

**Resistance Marxist Library**

**The Fight Against  
Fascism in the  
USA**

**James P. Cannon, Farrell  
Dobbs, Joseph Hansen, Leon  
Trotsky & others**

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# Introduction

*By Malik Miah*

What is fascism? Should it be of concern to political activists today? More importantly, how should incipient fascist groups be fought?

President George W. Bush and his doctrine of pre-emptive strike against countries and groups declared as enemies of the United States and the “free world” might suggest that fascism should not be a great concern to socialists and progressive-minded activists. Fighting imperialist wars and national oppression seems a much more urgent matter. And it is.

Yet as this collection of articles and documents written by American Marxists show, fascism and fascist ideology is integrally linked to “democratic” capitalism and its policies against working people and the oppressed. Moreover, some on the left mistakenly refer to the Bush administration as “fascist” or “cryptofascist”.

## **Why fascism?**

Fascism is one of the forms of rule by the propertied classes. It is a form of rule that defends the capitalist private property system. The fascist state, when created, is a brutal dictatorial state opposed to commonly accepted bourgeois-democratic norms. Fascism is used by the capitalist class as a last resort in the face of rising working-class mobilisations and instability of their system. It is not the preferable way to rule as a minority class but fascism — under its demagogic leaders and vigilante groups — will be turned to, when needed, to protect the capitalists’ economic and political power.

The reason the “democratic” imperialist countries went to war against Nazism during World War II was not because it was an “evil” system. It was fundamentally an

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interimperialist war over which capitalist state would control the world's resources. Hitler sought to use Germany's military power to change its inferior status in relationship to its competitors in Europe and the United States. Japan's imperial regime likewise sought to increase its power in relationship to the United States in Asia and the Pacific.

Fascist Italy under Mussolini was aligned with Germany and suffered Hitler's fate. But fascist Spain under Franco became an ally of Hitler's opponents and survived until the 1970s.

The military rulers of Portugal survived in power until the 1970s and the apartheid rulers of South Africa even longer. Other forms of capitalist rule lacking the democratic trappings of most imperialist countries today include military dictatorships that were common in Latin America and Africa and the sultanates in the Middle East. None of these forms of capitalist rule, however, are based on the mass terror that arose in fascist Italy and Germany.

## The Soviet Union & World War II

Moreover, for "democratic" imperialism, which was led by the US ruling class, the key concern was not fascism but communism and the communist movements. Imperialism's powers were united in seeking to destroy the Soviet Union but their own intra-class war made that impossible. Hitler's advances across Europe and his attack on Britain, along with his invasion of the USSR, turned Stalin into a temporary but necessary ally for Roosevelt and Churchill to defeat Germany.

Stalin's USSR had survived his slaughter of the old Bolshevik leadership through the bloody purges of the 1930s. But the underlying structural strength of the state — state-owned property and planned economy in particular — allowed the Soviet Union's survival and prevented its temporary imperialist allies from leading a counter-revolution to impose capitalism.

Ironically, it wasn't imperialism that defeated the Soviet Union; it took seven decades of Stalinist corruption and degeneration before the world's first workers' state power collapsed and capitalist property relations were restored. The toiling masses were so traumatised and depoliticised by decades of Stalinist bureaucratic rule that the original socialist ideas of the 1917 revolution had been lost in the political consciousness of the people. It's why it's been so difficult to rebuild communist organisations based on the ideas of genuine Marxism in modern-day Russia.

The survival of the Soviet Union, and a much weaker imperialist system after the bloodletting of World War II, also spurred on the struggles of the colonial peoples for their national sovereignty. While both fascist capitalism and "democratic" capitalism

sought to keep their colonies, they failed. In South Asia the peoples of British-ruled India won their independence. In Southeast Asia the people of the Indonesian islands defeated the Dutch. The peoples across Asia and Africa and the Middle East escalated their battles for sovereignty. The most significant victory came in China where Mao's People's Liberation Army defeated imperialism's allies and established the world's most populated socialist, workers' state.

The imperialist Cold War and the policy of containment of the USSR and its allies reflected the weakness of capitalist rule. With nuclear parity, a pre-emptive first strike was not a realistic policy.

For the "democratic" imperialist powers led by the United States the domestic side of containment was the vicious witch-hunt policy popularly known as McCarthyism. It became the public face of spreading a form of incipient fascist mentality. Senator Joseph McCarthy led the campaign against "reds" in the work place, college campuses and general society. Socialists faced blacklists and victimisation for their ideas.

## **US Trotskyists' strategy of countermobilisations**

The following collection is based on the experiences of the US Trotskyist movement in the antifascist struggles of the 1930s and '40s, and how they took on incipient fascist ideology and groups during the Cold War. It also touches on the 1960s and '70s, in particular the question of how to pose the struggle against fascism in regard to the issue of free speech.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), formed in 1938, was the US section of the Fourth International (FI), organised by exiled Russian revolutionary communist leader Leon Trotsky.

Stalin and the powerful bureaucratic caste forced Trotsky out of the Soviet Communist Party in the 1920s. He organised the International Left Opposition (ILO) to challenge Stalin's rule of the Bolshevik Party and domination of the world communist movement known as the Communist International (Comintern). Trotsky and the ILO sought to reform these formations.

After Hitler's easy rise to power in Germany in 1933 when the mass socialist and communist parties refused to use their power to stop the fascists, Trotsky said the Bolshevik Communist Party and the Comintern were dead as revolutionary organisations. The task at hand for Marxists was not to reform these bodies but to build new parties and a revolutionary international, the Fourth International.

The SWP's predecessor, the Communist League of America, analysed the growing fascist ideology and movement in the US in the context of the rise of Hitler in Germany and Franco in Spain. Fascism's victories and Stalinism's crushing of the opposition in

the Communist Party of the Soviet Union marked a turning point for the international left movement. The formation of the FI thus was connected to the consolidation of Stalinism and the rise of fascism.

The political strategy of the Marxists, called Trotskyists (labelled “Trotskyites” by the Stalinists and their enemies) remains a key method of struggle to take on rightist formations and incipient fascists. The Socialist Workers Party was an active participant and builder of the antifascist movement. The SWP members, particularly those in the trade unions, followed a strategy of countermobilisation to fight the incipient fascist groups and advocated the formation of workers’ defence guards to defend working-class organisations. Liberals who opposed fascists, on the other hand, focused on relying on the capitalist courts and legislatures to stand up to the fascists.

A resolution of the SWP National Committee, “The Capitalist Witch-Hunt — And How to Fight It” (included as an appendix to this volume), explains the strategy:

“The working class and the minorities must vigorously oppose every transgression upon their civil and constitutional rights, from whatever quarter they come, and utilise every safeguard provided by law. But they cannot entrust the protection of their liberties to the capitalist regime or expect the powers-that-be to stop or eradicate the menace of fascism.”

“Class-conscious workers”, it continues, “should not fall into the trap of demanding infringements of anyone’s civil rights, including those of the fascists. At the same time they should recognise the real situation and make it plain to others. The civil rights of fascist elements are not being threatened; the authorities are in league with them. They are in no danger of persecution or need of defence. They are not the victims but the sponsors and beneficiaries of the current repressions.”

“The history of Italy and Germany conclusively proves”, the resolution adds, “the folly and futility of relying upon the capitalist government, its police, or its parties in the fight against fascists. The masses can safeguard their rights, their lives and their organisations only by mobilising the full strength of their own forces in the most vigorous united and independent defensive actions against the race-bigots, antisemites, union-busters and mobsters who threaten them.”

### **Fascism: what it is and isn’t**

Understanding what fascism is and distinguishing it from the various right-wing and terrorist movements that are called “fascist” today is important. Fascism is a specific social phenomenon. It was first seen in Italy in the 1920s with Mussolini and in Germany in the 1930s under Hitler. The latter were not small groups of thugs, but mass social movements that sought and were able to smash working-class organisations through

violence and impose their rule over the people as a whole.

The fascists play upon the despair of the small business people when there is a deep economic crisis along with the anxiety of the working class and professional layers. The fascists use the real anger to blame the big capitalists and the labour bosses for the crisis of the small people but it is pure demagoguery.

The fascist movement is based primarily on sections of the population standing between the two most powerful social classes — the working class and the class of capitalists. The “in-between” layers — including the small business people and shopkeepers, farmers, professionals and government functionaries and layer of skilled trade workers — join up. They are the fascists’ recruiting field.

The fascist movement feeds on the despair and frenzy that grip this layer of the population during economic uncertainties, Mussolini and Hitler became the spokespeople for this disenfranchised layer and used “anti-establishment” rhetoric and demagoguery, sometimes revolutionary populist language, to appeal to the dissatisfaction of the masses of people with the corrupt *status quo*. They appealed to the nationalism and chauvinism of this layer; they attack the rich getting richer, etc.

But their real goal is to get the leadership layers to blame oppressed national minorities, women, gays and the labour movement for their problems. The big capitalists in fact are let off the hook.

Fascists always appeal to the most backward and obscurantist traditions of society, customs and prejudices in people that are inculcated by class society and reinforced by the traditional “democratic” capitalist politicians. For example, Bush’s permanent war on terrorism is based on using backward prejudices to go after the weakest sections of society. It begins with the Arabs and Muslim immigrants, but quickly it targets all immigrants of colour and soon even native-born citizens who are Muslims or appear to “look” Muslim and are of Arab or Third World origin.

No one is safe. Special laws are passed — like the USAPATRIOT Act — to limit civil and human rights. Other countries are doing the same. Political asylum is becoming impossible unless you’re a Cuban counter-revolutionary arriving in Miami.

While on the one hand the attacks are made by the liberal democratic state, the conservative policies encourage vigilante actions and fascist-type groups to freely operate against those who don’t agree with or support the propaganda of the rulers. The ground is being set for these formations to play a bigger role when needed in the future.

The rise of fascist groups, first small, than larger and larger, occurs with the aid of “democratic” government policies. The danger is the fascist movement that feeds off the rightist policies of elected capitalist governments can move to the right of the

regime and ultimately use the institutions of the capitalist state to take power directly. It is exactly what happened in Germany in the 1930s. The Hitler thugs were used against working-class opponents before the fascist leaders were put into power. The climate was set for Hitler to come to power quite legally when the capitalist rulers felt that the Brown Shirt gangs were the last resort to crush the labour organisations to save their power even though it meant limiting their own liberties. Thus, Hitler was appointed chancellor in January 1933 by the president, Hindenburg. Furthermore, after the March 1933 Reichstag fire (blamed on the communists), all the traditional “democratic” capitalist politicians voted to transfer parliament’s legislative powers to Hitler’s cabinet, thus legally granting Hitler dictatorial powers.

### **Resistance & fascism**

Unless the working class is able to resist the policies of rightist regimes like Bush’s in the US, it makes it easier for small fascist type groups to spread their reactionary message and grow in times of crisis.

The lack of mass independent working-class organisations and a movement of the left fighting back can camouflage the interconnection between ideology, small groups and the democratic capitalist state. The rise of fascism is very much connected to this dynamic process.

It is important for left-wing activists to have a clear understanding of the origins of fascism and learn the lessons from the past. The existence of the US as the sole superpower and its policy of pre-emptive war against so-called rogue states and groups will make it easier for the rise of fascist thinking and fascist groups around the world. The dismissal of international treaties and laws by the Bush administration indicates the ground is being set to allow not only government bullying but also extralegal vigilante activity to advance the reactionary goals of the US rulers.

The fascist state, as Trotsky explains, is not a new state but a particular form of the capitalist state defending the profit system without the facade of bourgeois democracy. It is not simply a new form of dictatorial rule. New police-state methods are not sufficient to defeat a strong organised workers’ movement. Through mass terror, murder, and other forms of intimidation carried out by the fascists, the capitalist class aims to completely crush, atomise and demoralise the labour movements.

In general the capitalists would prefer not to have to resort to fascism. Using the Constitution and other legalities of the state and keeping working people under illusions of democracy are preferable. But if the working class and oppressed are fighting back aggressively in opposition to imperialist wars and world domination, then such a step is required.

While this is not the case in any imperialist country today, a crisis of capitalist rule can develop quickly as it did in 1917 in Russia or in 1959 in Cuba. What's permanent is class struggle.

The ruling class never makes the move toward fascism in one leap. It begins with the process of increased attacks on the democratic rights of the most vulnerable, the Blacks and other minorities, women and students then escalates to all working people. It does so first with legal measures (USAPATRIOT Act) then extralegal ones, including use of small rightists groups to do the rulers' dirty work. But none of this will happen so long as the "normal" institutions of the state — courts, police, political parties and armies — are effectively defending the wealth and property of the ruling class.

Trotsky also explains that the primary reason fascism triumphed in Italy and Germany was because of a default of leadership by the mass socialist and communist parties. The lack of independent leadership is seen in the political integration of the union bureaucracies into the capitalist state. The leaders of the oppressed races and nationalities likewise support the capitalist system. There are no mass left-wing parties. Nevertheless, rightist ideas must still be promoted.

## Will be home-grown

The United States has never had mass working-class parties. Yet incipient fascist formations have existed. And they are a by-product of local customs, traditions and prejudices. American fascism will be home-grown, as it was in Italy and Germany and other countries.

Joseph Hansen, a former secretary to Leon Trotsky and a longtime leader of the SWP and international socialist movement until his death in 1979, discusses how an obscure Catholic priest in Detroit became a prominent anticommunist and fascist promoter. Father Coughlin, using the repercussions of the economic depression of the 1930s, became the spokesperson for the "little man" to advance a reactionary program.

Typical of fascists demagogues, he came across like a populist while his real agenda was to defend big capital from the working classes. "I am for a just annual wage. I am for labour's right to organise. I am for the cost of living being maintained on an even keel; and I am for preferring the sanctity of human rights to the sanctity of property with government's chief concern for the poor", quotes Hansen in his article "Father Coughlin: Fascist Demagogue".

Sounds good and maybe socialist, Hansen notes. But in his program for *Social Justice*, Coughlin argued for a "corporate state" and said "democracy is doomed". His fascist program was based on the preservation of private property.

Coughlin's appeal, Hansen explains, was because of the crisis working people and

small business people faced due to the economic catastrophe of the 1930s depression. The fascist demagogues skilfully attacked the government while defending the system that the government serves.

“Fascism is a combination of two things”, writes Hansen. “Further, it is a wide mass movement of farmers and small business men who face bankruptcy, of youth denied a future under capitalism, of sections of the unemployed. All these layers of the oppressed who are seeking desperately to put their hands on the surrounding plenty become hypnotised by the silver-plated promises of a demagogue who regiments them into blindly obedient shock troops.

“Secondly, it is financed and controlled by the very capitalists who above all are anxious to keep the revolutionary violence of the masses from turning against them. In America — the Du Ponts, the Morgans, the Rockefellers — the 60 Families. To the rank-and-file followers of fascism, at first it seems a genuine revolutionary way out of their misery. They discover the truth too late. The capitalists provide the money. The dictator provides the powerful slogans, the stirring names, the demagogic program, the organisation, the lieutenants and the oratory.”

### **Lesson of civil rights movement**

During the mass civil rights movement against Jim Crow legal segregation it was typical of the white bigots to claim they were defending “state rights” and local traditions when African Americans fought for equality. The Ku Klux Klan and White Citizen Councils never openly advocated a fascist program. They used the methods of extralegal terror to keep Blacks down. The state and local governments and courts were willing accomplices in their violence against minorities.

What defeated the bigots was the power of an independent civil rights movement that won the backing of working people across the United States. It led the federal government to impose national standards on civil rights in order to curtail and demobilise a growing movement. The rulers feared the movement could begin to challenge the power of the national government if no concessions were made.

Victory, however, was won not by relying on the government to stop the extralegal and legal actions of the racists. The strategy of countermobilisation against the racists and their legal institutions united the people as a whole for civil rights. Socialists were active participants in that fight.

### **My experiences**

As a former leader of the SWP in the 1970s and '80s, I was involved in two fights in Boston and Chicago where racists and incipient fascist groups used demagogy and

other means to advance their reactionary goals.

In the early 1970s, a battle broke out in Boston to desegregate the public schools. The Boston School Committee was linked to an extralegal formation called ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights) that tried to stop the busing of Black children to white neighbourhoods in order to integrate the schools. The leading civil rights group, the NAACP, and a student-based coalition, the National Student Coalition Against Racism (NSCAR) that I was an organiser of, led the fight for equality. Our tactics included mass demonstrations and coalition-building to isolate the racists.

During that struggle, legal and extralegal acts were taken by the racists and their friends in government to justify their desire to keep Black children out of “white schools”. In the battle, mass campaigns to win busing ultimately led to the defeat of the racists and the establishment of integrated public schools.

Later in the 1970s in Chicago I was an organiser for the SWP. We joined with other groups to build a coalition to fight an attempt by neo-Nazis to march in the mostly Jewish community suburb of Skokie. Many residents had survived the holocaust in Europe. Our policy was to organise with other forces counterdemonstrations at the site of the planned march by the fascists. We disagreed with some liberals who wanted to get the government to ban the fascists’ rally and ultralefts who opposed building a broad coalition with liberals.

We rejected both tactics explaining that any laws adopted against the right would primarily be used against working-class and antiracist forces. It would set a wrong precedent and miseducate working people and youth that the capitalist state can be relied on to fight racists and fascists.

Instead, we explained, it will take an organised working class to counter the ideas of fascists and stop their organisations in their tracks. However, we also demanded that the capitalists’ police arrest and prosecute to the fullest extent of the law those who carried out gangster acts and violence against opponents of their views and policies. Any failure of the authorities to act could be used to drive home the need for working-class self-defence.

In the Boston and Chicago battles socialists also explained that rightists and government forces will always seek to reverse gains won by the labour and antiracist movements. Victories could only be temporary. If the capitalist rulers are forced to make concessions for survival, they will immediately begin a campaign to erode and reverse those gains when the resistance disappears.

In the case of public education, a quarter century later after steady legal attacks the schools are nearly resegregated. Affirmative action gains in hiring and education for Blacks and women won in the 1960s and ’70s are also much weaker. Set-asides and

quotas to allow qualified African Americans in political and economic positions historically denied them were made illegal in 1978 by the US Supreme Court. In the 1990s California, Texas and Florida made affirmative action programs in higher education illegal. Women's rights too are weaker. The right of women to have an abortion is nearly impossible in most states even though it is technically legal because of the rightist campaign to end legal abortion.

The incorporation of the civil rights and labour leaderships into the government and its institutions is a key reason there is no mass civil rights movement today. The right has faced little organised resistance. The capitalists never stop in making their rule stronger so long as they remain in power.

### **Raising class and political consciousness**

The battles against rightist aims and incipient fascist movements are extremely important in raising workers' class political consciousness. It is only through struggle that consciousness is advanced and workers and other oppressed people turned into anticapitalist militants.

The lessons of these early experiences are important as the US ruling class seeks to dictate the course of world affairs. Under the "Bush Doctrine" where any possible challenge to US military power will be hit first and destroyed, the need to resist is crucial for the world's toilers. Bush's pre-emptive strike policy threatens to turn into a target for attacking any government that Washington deems to pose a threat, or even a potential threat, to US business interests. While the Bush Doctrine is not a fascist doctrine, it encourages the rise of fascist elements.

At some point the working classes will resist US imperialism and the threat of fascism will become more relevant and Hitler-like formations like those that occurred in the US in the 1930s will form. Understanding what fascism is, why it arises and why socialists and others must countermobilise against it before it is too late is thus very important.

The defeat of fascism requires the overthrow of the capitalist system. It requires the creation of a mass revolutionary movement that puts human needs before profits. It requires mass movements against imperialist war and the defeat of one's own regime when it engages in wars of imperial domination.

The victory of the Russian workers and peasants in 1917 shows the road forward. But the rise of Stalinism and the eventual collapse of the workers state in the 1990s shows that it isn't easy to establish a new order and state power.

The challenge in the modern world is taking on the rightist policies of the capitalist regimes and the policy of world domination by the strongest state in human history —

the US ruling class.

The road to build revolutionary parties and organisations based on the working class and oppressed is the only solution to the crisis of leadership that Trotsky, Lenin and the Russian leadership discussed after taking power.

The fight against fascism begins with taking on the rightist policies of the capitalist state. It means taking on the ideas of fascism and rightism and standing up to fascist groups when they raise their ugly heads. Although taking on war and repression with broad united fronts is number one, taking on small rightist groups is important too.

## Unity in action

The strategy in all cases is the same: to unite the toilers in action. It is the strategy of countermobilisations — of the labour movement, of the Black and Latino movements, of the women’s movement, of the environmental movement — to make it politically and physically impossible for the racist and right-wing groups to get away with their violent attacks on democratic rights.

The article by Trotsky, “The Danger of Ultraleft Tactics in Fighting Fascism”, discusses the biggest challenge: to build a united front and to resist divisive campaigns of some socialists who advocate ultraleft tactics. Instead of uniting, he explains, they divide socialists from the bourgeois liberals and activists supporting civil liberties. The failure of the communists and socialists to form a united front in Germany was a key reason Hitler came power.

The Fourth International’s founding document, written by Trotsky in 1938, puts the centrality of building a revolutionary leadership as key for the working class to defeat fascists and the capitalist ruling classes. Although written 65 years ago, it outlines an analysis of the capitalist system and what needs to be done by socialists to build a revolutionary movement. The excerpts in this collection focus on why forming “workers’ defence guards” is crucial to take on the extralegal terror of the fascists.

The articles and documents in this volume, based on the experiences of the US Trotskyists, are an invaluable contribution in the political education of radical activists.

*February 2003*



## **Section I**

# **Father Coughlin: Fascist Demagogue**





Father Charles E. Coughlin visits the White House for the last time, January 1936.

The 1930s depression led to a sharp increase in the class struggle and demands for radical social change. At first Roosevelt's "New Deal" combination of reforms and demagoguery kept things under control. But after a weak economic revival in the mid-thirties, a new downturn came in 1937-38. Despite the dramatic rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the bureaucratic labour leadership failed to make a political break with Roosevelt and the Democratic Party and strike out in a new direction.

In the context of economic crisis, widespread disillusionment with Roosevelt and the default of the labour leaders, various fascist formations began to get new wind in their sails. One of the most important of these was the Social Justice Movement led by Catholic priest Father Charles E. Coughlin.

With the onset of World War II, the combination of patriotic anti-Nazi sentiment and the war-based economic revival eased the political crisis facing the US rulers and the home-grown fascist forces went into decline.

In 1942, the Catholic hierarchy ordered Coughlin to give up his political activity and he faded from public view.

# Father Coughlin: Fascist Demagogue

*By Joseph Hansen*

## The rise of the 'radio priest'

In the summer of 1926, an obscure Catholic priest began broadcasting over the radio in Detroit.

For three years he spoke steadily without gaining any following beyond a local one. His speeches were not particularly striking. He said nothing to distinguish himself as *different* from hundreds of others who performed for America's loudspeakers.

Then the 1929 crash ushered in the worst depression United States capitalism had yet experienced.

Something *different* did occur then. The obscure priest launched a series of violent attacks against "communism". His name zoomed into the national spotlight.

He began broadening his activities like a business man who has succeeded in selling a huge issue of stock for a newly formed company.

In the lowest depths of the depression, he built himself a million dollar shrine. He began publishing a sleek magazine that carried not a line of advertising, yet sold for only a dime — an editor's day dream come true. He organised a wide political movement. He added radio stations to his network until today 48 are broadcasting his speeches — at an estimated cost of \$8000 each — to an audience that may number millions.

Big business tycoons count him an intimate. Many Congressmen consider him the greatest political force outside the White House. Fascists the world over hail him as among the chief of their dark number.

The labour movement has denounced him repeatedly.

This is the Reverend Charles E. Coughlin.

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This article is the text of the 1939 Pioneer Publishers pamphlet (based on a series of articles that Joseph Hansen wrote for the *Socialist Appeal* that same year).

## Political chequerboard

The political program he has followed is as astounding as his rise from obscurity.

At first the “radio priest” urged his listeners to put their trust in President Herbert Hoover, the “great engineer”.

As late as January 11, 1931, he declared that “we have lost no faith whatsoever” in President Hoover and his cabinet.

Then he switched to the New Deal and supported it so eloquently that he became one of the most influential spokesmen for the Roosevelt Administration.

“*Roosevelt or ruin*” was his slogan.

Millions believed him and chose *Roosevelt*.

On November 11, 1934, shortly after the rise of Adolph Hitler to power in Germany, he launched his organisation, the National Union for Social Justice. He wrote the program for this organisation himself. It has never elected him as its leader or constituted itself on democratic lines. Political discussion at its unit meetings is strictly forbidden. Coughlin is self-appointed supreme dictator.

In the 1936 presidential campaign he switched from the New Deal and supported William Lemke for president.

When Lemke was beaten at the polls, the “radio priest” retired from public life. But his retirement was only temporary.

He came back on the air with a new twist to his political program — *against the Jews ... revolution ... prepare for violence ...*

Now his movement is spreading from coast to coast. In every city unemployed youths hawk his magazine *Social Justice*. He is conducting an essay contest with prizes amounting to \$16,000.

Many people consider him the only hope, the only way out of the depression. Many others consider him the most dangerous menace yet to appear on the American political scene.

## Father Coughlin promises

The magazine and the radio speeches, copies of which Father Coughlin mails out free by the hundreds of thousands, are designed to appeal to those who have been crushed by the depression — the millions of unemployed, youth who see only a blank future, farmers facing ruin, those who see no more hope in Roosevelt’s New Deal.

“I am for a just annual living wage”, he declares. “I am for labour’s right to organise. I am for the cost of living being maintained on an even keel; and I am for preferring the sanctity of human rights to the sanctity of property with government’s chief concern for the poor.”

Who could be against a program like that?

But Father Coughlin was not the first man to stand for labour's right to organise, nor the only one to point out the high cost of living. Father Coughlin is not the first orator to round out pungent and stinging phrases about the sanctity of human rights.

Why should a program so commonplace as that create such excitement and clamour, and out of an obscure priest create a national political figure with apparently unlimited funds at his disposal?

*Because that is not his real program.*

## Coughlin & the New Deal

At one time, if your memory goes back as far as President Roosevelt's election campaign, the New Deal promised these very same things.

And Father Coughlin backed the New Deal 100%.

The international bankers are on their way out [he promised, side by side with Roosevelt].

The prosperity identified with the year 1926 is not too far distant.

March 4, 1933! What a memorable day that was! It was the birthday of the new deal. On that date a voice went ringing around the world announcing a new Declaration of Independence. Before the minds of the millions who listened there was revived the drama of Christ as He lashed the moneychangers from the Temple. [*The New Deal In Money*, p. 36.]

Father Coughlin described Roosevelt to his rapt followers as the "*New Lincoln*", the "*protector of the common people*", and he declared himself ready to follow "*our leader to the end*".

I still proclaim to you that it is either "Roosevelt or Ruin". I support him today and will support him tomorrow. [Radio speech, March 11, 1933.]

Father Coughlin even held a number of secret conferences with "New Lincoln" Roosevelt himself. The nature of those conferences has not been divulged to this day. Frequently he called the President's personal secretary over long-distance telephone.

High, wide, and handsome, Coughlin rode the great wave of popularity that swept Roosevelt into office amidst golden promises.

