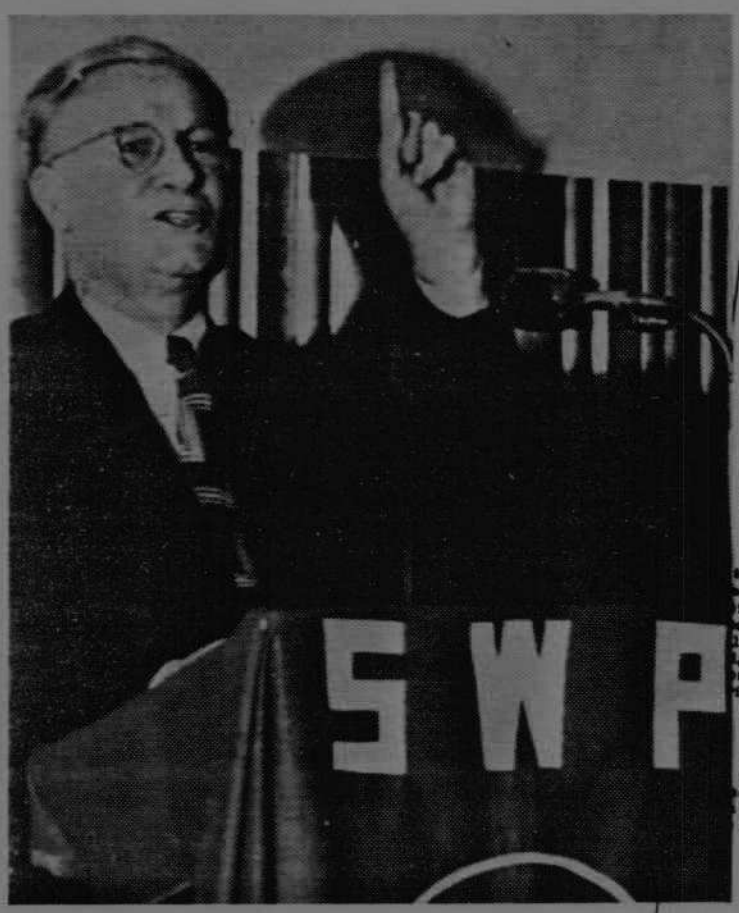
BUILDING THE PARTY (1950-1955)

James P. Cannon



Los Angeles, California
January 27, 1964

New York

Dear Farrell:

I am enclosing herewith the article on Deutscherism. The main problem was that of condensation and elimination, so as to bring out more sharply and concentrate attention on the central issue of the Deutscher theory of the self-reform of Stalinism and its political implications. Please tell Joe and Murry that I received the material they sent, but I had to leave out references to it, as well as a lot of other material, on that account.

After spending a lot of time making notes, I came to the conclusion that comment on Frank's and Haitan's reviews of the Deutscher book, and other aspects of the question, would be better reserved for follow-up articles after our fundamental thesis has first been established in a separate article—despite the revulsion I felt for their "friendly" reception of the affrontery of a political enemy, and the temptation to say what I thought of them, and a lot of other things while I was at it, in one omnibus article.

• • •

You can dispose of the article in any way you find most convenient. I think it is rather more suitable for the magazine than for The Militant. But I leave the decision to you. In any case please ask Joe to edit it and write in the subheads.

• • •

I have been reading the first bulletin of the International Committee in French, with a mounting feeling of outrage and indignation at the monstrous job that was done on the French majority in the name of "discipline." People capable of such things should be driven out with whips. Reading through this material I felt that I was living once again in the blackest days of our experience in the Comintern. I greatly admire the fighting spirit shown by the French majority in this cruel test—all the more so since they had to fight alone for such a long time. Their resolutions on this matter should be translated and published far and wide as soon as possible.

• • •

You told me that he had written to you making some suggestions about motivation and preparation of the new fund campaign. I made a number of notes on the same subject a couple of weeks ago and then had to put them aside till I finished with this article. I will try to write you at length on this and some other matters tomorrow.

Fraternally,

J.P. Cannon

JPC:jm
AIRMAIL

MRCI Education Bulletin £1

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P & P: MRCI, BCM 7750, London WC1, England.

Introduction

This pamphlet contains a selection of writings by the founder of American Trotskyism, James P. Cannon (1890-1974), from the period 1950-1955. Most of the letters and articles presented here have either never been published, or are long out of print. During this period, Cannon was easing himself out of the leadership of the SWP. In September 1952 he left the New York Centre, and moved to Los Angeles. In many of his letters, Cannon discusses the need to develop a new leadership and to find a new layer of members. His advice to leading comrades of the SWP on how they should develop themselves, and in which direction they should lead the party, gives a valuable insight into Cannon's views of party-building in general, and of the SWP at this time in particular.

In 1953 the Fourth International split, and the SWP, together with the British, French and Swiss sections, formed the "International Committee" (IC). We do not agree with Cannon's analysis of the split. We do not think that he -- or any other leader of the IC -- understood the roots of the Pablo/Mandel faction's opportunist orientation towards Stalinism, for the simple reason that the whole of the FI had a common centrist view of Stalinism, as codified at the Third World Congress (August 1951). In his speech on China (1955), reproduced here, Cannon shows the limits of his self-proclaimed "orthodox" Trotskyism. Although able to make some correct points on the Stalinist nature of the Chinese CP, and on the causes of the overturn, he could not present an overall view of the contradictory nature of Stalinism, nor could he avoid the FI's centrist conception of the "revolutionary process" spontaneously pushing the Trotskyists to the fore. However flawed some of the articles presented here may be, we feel that a critical study of Cannon's writings can contribute to a revolutionary understanding of the centrist degeneration of the Fourth International -- and of the SWP -- during this period, and to the education of a new generation of revolutionary militants throughout the world.

* * *

Other material by Cannon from this period can be found in the various Cannon volumes published by Pathfinder Press, as well as in the SWP "Education for Socialists" series "International Committee Documents 1951-1954", and in Pathfinder's "James P. Cannon as we knew him", from which the first two items presented here are taken. Pathfinder - effectively run by the SWP - appears to have stopped publishing the volumes of Cannon's "Writings and Speeches". Given the pro-Stalinist turn of the SWP, Cannon's attacks on their 1950s predecessors would obviously be embarrassing. We discovered the unpublished letters printed here in the International Committee Archives at the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Mouvement Trotskyste et Révolutionnaire International (CERMTRI - 88, rue Saint Denis, Paris 75001, France), where they are available for consultation. Other articles are taken from various Internal Bulletins, "Fourth International" and "Militant". Full details of the source of each document are given in the notes at the end of the pamphlet. Slight changes have been made to the texts: spellings have been anglicised, typographical errors have been corrected and editorial subheads have been removed. We hope that our example in publishing this pamphlet will encourage others who have access to the large amount of unpublished material by Cannon to make it available to a wider readership.

July 1987

The Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI) consists of: Arbeiterstandpunkt (Austria), Gruppe Arbeitermacht (West Germany), Irish Workers Group (Ireland), Pouvoir Ouvrier (France), Workers Power (Britain).

Letter to Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel
and Pierre Frank - 17th February 1950 (1)

Dear Friends,

I have finally become a rich man, and have some extra money which I am free to dispose of as I see fit. As I recall, Marx, like Engels, once wrote that one should wish for worldly goods only to be able to fly to the assistance of his friends. This is my disposition too.

On the occasion of my sixtieth birthday celebration in New York, the rank and file comrades of the New York organisation presented me with a purse of $400. The Party Plenum, which was held at the same time, unanimously approved the initiative of the New York comrades and decided to make the fund a national one. The comrades of all branches throughout the country, as well as friends and sympathisers, will be given an opportunity to contribute to this fund on a purely voluntary basis. So, in a few weeks I will have even more money.

But in the meantime, in order to protect myself against the conservatising influence of wealth, I want to dispose of the $400 now in hand and have decided to divide it among the three of you as my personal gift to you. Please let me know right away how to send it. I wish to divide this money into three equal parts among yourselves.

However, I make one absolute stipulation as to the use of the money. I want you to understand firmly that it is for your <u>personal</u> use, to be put into your own pockets and used only for your <u>personal</u> needs. Under no circumstances is it to be turned in to the organisation treasury or to be spent for any of the regular items of the budget. With this strict limitation, I don't care what you do with the money. Buy food with it if you are hungry; or, if you are thirsty, you can spend it all on Cognac as far as I am concerned.

This is the first opportunity I have had to express to all three of you my heartfelt appreciation -- and, yes, I may as well say it frankly -- my reverence for the truly great and heroic work you have done for the cause through these difficult years. I am glad that, thanks to the kindness and generosity of the New York comrades, I am able to express my sentiments in this regard with something more than words.

If I might make a suggestion as to how you could squander a small part of this money, it would make me very happy if the three of you, who have worked so long on skimpy rations, would get together and treat yourselves to the best French meal you can get in a good French restaurant. Wash it down with the best French wine the "maison" has to offer. And then, when the Cognac is served with the coffee, you might drink a toast to my sixty years. But not a political one, in thesis form, to which you Europeans are too much addicted, but just something personal, like this: "Here's to the old son-of-a-bitch who believes that money was made to be spent and shared with friends".

Letter to Joe Hansen - 28th March 1952 (2)

Dear Joe:

We are standing on a great bridge of history. Things we discuss and the decisions we make are the most important in the history of the world. Bear in mind that when I talked to Trotsky in 1935 (3) about the French question, about Molinier and Naville, I said they have a great historical responsibility. He answered me: "The greatest responsibility in the history of the world and they quarrel and split over trifles".

That's reported in my book The History of American Trotskyism.

The thing that bothers me, Joe, is that we who have created the greatest cadre -- shall they fall apart and split over trifles? Or are we strong enough to absorb the little things and still keep the cadre together? That is my will, and what I want to know is who is going to help me?

You saw that meeting last Saturday. (4) If I had been a willful man, I could have broken the whole thing to pieces right there, but I didn't want to do it.

I ask you to take into consideration not only the drastic action that I took in reading my letter to the International, but my secondary action in withdrawing the letter. And not merely withdrawing it, but, as Reba will tell you, burning it up and asking her to burn her stenographic notes (which she did).

People who are working with me -- I want them to know when I give something with the left hand, I don't take it back with the right. That letter which caused such consternation to some of the comrades does no longer exist. Maybe that is a small lesson for you, Joe. When you give a concession, make a real one.

In your future troubles and factional arguments, etc;, when you make a concession, make a real one. My greatest pride, Joe, in all the bitter years we had to fight is that no man dares to come before the leading body and say he didn't get a fair deal. Pin any man down, no matter what his beliefs are, and he will admit that he can get a square deal in this party. He will not be framed up; he will not be taken advantage of and run out. If anybody wants evidence, you can tell them about yourself. When we had the dispute about the sociological designation of Eastern Europe, you were in a minority. (5) I was on the other side, but we approached it from different angles. You were approaching it from the theoretical side; I was approaching it from the political side. I had a mortal terror of any conciliation towards Stalinism. So the discussion proceeded.

You at the beginning of the discussion were in the minority; I was in the majority. You are in a position to tell the party, if the question arises, does a minority have a fair chance in this party? Were you hounded, persecuted, and denigrated because you disagreed with Cannon? Were all the doors of the party closed to you? Or, on the contrary, were all the doors opened and were you given the opportunity to make a national tour so that comrades all over the country could meet you and you could explain your minority opinion?

As far as I know this dispute is still unresolved. I do not accept the decision of the world congress. I do accept the political conclusion that we must defend these formations, so why fight about it? Do you think for one minute that if I considered this a fighting issue that I wouldn't fight?

Letter to an international comrade - 16th December 1953 (6)

Dear Comrade:

We have received your letter of December 2, in which you express some provisional opinions on the factional struggle in the Fourth International. We have noted your statement that "it appears that we see eye to eye on the political aspects of the question" as well as your criticism of our procedure. Somewhat similar opinions have been expressed in other letters received in New York since the publication of our "Letter to All Trotskyists" in the November 16 issue of the Militant.

The "political aspects of this factional struggle involve not the narrower questions of tactics, or even of strategy, but fundamental issues of principle -- as we have already demonstrated and will continue to demonstrate in an unceasing and unrelenting struggle to preserve our great heritage. For that reason, all secondary aspects will have to be subordinated, as we, acting with full consciousness and deliberation, have already subordinated them. For that reason, we cannot agree with your objection to our action in making public through the Militant our "Letter to all Trotskyists".

You write: "It is my opinion that you have prejudiced your getting a proper hearing on the political issues at stake by this utilisation of the press, by this taking of the political issues at stake to the public". You are mistaken about that, as were those who counselled us in 1928 to refrain from publishing the Militant and carrying our revolt against Stalinism "to the public". It's the same kind of fight now, and you will soon have to recognise it. Measures taken in a struggle cannot be determined by a rigid formula; they follow from the nature of the struggle and the way it is conducted by opponents.

The Pablo faction has already attacked our basic principles in public. They are openly and publicly working to revise the Trotskyist doctrines out of existence by the devious and tricky device of filling the old formulas with a new and different content. They are carrying out in practice a pro-Stalinist policy of their own factional devising which has no sanction or authorisation in any officially adopted resolution of an international gathering, nor in any of the classic writings of our teacher and founder. We are fighting in the open because that's the only effective way to meet such a challenge.

The Pabloites know very well that they cannot hope to secure formal and official sanction for their criminal policy as long as the historically created cadres of Trotskyism, educated in the doctrine and hardened in struggle, stand in the way. They must first break up or "excommunicate" these cadres and convert minorities into majorities. That's why they have provoked and instigated splits in one country after another -- first in France, then in Ceylon, and now in England and the United States. All these splits are now public affairs.

It is later than you think. What is involved is a wide-open fight to preserve the Lenin-Trotsky heritage and prevent the disruption and dispersal of the cadres. You, and everyone else, will have to take a position on the issues of political principle involved in the struggle. These issues of political principle stand above all formalities, as they have always done since the Left Opposition in the Russian Party raised the banner of revolt against Stalinist revisionism and degeneration thirty years ago.

By this I do not mean to state that we advocate or practice irresponsible conduct in matters of organisation and discipline, any more than our predecessors and inspirers did during the first heroic period of the struggle in the Russian Communist Party. We know all about organisational formalities, perhaps better than others -- if you will permit me to say so -- and have never been the first to brush them aside. But we also know the

difference between an honest system of democratic organisation and a formalistic trap for the innocent.

We do not belong to that school of super-politicians who say that "organisation methods" do not matter; that any abuse of authority, any organisational enormity, is permissible as long as the "political line" appears at the moment to be more or less correct. The "organisation question" is important in and of itself; and it is even more important as the first tell-tale indicator of undisclosed political aims. This was the case in the Russian Party in 1903 and again in 1923. We saw the same thing in the SWP in the great battle of 1939-40 with the Burnham-Shachtman revisionists. We see it now in the present struggle for the Fourth International.

Our "organisation methods", so well advertised by our various opponents in the past, are and always have been the instrument of a political line. This has eventually turned out to be the case with others, too, even though they didn't always plan it that way. It is perhaps no accident that the specific organisation methods of Pablo -- which are not Leninist, but to speak plainly, purely and simply Stalinist -- made their appearance in the administration of the Fourth International coincidentally with his departure from Leninist-Trotskyist orthodoxy and his attempts to impose a pro-Stalinist line on the movement against its will. Such a monstrous project could not be attempted, nor even seriously contemplated, by the method of honest, democratic discussion in which our movement was educated by its founder.

Now, as in the Russian party and the Comintern, this question of organisation is turned upside down; and the real violators of discipline, those who trample on every principle of democratic centralism as taught by Lenin and Trotsky, are precisely those who launch such accusations against their opponents; you will have plenty of chance to convince yourself of that too, when you get the true, detailed and documented story of the Pabloite operations in France and England.

The fact of the matter is that the Pabloites started the public struggle by publicly violating the basic principles of our movement in the policy they followed in connection with the great historic events of the past six months. They have done this without authorisation of any Congress or any adopted resolution. We have never recognised their right to do this. Our press has been defending the orthodox Trotskyist line and counterposing it to the line of the Pabloites for the past six months.

Our "Letter to All Trotskyists", adopted by our 25th Anniversary Plenum, was nothing more and nothing less than an extension of the six-month-old indirect polemic -- a public answer to the Pabloites' infamy, naming names. Our "Letter", as you can see for yourself by reading it attentively, is by no means a collection of epithets and unsubstantiated accusations. Our indictment lists concrete actions and cites precise texts which show the unauthorised and anti-Trotskyist position of the Pabloites on the post-Stalin events in the Soviet Union, on the revolt of the East German workers and on the French General Strike.

