass extermination of European Jewry. In this year of 1944 such an attempt will be laughed off by these Jewish workers if one can laugh in the face of four million dead.

It is true that my article did not sufficiently stress the vile intent of the Allies in their use of these atrocity stories. It is even more true, however, that in addition to correcting me on this score, the subsequent editorial leaned over too much on the other side, stressing entirely too much the "alleged" nature of these crimes. In its desire to be objective and truthful, the editorial turned into nothing less than a subjective distortion of the truth.

To represent a truly marxist analysis of the problem of atrocities the editorial should have embodied the following five points. These Five Points were found entirely acceptable by Comrade Warde in a subsequent discussion I had with him, thus confirming my impression that it was not the conception of our line that was at fault, but rather its expression in our press.

1. The atrocities ascribed to the German fascists, the concentration camps, death centers and gas chambers, are by and large FACTS. THIS MUST BE OUR FUNDAMENTAL POINT OF DEPARTURE.

2. These FACTS have been misused and distorted by the Allies for their vile campaign to dismember Germany and suppress a German revolution.

3. These FACTS do not represent "German" crimes. There is nothing "German" about fascism which is an international attempt on the part of the ruling class to save its tottering system. Fascism -- the brutal dictatorship of the bourgeoisie -- expresses itself precisely in these methods. Concentration camps and wholesale killings are a necessary concomitant of a fascist regime. They represent horrible commentary on the decay of the capitalist system.

4. In their dealings with these FACTS, the crude hypocrisy of the Allies must be exposed. In addition to inciting a vicious anti-German hate campaign, identifying all Germans with all Nazis, the Allies completely whitewash their own refusal to offer help or refuge to the very real victims of fascism. Furthermore, they completely whitewash the supreme atrocity -- committed by all imperialists -- war itself.

5. Having taken cognizance of these FACTS, the European proletariat will deal out swift and just punishment to the fascist perpetrators of these crimes. The American proletariat, on the other hand, must demand action instead of hypocrisy on the part of the government -- they must demand the opening of the doors to these victims of fascism.

In conclusion, my contentions may be restated in this form. According to the editorial, the facts themselves are open to doubt. This is untrue. What is at issue is the evil use which is made of these facts by the Allies. It is against this DISTORTION of the truth that we must strongly fight -- but not against the TRUTH itself.

November, 1944.

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