Roosevelt was going to end the depression, put everybody to work, give everybody an annual wage, permit labour to organise, and MAINTAIN PRIVATE PROPERTY.

Coughlin was a key man in the propaganda machine that deluded the people into supporting Roosevelt.

Father Coughlin, the Detroit spellbinder, was a fellow-traveller of Roosevelt's, a high pressure salesman of his wares. When he abandoned the job it was taken over by Stalin's Communist Party.

Of course, Coughlin has since turned against Roosevelt. His reason was very simple. Highly sensitive to the moods of the masses, Coughlin understands that Roosevelt's answers no longer satisfy the people, especially the unemployed. They are restlessly seeking a way out. Coughlin is not blind to the finger writing Roosevelt's doom on the wall.

The obscure "radio priest" of 1926 has come a long way. The future seems bright for his particular talents. Strife and dissension, wars and rumours of wars, these ring a sweet clangour in the ears of Father Coughlin.

### Capitalism is bankrupt

One of the surest signs that a social system is mortally sick is the existence of a large body of permanently unemployed workers. Greek civilisation toppled amidst the frenzied despair of her unemployed. The broken pillars of the Coliseum in Rome still stand as a monument to the tyrants of the mighty Roman empire who vainly attempted to trick the hordes of unemployed out of their hunger. During the death agony of feudalism, all Europe was wracked by wandering bands of desperate and starving unemployed.

American capitalism is mortally sick.

For ten years, since 1929, capitalism has cast off an increasing number of people whom it can never employ, whom it *cannot even feed* — despite the fact that the land is bursting with food and crops are rotting on the ground.

Each year an estimated 500,000 youth reach employable age and are thrown into the ever-swelling ranks of the unemployed. These hungry, ill-clothed Americans number now almost 17 million — a colossal figure!

At first they listened to the promises of Roosevelt's New Deal and these promises sounded good. He was going to feed them, clothe them, give them jobs and security.

Now they know that he lied. Now they know that he cheated them, that he had nothing to give them but increased misery.

The unemployed stand for the moment, uncertain what road to take next. They are starving in the richest country in the world. Warehouses are crammed to the roof with goods. Billions in gold lie idle in the banks. Factory gates are shut. Machines are silent. Crops are ploughed under.

Using the LIE that private industry will provide jobs, Roosevelt's *slash relief* program hurls fresh million after million of Americans into the streets. There they may eat garbage — if they can find any left in the garbage pails — while they hunt for a job in private industry.

All about them they see incalculable wealth monopolised and enjoyed by a miserable handful of parasitic stockholders.

The unemployed go hungry

They are bewildered, but one basic truth they do understand: *This situation is intolerable.*

They are ready for action. No more postcards to Congress! Already they feel in their minds the thing that is coming ... *revolution ... three square meals a day ... clothing ... a decent home ... plenty for all ...*

Democratic capitalism is doomed. Coughlin knows it. Big business knows it. Roosevelt knows.

Everybody knows it but that wooden skull minority composed of John L. Lewis, William Green, Earl Browder, an idiot or two, and a handful of old maids of both sexes who were left over from the last century. This minority still believes that democratic capitalism will continue indefinitely to punch its meal ticket!

In America apt students have watched the rise to power of Mussolini and Hitler. They understand that only one road is left open to capitalism that has become sour and rotten with old age. In Italy Mussolini called it fascism

In Germany Hitler called it Nazism. We do not yet know what name a similar movement in America might bear. Perhaps in America it will be called — *Social Justice.*

## What is fascism?

Fascism is a combination of two things.

First, it is a wide mass movement of farmers and small business men who face bankruptcy, of youth denied a future under capitalism, of sections of the unemployed. All these layers of the oppressed who are seeking desperately to put their hands on the surrounding plenty become hypnotised by the silver-plated promises of a demagogue who regiments them into blindly obedient shock troops.

Secondly, it is financed and controlled by the very capitalists who above all are anxious to keep the revolutionary violence of the masses from turning against them. In America — the DuPonts, the Morgans, the Rockefellers — the Sixty Families.

To the rank and file followers of fascism, at first it seems a genuine revolutionary way out of their misery. They discover the truth *too late.*

The capitalists provide the money. The dictator provides the powerful slogans, the stirring names, the demagogic program, the organisation, the lieutenants, and the *oratory.*

## Father Coughlin's real program

A few years ago it was very difficult to prove that Father Coughlin was *consciously* plotting to build a fascist movement in the United States. But now he has come out more in the open. He has had time to make slips in his public and private utterances.

It is only necessary to read his speeches and his magazine *Social Justice* with a little care to discover Father Coughlin's REAL program.

Only one month before he launched the National Union for Social Justice he said to Paul Weber of Hearst's International News Service (*Detroit Times*, October 10, 1934): "*I am devoted to capitalism.*"

Among his 16 points for Social Justice he calls for the *preservation of private property*.

Devotion to capitalism and preservation of private property — this is the holy Bible of fascism.

On March 13, 1938, in a broadcast over his network, Coughlin urged the establishment in the United States of a "*corporate state*", which is the gilded way of describing Mussolini's fascist state.

*A corporate state* in which parties would be abolished and the President would be chosen by a House of Representatives elected by occupational classes was proposed Sunday by Father Charles E. Coughlin. [United Press dispatch in the *New York World Telegram*, March 14, 1938.]

But he has been more frank even than this. In a signed article in the February 13, 1939, issue of *Social Justice* (page 7) he declared:

I am beginning to understand why I have been dubbed a "Nazi" or a "fascist" by the Jewish publications in America; for practically all the 16 principles of social justice are being put into practice in Italy and Germany.

Like all true fascists he is bitterly opposed to the great majority taking power and favours the rule of a small minority — the capitalists. In an editorial in *Social Justice* (February 20, 1939) he stated:

The principle of mere "majority-ism" — sometimes called democracy and sometimes Bolshevism — is not enough. The popular fallacy is that "50 million Frenchmen can't be wrong". As a matter of experience and historic fact, 50 men are much more likely to be right than 50 million.

In this case Coughlin can add TEN to his 50 men and make it the SIXTY FAMILIES.

During the 1936 election campaign, Coughlin clarified his position still further in an unguarded moment. In an interview at which Dale Kramer, former national secretary of the National Farm Holiday Association, was present. Coughlin stated that "*Democracy is doomed*" and "*I take the road to fascism*" (*Coughlin, Lemke and the Union Party* by Dale Kramer).

## Coughlin opposes social security

Yes, Coughlin is thoroughly devoted to capitalism. He opposes capitalism granting even the slightest concession to labour.

To guarantee food and clothing to a labouring man and his family when some sordid capitalist throws him out of a job would threaten the capitalist structure Father Coughlin thinks!

Studying it [the Social Security Act] closely, one discovers that basically it is socialistic in its conception and aims. It is socialism of the old school; socialism that offers a remedy more disastrous than the threatened evil; socialism that demands we take from those who have and give to those who have not. [*Social Justice*, October 17, 1938.]

In the same editorial he advocates giving everyone an “annual living wage” *instead* of Social Security.

What Father Coughlin considers an “annual living wage” in dollars he does not state. It must be less than social security to gain his approval!

And what would be wrong with giving a *decent* annual living wage (not less than \$2500 at present cost of living) *and* Social Security? A labour government could easily obtain that as a minimum for the workers in the richest land on the face of the earth.

### Coughlin favours regimentation of labour

The industrial barons have long been struggling to enact changes into the Wagner Act which would benefit them. Coughlin backs up the changes they want. There must be “*no conflict*” between labour and the employers, Coughlin says. “*National unity*” is what he wants.

Make the United States Department of Labour a real power. Let it take over the functions of collective bargaining — the functions which the American Federation of Labor is now trying to fulfil. Let it supplant the AF of L entirely. [Interview published in the *Detroit Times*, October 10, 1934.]

Does this sound like giving labour the right to organise? What Coughlin advocates in the quotation above is exactly what Mussolini and Hitler advocated and *what they put into effect*.

Concentration camps, forced labour, prisons, starvation, endless hours of labour — this is what Father Coughlin’s plan means.

### Father Coughlin favours war

Father Coughlin claims that he is opposed to war. But close attention to his words shows that he is opposed only to war against Germany and Italy *at the present time*. And even on this point he will shift quickly enough when the war actually breaks. He supported Roosevelt’s war program once before. It will not be difficult for him to flop back again during the war hysteria and cry sternly over his network: “*Roosevelt’s War or Ruin*”.

There is no dearth of statements he has made on this point too, disclosing his *real views*.

On January 19, 1930, in the discourse entitled “Christ or the Red Fog”, Coughlin attacked a Milwaukee students’ conference for adopting a resolution opposing war. He condemned the students because:

They are unwilling to assist in building up a better navy and a stronger army to protect a country where Christ is still a King. [*Father Charles E. Coughlin*, p. 68.]

Coughlin is no less devoted to capitalism and private property than Roosevelt. He too wants a big navy and a big army. He too wants unemployed youth marching behind bayonets.

### The fine art of Jew-baiting

So incensed are the American workers at the unparalleled brutality with which Hitler has persecuted the Jews, and so great has been the wave of sympathy for them that Coughlin has attempted to deny that he is a Jew-baiter.

“We disavow all participation with those who hate Jews because they are Jews ...” (*Social Justice*, May 1 1939.) “If and when antisemitism shows its ugly head here, I shall be the first, without hope of receiving reward, to condemn it both by voice and deed.” (Reprinted in *Social Justice*, May 1, 1939.)

But a fascist movement if it is to be successful must have a scapegoat on whom the frenzied masses can vent their rage in place of the capitalists who deserve it. (Naturally the capitalists pay well for this service.) And so Coughlin too must have a scapegoat. Coughlin like Hitler and Mussolini has selected the Jew for his scapegoat.

In order to maintain that he is not antisemitic, he divides Jews into two categories. Five per cent of them are *religious*, he postulates. This 5% he favours — and if they are ever persecuted, he declares, you will find him in their front ranks! The other 95%, he says, are *not religious*. They are communists, socialists, atheists, international bankers, and dealers in gold. In fact Father Coughlin does not pause at words far more lurid than these in marking the Jews for victims on the reeking altar of capitalism.

At the very height of Hitler’s persecution of the Jews, when the whole world watched horrified, and even reactionaries scurried to place themselves on record as opposing this persecution, Father Coughlin defended Hitler’s bloody pogrom and attacked the Jewish victims (radio speech, November 20, 1938).

*Social Justice* from one end to the other is crammed with insinuations and innuendoes attacking the Jews. In issue after issue, Coughlin published the infamous “Protocol of the Elders of Zion”, which was proved a vile forgery years ago.

In the December 19, 1938 issue of *Social Justice*, Coughlin attempted with the

following lurid allegation to blacken the Chinese who have been defending themselves against the attack of Japanese imperialism:

Abraham Cohen, who has been variously known as General Ma and General Moi Sha, is the power behind the Nationalist government.

Even if it were true, there would be nothing wrong in a Jew fighting with the Chinese against the oppressing Japanese armies. But not even Japanese propaganda claims that such a person exists.

Outside his editorial page, Coughlin does not pay the slightest attention to differentiating the religious Jews from the ones HE *thinks* are non-religious. They are ALL *Jews* in the news articles.

For example, in the issue of *Social Justice* for June 5, 1939, he attacks Leslie Hore-Belisha as “the only *Jewish* member of the British cabinet”. (Who certainly as Minister of War is devoted to capitalism, and cannot be dubbed a “communist” by the wildest stretch of the term.)

Dissatisfaction [exists] within the British Army over the fact that England’s military arm is led by a Jew, fed by a Jew, and now clad by a Jew, despite severe censorship to hush up the matter [the article asserts].

In his fantastic efforts to prove that there is an “international plot of Jewry” to enslave the world, Coughlin stops at no lie or distortion of the truth. That is one of the things he must accomplish: construct a hook-nosed wolf with golden fangs and label it JEW, if he is to succeed in becoming Fascist Dictator of America.

With all the deliberate intent of a fascist demagogue who knows exactly what he is about, Coughlin has charted the moves which he hopes will bring him to power.

What does Father Coughlin hope to accomplish by his Jew-baiting?

Split the labour movement into warring camps.

Hack and chop these camps into splintered bits.

Grind these bits into dust.

That is the purpose of Jew-baiting.

First the Jews, then the militants, then the trade-unions, each in turn will be sucked into the ravenous maw of American fascism; each of them tagged: “agent of international Socialist Jewry”.

That is the purpose of Jew-baiting!

## Coughlin supports his fellow fascists

In an editorial in the January 2, 1939, issue of *Social Justice* Father Coughlin attacked a proposal that the Red Cross ship wheat for distribution to starving victims of the civil war in Spain, both Loyalists and Fascists.

He gave as his reason that since there was greater need in the territory then held by the Loyalists, most of the wheat would go to feed starving Loyalists.

When 500,000 refugees began pouring into France, fleeing from the advance of fascist warlord Franco after being betrayed by Loyalist army leaders who had been put into power and supported by Stalin's Communist Party and the social-democrats, Coughlin cynically declared:

The hordes clamouring for escape at the border are not Spaniards. Thousands upon thousands are Russian reds. [*Social Justice*, February 13, 1939]

Coughlin approved Hitler's seizure of Austria.

Coughlin approved Hitler's seizure of the Sudetenland.

Coughlin approved Hitler's seizure of Czechoslovakia.

Coughlin approved Hitler's seizure of Memel.

Coughlin approves Hitler's bristling war threats.

In his broadcast of March 24, 1935, Coughlin declared: "*Today the outposts of Germany are the frontiers of our civilisation.*"

When the work week was lengthened arbitrarily by decree in France, Father Coughlin hailed the act.

In the Far East Coughlin supports Japan and describes this militaristic dictatorship where all civil liberties have been suppressed in blood for years, as "the sole barrier against the menace of communism in the Far East". The "victory of China", he assures the reader, "would mean victory for communism in China" (*Social Justice*, December 19, 1938. See also the issues of December 26, 1938 and March 6, 1939).

When Mussolini invaded Ethiopia (a Christian nation incidentally), Coughlin broadcast a speech attacking the Ethiopians and justifying Mussolini's criminal war (*A Series of Lectures on Social Justice*, April 1936, by Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, pp. 17-19).

Coughlin applauded Mussolini's seizure of Albania, calling it a "rescue", for the "benefit" of its million inhabitants.

*Why is Father Coughlin so enthusiastic about the foreign fascists?*

Let it be understood once and for all, that Father Coughlin is not an *agent* of the European dictators. Far from it. He is their *disciple* and *admirer*. But on the day that war breaks out between the United States and any one of these nations which Coughlin now lauds, he will turn against that nation as savagely as a cannibal on his aged grandfather.

What Coughlin desires is that the *methods* and the *ideology* of these fascist plunderers *sink deeply into the minds of his followers*.

Coughlin wants to organise a state *similar* to the Nazi and the fascist — a *corporate state*, and the REAL masters of that corporate state, the masters to whom he swears devotion and whose interests he represents, are *America's parasitic SIXTY FAMILIES*.

## The fascists hail Coughlin

When the Socialist Workers Party led 50,000 demonstrators in protest against the February 20 meeting of the German-American Bund in Madison Square Garden, the 18,000 members of the Bund, meeting under protection of the biggest concentration of police in New York history, were heiling Führer Fritz Kuhn, Führer Hitler, and Il Duce Mussolini. But the biggest ovation of the evening, next only to that accorded La Guardia's police, was the ovation given Father Coughlin.

*Significant that the German-American Bund followers of Hitler should be so enthusiastic over Coughlin!*

An Associated Press dispatch from Rome on January 17, 1939, stated that the radio priest "received fascist praise and thanks today from the *Regime Fascista*, the newspaper that has led attacks on the Vatican in the dispute over the Italian antisemitic measures".

In a Berlin dispatch dated November 27, 1938, Otto D. Tolischus reports in the *New York Times*:

The German hero in America for the moment is the Rev. Charles E. Coughlin because of his radio speech representing National-Socialism (Nazism) as a defensive front against Bolshevism.

The *acknowledged* advocates of fascism in America are not less enthusiastic.

George E. Deatherage, leader of the Knights of the White Camellia, who insists that fascism as a movement began in America with the Ku Klux Klan long before it was copied by the Nazis, declares:

He is not the leader we are looking for, but America has produced no greater voice; and when the time for the showdown comes, Father Coughlin will have behind him and us, ten million mobilised followers. [*Saturday Evening Post*, May 27, 1939]

William Dudley Pelley, Führer of the Silver Shirts, another mysteriously financed "Christian" who openly proclaims his desire to Hitlerise the United States, declared in the November 14, 1938, issue of his magazine, *Liberation*:

This past week the aggressive Father Coughlin went on the air over a New York radio station and delivered what amounted to the prize Silver Shirt speech of the year.

It is not difficult to understand the brotherly love between the openly acknowledged fascists and the "radio priest" who has risen so rapidly from obscurity.

## Father Coughlin, speculator & stockholder

When Coughlin was supporting Roosevelt and the New Deal during the honeymoon first term, he pronounced a series of discourses over the air on the silver question.

The burden of these speeches was, briefly, that to save the forgotten man, increase world trade, give everybody a job, and "thaw out money", it was necessary only to

raise the price of silver.

The restoration of silver to its proper value is of Christian concern. I send you a call for the mobilisation of all Christianity against the god of gold. [Quoted in the *Churchman*, June, 1939.]

Eventually Roosevelt did raise the price of silver.

And then Secretary of the Treasury, Morgenthau revealed in April 1934 that the largest holder of silver futures in the state of Michigan was *one Amy Collins, secretary to Father Coughlin*.

She held 500,000 *ounces*, costing 40 cents an ounce at the time of purchase, but purchased at 10% margin, or \$20,000. Every time silver went up one cent it meant \$5000 *profit for the holder of the 500,000 ounces*.

On an investment of \$20,000, Coughlin made 500% PROFIT.

It was this revelation of his silver speculations which turned Coughlin so savagely against Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau. Even the Bund since then curses Morgenthau regularly in its ritual. Not long afterward, Coughlin switched his support from President Roosevelt to William Lemke.

In 1935 the *Detroit Free Press* revealed in a series of articles that in 1929 and 1930 Father Coughlin had speculated in stock of the Kelsey-Hayes Wheel Co. and the Packard Motor Car Co., that in one transaction alone he paid as much as \$30,110.89 for Kelsey-Hayes stock and lost nearly \$14,000 in another venture. The *Free Press* also revealed that Coughlin manipulated three bank accounts, one in the name of C.E. Coughlin, one in the name of the Radio League of the Little Flower, and a third in the name of Ste. Therese of the Child Jesus Parish, and that he used these funds for speculative purposes.

Father Coughlin's interest in the stock of certain automobile companies sheds an intensely illuminating light on his early ventures into the labour field.

### **Father Coughlin, labour hater**

Besides having his printing done in a nonunion shop, Father Coughlin constructed his million dollar Shrine of the Little Flower by hiring an open-shop contractor who paid his men 25 to 40% below trade union rates. In this way Coughlin showed what he means by a "living annual wage"!

As a result, the AF of L at its 1934 convention at San Francisco unanimously adopted a resolution condemning Coughlin for his antilabour policies.

Father Coughlin favours the company union:

Had the motor manufacturers been in the least intelligent, they would have helped to organise a friendly and efficient union years ago. [*Eight Lectures*, p. 125]

Father Coughlin is opposed to strikes (exactly the way Hitler and Mussolini are opposed to strikes!):

The National Union for Social Justice contends that strikes and lockouts are absolutely unnecessary. [Sermon, December 2, 1934]

In 1935 a semi-company union, the Automotive Industrial Workers of America, was organised. It was known as the “Coughlin union” because of the blessing Coughlin gave it.

It was organised in order to prevent the formation of a real fighting union which would gain better conditions, better wages, and shorter hours for the workers.

But the “Coughlin union” despite its blessing, decided to strike against the intolerable conditions in the Motor Products Co. and downed tools on November 15, 1935.

In the vicious strikebreaking campaign that followed, the strikers asked Father Coughlin for help.

*He REFUSED to see their delegation.* He refused to broadcast in their behalf. He refused to speak a single word in their cause.

Let it not be forgotten, that *many of the leaders of this strike were members of Father Coughlin’s organisation, the National Union for Social Justice.*

The police, the armed scabs, the organised company terror — these, *combined with the Judas kiss of Father Coughlin,* broke the strike.

Yes, Coughlin promises many beautiful things to the oppressed, but when the crucial moment comes, *he is the first to plant the dagger in their backs.*

Since the formation of the CIO Coughlin has assailed it venomously and incessantly.

When Governor A.B. Chandler of Kentucky ordered President Roosevelt’s National Guard down to Harlan County with orders to *shoot to kill* if necessary to break the strike, Coughlin whitewashed the coal operators who have been notorious throughout the nation for half a century as one of the most tyrannical, bloody, and violent sections of the boss class.

The Union Leaders Made Troops Necessary. [*Social Justice*, June 5, 1939, p. 21; headline to article on Harlan.]

To guarantee the men their right to work, Governor Chandler found it necessary to call out nearly 1000 National Guard troops to stand guard over the mines ... Lewis defied the forces of law and order in Harlan County, Ky., where Governor Chandler said that 75% of the mine workers desired to work, despite Lewis’ command that they continue in idleness. The cry of revolt [against Lewis] was heard in other sections sickened by Lewis’ one-man rule over their jobs, homes, and happiness. [*Social Justice*, May 22, 1939.]

The coal operators, who are also the county officials, openly admitted that THEY *sent*

for the troops to break the strike.

As a propagandist able and willing to paint up violence, terror, and intimidation of the bosses with the gentle colours of the lily, Coughlin has no equal — in America.

The Memorial Day massacre, in which Republic Steel Corporation shot down unarmed workers in the back is blamed by Father Coughlin *on the workers*. He characterises the massacre as a “bloody riot” and asserts that it will be easy for the Republic Steel Corporation to “prove to any jury that it cost them” the \$7,500,000 for which they are suing the workers they attacked (editorial in *Social Justice*, June 5, 1939).

The editorial continues with a vicious attack on the CIO. To Father Coughlin any militant worker is a “red”, a “socialist”, a conspirator in the ring of “international Jewry”.

When he retired “forever” from the air and public life in 1936, he returned in less than two months, January 1, 1937, with an attack on thousands of striking General Motors workers.

His civil liberties record is no better than his labour record.

In the March 13, 1939 issue of *Social Justice*, for example, he opposes antilynching legislation.

In the December 19, 1938 issue, he attacks the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee, which exposed the million dollar labour spy racket and the widespread use by powerful corporations of thugs, machine guns, poison gas, intimidation, terror, and violence against their workers.

Father Coughlin does not like *investigations* or *exposures* such as those conducted by the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee.

Let the fools and the suckers bite at the gaudily feathered hook Father Coughlin dangles! Labour’s right to organise? Father Coughlin believes in it the same way Tom Girdler and Henry Ford and the Harlan County coal operators do. Just let the workers dare to carry a card in a genuine union! There are ways of changing those workers’ minds — Memorial day Massacres, multi-million dollar damage suits, rifles and bayonets of the National Guard, a spray of machine gun slugs in the back ...

## Who is behind Father Coughlin?

What Father Coughlin’s secret files at the Shrine of the Little Flower would reveal as to his financial backers can only be imagined.

Hitler’s movement, when it was in the same stage as Father Coughlin’s, was *secretly* backed by powerful financial interests — the steel magnate Thyssen and other powerful German capitalists.

Occasionally Coughlin will mention certain capitalists favourably in his radio broadcasts — Henry Ford, Walter P. Chrysler, James Rand. Father Coughlin stayed at

the *San Simeon ranch of William Randolph Hearst* while on a visit to California. Mr. G.A. Richards, president of WJR is a generous financial backer mentioned by Coughlin. He mentions too in one of his broadcasts (*Father Charles E. Coughlin*, an official biography, p. 107) the visit of Harris and LeBlanc to his shrine for intimate conversations, Robert M. Harris of the New York Cotton Exchange — a southern bourbon well-known as a cotton and silver speculator, and George LeBlanc described by Coughlin as “perhaps the world’s foremost gold trader” (*an international banker!*).

The forces in Coughlin’s financial background are as sinister as the forces that directed the breaking of the Little Steel Strike.

### Coughlin’s program & the fascist program

Coughlin’s program as it now stands bears a remarkable resemblance to the programs of fascism and Nazism when they were at a similar stage.

Coughlin appeals to the dissatisfied and restless unemployed workers and youth, and the farmers and small merchants who are facing bankruptcy.

Hitler directed his appeals to the same sections of the population.

Mussolini built his movement from similar ranks.

Coughlin, like his predecessors proposes a “just and living annual wage”, “cost of production plus a fair profit to the farmer”, etc. He attacks democratic capitalism just as Mussolini and Hitler did, and attacks it contemptuously.

He proposes “revolution” as they did, the use of force. He attacks the failure of the New Deal to solve unemployment. He attacks its war program.

Coughlin is attempting to divert these revolutionary layers of the oppressed masses, just as Mussolini and Hitler before him did, from striking at the very heart and core of the *system* that produces unemployment. He turns their rage against the “international bankers”, the “Jews”, the “money system”. He proposes economic reforms chiefly in the realms of *banking and currency*. In this way, like Mussolini and Hitler, he attempts to dissipate the revolutionary energy of the masses against bundles of painted straw.

To the capitalists he makes clear exactly where he stands by expressing his devotion to capitalism and the private ownership of property. For certain public necessities and natural resources he advocates *nationalisation*; but he *emphasises* that he doesn’t want nationalisation of industry.

Some of Hitler’s most prominent demands make interesting reading beside Coughlin’s. The Nazi platform for instance called for “abolition of the domination of interest”, “the complete confiscation of all war profits”, and “participation in the profits of large concerns”.

*These demands, of course, were NEVER carried out.*

Practically all the 16 principles of social justice are being put into practice in Italy and Germany. [*Social Justice*, February 13, 1939, p. 7]

Let that statement of Coughlin's burn like fire on your memory!

And we might remind the lieutenants of Father Coughlin, that the secondary leaders in Hitler's organisation who insisted on carrying out the Nazi program were "*purged*" in a *ghastly blood bath*.

When fascism marches into power it smashes the trade unions, arrests the regularly-elected leaders and appoints fascist chiefs in their place who *dictate* the new rules and regulations. They confiscate the union treasury.

They confiscate the savings accounts and the insurance of the workers, if they have any.

They build barbed-wire concentration camps and herd the unemployed inside at bayonet point.

They spread the industrial spy system throughout every city, town, and hamlet of the entire nation and intensify its grip a thousandfold.

Libraries are burned. Schools are shut down. Hours are lengthened. Wages are slashed. The speed-up is whipped up to new heights. Terror and torture are turned loose. The streets flow with blood. Strikes are punished with death. Racial minorities such as the Jews and the Negroes are nailed to the cross.

Fascism is hell for the workers and the unemployed. But it saves the profits of the small handful of capitalists who control the nation's wealth. And some obscure figure becomes the all-powerful dictator of the nation's fate.

To many good-hearted people it seems impossible that fascism could come to the United States.

But it is impossible to wish away 17 million unemployed.

It is impossible to wish away the dizzy downward plunge of the rate of capitalist profit since 1929.