How did the Pabloites, who are presumably responsible for their conduct of office to the Trotskyists who make up the world movement, including, we take it, its founders and most loyal and most consistent supporters and builders -- how did the Pabloites reply to this indictment by the 25th Anniversary Plenum of the SWP?

Their answer appears in a special issue of the Paris organ of the Pabloite faction, "La Vérité des Travailleurs", December, 1953. It will probably surprise you when you read it, but it didn't surprise us. We encountered identically the same kind of answers from the Stalinists in 1928, and ever since over a period of 25 years, and we know the Stalinist mentality, the Stalinist method of answering revolutionary critics and opponents.

Here's what the Pabloite answer to our concrete and specific indictments, our precise quotation of their texts, consists of:

First, the Majority of the SWP -- which is more than an 80% majority -- is "excommunicated", without notice or hearing, and the pitiful Minority, running to the Shachtmanites for sympathy, are "recognised" as the Majority (as in France and England).

Then, having changed us overnight from a majority into a minority by a sort of papal bull, they proceed to change us just as suddenly from revolutionists into imperialist agents by papal anathema. They say: "The American Majority has just betrayed our cause..." "deserters and capitulators before the class enemy..." "buckling before the reactionary pressure now prevailng in the United States" -- and other pleasantries of the same order plucked fresh from the Stalinist garden.

The Stalinists said precisely the same things about us, word for word, in 1928 and ever since, and we have been wearing them proudly as decorations all this time. The Pabloites didn't even bother to "revise" the wording. Nothing is changed except the identification of the donor on the gift card.

But nowhere and never, in 1953 as in 1928, in a single paragraph of the special issue of their paper, do the Pabloites find space for an attempt to answer our indictment for concrete actions taken by them, or to deny the precise accuracy of our quotations from their texts. This is known as the method of evasion by counter-accusation. The reason for this method is as evident now, as it was evident in the Stalinist answer to our revolt and indictment in 1928. They cannot answer our accusations within the framework of our doctrine, and they cannot deny the accuracy of our quotations from their published writings.

Billingsgate is the only weapon left to them; that, and the appeal to all Trotskyists in the various sections to be "loyal to the International". When they say "The International" they mean the perfidious Pablo faction which is working night and day to disrupt and destroy the International and to pervert the Trotskyist movement into a left cover and apologist for Stalinism.

There is and can be no doubt whatever that the Trotskyist militants throughout the world, who have stood at their posts a long time under hardship and persecution, are profoundly attached to the Fourth International, which represents their greatest collective achievement. The Communist militants were animated by the same sentiment toward the Comintern during the first years of Trotsky's heroic struggle against its Stalinist degeneration. We know how this confidence was abused and betrayed by the Stalinist usurpers and converted into a force aiding the corruption and eventual destruction of the Comintern as a revolutionary organisation. If you want explicit and detailed information on how this job was done, I can give you plenty. I was there.

The whole trick was to identify the Comintern with the administration and to represent the criticism of the Left Opposition as an attack on the Comintern and the Soviet Union by "agents of imperialism". The same trick is being attempted now in the struggle within the Fourth International by the Pabloite faction. This time, however, the game will meet with a sturdier resistance, especially from the "old Trotskyists" who have been instructed by the experiences of the past.

Normally, of course, the Trotskyists, like any other organised political tendency, reserve the right to discuss their internal affairs among themselves. The leaders of the SWP, schooled in a long tradition of responsibility and discipline, would never be the frist to violate this normal procedure and resort one-sidedly to a public discussion. We are great believers in organisation formalities, regular procedure, responsibility and

discipline. These concepts and practices have been deliberately built into the SWP and are part of its solid structure.

But we are also believers in the Lenin doctrine that the essence stands above the form. The essence of the matter is that the conspiracy to prostitute the principles of our movement, and to break up and disperse its cadres, is already a wide-open scandal in several countries. That is the reality, and that is what we must deal with.

In France, during the General Strike, the Pabloites denounced the French Trotskyists of the Majority in a published leaflet addressed to Stalinists.

In Ceylon, the split of the pro-Stalinist faction has been widely exploited by the capitalist press of that country and has been publicised throughout the world by the international press agencies; we read the first reports of the Ceylon split in the New York daily papers.

In England the agents of Pablo publicly attack the Trotskyists in the mass movement and combine with Stalinist fellow-travellers against them.

And in the United States, as if to demonstrate that little things take the same pattern as the important, the pitiful Pabloite minority of the SWP, suspended from the party for their public boycott of our 25th Anniversary Celebration and election rally, appealed for public sympathy in the Shachtmanite press.

That is the essence of the matter, dear friend. The Pabloites by their actions have made the battle for the Fourth International a public affair; and we have no choice but to fight it out in public. We resolved at our 25th Anniversary Plenum to do our part to rally the Trotskyist militants everywhere to the defence of their programme and their organisation before it is too late. Our Plenum deliberately decided to talk openly to our international comrades through our press, this precious instrument which was not given to us but which has been created in 25 years of international collaboration.

But our appeal is not addressed to the public, to the Shachtmanites, or the Stalinist fellow-travellers. It is addressed, as the Open Letter of our 25th Anniversary Plenum says: "To all Trotskyists". By no means and under no circumstances do we advocate a split among the Trotskyists. Their task, as we see it, is a directly opposite one: to conduct an honest, democratic discussion in preparation for an honest, representative Congress; to maintain and strengthen their own unity in the struggle to defeat the splitters and to liquidate the liquidators.

Fraternally,

James P. Cannon

Letter to Joe Hansen - 12th January 1954 (7)

Dear Joe:

I received your letter of January 9, with extracts from the decisions of the Pabloite Plenum. I assume your treatment of this affair in the paper will make it clear from the start that this is a "Plenum" of the rumps of minorities from which the majorities of a half-dozen important sections have been excluded, that its decisions have only the status of factional pronouncements and can in no sense of the word be considered as decisions of the Fourth International, etc.

I think it is very important that all our comments be formulated in this way so as to make it clear that the struggle for the Fourth International is still proceeding as a factional struggle, that there is no question of the orthodox Trotskyists "withdrawing" or recognising the right of the revisionists to speak in the name of the Fourth International. I have given further explanation of the importance of this tactic in a letter to George Breitman.

I assume also you will take up their failure to answer the concrete political indictment in our letter, and restate the essential points of the indictment for the benefit of those who may have come in late. The following points should run through all our stuff like a refrain:

1. The issues at stake are issues of principle which relate to the basic doctrine of Trotskyism.
2. The Pabloites started the fight in public by publishing their attacks on the programme in public organs. (Clarke's article in the Fourth International, Pablo's stuff in the Quatrième Internationale, the French leaflet, etc).
3. The Pabloites are trying to split the International by expelling the most important sections in order to cut off discussion and arrange a rump Congress.
4. Their purpose is to compromise and discredit the name of the Fourth International as much as possible before formally "junking" it.
5. The orthodox Trotskyists will never permit this game to succeed. They already represent a real majority of the forces of the FI; they are conducting a factional struggle for the FI and are certain of victory in the struggle, etc.

In my opinion these formulations are very important, not only because they represent the essence of the real struggle, but also to avoid slipping into a position where we appear to be surrendering any formal grounds to the Pabloites.

* * *

I have almost finished a 5,000 word article on "Trade Unionists and Revolutionists." It's a re-write and amplification of my May 11th speech to the New York caucus on the stratifications in the working class, as they have been reflected historically in the factional struggles of our international movement, and as they are reflected today -- following the classic pattern -- by the Cochranite trade unionists. I had thought this would be suitable for the magazine. I will send it along in a day or two and you can look it over from that point of view.

I understood that my last Plenum speech on "Factional Struggle and Party Leadership" was also to go in the magazine. You don't mention it in the list of contents you are working up for the next issue, and I have been wondering what happened to my article. (8) I also sent another speech on the history of the fight for the Internal Bulletin. I would also like to know if that has been received.

We should always bear in mind the importance and necessity of thoroughly informing and educating our own membership, and especially the British membership, on all the issues and at all stages of the struggle. From that point of view, the whole struggle is a blessing in disguise. That can justify us in publishing everything we can turn out, both in the Internal Bulletin and in the press, as rapidly as possible.

As I wrote to Breitman, I am not impressed by the number of small weak sections being rounded up by the Pabloites to make an impressive total. With the basic cadres in France, Britain, China, Switzerland and this country, the real relation of forces is clearly on the side of the orthodox; all we have to do is to hold firm and keep firing away.

The Ceylonese probably hope -- by playing dead -- to avoid a new faction fight and threat of split by a section of the Pabloites who didn't leave the party in the previous split. This is the very worst thing they could do. It is practically a sure way of guaranteeing another split, at a later day. If any more material comes in from Ceylon I would like to get it promptly.

* * *

The material I have been preparing covers all points of the fight, with particular reference to the historical development of the international Trotskyist movement. I will try to follow your suggestion and work it up into short articles for the paper. If I can't send the first article in by Tuesday, January 19, I will be pretty sure to have it a week later. The trouble is that I have so much material that the problem of selecting and condensing is rather difficult. Besides that, so much of it is of purely internal interest that I will have a hard time popularising it for the paper. Anyway, I will do the best I can. (9)

This is really the most interesting fight we've had since 1928 and hardly less important. The problem is the education and re-education of new cadres who have not really gone through the old Trotskyist school. A lot of those little sections, without tested cadres or leaderships, are real creations of the Pabloite regime. The weaker they are, the more they lean on the "International" and regard it as a substitute for a serious national organisation with tested cadres and qualified leaders. Never having been through the long struggle over basic principles, which is the essence of the "old Trotskyism", many of them actually think that the overthrow of capitalism -- and on a world scale at that -- is simply a matter of clever tactics, and that the tin Messiah in Paris has that all figured out for them, so that victory will come with a minimum of effort, and maybe with no real conscious effort at all. In that case, there is really no need for cadres and parties, as the "old Trotskyists" so stubbornly insist.

Fraternally,

J. P. Cannon

P. S. Are you in touch with our people in Vancouver? I think it very important to communicate directly with them, and send them all our stuff promptly and help them to influence Toronto.

Letter to Farrell Dobbs - 27th January 1954 (10)

Dear Farrell:

I am enclosing herewith the article on Deutscherism. The main problem was that of condensation and elimination, so as to bring out more sharply and concentrate attention on the central issue of the Deutscher theory of the self-reform of Stalinism and its politial implications. Please tell Joe and Murry that I received the material they sent, but I had to leave out references to it, as well as a lot of other material, on that account.

After spending a lot of time making notes, I came to the conclusion that comment on Frank's and Maitan's reviews of the Deutscher book, and other aspects of the question, would be better reserved for follow-up articles after our fundamental thesis has first been established in a separate article -- despite the revulsion I felt for their "friendly" reception of the offerings of a political enemy, and the temptation to say what I thought of them, and a lot of other things while I was at it, in one omnibus article.

* * *

You can dispose of the article in any way you find most convenient. I think it is rather more suitable for the magazine than for The Militant. But I leave the decision to you. In any case please ask Joe to edit it and write in the subheads.

* * *

I have been reading the first bulletin of the International Committee in French, with a mounting feeling of outrage and indignation at the monstrous job that was done of the French Majority in the name of "discipline". (11) People capable of such things should be driven out with whips. Reading through this material I felt that I was living once again in the blackest days of our experience in the Comintern. I greatly admire the fighting spirit shown by the French Majority in this cruel test -- all the more so since they had to fight alone for such a long time. (12) Their contributions on this matter should be translated and published far and wide as soon as possible.

* * *

Tom told me that he had written to you making some suggestions about the motivation and preparation of the new fund campaign. I made a number of notes on the same subject a couple of weeks ago and then had to put them aside till I finished with this article. I will try to write you at some length on this and some other matters tomorrow.

Fraternally,

J. P. Cannon

Trotsky or Deutscher? On the new revisionism
and its theoretical source - (27th January 1954) (13)

Since the death of Stalin, some of the unofficial and pseudo-critical apologists of Stalinism have begun to shift their ground without abandoning their office as apologists. Yesterday they were describing Stalinism as the wave of the future. They now promise an early end to Stalinism in the Soviet Union; and -- for good measure -- they assure us that the end will come easily and peacefully. What interests us is the fact that, in doing so, they refer to Trotsky and try, in one way or another, to invoke his authority in support of their new revelations.

There is indeed no room for doubt that Stalinism is in deep trouble in its own domain. The events in the Soviet Union and in the satellite countries since Stalin's death are convincing evidence of that. The workers' revolts in Eastern Germany and other satellite lands, which undoubtedly reflect the sentiments of the workers in the Soviet Union, indicate that the Stalinist bureaucracy rules without real mass support.

The crisis of Stalinism is reflected in the reactions of the bureaucracy to the new situation. The frantic alternation of concessions and repressions, the fervent promises of democratic reforms, combined with the start of new blood purges, are the characteristic reactions of a regime in mortal crisis. The assumption is justified that we are witnessing the beginning of the end of Stalinism.

But how will this end be brought about? Will the Stalinist bureaucracy, the chief prop of world capitalism, the pre-eminent conservative and counter-revolutionary force for a quarter of a century, fall of its own weight? Will it disappear in a gradual process of voluntary self-reform? Or will it be overthrown by a revolutionary uprising of the workers in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?

These are the most important questions of the day for the disciples of Trotsky; for different answers imply profoundly different lines of political action. And it is precisely because we hear conflicting answers to these questions that the present factional struggle in the Fourth International has broken out into the open and taken an irreconcilable form. What is involved is an attempt to revise the theory of Trotsky -- which up till now has been the guiding line for the political strategy and tactics of our movement -- without openly saying so.

This sort of thing has happened before. In setting out, in his pamphlet on "State and Revolution", "to <u>resuscitate</u> the real teaching of Marx on the state", Lenin remarked: "What is now happening to Marx's doctrine has, in the course of history, often happened to the doctrines of other revolutionary thinkers and leaders of oppressed classes struggling for emancipation...After their death, attempts are made to turn them into harmless icons, canonise them, and surround their <u>names</u> with a certain halo for the 'consolation' of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping them, while at the same time emasculating and vulgarising the <u>real essence</u> of their revolutionary theories and blunting their revolutionary edge. At the present time, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the labour movement are co-operating in this work of adulterating Marxism. They omit, obliterate and distort the revolutionary side of its teaching, its revolutionary soul".

Lenin's forewarning did not prevent the Stalinists from performing the same mutilating operation on his own teachings after his death. Lenin's name was "canonised" while his real teachings were defiled. Trotsky's historic battle against Stalinism, the greatest theoretical and political struggle of all time, was in essence a struggle to

"resuscitate" genuine Leninism. The embattled Left Opposition in the Soviet Union fought under the slogan: "Back to Lenin!"

Now, in the course of time, the teachings of Trotsky himself have been placed on the revisionist operating table, and the fight for the revolutionary programme once again takes the form of a defence of orthodox principles. For the third time in the hundred-year history of Marxist thought, an attempt is being made to revise away its revolutionary essence, while professing respect for its outward form.

Just as the Social Democrats mutilated the teachings of Marx, and the Stalinists did the same thing with the teachings of Lenin, the new revisionists are attempting to butcher the teachings of Trotsky, while pretending, at the same time, to refer to his authority. This pretence is imposed on them by the simple and obvious fact that Trotsky's theory of post-Lenin developments in the Soviet Union is the only one that has any standing among revolutionists. It would be quite useless to refer to any other "authorities". There are none.

The new revisionism has many aspects. Here I will deal with the central core of it: the revision of the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism and its perspectives in the Soviet Union. This is the central question for the simple reason that it has the most profound implication for the policy of our movement in all fields.

Since its foundation, the Fourth International has recognised Stalinism as the main support of world capitalism and the chief obstacle in the workers' movement to the emancipating revolution of the workers. Trotsky taught us that, and all experience has abundantly confirmed it. The Fourth International has been governed in its policy with respect to Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and to the Stalinist parties in the other countries, by this basic theory of Trotsky.

The policy cannot be separated from the following analysis; a revision of the theory could not fail to impose deep-going changes in the policy. As a matter of fact, questions ofpolicy, including the not unimportant question of the historical function of the Fourth International and its right to exist -- cannot be fruitfully discussed wth those who disagree on the nature of Stalinism in the present stage of its evolution, and its prospects, and therewith on the attitude of our movement toward it. Different answers to the former inexorably impose different proposals for the latter. The discussion becomes a fight right away. Experience has already shown that.

The originator and fountainhead of the new revisionism, the modern successor to Bernstein and Stalin in this shady game, is a Polish former communist, named Isaac Deutscher, who passed through the outskirts of the Trotskyist movement on his way to citizenship in the British Empire.