And it is impossible to wish away the stormtroopers being trained by fascist organisations right now in America.

In city after city, the fascist movement is spreading. Trained squads of Coughlinites, protected by the police, sell *Social Justice* in the busiest streets of every city, in workers' sections, in predominantly Jewish and Negro sections.

*Fights between workers and fascists break out almost every day.*

## Can Roosevelt stop fascism?

Father Coughlin is not alone among the representatives of big business who hears death's knuckles rapping at the door of democratic capitalism.

President Roosevelt, nearing the end of his second term in the White House sees his New Deal collapsing like a house of cards built from an old and very dirty deck.

Only WAR can save Roosevelt — and then only for the briefest of periods.

But for this brief period he will pay the price of millions of lives of the workers, the farmers, the youth. That is why he is buying battleships with the relief funds of the unemployed.

That is why he has poured money without precedent into a war machine that outstagger anything in the history of the country. He hopes to divert the attention of the desperate masses from *their* plight to a *foreign enemy*.

But even war is a temporary and unpopular expedient. The unemployed don't want bayonets. They want food and jobs. Roosevelt's war can only whip their fury to new heights. Father Coughlin knows all this very well. He has read a lot of fan mail since 1926.

He knows too that big business in its way is as desperate as the unemployed. Big business fears the revolutionary might of the unemployed. It wants to preserve its clutches on national wealth. It wants to preserve the profit system.

Roosevelt's usefulness as a stopgap for big business is almost at an end.

Roosevelt is capitalism's smiles and promises of last rear.

Now the Sixty Families need a new demagogue with less smile and more promises.

General Smedley Butler has revealed that the Morgan-DuPont interests were ready to spend \$3 million with a promise of \$300 million more if necessary to finance a fascist army that would march on Washington behind the General.

General Butler turned the offer down. *Perhaps someone else did not turn that offer down.*

## Can the trade unions alone stop fascism?

The trade unions, bogged down with the bureaucracies headed by John L. Lewis and William Green, stand helpless before the terrible problems now facing the working class, the half-ruined farmers, the small business men, and the destitute unemployed.

The trade unions as fighting organisations of the working class won huge successes in the past, conquering many of the rights of labour and defending them during the upswing of capitalism. Today under the domination of Lewis and Green the trade unions if left *alone and without help face disaster*.

Father Coughlin understands the limitless strength of America's labouring people far better than do Lewis and Green with their corner grocery outlook.

That is why he attempts to turn the unemployed, tooth and nail, upon those organised in trade unions.

That is why he denounces the CIO and the AF of L over his radio network. That is why he calls strikers “idlers”, and speaks of the “jobs they have left”.

That is why he calls every militant trade unionist a “communist”, a “socialist”, a “Jew”.

That is why he exerts every ounce of his voice and his pen to build up a terrible hate for the words: *communist, socialist, Jew*.

The trade unions *alone*, especially as they have been caught in the death grip which democratic capitalism has clamped upon Lewis and Green, cannot meet the situation.

A new force is needed and needed badly.

A new weapon of the working class must be forged.

An Independent Labour Party, a fighting militant political party of the working class charged with vision, with daring, with invincible *boldness* must be organised as the battering ram that will smash this entire trashy structure of New Deal politics and the poisonous fascist growths that swell upward from its rotting foundation.

### **Fascism in America must be stopped!**

We must not repeat the mistakes of the labour movement in Italy and in Germany which permitted forgers, sidewalk spiellers, and sideshow adventurers like Mussolini and Hitler to take over power.

The first lesson to learn is not difficult: LABOUR MUST DEPEND ON ITS OWN STRENGTH.

Labour must have its own independent political party.

Labour must have its own defence guards.

The greatest danger of all is to depend on the Roosevelts, the La Guardias, the police, and the bootlickers of these former bosom friends of Coughlin and his ilk.

The first task that labour must perform in stopping the fascist movement in America is the organisation of a *workers' defence guard*.

Every union local should begin the immediate organisation of a guard to protect itself from the certain onslaught of the fascists in the near future.

The sooner these guards are organised the more efficient they will become in protecting the labour movement.

Trained, disciplined, and bold *workers' defence guards* are the ONLY FORCE that can physically *stop* the fascists from overpowering the labour movement in America.

### **The final answer to Coughlin**

Democratic capitalism is doomed in the United States.

It can offer nothing but war, unemployment, misery, death.

In its desperate dying struggles capitalism will attempt anything to survive.

That “*anything*” is *fascism*.

The whole fascist movement is built upon the collapse of “democracy” and complete scorn and rejection of democratic institutions, except where they can be utilised to further fascism.

The entire working class, employed and unemployed, youth and aged, and their brothers who toil on the farms, must unite in common struggle to throw out the present government which represents the capitalists and place in power a government that will *represent the workers and the farmers*.

First step in placing labour’s own government in power is to organise labour’s OWN POLITICAL PARTY.

Every worker must begin *thinking* INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY, *talking* INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY, *organising* INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY.

This must be done immediately.

There is not a moment to lose.

ORGANISE AN INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY.

## The socialist order of plenty

Democratic capitalism is doomed.

Although it loaded them with chains and branded them with irons, even a slave state could feed and clothe its slaves. But democratic capitalism can provide neither jobs nor food for those who toil.

It deserves no other fate but to be crushed by socialist revolution.

Clean away the rubbish of democratic capitalism!

GOOD RIDDANCE!

The productive system is ready to pour out fabulous riches.

Open up the vaults and the granaries!

Open up the bursting warehouses for every working member of society!

Harvest and distribute the crops that ripen in the fields!

Open the idle factories and man the machines that will produce undreamed quantities of wealth!

An end to the blind alley of despair in America! Fight with the Socialist Workers Party for the SOCIALIST ORDER OF PLENTY! ■



## **Section II**

# **Boss Hague: Experiment in Jersey City**





Frank Hague, Democratic Party boss of Jersey City, 1917-47.

Along with Father Coughlin's Social Justice movement, Frank Hague's dictatorial rule in Jersey City was the most significant of the home-grown fascist outfits in the US in the later 1930s.

Hague was the Democrat boss of Jersey City from 1917 to 1947 and a one-time Democratic Party national vice-chairman. In the 1930s he used city cops, municipal employees and war veterans in cooperation with company goons to prevent the CIO from organising in the area; picketing was outlawed and union organisers run out of town. A section of the capitalist class was favourably inclined towards Hague's antilabour methods. Trotsky saw him as an incipient American fascist.

With the new conditions brought about by the onset of the war, Hague reconciled with the prowar CIO leaders, abandoned his fascist methods and resumed functioning as a normal rotten big city machine boss.

# **Boss Hague's Police Kidnap Norman Thomas**

The Jersey City police committed a typical act of violence during the May Days by brutally assaulting, kidnapping, and deporting Norman Thomas when he attempted to speak in Journal Square on Saturday night, April 30 [1938], against Boss Hague's personal dictatorship.

The leader of the Socialist Party declared that at least half a dozen people in the crowd had been struck on the base of the neck from the rear by police nightsticks, a blow which paralyses without leaving a mark. Among them was Louis Freader, Hoboken Secretary of the Workers Defence League. The secretary of the League, Morris Milgram, said that at least 15 persons had been expelled from the city with Thomas, including residents of Jersey City.

## **Vicious assaults**

One of them was Ashley Garrick, Jersey City lawyer whose arms, according to eyewitnesses, were held by two cops while a detective punched his face so brutally that he had to be treated by a physician.

So frenzied was the melee around the seizure of Norman Thomas that the uniformed men failed to recognise the plainclothes cops of their own force. As a result one uniformed patrolman struck a detective.

The Jersey City police chief declared that Thomas had been put out of the city "for his own personal safety".

Safety, presumably, against even more serious manhandling by Hague's guardians of law and order! Thomas himself branded the whole police report as fiction, "doubtless as false as the evidence against Jeff Burkitt", who is serving a six-month sentence for trying to make a speech on the same spot.

Thomas has demanded that the LaFollette Civil Rights Senatorial Committee investigate Hague's dictatorship, and has asked various federal authorities to intervene. But Hague has been sufficiently exposed in the eyes of the people by his own actions in the past period. What is needed is not further investigation but further action against this petty satrap and staunch pillar of the Democratic Party.

### **Workers' initiative needed**

The organised workers of New Jersey should take the initiative in launching a movement of self-defence against the unabated and ever more vicious attacks of Hague's gangsters-in-uniform. They can secure the sympathy and support of every militant force in the labour ranks, who are already aroused to the menace represented by Hague and his regime. The independent action of the militant and organised workers is the best way to restore their democratic rights to the people of Jersey City. ■

# Hague's Rule Still Awaits Real Challenge — Free Speech Fight Imperative

Boss Hague, his private police force, and his army of officeholders remain in undisturbed possession of Jersey City. In the first test of strength between the Jersey autocrat and his opponents, the Mayor emerged victorious without a battle.

The widespread movement of popular protest engendered by Norman Thomas' expulsion from the city on April 30 and the continued provocation of Hague's agents during last week, fizzled out miserably when the two Congressmen Jerry J. O'Connell and John T. Bernard, who came from Washington to challenge Hague's dictatorship, failed to appear at the meeting scheduled for Journal Square last Saturday night.

For three days Hague prepared to prevent the meeting. Billboards and full-page advertisements appeared in all the Hudson County papers, jointly sponsored by the "American Federation of Labour Unions of Hudson County" and the "War Veterans Committee for Law and Order", headed by Col. Hugh Kelley, secretary to Governor Moore, calling upon Jersey City citizens to "show their Americanism" and "be present in Journal Square" on Saturday evening to repeal the invaders. The leaders of the Democratic Ward Clubs, together with heads of AFL unions, rallied Hague's cohorts for the expected battle.

## Police fill square

From noon on, the atmosphere around Journal Square was noticeably tense. Plain clothes cops and uniformed police were sprinkled throughout the place. The first act of violence occurred around one o'clock when Milton Filkner, executive director of the Jersey City Committee of labour's Non-Partisan League, was socked in the jaw by a

plain clothes dick for distributing leaflets. An Associated Press photographer who tried to snap the scene had his camera smashed. Police Chief Casey stood smiling by and allowed the assailants to escape.

By seven o'clock 350 police guarded Journal Square. Wrecking cars had dragged away all the autos parked in the vicinity. Escorted by mounted police and members of the American Legion, motor trucks carried 3000 placards into Bergen Street with such slogans as "Reds Destroy Industry and Business but Not in Jersey City", "Civil Liberties is a Cloak for Communism", "Let All the Radicals and Red Foreigners Go Back to Russia". These were distributed among the waiting crowd of Hague henchmen. The Legionnaires bore two 20-foot streamers, one inscribed "Labour! AFL Will Never Join Hands with CIO and Communism", and the other, "Norman Thomas, Roger Baldwin and Stalin, One for All and All for One — Keep Out".

### **Congressmen stay away**

All traffic was stopped by the police and the area roped off. By 8:30 over 25,000 people, including in large part WPA workers and city employees conscripted for Hague's demonstration, had gathered in Journal Square. The Legion bands and the paraders bearing placards, headed by the deputy police chief, kept the crowd in a state of excitement and tried to incite a lynch spirit in them.

Meanwhile, the two congressmen who were slated to speak at 8:30 had been corralled by the Stalinists at the headquarters of the International Labor Defence in Manhattan which had taken charge of the proposed meeting. There they stayed while the president of the ILD, the ex-Republican congressman Vito Marcantonio, received telephone reports from the battleground in Journal Square.

At 10:45 Marcantonio announced that O'Connell and Bernard had finally been persuaded not to go to Jersey City. [...]

Thanks to the failure of the Stalinist leadership and their liberal congressmen to prepare in any adequate way to meet the mobilisation of Hague's gang by rallying the workers of Jersey City in a counterdemonstration against them, they had no forces at their disposal and were compelled to capitulate in a cowardly manner before the threats of Hague's thugs. To avoid a repetition of this fiasco in the future, it is imperative that the organised workers of New Jersey take the initiative in creating a movement of self-defence against Hague's henchmen. The organised workers in the CIO constitute the only force capable of mobilising the masses and generating a movement powerful enough to undermine Hague, dislodge him from power, and restore the elementary rights of free speech and public assembly in Jersey City. ■

# Hague Frustrates Meeting Plan — CIO Must Take Lead in Struggle

Boss Hague's cops scored another victory when they broke up the mass meeting scheduled for Pershing Field last Friday evening, seized and deported the chief speaker, Representative O'Connell, knocked down his wife, and beat up CIO assistant regional director Sam Macri. Other officers of the Hudson County Committee for Labor Defence and Civil Rights, which called the meeting, were spotted and slugged by Hague's thugs.

Hague again mustered all his forces to crush the challenge of his adversaries. Over 500 cops and hundreds of conscripted office holders were active in the crowd of between 10 and 15 thousand milling around the field when O'Connell arrived. An American Legion band played martial music and Hague's henchmen waved American flags in order to generate the properly patriotic lynch atmosphere for the dirty work of his uniformed gangsters.

## Lynch spirit kindled

No sooner had O'Connell signified his intention of speaking than the Hague henchmen shouted in chorus: "Kill the bum! Send the red back to Russia! Throw him out!" Obeying these orders, the police closed in on O'Connell, separated him from his wife and friends, and marched him off the field to police headquarters. After holding him there for two hours, Police Chief Walsh and others "defenders of law and order" deported him on a train to Newark.

Walsh impudently asserted O'Connell was taken into custody to save his life. The Jersey Police Department's ability to protect even themselves from the excessive zeal of their own thugs was shown by the fact that the Chief and two other high officials were struck by cops during the melee.

After his expulsion, O'Connell had no better method of action to suggest than to announce, once again, that he intended to ask Roosevelt and Farley to intervene against the vice-chairman of the Democratic Party. This will make the 100th appeal plea addressed to these "defenders of democracy" without any other result than a Department of Justice investigation on which, it was reported last week, no action had yet been taken.

### **May block struggle**

O'Connell's proposed action indicates a danger that he will use his rehabilitated prestige for purely personal political ends to impede a real struggle against Hague or to compromise with the forces protecting him.

CIO representatives have been conducting negotiations with Hague's assistants in the Democratic Party to effect a compromise with him. The deal was blocked only because of Hague's intransigence.

The CIO workers must frustrate such attempts. No compromise with the Hudson County Hitler that will result in any abridgement of democratic or labour rights! Fight to the finish against Hagueism!

The CIO must step to the forefront and take the leadership of the forces in the fight against Hague. Several CIO officials took prominent parts in Friday's meeting. Several were victims of the cops. The CIO must meet this challenge by preparing an even mightier counteroffensive against Hague.

### **CIO action needed**

In its own name, under its own auspices, and with its own speakers, the CIO should mobilise the anti-Hague forces in counterdemonstration. Such a mass assembly requires careful preparation to be successful. The events of last Friday underscore the necessity for the immediate creation of a labour guard to prevent Hague's cops from repeating their brutalities.

Several CIO bodies have already approved the formation of such a defence corps. This is a great step forward in the struggle against the Hudson County Hitler. Other labour organisations should follow this example.

Despite his show of strength and string of minor victories, Hague's regime is weakening. With a correct and aggressive policy the CIO can weld together the fighting force that can smash it to smithereens in short order. ■

# How Hague Rules

*By James Raleigh*

Readers of the daily press, learning for the first time of Frank Hague and his domination of all social and political activity in Jersey City, are induced in the main to conclude that the commotion over popular rights now engendered there by rebellious elements is a purely sporadic phenomenon that will die down in due course either as a result of Hague's temporary surrender to adverse public opinion or because of the people's fatigue in opposing his entrenched power.

Analysis will show this is not the case.

Briefly stated, Hague's control of the whole local government begins with the police and ends with the judiciary.

Today, ordinary people in Jersey know in advance who will "pass" civil service examinations for key jobs before they are conducted, who will be "elected" to public office before they are nominated, and who will be sent to jail for election law "violations" before they are tried.

No one of importance criticises Hague publicly without suffering retribution. No one of influence organises against him unless he seeks to use the organisation as a blackmailing device to induce Hague to buy him out.

## Democracy in Jersey City

No one may vote against him if in the future he wishes a favour. The "secret" polling booth has no curtain to hide the mark on your ballot. In Jersey City pro-Hague citizens hand in their ballots unfolded as they leave the voting booth. Everybody kowtows to "Haguey" as he is fawningly called. Most people decide to play ball with him, even the Republicans.

Yet paradoxically this is also a weakness. For every politician wants to be a cog in Hague's machine.

Obviously Hague's political machine, no matter how well geared, can not be made big enough to carry all the disgruntled residents of the city, whose disgruntlement eventually finds strength in numbers and unity. Several years ago, Hague had already enlarged his apparatus to such an extent that it was top heavy. Those who could not get comfortable berths in it were not the only grumblers. Property-owners became dissatisfied with the ever-rising taxes needed to maintain it. The unemployed complained because no provision was made for them. And even loyal Democrats still working in local industries were becoming embittered at the inadequate and falling wages.

Into this hectic picture, on the heels of the glum-faced rugged individualist Herbert Hoover, stepped the smiling Friend of the Forgotten Man, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Among others he came to save was Frank Hague, local despot of Jersey City.

In the early days of the gold rush to Washington, New Jersey applicants seeking to fill the thousands of new jobs both there and in New Jersey were frankly told to see their congressman. And Hague's congressmen were equally frank in telling them to see their ward-leaders back home.

### **Recalcitrants removed**

In Jersey City, men are removed from federal WPA jobs and pointedly told that they had voted against Hague. Only favoured applicants, vouched for by Hague's district leaders, can aspire to fill these vacancies. Lawyers, who by nature of their more articulate profession are potential leaders of those discriminated against by the dwindling federal funds, are bought off by being given foreclosure work for those federal agencies that make mortgage loans on workers' homes. Theatre projects, writers' projects, sewing projects, music projects, lawyers' projects — all these New Deal palliatives are mysteriously closed to enemies of Frank Hague.

In the five years of the New Deal not one outspoken word has been uttered, not one unmistakable gesture made to show that Roosevelt was opposed to the goings-on in Jersey City under the tyranny of Hague. Only the other day in regard to the deportation from Jersey City of Norman Thomas and the intimidation of Representatives O'Connell and Bernard, the president announced that Hague's denial of constitutional rights was purely a local police matter. But then Hague is a vice-chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

### **Roosevelt needs Hague**

One hand washes the other. Without Hague to dispense WPA jobs to make voters obligated to the Democratic Party, Roosevelt could not have carried New Jersey.

Without Roosevelt to delegate New Deal appointments to him, Hague could not have maintained his political primacy in New Jersey. But the signposts point to trouble. The new recession has come upon New Jersey no less than upon Illinois and Ohio. Rent checks for Jersey City people suddenly fell two months in arrears, and funds for current relief could be raised only by diverting road funds from gasoline taxes. Young boys and girls are unable to find jobs.

One result of this development was the last local election. A group of unsatisfied youths, under the leadership of 24-year-old John R. Longo, a muddle-headed Democrat impelled simply by the need of a job, saw a solution for themselves by filing a ticket in the Democratic Party primaries against Hague's handpicked slate of candidates. Longo's naivete and inexperience, however, made him blunder in preparing his petition: He forgot to witness all the signers as they made their signatures. His petition was "thrown out" by Hague's county clerk. His political blackmail failed. Longo was tried for election law "violations", the first such case in New Jersey, although such "irregularities" are regular, even in Hague's own petitions.

The jury was packed and the jurors even lied as to their occupations and connection in order to be sure to get on the jury to serve Hague. Longo now faces a five-year sentence for a "technical" crime as a lesson to the public on the sanctity of the ballot.

## Hopeless courses

Any attempt to end Hagueism by resort to the traditional political parties is hopeless. Hague, a Democrat, has insinuated himself into the Republican Party and by patronage has tamed all potential opposition from that source. The Hague-Hoffman Democratic-Republican alliance in the last governorship term was an open scandal.

As to a rebellion against Hague by a fusion party or by a group within his own party, this is impossible so long as Hague has control over the election apparatus. In tabulating the votes, whether Republican, Democratic, or otherwise, Hague employs his own unique method of counting. By manipulating totals in Jersey City and in the remainder of Hudson County, really one continuous city, Hague arranges for a vote big enough to carry the whole state, normally Republican.

Next, Jersey City is 70% Roman Catholic and the church loyally supported Hague, even before he gave a \$50,000 donation to the parish. Now priests in the confessional box deem it proper to ask parishioners if they voted for Hague. Of course, when Hague hollers "communism" at his opponents, the priests respond: "Communism seeks to destroy the Church".

An ouster of the Jersey City dictator as a result of church pressure is less than likely. Yet very significant is an incident of last year, in the very midst of Hague's initial

fight against the CIO “drive” in Jersey City. Although the CIO was promptly painted “red” and by implication anti-Catholic, nevertheless a group of underpaid Catholic grave-diggers entered upon a sit-down strike. Needless to say, it was hastily settled and hushed up. This event shows that the worker will not always be fooled by an institution, political or religious, when it comes to their own immediate material welfare. Obeisance to a church which dwells on the “hereafter” will decrease directly as participation in a labour union which caters to the workers’s wellbeing increases.

The only force capable of eliminating Hagueism from Jersey City or his equivalent from any other locality is the working class. Meanwhile the workers continue to be split by groupings that do them no good. They divide politically between Republican and Democratic parties to maintain a sham two-party system, which in reality is not even a one-party system but a one-man system. Many of them observe economic group distinctions within their own ranks, a bias against the CIO.

### **No real conflict**

The fact is that until this date the two types of unions have not conflicted in Jersey City except in Hague’s mind. No effort has been made by the CIO, the newcomer of the two, to raid either the workers or the industrial field of the AF of L. Nevertheless, the AF of L leaders in general have evinced a marked hostility to the CIO’s attempt to unionise the unorganised. This enmity always arises concurrently with Hague’s animosity, and invariably the AF of L’s condemnation is accompanied by a lavish endorsement of “our mayor, staunch friend of labour”.

The labour spokesmen behind these declarations of loyalty and confidence are frequently men who in the past have fought and denounced Hague in the fiercest terms. Today they make dictated speeches and sign prepared statements in his praise without even reading them beforehand.

Why Hague and the AF of L are so vigilant in “protecting” Jersey City from the “radical” CIO is a question of great importance. To begin with, the rank and file as well as the leadership of the AF of L have been in years past victimised and intimidated. Now they are completely regimented by Hague.

### **Receivership weapon**

This was accomplished chiefly through receivership suits against a number of union locals. First, the vicious patronage system was extended to the trade unions by the appointment of Hague receivers and attorneys whose large fees liquidated the unions’ funds. Second, the unions were rendered impotent and useless as far as declaring or carrying on strikes was concerned. Third, local business rallied to the boss’s moral —

and financial — support to prevent strikes in their plants.

Fourth, the union leaders now hold their posts, not by the grace of their membership, but by indulgence of Hague. Any move in the ranks toward independence is promptly suppressed by the bureaucrats — lest the union be thrown into receivership and thus lose the last vestige of “organisation”. Such receivership is easily effected in New Jersey, simply by having a few members sign affidavits that the union funds are being squandered, or that the union is insolvent and cannot meet its financial obligations, or that other “equitable” grounds for receivership exist.

Then, it may be asked, why doesn't Hague permit the CIO to come into Jersey City and organise, and as soon as that is done hold the same club over its head — the threat of receivership? The answer is that if the CIO does organise, then to retain its membership it must extract from local industry some wage and hour benefits. These concessions cannot be granted without stimulating wider organisation and at the same time alienating industry proportionately.

## Runaway shops

Jersey City is a town of runaway shops, businesses that have fled from other cities to get the jump on their competitors by the low wages made possible by local non-unionised labour. This influx of sweatshops and homework industries has served and saved Hague in two ways — first, by giving some residents a bare minimum wage and thus removing them from the overcrowded relief rolls and so reducing the strain on city finances; second, by making vacant industrial properties tenantable once more and so restoring them to the ranks of sites that contribute the needed taxes that seem increasingly harder to collect as time passes. If the CIO is allowed to organise, the fly-by-night shops will fly again, these two benefits with them. Hague, to maintain himself, must fight any effort to further organise labour.

But this does not mean that the workers cannot be unionised. On the contrary, the field is fertile for an intelligent and energetic campaign. Jersey City's liberation from Hague depends on understanding, hard-working and honest leaders who must persistently and consistently, not cheaply and dramatically, organise both the workers and the unemployed. A healthy nucleus exists in the CIO unions which were organised earlier, such as the steel workers. Further sound material is the unemployed. Even the rank and file of the AF of L will support a serious and intelligently organised drive. ■

# Jersey City: Lesson & Warning

*By James P. Cannon*

Jersey City today is the testing ground of a struggle destined in the not too distant future to become national in scope and to dominate national affairs.

The most conscious representatives of the two main contending forces which will confront each other in the national struggle that is impending — the capitalist masters of America and the dissatisfied working masses — are closely studying the developments in Jersey City and drawing conclusions for the future.

It is safe to assume that a section of the capitalists have already come to certain tentative conclusions in favour of the Hague method of dealing with labour insurgence. It is important for the workers also to know what the brutal aggressions of Mayor Hague and his cohorts really signify.

They must know what the problem is in order to formulate the proper answer to it. Much can and much undoubtedly will be written on this subject, for it has a transcendent importance. Here I want to present an outline of opinion from the proletarian class point of view:

## **The real meaning of Hagueism**

Hagueism is not simply the individual aberration of an illiterate, provincial politician, as liberals, social-democrats, and Stalinists represent the matter. The Jersey City events signify a deliberate mobilisation of reaction, backed by big industrial and financial interests, for a serious preliminary test of the workers' capacity to resist fascistic repression.

It is no accident that the fight of Hague was directed from the start against the organisation campaign of the CIO. Hagueism is a shrewdly devised *antilabour campaign*, not a seemingly irrational interference with the formal rights of free speech, etc.

By the same token the aggressions of the Hague reaction can be seriously countered

only by an organised resistance of the workers. Any other approach to the question is false and can only lead to defeat in the fight against Hagueism in New Jersey and its spread to other centres. No doubt the present attempt to suppress the CIO in New Orleans draws certain inspiration and encouragement from the Jersey City success of Mayor Hague.

### **CIO bureaucrats debase struggle**

The greatest aid to Hague's campaign has resulted from the pusillanimous conduct of the leadership of the New Jersey CIO. They renounced the fight on their own account and handed it over to liberal-Stalinist "civil liberties" bodies. The latter, as is their nature, debased the whole struggle to more or less meaningless court battles. Hague's plug-uglies wielded their clubs and blackjacks on the streets of Jersey City where the issue is really decided.

The high-placed comedians from Washington, who were assigned the task of restoring free speech in Hague's domain couldn't find their way to Journal Square and had no organised workers' force to protect them if they arrived. The publicity attending the intervention of Norman Thomas overshadowed one fact of paramount significance:

There was no organised force of Jersey City workers prepared to defend the meeting. But a Workers' Defence Guard, the one factor so far lacking, is precisely the factor necessary for the beginning of a real fight. Only the Workers' Defence Guard, surrounded by the sympathy and support of the workers' mass organisations, can smash incipient American fascism — for that is what Hagueism is — and safeguard the workers' rights in Jersey City.

### **Business interests behind Hague**

The experience of the past weeks have shown that Hagueism is capable of organising the entire apparatus of the city administration, its police and unofficial thugs, veteran's organisations, and all forces of reaction, together with a considerable section of the local population. It is likewise quite obvious that "business", which is the real beneficiary of Hague's antilabour campaign, is solidly behind him. It is not for nothing that Jersey City's official slogan is: "Everything for Business".

Under these circumstances, it is, to say the least, quite naive to imagine that individuals coming from the outside, or a few dozen, or even a few hundred people from New York, can seriously challenge the Hague reaction on its home ground and overthrow it. On the contrary, the sad fiasco of the comic-opera congressional heroes from Washington is proof that we are dealing here with something far more serious than the incidental and irrational actions of a local Führer. The failure to line up at least

the local CIO organisations for serious resistance, for the protection of speakers and of meetings, reduces any outside intervention in the situation to the status of a more or less meaningless sally, doomed to defeat in advance.

### **Publicity stunts helped Hague**

On the basis of the experiences of the past week, it can be said with certainty that all such adventuristic publicity stunts have only succeeded in playing into Hague's hands and strengthening his appeal to local prejudices against the "invasion" of outsiders. Speakers, and even groups from the outside can play an auxiliary and stimulating role in a serious struggle; provided only, however, that their intervention is based upon solid support of a section of the workers in Jersey City and that the brunt and burden of the fight is borne by organised workers and their defence squads. A serious challenge to Hagueism can only begin with a movement inside the ranks of the Jersey City trade unions for stern resistance to Hague and his hoodlums, official and unofficial. That is the lesson of Italy, Germany and Austria. Fascism fears no "scandal" and is not to be bluffed. It has to be beaten down.

It is not sufficient to denounce Hague as a violator of the Constitution and its Bill of Rights. These documents are sacred only for the dupes of capitalist propaganda, not for the real masters themselves. The workers in reality have only such rights as they are ready and able to defend with their own strength. Everything else under the subject of democratic rights is a lie. Hague, the authentic American fascist, answers all palaver with brutal force. For their part, the magnates of industry and finance, alarmed by labour's aggressiveness of the past few years, cannot fail to notice with satisfaction that all the arguments in court and all the pious sermons and editorials about the Constitution carry little weight against the fists and clubs of Hague's hoodlums. Force is the argument of the advance guard of American fascism. Woe to the workers of America if they do not learn in time to talk the same language!

### **A fight of national significance**

The fight against Hagueism has an extraordinary national significance insofar as it poses in all seriousness the problem of combating the beginnings of American fascism. It imposes on revolutionary militants, in the first place, the general task of widespread agitation for the formation of the workers' defence guards as the only way to combat fascism. Along with this must go thoroughgoing exposure of all illusions that people's front combinations, liberalistic wailings, and court struggles can seriously interfere with the advance of American fascism. It is necessary to explain to the workers, on the basis of European experience, that *if they do not fight fascism by their own organised*

*defence guards, fascism will crush the labour movement.*

In Jersey City, and in New Jersey generally, the main task of those who understand the problem and want to meet it realistically is to carry on an intensive agitation along this line, and to introduce resolutions to this effect in all labour organisations both AF of L and CIO, to which they have access. Revolutionary workers who are the only possible leaders of a fight to the finish against fascism will naturally take part, in the most energetic and courageous manner, in actual demonstrations against Hague.

### **Fight cannot be delegated**

But it would be adventuristic folly for them to substitute the numerically weak forces of the vanguard for the genuine mass struggle of the workers' organisations. It is worse than folly for the workers' organisations to "delegate" their fight for labour rights, which is their fight for existence, to lawyers, grandstanding congressmen, "civil liberties experts" and the rest of the publicity seeking, windbag fraternity. This is labour's own fight. Only the workers, organised and steeled for physical combat, can stand up against fascist reaction and defeat it in New Jersey and on a national scale.

Bourgeois democracy, already obsolete in most of Europe, is also approaching its twilight in America with the decline and decay of American capitalism. The fate of America, like that of the rest of the world, will be decided in the oncoming struggle between fascism and the workers' revolution. The Jersey City events signalise the opening skirmishes of this grandiose struggle. ■

# **‘An advance scout of the American capitalist class’**

*By Leon Trotsky*

In the last few days I read a French book written by an Italian worker about the rise of fascism in Italy. The writer is opportunistic. He was a socialist, but it is not his conclusions which are interesting but the facts which he presents. He gives the picture of the Italian proletariat in 1920-21 especially. It was a powerful organisation. They had 160 socialist parliamentary deputies. They had more than one-third of the communities in their hands — the most important sections of Italy were in the hands of the socialists, the centre of the power of the workers. No capitalist could hire or fire without union consent, and this applied to agricultural workers as well as industrial. It seemed to be 49% of the dictatorship of the proletariat; but the reaction of the small bourgeoisie, the demobilised officers, was terrible against this situation. Then the author tells how they organised small bands under the guidance of officers and sent them in buses in every direction. In cities of 10,000 in the hands of the socialists, 30 organised men came into the town, burned up the municipal buildings, burned the houses, shot the leaders, imposed on them the conditions of working for capitalists; then they went elsewhere and repeated the same in hundreds and hundreds of towns, one after the other. With these systematic acts of terror they totally destroyed the trade unions and thus became bosses of Italy. They were a tiny minority.

The workers declared a general strike. The fascists sent their buses and destroyed every local strike, and with a small organised minority, wiped out the workers' organisations. After this came elections, and the workers, under the terror, elected the

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Excerpts from a June 7, 1938 discussion between Trotsky and leaders of the US Socialist Workers Party in the leadup to the founding conference of the Fourth International in September of that year. For the full text see Trotsky, *The Transitional Program and the Struggle for Socialism* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1999).

same number of deputies. They protested in parliament until it was dissolved. That is the difference between formal and actual power. All the deputies were sure that they would have power, yet this tremendous movement with its spirit of sacrifice was smashed, crushed, abolished, by some 10,000 fascists, well organised, with a spirit of sacrifice, and good military leaders.

In the United States it might be different, but the fundamental tasks are the same. I read about the tactics of Hague. It is a rehearsal of a fascist overthrow. He represents small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened. He has his gang, which is absolutely unconstitutional. This is very, very contagious. With the deepening of the crisis it will spread all over the country, and Roosevelt, who is a very good democrat, will say, "Perhaps it is the only solution".

It was the same in Italy. They had a minister who invited the socialists. The socialists refused. He admitted the fascists. He thought he could balance them against the socialists, but they smashed the minister too. Now I think the example of New Jersey is very important. We should utilise everything, but this especially. I will propose a special series of articles on how the fascists became victorious. We can become victorious the same way, but we must have a small armed body with the support of the big body of workers. We must have the best disciplined, organised workers, defence committees, otherwise we will be crushed; and I believe that our comrades in the United States don't realise the importance of this question. A fascist wave can spread in two or three years, and the best workers' leaders will be lynched in the worst possible way, like the Negroes in the South. I believe that the terror in the United States will be the most terrible of all. That is why we must begin very modestly, that is, with defence groups, but it should be launched immediately.

**Question:** How do we go about launching the defence groups practically?

**Trotsky:** It is very simple. Do you have a picket line in a strike? When the strike is over we say we must defend our union by making this picket line permanent.

**Question:** Does the party itself create the defence group with its own members?

**Trotsky:** The slogans of the party must be placed in quarters where we have sympathisers and workers who will defend us. But a party cannot create an independent defence organisation. The task is to create such a body in the trade unions. We must have these groups of comrades with very good discipline, with good, cautious leaders, not easily provoked, because such groups can be provoked easily. The main task for the next year would be to avoid conflicts and bloody clashes. We must reduce them to a minimum with a minority organisation during strikes, during peaceful times. In order to prevent fascist meetings it is a question of the relationship of forces. We alone are not strong, but we propose a united front.

Hitler explains his success in his book. The Social-Democracy was extremely powerful. To a meeting of the Social-Democracy he sent a band with Rudolf Hess. He says that at the end of the meeting his 30 boys evicted all the workers and they were incapable of opposing them. Then he knew he would be victorious. The workers were organised only to pay dues. No preparation at all for other tasks. Now we must do what Hitler did except in reverse. Send 40 to 50 men to dissolve the meeting. This has tremendous importance. The workers become steeled, fighting elements. They become trumpets. The petty bourgeoisie think these are serious people. Such a success! This has tremendous importance as so much of the populace is blind, backward, oppressed, they can be aroused only by success. We can arouse only the vanguard, but this vanguard must then arouse the others. That is why, I repeat, it is a very important question. In Minneapolis, where we have very skilled, powerful comrades, we can begin and show the entire country.

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We mentioned in the discussion that Mr. Hague is not some stupid old man who imagines some medieval system exists in his town. He is an advance scout of the American capitalist class.

Jack London wrote a book, *The Iron Heel*. I recommend it now. It was written in 1907. At that time it seemed a terrible dream, but now it is absolute reality. He gives the development of the class struggle in the United States, with the capitalist class retaining power through terrible repressions. It is a picture of fascism. The ideology he gives even corresponds with Hitler. It is very interesting.

In Newark the mayor begins to imitate Hague, and they are all inspired by Hague and by the big bosses. It is absolutely certain that Roosevelt will observe that now in the crisis he can do nothing with democratic means. He is not a fascist, as the Stalinists claimed in 1932. But his initiative will be paralysed. What can he do? The workers are dissatisfied. The big bosses are dissatisfied. He can only manoeuvre until the end of his term and then say goodbye. A third term for Roosevelt is absolutely excluded.

The imitation of [Hague by] the Newark mayor has tremendous importance. In two or three years you can have a powerful fascist movement of American character. What is Hague? He has nothing to do with Mussolini or Hitler, but he is an American fascist. Why is he aroused? Because the society can no longer be run by democratic means.

It would of course be impermissible to fall into hysteria. The danger of the working class being outrun by events is indisputable, but we can combat this danger only by energetic, systematic development of our own activity, under adequate revolutionary

slogans and not by fantastic efforts to spring over our own heads.

Democracy is only the rule of big bosses. We must understand well what Lundberg showed in his book, that 60 families govern the United States. But how? By democratic means up until today. They are a small minority surrounded by middle classes, the petty bourgeoisie, workers. They must have the possibility of interesting the middle classes in this society. They must not be desperate. The same holds true for the workers. At least for the higher strata. If they are opposed they can break the revolutionary possibilities of the lower strata, and this is the only way of [making democracy work].

The democratic regime is the most aristocratic way of ruling. It is possible only for a rich nation. Every British democrat has nine or 10 slaves working in the colonies. The antique Greek society was a slave democracy. The same in a certain sense can be said of British democracy, Holland, France, Belgium. The United States has no direct colonies, but they have Latin America, and the whole world is a sort of colony for the United States — not to speak about appropriating the richest continent and developing without a feudal tradition. It is a historically privileged nation, but the privileged capitalist nations differ from the most “pariah” capitalist nations only from the point of view of delay. Italy, the poorest of the great capitalist nations, became fascist first. Germany was second because Germany has no colonies or rich subsidiary countries, and on this poor base exhausted all the possibilities; and the workers could not replace the bourgeoisie. Now it is the turn of the United States — even before Great Britain or France.

The duty of our party is to seize every American worker and shake him 10 times so he will understand what the situation is in the United States. That is not a conjunctural crisis but a social crisis. Our party can play a very great role. What is difficult for a young party in a very thick atmosphere of previous traditions, hypocrisy, is to launch a revolutionary slogan. “It is fantastic”, “not adequate in America” — but it is possible that this will change by the time you launch the revolutionary slogans of our program. Somebody will laugh. But revolutionary courage is not only to be shot but to endure the laughter of stupid people who are in the majority. But when one of them is beaten by Hague’s gang, he will think it is good to have a defence committee, and his ironic attitude will change. ■



## **Section III**

# **Depression-Era Struggles Against Fascism**





From left to right:  
*Francis E. Townshend, Gerald L.K. Smith and Charles E. Coughlin at convention of Union Party in 1936. Shortly before, Coughlin had shed his coat and dog collar while making a fiery speech.*

One of the fascist groups which developed in the 1930s was the German-American Bund, a pro-Nazi organisation of Germans living in the US formed in 1936. Led by Fritz Kuhn, it claimed 25,000 members and 8000 “stormtroopers”; it advocated antisemitism, anticommunism and US neutrality in any European conflict. However, its potential support was limited by its crude imitation of Nazism; and its direct identification with Germany led many to view it as unpatriotic. It was outlawed after US entry into World War II.

On February 20, 1939 the Bund attempted to hold a mass fascist rally at New York’s Madison Square Garden. As the first article in this section reports, the SWP took the initiative to organise a protest demonstration. Despite opposition by labour, liberal, social-democratic, Stalinist and mainstream leaders, the countermobilisation was a spectacular success.

Other articles in this section take up the question of whether such countermobilisations are an attack on the fascists’ supposed right of free speech and assembly. The SWP pointed out that this was hardly the issue, but rather how to energetically defend the concrete rights of the working class against the fascist movement which wanted to eliminate them.

One of the central elements of the SWP’s propaganda and agitation against fascism was the call for the labour movement to form workers’ defence guards to protect its meetings and activities against fascist attacks. A number of articles here take up this question.

# 50,000 Anti-Nazis Answer

## SWP Call

### 1780 La Guardia Cops Protect Nazis from Workers' Wrath in Brutal Attack on Demonstrators

An imposing, fighting demonstration of 50,000 workers assembled near Madison Square Garden on Monday evening to protest the first big fascist mobilisation in New York City.

In addition to the 50,000 demonstrators who responded to the call of the Socialist Workers party for a labour rally against the fascist concentration, official police estimates given to the press counted another 50,000 among the spectators. With few exceptions, the latter made clear their sympathy with the aims and slogans of the demonstrating thousands. With a brutality recalling the days of tsarist Cossacks, 1780 of Mayor La Guardia's police, the largest number of cops ever collected in the city against a single demonstration, slugged and trampled under horses' hooves scores of workers in an unsuccessful attempt to break up the demonstration. From 6pm until 11, the workers engaged in a series of bitter clashes with police. The size of the workers' counterdemonstration far exceeded the expectations of even the most optimistic.

Efforts had been made on all hands, prior to the Nazi meeting, to minimise the significance of the call issued by the Socialist Workers party, to smother it by a campaign of silence, and to sabotage it directly.

Supercilious critics of the "Trotskyists" in the social-democratic camp sought to dispose of the counterdemonstration by ridicule and disdainful talk of our alleged insignificance. Neither the Socialist party of Norman Thomas nor the Social-Democratic Federation would take any cognisance of the call for the demonstration, much less endorse it. They were nowhere to be found in the demonstration.

### CP role despicable

The Stalinists played a particularly despicable role, which aroused widespread bewilderment and confusion in their own ranks, which contain thousands of workers who really want to fight against fascism.

On the day of the demonstration, all that the *Daily Worker* had to say was its report of a speech in favour of democracy by acting Mayor Newbold Morris. Not a single word about the “Trotskyists” or their call. It would have been a little embarrassing even to such brazen pen-slaves as Stalin employs in New York to write, on this occasion, diatribes against the “Trotsky-fascists”!

As for the Monday edition of the *Freiheit*, Yiddish organ of the Stalinists, it solved the whole annoying problem by not printing one line about the Nazi demonstration or about the counterdemonstration. It just shoved its head into a deep pile of sand.

The three other Jewish daily papers in New York City, the conservative *Morning Journal*, the “progressive” *Day*, and the social-democratic *Forward* — united in printing virtually the same news stories and editorials, using, in all cases, the same arguments and in many cases even the same words. Instead of a call to the Jewish workers to demonstrate against their sworn enemies, the fascists, they joined hands in a snivelling, cowardly appeal to their readers to do anything in the world Monday evening — go to the movies, stay at home, go to the mountains or the seashore — anything except go to the anti-Nazi demonstration.

### Morris' radio appeal

Acting Mayor Newbold Morris issued a special last minute appeal to the population of New York City to stay away from our rally.

“Information has come to me”, said this pompous professional democrat, “that some citizens, indignant at tonight’s Bund meeting at Madison Square Garden, are planning to be present at or about the Garden entrance to express displeasure. In the interest of public order, I want to urge all citizens having no business at the meeting to remain away from the Garden and its immediate vicinity.”

This statement, broadcast on the radio before the meeting and of course prominently featured later by the *Daily Worker*, was calculated to reduce the demonstration called by the SWP to an insignificant handful of individuals who could be dispersed by the army of cops with a wave of the hand.

Yet, in spite of this imposing array of sabotaging talent from the ranks of the fireside “democrats” whose efforts were supplemented by the repeated emphasis given in the capitalist press to the fact that, as the *World-Telegram* put it, “neither the Socialist Party nor the Communist Party in this city had announced up to this morning

(Monday) any intention to demonstrate or otherwise take cognisance of the meeting”, and that “only” the Trotskyists would be there — thousands of New York workers began converging upon Madison Square Garden even before 6 o’clock in the evening, that is, more than two hours before the Nazi meeting was scheduled to open!

It goes without saying that they were not Trotskyists, these thousands who, by 8 o’clock, reached enormous proportions. But their presence around the Garden, in response to the appeal of a comparatively small organisation, showed that the Socialist Workers party had correctly gauged the sentiments of the best sections of the New York working class.

### **Rank & file comes**

Rank-and-file Stalinists, perplexed and irritated by the criminal sabotage of their officialdom, but nevertheless determined to demonstrate “unofficially” against the Nazis, whom they realise to be the menace they are, came to our rally by the thousands.

No less gratifying was the fact that one of the banners borne in the demonstration signified that the youth organisation of the Thomasite Socialist Party had come to the anti-Nazi rally in spite of the shabby indifference of the party elders.

Equally inspiring was the contingent of Negro workers who came spontaneously to the tumultuous gathering, bearing their own posters and placards, including one signed by the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

### **Squadrons move on Garden**

By 6 pm the first organised squadron of members of the Socialist Workers party and Young People’s Socialist League (4th International) left from a central assembly point for the Garden area. It was followed in swift succession by three other squadrons — each assigned to a specific concentration point.

Upon their arrival, they found what the *New York Times* subsequently described as a wall of cops, in uniform, in plain clothes and mounted, “who made of Madison Square Garden an almost impregnable fortress to anti-Nazis”.

The Garden was blocked off for blocks around in all four directions. Traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian, was detoured in the most elaborate way.

### **Cops versus workers**

Nobody was allowed to penetrate the solid wall of cops who was not in possession of a ticket to the Nazi meeting, purchased in advance. The smallest gathering of workers, even of ordinary passers-by, was instantaneously broken up by the cops in order to prevent a concentration.

But in spite of all their efforts, thousands of workers from all parts of greater New York did begin to collect along the streets immediately outside the blocked-off quadrangle — primarily on 48th Street on the south and 51st Street on the north, pressing in both cases towards 8th Avenue, on which the main entrance to the Garden is located.

### **Thousands cheer SWP**

The placards and posters of the Socialist Workers party were uplifted amid the cheers of thousands. Almost simultaneously, on both streets, which by this time were choked to capacity by huge crowds reaching from Broadway to 8th Avenue, a spontaneous drive was launched to get through the police lines and into the immediate Garden area.

Action began on 48th Street. From the corner of 8th Avenue where a solid line of mounted cops was stationed, stirrup to stirrup, they made a furious attack on the assembled demonstrators. Moving in both directions, one group of cops trampled down a throng of patriotic war veterans and cut their American flag to ribbons, while another group smashed brutally into the mass of workers.

### **Masses reform ranks**

Although the Cossacks made repeated sallies into the workers' crowd, the mass formed and reformed, stoutly determined to hold their own until they gathered sufficient strength to exercise their right to assemble and to picket whether the cops granted it or not.

Meanwhile, 51st Street was jammed from Broadway to 8th Avenue with a crowd so densely packed together that it was virtually impassable. Just as close a line of Cossacks stood at the 8th Avenue end, backed by hundreds of police on foot. The forward surge of the workers bent that line over and over again but did not succeed in breaking through.

### **Defence guards needed**

It was evident, especially at this point, that even a large gathering of workers cannot easily attain its objective unless these workers have been organised thoroughly in advance and trained to act in sharp coordination. It was evident, in other words, that for the complete success of such a demonstration a militant, organised workers' defence guard is indispensable.

The fury of the workers increased with every minute. They kept shouting angrily at the Cossacks, and booed them for every vicious plunge into the crowd.

“Down with the Nazi terrorists!” they roared the cry of the Socialist Workers party.

“We demand the right to picket!” they shouted.

Surrounded by an unbreakable phalanx, one SWP speaker after another, lifted on the shoulders of huskies, made terse and militant speeches to the workers, who cheered so lustily that they could be heard, literally, for blocks away.

Max Shachtman, editor of the *Socialist Appeal*, was the first to speak. He pointed out that the La Guardia administration, elected to office by the vote of New York labour, was showing an amazing concern over the so-called “democratic rights” of the Nazi assassins to hold a mobilisation meeting which was an insult and a provocation to the working people of the city. The same administration, however, which gave such unprecedented police protection to the fascist gang, was using the police to deprive the workers of *their* democratic rights, notably the right to assemble and to picket — rights supposedly guaranteed by the Constitution and by several decisions of the Federal and Supreme courts.

He warned the workers of New York against being caught asleep in the struggle against fascism, as was the case in so many countries of Europe. It *can* happen here, he cried, but it will be too late to stop it when the concentration camps are being filled. His appeal for the workers’ defence guards as protection against fascist assaults, so strikingly underscored by the conduct of New York’s “democratic” police, was enthusiastically hailed by the crowd.

Shachtman was followed by other spokesmen of the party. The speakers included James Burnham, Martin Abern, manager of the *New International*, Nathan Gould, National Secretary of the YPSL, B.J. Widick, the party’s labour secretary, Bill Morgan, leading militant in the unemployed movement, Richard Ettlinger, prominent among the progressive office workers, Paul G. Stevens, Irving Pankin of the YPSL, and numerous others.

## Parade down Broadway

Suddenly, after having stood their ground for three hours, the workers veered around upon the signal of the demonstration’s spokesman and marched down the street in a tremendous column for a parade down Broadway.

It is a long time since New York’s most famous avenue has seen such a militant, vociferous, determined, and large working-class parade. The police, concentrated around the Garden, were so scattered along Broadway that they did not even attempt to halt the parade.

Shouting their slogans as they marched along the almost equally crowded sidewalks,

the paraders, led by the banner-bearers of the Socialist Workers party, turned south from 51st Street and, after reaching 42nd Street with unbroken ranks numbering thousands, moved west to 8th Avenue again. At that point, the marchers turned north and proceeded in the direction of the Garden, which is located between 49th and 50th Streets.

### Cops attack

Just as the head of the march reached 47th Street, it ran smack into a newly-formed line of cops. Without a word of warning, they plunged into the parade, mounted cops in the lead, with rows of foot cops behind them. The horses were driven straight into the ranks of the marchers, first in the centre of the street and then on the sidewalks. Shop windows were shattered to smithereens, and workers wounded by jagged splinters. Others went down under the horses, as is so graphically revealed by the sensational photographs which were published in the press. Clubs were drawn and swung freely and viciously.

This was not in tsarist Moscow, in Hitler's Berlin or Mussolini's Rome. No! This took place in the domain of "democratic" New York, under the administration of "progressive" Mayor La Guardia, successful candidate of the American Labor Party in the last election!

Notwithstanding the assault, the lines of the march were still reformed. The parade turned down 47th Street and proceeded once more to Broadway. There a fresh attempt was made to organise a meeting at the Duffy Monument. But another police concentration was on hand and a violent struggle ensued.

The workers refused to be shoved around. They had seen many of their comrades seriously injured and beaten. When the police sought to disperse the marchers, they encountered the stiffest resistance.

### March terminates

Finally, after breaking through the police line, the crowd drove through to 49th Street, where the march was terminated by an announcement from an SWP speaker whom the police, helplessly trying to break through the firm block of workers, sought in vain to reach so that he could be torn down from the taxicab he had mounted in order to address the marchers.

As the militants disbanded, along about midnight, the Tuesday edition of the *Daily Worker* appeared on the street. Unbelievable as it sounds, while the Stalinist sheet had a report of what went on inside the Garden at the Nazi meeting, it did not even mention the fact that there had been tens of thousands of workers gathered near

the Garden in a stormy, anti-Nazi protest meeting! From its report, one would conclude that the Nazis held their mobilisation undisturbed by the presence of a single worker. The encouragingly huge protest demonstration, the police brutality, prominently featured by every capitalist newspaper, was deliberately and completely suppressed by the Stalinist paper!

### **Stalinists sabotaged**

But that incredibly stupid device will not save Browder and Co. from giving an accounting to their members as well as the workers in general. Everybody in and around New York knows about the demonstration, who initiated, sponsored, and led it. Everybody knows that the Stalinists sabotaged it from first to last. And thousands, including rank-and-file Stalinists of the party and the Young Communist League, are so disturbed by this policy, so ashamed of it, that they will demand an answer to the question that is being asked on all sides.

Meanwhile, the answer to the bigger question — how to fight fascism? — was given in thunderous tones by the magnificent demonstration which reached its highest note on the cry: workers' defence guards to crush the fascist danger! ■

# Should Fascists Be Allowed the Right of Free Speech?

**A working-class point of view on the question that was brought to the fore again by the professional democrats when the Nazis mobilised at the Garden**

It seems that the only point of importance that the professional liberals and democrats could see in the big mobilisation of the Nazis at Madison Square Garden last week, was their “right of free speech and assembly”.

Mayor La Guardia kept reiterating emphatically that his attachment to democracy compelled him to grant the fascists the right to hold their meeting and provide them with extraordinary police protection.

The American Civil Liberties Union rushed into print to insist that the right of free speech be extended to the Hitlerites.

One of the numerous committees of the Jewish bourgeoisie, anxious to demonstrate that it loves fairness above all else, did likewise.

Even the wretched little Jewish anarchist weekly published in New York indignantly reproached the Trotskyists for the lack of sense in “demanding the right of free speech and assembly for oneself and at the same time trying to prevent the freedom of speech of our opponents ...”

## **Freedom for Nazis but not for pickets**

Before going further into the consideration of the question of “free speech for fascists”, it is interesting and important to record the fact that all the above-mentioned who showed such touching concern for the “democratic rights” of the Nazis, are entirely unconcerned with the brutal police suppression of the picketing rights of the workers

who assembled outside the Garden.

The Mayor simply refused to see a delegation which came to protest against the violence of the police who rode down and slugged the picketers.

The American Civil Liberties Union, apparently exhausted by its noble efforts in behalf of the Nazis, didn't utter a peep about the democratic rights of free speech, assembly and picketing being denied the 50,000 antifascists who came to protest the Nazi rally. Ditto for the Jewish committee.

As for the anarchists' *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, it says not a word about the police assaults, but villainously insinuates that the terrible Trotskyists were really at fault because, Mr. Police Commissioner, they planned a violent attack on the Nazis who were innocently celebrating Washington's Birthday. Unbelievable, but here are its exact words:

But there are times when people who endeavour to do social work must reflect 10 times, 100 times, before they come out with an appeal for acts of violence.