The British bourgeoisie are widely publicising his writings; and it is not far-fetched to say that their tactical attitude toward the Malenkov regime -- somewhat different from that of Washington -- is partly influenced by them. The British bourgeoisie are more desperate than their American counterparts, more conscious of the realities of the new world situation, and they feel the need of a more subtle theory than that of McCarthy and Dulles. The political thinkers of the British ruling class long ago abandoned any real hope for the return of former glories; to say nothing of a new expansion of their prosperity and power. Their maximum hope is to hang on, to preserve a part of their loot, and to put off and postpone their day of doom as long as possible. This determines their current short-term foreign policy.

To be sure, the long-term programme of the British bourgeoisie is the same as that of their American cousins. Their basic aim also is nothing less than a capitalist restoration by military action, but they are less sanguine about its prospects for success at this

present time. Meanwhile, they want to "muddle through" with a stop-gap policy of partial agreement, "co-existence" and trade with the Malenkov regime.

Churchill and those for whom he speaks, sense that the overthrow of Stalinism by a workers' political revolution, reinforcing the Soviet economic system by the creative powers of workers' democracy, could only make matters worse for them, and for world capitalism as a whole, and they are not in favour of it. That's why they saw nothing good about the uprising in East Germany, and opposed any action to encourage it. Far from wishing to provoke or help such a revolution, the British bourgeoisie would be interested, without doubt, in supporting Malenkov against it.

There is scarcely less doubt that, in the final extremity, the main section of the Soviet bureaucracy, concerned above all with their privileges, would ally themselves with the imperialists against the workers' revolution. The British bourgeoisie have that in mind, too; and that's why they are giving an attentive hearing to the new revelations of Deutscher, who promises that Malenkov will avert a domestic workers' revolution by a progressive series of reforms and that he will follow a policy of coexistence, peace and trade with the capitalist world.

What the British imperialists think of Deutscher's theory is their own affai, and it is not our duty to advise them. Our interest in Deutscher derives from the evident fact that his theory of the self-reform of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which he tries to pass off as a modified version of Trotsky's thinking, has made its way into the movement of the Fourth International and found camouflaged supporters there in the faction headed by Pablo. Far from originating anything themselves, the Pablo faction have simply borrowed from Deutscher.

Since there is no surer way to disarm the workers' vanguard, particularly in the Soviet Union, and to reason away the claim of the Fourth International to any historical function, this new revisionism has become problem number one for our international movement. The life of the Fourth International is at stake in the factional struggle and discussion provoked by it. The right way to begin the discussion, in our opinion, is to trace the revisionist current in our movement to its source. That takes us straight to Deutscher.

The new revisionism made its first appearance a few years ago in Deutscher's biography of Stalin (1949). In this book he took from Trotsky the thesis that the nationalisation of industry and the planned economy, as developed in the Soviet Union after the October Revolution, are historically progressive developments. Then, having tipped his hat to <u>one part</u> of Trotsky's theory, he proceeded, like his revisionist predecessors, to "omit, obliterate, and distort the revolutionary side of its teaching, its revolutionary soul".

In order to do this he identified nationalisation and planned economy, made possible and necessary by the October Revolution, with Stalinism, the betrayer of the Revolution and the murderer of the revolutionists. To be sure, he deplored the frame-ups and mass murders of the old revolutionists, but tended to dismiss them as unfortunate incidents which did not change the basically progressive historical role of Stalinism. At that time (1949) he envisaged the world-wide expansion of Stalinism, equating it with the expansion of the international revolution.

This revelation of Deutscher was a made-to-order rationalisation for the fellow-travellers of Stalinism, who were wont to excuse the mass murders of revolutionists with the nonchalant remark: "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs". Deutscher's theory, enunciated in his biography of Stalin, also found slightly muted echoes in the ranks of the Fourth International. Pablo's strategical and tactical

improvisations, including his forecast of "centuries" of "deformed workers' states" began from there.

With the death of Stalin, however and the shake-up which followed it, Deutscher changed his first estimate of the prospects of Stalinism. And again he referred to a part of Trotskyism, in order to distort and misrepresent Trotsky's most fundamental teaching on the next stage of developments in the Soviet Union.

This would appear to be a rather foolhardy undertaking, for Trotsky's teachings are no secret and no mystery. They are all written down and are known to his disciples. Moreover, like all of Trotsky's works, they conveyed his thought with such clarity and precision that nobody could misunderstand it. Contrary to the whole tribe of revisionist double-talkers, Trotsky always said what he meant, and our movement has no record of any quarrel or controversy as to the "interpretation" of his meaning during his lifetime.

The best and most effective way to answer and refute misinterpreters of Trotsky's theory of Stalinism, who have made their appearance since his death, is simply to quote Trotsky's own words. They are all in print, and all quotations are subject to verification. Therefore, before taking up Deutscher's distortions of Trotsky, I will first let Trotsky speak for himself.

It took the Soviet bureaucracy a long time to complete its political counter-revolution and to consolidate its power and privileges, and Trotsky followed its evolution at every step. He analysed Stalinism at every stage of its development, and prescribed the tasks of the struggle against it on the basis of the real situation at each given stage of its development. These tasks, as Trotsky prescribed them, changed with each change in the situation, and were so motivated. To understand Trotsky's theory it is necessary to follow the evolution of his thought from one stage of Soviet development to another.

For the first ten years of his historic battle against the degeneration he held that Soviet democracy could be restored by an internal party struggle for the peaceful reform of the party. As late as 1931 he said: "The proletarian vanguard retains the possibility of putting the bureaucracy in its place, of subordinating it to its control, of insuring the correct policy, and by means of decisive and bold reforms, of regenerating the party, the trade unions and the Soviets" ("Problems of the development of the USSR". Emphasis added).

In October 1933, when the bureaucracy had further "concentrated all power and all avenues to power in its hands", he called for a new Soviet party of the Fourth International, to lead "the reorganisation of the Soviet state" by extra-constitutional methods. He wrote: "We must set down, first of all, as an immutable axiom -- that this task can only be solved by a revolutionary party. The fundamental historic task is to create the revolutionary party in the USSR from among the healthy elements of the old party and from among the youth...No normal 'constitutional' ways remain to remove the ruling clique. The bureaucracy can be compelled to yield power into the hands of the proletarian vanguard only by force." ("The Soviet Union and the Fourth International".)

However, this "force", required to bring about the "reorganistion of the Soviet state", as he saw the situation at that time (1933), would not take the form of revolution. He wrote: "When the proletariat springs into action, the Stalinist apparatus will remain suspended in mid-air. Should it still attempt to resist, it will the be necessary to apply not the measures of civil war, but rather measures of police character". ("The Soviet Union and the Fourth International". Emphasis added.)

But by 1935, Trotsky came to the conclusion that it was already too late for mere "police measures", and that a political revolution, leaving intact the social foundations of the Soviet Union, was necessary. That conclusion remained unchanged.

For the benefit of those who still nurtured illusions of reforming the bureaucracy -- Trotsky never promised that the Stalinist monster would reform itself -- he wrote in 1936: "There is no peaceful outcome for this crisis. No devil ever yet voluntarily cut off his own claws. The Soviet bureaucracy will not give up its positions without a fight. The development leads obviously to the road of revolution" ("The Revolution Betrayed").

He added: "With energetic pressure from the popular mass, and the disintegration inevitable in such circumstances of the government apparatus, the resistance of those in power may prove much weaker than now appears. But as to this only hypotheses are possible. In any case the bureaucracy can be removed only by a revolutionary force. And, as always, there will be fewer victims the more bold and decisive is the attack. To prepare this and stand at the head of the masses in a favourable historic situation -- that is the task of the Soviet section of the Fourth International". ("The Revolution Betrayed". Emphasis added).

Finally, Trotsky's settled conclusion, excluding any thought of "reforming" the Stalinist bureaucracy -- not even to mention the monstrous suggestion of its possible self-reform -- became the basic programme of the revolutionary struggle for the restoration of Soviet democracy. This programme of political revolution was formalised in the Transitional Programme of the Founding Congress of the Fourth International, written by Trotsky (1938), as follows: "Only the victorious revolutionary uprising of the oppressed masses can revive the Soviet regime and guarantee its further development toward socialism. There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection -- the Party of the Fourth International!" ("The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International". Emphasis added).

That has been the programme of the Fourth International, and the theoretical source of its policies and tactics in relation to Stalinism, since its formal establishment as a world organisation in 1938. Up until recently, no one who held a different opinion has ventured to call himself a Trotskyist.

But now Deutscher, in his latest book "Russia - What Next?", has shown those who want to be shown, how Trotsky too -- like Marx and Lenin before him -- can be turned into a "harmless icon". First bowing before Trotsky's "prophetic vision of the future", Deutscher then introduces a slight revision of Trotsky's theory of the road to this future, strikingly similar to Bernstein's revision of Marx, nearly 60 years ago, after the death of Engels.

Marx and Engels, as everybody knows, had predicted the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism by means of a workers' revolution. Bernstein said: "The first part is correct; capitalism will be replaced by socialism. But this transformation will be brought about gradually and peacefully, by a process of step-by-step reform. Capitalism will grow into socialism. A workers' revolution is not necessary".

This was the theory which disarmed the Second International. It led straight to the betrayal of the Social Democracy in the First World War, and to the transformation of the party founded by Marx and Engels into a counter-revolutionary force.

Deutscher performs the same kind of operation on Trotsky's teachings, "emasculating and vulgarising" their "real essence" and "blunting their revolutionary edge". Soviet democracy, he says, will be restored as Trotsky predicted -- but not by a revolutionary uprising of the Soviet proletariat, and no party of the Fourth International is needed. The Stalinist party is good enough, and the heirs of Stalin will lead the way to the abolition of Stalinism.

Deutscher proclaims, as the most likely prospect of Soviet development under Malenkov: "A gradual evolution of the regime toward a socialist democracy" (page 208). He

continues: "An analysis of these conditions leads to the general conclusion that the balance of domestic factors favours a democratic regeneration of the regime" (page 208).

That sounds attractive to those who hope for victory without struggle, as the Bernstein theory of the self-elimination of capitalism sounded before 1914, and especially before fascism. But that's the most that can be said for it.

What is especially monstrous and dishonest about this complacent prediction is that Deutscher, in support of this prediction, trickily refers to a formulation of Trotsky, made in 1931 (quoted above) and leaves unmentioned Trotsky's later conclusion that the entrenched bureaucracy could only be overthrown and soviet democracy restored only by means of a mass uprising of the Soviet proletariat led by a new party of the Fourth International.

Deutscher writes: "In the 1930s Trotsky advocated a 'limited political revolution' against Stalinism. He saw it not as a full-fledged social upheaval but as an 'adminstrative operation' directed against the chiefs of the political police and a small clique terrorising the nation" (page 214).

Deutscher even goes further. Throwing all caution to the winds, he credits "Malenkov's government" with actually carrying out this programme of self-reform. He says: "As so often, Trotsky was tragically ahead of his time and prophetic in his vision of the future, although he could not imagine that Stalin's closest associates would act in accordance with his scheme. What Malenkov's government is carrying out now is precisely the 'limited revolution' envisaged by Trotsky". ("Russia - What Next?" page 215).

Indeed, Trotsky "could not imagine that": and anyone who does imagine it -- to say nothing of asserting that it is already taking place -- has not right to refer to the authority of Trotsky. Besides that, Malenkov's "limited revolution" has so far remained a product of Deutscher's imagination. The ink was hardly dry on his new book when the new blood purge started in the Soviet Union and Malenkov's army answered the revolting East German workers with tanks and machine guns and wholesale arrests of strikers.

Deutscher's new book was adequately reviewed by comrade Breitman in the Militant of June 22 and 29, 1953, and his conclusions were ruthlessly criticised from the standpoint of orthodox Trotskyism. If we return to the subject now, it is because Deutscher's fantastic revelations have not remained a mere matter of controversy between Trotskyists and a writer outside the ranks of the revolutionary workers: One book review would be enough for that. But since that time we have had to recognise accumulated evidence of echoes of the Deutscher theory inside our party and the Fourth International. Deutscherism is being offered as a substitute for Trotsky's theory; and, in order to facilitate the switch, is being dressed up as nothing more than a modernised version of this same theory.

Here I would like to make a brief parenthetical digression on a secondary point.

As our readers know, a factional struggle in the Fourth International has broken into the open; and, as in all serious factional fights, some questions of organisational procedure are involved. Some international comrades have expressed the opinion that the struggle is merely, or at least primarily, an organisational struggle and wish to shift the axis of the discussion to this question.

As already indicated in previous contributions to the Militant, the SWP considers this aspect of the struggle also important. I intend to return to this question and to discuss it at length, as I did in 1940 in the great factional battle which we, together with Trotsky, waged against the revisionist programme of Burnham. Nevertheless, I think now, as I

thought then, that the organisational question, with all its importance, is a derivative and not the primary question.

Such questions really make sense only when they are considered in this light. In every struggle, revolutionists and opportunists find themselves at loggerheads on the issue of "organisation methods". But regardless of how this issue may arise in the first place, whatever incidents may provoke it, the dispute over "organisation" always leads, in the final analysis, to the more decisive question: What are the conflicting organisation methods for and what political purpose do they serve? The disciples of Trotsky throughout the world , if they really want to be faithful to his political method, should put this question to themselves and seek the answer in the only place it can be found -- in the domain of the conflicting theories and politics of the contending factions.

It is well known, or ought to be, that revisionist always try to duck and run and hide from a frank and open discussion of these primary issues, and to muddle up the discussion with all kinds of secondary organisation questions, fairy tales and chit-chat; while the orthodox always insist, despite all provocations, on putting first things first. The documentary record of the 1939-40 struggle in the SWP gives a classic illustration of these opposing tactics. (See the two books "In Defence of Marxism" and "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party").

We think that Trotsky and we were right in the way we conducted that great struggle and have taken it as a model for our conduct of the present one. That is why, in our Letter to All Trotskyists, adopted by our 25th Anniversary Plenum (the Militant, Nov. 16, 1953), we put the theoretical and political questions first and the organisation questions second. The same considerations have prompted the present contribution to the discussion, in advance of a fuller treatment of the derivative questions of international organisation and conceptions of internationalism.

At the May Plenum of the SWP the two factions in the party, who up to then had been fighting primarily over national questions, concluded a truce based on the recognition of the right of the majority to lead the party according to its policy in national affairs. It was also agreed to continue the discussion without factional struggle. This truce was blown up within a very few weeks after the Plenum by the outbreak of a new controversy over fundamental questions of theory which had not been directly posed by the minority before the Plenum. Simultaneously, the factional struggle in the SWP was extended to the international field.

The first signal for the new eruption of factional warfare was the announcement by the minority of the new slogan under which they intended to resume the factional struggle: "Junk the old Trotskyism!" This slogan was announced by Clarke as reporter for the minority, at the membership meeting of the New York Local on June 11, 1953. The party membership as well as the leadership, long educated in the school of orthodox Trotskyism, reacted sharply to this impudent slogan and awaited alertly to see what would be offered as a substitute for their old doctrine.

They didn't have long to wait. In the issue of Fourth International which came off the press a week or so later, Clarke, as editor, contributed an article on the new events in the Soviet Union. This article, smuggled into the magazine without the knowledge or authorisation of the editorial board, envisaged the possibility of the self-reform of the Soviet bureaucracy in the following language: "Will the process take the form of a violent upheaval against bureauicratic rule in the USSR? Or will concessions to the masses and sharing of power -- as was the long course in the English bourgeois revolution in the political relationship between the rising bourgeoisie and the declining nobility -- gradually undermine the base of the bureaucracy? Or will the evolution be a combination of both forms? That we cannot now foresee." (Fourth International, No. 120).

This brazen attempt to pass off this Deutscherite concept in our Trotskyist magazine -- carrying the revisionist attack to the public -- enormously sharpened the factional struggle, and made it clear, at the same time, that this struggle could no longer be confined to national issues. The party majority, educated in the school of Trotskyist orthodoxy, rose up against this reformist formulation of Soviet perspectives. Their protest was expressed by comrade Stein.

In a letter to the Editors, published in the next issue of the magazine, he pointed out that Clarke "discards the Trotskyist position on the inevitability of political revolution by the working class against the Soviet ruling caste without any substantial motivation". He added: "If comrade Clarke believes that the accepted programmatic positions of Trotskyism on these fundamental issues are no longer valid and require revision, he should not have introduced such serious changes in so offhand a manner." (Fourth International, No. 121.)

Some comrades in our international movement, who protest their own "orthodoxy", while acting as attorneys for the revisionists, have attempted to minimise the importance of Clarke's Deutscherite formulation on prospective Soviet developments, which followed so closely on the heels of the slogan, "Junk the old Trotskyism!". They try to pass it off as "a misunderstanding", a "bad sentence which can easily be set straight", etc. Subsequent developments provide no support for this optimistic reassurance.