### What the problem really involves

The question of "democratic rights for the Nazis" cannot be resolved on the basis of liberal phrasemongers. All such a discussion can produce is a bewildering tangle of words and abstractions. At a more decisive stage, as all recent experience has proved, it produces a first class disaster not only for the working class but also for the professional liberals and democrats themselves.

How many of them, indeed, are there in the concentration camps, in prison and in exile who are continuing the thoroughly futile and abstract discussion over whether or not the fascist gangsters should be granted the "democratic rights of free speech and assembly"!

And what is most decisive — this is the point which leads us directly to a solution of the problem that seems to agitate so many people — is the fact that in Italy, in Germany, in Austria, in Czechoslovakia, in Spain, the democrats were so concerned with preserving the "rights" of the fascists that they concentrated all their attacks and repressive measures upon those workers and those labour organisations which sought to conduct a militant struggle against the fascists and for the preservation and extension of their truly democratic rights and institutions.

It is when the bourgeois "democrats" like Giolitti in Italy and Brüning in Germany, had done all in their power to smash the most progressive and active sections of the working class — as La Guardia and his police tried to do on a smaller scale in New York last week — that the fascists concluded successfully their march to totalitarian power. Whoever forgets this important lesson from abroad, is a fool. Whoever tries to keep

others ignorant of this lesson, is a rogue.

### A simple example

Let us take a simple example which every worker has experienced dozens of times.

A strike is called. The authorities promptly jump into the situation in order to protect the “democratic rights” of the scabs and the company gunmen who guard them. The “right to work” of the scab, which is guaranteed by the capitalist government, amounts in reality to his “right” to starve out the striking workers and reduce them to helpless pawns of the employers.

Millions of workers have learned the futility and deceptiveness of the academic discussion of the scab’s “democratic rights”, as well as of appealing to the government and its police to “arbitrate” the dispute involved. They try to solve the question, as they must, *in the course of struggle*. The workers throw their picket-lines around the struck plant. The conflict between the scab’s “right” to break a strike and the workers’ right to live, is also *settled* in the course of struggle — in favour of those who plan better, organise better, and fight better.

### Same rule applies on broader scene

The same rule applies in the struggle against the much bigger scab movement that fascism represents.

The workers who spend all their time and energy in the abstract discussion of the Nazi’s “democratic rights” — to say nothing of working themselves into a lather in defence of these “rights” — will end their discussion under a fascist club in a concentration camp.

The workers who delude themselves and waste their time begging the capitalist democrats in office to “act” against the fascists, will end up in the same place, just as the workers of Italy, Germany, and Austria did.

The workers have more vital concerns. They are and should be interested in defending and expanding their democratic rights. But not in any abstract sense. These rights are the concrete rights of free speech, assembly, press, the right to organise, strike, and picket, without which an independent working class simply cannot exist.

A decaying capitalism — of which fascism is only a natural product — seeks constantly to restrict and destroy these rights, which are not truly genuine even in “normal” times. These rights can only be defended from the assaults of capitalism and its ugly offspring, fascism, in the same way in which they were first acquired: by the tireless, aggressive, unbending, independent struggle of the working class.

The wailing and weeping about the Nazi’s “rights” can safely be left to the prissy

liberals and the phony democrats.

The self-preservation of the working class demands that it cut through all abstract chatter and smash the fascist gangs by decisive and relentless action. ■

**Socialist Appeal**  
 Official Organ of the Socialist Workers Party, Section of the Fourth International  
 David Tuley, Editor

1000  
 New Subscribers  
 By April 1st!

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# 50,000 ANTI-NAZIS ANSWER S.W.P. CALL

## AT THE GARDEN PICKET LINE



Max Shachtman, officer of the SOCIALIST APPEAL, addressing a RALLY of the cops (shown this journal) 7th Street on Monday night in the ongoing demonstration, led by the Socialist Workers Party against the Fascist Madison Square Garden meeting.

### 1,780 LaGuardia Cops Protect Nazis from Workers' Wrath in Brutal Attack on Demonstrators

An inspiring, fighting demonstration of fifty thousand workers assembled near Madison Square Garden on Monday evening to protest the first big fascist exhibition in New York City.

In addition to the fifty thousand demonstrators who responded to the call of the Socialist Workers Party for a labor rally against the fascist procession, individual police officers joined in the past several months: fifty thousand among the picketers. With few exceptions, the latter made their show separately with the same end and slogan of the demonstrating thousands. With a fanfare recalling the days of Carrie Cassock's

### NAZIS CHEER NEW YORK COPS FOR CLUBBING OF PICKET LINES

"History Is Written, Not in Ink; But in Blood!" Declares Jew-Baiting Swastika Leader

When Fritz Kuhn, leader of the German American Bund, led his 1,780 men in Madison Square Garden Monday evening, he thanked "New York's best," the police department, for the splendid protection of his group. His thanks were shared in the largest and loudest ovation of the evening, the Nazi swastika waving and applauding the police department valiantly.

Outside on the avenue, New York's "best" was clapping when the workers who had come to exercise their right to picket the fascist meeting.

**Jew-Baiting Trends**  
 "History is not written in ink," said Fritz Kuhn, but written in blood. The Nazi leader had long been berating, berating, bludgeoning his followers to more and more virulent anti-Semitism. "It will take more than words to suppress anti-Semitism. We are preparing our own virulent biological international Communist Jewry extermination!"

The climax of the meeting came under the lead of Fritz Kuhn, who declared the "We are not afraid of the Jews" slogan.

**Arrest, Beat 5 For Picketing**  
 The workers were arrested...

Socialist Appeal reports on huge February 20, 1939 anti-Nazi demonstration in New York.

# Comrade Cross Invents a Problem

*By Felix Morrow*

I have carefully read and reread Comrade Cross' article, "The Relationship Between Free Speech and the Proletarian Revolution" [see the same number of the *Bulletin*]. I regret that it is not a fruitful contribution to analysing the new problems concretely raised by the slogan of workers' defence guards. That slogan does raise important new problems. Comrade Cross has, however, simply invented a nonexistent problem; he has done so, as I shall show, in order to propagate an historical interpretation of the Thermidorean reaction in Soviet Russia which is alien to the Trotskyist explanation of the degeneration of the workers' state in Russia. The free speech "problem" invented by him serves merely as a springboard for a false historical theory. Comrade Cross is within his rights in raising any and all questions during the pre-convention discussion. But the main body of his article is an argument against a straw man, for it is *not* true that the party "denies free speech to fascists"; while the real logical motivation of his article — the enunciation of an anti-Trotskyist explanation of the degeneration of the proletarian dictatorship in Russia — is simply asserted without a word of argument or proof.

Comrade Cross writes: "The current articles in the press of the SWP have unambiguously pledged that party to most violent action in smashing the fascists and in denying them the right to speak. A more thoughtful leadership would simply agitate to smash the fascists, and leave the question of their right to speak alone. The arguments used are: that the avowed object of the fascists is to smash all democratic rights. They would deny us the right to speak, put us in concentration camps and shoot us. Consequently, why should they be allowed free speech?"

Where did Comrade Cross find the *Socialist Appeal* saying that fascists should not be allowed to speak? He cites no issues and pages of the *Appeal* — and with good reason, for he could find no such citations. Yet he blandly reports the *Appeal's* arguments

for this nonexistent position.

A very fruitful discussion can be had on the extremely delicate problems connected with calling upon the workers to fight against the fascists: when to speak purely in defensive terms, and when to go over to terms indicating an offensive against the fascists. For the moment, it is clear, political realities — the speedy growth of the fascists, our own weakness — dictate defensive terms. A warning must also be given to the party against a too-technical conception of the formation of workers' defence guards: unless the guards are merely the first ranks, carrying with them nonparty and nonguard elements in their actions, we shall find ourselves defeating the real purpose for mobilising the guards: getting the masses to move with us. We must also convince the party membership — and above all the youth — that the guard is a practical, feasible, and pressing task. These and other problems deserve discussion. But not this invention of Comrade Cross.

It has long been clearly thought out, in the Bolshevik movement, where we stand on the question of free speech. First of all, "free speech" belongs to the category of "civil liberties". Let those who will, engage in this activity — we certainly don't denounce the *existence* of the American Civil Liberties Union — but the task of the revolutionist and of the working class and its allies is the fight for the *democratic rights of the working class*.

From the concept of "civil liberties", the American Civil Liberties Union logically arrives at the point of offering its services to fascists who in isolated instances run afoul of a progressive mayor or police chief. What do we say about such actions of the ACLU? We say: for every fascist persecuted by the state, 10,000 workers are persecuted. We are ready to tell the ACLU of more cases of workers' rights being violated than the ACLU can possibly handle. The ACLU knows this as well as we. But the ACLU is so anxious to prove its respectability, so fawningly worried about the good opinion of bosses and their stooges, that the ACLU takes good money and lawyers that might be used to help persecuted workers, and diverts it to the use of the fascists.

This concrete criticism of the ACLU does not involve a denial of free speech to the fascists. Moreover, is it our business to tell the capitalist state what to do about the fascists, to please give them free speech? Not at all. We give advice only to the workers, and we call upon them to fight fascism. The only point at which we will suppress the free speech of the fascists is only in the broad sense that, in carrying out the seizure of state power, we shall undoubtedly have to smash the fascist organisations and suppress the fascist cadres. ■

# Resolution on Workers' Defence Guard

1. The collapse of the New Deal, and the insuperable, ever-mounting internal conflicts of United States capitalism are beginning to pose more and more directly to the US bourgeoisie the necessity for abandoning parliamentary democracy and resorting to fascism as the sole means for preserving its power and privilege; and these same factors simultaneously open the minds of large numbers among the unemployed, farmers, middle classes and demoralised proletarians to fascist demagogy and organisation.
2. Recent months have witnessed a profound transformation in the character of the fascist movement in the United States. Before this, it had been confined largely to individual cranks, eccentrics, and dilettante intellectuals, and "foreign" groups such as the various Italian fascist societies and the Nazi Bund. Now, for the first time, it is becoming a serious, native, mass movement. In the first stage of this transformation, the Coughlinites in the big cities, and to a lesser extent the Silver Shirts in the farming areas and smaller towns, are playing a major role. Whatever may be the eventual fate of these two particular groups, and whatever may be the episodic rises and declines of the fascist movement as a whole, it is certain to grow in extent and depth until its sources have been rooted out. This can be accomplished by nothing short of the social revolution.

## Immediate problem

3. The transformation of the fascist movement dictates the transformation of the methods of defence against it. Theoretical analysis and abstract propaganda, to which specifically antifascist activities had to be more or less confined so long as fascism in this country remained primarily a threat for the future, become altogether

inadequate when fascism has become a reality of the present.

4. The long-term defence against fascism can be only the achievement of the social revolution. Meanwhile, however, there is the immediate and direct problem of the physical defence of the organisation, lives, and liberties of the workers, which the fascists aim first to weaken and then to destroy, from the physical assaults of the fascist gangs. The experience of all countries, including the United States, proves beyond any doubt whatever that the agencies of the bourgeois-democratic state will not and cannot carry out this defence; but that on the contrary, reliance upon these agencies guarantees the smashing of the workers and the victory of the fascists. Only the workers themselves, relying on their own means and strength, can defend their own organisations and life and liberties. The only possible form of defence against the fascists is the workers' defence guard. Whereas, formerly, the workers' defence guard has been primarily a slogan for agitation, the point has now been reached, and more than reached when the concrete task of the actual building of the workers' defence guard must begin in action.
5. The workers' defence guard is, from one point of view, an outgrowth and development of the picket squads used by virtually all unions in strikes. From the beginning, however, the defence guard differs in key respects from the picket squad. The guard is permanent, whereas the picket squads are usually created only for the duration of the strike. The duties of the guard are not merely picketing, defence against scabs, etc., but at all times the defence of the headquarters and rights of the union and its members. Moreover, the tasks of the guard must be conceived, from the start, not in narrow terms of the given single union which may be first involved, but of the labour movement as a whole, and indeed of all groups, individuals, organisations, racial minorities, etc., threatened or attacked by the fascists, vigilantes or other reactionaries. The duty of the guard is to defend all who need defence from the assaults of the fascists. To carry out this duty, the guard must be trained and disciplined, and function democratically as an autonomous body. From a second point of view, the workers' defence guard is the preparation for the far broader organisation of the masses, with far greater tasks, which will in the future have the task of defending the masses against the counter-revolution.

### **Enlisting the unions**

6. From the nature of the workers' defence guard and its tasks, it follows that the guard should take form wherever possible through the established unions. Revolutionists within the unions must attempt to win the union members as a whole to a realisation of the necessity of the guard and must aim to have the

unions initiate the actual building of the guard. Where a union forms units of the guard, the aim must be from the beginning to extend the scope and base of the guard beyond the normal confines of union organisation and activity; by drawing into the guard unemployed, youth, and others who are not members of the union (and in many cases are not in a position to be members of any union), by linking up with other unions in the building of the guard, by establishing relations with the guard in other cities and by amplifying the types of activities undertaken by the guard.

7. In localities where it is at present impossible to enlist the established unions in the task of building the guard, it is now necessary, in addition to constant agitation for union initiative, to take concrete steps in the formation of the guard with what forces are available. Where such forces are meagre it would be an error to regard the group that can be formed as a workers' defence guard in the full sense; rather, since the genuine guard can be built only by enlisting the masses, are such groups skeletons or embryos of the guard. They cannot substitute their action for that of the masses, but must aim to win the masses especially in the trade unions to the task of building the guard, by adding on however a modest scale, the lesson of action and example to that of agitation. In New York City, Newark, and elsewhere, first steps have been taken along these lines by the formation of the Anti-Fascist Labour Guard.

### **United front action**

8. The struggle against fascism makes possible, and demands, the broadest possible united front. The essential requirements for membership in the defence guard must be formulated simply as a willingness to fight the fascists, to defend labour and other organisations and groups from the fascist and vigilante attacks, and to accept the democratic discipline of the guard. While taking every precaution to make sure of the integrity of every applicant and to preserve the guard from provocateurs, stoolpigeons, and irresponsible or light-minded elements, the effort must be made to enlist membership and support as broadly and widely as possible on this basis.
9. The significance of our party's advocacy and support of the guard is in no way limited to the specific and all-important tasks which the guard can and must fulfil. Advocacy and support of the guard is an integral and decisive part of the political program of our party and a political weapon of the utmost importance. Experience has already shown, and will more fully confirm in the future, that the slogan of building the guard meets with an immediate response from the best sections of

the workers and the youth, and concretises the whole meaning of our conception of the struggle against fascism in a manner accomplished by no other part of our program.

### **Supplementary motions**

1. The convention instructs the incoming national committee to appoint a special commission to be in charge of carrying out and coordinating on a national scale, the work of the party in connection with the building of the workers' defence guard. ■

# Proposals on Initiating Defence Guards

1. The general line of the workers' defence guard is laid down by our convention resolution which makes clear that we attempt to help in building a mass guard based upon the support of trade unions and other mass organisations.
2. The convention resolution also makes clear that we do not merely agitate and carry on literary propaganda for this idea, while waiting for the unions to take the lead in establishing the guard, but that at every available opportunity we utilise our available forces to set up nuclei of the future mass guard.
3. It is obvious that at the present time in New York no unions or other mass organisations are ready to initiate and support the organisation of a labour defence guard. These objective conditions dictate to us that we establish, as the immediate policy, a specialised type of activity in order to reach our objective by a flank movement as it were.
4. The New York guard will select two favourable neighbourhoods; one in the Bronx district, the other near the Flatbush district, and will "dig" themselves into these neighbourhoods in the following manner:
  - a. They will hold regular open air meetings under the auspices of the guard.
  - b. They will seek to establish relations with every single available trade unionist and contact in the neighbourhood with the view of eventually establishing relations with every single local union of the neighbourhood.
5. A speakers' bureau will be organised in an attempt to send special representatives of the guard to address the organisations above mentioned.
6. The guard will sponsor model resolutions which they will attempt to have their contacts and friends introduce in these organisations.

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These notes were attached to the SWP Political Committee minutes of July 25, 1939 and sent to all party branches.

7. The guard will organise as one of its central activities a well-planned and coordinated espionage system for the following purposes:
  - a. To gain full knowledge of the scope, character, and implications of all the groups adhering to the Coughlin movement, the Christian Front, and the other fascist groups.
  - b. To have full and accurate knowledge of all of the plans, moves and preparations of the enemy camp.
8. With the ground well prepared by this deliberate day-to-day work of establishing connections with union members, local union organisations, fraternal bodies, etc., and with the full knowledge of the ramifications of the enemy organisations, gained by the most painstaking efforts, the guard will be in a position to make a great drive to secure finances from numerous Jewish storekeepers and other sympathetic individuals, etc., to carry on its activities and counteract the propaganda of the Christian Mobilisers and the other fascists to “Buy Christian and boycott Jewish business!” etc., etc.
9. Using its knowledge of the plans of the enemy, the guard will attempt to contact the organisations in its neighbourhood, with whom it presumably has established close fraternal connections, in order to gain the support of these organisations for *mass actions* in defence of the democratic rights of labour, etc., to be conducted against the Coughlinites. The guard becomes thus not only an organisation of propaganda and agitation, but also an organisation of *action*. It must be understood, however, that we always carry on our actions on the basis of our ability to mobilise larger masses behind our aims and moves than simply the members of the guard nucleus or even of the party membership.
10. The guard will make preparations to publish a magazine to be written in a vivid and attractive style emphasising the nature of the guard organisation as one of action and aggressive opposition to the fascist movement.
11. Given the present numerical strength, the guard will dress in uniform only in inside meetings. A small band of uniformed men marching in the streets tends at the present time to antagonise and alienate people, rather than aiding the guard in its basic purpose of winning support for itself of larger strata of the population.
12. The guard is to emphasise its non-political character in all of its agitation and propaganda, and to stress that it is not a “subversive” organisation, but is an organisation protecting the democratic rights of the labour movement against the challenge of fascist dictatorship.
13. The guard is to carry on all of its present propaganda under defensive slogans, always *protecting* the rights of the workers, *defending* meetings from unjust

provocation or attack, etc.

14. The guard is to be governed in its organisation and practical work by a council with one coordinating officer, the organiser. ■

# Coughlin Delivers Fascist Blast Against Workers' Defence Guards

*By Joseph Hansen*

In a violent one-hour tirade last Sunday over his nationwide radio hookup, Father Coughlin attacked the formation of antifascist union guards, as if he feared that any minute they might mop up the fascist gangs he is organising.

Father Coughlin's attack was specifically directed against Harry Milton's proposal to Local 66 of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union that they organise antifascist union guards. Coughlin's attack on Milton should dispel the last doubt which might linger in anyone's mind that Father Coughlin is deliberately planning to introduce fascism in America.

This attack proves once and for all that Father Coughlin realises perfectly that antifascist union guards are the ONE FORCE which can stop him cold.

Father Coughlin began his bitter and slanderous attack against the formation of antifascist union guards by reading over the air a resolution which had been introduced in Local 66 of the ILGWU by one of its prominent members, Harry Milton.

## **Union guard resolution**

The resolution urges the ILGWU immediately to organise an antifascist union guard in order to defend itself from fascist groups and preserve the democratic rights and civil liberties of labour.

The resolution is now under consideration by the International Executive Board of the ILGWU.

Father Coughlin slandered Harry Milton throughout his entire period on the air, asserting that Milton "marched against the people of Spain" under the domination of the Stalinists.

### Milton's actual record

Harry Milton served with the Independent Labour Party contingent of the 29th Division of the Loyalist Army, heroically defending on the battlefields the Spanish workers against the attack of General Franco's fascist legions. Milton was arrested by the GPU Stalinist secret service — and imprisoned with hundreds of his fellow militiamen, anarchists, socialists, and other militants. Only by the narrowest of margins did he escape death at the hands of Stalin's GPU.

In introducing the resolution in Local 66 of the ILGWU which was attacked by Coughlin, Milton stated:

We must not wait until our own union is broken into and smashed by fascist gangs, as they will attempt tomorrow or the day after, but to stop the fascists now, wherever they attempt to deprive any workers or workers' organisation of its constitutional rights.

The Coughlin gangsters have already broken into a workers' headquarters — the Debs School — and have succeeded in breaking up numerous meetings of labour organisations in the city. Last week they tried to break up an American Labor Party meeting where Michael Quill, president of the Transport Workers Union, was the speaker. Fortunately, the transport workers were prepared.

A few weeks ago beside the above-mentioned attacks against labour, the Coughlinites knifed a school teacher on 14th Street in New York City and attempted to break into the headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party, knifing an antifascist who was on guard.

Father Coughlin fears the formation of antifascist labour guards more than any other single force which might attempt to stop him in his plans to thug his way to fascist power in America.

Only one thing could have broken our movement — if the adversary had understood its principle and from the first day had smashed, with the most extreme brutality, the nucleus of our movement. [Hitler]

If the enemy had known how weak we were, it would probably have smashed us to jelly ... It would have crushed in blood the very beginning of our work. [Goebbels]

Coughlin understands that the formation of antifascist union guards will prevent him from introducing fascism in America!

That is why he opposes the formation of antifascist union guards with such a deadly fear. ■

## **Section IV**

# **Antifascist Struggles at the End of World War II**





# Report on the Los Angeles Antifascist Campaign

*By Murry Weiss*

The first stage of the antifascist campaign launched by the Los Angeles Local on June 21 has been concluded. Now it is necessary to sum up a body of extraordinarily valuable experience. This experience is all the more precious in view of the inevitable development of the struggle against fascism on a broader scale in the period that lies immediately ahead.

American fascists, such as Gerald L.K. Smith, are already busy preparing for large-scale operations. They scurry up and down the country seeking concentration points. Their natural arena are the large population-swollen industrial centres such as Detroit and Los Angeles where monopoly capital is harried by present and future “labour troubles”. In these areas they try to build a mass base among the dislocated and discontented middle-class; the old-age pension movement, veterans groups, religious sects, etc.

In our analysis of the Smith movement, we must avoid exaggerations. To overestimate Smith’s present strength or to exaggerate his ties with big business in Southern California is in some respects as dangerous as the softheaded evaluation of Smith as a lunatic and an “inconsequential rabble-rouser”.

G.L.K. Smith, a typical product of the pioneer American fascist movements, came to Los Angeles to persuade big business in Southern California that he could be useful to them in settling accounts with the labour movement. For this purpose he had to show strength, dynamic abilities, a large movement. Has he succeeded in doing this? No doubt powerful elements among the rich farmers and capitalists toy with the idea of utilising Smith. But it is obvious that Smith has not yet been given the go-ahead signal and the necessary finances to accomplish his purpose. Our analysis of Smith’s

campaign and his tactics must proceed from this premise — he seeks to make a show of strength.

He seeks to impress the big powers with his potentialities as an organiser of anti-union combat forces and with his skill in manipulating race antagonisms and provoking race riots.

The ranks of labour in Los Angeles are swollen with new recruits from the deep South, both Negro and white. Large masses of reactionary middle-class elements are mobilised in and around Los Angeles by the very process of the war. The zoot suit riots, carefully studied by the fascists, gave an indication of how soldiers and sailors could be incited against racial minorities and how a pogrom atmosphere can be created in an American city. Smith's activities constitute a mortal threat to the working-class. This was and remains our starting point. Smith's movement is not the isolated German-American Bund, wearing stormtroopers' uniforms and meeting in the Deutsches-Haus. He moves behind a heavy defensive covering of "Christians Unite" and "Against Fascism and Communism". He works through the churches, the old-age pension movement, and every other possible defensive camouflage. Thus when we formulated the policy of our antifascist campaign, our central thought was to force the organised working class into consciousness of who Smith was and the necessity of fighting him. In the first period this was the main need.

The line of the campaign was to mobilise the organised forces of the working class for a struggle against Smith. We reasoned: Smith is here to build a mass movement; to win financial support from influential capitalists; to organise combat groups; to unite all reactionary forces under a single banner; to explode the tinder box of racial tension into riots and pogroms; to turn it all into an attack on the labour movement and on the unemployed who tomorrow will struggle for jobs and security. But Smith is only in the initial stage of his campaign. Therefore, we must not allow him to gain time and a foothold but we must smash back with *great power and boldness, with overwhelming preponderance of force*. This was the objective need. This was the message our party would bring to the workers organisations.

When the Section Executive Committee first opened the discussion on our tactics in the struggle against Smith, the leaders of most sections of the labour movement were completely passive to the fascist threat. Others were following a feeble and cowardly policy. In the Stalinist movement and its periphery a great deal of pressure to "do something" against Smith was to be observed. The Jewish organisations were feeling the pressure of the alarmed and apprehensive masses of worker and middle-class Jews.

The policy of those labour leaders who showed at least an awareness of Smith (the

Stalinists and the Jewish leaders) contained two main elements. One was what has since been termed the “hush-hush” policy: “Smith is a lunatic crackpot; ignore him, leave him alone and he’ll kill himself.” When the rising tide of pressure from the militant workers, the Jewish people and other racial minority groups became sufficiently acute, the Stalinists and the Jewish leaders, developed the second element of their policy: “Pressure on the existing law-enforcement agencies and auditorium owners.” A large scale telephone and letter-writing campaign was organised. Auditorium owners were petitioned to refuse Smith access to their halls. At one point an “anti-lunatic-fringe” committee was formed with a few prominent Stalinist trade unionists at the head. This committee died stillborn and is interesting only as a symptom of the policy that was being followed.

With each successful meeting of Smith, hammer blows were struck at the policy of “hush-hush”. Cowardly silence and petitions to auditorium owners proved their ineffectiveness. More and more workers were being drawn into the movement for antifascist *action*. We learned later of pressure being applied by various militant CIO unionists.

It is on this background that the Section Executive Committee considered the campaign and worked out policy.

At the meeting of the SEC on June 21, the discussion at first revolved around the question: Shall we picket Smith’s Philharmonic meeting of June 25? We had a proposal from the Schachtmanites for a united front picket demonstration on the 25th. The proposal of the Schachtmanites served one purpose. It forced us to seriously consider the whole question of the fight against Smith — something we had not done previously. As the debate on this question developed, it became clear to all the comrades that a much broader question was involved: the need for an energetic long-term campaign against Smith was agreed upon; the main tactical orientation of propelling the labour movement into action was also agreed on.

The letter from the WP [Workers Party — the organisation Shachtman formed after he split from the SWP in 1940] was addressed to the Socialist Party, Socialist Labor Party, Industrial Workers of the World, and the Socialist Workers Party. Their proposal stemmed from the main line they followed throughout the campaign. Draper expressed it clearly when he told us: “We expect nothing from the labour movement at this time in the struggle against the fascists. It is up to the socialists to act.” All the SEC members, including the comrades who favoured a picket line, appraised the policy of the Schachtmanites as sterile and adventuristic. If it is true that Smith is a fascist bent on destroying the labour movement, then obviously what is needed is a resolute and persistent campaign to organise the united front of all the powerful

workers' organisations. This is the force that will crush fascism! How can a serious revolutionary policy fail to orient from the basic consideration of a united front tactic towards the Stalinist organisations? Why did the Shachtmanites appeal to the SLP for a united front and to the CPA (Communist Political Association)? Why did they fail completely to see the need for a united front campaign in the labour movement? It will be seen in the future development of the events how the Shachtmanites miscalculated the entire situation ("we expect nothing from the labour movement at this time"), based themselves primarily on a heckling attack on us, *provided comfort to the fascists*, and were overwhelmed by the real course of events.

Comrades Weiss and Tanner were absent from the June 21 SEC meeting because of illness. They proposed in a memorandum to the Committee "the Los Angeles Local should immediately open an antifascist campaign" and outlined a proposed plan of attack. The Committee adopted the proposal for the campaign as a whole; dividing on the question of the tactic for June 25 Smith meeting, a majority in favour of the tactic proposed in the Weiss-Tanner document.

### **We launch the campaign**

The comrades of the Section Executive Committee were fully aware of the pressure the Shachtmanites would attempt to exert on the party when we adopted our policy. If we had considered the question from the point of view of factional pluses and minuses, of "getting the best" of the Shachtmanites in a petty sense, we would have gone out and picketed. This would have facilitated our work of getting next to a few workers the Shachtmanites had recruited and were carefully hiding from us. The Shachtmanites put on a campaign of pressure. At two Sunday night lectures on Stalinism conducted by our party, their leading speakers took the floor and presented their policy; called for party members to participate with them in the picket line. At our antifascist mass meeting at which we presented our program for the struggle against Smith, three Shachtmanite speakers dominated the discussion period.

The congenital Abernite, Max Sterling, presented himself to a group of our youth as a "raw worker" undecided between us and the Shachtmanites, but inclining towards them because of their militant position on the antifascist struggle. In a word, they threw everything they had into a campaign to shake the party. We anticipated this and took it into the bargain. We had confidence that the correctness of our line would be confirmed. Our new members and our workers cadre would learn from the firsthand experience with Shachtmanism, with the petty-bourgeois adventurers in action.

We can state with absolute certainty that as regards this aspect of the question, that is, the Shachtmanite "offensive", it netted them exactly zero in influence or gains

in our ranks. On the other side of the ledger, we succeeded in inoculating the relatively new party members against the old Shachtmanite virus and in developing contact with a few workers who had accidentally joined the WP.

We opened the campaign with a whole series of record moves. We sent telegrams to all labour bodies, racial minority groups, the Communist Political Association, etc. Naturally we had no illusions that this would bring results in and of itself, but it provided the basis for the effective agitational campaign we developed during the following weeks.

We struck out along three main lines. Within the framework of the general united front tactic we developed a special united front manoeuvre towards the Stalinists. We regarded the Stalinist movement as the key to the situation. The Stalinists control the apparatus of the CIO; the Stalinists have a large Jewish following; there was considerable sentiment in the Stalinist ranks for "action"; and finally, the Stalinist ranks were in the midst of the crisis of their turn [the expulsion of Browder] manifesting a greater susceptibility to our ideas than we have witnessed in many years. We decided to place as much power as we could behind the united front campaign directed towards the Stalinists. The evidence shows that we were very successful in driving our appeal for the united front deep into the ranks of the Stalinist movement. Our open letter was distributed widely at Stalinist mass meetings, at the Hollywood Citizens Committee meeting, at the CIO Council and in the garment centre. It was mailed to our contact list as information.

Most important of all, it was a weapon for our comrades in the shops and unions. The open letter became the occasion for an approach to Stalinist shopmates. Even a number of leading Stalinist workers, members of the Section Committee of the CPA, were contacted in this way and made favourable comments. In one case, our comrade presented the open letter to a Stalinist worker in the shop, a diehard anti-Trotskyist, who declared he was convinced we were right on this point. He then showed the open letter to two other Stalinist workers in the shop, one of whom asserted that the Trotskyists were "certainly sincere in their struggle against fascism". Among the militants in the CIO and in leading Negro circles our united front tactic towards the Stalinist made a good impression. When we observe how our campaign, our tactics and slogans are being carried into the factories, we can mark it down as a new stage of our development. Here, in the shops, we have the greatest testing ground for our slogans, and here is where we are strongest.

The second line of action was the presentation of resolutions in the unions. We started modestly, but quickly realised the extent of possibilities and tried to step up the introduction of resolutions and the content of the resolutions accordingly. At each

union meeting we observed that the temper of the workers was relatively hot on this question. The ease with which our resolutions passed prompted us to work on the idea of proposing that one union body, for example, the Auto Council, shall take the initiative in calling for the formation of a trade union committee to combat Smith. We envisaged this as the next step in making the united front a reality. We are convinced that this would have been entirely possible and a trade union committee would have taken shape “from below”, so to speak, i.e., from the action of various local unions in meeting together.

In the meantime, however, the accumulated pressure from a number of different directions, ours not least of all, had forced the Stalinists into a more serious move. The fascists planned to hold a mass meeting at the shrine Auditorium on July 20. It was clear that all of the previous efforts of the official leaders to stop Smith had fizzled. The pressure of the workers had also forced the AFL and Railroad Brotherhoods tops into stirring. The united front took shape “from above”. Our tactics in the resolutions campaign were accordingly adjusted to this new situation, and we shifted over to resolutions endorsing the united front and calling for support to the united front mass meeting, a counterdemonstration to the Smith Shrine meeting, at the Olympic Auditorium on July 20.

Although the full effectiveness of our resolutions campaign cannot be measured by the list of unions in which we passed resolutions, the score is nevertheless impressive. In all cases the unions forwarded the resolutions to other unions with a “snowballing” effect. Through the direct initiative of the party, we passed resolutions characterising Smith, condemning him and calling for militant united labour action against him, in the following unions: Marine Fireman’s Union; the Consolidated Steel Local of the USWA; the Joint Board of the ILGWU; the United Auto Council, UAW-CIO; Local 9 of the Shipyard Workers Union-CIO ( the largest CIO union on the West Coast); an IAM Local at Lockheed Aircraft; and the San Pedro Longshoreman’s Union. In a number of other unions resolutions were slated to go through, but further developments made them unnecessary. The key character of the union bodies listed will show why we can realistically state that our resolutions campaign played an important role in mobilising sentiment for action, putting pressure on the bureaucrats and in developing the antifascist united front of the Los Angeles labour movement.

The third main line of our campaign was work among the racial and national minorities organisations. We very quickly utilised our excellent relations with the Negro press to publicise the party’s campaign and its united front slogans. Three of the local Negro newspapers published our press releases. In our discussions with the editors of the Negro press and various Negro worker leaders, our policy was warmly

received and approved. The Sunday before the Olympic Auditorium demonstration the party mobilised forces to go into the Negro neighbourhood and the Negro churches. Our comrade spoke before 1200 Negro youth in a large church.

Our contact with Jewish organisations has been fruitful in at least one instance. Mr. Gatch, the editor of the *California Jewish Voice*, has taken a militant position on the struggle against Smith. Before the news of the United Front Olympic Auditorium demonstration was announced, he proposed in a lead article that 10,000 antifascists picket the Shrine meeting. Smith has printed photostatic copies of this article as evidence of the violent Jewish plot against him and his “Christians Unite” campaign. Our relations with this editor and a number of other Jewish organisations around him promise to develop into a bloc within the united front.

Recently it has come to light that fascist vigilante elements are organising, in the agricultural valleys, rifle clubs with antisemitic slogans. Gatch has indicated that he is planning to demand from the authorities decisive action against this ominous move, and if immediate action is not forthcoming, he will call for the formation of Jewish youth “health” clubs. There are other small signs that such sentiment is developing among the Jewish, Mexican and Negro population. We will of course be in the forefront in raising the slogan of defence guards. In every case we will try to deepen the effect of the slogan by linking it to such concrete events or threats as the valley rifle clubs. If the *Jewish Voice* calls for the formation of Jewish Youth clubs for defence, we will advocate joint Jewish, Mexican, Negro, youth and workers’ defence groups.

## Two Smith meetings

The Smith meetings at the Philharmonic auditorium on June 25, and at the Ham’n’Eggers Hall on June 28 were organised on an ostensibly closed basis, admittance by invitation only. Both were overflow meetings of thousands of people. The Shachtmanites called for mass picketing at both meetings. They issued leaflets and conducted a publicity campaign. In our opinion, separate and apart from the question of whether the SWP should have called a picket demonstration, the Shachtmanites’ picket demonstrations were puny and ineffective. At the Philharmonic Auditorium, they mobilised *from the street* 150 people. Very few of these came down in response to the call, but were obviously antifascist passers-by who joined in the picket line for a short time.

Can this demonstration, which was called to “stop the fascists”, be considered effective? Can it be compared with the Madison Square Garden demonstration or Los Angeles antifascist demonstrations of 1938? When the party called the workers to demonstrate against the fascists at the Deutsches Haus in Los Angeles in 1938, we had

2000 workers outside to a few hundred frightened fascists inside. We had unions and factories represented officially in the demonstration, speaking over our sound-truck loudspeaker. We held siege on the fascist meeting so that they didn't dare leave the meeting till long after midnight. Many of them were then severely beaten by Mexican workers from the Dura Steel factory, who had been called out to demonstrate by the party. In New York comrades know what a mass outpouring of working-class strength there was in response to our call.

If there remains a shadow of doubt over the estimate of the Shachtmanite tactic, this is eliminated when we examine the results of their picket line three days later! Here the Smith meeting was conducted in an off street with very few passers-by. The real drawing power of the Shachtmanites and a test of the mood of the workers, their willingness to respond to a call from a small organisation, could be observed more accurately. Instead of maintaining their 100 to 150 pickets, the second picket line dropped to from 25 to 50 according to the most generous estimates!

At both meetings Smith made great capital out of the feeble showing of the Shachtmanites. "We are thousands and they are 25 or 50 at the most, and they talk of breaking up our meeting. If we went out and said 'boo' they'd run. Even the left-wing CIO is not represented out there." In general, he employed the occasion to raise the morale of his meetings, to picture his movement as unconquerable and the opposition as disorganised and feeble.

The Shachtmanites, however, proclaimed these demonstrations as "victories". How a "picket Smith's meetings" movement which records a sharp decline from its first to its second action, can be depicted as a victory is very hard to grasp. Overflow fascist meetings are successfully held.

They aren't to the slightest extent shaken from enthusiasm and confidence but, on the contrary, draw strength from observing that instead of a mass demonstration of workers' strength, a small handful of "radicals" parade before their meeting. This can be proclaimed an antifascist victory only by irresponsible braggarts who are deaf, dumb, and blind to the teachings of Bolshevik tactics.

Shortly after their second picket demonstration, the Shachtmanites again proposed to meet with us to discuss joint activity in the struggle against Smith. Our Section Executive Committee decided to authorise the organiser to meet with them. In accordance with our traditional policy we were ready to act jointly with any group or individual in the labour movement. We were ready to bloc with them on any question of action that could be commonly agreed upon. We didn't think there were many such actions but we were ready to listen to any proposals. We met with the Shachtmanites, and they presented a united front proposal in a number of variations.

a. That the SWP and the WP and perhaps the SP shall set up a joint labour committee for the fight against fascism. This “labour committee” they did not envisage as a trade union body. It was at this meeting that Draper, their representative, stated: “We expect nothing from the labour movement at this time. The socialists will have to act alone.” Of course we rejected this, explaining that our orientation was towards forming a united front of unions and other large working-class organisations.

b. A united front mass meeting of both parties. We explained that this was unrealistic since it simply meant a proposal that we provide them with a platform and we preferred to speak from our own platform in party meetings and could see no benefit from a joint mass meeting.

c. A united membership meeting to discuss the antifascist struggle. Again we explained that they had been provided with ample opportunity to remain in the party and have full rights in discussion as an opposition faction. Since they treacherously split with the SWP, it was unreasonable for them to demand the rights of members within our organisation.

d. United front picket lines against any future meeting Smith may hold. We gave them the same answer; that we were orienting to the formation of such a united front with the working-class organisations that really represented the mass of workers in the city and thereby the power of the workers in the city. As regards future demonstrations of Smith, we would appraise the question of purely party demonstrations on the basis of the relationship of forces at a given time.

e. They proposed blocs to pass resolutions in the unions. Here we agreed to consider such blocs on the basis of any concrete situation that offered possibilities along this line. They could cite only one, Local 9, Shipyard Workers. We could think of no other. In this union we had formed a bloc with a Negro militant, the vice-president of the state CIO, a former Stalinist, who had agreed to present our resolution. Nevertheless, we agreed to refer the question to our fraction with a recommendation that our fraction consult with their fraction; mainly because we were concerned with restraining them from any blundering interference with the arrangements we had made. This is precisely what occurred. Our fraction representative met with theirs. They arrogantly insisted on proposing their own resolution with their own speaker. We finally persuaded them to refrain from doing so until a far more effective arrangement could be put through. This was the extent of our bloc with the Shachtmanites in Local 9.

### The united front is formed

Smith announced plans for his final rally for July 20 at the Shrine Auditorium at a small secret meeting in Clifton's Cafeteria. We had observers present at this meeting and were the first to spread the alarm throughout the labour movement and Jewish organisations. We called up representative individuals and appraised them of the plans of Smith. Immediately the movement for antifascist action was spurred forward. As we reported before, one Jewish newspaper called for a mass picket demonstration. A Jewish workers' cultural organisation pledged its 300 members in support of a picket line at the Shrine meeting. The pressure of our campaign was developing considerably in the CIO. The Stalinist rank and file and periphery were dissatisfied with the official policy.

The first news we heard of the development of a united front and a counterdemonstration for July 20, came from Slim Connally, a Stalinist CIO leader, who told one of our comrades that the CIO was calling a counterdemonstration at the Olympic Auditorium on the same night as Smith's Shrine meeting. He told our comrade, a Negro trade unionist, to spread the word among the Negro people. Our comrade immediately came down to the Central Branch meeting of the party and announced the news.

At the same time we heard that a meeting of all antifascist organisations was to take place at the Royal Palms Hotel on Tuesday, July 17, to lay the plans for the final buildup for the Olympic Auditorium demonstration.

The Tuesday meeting proved to be an extremely representative gathering of the trade unions, racial minority organisations, religious and Hollywood groups. A sprinkling of bourgeois politicians decorated the occasion with the typical Stalinist attempt to distort a united front into a peoples' front masquerade. Official representatives of the CIO AFL, and Railroad Brotherhoods were present. A good number of local unions, mostly CIO, were also represented. A mystery of sorts surrounds the question of precisely which organisation took the initiative in calling this united front. Attorney-General Kenney and Assemblyman Albert Decker were assigned the roles of official chairman and convener. Our first information led us to believe that the CIO had called for the Olympic meeting and the Royal Palms united front gathering. This accounts for the fact that the *Militant* characterised the Olympic meeting as a CIO demonstration rather than a united front demonstration, at which the CIO, AFL, and Railroad Brotherhoods participated, together with racial organisations and other "community" groups. It is possible that the Stalinists started with the CIO as sponsor and then obscured its role when they found such widespread support from other organisations and individuals. In our opinion, organisation control of the Olympic

Auditorium meeting and the initiative in calling the Royal Palms meeting lies with the Stalinists. The question of which organisation was officially responsible recedes into the background once it is clear that the Stalinists were the most powerful force which controlled the apparatus of both meetings. What then is our analysis of this setup? Is it a genuine united front?

There can be no question that it was a real united front, but as is always the case with institutions that arise out of the reality of the struggle, as distinguished from textbook definitions, this concrete united front has its peculiarities, determined by the entire situation. The groundswell of workers' antifascist sentiment for action was sufficient to jar the official apparatus of labour and of the Stalinist party into action. This workers' sentiment, when combined with the state of excitement and anxiety of the Jewish organisations, proved sufficient to bring together in one council an extremely wide representation of the labour movement and the racial minority groups. However, the movement of the workers from below has not yet reached the point where it could express itself in a united front of action which would be representative of the labour organisations from top to *bottom*. What was striking at the Tuesday Royal Palms meeting was the inordinate importance and weight held by political shysters, Hollywood stars, accidental figures, and the summits of the labour movement. There were too many religious quacks and too few factory workers. This signifies an early stage in the united front struggle against fascism. The Stalinists are working might and main in this early stage to derail the movement; to switch it on to the path of peoples' frontism, to stifle the initiative of working-class ranks. This is the characteristic element of their policy at the Royal Palms and Olympic meetings.

### **The party in action**

How did the party participate in this movement? We immediately declared our full support to the idea of a counterdemonstration against the fascists. Our leaflet calling for the workers to pack the Olympic Auditorium was the first announcement of the demonstration on the streets. The campaign that was organised during that one week in some respects surpassed the election campaign. The SEC declared a state of full mobilisation, and that proved to be no idle phrase. It was understood by the overwhelming majority of the party membership to mean an extraordinary demand on their time and energy, and they acted accordingly.

The week was notable for our utilisation of a long unused medium of agitation, the open air meeting, which has now become a regular feature of our campaign. We decided to launch a new series of radio broadcasts, and attempted to arrange the schedule in time to announce it to the workers gathered at the Olympic Auditorium;

but we were blocked in this by the refusal of the broadcasting companies to sell us the time.

The first part of the week was concentrated on getting out the leaflet, beginning its mass distributions, preparing a mailing to 4000 subscribers and contacts and in preparation for the Tuesday meeting. All our fractions were instructed to work wherever possible to represent their unions at the Tuesday meeting. In most cases the shortness of time prevented the democratic election of delegates and thereby cut down our own representation. Union officials would, as a rule, appoint one of their group to attend. Yet we had four trade union delegates at the united front meeting. We had three delegates from the party, and about 30 comrades participated as individual observers.

There were approximately 400 present at the Tuesday meeting. The night before at the SEC we had elaborated a three-point policy to be following by the party caucus. (1) Continue the united front after the Friday meeting as an organ of struggle against fascism; (2) For a preponderance of representatives of the labour movement on the speaker's rostrum. Instead of Hollywood celebrities, let's have the leaders of the labour movement, Green, Murray, and Lewis, fly out here and speak at the meeting; (3) We proposed the Olympic Auditorium demonstration should have a brief program and should then be transformed into a giant parade to march on the Shrine. The Olympic Auditorium is one mile from the Shrine. Our proposal was to march the parade past the Shrine in a peaceful display of antifascist strength and to demobilise a few blocks past the Shrine.

On Tuesday we had two speakers get the floor at the united front meeting. Following a speaker from an Italian organisation, who stated that if workers had organised in time and fought back, fascism would never have triumphed in Italy and Germany, Comrade Cappy got the floor and presented the proposal for adjourning the Olympic meeting early and parading to the Shrine. Then Comrade Tanner was recognised. She spoke for 15 minutes, outlining the proposals of the party. The party proposal for a march became the pivotal point for all further discussion. Her speech was received with considerable applause as well as some subdued heckling from the Stalinists. The *People's World* reported the next day that "speaker after speaker" came out against Myra Weiss, leader of the local Trotskyites who had proposed a parade past the Shrine after a brief meeting at the Olympic.

In the course of a debate at the Wednesday party membership meeting Comrade Cappy developed the idea that our proposal for a march was adventuristic and represented a succumbing to the pressure of the Shachtmanites. The reporter for the SEC, Comrade Weiss, held that it was precisely this proposal which had marked off the left-wing of the united front; that the proposal was entirely realistic; that it was

feasible to call for the organisation of an antifascist parade when the forces we were addressing this proposal to represented all the official organisations of the labour movement; that taking into account the real strength of the fascists, such a parade would have the effect of a powerful sledgehammer attack. It would weaken Smith immensely.

As for the comparison with the Shachtmanites, it was held that our difference with them was over the question of proceeding with a tiny force in an ineffective display of weakness against the fascists; whereas we were appealing to the strong workers' organisations to act against the fascists. Although it was not disputed that many tens of thousands of workers were still unaware of the character of the Smith movement, there were other tens of thousands, still in the minority, who were ready to take militant action once they saw a realistic possibility of doing so. An official decision of the labour movement to act, parade past the Shrine, would call forth a tremendous burst of enthusiasm and action from tens of thousands of militant workers in this area. Furthermore to underscore that we were not proposing a march led by us alone, we had stressed in our formulation of the proposal that if the majority of the united front opposed such a parade, we would be bound by that decision.

### **The Friday meeting**

The attendance at the Olympic Auditorium meeting revealed the depth of the movement that had been aroused against Smith's activities. The antifascist workers, the Jewish, Negro, and other racial minority groups, were obviously looking to the Olympic meeting as a great force in the struggle to crush the fascists. The Auditorium was packed to the rafters with a huge overflow crowd of 5000 on the outside; 17,000 would be a very safe estimate of the total attendance.

Across the platform of the meeting was paraded the usual Stalinist handpicked assortment of phony politicians, religious leaders, Hollywood stars, etc. However, the heads of the AFL and CIO Los Angeles Council spoke. The greatest ovation was received by Philip Connally, the head of the CIO Council. The most spirited applause occurred when the speakers struck a militant note. When Connally said: "We do not believe in free speech for the fascists", the enthusiasm of the audience reached its height.

What was most characteristic of the whole program and the meeting — and it went to about 11:30 — was the fact that not one speaker told the workers what they should do in the struggle against Smith. Attorney General Kenney painted the picture of the war boom industries threatening to collapse, the danger of unemployment, the sharpening of a social crisis as a result of it; and cited this as the reason for Smith's

activity in this area. He said: "The way to fight Smith and other fascists is to keep industry going at capacity with full employment." All he failed to do was to tell the audience how.

The Stalinists pushed to the fore the question of Rankin's forthcoming investigation of Hollywood. It became apparent that they are utilising this united front, both at the Olympic meeting and at future meetings, to shield themselves from the red scare attack that the reactionaries are trying to whip up in Hollywood.

The Olympic meeting was the product of a real movement from below. The Stalinists are not capable of calling such meetings at will. When Philip Murray came to Los Angeles in 1943, the Stalinists, who were then trying to impress Murray, tried to gather a large meeting together at the Olympic with Hollywood stars featured and an enormous publicity campaign. However, the meeting was poorly attended with a very low level of enthusiasm.

It is hard to say what the composition of the Friday meeting was. The Stalinists and their periphery were there in full force. There was a strong middle-class professional grouping. Without doubt there were many thousands of industrial workers present and quite a large number of Negroes. Some comrades believe that the largest percentage of workers were turned away in the overflow crowd; those who couldn't arrive early enough due to working hours.

We distributed our leaflet in over 8000 copies. The four proposals are the pivotal points around which we propose to agitate in the shops and the unions during the coming period. The slogans for antifascist shop committees we regard as extremely potent in possibilities. There, the initiative will more and more fall into our hands. In the last analysis, the united front that has emerged represents all the weaknesses of the existing state of the labour movement; the union tops disconnected from the workers in the shops, the Stalinist political and trade union apparatus, the heavy middle-class element. As the struggle sharpens, the party will bring the slogans of the left-wing of the united front into every factory where we have contact. At a certain point the formation of antifascist factory committees will provide the medium for the organisation of vital combat forces. One of the possibilities of the formation of workers' defence guards is linked up with the factory committees, although it is not excluded that the workers' defence guards will have an initially neighbourhood, or even racial minority origin.

The third point of our proposal is obviously the most immediate. It is our opinion that if we follow the right tactic with sufficient energy, we can meet the next wave of fascist activity with *labour demonstrations and mass picketing*. It is not a question of can we "get by" with some small picket lines of the "radical" parties. It is a question of how

to mobilise masses of workers for struggle, without ignoring the reality of their existing organisations and leadership. Every party venture, every party tactic must be calculated to further this end.

The fourth point (the labour party) has become particularly timely after the results of the British elections and is now prominently lifted to the place of an independent and immediate campaign of agitation for the party as a whole.

All the comrades at the meeting reported that our leaflet was read carefully by those they could observe around them. Not one leaflet was found thrown away; this despite the fact that tremendous amounts of literature were being distributed at the entrances. Before the meeting our distributors succeeded in contacting a few new Shachtmanite recruits, who have since been followed up and look to be very promising.

The distribution squad was caught outside with the thousands of workers who couldn't get in, and engaged in many fruitful discussions in the street. After the police dispersed the crowds, we filled the available cars with contacts and brought them to the headquarters. When the others returned after the meeting, it was as if we had a mass meeting in our own hall. Although it was after midnight, the new workers contacted were anxious to hear a word from the party speakers.

Our observer at the Shrine meeting reported how Smith ascribed the poor attendance at his rally (5000) to "the communists and the Jews who had packed the streetcars en route to the Shrine and Olympic Auditoriums". Comrades Tanner and Weiss announced our determination to continue the open air meetings on the East Side and our plans to develop a free speech fight if the police interfered again as they had done earlier. Since then we have held three successful street meetings on the same corner without any further difficulties.

## Summary & perspectives

The campaign is in a moment of lull. Smith has left town for speaking engagements in the East, promising to return soon. His threat to make Los Angeles a national headquarters was not carried out. It is not even a West Coast headquarters. For the moment he is working under the surface once again. How long will this last? Will he start a new campaign of meetings? Will someone else of the same calibre raise a new threat? These questions cannot be answered in detail.

We base ourselves on the inevitable development of further fascist activities. The reported rifle clubs in the valleys can become the point of departure for a new offensive in the antifascist campaign. We are investigating the activities of local supporters of Smith. Generally speaking, there is no lack of vigilante and fascist activities in Southern California. The party then prepares for a new big push in its campaign. What better

preparation can there be than the assimilation of the lessons of the first stage of the campaign?

The contrast between our policy and the Shachtmanites had a clear and finished character. The two lines of policy were submitted to the test in a short time. It is useful and instructive to draw up a balance sheet.

The Shachtmanites proceeded by a superficial analogy to the Madison Square Garden demonstration of 1938. They “expected nothing from the labour movement at this time”, and they thought that a mere signal from anyone was sufficient to bring a mass of antifascist workers into the streets. If one is serious about summoning masses to action, it must be conceded that they miscalculated on both counts.

The antifascist masses would not in these circumstances move against the Smith type of fascist movement without first exhausting the possibility of utilising the defensive covering and power of their own mass organisations. In this they display a far better grasp of the difference between the Smith fascists and the German-American Bund than the Shachtmanites do. The militant workers did not answer the call to picket because they felt the need to move with and through the unions. Moreover they estimated that it was possible to get action from their organisations and proceeded to apply pressure. That is why we found that we were not alone in our efforts to push for the united front and for antifascist action in the unions. Everywhere other militants were following the same line.

Our tactic was fully confirmed by the course of events. The objective implications of Smith’s activity were so ominous in the setting of the present economic and political situation, that the trade union officials, the Stalinists, the Negro and Jewish leaders could not fail to be alarmed. Our task was to hammer home the meaning of the fascist threat and to organise the pressure of the workers to force the organisations of labour onto the road of struggle.

It is necessary to understand clearly that the Shachtmanites did not simply add to the tactics we carried out, by organising a picket line. They followed a totally different course. They could not see the reality or effectiveness of a struggle for the united front in the unions, and they had no conception whatsoever of a united front tactic with the Stalinists.

They complain: “You claimed you had no time for preparing a joint demonstration with us, but you were ready in the available time to act jointly with the Stalinists.” Of course! In uniting with the WP we could calculate mainly on our own forces to act. For this we lacked time *and* the necessary relationship of forces. If we could unite with the Stalinists instead of the WP this would signify an enormous change in the relationship of forces and the time factor would alter accordingly. The Shachtmanites cannot

understand that this is the reason why we fight for the united front with the Stalinists. It is not because we hate the WP worse than we hate the Stalinists, or because of our natural bureaucratic affinity for the Stalinists. It is because in one direction a mass of workers are concentrated; in the other, little more than a handful of renegades from Marxism.