Comrade Stein's intervention offered Clarke and his factional associates in the SWP as well as in the Fourth International a wide-open opportunity to clear up any possible misunderstandings on this fundamental question. He invited him, in effect, either to "motivate" his revision of "accepted, programmatic positions of Trotskyism on these fundamental issues", or to withdraw it.

Clarke did neither. In the same issue of the magazine, he blandly stated that the theory of the self-reform of the Soviet bureaucracy, which he had envisaged as a definite possibility, is genuine Trotskyism. In answer to Stein's criticism, he said: "I am discarding nothing. I am trying to apply our programme. What is happening is that the concept of the political revolution held by world Trotskyism for almost two decades is now for the first time due to find application in life."

Just how "the concept of the political revolution" can "find application in life" by "concessions to the masses and sharing of power" -- a concept of reform -- was left without the explanation which Stein had demanded. Instead, his pertinent criticisms were derided as "deriving apparently from the conception that the programmatic positions of Trotskyism constitute dogma rather than a guide to action."

Naturally, no one is required to accept the theoretical formulations of Trotsky as dogma. All of these formulations in general, and the theory of Soviet perspectives in particular, are meant as a guide to action. Precisely because of that, because the revision of theory has profound implications for the political action of our movement, if one wants to challenge this theory -- which anyone has a perfect right to do -- he should do it openly, and state frankly what is wrong in the old theory, and consequently what is wrong with the line of action it was designed to "guide".

He should offer "substantial motivation" for the new and different theory of Stalinist self-reform, and not -- in the movement based on Trotsky's theory -- simply introduce it "in so off-hand a manner", as a matter of course, so to speak. That is all that Stein demanded. But Clarke did not answer in these terms. His gratuitous reference to "dogma" -- a device we have encountered before in conflicts with hide-and-seek revisionists -- simply evaded any explanation or motivation of his astonishing statement without withdrawing it.

However, comrades throughout the country and co-thinkers in other countries, who read this exchange in Fourth International magazine, took a more serious view of the matter. They recognised that fundamental questions of theory were breaking to the surface in the internal fight in the SWP, and the orthodox and the revisionist tendencies began to take sides accordingly.

The Pablo faction in the British section, which had previously worked in secret, made its first demonstrative appearance in the open with a demand that Clarke's article be published in England in place of another article on Soviet development which had been written from an orthodox point of view. This was opposed by Burns and the other orthodox Trotskyists on the grounds that Clarke's article was contrary to the programme of the Fourth International. The open factional struggle in the British section began to take shape from that moment.

Comrade Burns wrote to us under date of August 10 as follows: "The editorials by Clarke open up a decisive stage of the political struggle. These are not questions of accidental formulations. This is the real policy of the Minority and its supporters".

Prior to that, before Stein's criticism had appeared in the magazine, I wrote to New York from Los Angeles under date of July 9; "Are we going to sponsor the possible variant, as Clarke seems to intimate in the end of his article in the latest magazine, that the Stalinist bureaucracy will right itself without a political revolution? Under this head I would like to know the name and address of any previous privileged social groupings in history which have voluntarily overthrown their own privileges".

Comrade Tom, an "old Trotskyist" of the orthodox school, who saw the new revisionist current in the International and raised the alarm against it sooner and clearer than we did, wrote to us from abroad under date of August 23: "We can do no greater honour to his (Trotsky's) memory, thirteen years after his assassination, than to continue his work 'In Defence of Marxism', and to complete it under the heading 'In Defence of Trotskyism' against the new revisionists who are attempting to defile it and -- by that same token -- to blur the guilt and the reactionary role in history of his assassins."

Recognising the Deutscherite origin of Clarke's formula, Tom continued: "Has everyone read Deutscher's new book? It should be required reading for the present struggle. This man, as is well known, has passed through our international movement on his way to the fleshpots of Fleet Street. He is not someone moving towards us but someone who has moved away from us. And direction, as Trotsky taught us, is a very important element in judging the specific position taken by the political animal at any given time. He is acclaimed not only by Clarke and his friends, but by the British bourgeois press as well (which, for reasons of its own, as I believe Jim once said of Churchill, engages in quite a bit of wishful thinking these days of insoluble predicaments".

"Pablo, Burns tells me, remarked to him recently that Deutscher has done more than anyone to popularise 'our' ideas before a broad audience. Deutscher is certainly no mean populariser, but not of our ideas, that is, the Trotskyist ideas -- although most everything of substance and truth in his presentation is borrowed from this source. His new book, which purports to analyse Stalinism and to present forecasts from a vaguely 'Marxist' point of view, has a few flaws in it in this respect: It leaves out of account entirely a sociological, historical evaluation of the Soviet bureaucracy; it describes Stalinism as a continuation of Leninism (it is its fusion with the barbaric Russian heritage, according to his description); it passes off the physical destruction of Lenin's party as something of moral rather than political significance; it justifies Stalinism as historically necessary and in its end result progressive. And -- on that basis -- projects the theory of the Malenkov 'self-reform' movement. That is, on the basis of a distortion of the Trotskyist analysis, it presents a complete negation of the Trotskyist line of struggle against Stalinism.

"Our new revisionists have so far only half-borrowed from his conclusions and tried to smuggle them in piecemeal as our line. It should not be forgotten, however, that Pablo's views on the reality of the transition epoch -- in which of necessity deformed revolutions and workers states become the norm deviating from the ideal of Marxist classics -- touch some points in the Deutscher analysis as well. Nothing has been heard of these views lately, and for good reason: they need some adjustment to the newer reality, so to speak. But has the concept, the trend of thought, behind them been dropped? All evidence is to the contrary."

Comrade Peng, the veteran leader and international representative of the Chinese section of the Fourth International, wrote to us as follows, under date of October 6: "Though we know little about the Majority and the Minority in America, after reading the two different ideas recently in the Fourth International, it becomes clear to us. (The letters of S. and C. are published at the end of the Fourth International which we read yesterday). The Minority have begun to dissociate themselves from the Trotskyist tradition which is being defended by the Majority. It is not an accident that the International (the Pabloite International Secretariat) stands by the Minority. In fact, the idea of the Minority has evolved from some of the prejudices in the International, but more clearly and more distinctly".

Peng certainly hit the nail on the head when he said that the Pabloite International Secretariat "stands by the Minority", although up till that time they had been pretending "neutrality". The opening of a public debate over the perspectives of development in the Soviet Union, precipitated by Clarke's article, put an end to this pose. Pablo commented on this issue of the magazine, not to condemn Clarke's revisionist formulations, but the objection to them. In a letter to us dated September 3, he wrote: "...the latest issue of the FI, as well as a series of articles recently published in the Militant, sketch out a course whose meaning it is not difficult to discern. It seems to us that you are now in the process of developing a line different from ours on two fundamental planes: the conception and the functioning of the International; and the manner of understanding and explaining the events which are unfolding in the Soviet Union and the buffer countries since Stalin's death"

He was dead right about that. We certainly were "developing a line different" from that of the Pablo faction, not only, as he says about "the manner of understanding and explaining" events in the Soviet Union and the satellite lands, but also about events in France -- different theoretical analyses of the role of Stalinism. And, even more to the point, about what to say and do about these events -- different lines of political action "guided" by different theories.

The factional line-up in the Fourth International began to develop rapidly from the first publication of this theoretical controversy in Fourth International magazine; and different actions of the contending factions followed from different theories with lightning-like speed. The sudden and violent eruption of the open struggle has taken some international comrades by surprise, but we are not to blame for that. Events put the conflicting theories to test without any lapse of time, and both sides had to show their real positions in the test of action.

We have indicted the revisionists concretely for their shameful actions in connection with these events, in the Letter to All Trotskyists from the 25th Anniversary Plenum of the SWP. The movement is still waiting for their answer to this indictment.

If I have dwelt at some length on this chronological sequence of developments since the publication of Clarke's article, it was not to overplay the role of Clarke in precipitating the public discussion. His importance in the controversy derives from his claim to be the true spokesman and representative of Pablo's real position -- a claim which has been proved to be 100 percent correct. If his own contributions to the

discussion have appeared to acquire an exaggerated importance in this presentation, it is simply because he spoke more frankly and bluntly; or, as Peng wrote, "more clearly and distinctly," than his sponsor and revealed his real position too soon.

Pablo prefers double-talk, dissimulation and duplicity. He knows that the cadres educated in the school of Trotsky could never be led to the direct rejection of their doctrine. His method is to manoeuver the Fourth International into a revisionist position, not by frank and open avowal of such a programme, but by the step-by-step imposition of a policy which, in practice, would undermine its historical function as an independent political movement, convert it into a left cover of Stalinism, and prepare its liquidation.

If Pablo were to criticise Clarke, within the circles of their common faction, it would not be for the content of his article, but for his imprudence in spoiling the strategy of premature disclosure of its real meaning. Auer once explained this strategy of the revisionists-in-practice in the German Social Democracy. In a famous letter to Bernstein he said "My dear Ede, you don't pass such resolutions. You don't talk about it, you just do it." (Quoted in The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx by Peter Gay, page 267).

As for the specious arguments of Pablo's attorneys that there has been a "misunderstanding"; that Clarke's "bad sentence" will be repudiated; and all the rest of the rigmarole designed to muddle up the discussion of fundamental questions -- the answer has already been provided by actions which speak louder than words.

The minority of the SWP, for whom Clarke spoke, have received, in the meantime, the public endorsement of the Pablo faction. That, in itself, tells everything a political person needs to know about their political affinity. Trotsky often said that the surest indication of a group's real position is its international assocations and alliances. "Tell me whom your friends are and I'll tell you who you are". There is no "misunderstanding" about this alliance. This is proved, if more proof is needed, by the fact that nowhere has the Pablo faction found time or space to repudiate the minority's Deutscherite formulations of the self-reform of the Soviet bureaucracy, nor their slogan, "Junk the old Trotskyism!"

At the same time, to prove that there was no "misunderstanding" on their part, the minority organised a boycott of the 25th Anniversary celebration of the SWP, as a public demonstration against the Trotskyist orthodoxy which our 25-year struggle represents. This boycott precipitated their split from the SWP, which called forth public statements of their position in organs other than the press of the SWP. But neither in the first letter of Cochran to the Shachtmanite paper, nor in independent publications of their own, have they made the slightest retraction, correction or amendment of their original formulations about the prospective self-reform of the Soviet bureaucracy and all that is implied by it in terms of practical policy.

That is their real position and the real position of their sponsors and factional allies in the international struggle. Their attempt to revise the Trotskyist analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and to throw out the programme derived from this analysis, is what the factional struggle in the international Trotskyist movement is really about -- if we want to trace all the innumerable differences on derivative questions of tactics and organisation to their basic theoretical source.

Letter to George Breitman - 29th January 1954 (14)

Dear George:

My delay in answering your letter of Jan. 16 was caused by the fact that I was concentrating on the Deutscher article and couldn't think of anything else. The article, which I finally finished yesterday, isn't very long, but that's why it took so much time. A large part of the time was spent in writing stuff I had to eliminate later in the interest of condensation, in order to centre the attention of the reader on the main point at issue: the theory of the self-reform of Stalinism.

All the side aspects of this question are interesting, and I worked them also for a long time with the original idea of writing a complete omnibus. But I finally had to throw this material out -- perhaps to reserve it for later articles -- for fear of leading the reader into bypaths. After this gruelling experience I fully understand what the fellow meant when he wrote to a friend: "I am sending you a long letter; I didn't have time to write a short one".

Also, as you have observed, I have a defect which is sometimes a merit. It consists of my inability to concentrate on more than one thing at a time, my inability to free myself from this single concentration until the task at hand is finished, and my nervous irritability at any interruption. I am sometimes afraid that when my

"summons comes to join
the innumerable caravan that moves
to the pale realms of shade," (15)

if I am preoccupied with something else at the moment, I will fly into a nervous rage at the Grim Reaper and tell him: "For Christ's sake, let me alone until I finish what I'm doing!"

* * *

I was somewhat surprised by your reaction to the remark in my Los Angeles speech that you are "the most restrained and moderate of all our people". I don't consider this a bad quality and meant my remark rather as a compliment which, by stretching things a little, might also apply to me. In my ruthless pursuit of self-appraisal, in the effort to comply with the injunction of the Greek philosophers -- "Man, know thyself" -- I try not to overlook the good points wherever I can find them.

One of them, I permit myself in moments of self-indulgent vanity to believe, is that I am the most restrained and moderate person there is. When my patience at times is pushed to the point of explosion, and I venture on a mild and restrained criticism of the conduct of others, and hear objections to it, I always mutter to myself: "Jesus Christ, what would they say if I told them what I really think?"

* * *

Your reference to the personal quality which I attributed to you as "Goldmanesque" implies that this might be considered derogatory. That was never my opinion of Goldman. He was a contradictory and tragic figure who had great merits as well as great faults. He and I got along very well together for a long time as long as we had political agreement, and I never minded his mildness and moderation, the qualities which were dominant in his better, more "normal" days. As a matter of fact, I valued him precisely for these qualities, and also for his fairness. They had a positive value to the party, as a corrective of the excesses of others, in the days when he worked with us in a team.

Looking back, the collaboration between us was very fruitful for the party while it lasted, and that should temper our final judgement of him. This collaboration began in 1933 -- when we came together at the Mooney Congress in Chicago -- and lasted ten years, with a two-year interruption when he bolted our organisation and joined the SP by himself. This interruption, and the final breakup of the collaboration, which began in 1943, were both primarily due to political causes.

Insofar as his personal qualities played a part, it was not his moderation but its antipode -- his impulsiveness and plunging recklessness -- that guided his unfortunate course in each case. In 1934 he jumped over the head of our organisation to enter the SP by himself without even trying to convince the majority. And one has only to read the Internal Bulletins of the final conflict with him (1944-46) to remind himself that the majority were far more restrained and patient than he was.

But even this should not be taken one-sidedly. The impatience and impulsiveness of some individuals also can sometimes yield positive results -- in breaking up conservative routine and searching out new opportunities -- if they are balanced against different qualities of others in a working combination.

However that may be, it takes all kinds of people to make a party. One is not necessarily better than another; but all, without exception, are different, and it is very hard to find a person who is not good for something and useful to the party -- as long as he has good will. That's what we have to keep in mind if we really aim seriously, as we do, to build a cadre fit to lead a party with a great purpose to serve. I didn't know this to start with, but I have learned it from experience mulled over and generalised. I long ago ceased to expect or even to desire that everyone should be like me. When you stop to think of it, that would be a hell of an aggregation, wouldn't it? I, with my love of variety, couldn't belong to such a party, I'd get bored to death looking at dull-faced replicas of myself.

One thing I can't stomach about personal cults -- I can't stand <u>anything</u> about them -- is their annihilation of the separate personalities of all the individual members of the cult, and the brutal reduction of them all to one common pattern of the methods, crochets, prejudices and absurdities of the "leaders". If people want to do what they are capable of doing in this world, and to add their best qualities to the different qualities of others in a powerful collectivity, it is necessary for them to be what they are, and not waste time and the time of others in trying to be or posing as something different.

I don't hope to convince many people of the wisdom of this course by talking about it, but I always have hoped and still hope to encourage it by example. I give myself credit for scrupulously observing this rule ever since I joined the movement in my youth and discovered, soon after, that what I say and do could have some influence on others. I have waged a lifelong, and I venture to say, a completely successful struggle to be myself under all circumstances and conditions; not to try to be something different or to pose as something different. Not to be a Trotsky, or in earlier days, a Haywood, or a St. John or a Debs, and not to pose as such, but to be purely and simply myself as a separate and individual human personality which has to be taken by others, for good or ill, as it really is.

That's why I have never taken the trouble to show an external personality that is different from the real thing; to conceal what other people may consider faults and indulgences, but which are part of my way of life, shaped by tradition and environment -- and perhaps also by personal prediliction -- in my early youth, and which it would be too much trouble to change even if I wanted to change them, which I don't.

A great deal of trouble is caused in this world and in the party, and we have seen striking demonstrations of it in the past two or three years, by people trying to be

something different than they are, to play roles God never designed for them and to convert their lives and their activities into a game, instead of the simple act of living.

I believe the greatest enemy the young revolutionist can have is the flatterer, the leader who appeals to his weakness and his vanity, who makes him think he is different and greater than he is, and thus converts him into a tool and a dupe, imitating all the mannerisms of the Messiah and fancying himself a little Messiah on his own account, and spoling him for the work he could do as his real self.

I was overcome with revulsion when I saw Johnson (16) doing that -- fostering such pretensions in little people of limited talents and spoiling them for the useful minor functions they were equiped by nature and knowledge to perform. I was doubly revolted when I finally saw Pablo operating in the same way in the recruitment of his obscene cult of first and second degree Messiahs.

I think the least that a leader can do for younger comrades, who may be influenced by his prestige and authority, is to be honest with them; to encourage them to be themselves and to think for themselves, and to realise their own potentialities as they really are; and not to debauch them by flattering their weakness and their vanity, and thereby converting them into tools and dupes and handraisers.

Much has been written in the past and much will be written in the future about Trotsky's methods of dealing with people. It has often been said that he was strong in handling ideas but very weak in handling men. I presume that in the announced biography by Deutscher, we will have another dissertation on this theme. I didn't know Trotsky as well as I would have liked to, but I do know that insofar as there were any dealings between us, he handled me all right. That's not such an easy thing to do, because I am inclined to bridle and rebel at the slightest trace of insincerity, design or professional manner in anyone's relationship with me.

I know that Trotsky assembled a cadre of the very best people now living, in all parts of the world. No slick salesman or profesional mixer can show anything to compare with this cadre. It is not enough to say that this was done solely by the power of his ideas. In addition to the ideas there was the man and his personal relationship with his disciples. The best, and what I consider the truest, appreciation of the Old Man in this respect, was written by Loris, (17) in the days when he was still under the influence of his long experience with Trotsky, and before he personally had forgotten what he learned from him. He said "Trotsky addressed himself to the best in men".

So he did, as we all can testify. But the "best" had to be there in the men themselves in order for him to bring it out. If we want to preserve this cadre created by Trotsky, and to enlarge and extend it into a multiplied power, it will be well for us to bear in mind this method of Trotsky, and say to the new recruits of the younger generation -- or better, show them by our own example: "Be yourself", meaning thereby as Trotsky did: "Be your better self."

Fraternally,

J. P. Cannon

Letter to Farrell Dobbs - 2nd February 1954 (18)

Dear Farrell,

I think we can be very well pleased with the work of the International Committee so far. Their procedure at the last meeting, in confining themselves to brief and to-the-point resolutions on the most important problems of the moment presented by Pablo's Plenum, was especially impressive.

As I see it, this committee has two tasks which must be taken up in the proper order of precedence.

The first task is the consolidation of the various national cadres in the Trotskyist faction represented by the International Cttee. That comes first, and we have plenty of ammunition for it.

The second task will be the preparation of fundamental documents setting forth the Trotskyist position in the present world conjuncture, and its perspectives , as well as on the Trotskyist conception of the world organisation and its functions. For this we need a thorough discussion among the orthodox Trotskyists themselves in the International Bulletin and in the Internal Bulletins of the sections.

We have time for that, and should not rush ahead with <u>official</u> documents prematurely. The whole Pabloite conception of international organisation and its method of functioning must be rejected. The whole system of shot-gun resolutions, prepared by a small uncontrolled and unrepresentative committee, and then rushed through a shot-gun Congress, has to be thrown out. Trotsky said many times that a Conference or a Congress can do no more than put the formal official seal of approval on principled political agreements already worked out in previous discussion within the national sections and between them.

The decisions of such Congresses can then be firm and decisive, and the question of disciplinary measures to enforce them does not arise as a serious problem. The hackles on the back of my neck rise up, and I begin to froth at the mouth, when I see people trying to enforce the rule of the minority over the majority by "discipline" -- as if real discipline can ever by anything else than the expression of majority rule. Pabloite "discussion" turns this basic democratic principle upside down.

After we have separated the sheep from the goats in the course of the factional struggle, we can discuss and solve tactical questions among ourselves. But Trotsky, in the long course of the pre-history of the Fourth International, from 1929 to 1938, brusquely refused even to <u>discuss</u> tactics with opposition elements, whoever they might be, in advance of a worked-out agreement on the fundamental questions of principle. He would have nothing to do with the Brandlerites, Syndicalists, etc. , because they did not agree on the main principles which the tactics had to serve. We have all the instruction we need for the solution of our present tasks of reconstruction of the international movement in the record of this period.

There is rich material in the documentary record of the evolution and development of our movement on the role and limitations of Congresses and Conferences. I have been re-examining this old material in my files and oiling up my artillery at the same time.

We must, first of all, recognise that the Fourth International is no longer a homogeneous political organisation. We must first draw the line of demarcation on principled questions, before we can fruitfully discuss their application in political action. This line of demarcation is being drawn by the <u>factional</u> struggle under the leadership of

the International Committee, and the orthodox Trotskyists co-thinkers are being rallied in the course of this struggle.

This task, as I think all will recognise, takes precedence. Once the fundamental line-up has been completed on this basis, the second task of working out a common line of political action among the genuine Trotskyists should present no insuperable problems. Of course the two tasks are not arbitrarily separated. The various sections are carrying out their application of the line in practice every day. The eventual ratification of a common line by a formal Congress will follow in due course.

One thing we have to avoid in the meantime is a discussion of tactics with the Pabloites, on the false assumption that nothing more is involved than the implementation of a common line. This futile business has been fostered in the past by compromise resolutions. We will have no more of them. We have to hammer the Pabloites incessantly as supporters of a different general line of principle than ours, and attack their tactics, not as "deviations", but rather as the logical application of a false principled line.

* * *

Would it not be timely now for the NC of the Canadian section to make a formal statement supporting the International Committee to follow up the Chinese declaration? This would be especially important in helping the Ceylonese to make a definite decision. It appears to me, that if the Ceylonese would take a definite position in the near future, it would practically settle the fight and avoid the split which they seem to fear; or more correctly, reduce it to a splinter. As I have observed in long experience, that's the way splits are usually "prevented". Very seldom has it been done by the eventual agreement of everybody with everybody.

* * *

I am looking forward to receiving a copy of Breitman's latest reply to Germain, (19) which you say has already been mailed to the key sections abroad. I note reference to a pamphlet by Cochran on American perspectives. I am anxious to see this revelation from the oracle. It may provide some material for a temporary diversion on my part from the international aspects of the fight to a discussion of our own backyard, which is where I really live and feel most at home.

Fraternally,

J. P. Cannon

Letter to Murry Weiss - 2nd February 1954 (20)

Dear Murry:

I got your note of January 19. Thank you for the enclosures. They will be good material for follow-up articles on the Deutscher-Pablo tie-up, but I thought it better to eliminate those references from the first article in order to concentrate all attention on the basic theory of self-reform itself.

I rather envy the opportunity you will have on your tour to speak to the party members everywhere on the international fight and its significance. I recall my first tour to explain "Trotskyism" 25 years ago. You can draw a parallel with the struggle of that time, when we re-created the fundamental nucleus of American communism in the discussion of international questions.

You are more fortunate in your tour this time, because your exposition of the international questions will be united with your public speeches in a big-scale party agitational campaign on current questions or prime importance. (21) That is one measure of the advances we have made. In the early days of our movement there was no action in the class struggle to speak of; and besides, our forces were so few that we had to devote ourselves exclusively to propaganda in the most narrow sense, on apparently remote questions.

But even then, although we were in very truth a "propaganda group", we did not reconcile ourselves to that role. We announced from the start that our aim was not merely to analyse and to comment, but to struggle <u>for the reform of the Communist Party</u>, i. e. <u>to become a party</u>. In the meantime, we have created a party of our own. Our next endeavour is to put some flesh on its bones by energetic campaigns of <u>agitation</u> suitable to a party, while devoting a lot of our time simultaneously to the renovation, stengthening and shoring up of its theoretical foundations.

The comrades of the younger generation, who participate in this simultaneous two-sided struggle, are indeed privileged. What is going on right now is an ideological struggle no less important and significant historically than the one in which our movement was created 25 years ago. We are fighting once again to re-create the world movement without permitting one break in the continuity of its evolution.

The cadres created by Trotsky and his ideas are confronted for the first time, with a test of their capacity to use these ideas for the solution of a deep crisis in the international movement, without Trotsky's participation. From all indications, the basic cadres on an international scale are meeting this test successfully.

In the crisis of 1939-40 -- a crisis arising after great defeats -- we had Trotsky's direct leadership. In a second, minor crisis of the immediate post-war period -- the continued fight with the Shachtmanites, with Munis, the German retrogressionists, Morrow-Goldman, Natalia, the French right wing, Haston, etc. -- we were still riding on the tide set in motion by our victory in 1940. This was recorded in "the books" containing the documentary record of that fight. It was really "the books" which tipped the balance in that second, subordinate crisis.

Now we have to do it all by ourselves, and we have to write new "books" on our own account. The ideological life of our movement is very rich indeed these days. This time it is concerned with a tremendous upsurge of the elemental revolutionary movement of the workers and colonial peoples. Our young comrades are indeed fortunate to witness and participate in such a titanic historical struggle under such favourable auspices.

You are lucky too, to have a chance to explain all this to the young generation along the route of your tour -- to inform them and inspire them with a consciousness of the great historical importance of everything that each and every one of them think and say and do in these great days.

Fraternally,

J. P. Cannon

Letter to Farrell Dobbs - 3rd February 1954 (22)

Dear Farrell:

I haven't been able to disentangle myself from other preoccupations to send you any connected thoughts on McCarthyism and the probable character and perspectives of American fascism in general. The articles of Breitman are very effective arguments against people who will not recognise incipient American fascism until it obliges them by assuming "classic" European form. What will they do if American fascism neglects or refuses to accommodate them in this respect, right up to the eve of the show-down -- which it may well do?

I will have something to say about the question of American fascism a little later when I get free from some other commitments in the anti-Pablo campaign. In fact, I have scheduled a whole lecture on the probable character and perspectives of American fascism in the projected new series of lectures on "Problems of American Socialism". But it will have to wait. Meantime, I am in basic agreement with the campaign you are conducting and the arguments for it, especially those given in Breitman's articles. I believe these articles would make a good follow-up pamphlet to the first one.

* * *

Those who would judge specific American forms of fascism too formalistically by the European pattern, arbitrarily limit capitalist aggression against the workers' movement to two forms. They see the democatic form by which the workers are suppressed through strictly legal measures in accordance with the law and the constitution -- such as the Taft-Hartley Law, formal indictments and persecutions for specific violations of existing statutes, etc. All this, despite its obvious inconvenience to the workers movement, is characterised as democratic.

On the other side they see the illegal, unofficial forms of violence practiced by "storm troopers" and similar shirted hooligans outside the forms of law. This is characterised as fascism.

But what about the violence which is technically illegal and unconstitutional, but carried out nevertheless by duly constituted officials clothed with legal authority? Such things as the breaking up of meetings and picket lines by offical police and special deputies; wire tapping, inquisitions, screening and black-listing of "subversives", and a general reign of intimidation and terror -- don't fit very well into the "democratic" formula, although their chief instruments are legally-constituted officials, supported and incited by press campaigns, radio demagogues, etc.

This specific form of illegal violence under the outward forms of law has a specific American flavour; and it is especially favoured by a section of the ruling class which has very little respect for its own laws, and cares more for practical action than for theories as to how it is to be carried out. This is, in fact, an important element of the specific form which American fascism will take, as has already been indicated quite convincingly.

The depradations of Mayor Hague, who announced "I am the law", were a manifestation of this tendency back in the late Thirties. Trotsky, by the way, considered Hague an American fascist. He described his unconstitutional assaults on free speech and free assembly, through the medium of official police, as manifestations of incipient fascism. If the labour movement stands around and waits until it is attacked directly by unofficial shirted hooligans, before they recognise the approach of American fascism, they may find their organisations broken up "legally" while they are waiting.

The truth of the matter is that American fascism, in its own specific form has already a considerable army of storm troopers at its disposal in the persons of prosecuting attorneys and official policemen, and a press and radio power which makes Hitler's "Angriff" look like a throw-away sheet. It has political demagogues, like McCarthy, who are different from Hitler mainly in the fact that they are clothed with official legal powers and immunity, while Hitler had to build up an independent, unofficial and at times, persecuted movement without any official sanction, without any direct support from the established press, etc.

"McCarthy is different", say the formalistic wiseacres, as if that were a help and consolation. He is indeed different in several ways. But the most important difference is that he operates with formal legal sanction and immunity. The right comparison to make is not between the McCarthy of today and Hitler on the verge of taking power in 1933, but rather with Hitler in the later Twenties. The main difference we find in this comparison is that McCarthy is 'way ahead of Hitler.

* * *

Another point: The German-American Bund of the late Thirties was not a characteristic manifestation of American fascism, but rather a foreign agency of Hitler's German movement. Neither is it correct to look for the appearance of genuine American fascism in lunatic fringe outfits such as the Silver Shirts, Gerald Smith, etc. A powerful section of the American bourgeoisie, with unlimited means at their disposal, are already fascist minded. They feel no need of unofficial screwball movements.

To the extent that such outfits appear here or there, with the development of the social crisis, they will be subsumed in a broader, more powerful, adequately financed and press-supported general movement which operates under more or less legal forms. It is far more correct, far more realistic, to see the incipient stage of American fascism in the conglomeration of "official" marauders represented by McCarthy -- and also to a certain extent by Brownell -- than outside it.

* * *

One of the great satisfactions of my distant removal from the centre, in addition to the opportunity it gives me to concentrate on some special work, without the distraction and interruption of daily affairs -- is the consciousness and feeling of belonging to a party, in which many other people are doing a lot of political thinking and pushing forward the party work in all its forms.

The initiative of the party centre in developing the anti-McCarthy camapign at this time, and its prompt response to the reappearance of Coughlin with an action in Detroit, has been especially impressive in this respect. There is no substitute for a cadre of qualified people. Once such a cadre has been assembled, and has acquired the habit of cooperation in a division of labour, it just keeps rolling along with a momentum of its own, regardless of who may be absent at the moment, and regardless of what screws may get loose and turn into screwballs. (That's a joke, son.)

Fraternally,

J. P. Cannon

Letter to Daniel Roberts - 3rd February 1954 (23)

Dear Dan:

Farrell sent me a copy of his January 20 letter, which made the tentative proposal that you work in the centre for a while. I realise that this would create some difficulties for the Seattle organisation. Your association with the comrades farther North also has an exceptional importance at the present time; they have an important role to play in the solution of the international crisis. Nevertheless, I am in favour of your transfer to New York for the next period if it can be reasonably arranged. I am inclined to think that the Northwest comrades, being more national and international party minded than provincial, will be inclined to the same position after due deliberation.

* * *

National political experience is qualitatively different from local activity; and, at a certain stage of the development of a professional revolutionist, it becomes more or less mandatory. One can learn only so much on a local scale; the opportunities being restricted both by the limited character of local activity and interests, and by the fact that the local activist is deprived of daily association with others who have a wider and more general national and international experience and of discussion with them in the daily confrontation of larger, more general problems.

The transfer of an activist from the local to the national arena is comparable to the leap from the grade school to the university. I noticed this qualitative difference in my own experience in the early days. Since then I have had occasion to observe the influence of such a changed environment on the political development of others. Many of the strongest political leaders in the party are today working in local organisations remote from the centre. This will be the case also in the future, if we do not foolishly depart from our basic conception that the national leadership of the party, in the real sense of the word, is a broadly extended cadre not limited to the current political staff in the centre.

As a rule, the strongest and most effective local leaders of the party today are those who have served their time in the centre and have brought back with them into the local work the rich acquisitions of this experience.

I like to conceive of the Plenum of the National Committee not as a body entirely led and dominated by a limited group in the central staff, with the district representatives serving as a sort of chorus, but rather as a body of people who are more less equal, both in their rounded experience and in their capacities; who are cooperating in a division of labour between local and national work; and who can be easily interchangeable in these functions.

This is a sort of guarantee against the self-perpetuation of a small group of professionals without real connections with the living local organisations, and operating without any real control -- the method of functioning, and apparently the conception, of the Pabloites in the international movement, and one of the reasons for the crisis they have precipitated. The broadly-representative system is also a guarantee that the party will not be beheaded, either by the defections of a few individuals who hold all levers in their hands, or by any untoward circumstance which might put them out of action.

If the leadership is more broadly diffused; if the individual members act as interchangeable parts for the central mechanism; then, in the case of the worst emergency, if only two or three or more of them evade the disaster, they can automatically constitute a functioning political centre which will command the necessary respect and authority in the party ranks. In case of emergency, such a new centre can not very well be improvised on the spur of the moment. It would be much better if they are prepared for it by previous experience and training of a more general character, and are

already known to the party, not only as local leaders but also as effective participants in the national leadership.

* * *

There is no gainsaying the fact that the transfer of any effective activist to the centre disrupts the local mechanism and invariably brings the automatic first response of consternation from local comrades: "This is impossible. We can't possibly get along without Comrade Blank". I know that this is so, first of all from my own experience.

When I was first elected to the Central Committee in 1920, with the accompanying decision of the Convention that I should leave Kansas City and go to work in the centre, our Kansas City delegation, including me, strenuously resisted the decisions and voted against them. I was eager and ambitious to get the wider experience and the opportunity to learn from others, who I thought at that time -- somewhat mistakenly, as I regretfully learned later -- knew so much more and were so far superior to me. But the decisions were made just the same, and I had packed my suitcase and was on my way before I had quit muttering and protesting about the dire fate my departure would bring to the Kansas City organisation.