This is not the place for an estimate of the antifascist campaigns of 1938-39. Certainly the demonstrations in New York and Los Angeles were of great significance.

However, in my opinion the model of antifascist activity for the party is to be found in Minneapolis. The relative weight of their antifascist tactics as against the other ventures of the party is much greater precisely because they operated through the mass movement of the workers. It is this aspect of the Minneapolis experience that should be assimilated by the party now.

The question remains: Could anything have been lost by joining in a picket demonstration with the Shachtmanites at the Philharmonic on June 25? Yes! A great deal would have been lost. Adding a few hundred to such a picket line would not have raised its effectiveness qualitatively. What was needed was a demonstration of the overwhelming preponderance labour possessed in the contest. Even the Olympic Auditorium demonstration accomplished this. By mobilising 17,000 in a counterdemonstration to the fascist 5000, a demoralising blow was struck at them.

But could anything have been lost? In following such a tactic we would have become divorced from the mainstream of militant workers who were pressing hard on the lever to lift their organisations into action. By concentrating on helping them press this lever, we solidified our connection with them. Many workers were irritated and contemptuous of the policy of a "show of weakness". Had we followed that course we would be arguing to this day with the Stalinist workers about the question of whether the Trotskyists are "hotheads" and "ineffective". "Look how small their demonstration was. Why do they jump the gun?" As it is, we decisively reject responsibility for the WP antics. We point to our record of struggle for the united front and we propose action to the workers' organisations.

The perspective of the antifascist campaign is very broad and converges with other campaigns. This distinguishes it from the more narrow party campaigns with their succinct objectives and delimited time. We compensate for this by introducing into the broad campaign the element of organisation objective whenever possible. When there is a lull we exploit it for analysis and preparation, rather than for artificial campaign-mongering. Right now campaign activity is confined to open air meetings. At the same time we are searching for an opening that will allow us to lift the struggle to a higher level. There is a possibility for organising a meeting with a number of Jewish groups

who hold militant positions on the tasks of the united front. In a bloc with them we could present our proposals for militant action at the next united front conference, which will occur on August 26. If we mobilise the forces of the party and its sympathisers in the trade unions we can have a large group at the united front meeting. The same tactic can be developed toward Negro and Mexican organisations, who are keenly aware of the threat of fascism with its physical violence and terror. In the solidification of such a bloc lies the possibility of, in the next immediate period, calling united front demonstrations and picket lines.

In the next stage of the campaign, through the radio, through demonstrations, through the deepening of our united front tactics, we shall draw even closer to our banner the sympathetic periphery of *Militant* readers and contacts. We will recruit many of them. The party will grow stronger.

We want the comrades nationally to know that when the Los Angeles Local raised the slogan of "No headquarters for Smith in Los Angeles", we did so in deadly earnest. We are committed to this slogan to the marrow of our bones. For the Socialist Workers Party the struggle against fascism is to the death. ■

# Minneapolis Picket Line Smashes Fascist Rally

*By Barbara Bruce*

*Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 22* — A united labour movement stopped fascist Gerald L.K. Smith from speaking last night in Minneapolis. More than 1500 pickets from AFL, CIO, and railroad unions, along with members of veterans', Jewish, Negro and working class political organisations, including the Socialist Workers Party, rallied in a fighting mass demonstration against America's No. 1 fascist leader.

When Smith's goons assaulted several pickets outside the fascists' meeting place at the Leamington Hotel, aroused workers stormed the meeting hall and routed Smith and his followers in a pitched battle.

Smith's talk was originally booked for the Hennepin County Republican Club rooms at 703 Third Avenue South. Long before meeting time, an organised picket line was formed under the direction of Walter Frank, secretary of AFL Lathers Union No. 190, and representative of the Minneapolis Central Labor Union, who acted as picket captain.

Assistant picket captains were Henry A. Schultz, representing the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, Lodge 102, and Earl Cluka, financial secretary of United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers, representing the Hennepin County CIO Council.

## **'Stop fascism'**

Scores of banners carried by the pickets had been distributed by the united labour committee. They carried such slogans as "Race Hatred Is Fascism"; "Stop Fascism and G.L.K. Smith"; "Don't Be a Sucker for Fascists"; "Don't Support Hitler's Agent — Keep Away". By agreement of the committee in charge, each organisation carried only one placard.

Among the organisations carrying their own banners were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; the Workers Defence League; the Minneapolis AFL Central Labor Union; the Minneapolis AFL Building Trades Council; the American Veterans Committee; the American Youth for Democracy; the Socialist Workers Party; the Communist Party; and the Minneapolis Jewish Action Committee.

Prominent in the picket line was the banner of the Socialist Workers Party proclaiming, “American Workers Do Not Want a Hitler — STOP Gerald L.K. Smith”.

### **March through loop**

A group of Smith’s followers had gathered at the Third Avenue address, waiting for the door to be unlocked. Smith’s secretary, Renata Legant, moved among the known Smith supporters in the crowd and told them to assemble in the ballroom of the Leamington Hotel.

When the [antifascist] picket captains gave the signal, the huge body of pickets marched down the street to the hotel three blocks away singing “Solidarity Forever” and shouting “Down With the Fascists”! As the picket line moved toward the hotel, some of the Smith goons attempted to break up the line. Several of the pickets were attacked and knocked to the sidewalk. When the attackers fled into the hotel, the pickets stormed in after them.

Surging through the lobby, the pickets were met by a knot of fascists who attempted to bar the way to the ballroom where the meeting was to be held. With a mighty push, the Smith supporters were brushed aside and the pickets plunged on like a great tidal wave toward the meeting hall.

Charging through a barricade of chairs which the fascists had thrown up to prevent the pickets from entering the hall, the shouting mass of labour antifascists made their way into the ballroom. In their frantic retreat, the fascists left broken chairs, tables, lamps, and mirrors in their wake. Dozens of Smith’s supporters fled through the windows. Those remaining in the hall scuttled to one corner of the room and huddled there.

### **Workers take over**

At the call of the picket captain, Walter Frank, all the pickets were seated. Frank’s announcement that no Smith meeting would be held was greeted with resounding cheers. He reported that the hotel manager had refused to let Smith’s meeting take place and ordered the fascists out, since the ballroom had been obtained under false pretences. One of Smith’s followers had rented the hall in the name of the “Northwest Pioneers”.

The assembled pickets were then instructed to march in a body to the Minneapolis Courthouse where an antifascist rally would be held. A rearguard of pickets was left at the hotel to see that instructions of the manager were carried out.

Smith came out of hiding only after the pickets left. He attempted to hold a meeting in the hotel lobby but only a handful of people remained. In one of his usual attacks on the labour movement and minorities, Smith declared to his followers that the demonstration was the work of “Jewish terrorists and communists”.

### **Victory meeting**

Following their captains’ orders, the pickets marched to the courthouse, still singing, and chanting “Down with Smith”! Hundreds of workers, white and Negro, Jewish and gentile, Protestant and Catholic, along with veterans and students, poured into the hall. Here they cheered the picket captains who praised the conduct of the pickets throughout the demonstration and their magnificent defence against the fascist attackers.

When Frank concluded a stirring address by stating that “the CIO, AFL, railroad brotherhoods, and independent unions must join forces in a common struggle against reaction in America”, the hall rang with applause.

Others who spoke with Milton Siegel, field representative and Vice President, District 2, of the CIO United Packinghouse Workers; Henry A. Schultz, spokesman for Lodge 102, Railroad Trainmen; Henry Piper, associate editor of *Labor Review*, official organ of the Minneapolis Central Labor Union; and Jerrold Stoll, American Veterans’ Committee representative. The meeting closed with a pledge to continue the organised fight against fascism in America. The crowd left singing “Solidarity”.

### **Great tradition lives**

This inspiring antifascist labour battle shows that the great tradition of working-class solidarity and militancy, built in Minneapolis during the thirties by the famous Minneapolis Drivers Local 544, is still alive. The spirit of labour struggle that the Roosevelt administration and AFL Teamsters President Tobin tried to crush during the war by the imprisonment of the Trotskyist leaders of Local 544 has survived.

Those leaders, like Vincent R. Dunne, played a prominent role in last night’s antifascist fight. In the 1941 Minneapolis labour trial, the basis of one charge against him and the other 17 defendants was their advocacy of union defence guards to defend labour meetings from fascist attacks. ■

# Comments on the Minneapolis Antifascist Campaign

*By Vincent R. Dunne*

The fascists tried to come back here, long after we were no longer the heroes of the labour movement, after we were imprisoned for our opposition to the war. They came back and tried to rent the auditorium in Gerald L.K. Smith's name to put on an anticommunist demonstration.

The leader of the Minneapolis labour movement, the Central Labor Union, had become pretty quiet by that time. They were lined up with the Democratic Party, turned over everything to labour boards, were quite satisfied, and didn't want any more trouble. The former leaders of the truckers were no longer the leaders of the labour movement, but we had been delegates to the Central Labor Union and we knew the leaders well enough to impress them with the danger of this fascist meeting.

We were for the city turning over the auditorium to Gerald L.K. Smith and for organising a demonstration against him. But they denied him the auditorium. He finally got quite a big hall on Third Avenue.

Now the Minnesota Jewish Council, a petty-bourgeois group, urged the trade union leadership to ignore Smith. Many of the leaders in the Central Labor Union went along with this.

A meeting had been called for the Jewish leaders and the trade union movement. We sent a committee over there of former leaders in the drivers' union and asked them to reconsider this. They had agreed not to demonstrate. Give Smith the silent treatment, they said. We said, the silent treatment is no good in a case like this. You've got to go down and picket that place. We had the support of two or three of the leaders of the Central Labor Union on this.

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From a transcript of remarks made to a class on fascism held in Minneapolis on December 30, 1963.

A second meeting was scheduled. We turned around the whole meeting that had been called to give the fascists the silent treatment. In the end, one of the rail unions called a demonstration that became a demonstration of the entire trade union movement.

Even the Communist Party participated that time, the only united front I remember with the Communist Party here. They were quite numerous in Minneapolis. They had some union posts. They supported this. It was overwhelmingly accepted by the rank and file of the trade union movement, so they couldn't back down.

The trade union movement had charge of the picket line. Many of our comrades were picket captains. Thousands of people demonstrated in front of Smith's meeting hall. Finally, Smith gave up the idea of having a meeting there and sent in word that they were going to the main ballroom of the Leamington Hotel.

We were aware of this and we sent our pickets down to challenge them when they came out the back door. Pickets were strung along Third Avenue and several other streets so that whatever way they went, we'd catch them.

At the Leamington Hotel, they began to attack us. They sent squads out to brutally attack our pickets. We fought back and when the main body of our picket line got there, there was a melee in front of the hotel. We just marched right into the hotel, challenged them right at their door, drove their sluggers back into the ballroom. Some of the people at the front of the line — I wasn't there at the moment — broke in the big old doors of the ballroom. Chandeliers went down, everything went down, as the fascists went out the back door. They've never been back here since.

There are lessons to be drawn from this. That is the way the fascist threat must be met. And that can only be done by a mass movement of the workers. It can't be done by petty-bourgeois individuals giving fascists the "silent treatment". ■



## **Section V**

# **McCarthyism: An Incipient Fascist Movement**





Senator Joseph McCarthy and his committee's chief counsel, Roy Cohn, at the Army-McCarthy hearings, spring 1954.

A Republican from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy was first elected to the Senate in 1946, with liberal and Communist Party support. But in 1950 he gained prominence with his advocacy of the most extreme anticommunist witch-hunt, going way beyond the harsh crackdown already being carried out by the Truman administration. His wild charges of communist infiltration of the government attracted significant support from the middle class and even from sections of the working class.

The witch-hunt had a significant impact on the labour movement, intimidating and marginalising progressive forces and strengthening bureaucratic and conservative trends; it also introduced a deep chill in intellectual and cultural life.

McCarthy's influence peaked during the period of the 1950-53 Korean War, when World War III was widely expected. However, the US rulers moved away from a direct showdown with the Soviet Union and towards a *modus vivendi*. The political space for McCarthyism evaporated; he was censured by the Senate in 1954 and went into sharp political decline.

# McCarthyism: An Editorial

## 1. Putting McCarthy 'in his place'

Do you remember all the loud talk recently about how McCarthy was going to be “put in his place” at this session of Congress? He was put in his place all right. On January 12 [1954], five days after the session opened, McCarthy was named to the powerful Senate Rules Committee.

This Committee determines what legislation should reach the floor of the Senate. It can and has bottled up bills distasteful to big business and the Southern plutocrats, like antilynching, FEPC and progressive social security legislation. It gives the green light to war appropriations, antilabour legislation, witch-hunt measures and the like.

Another jurisdiction of the Rules Committee is over funds voted for Senatorial investigations. One of the most advertised features of the various Republican and Democratic plans to “stop McCarthy” was to put a financial squeeze on his investigating committee if he doesn't behave. Now McCarthy, by a mere request, has been placed on the very committee that wields power over committee finances. Thus he can fight for the finances he needs from the strategic position of Rules Committee member.

And because of the other crucial powers of this committee, McCarthy can broaden the power of his fascist machine in Congress. If one doesn't want to be blind, that's the first result of the Democratic-Republican “battle to stop McCarthy” at this session of Congress.

Lesson one: Every time the chiefs of the two capitalist parties declare war on McCarthy it ends up in a fiasco, with McCarthy strengthened. He takes another big step in his drive towards the White House.

There are good reasons why McCarthy thrives on the manoeuvres of the Republican and Democratic anti-McCarthyites.

## 2. The ‘outflanking’ technique

The capitalist party politicians use two methods to fight McCarthy: (1) Steal his thunder. Outflank him from the right. Use bigger and better redbaiting than McCarthy. (2) Curb him, and if necessary crush him by the power of the party machines.

Neither of these methods work. They don’t work because McCarthy is not just another reactionary politician who has fallen out with the machine. McCarthy heads an incipient fascist movement. His political machine is fundamentally independent from the two capitalist party machines — although he uses these machines for all they are worth to him.

Stealing McCarthy’s thunder doesn’t work as a tactic to undermine him. It was tried when the Republican high command ordered Attorney General Brownell to spy-smear ex-president Truman. McCarthy, far from being undermined and outflanked, stepped in and took over the whole show. He thrived on the manoeuvre.

It was tried again by Eisenhower in his super-redbaiting project of “alienising” native-born Americans. The *New York Times* is dead wrong in saying that by this act Eisenhower “certified publicly once again his own leadership in the battle against communism” (W.H. Lawrence, January 9). All Eisenhower “certified” by his speech was a craven capitulation to McCarthy. And that’s all he’s been “certifying” during the whole year in office.

John O’Donnell, *New York Daily News* hack, gives a revealing McCarthyite reaction to Eisenhower’s speech: “Joe McCarthy ... won hands down — all the way from Ike’s appearance when the president gave him the big hello with an affectionate wave of the arm, down to the thundering applause which greeted the president’s request that Congress press harder on subversives, be they aliens or native-born or naturalised citizens. No wonder McCarthy and Senator Jenner wore broad grins.”

Truman is always working at the “outflanking” technique, even though it “outflanks” him right into a spy-smear corner. “The communists I handled I put in jail”, he boasted to a reporter on January 8. “If anyone is convicted and sent to a penitentiary, he automatically loses his citizenship. I convicted my communists. That’s how I took care of them. I’m the only man who ever sent a communist to jail.”

McCarthy thrives on this stuff. It justifies his highly specialised and truthless red-hunting machine. It gives momentum to his fascist movement.

Lesson two: McCarthyism cannot be defeated by those who play McCarthy’s game; it cannot be outflanked from the right; it must be destroyed from the left, by a bloc of workers, farmers and minority peoples.

But if labour is to destroy McCarthyism before it is itself destroyed, it must launch a militant and united program of action.

### 3. To run or to fight?

There are two instructive examples of how labour is reacting to McCarthyism.

1. When McCarthy opened his investigation of the “red menace” in General Electric, the United Electrical Workers Union (CIO) played right into his hands. The union leadership proclaimed its own witch-hunting record. It permitted victimisations; it ran for cover and cowered. Result? The GE system was “McCarthyised”. The unionbusting “loyalty” purge was officially introduced into private industry. GE’s 230,000 workers are subject to dismissal for their political beliefs or refusing to turn stool pigeon for McCarthy. The union is weakened. The company has a new unionbusting weapon.

2. The Velde House Un-American Committee came to San Francisco, with the usual advance publicity about uncovering “red” control of unions, etc. The Independent Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union calmly served notice: One witch-hunting peep out of you against our union and we’ll strike.

Velde was cautious. Did they really mean it? He tried a sly ruse. He prompted a stool-pigeon witness to speak about “red domination” of the Longshoremen’s Union. The next morning the waterfront of San Francisco was shut down tight. Not an ounce of cargo moved. The Longshoremen massed thousands of pickets at the doors of the witch-hunting Velde committee. They considered it a matter of elementary union security to slap down hard on this labour-baiting McCarthyite stooge.

Result? The whole San Francisco Bay Area labour movement was aroused to new militancy and confidence in the fight against reaction. Students, professionals and workers organised large anti-Velde meetings all over the Bay Area. Velde retreated on witch-hunting the Longshoremen. He cut his hearings short. The unions were strengthened. The unionbusting employers were weakened.

Lesson three. Militant action by labour can beat the McCarthyites. The unions must refuse any form of cooperation with the witch-hunting committees — and back up their refusal with all the power at their command.

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But militancy is only half the battle. Labour must have a correct social program — it must offer a fundamental solution to the problems of war and depression.

#### 4. The struggle for the middle class

McCarthyism already shows clear signs of unfolding a demagogic social program to direct the discontent of farmers, small businessmen, and workers into fascist channels.

The fascists observe, just as the revolutionary workers do, the oncoming depression and the beginnings of a wave of mass discontent with capitalism — and they are preparing to use it. As the social crisis becomes more acute the question will be posed: who offers the solution to the crisis — the labour movement or the fascists?

If the workers' organisations don't have the answer, the fascists will utilise the rising discontent of the middle class, its disgust with the blundering labour leadership, and its frenzy at being ruined economically, to build a mass fascist movement with armed detachments and hurl them at the unions. While spouting a lot of radical-sounding demagoguery they will deflect the anticapitalist wrath of the middle class and deploy it against labour, and establish the iron-heel dictatorship of Big Capital on the smoking ruins of union halls.

McCarthy has already come out with a farm program! He blithely outbids all offers to help farmers threatened with ruin. Eisenhower speaks of 75% parity. The Democrats likewise. McCarthy is for "100% and more" parity.

McCarthy is talking of "broadening" his field of investigations. He said: "I may divide forces and run simultaneous investigations." The reason for this is the facility such diversification will provide for outlining a fascist program to meet the needs of all the discontented with wild demagogic promises — all the while spinning it around the main theme of the "communist menace".

Thus lesson four: IF labour clings to the capitalist parties, if it fails to organise a labour Party and adopt a deepgoing program of socialist reorganisation for America, the fascist demagogues will have a clear field. Only the working class, organised independently on the political field and armed with a revolutionary socialist program, can defeat fascism. ■

# Fascism & the Workers' Movement

By James P. Cannon

## 1. Notes on American fascism (A letter to *The Militant*)

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 the "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. 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 in two forms:

They see the democratic 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 prosecutions 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 "stormtroopers" and similar shirted hooligans outside the forms of law, as in Italy and Germany. This is characterised as fascist.

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Originally carried as a series of six articles in the *Militant*, March 15, March 29 and April 5-26, 1954

But what about violence which is technically illegal and unconstitutional, but carried out nevertheless by duly constituted officials clothed with legal authority? What about such things as the breaking up of meetings and picket lines by official police and special deputies; wire tapping; inquisitions; screening and blacklisting of “subversives”; and all the rest of the intimidation and terror of the witch-hunt? These procedures 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 kind of illegal violence under the outward forms of law has a distinctive 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 depredations of Mayor Hague, who announced that “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 a manifestation of incipient American fascism. I think he was right about that. If the workers stand around and wait until the labour movement 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 lawless prosecuting attorneys and official policemen who don’t give a damn what the Constitution says. Incipient American fascism — already, right now — has a press and radio-television power which makes Hitler’s *Angriff* look like a throwaway 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 direct support from the established press, etc.

“McCarthy is different”, say the formalistic wiseacres, as if that were a help and a consolation. He is indeed different in several ways. But the most important difference is that he *starts* with a great power behind him, and operates with formal legal sanction and immunity. The right comparison to make is not of the McCarthy of today with Hitter on the verge of taking power in 1932, but rather with Hitler in the middle 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 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 now 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*; and they have a big foot in the government, national and local. They feel no need at present of unofficial movements.

To the extent that such outfits will appear here or there, with the development of the social crisis, they will probably 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 than outside it.

## 2. Perspectives of American fascism

The campaign of the Socialist Workers Party against the ominous upsurge of McCarthyism, and its characterisation of the McCarthy movement as American fascism in incipient form, has been misunderstood by some people who don't want to think, as well as by others who prefer to misunderstand us in order to misrepresent us.

Up till now we have not heard any cogent arguments against our campaign and its motivation. The most we can make out so far are some mutters and murmurs of dissent, to which we will give a preliminary answer while our critics and opponents are getting up the nerve to speak more distinctly.

One of these muted criticisms appears in a clouded statement in one of the documents of the Pablo faction which Joe Hansen is taking apart in serial articles on another page of *The Militant*. Remarking that the Socialist Workers Party has "sounded the alarm on the fascist danger in the United States" — an accusation which cannot be denied — this document represents the campaign as a sign of our "pessimism", a conclusion which at the very best can be characterised only as a misunderstanding.

There is an obvious contradiction in this recognition of our campaign and the conclusion drawn from it. The woods are full of pessimists about the future of America in general, and about the prospects of American fascism in particular, but they are not organising any campaigns. It is not in the nature of pessimists to do anything of that sort. Pessimism is not merely a gloomy view of evils to come, but a capitulatory reconciliation to them in advance. The real pessimists are simply keeping quiet — concerned to prolong their own grub-like existence, and hoping to adapt themselves to whatever comes by acquiescence and conformity.

The attitude of the SWP is the opposite of all that. The character of a party is not indicated by what it sees and points out but rather by what it does about it. To accuse the SWP of “sounding the alarm on the fascist danger in the US” is only to pay to the party the indirect and unintended compliment of saying that it calls for a struggle against the danger. Pessimists don’t sound any alarms or organise any struggles. They just run for cover. Pessimist is just another name for quitter and capitulator.

Some other critical murmurs we have heard, which have not yet found their way into print, represent our campaign as an “exaggeration” of the fascist danger and an apprehension of its imminent victory. That is another misunderstanding. To sound the alarm against the danger of fascism in the United States — and to state frankly that its victory is possible — is by no means to be taken as an admission that fascism is already in power, or close to it. Neither is it to be taken as a prophecy that fascism is destined to conquer eventually.

That will be decided in the struggle. The aim of our campaign is to “alarm” the labour movement to the reality of the danger and, from that, to the necessity of organising the struggle on the right basis while there is yet time. The workers still have time to organise the countermovement, but they don’t have forever; and the sooner they recognise the central reality of the whole problem — that the issue will be decided in struggle — the better chance they will have to be the victors.

A fascist movement does not arise from the bad will of malicious demagogues. Neither is a radicalised labour movement created by the propaganda of revolutionists. Both are products of the incurable crisis of capitalism, which renders it unable to maintain a stable rule through the old bourgeois democratic forms. One way or another — these forms will be changed. The latent crisis, which has been artificially suppressed and disguised by war and military expenditures, promises to break out with redoubled fury in the coming period. This will spell impoverishment and misery for tens of millions of people, and it will generate an enormous discontent with the hopeless state of affairs. The unflinching result will be a widespread desire for a radical change.

This mass discontent and desire for a change can take one of two forms, or both of them at the same time.

The workers are the strongest power in modern society. If they show a resolute will to take hold of the situation and effect the necessary revolutionary change, the millions of desperate middle-class people — impoverished farmers, bankrupt small businessmen and white-collar elements — who have no independent power of their own, will follow the workers and support them in their struggle for power. This was demonstrated in the Russian Revolution of November 1917.

On the other hand, if the workers, as a result of inadequate or pusillanimous leadership, falter before their historical task, the allegiance of the middle-classes will rapidly shift to the support of the fascists and lift them into power. This alternative outcome of the social crisis was demonstrated in Italy and Germany.

How will things go in this country? The most “optimistic” way to answer that question is to tell the truth and to say once again: It will be decided in a struggle. Experience of other countries has already shown that a fascist movement and a movement of labour radicalisation, which arise in the first place from the same cause, make their appearance at approximately the same time. But they don't develop at the same rate of speed. The “subjective” factor, the factor of leadership, plays a big role here.

In Italy, and later in Germany, the movement of labour radicalisation had a big jump on fascism at the start. In these two countries fascism began to become a mass movement and a formidable power only after the workers had failed to carry through their revolution when they had the chance — in 1919-1921 in Italy, and in Germany from 1918 to 1923. The tumultuous rise of the fascist movement in those two cases, and its eventual victory, were the answer to the workers' default and the penalty for it.

Here in the United States we see a somewhat different development of the two antagonistic forces — fascism and workers' radicalisation — and a different rate of speed in their development. But these are only tentative manifestations which are not yet by any means decisive. The extraordinary thick-headedness of the labour bureaucracy in this country, and the lack of a revolutionary party with a base of mass support, have given incipient fascism the jump on the labour movement. A form of preventive fascism, of which McCarthy is indubitably the chief representative, has already got a head start and has widespread ramifications of support, inside the governmental apparatus as well as outside it. To recognise that fact is not to conjure up imaginary dangers but simply to recognise the obvious reality of the situation.

And this recognition of reality is the first prerequisite for the organisation of an effective countermovement. McCarthyism, as it appears today, is undoubtedly an *incipient* fascist movement, but that's all it is. The beginnings of a fascist movement aiming to take power in this country, and fascism already in power, are not the same thing. Between the one and the other lies a protracted period of struggle in which the issue will be finally decided. Whoever recognises that and “sounds the alarm”, and thus helps to prepare the struggle of the workers is doing what most needs to be done at the present time. Such a campaign is by no means a manifestation of pessimism, but the best antidote for it.

Power is on the side of the workers, and all the chances of victory are in their

favour. But they will never gain the victory without the most resolute struggle. The first prerequisite for that is an understanding of the irreconcilable nature of the struggle and what it's all about. The fate of America, and thereby of all mankind — that's what it's all about.

### 3. First principles in the struggle against fascism

The honourable Joseph McCarthy is not much of a thinker himself, but he has certainly stimulated a lot of thought, or what passes for it, in the minds of others. His unbridled aggressiveness in recent months has stirred up quite a fluttering in the dovecotes of so-called liberalism. The pontifical pundits, who yesterday thought the spectre could be exorcised by ridicule, or by pretending not to notice it, are now deep-thinking second thoughts about the Wisconsin demagogue and what he stands for.