That proved to be an exaggerated fear. My departure from Kansas City was a loss to the local organisation but it proved also to be a gain. It compelled others, who had previously been inclined to leave everything to me, to make decisions and perform functions which they had previously thought beyond them. Ironically, the later extremely serious and classical conflict with Oehlerite sectarianism in 1935 could legitimately trace its genealogy to my departure from Kansas City in 1920. My leaving the scene created a vacuum which was soon filled by an energetic young fellow named Hugo Oehler. He developed very rapidly as a party leader and soon began to do many things as well as I had done them, and in some cases better.

Oehler became one of the most influential and most highly respected of the younger leaders of the party. He came with us into the Left Opposition and contributed no small part to its work and development in the early years. His eventual defection into sectarianism does not cancel out the great constructive work he had done before that. He was an admirable comrade. I was always proud of the fact that he came from Kansas City and that I had had something to do, at least indirectly, with his rapid development; and I still remember him affectionately despite the later conflict and separation.

Who knows? You may have another Hugo Oehler in the Seattle organisation, waiting for you to get out of the way and give him a chance to show what he can do on his own account, when you are not more or less monopolising the responsibilities and the functions. I have seen this sort of thing happen many times in other local organisations when similar transfers were made. You might even use this as an argument to convince the Northwest comrades that your departure may turn out to be a blessing in disguise, the best thing that ever happened to them. At any rate, you can try it.

* * *

I am deeply interested in the political discussion going on among the comrades farther North and am most gratified by the resolute stand they have taken on the crisis in the international movement. When the show-down comes the cadres of the "old Trotskyists" show their mettle every time, wherever they may be. Our inability to get a reliable Vancouver address is a big aggravation to me. I sent them copies of some material I have written and it was returned. I would have sent them quite a bit more if I had known where in the hell to send it. Don't they know that Trotsky considered laxity and slovenliness in technical matters a characteristic trait of Mensheviks; not Bolsheviks?

Letter to Farrell Dobbs - 19th March 1954 (24)

Dear Farrell:

For the P.C. Re: The new programme of the Communist Party

I haven't seen the full text of this document yet, but the line is indicated clearly enough in the quotations cited in Harry Ring's article in this week's Militant. The key points, of course, are the confirmation of their turn to the Democratic Party and their offer of a "coalition" with "those groups of capital opposed to the McCarthyite programme of fascism and war".

Tom told me that he had already written to you about this matter, suggesting that the publication of this new programme opens up the opportunity for a big attack on the CP. I had been thinking along the same lines, and would go even further. We shouldn't let the Stalinists off with an occasional article.

The time is ripe, and the publication of the new CP programme provides the occasion, to open up a campaign against the Stalinists. Such a campaign at this time should not conflict with our general campaign against McCarthyism. On the contrary, it should be conceived as a part of the general campaign -- a campaign within a campaign -- dealing with the most important question of the programme for the anti-fascist struggle.

Many reasons have accumulated to make a campaign against the Stalinists, within the anti-McCarthy campaign, timely now; and we have much to gain from it on several fronts. Tom tells me that the Stalinists are becoming very active in the unions again; and that they are acquiring a certain immunity by their posture as "Democrats". He was also told at the Stalinist bookshop here, that a huge edition of the new CP programme is being published in pamphlet form.

All indications are that the Stalinists' campaign for a "coalition" will be pushed energetically. A great many workers are becoming more interested in the crisis and McCarthyism than in red baiting. The Stalinists have the possibility, in such a situation, of gaining the sympathy of newly awakened militants, and of beginning a new recruitment, if we are not right on top of the situation with a well organised and systematic exposure of their treacherous policy.

An anti-Stalinist campaign of the SWP will be a striking demonstration that our relationship to the Stalinists is not that of friendly parties cooperating "in the same class camp", but that of irreconcilable opponents struggling for leadership in the anti-fascist movement of the workers on the basis of conflicting programmes.

A new anti-Stalinist campaign (within the broader anti-McCarthy campaign) will be now the most effective form of a struggle against the American Pabloites, and can have a devastating effect. It will equip our own people, in action, with the most effective arguments against the Pabloite "soft approach" to the Stalinists, and harden them against any possible sentiment of conciliation toward them.

The manifest right turn of American Stalinism upsets the whole premise of the Pabloite line for the US. No wonder it leaves them speechless. The publication of the new CP programme certainly gives us an excellent opening to demand that our home-grown Pabloites open their mouths, speak up, say something on the question, put up or shut up. I notice that Joe used this attack against them quite effectively in the current issue of the Militant, on the question of McCarthyism. This same line can be followed up even more effectively, I think, on the question of American Stalinism.

A positive campaign against the Stalinists, on the basis of their announced programme, is the necessary supplement now to our international polemic against the Pabloites. Their revelation stakes everything on an irreversible left turn of Stalinism. But the policy of the American CP is evidently not an American "exception" to the general trend of Stalinist policy. It fits into a swing to the right on the international field.

We have already commented on this with respect to France. New developments in Ceylon are along the same line; the CP there counterposes the call for a "progressive", i.e. capitalist government, to the LSSP slogan for a Workers' Government. The latest issue of La Vérité reports that Colvin de Silva is beginning a new series of articles against the Stalinist policy in Ceylon in the Samasamajist. I also noticed in the January 14 issue of the Samasamajist (the latest issue I have received) that Leslie Goonewardene announces a new series of articles on "The Difference Between Trotskyism and Stalinism".

You probably have already seen these articles in the airmail copy which you receive. As part of our campaign against the Stalinists in the US, The Militant should comment on this new development of Stalinist policy in Ceylon, and possibly reprint a number of the articles from the Samasamajist.

On the whole, the more I think about it, the more it seems timely to link up a new systematic attack on the Stalinists with our general anti-McCarthy campaign; and to coordinate it, at the same time, with our campaign against the Pabloites, nationally and internationally. I suggest that the related questions of the new programme of the American CP, the right swing of Stalinist policy internationally, and the next stage of the struggle against Pabloism, be the subject of a thorough discussion in the PC.

Following that, if it is decided that the anti-Stalinist campaign is timely now, it should be thoroughly prepared and started off with a bang, and a formal statement by the PC, as was done when you started the anti-McCarthy campaign.

Fraternally,

J. P. Cannon

Letter to Farrell Dobbs - 7th April 1954 (25)

Dear Farrell:

We have been discussing the present stage of the international struggle and the advisability of taking a little time out to consider the question of tactics in the next period. It seems that the all-out public fight with the Pabloites, on all questions great and small, has just about served its purpose. We have certainly done a pretty thorough job in the public polemic on all fronts since November. But we should be careful now that we don't over-do it and create an adverse reaction. (26)

Questions of organisation, Congress manoeuvres, and other strictly internal questions, which have no real interest to our general readers, should be relegated to Internal Bulletins and letters, and the public discussion restricted to the larger questions of Pabloite revisionism.

Some caution on public utterance may also be required by the interests of those sections deeply involved in entrist work. Too many and too frank references to them in public may give the reformist fakers an opening to attack them and involve them in an inprofitable fight. At any rate, they may feel that way and we have to bear their sentiments in mind.

The whole question of the entrist tactic -- its justification and necessity in certain cases, its aims, and its limitations -- will probably have to be debated in the near future. But it may be dangerous to conduct this discussion frankly in public. We don't want to jeopardise the work which comrades are now doing in this field by giving the reformist bureaucrats a written outline of our aims.

I recall that the Indian comrades, at the time they made a decision to enter the Socialist Party of India, asked us not to ship any more copies of the History of American Trotskyism to India. The reason was that I had spoken so frankly in this book -- after the fact -- about our experience in the SP and the political aims that motivated the entry, that they were afraid the Indian SP leaders could use it to discredit and isolate our comrades before they got a good start with their integration. This incident is worth remembering now.

I am strongly inclined to the opinion that the discussion of the entrist tactic will have to be more or less excluded from our public organs. Even in the internal discussion, we will have to resort to some diplomatic formulas.

The trouble is, that any discussion of an entry tactic at any time, must be carried out with the understanding on our part that a hostile bureaucracy may be listening and that we don't want to put weapons into their hands. The discussion of the entrist tactic initiated by Trotsky in the mid Thirties, was regulated to a certain extent by this consideration. Opponents of the tactic, such as the Oehlerites, who accused us of liquidationism at the time, demanded that we say whether the entry was for permanence and whether we really expected to gain a majority and transform the SP.

Even though there was not a trace of liquidationism in our policy, we nevertheless found it necessary to parry that question for tactical reasons so as not to put the rightwing bureaucrats on guard against us. Trotsky's formula in answer to the Oehlerites was "we will not attempt to answer that question in advance. We will work in the reformist and centrist organisations for our programme and then we'll see".

The issue is now doubly complicated by the fact that the Pabloite conception of entry is not the same as that of Trotsky. Their policy really is liquidationist in essence, and

diplomatic formulations are used by them not to disarm the bureaucrats but to muddle and confuse the comrades.

We will have to find a way to counterpose our conception of entry to that of the Pabloites without endangering or disrupting the work of our people in reformist organisations, without giving aid and comfort to anti-entrist tendencies motivated by real sectarianism, and without aiding the liquidators to liquidate the whole conception of the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the vanguard party. This is a rather large order and it is easier said than done. Nevertheless we must find a way to do it.

We have to begin with the recognition that this is strictly an internal problem of our own movement, and that its discussion in the future, insofar as this is possible, should be strictly limited to internal channels. But even so, our formulations must be worked out very carefully.

Fraternally,

J. P. Cannon

Letter to Vincent Dunne - 14th January 1955 (27)

Dear Vincent,

Things have been a bit disorganised here because of Jane being sick: she had a bad cold which has kept her in bed for two weeks with a constant fever, and the doctor thinks that she won't be able to start work again for at least two or three weeks. You can imagine how this has slowed down work here. However, I've taken advantage of this break to read and have a think about things a bit, all of which will prove to be useful in one way or another once Jane can start work again. In the meantime, Rose and Evelyne are filling the gap.

I've been spending quite a bit of time with Engels. Some of his letters to Sorge and others in the US were previously included in the "Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels". They have now been grouped together in a new volume published last year by International Publishers, "Letters from Marx and Engels to Americans". I've taken advantage of this break in work to make a thorough study of it. It's a book that really should be read by all Party activists, and particularly by the students at the Trotsky school.

Engels' letters are the first and best warning against sectarianism. But they are more than just that. Engels, in his letters to Sorge, combined his attacks against the sectarian socialists in the USA and England with attacks against the English Fabians and against the petit-bourgeois opportunists in the German Party. The "innovators" and neo-liquidationists who are all trying to use Engels at the moment only cite the first part and ignore the second.

I foresee a big argument breaking out around this volume of letters, and I aim to take part. It seems that all the ex-revolutionaries, reformed Trotskyists and deserters base themselves on Engels. But they don't draw their capitulationist tendencies from him; that has its origins in their own makeup; they are trying to find a defence in Engels after the fact.

They suggest that he supports their idea -- the only thing they all agree upon - that it is wrong to try and build a revolutionary party under present conditions, when the number of conscious revolutionaries is so limited. They say that this is sectarianism -- not only the politics and activity of such a party, but even the very idea that a small party has the right to exist, whatever its objectives and actions.

The Shachtmanites, as well as the Cochranites, refer to Engels on this point. I have also seen an article on the same lines in the political-literary review "Dissent", published by a group of graduate Shachtmanites, professional abstentionists, homeless socialists and other political vagabonds who call themselves intellectuals. These birds of passage have changed the formula by quoting Marx, having carefully made sure that he was dead and unable to take them by the throat.

* * *

As you well know, I am in constant struggle against any sign or symptom of sectarianism. I've decided to write on this subject, too, in a "preventive" manner, and to base myself on Engels. I think that sectarianism, in one form or another, is a permanent danger for any small organisation of revolutionaries which is condemned to isolation, due to circumstances outside its control and irrespective of its wishes and intentions. If such an organisation ceases to consider itself part of the working class, an organisation which

can only achieve its objectives with and by the working class, and starts to behave consequently, it is lost.

The key to the Engels' thinking is his striking expression that conscious socialists must act as a "yeast" in the instinctive and spontaneous movement of the working class. These are words that each member of the party should remember. The yeast can help the dough to rise, and eventually become a loaf of bread, but it can never be the loaf of bread itself.

Any tendency, direct or indirect, in a small revolutionary party, to construct its own world, outside and separate from the real movement of the workers in the class struggle, is sectarian. Such tendencies can take many forms, and we shouldn't fool ourselves into believing that all the possibilities have been exhausted by the well-known classic examples.

We have come a long way, to my mind, since the adventures of the first American socialists with their separate colonies, self-sufficient and outside the dominant economic system, and since the experiences of the SLP with those pure socialist syndicalists, who were outside the existing movement, with all its faults. But a "political colony", shut in upon itself and trying to live its own little life, in its own little world, wouldn't be any better.

The wise words of Engels on this subject should be discussed and applied to modern conditions. But if I get involved in the controversy over Engels' letters, I wouldn't restrict myself to the question of sectarianism. It seems to me that the real question is the attempt to use Engels' authority to liquidate the concept of a party of socialists, founded on a definite programme -- a party that can only be a small party in the present situation -- and to replace it by some "big" future party, to be built at some moment or other in the future by people with unknown names and addresses, as a result of the later development of a spontaneous process. This is radically false because the very idea of a party -- big or small -- implies a programme and therefore consciousness.

Incidentally, this misunderstanding and misuse of Engels is not new. It is a striking illustration of the backwardness of American political thought to see that the letters of Engels to Sorge, which were published in Germany 49 years ago and translated into Russian a year later -- and which became the object of discussion in the Russian movement in 1907 -- are only now available in their complete form in this country, and are only now becoming a factor in the same debate!

Lenin's Introduction to the 1907 Russian edition of these letters (reprinted as an Appendix to the new American edition) is a strong polemic against those opportunists who used the authority of Engels in favour of their proposal to liquidate the social-democratic party, founded on a strictly defined programme, in order to create an amorphous "workers' congress". That, in essence, is just what our ex-revolutionaries are trying to do in the United States today.

My polemic against today's liquidators will take up Lenin's defence of Engels against the Russian liquidators half a century ago, but won't stop there. Engels didn't say the last word on the question of the party, and neither did Lenin in 1907. Many things have happened since then, and if we want to be faithful to the spirit and the method of Engels, these events of living history have to be pointed out and discussed; the commentary has to add something to what has already been said.

60 years have gone by since Engels laid down his pen. From what he saw and knew at the time, he thought that Bebel's German party was, all in all, pretty good. For his part, Lenin in 1907 was happy to take Bebel's party as his model. He wrote -- in "One step forward, two steps back" -- that he wasn't attempting "to create a special variety of a

Bolshevik kind", but simply to adapt "the point of view of revolutionary social-democracy" as represented in the Second International, to Russian conditions. But the German Party was to be proved unfit to fulfill its historic task, and ignominiously collapsed, faced with the test of 1914. Can there be any doubt that Engels would have drawn radical conclusions from this catastrophe? As far as Lenin is concerned, he was later forced to recognise that his conception of a vanguard party, which he had originally understood as being nothing more than a Russian version of the German party, was in fact something new -- a development and an application of the Marxist theory of the party to the current stage of the struggle for power.

The validity of this conception was demonstrated positively by the Russian revolution, and negatively by the defeat of the revolution in other countries where the old forms had persisted. The leit-motif of Trotsky's great struggle in the period after Lenin, summarised and re-affirmed in his thesis on the crisis of leadership in the 1938 Transitional Programme, was just that Leninist contribution and extension to the programme in the theory and practice of the Party.

If it was just a question of having a "big" party, just for the sake of it, then any old type of party would do; but nothing less than a Bolshevik party will do for war and revolution. This, in my opinion, is the final verdict of history. What's more, the building of such a party cannot be put off until everyone recognises the need for it. It must be started by those who are ready, who are able, and who are determined. That's how it was done in Russia, and no one has yet found a better way.

We have plenty of ammunition for the polemic against the liquidators in the discussion over the letters from Engels to Sorge; the subject should certainly be of major interest to the new generation that is coming into the movement at a time when theory and practice have a good chance of being telescoped. Perhaps our projected "Theses on the party" will evolve out of the discussion, before being formally codified. That is certainly the most interesting, and perhaps the most effective way of preparing the theses. I wonder if this topic couldn't be profitably added to the programme of the Trotsky school.

Yours ever,

J. P. Cannon

Letter to Murry Weiss - 4th March 1955 (27)

Dear Murry,

I was glad to see that the Militant had taken good note of the National Guardian's appeal for a list of independent parties in the next elections, and of the support given by the Cochranites to this appeal. I've been following the politics of the second-rate Stalinists of the Guardian and of Monthly Review, and the general evolution of their relationship with the Cochranites, and I was of the opinion that we should make some pertinent remarks pretty soon.

I think that the Editorial in the Militant hits just the right note in its criticism of the politics of the Guardian and against the Cochranites. However, I do not agree with the last paragraph, from a tactical point of view. This paragraph appears to close the door on an intervention by us in any small movement that might be created by the Guardian's proposal.

The Editorial says: "We reject McManus's proposal". Of course, that's what we do with the proposal as it is at the moment; but we didn't need to say so straight away. We should approach the question a bit more subtly and a bit more flexibly, and we should not exclude the idea of participating in any conferences which may take shape as a result of McManus's appeal. We should leave ourselves enough room to test what's left of the ALP-Progressive Party, which the Stalinists abandonned so abruptly, to see if there aren't some youth among them who are simply attracted by the idea of an independent party, and who are not yet irredemiably contaminated by Stalinism.

If we take the formal position that we are for independent political action without waiting for the unions, and that we want to discuss programmatic questions with those who have the same position, that would open the door for us. Straightforward rejection of the proposal seems to close it.

* * *

I remember that the Old Man took this position in the 30s, when the question of new parties and of a new international was being discussed in other circles as well as our own. In America, for example, our first approach to the supporters of Muste combined a declaration of agreement with their proposal to form a new party with a criticism of their first proposal on programme. At the same time, we didn't present our programme as "take it or leave it", in an ultimatist way. We stated that we were ready to discuss any proposal that was put forward by other people. In this way, we drew the American Workers' Party into a discussion and into negotiations that finally led to fusion. Our method with regard to the Musteites at that time, which was applied again, a bit later, in relation to the left socialists in the SP, produced excellent results in terms of recruitment and political experience. None of that would have been possible if we had adopted a brutally ultimatist attitude.

* * *

Of course, current developments are not the same as those of 1934-1936, and the prospects are much more limited. The big difference is that Muste's movement and the left wing of the SP were basically progressive, even if a bit confused, and that they were breaking with the <u>ideology</u> of the labour bureaucracy, the rightist old guard of the SP and the Stalinists. Organisational questions played a secondary role.

As far as I know, the American tendency of the Guardian and of Monthly Review is not opposed to the general ideology of Stalinism on any important issue. They are ready to

endorse the balance sheet of Stalinism, from the Moscow Trials through the Second World War to the pacifist circus of coexistence, if only they are allowed to do so as an independent party. The renegade Cochranites joining them gives an even more degenerate aspect to the entire show. On the whole, we can say with certainty that this "small" movement is more an expression of backwardness than of progress.

The main nucleus of these dissident Stalinists consists of burnt-out cases, incurably corrupted by Stalinist ideology, who do not have the slightest intention or ability to do anything else but bleat about the official CP and ask for their own little stagnant pool to paddle in. It would be more than stupid to foster illusions in the possibility of a revolutionary party coming from this Stalinist garbage. But perhaps it's possible -- I don't have enough information to be sure -- that some serious youth might have been attracted to these groups by the slogan of an independent party. If this is the case, it might be useful to try to get in contact with them.

Do we have any politically developed elements in the New York branch who might be able to devote themselves completely to this for a while, starting with an incognito exploration of the situation in the ALP. This might provide us with the information that we need in order to define tactics. We might also have some chance of finding out what is going on in the Cochranite branch of the unofficial Stalinists.

* * *

We think that it is certain that the first signs of a serious breakdown in the economic situation, or of new developments in the international situation, or both, will provoke a new current of opinion in favour of a Labour Party based on the unions. But that's only one aspect of future developments. We must not forget that a concomitant perspective -- of the most crucial importance for us and for the labour movement in general -- will be the appearance of a new layer of angry young people who will be attracted as individuals to the idea of an independent revolutionary party. Such valuable elements might turn up in all kinds of places. We should be on the alert to prevent the Guardian/Monthly Review/Cochranite bunch from attracting them with their proposals for "independent tickets in '55" without making clear what their programme is. If we adopt the correct tactical approach it seems to me that it will open the door to a campaign of polemic and hesitation on their part that might enable us to reach out to some of the valuable elements in this movement, as well as allowing us to consolidate our own forces.

* * *

I have also thought for some time that we should subject the Cochranites' politics, as they have developed since the split, to a critical examination.

They would not be able to stand up to it. A clinical analysis of the evolution of Cochranism would also be useful in the international movement. I think that a discussion of these questions on the National Committee would be timely.

Fraternally,

J. P. Cannon

Letter to Morris Stein - 11th March 1955 (27)

Dear Morris,

I got your note of dated 5th March about Lazar Kling, and I'll send the information to the historian; I think it will interest him.

I was amused to read in The Nation of 26th February, page 188, an advert for a publication called "Turning Point" which includes a "denunciation" of the Cochranites. Tom ordered a copy and I have just had a look at it. The "Turning Point" -- a duplicated bulletin -- is edited by a group of unofficial Stalinists who think that the Cochranites haven't sufficiently prostrated themselves. Have you noticed this publication?

There are all sorts of small groups of unofficial or dissident Stalinists in the country. Usually such developments would provide a certain area for work along the lines of revolutionary regroupment. This was the case, for example, 26 years ago when Trotsky began his work in exile after his deportation to Turkey. The first cadres of the Left Opposition were fished out of this kind of dissident group, although very few of them were ever completely won over. However, in the process, they provided a kind of bridge towards newer, fresher and better elements.

The Cochranites are apparently concentrating on this milieu in the hope of finding the material for a new party. This represents a change from Cochran's original orientation towards the lower cadres of the CIO bureaucracy, along the lines of the much more clearly pro-Stalinist line of Clark, Bartell and Frankel.

Whether he knows it or not, Cochran is a practicising disciple of the Dewey school of empiricism. He is ready to try anything, hoping that he will end up by finding the right formula after a series of bad tries. It's now perfectly clear what he meant when he started talking about the "Americanisation" of Marxism. Trotskyism of the old school teaches that it's the programme that creates the party. The main idea of the Cochranite review -- if we can call it an idea and not simply a gamble -- is that you first have to find the people for a new party, find them wherever they may be, and then find the programme. No doubt that is "American", but it certainly isn't Marxist.

As I see things, there are two main differences between the Cochranites' current adventure and the methods used by the Trotskyists a quarter of a century ago.

Firstly, the splits of the first period were implicitly progressive. The present dissident groupings represent principally a retreat and a withdrawal under the pretext of minor disagreements with the American leadership of the CP, without rejecting fundamental Stalinist ideology and practice on any issue.

Secondly, Trotsky began his work by drawing a clear line of programmatic demarcation, rejecting any compromise or conciliation with dissident groups like the Brandlerites, the Lovestonites, etc...who remained tied to one or another of the parties on the Stalinist list. The Cochranites are trying to do a deal with the unofficial Stalinists through a deliberate policy of conciliation and adaptation.

From this point of view, the editorial of the Militant on the National Guardian's appeal for independent tickets in 1955 was fundamentally correct. But, I think we should strive to get serious information on the situation in these unofficial Stalinist circles in order to prepare a systematic campaign of explanation and polemic on the general theme of revolutionary regroupment.

Where can we expect the human material for the revolutionary party to come from in the next period, and on what basis can we regroup them? I think it would be useful for us to think about this question, with the aim of concentrating our agitation in a clearly defined direction. I don't think that many forces -- if any -- will come from the stagnant swamp of unofficial Stalinism. Another big difference between the current situation and the 1930s is that at the moment no social-democratic movement exists within which we could expect to see a left wing take shape. So there is nothing there, either.

All kinds of burnt out and disillusioned radicals, who really only want to gossip and moan, hold out poor prospects for a serious party. The same thing goes for most routine trade unionists. It is the new elements, mainly youth, who have nothing to lose, who haven't been worn out or deformed by other parties, and who are able to respond to a great idea, who will offer us the best prospects.

I am inclined to think that the most fertile ground for initial recruitment will be found amongst the unemployed, amongst the minorities who are victims of oppression, and amongst the students who are beginning their working life unable to find a job. From this point of view, branches like Detroit for example should distribute the Militant at the Employment Bureau and on Wayne campus (I suppose that they already do that).

Many sons and daughters of auto workers who were able to go to college during the golden age of full employment and overtime for their parents, will graduate or leave college without graduating, without even being able to find a job in industry as an unskilled worker, never mind the kind of more sought-after jobs that their education was supposed to prepare them for. Such elements will be receptive to the idea of a radical solution to an intolerable situation.

* * *

I am currently in the middle of studying the "Industrial Workers of the World", in preparation for an article on their 50th anniversary, which falls this summer. (28) The IWW didn't win most of their recruits from the working class in general, even though that was their original plan. Circumstances at that time led their organisation to address its appeals and turn its activity more and more to those sections of the working class which were experiencing the worst hardship -- unskilled workers, immigrant workers, and especially those who migrated to the West and who were unemployed half the time. It was in these circles, and especially amongst the youth of these layers that the main cadres were found.

It was only later that the great idea of industrial unionism, popularised by the IWW and by the Debs socialists, penetrated the mass of the proletariat and found its explosive expression in the rise of the CIO. In re-examining the history of the IWW, it is essential in my opinion to remember that they had their first successes on the fringes of the main mass of the proletariat, and that they found their first recruits there, too. In the period between the formulation of their programme and its fusion with the masses, these people, who were in fact the vanguard of the class at the time, were the torch-bearers of this idea. They maintained the continuity of the movement and put enough flesh on its bones to keep it alive. The history of the beginnings of American communism shows a somewhat similar picture as regards the role of those elements born abroad. During the first ten years of the Communist Party, the "English" sections were never more than 10% of the total membership, and as you know, at least 50% of the members of these "English" sections were "Americanised" elements, born abroad, mainly Jews. Foreigners and Jews, with only a few native Americans, were the torch-bearers of communist ideas in those pioneer days.

In the five years following the crash, the CP mainly found its recruits amongst the unemployed and in the "lost generation" of students for whom there was no prospect of a

professional career. In the second half of the 30s, with the upturn in the economy, those cadres recruited in the unemployed councils and in the youth movement were sent into the factories, and in many locals easily became the leaders of the tumultuous CIO movement.

These historical examples are worth considering. We can expect that this process will be repeated in one form or another. But this time -- the world being what it is -- the interval between the first large-scale recruitment of the most receptive elements and when the programme bursts out in mass action will be what the convicts call "short time".

I'd like to know what you think about all this.

Fraternally,

J. P. Cannon

On the Chinese question - 16/18th September 1955 (29)

We have to remind ourselves continually that our theory is not a law laid down to regulate reality, but rather an anticipation of the line of development which reality will take. We don't test the facts against the theory, but vice versa. We test our theory against the reality as it develops. If new facts, that were not foreseen, at one time or another appear to refute our theory in part, that only signifies for us, as Marxists, that we have to introduce some amendments into our theory.

I personally am of the opinion that these new developments of recent years in the Chinese revolution represent a striking confirmation of the theory of permanent revolution -- if we understand it correctly and if we see the facts as they really are.

Engels often insisted in his letters to America, that our theory is a theory of development. And that of course is true of the Trotskyist advancement of the Marxist theory in the post-Lenin time, or even in the time when Lenin was alive, beginning with 1905. The theory of the permanent revolution is a theory of developments which are to take place, and of the role of the party as a part of these developments.

In the development of historical events we see the two main factors; one is the mass movement which is the great battering ram, and the other is the conscious factor, represented by the party. These two parts of the historical process interact on each other all the time, but not always in the same way and to the same degree. The relation between them could be described as changing, not fixed and always the same.

The spontaneous, elemental movement of the masses, led at every stage by the conscious party, is merely the ideal form of development. We saw that in 1917 in the Russian revolution. The elemental movement of the masses, led by the Bolshevik Party, accomplished the classic revolution. But even in the Russian Revolution, this ideal relationship of the conscious factor, represented by the party, to the elemental movement of the masses was not established at first. There was a tremendous distortion, or deformation, if you want to call it that, in the first stages.

When the February Revolution broke out the Bolshevik Party wasn't there. In the period from February to the middle of April a part of the Bolshevik Party and its leadership was there, all right, but its policy was incorrect. It was only as the revolution began to develop, in the middle of April with the arrival of Lenin and then in May with the arrival of Trotsky, that that ideal relationship between party and the class, so magnificently portrayed in the History of the Russian Revolution by Trotsky, and confirmed by Sukhanov, was really established. Then you had the ideal situation of an invincible mass movement of the workers led and directed at almost every step by the conscious Bolshevik party.

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I see the Chinese revolution not as a single act that was accomplished with the military victory in 1949. I see it rather as a process that is still going on, and still far from completed. I don't think the Chinese revolution, after six years of development, has progressed as far as the Russian revolution in its first year.

I see the Chinese revolution as a process that is still going on, with its further development and its eventual outcome still unknown, and with variants possible. Our task at the moment is to estimate what stage it is at today, and how we shall characterise it, and what policy we shall recommend.

The military victory of 1949 was obviously only one stage of the revolution. From the start the revolution has been terribly distorted as a result of the defeat and betrayal of the revolution of 1926 and the subsequent policy of Stalinism in the Chinese Communist Party.

In this first stage of the revolution, marked by the military victory, obviously the city proletariat did not play a decisive role as they did in the Russian revolution of 1917. I don't know enough about the actual facts to know to what extent they did participate. I am inclined to be a bit sceptical of the report read from some book here, that the city proletariat played no part at all. I believe they were there, but they obviously did not play the decisive part. That was played by the army led by the Stalinists.

That was one feature of the first stage of the revolution, distinguishing it from that of 1917 in Russia -- the absence of the dominating role of the city proletariat. The second big difference was the programme proclaimed by the Stalinist leaders at the moment of the victory. That was a programme of capitalism.

It seems obvious to me that this military victory of a predominantly peasant army, led by a gang of Stalinists openly proclaiming a capitalist programme for the further development of China, could not, by itself, signify the creation of a workers' state.

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Here I disagree quite radically with comrades who say we should have designated the new regime in China as a workers' state from the moment of the military victory in 1949. That gives the Chinese Stalinists far more credit than they deserve.

It is true that we date the establishment of the workers' state in Russia from the conquest of power under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party in 1917, even though the measures of socialisation did not get under way until the following year. But the Bolsheviks took power in the name of a socialist programme. The Chinese Stalinists proclaimed a programme of capitalism. This difference should not be disregarded. Drastic measures of socialisation in China, which belied the Stalinist programme, had to be taken before we could recognise the qualitative change in the character of the regime.

Power in the hands of the Stalinists is not in itself equal to a workers' state. In Italy and France, where the German army collapsed there is no question that actual power was in the hands of the partisan movements led by the Stalinists. This was especially true in Italy. If they had so willed, and had had such a programme, they could undoubtedly have set up a government. There was nobody in the country with sufficient force to stand against them.

But instead of setting up a revolutionary government and proclaiming a programme of socialism, they deliberately disarmed the partisans and turned the power over to the bourgeoisie. Then the Stalinists entered the bourgeois cabinet in a coalition government as a supporting force. That was done by the Stalinists in Italy and in France. The Chinese Stalinists might very well have done the same thing, if circumstances had permitted them to.

I was struck by the information that Farrell quoted here -- from the U.S. White Paper -- that on the very eve of crossing the river to the final confirmation of their military victory, the Stalinists were still dickering for a coalition government which would have meant handing the power back to the bourgeois class represented by the Chiang Kai-shek regime.

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To say precisely what kind of regime was established at the moment of the definitive military victory, was a question easier to put than to answer. We were cautious in answering that question in these last six years. For a while we characterised it is a transitional regime. It took us even some time to arrive at that definition of the new regime as a workers' and peasants' transitional regime. Evidently this could only be a short term affair. It had to develop one way or another.

The slogan of the workers' and peasants' government, formulated by Trotsky in the Transitional Programme, was the same as that advanced by the Bolsheviks in 1917 for the workers' parties to take power. It was conceived as a transitional regime that could lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat, but not as the dictatorship of the proletariat itself. That could be realised only if and when the programme would turn revolutionary and the expropriation of the capitalists would be put on the order of the day.

What we had in China, then was a transitional regime in a process of development. And the question arose: In which direction would that development take place? We had to wait and see before we could definitely label it. The question that we have to answer today, six years later, is this: In what direction did the development actually take place? Did it slide back toward a restoration of the old regime, or did it move towards the elimination of capitalism?

Obviously the direction was anti-capitalist after the first period. The second question that follows from that is this: Has a qualitative turning point been reached in this process of development? Has the economic structure of the regime been so transformed that it must now be characterised as a workers' state, even though a bastardised form of it?

In order to answer that question we have to look at the facts. I am not so familiar with the statistical material as some of the other comrades who have been working on it. But what I have seen and read convinces me that the facts of progress towards expropriation of capitalist ownership and the establishment of new property relations are quite impressive. And I don't agree that this was done altogether without some elements of class war violence.

The reason, perhaps, that the violence of the civil war was slurred over and unnoticed, was that the bourgeoisie were so weak that they couldn't resist; they were just pushed aside. If the capitalists had had the strength and the means to fight, they undoubtedly would have fought. It was a form of civil war that was very one-sided. The Chinese bourgeoisie had no vitality. They couldn't stand up even against decress, to say nothing of armed force in the field. This force was there, and its mere existence was sufficient.

The bourgeois regime in China fell almost of its own weight, and not even the Stalinists could prevent it. They had no idea of introducing a new social order. But they found themselves obliged to expropriate the Chinese capitalists despite their announced programme and promise and hope to support a programme of progressive capitalism. I think all this tends to show that the laws of historical development, as foreseen in the Trotskyist theory of the permanent revolution, were stronger than the Stalinist wishes and programme.

To a large and decisive extent, I believe, the theory of the permanent revolution, as a theory of development, has been vindicated in the steps which the Stalinists in China have been compelled to take despite their programmatic promise and wishes to take a different course. And acknowledging the full fact that China today, after six years of the rule of Mao Tse-tung, is from the point of view of economic structure, a vastly different country than it was six years ago -- I don't give Stalinism any credit for that whatever.

I give credit for that to the logic of the situation, the international contradictions, the weakness of the Chinese bourgeoisie; and to be patriotic, I give a great deal of credit to our own boy from Independence, Missouri, Harry Truman. By his blockade of the New China, and his policy in the Korean War, Truman forced the Chinese Stalinists to take the road of socialisation as a matter of survival.

It became clear that China could not be developed on the bourgeois path. The new regime could get no capital from the United States, which has practically all the loose capital in the world. The Chinese bourgeoisie themselves wouldn't willingly invest a nickel in the capitalist future of China. The only one possible way to develop the industries of China, or even to keep them going, was the way the Chinese regime of Mao Tse-tung had to take and that was the road of socialisation.

In the evolution of China, the theory of the permanent revolution, as a theory of development in the colonial revolution, has been vindicated quite impressively.

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How does the theory stand up on the question of the party? A part, and in my opinion an essential part, of the theory of the permanent revolution is that the process of transformation from decrepit colonial capitalism to a socialist order of society, has to be led and directed by a conscious Bolshevik party. A vindication of that side of the theory of the permanent revolution has not yet been evident in the first six years of the New China. But is this experience conclusive? I don't think so.

I consider this first six years as only a part of a process that has a long way to go, and whose outcome is not yet determined. In my opinion, the theory of the permanent revolution with respect to the party, will be vindicated in the period to come. It is obvious that the imperialists cannot and will not allow China, or even the Soviet Union, to progress indefinitely toward the socialist order of society without a military showdown. The pressure of the situation from all directions will impose upon China an ever more consistent revolutionary policy and leadership. From iron necessity the Chinese revolution must find a conscious revolutionary leadership. That cannot be anything else than a party of conscious revolutionists.

So far we have in China a nucleus. This nucleus will have to expand and eventually replace the Stalinist leadership. All the progress that has been made up to now on the economic field is preparatory for this further vindication of our theory in the political field; provided of course that we have a correct policy and have confidence in our future, and know how to take advantage of the opportunities that will come later on.

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I have tried to find my way in the study of the development of these bastardised workers' states primarily by way of the trade union analogy, which Trotsky utilised so effectively in his arguments about the nature of the Soviet Union in the 1939-1940 discussion. He pointed out there that a workers' state can be called a trade union that has taken power. We do not judge a union entirely by its officers. It is possible for a genuine union to exist with a defective or even treacherous leadership. We distinguish between the two. That trade union analogy has been constantly in my mind throughout these years we have been struggling with the question of these bastardised workers' states.

I have thought particularly of the development of the trade union movement in the United States in the past 20 or 25 years. In the old Communist Party back in the Twenties, we began to realise that the trade union problem of the time in the United States was essentially the problem of organising the unorganised. Properly speaking, there was no labour movement in the basic industries of the country at that time. We had about two

million members of craft unions, mostly skilled and privileged workers. These craft unions dealt mainly with employers representing small aggregations of capital. When it came to the trustified industries, the basic industries in the country, outside the coal fields, which were anachronistic in many ways, there was no unionism whatever.

The resistance of the employers was so terrific and their power was so great, with their spy system and their company police, their financial resources, the press at their disposal, the policy of the state authorities and so on -- that one could not think of organising these industries the easy way. And the question arose among us: How will we organise the unorganised? We had noted that the only serious attempts in the past had been made through desperate strikes which could be led only by radicals and revolutionists. Even the IWW, which was always a small organisation, led more important strikes against the basic industries than the whole AFL put together.

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We came to the conclusion that the kind of fight necessary to break the resistance of the entrenched employers in the basic industries would require the leadership of radicals and revolutionists. The old style trade union system of going to see the boss and talking it over with him and negotiating an agreement wouldn't work there. You would have to have radicals who would resort to serious measures of the class struggle.

That was the general opinion in the old Communist Party, and I believe that was basically correct. But within that framework of general agreement, that the organisation of the unorganised was the task of revolutionists, there developed a difference of opinion, particularly between me and Bittleman, the documents of which disappeared in one of the burglaries the Stalinists perpetrated after our split with them. It didn't find its way into the press but we had a sort of internal discussion on the question. Bittleman said that the AFL fakers would not and could not organise the basic industries. That was the beginning of the theoretical preparation for the policy of completely independent unions all up and down the line.

I developed a theory then -- a sort of half theory -- which anticipated future developments. I held that the resistance of the employers in the basic industries could be broken only by a mass revolt of the workers; that this was the only condition under which we could conceive of organising unions in these industries. I maintained that when economic pressure produced this revolt a section of the bureaucracy would be compelled, whether it wished to or not, in order to keep contact with the workers and not be left on the sidelines, to give a certain support to the organising movement, and some places would even appear as leaders of it.

I was roundly castigated for my illusions about the labour fakers at that time. But I maintained that developments could take that course, since the labour bureaucracy rests on the labour movement and it is not free to determine its own policy at will. While the disposition of the labour skates is to have peace and co-existene with the employers -- they are the original coexistence people -- under pressure of a revolt and the danger of revolutionists taking the labour movement away from them, I said that some of them could be expected to step in and give partial leadership themselves.

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At that time the chief reactionary in the labour movement, the one labour leader most hated and denounced as a strike breaker, and an agent of the class enemy in the labour movement, which he really was, was John L. Lewis. He had come to power in the United Mine Workers Union in the process of breaking strikes in collaboration with the operators, in one place after another.

A whole generation of militant fighters were expelled and driven out of the industry by Lewis. In the Kansas coal fields, which I was familiar with and had had some part in, John L. Lewis actually conspired with the operators to break a strike and set up what a lot of the workers called a company union, and got it recognised by the bosses. Partly by practices of that kind Lewis maintained his power in the United Mine Workers.

I didn't predict that John L. Lewis would be one of the leaders of the organisation of the unorganised. That would have been too much even for my imagination in the Twenties, when Lewis was the Number One reactionary in the labour movement. But in the course of events, when the upsurge of the workers came in the Thirties, and when the handwriting was written on the wall, it was a section of the reactionary bureaucracy, headed by Lewis and Hillman, which, as you know, actually became the official leaders of the CIO movement, in order to keep it within certain bounds.

The rise and development of the CIO vindicated the basic theory of the communists of the early days that only radicals and revolutionists could organise the trustified industries; that only a class struggle policy could win strikes against these industries; and that you couldn't build unions unless you first had successful strikes caused by a revolt of the workers and a radical leadership. That basic concept was vindicated all up and down the line. But a section of the conservative bureaucracy also played a part they had never planned, or even dreamed of.

The CIO was really created in a number of strikes of which the outstanding examples were the Auto-Lite strike in Toledo; the sitdown strikes in Detroit and Flint and Akron; the Minneapolis strikes; the strikes of the maritime workers on the Pacific coast. These turbulent strikes, in which radicals played the leaders role, really made the new union movement.

The great upsurge spearheaded by these battles eventually culminated in the industrial organisation of millions of workers. But the role of a section of the old bureaucracy, represented by Lewis, was also an important factor. This should not be overlooked, for it is germane to our present discussion of the Chinese revolution.

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After the big upsurge, we saw another development. The CIO reached a membership of four or five million, but not all of them came the classic way by which workers are organised -- through victorious strikes led by militants, forcing the bosses to recognise the union. After the CIO got consolidated we saw unions organised in a different way. Many unions were organised by consent of the bosses without strikes. That didn't prove that the bosses wanted unionism or that that was the norm for union organisation. That was done only to avoid strikes. The threat of strikes was always there in the background.

The classic doctrine reads as follows: The only way to organise the workers against the powerful employers is by a mass revolt of invincible power, led by radicals with class struggle methods. That's the norm. But in the history of the American trade union movement, especially in the last 15 years, we have seen all kinds of deviations from the norm.

Once the CIO got firmly established, and the labour fakers saw this new federation growing up and outrivalling them in numbers, they began organisation campaigns they had never dreamed of before. Of the 15 million workers organised in this country, no more than 5 million are in the CIO. But a large section of these 10 million workers that the AFL accumulated were organised by the AFL fakers in agreements with the bosses without strikes, to head off the CIO. And not all of the CIO unions were organised in the classic form, a lot of them were pushovers.

That might seem to refute the basic contention we started with, that the only way to organise industry is by revolt of the workers, strike action, militant leadership. But that is not really so. Behind these pushover organisation campaigns the real power was the power of the existing CIO and the tradition of the revolt of the Thirties.

If we insist on the norm in every case we would have to say that the many unions organised by agreements with the bosses, to head off the CIO -- are not real unions. The fakers, when they started them, planned nice tame unions where the bosses would check off the dues and there would simply be peace and co-existence and nothing else. In many cases they even gave the bosses written promises to that effect, just as the Chinese Stalinists were willing to do.

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But the logic of the class struggle proved to be stronger than the bureacrats' designs. These workers happened to want more money and better living just like everybody else. The more the bona fide unions advanced, and every time they gained a few inches anywhere, a discontent would spread through these phony set-ups of the AFL. The labour fakers would be confronted with demands of the workers for more money. If they didn't get it they would threaten to go to the CIO.

The labour fakers, anxious for peace at any price, went to the bosses, just like Mao Tse-tung went to Chiang Kai-shek, to see if they couldn't make a deal and get a little concession. If the bosses said no the result was that these almost phony unions -- these deformed unions, you might call them -- were forced into strikes. And many of them were very militant strikes.

In the course of their evolution, independent of the will and the policy of the labour fakers, some of these deformed unions became transformed into quite militant organisations, capable of conducting strikes and advancing and showing the same characteristics as genuine unions. In fact, they became transformed into genuine unions.

Behind all that, as I said, was the influence of the real union movement, which was the CIO built in the Thirties. When they talk about 10 million men in the AFL and 5 million in the CIO, and say that's the relation of forces between them, today, I say that's not the reality. Two-thirds of those people in the AFL really belong to the credit of the CIO. It was the influence and the inspiration of the movement which resulted in the CIO that enabled these labour fakers to gather them in, and enabled the workers to find organisation protection there.

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I think of this trade union experience in the connection between China and the Soviet Union. It is an error to think of the Chinese Revolution as separate from the Russian Revolution. The social transformation in China is not so close and direct as that in Eastern Europe, where the Soviet armies were actually on the ground. Nevertheless, just as in the case of the CIO, the inspiration and the example and the hopes aroused by the Russian revolution in the first place in 1917, raised the Chinese workers to their feet and brought them to revolution in 1925-1926.

Then the victory of the Soviet Union in the war, which brought renewed prestige to the Soviet Union throughout the Orient, and new confidence and new hope to the colonial people, was one of the big factors, one of the big motive powers in the Chinese revolution that came to military victory in 1949.

The Chinese revolution is still moving in the same direction as that in Russia, although not at the same pace as the Russian revolution moved under Bolshevik

leadership in 1917. I believe that the Chinese revolution has to be considered in that sense as an extension and continuation of the October revolution in Russia. It shows all the tendencies to develop the same characteristics, although its development is slower and less consistent than the Russian development under a conscious leadership.

In Russia the expropriation of the bourgeoisie took place within one year after the victory. In China it is dragged out over six years and is by no means completed yet. We have yet to hear the proclamation of a completely socialist policy in China. We have yet to see the Chinese revolution find the consistent leadership of a revolutionary party, as our theory of the permanent revolution presupposes.

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But in what direction is China moving? What direction has it taken since 1949? As far as I can judge the facts, the direction is almost in a straight line, in the same way as that taken in the Soviet Union. We can attribute the slowness of it, the deformations, the uncertainty of the future, to the fact that the conscious factor has not caught up yet with the objective forces pushing it forward.

But I believe the trend is clear. We have enough facts of socialisation, of capitalist elimination, of developments toward the soviet form of social organisation, to say that a point of qualitative change has been reached; and that there is no longer a real capitalist basis in the economy of China. The character of the regime there must be designated accordingly.

The NC resolution is correct in saying it is a workers' state, horribly disfigured and deformed, with an unqualified leadership which endangers its future, but that its basic class character is established by these facts. The political tasks outlined in the Resolution follow from this analysis of the character of the regime.

NOTES

For the views of the MRCI on the key questions raised here (the split in the FI, the nature of Eastern Europe and China), see "The Degenerated Revolution" (1982) and "The Death Agony of the Fourth International" (1983), by Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group.

1. Reprinted from "James P. Cannon as we knew him" (Pathfinder).
2. Reprinted from "James P. Cannon as we knew him" (Pathfinder).
3. The year was in fact 1934.
4. Cannon is referring to a PC meeting in March 1952 in which he threatened to write to all sections of the FI, warning of a split if the differences within the leadership degenerated into unprincipled factionalism. See "Speeches to the Party" pp 226-7 for Cannon's view of this meeting, and pp 340-341 for the Cochranites' view.
5. Hansen was an early proponent of the recognition of the Eastern European "buffer" states as workers' states. Cannon and the majority of the SWP preferred to leave the question open. See "Speeches to the Party" pp110, 136-163.
6. Reprinted from the Militant 28/12/53
7. IC archives, CERMTRI, Paris.
8. This article was published in Fourth International and is reprinted in "Speeches to the Party".
9. This material was included in "Trotsky or Deutscher", reprinted here.
10. IC archives, CERMTRI, Paris.
11. Cannon is referring to "The struggle of the French Trotskyists against Pabloite revisionism" (reprinted in "International Committee Documents 1951-1954", Vol 1; SWP Education for Socialists).
12. Cannon was partly responsible for the international isolation of the PCI majority. On 16/2/52, Renard of the PCI wrote to Cannon, complaining of their treatment by Pablo. Cannon wrote back simply defending the Third Congress decisions. As he said later "I think that's the first time I ever answered a political letter and just pretended I hadn't read certain sections" ("Speeches to the Party" p 80).
13. From Fourth International, Winter 1954.
14. IC archives, CERMTRI, Paris.
15. The lines are from William Bryant's poem "Thanatopsis" and are incorrectly quoted.
16. C. L. R. James.
17. "Loris" was the party name of Jean van Heijenoort. His article "On some critics of Trotsky" was printed in Fourth International, August 1942.
18. IC archives, CERMTRI, Paris.
19. See "International Committee Documents 1951-1954" Vol. 4.
20. IC archives, CERMTRI, Paris.
21. Weiss's tour was entitled "McCarthyism - What it is - How to fight it".
22. IC archives, CERMTRI, Paris.
23. IC archives, CERMTRI, Paris. Dan Roberts (1918-1962) was organiser of the Seattle branch of the SWP. He did go to the Centre, and became Editor of the Militant (1956-1961).
24. IC archives, CERMTRI, Paris.
25. IC archives, CERMTRI, Paris.
26. All public polemic with the Pabloites ceased in the Militant after 12/4/54, and in Fourth International shortly afterwards.
27. The following three letters to Dunne (14/1/55), to Weiss (4/3/55) and Stein (11/3/55) appeared in the Bulletin Interne of the French PCI, N° 5, 1955 (PCI archives, CERMTRI, Paris). The English originals of these letters have not been found. They have therefore been retranslated from the French.
28. The article appears in "The First Ten Years of American Communism" (Pathfinder).
29. SWP Internal Bulletin, 1956. (SWP archives, CERMTRI, Paris). The resolution referred to is reprinted in "The Chinese Revolution and its Development" (SWP Education for Socialists).