Some apprehension of the deadly seriousness of McCarthyism has even begun to dawn in the thick skulls of the official labour leaders, and that alone is testimony to its penetrating power. It is now widely recognised that if the Wisconsin demagogue is crazy, he is crazy like a fox, and has to be taken seriously. It would also seem that the liberals, and the labour leaders who farm out their thinking to the liberals, are catching up with the SWP, as far as the definition of McCarthyism is concerned. Lately we see more and more references to McCarthy as an American Hitler. For example, Adlai Stevenson, who cannot justly be called an extremist, referred to McCarthy in his Miami speech as the apostle of a “malign totalitarianism”.

But we are still poles apart from the liberals and the labour skates on the main question, that is, the analysis of the causes of this preliminary manifestation of a “malign totalitarianism” — the Stevensonian euphemism for fascism — and the program for struggle against it. They all regard our revolutionary approach to the question as extreme and unrealistic. The unrealism, however, is on their side, because they separate McCarthyism from the social causes which have generated it, and which in fact, make such manifestations inevitable. If McCarthy did not exist American capitalism would have to invent him, or a reasonable facsimile.

In every great social struggle, those who understand its laws and foresee how it must develop according to those laws, have a big advantage over those who deal with surface manifestations. If the Socialist Workers Party had been the first and only group in American political life to state categorically that the rise of a fascist movement in the United States is an absolute certainty., and likewise the first to recognise McCarthyism as the preliminary manifestation of American fascism, and to call it by its right name — this was not guesswork in either case.

Our approach to the question of American fascism, as to every other political

issue, begins with and proceeds from a basic theory of American perspectives which is different from that of all other political parties and tendencies. That is not because we deny America's exceptional position in the world today. It is known, and has been said often enough, that American capitalism is in a different position from other sectors of the same world in other countries. I am even willing to repeat it once again if such reassurance will do anybody any good. But there are points of similarity as well as of difference, and the former are more important than the latter. That is the main point.

The American capitalists are richer and stronger than their counterparts in other lands. They are also younger and more ignorant, and therefore more inclined to seek a rough settlement of difficulties without diplomatic subtlety and finesse. All that does not change the fact that American capitalism operates according to the same laws as the others, is confronted with the same fundamental problems, and is headed toward the same catastrophe.

Of all the mistakes that can be made in judging the nature and prospects of the present social system in this country — and it is safe to predict that the American labour leaders, being what they are, will exhaust every possibility in this respect — the worst and most disorienting mistake is to regard American capitalism as *fundamentally* different; as immune from the operation of the same laws which determine the evolution and development of the same social system — through crisis, revolution and counter-revolution — in other countries.

This pernicious theory of "American exceptionalism", which seized the leadership of the American Communist Party in the latter days of the great boom of the twenties, disoriented the party in the great crisis which exploded soon afterward. This same theory, which is today held by the entire labour officialdom, is what disarms the American workers at the present time more than anything else, and gives the preliminary movement of American fascism such an easy advantage in the beginning.

We Trotskyists never belonged to this school of "exceptionalism". In 1946, right at the time when the editorial spokesmen of American capitalism were proclaiming the advent of the "American Century", and the American labour leaders were adjusting their so-called thinking to this illusory prospect, the Socialist Workers Party outlined a different and more realistic perspective for this country. The "Theses on the American Revolution", adopted by the party convention in that year, expressed its conception in the very first paragraph, as follows:

The United States, the most powerful capitalist country in history, is a component part of the world capitalist system and is subject to the same general laws. It suffers from the same incurable diseases and is destined to share the same fate. The overwhelming preponderance of American imperialism does not exempt it from the decay of world

capitalism, but, on the contrary, acts to involve it ever more deeply, inextricably and hopelessly. US capitalism can no more escape from the revolutionary consequences of world capitalist decay than the older European capitalist powers. The blind alley in which world capitalism has arrived, and the US with it, excludes a new organic era of capitalist stabilisation. The dominant world position of American imperialism now accentuates and aggravates the death agony of capitalism as a whole.<sup>a</sup>

This formulation of American perspectives, which governs all the work of the party, determines its analysis of McCarthyism as the incipient stage of American fascism; its categorical assertion that this movement will grow bigger, stronger and more cohesive with the development of the oncoming crisis; and its program for the struggle against it.

Some such manifestation as the present McCarthy movement was foreseen; and it needed only to make its appearance and score some initial successes, as it has manifestly done since the Brownell-Truman affair, for the party to react with its counter-campaign of agitation. The fact that the party members have recognised the necessity of the campaign, and responded to it with unanimous participation, is a sign that they were prepared for it by a long previous period of doctrinal education.

I speak of our view of American fascism as a doctrine; for we consider it a matter of principle that the war prosperity of US capitalism has been sick with a latent crisis from the start: and that this crisis is bound, sooner or later, to explode with devastating fury. This exploding crisis is certain to produce two antagonistic phenomena, a fascist movement on the one side, and a radicalised labour movement on the other.

The same social crisis which poses the threat of revolution in each and every capitalist country without exception, likewise generates the attempt to head off such a revolution by means which ruthlessly break down all the old forms of democratic rule. An organised fascist movement is an imperative necessity to the ruling class in every modern capitalist state threatened with social revolution, and is, in fact, a reflexive answer to it. In this view, the fascist movement is not something arbitrarily created by demagogues, to be talked down by appeal to reason and an alliance of all men of good will. Fascism is organised counter-revolution.

There is no law which forbids such a counter-revolutionary movement to get under way before the prospect and threat of revolution is clearly evident to all. A social revolution is immanent in the present position of American capitalism, and so is the counter-revolution. McCarthyism, as the first definite preliminary manifestation of

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<sup>a</sup> Cannon, "Theses on the American Revolution", *Fighting for Socialism in the 'American Century'* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2000), p. 147.

the counter-revolutionary movement, does not lose this basic characteristic simply because it is a preventive mobilisation against a revolution which has not yet taken visible form.

McCarthyite fascism has its cause and origin in the crisis of a social system which is pregnant with a revolution; and is in fact, the preliminary form of a preventive counter-revolution. A general hue and cry against McCarthyism won't amount to much until this is recognised.

#### **4. A new Declaration of Independence**

Fascism is a product of the crisis of capitalism and can be definitively disposed of only by a solution of this crisis. The fascist movement can make advances or be pushed back at one time or another in the course of this crisis; but it will always be there, in latent or active form, as long as the social causes which produce it have not been eradicated.

Looked at from this standpoint, the threat of American fascism is not a short-term problem, and by no means can it be eliminated at the next election — or, for that matter, at any other election. The American fascist movement, and the workers' struggle against it, will be a long drawn-out affair, from now to the final showdown, which in the end can be nothing less than a show down between fascist capitalism and the workers' revolution.

If the default of the labour movement has given American fascism, in the incipient and preventive form represented by the McCarthy movement, an advantage at the start, it still represents nothing more than an episode in a long struggle which will have many ups and downs. The real movement of American fascism is now only in its preliminary stages of formation, and the countermovement of the workers against it is not even started yet.

At any rate, American fascism, in its McCarthyite form or under some other aegis, is bound to provoke a militant resistance from the workers as soon as it passes over from its present preoccupation with a hunt for spies and "subversives" to a direct assault on the labour movement. Thereafter, the fascist movement will not develop on a straight ascending line. There will be zigzags on one side and the other, advances and set backs and periods of stalemate. In this protracted conflict the labour movement will have time to get a clearer picture of the real nature of the problem, and to mobilise its forces for an all-out struggle.

At the present time, the myopic policy of the liberals and the labour leaders is concentrated on the congressional elections next fall, and the presidential election to follow in 1956. A Democratic victory is counted on to deal a death blow to the McCarthy

aberration. “McCarthyism is becoming a danger all right, and it begins to look like a fascist movement; but all we need is a general mobilisation at the polls to put the Democrats back in power.” Such are the arguments we already hear from the Democratic high command, the literary liberals, the labour leaders and — skulking in the rear of the caravan, with their tails between their legs — the Stalinists.

This would really be laughable if humour were in place where deadly serious matters are concerned. The Roosevelt New Deal, under far more favourable conditions, couldn't find a way to hold back the economic crisis without a war. A Stevensonian version of the same policy, under worse conditions, could only be expected to fail more miserably. A Democratic victory might arrest the hitherto unobstructed march of McCarthyism while it re-forms its ranks. It might even bring a temporary moderation of the fury of the witch-hunt. But that's all.

The fascist movement would begin to grow again with the growth of the crisis. It would probably take on an even more militant character, if it is pushed out of the administration and compelled to develop as an unofficial movement. Under conditions of a serious crisis, an unofficial fascist movement would grow all the more stormily, to the extent that the labour movement would support the Democratic administration, and depend on it to restrain the fascists by police measures.

Such a policy, as the experience of Italy and Germany has already shown, would only paralyse the active resistance of the workers themselves, while giving the fascist gangs a virtually free rein. Moreover, by remaining tied to the Democratic administration, the labour movement would take upon itself a large part of the responsibility for the economic crisis and feed the flames of fascist demagoguery around the question.

That would be something to see: The fascists howling about the crisis, and stirring up the hungry and desperate people with the most extravagant promises, while the labour leaders defend the administration. The official labour leaders are fully capable of such idiocy, as they demonstrated in the last presidential election. But with the best will in the world to help the democratic administration, they couldn't maintain such a position very long.

The workers will most probably accept the recommendation of the labour leaders to seek escape from the crisis by replacing Republican rascals by Democratic scoundrels in the next election. But when the latter become officially responsible for the administration, and prove powerless to cope with the crisis, the workers will certainly draw some conclusions from their unfortunate experiences. The deeper the crisis, and the more brutal the fascist aggression fed by the crisis, the more insistent will be the demand for a radical change of policy and a more adequate leadership.

From all indications, the workers' discontent will be concentrated, at first, in the demand for a labour party of their own. This will most probably be realised. It will not yet signify the victory over fascism — not by a long shot — but it will represent the beginning of a countermovement which will have every chance to end in victory.

The break with the Democratic Party will be an implicit recognition that the fight against fascism is fundamentally a fight against capitalism in the period of its agonising crisis of disintegration and decay; and that there is no hope of victory for the workers in alliance with one of the parties of this same capitalism, and still less under its leadership, as at present. The formation of a labour party, based on the trade unions, will represent the American workers' Declaration of Independence. It will be a great turning point in American history. All developments will be speeded up after that.

It would be a great mistake, however, to speak of a prospective labour party as the solution of the problem of fascism. As in 1776, the new Declaration of Independence will signify not the end, but the beginning of the real struggle. The final outcome will depend on the program and the leadership. These will become the burning issues of an internal struggle for which the labour party will provide the main arena. It is from this point of view — clearly stated at all times — that we advocate the formation of a labour party and do all we can to hasten the day of its appearance.

## 5. Fascism & the Labour Party

Our campaign against McCarthyite fascism is an agitational campaign to arouse the labour movement to the advancing danger, and to stimulate a countermobilisation of the workers. Along this road we participate wholeheartedly in every practical action regardless of its official auspices. Such actions have a logic of their own and can lead, in a step-by-step process, to a final settlement of accounts with fascism and the social system which turns to fascism as a last resort.

The struggle against fascism is an affair of the working class, and the revolutionists would only defeat their own purpose by sectarian abstention from antifascist mobilisation of the class. The *Militant* is certainly correct in calling for a general congress of labour, to consider the question of a united antifascist struggle of the entire labour movement; and in advancing the slogan of a labour party as the general formula for the political independence of the workers in this struggle.

But even while advancing and popularising these slogans, which sooner or later will be accepted and supported by millions, we ought to explain their limitations as well as their advantages. The assertion that the labour party “will stop McCarthyism”, which makes its way into our agitation now and then, is an oversimplification which ought to be guarded against. A labour party would represent a gigantic step forward

in the struggle against fascism, but is not in itself a panacea for victory.

A fascist movement is an inherent necessity to the capitalist system at a given stage of its disintegration. Nothing will “stop fascism” short of the overthrow of capitalism. This is the simple truth of the matter, and if our party doesn’t tell this truth constantly it would have no reason to exist. There are plenty of others to sow confusion and foster illusions, and they are not entitled to any direct or indirect help from us. There is good ground for confidence that the workers will prevail in the final showdown, and that fascism will never come to power in America. But there is no ground for the assumption that the workers’ victory will be quick and easy, or that a mere demonstration of organised labour’s opposition would scare the fascist menace off the map.

The workers of Germany were politically organised in two great mass parties. Moreover, the communist and social-democratic parties of Germany, who shared the allegiance of almost the entire working class between them, were at least formally committed to a socialist program. They collapsed under the blows of fascism just the same, precisely because they hoped for the miracle of victory without a real struggle. That would surely happen in this country too, even with a labour party supported by the entire trade-union movement, if it should offer no more resistance to fascism than plaintive objections and parliamentary opposition.

I believe it is correct to say that a real first step toward a serious struggle against American fascism could hardly be anything less than the formation of a labour party. As long as the trade unions are allied to the Democratic Party and thereby, in effect, dependent on capitalist politicians to protect them against the onslaughts of a fascist party dedicated to a capitalist counter-revolution — they have not even begun to fight.

For that reason, it is perfectly correct to put the slogan of a labour party in the centre of our agitation and to concentrate all agitation around it. But in doing so, we have no need to oversimplify the fundamental problems posed by the beginnings of a fascist movement, and to think that we are doing our full duty if we stop at that. We must look far ahead — from the beginning of the struggle to the end — and keep the goal in mind in all that we do and say. We have to be with the workers in all their practical actions and in all their struggles. But we will be no help to them if we simply follow along, keep quiet about the workers’ present illusions and thereby foster them.

If we see the impending struggle in its true shape as a drawnout affair, we must recognise that coming developments will work powerfully to realise the slogans of the present. After that, new events will prepare the conditions for a widespread acceptance of the more advanced slogans required at a later stage of development. As a revolutionary party, we ought to foresee these developments and formulate the

necessary slogans in advance.

Looking to the future, as measured now only in years rather than in decades or generations, it can be expected that a labour party will take shape and command the allegiance of millions of workers from the start. This will represent a real beginning of the antifascist mobilisation of the American working class, which will just be another name for the mobilisation against capitalism, of which fascism is the final resort. But our agitation, and our participation in practical actions leading to this preliminary mobilisation, will have real importance and significance only to the extent that we keep the whole line of future developments in mind and prepare ourselves and others to meet them.

If the slogan of a labour party based on the trade unions is the most correct and necessary general slogan of agitation at the present time, the simultaneous explanation of the inescapable trend of developments toward a revolutionary showdown, and the building of a party of conscious revolutionists based on this perspective, cannot be put aside in the meantime. The two tasks go together; and taken together, they constitute the most important work of preparation for things to come.

## **6. Implications of the Labour Party**

The formal launching of an Independent Labour Party, the indicated next step in the preliminary mobilisation of the American working class against a rising fascist movement, will hit this country like a bomb exploding in all directions. It will not only blow up the traditional two-party system in this country and bring about a basic realignment in the general field of American politics. It will also mark the beginning of a great shake-up in the labour movement itself. The second result will be no less important than the first, and it should be counted on.

Under the present system the political stage is occupied by two rival capitalist parties, which in reality represent two different factions of the ruling class. The workers play merely the part of a chorus in the wings and have no speaking part on the stage. The formation of a labour party will change all that at one stroke. The struggle of capitalist factions for control of the government will be subordinated to the struggle of classes, represented by class parties. That is the real meaning of politics anyway.

The political realignment, brought about by the appearance of a labour party on the scene, cannot fail to have profound repercussions inside the labour movement. There will be a great change there too. The break of the trade-union movement with capitalist politics will coincide with the rise of the big opposition to the present official leadership. This rank-and-file opposition movement will most likely take shape in the struggle for a labour party, and be identified with it.

To imagine that the present official leaders can make the great shift from the Democratic Party to independent labour politics, and maintain their leadership smoothly in an entirely new and different situation, requires one to overlook the basic causes which will force them to make this shift. That is, the radicalisation of the rank and file and their revolt against the old policy. No matter how it is formally brought about, a labour party will be the product of a radical upsurge in the ranks of the trade unionists. The more the officialdom resists the great change, the stronger will grow the sentiment for a different leadership. Even if the present leaders sponsor the labour party at the start, they will be under strong criticism for their tardiness. The real movement for a labour party, which will come from below, will begin to throw up an alternative leadership in the course of its development.

The demand for a labour party implies the demand for a more adequate leadership., and the actual formation of a labour party, under the auspices of the present official leadership, would only accelerate the struggle under more favourable conditions. As revolutionists, we advocate the formation of a labour party with this perspective also in mind.

It is true that the simple fact of the formation of labour party, by itself, would have a profound influence in speeding up radical and even revolutionary developments. But those who are satisfied with that might as well retire from the field and let the automatic process take care of everything. The automatic process will not take care of anything except to guarantee defeats. The conscious revolutionists, however few their numbers may be in the beginning, are a part of the process. Their part is to help the process along by telling the whole truth. The fight for a labour party is bound up with the fight to cleanse the labour movement of a crooked and treacherous leadership, and cannot be separated from it. Those radicals and ex-radicals who are willing to settle for a labour party, leaving the question of program and leadership unmentioned, are simply inventing a formula for their own betrayal.

It is not permissible for revolutionists to pass themselves off as mere advocates of a labour party, pure and simple, like any labour faker who devotes Sunday sermons to this idea. A labour party headed by the present official labour skates, without a program of class struggle, would be a sitting duck for American fascism. That's the truth of the matter, and advocacy of a labour party isn't worth much if it leaves this truth unsaid. Large numbers of trade-union militants know this as well as we do. They know that the present official leaders are no good for a real fight on any front, and that they have to be thrown out before there can be any serious thought of a show down with American fascism.

Those militants who know the score on this ought to organise themselves in order

to conduct their struggle more effectively. This organisation of the class conscious workers can only take the form of a revolutionary party. There is no substitute for that. And since the SWP is the only revolutionary party in the field, there is no substitute for the SWP. Those workers who today already recognise the necessity of a labour party ought to take the next step and unite with the SWP in its effort to direct the struggle toward a revolutionary goal. ■

## Draft Resolution on the Political Situation in America

The excerpt below is from the draft political resolution prepared by the Political Committee of the SWP for the party's December 1954 convention. However, in the light of the rapid decline of McCarthyism in the latter half of 1954, this section of the resolution was revised and shortened, while retaining the political evaluation of McCarthyism as an incipient American form of fascism.

The convention resolution which was adopted stated:

In its incipient stage, a fascist movement is subject to far greater ups and downs than the democratic capitalist political machines that pave the way for it. In this it reflects the shifting moods of the middle class, constituting a barometer of the intensity of the crisis and the degree of political independence of the labour movement as well as the concessions or blows it receives from the liberal opposition to fascism. This is well illustrated in the case of the McCarthy movement. From obscurity, the Wisconsin demagogue became a national figure in a few months in 1950. By the end of 1953 his movement dominated the political scene. Then within a year, after the Army-McCarthy hearings, he suffered a sharp setback. The present eclipse of McCarthy should not be regarded as a definitive defeat of native fascism. The basic cadre is not smashed; in fact it is hardened by such experiences. Moreover, the basic causes of fascism, continuing to operate, will prepare a fresh revival of the movement. In the event of a social crisis, McCarthy's movement would show a rapid resurgence.

At the present conjuncture, however, the censure of McCarthy by the Senate — by far the most serious reverse he has sustained — signified unmistakably that the decisive sections of the ruling class are not ready to entrust their destiny to a fascist dictator. In the current policy of the ruling class, which seeks a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet bloc

instead of a headlong course toward an early war showdown, there is no place for McCarthy—except in the corner into which he has now been thrust.<sup>a</sup>

Reporting on the political resolution to the 1954 convention, Morris Stein evaluated the SWP's campaign against McCarthyism:

The delay in the war perspective was recognised by us some time ago and we explained it publicly in articles and speeches. What we did not do was correlate this factor with the prosperity that still holds despite considerable oscillations. These two factors — the deferment of war and the continued prosperity — preclude McCarthyism, the American form of fascism, from a feverish growth that could make it a contender for power in the immediate period before us.

Yet it must be admitted that we tended to give a contrary impression in our otherwise excellent campaign against McCarthyism during the past year, both in the press and in the first draft of our main political resolution, drawn up some months before the election, where we still made the fight against McCarthyism the main axis of our general line. While we recognised the possibility of a check being administered to McCarthy and his movement suffering a setback, we placed so much stress on the ultimate danger of fascism that it did not appear ultimate but immediate, and we failed to grasp the full implications of the censure move as a severe tactical defeat for McCarthy.<sup>b</sup>



## The political crisis

Symmetrical to the weakening of its international position, American capitalism has become increasingly malignant in its domestic politics. With the opening of the “cold war” in 1946 under Truman, American imperialism became the chief organiser of the world counter-revolution. It is not possible to revive, bolster, and sustain every reactionary force abroad, from the Japanese Mikado, Chiang Kai-shek, and Syngman Rhee in Asia to the former Nazis, Franco and the Vatican in Europe, without affecting the ideology of the home front. The antidemocratic views and moral corruption of these allies tend to become fashionable in America — all the more so in view of the losses abroad and the appearance of fresh obstacles requiring further postponement of war. The rantings of a Chiang Kai-shek or Syngman Rhee on the need for a supreme effort to reduce the anticapitalist countries to an open arena for imperialist exploitation strike a responsive chord. Their views become a factor in American politics.

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<sup>a</sup> SWP *Discussion Bulletin* A-26, December 1954.

<sup>b</sup> *Fourth International*, Winter 1955.

And while organising counter-revolution abroad, big business at home opened a reactionary drive to prepare the domestic front for World War III. American imperialism had sufficient resources in World War II to buy off the labour bureaucracy and a section of the working class, thereby blunting the opposition to war and gaining effective allies in keeping it under control. These resources are now gone. The sacrifices that would be demanded of the workers in the projected atomic conflict are of an order qualitatively different from anything demanded of the workers in the past. The ruling class does not count on buying off this opposition or seriously expect that the labour bureaucracy can contain it. Consequently they are resorting more and more to the club.

The unions are marked as the major objective, but the dollar plutocracy is not so stupid as to begin with a head-on struggle against such a force. Their strategy is “one at a time”. They have carefully singled out unpopular victims to whose defence the labour movement would be least likely to rally, and given them the works first. At the same time they have moved step by step to construct a police state capable of strangling all democratic institutions and traditions and transforming the trade unions into an integral part of the police-state apparatus. The norm of democracy in America is thus disintegrating. The disintegration has gone so far that for the first time in American history a political party has been outlawed.

The beginnings of the witch-hunt can be traced back to 1940 when Roosevelt signed the Smith “Gag” Act and personally gave the word to persecute the leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and Local 544 of the Teamsters. However, the need to appear as champions of democracy in the war, coupled with the support that both the labour bureaucrats and Stalinists gave the war, caused the Roosevelt administration to defer a wide-scale witch-hunt.

With the fall of Japan, a new chapter opened. The administration sought to begin its drive against the labour movement by driving a wedge into it, inspiring certain labour leaders to carry the ball first.

An attempt was made as early as 1945 to use the AFL as a bludgeon against the “communistic CIO”. This was short-lived. John L. Lewis, who appeared to be spearheading this manoeuvre, came into conflict with the government and the rest of the AFL bureaucracy. But it was sufficient to open the witch-hunt in a most important area — the unions themselves.

The Murray leadership of the CIO responded by opening a preventive witch-hunt of its own in the CIO. The Stalinist trade union leaders cooperated with Murray in this in the early stages, hoping to salvage their posts and positions by going along with the relatively mild edicts of the Buffalo CIO convention in 1946 ending the autonomy of

the CIO councils.

But with this infringement on trade-union democracy, the sluice gates were opened. The inner CIO witch-hunt gained momentum, finally engulfing every union and resulting in the expulsion of the Stalinist-dominated internationals.

The witch-hunt became the main political instrument in the drive against the democratic form of government. This was accompanied by administrative orders and a wave of federal and local antilabour legislation beginning with the Taft-Hartley Act in 1946, all of which was aimed at shackling the unions and reducing the Bill of Rights to a scrap of paper.

In the country as a whole, Truman's so-called "loyalty" order of 1947 — the domestic parallel to the launching of the "cold war" abroad — gave enormous impetus to the witch-hunt. From the government, the hunt for "reds" spread to the waterfront and to industries engaged in production of war material, and from there to industry as a whole. The purge swept Hollywood, radio, TV, the schools, and the churches. The government bureaucracy itself became a major hunting ground as the hysteria over the "red" danger charged the national atmosphere.

But a witch-hunt has a logic of its own. It can be kept going only by providing fresh sensations, each more startling than the last. Otherwise it tends to die down. Since the witch-hunt is an essential element of the drive to psychologise the people for war and for smashing the unions, big business cannot permit it to die down. And so the fresh sensations are provided. America is even given the electrocution of "spies".

At a certain point, however, the fantastic premises of the witch-hunt begin to appear to be true, especially to a nervous middle class. A desire thereupon arises in this section of the population for a drastic solution to the obsessing fear. Each new sensation, proving the "correctness" of the new outlook on reality, deepens this need. The witch-hunt thus becomes ready for a qualitative change. Or to put it in different terms, the witch-hunt becomes ready for division, the birth of something new.

In 1950 the first major signs of a qualitatively different kind of witch-hunt appeared when Senator McCarthy made his notorious speech at the Wheeling, West Virginia, Republican Women's Club attacking the US State Department of softness over "communist infiltration". The appearance of the obscure Wisconsin demagogue on the national scene was noted by us at the time as the possible beginning of a "super witch-hunt". The atmosphere in which the speech was delivered was "made to order", we said, "for the rise of a fascist movement that can quickly overtake traditional politics in the United States".

Since that time the witch-hunt drive has shown increasing signs of splitting into two fundamental segments — the witch-hunt of the capitalist regime as such which

develops organically so to speak from the old structure of bourgeois democracy towards a police state, and the witch-hunt led by McCarthy that has as its fundamental aim replacing the bourgeois democratic structure with a fascist regime founded on the destruction of the old democratic institutions and above all the destruction of the trade unions as independent working-class organisations.

In November 1953 this development was dramatically projected on the national arena when McCarthy in a radio-TV speech answered ex-president Harry Truman. Brownell's smear of Truman as the protector of Harry Dexter White, an alleged Russian agent occupying a high government position, had been properly characterised by Truman as "McCarthyism". After Truman's rebuttal, McCarthy took over, hurling his challenge November 24 at both the Democrats and Eisenhower Republicans and clearly delineating the independent fascist course of his faction for the 1954 elections.

These fireworks illuminated the whole national political scene, showing the emergence of a fascist nucleus in the administration and in the Republican Party and the crystallisation of an incipient fascist movement in the United States.

As McCarthy predicted at the time, "communism", or to speak more accurately, the formidable growth of his fascist movement, became the key issue in the 1954 elections. The development of McCarthyism has placed a question mark over the continued existence of every democratic institution in America, including not only the unions, but all political parties outside of McCarthy's faction. The death agony of the capitalist system, having caught up with the United States, finds its symptoms most glaringly displayed in the form of an acute political crisis from which no one, Republicans, Democrats, labour bureaucrats or any one else can escape. McCarthy is forcing America to confront its great historical alternative—fascism or socialism.

### **Our analysis of McCarthyism**

In response to the emergence of McCarthyism in November 1953 as a dominant issue in American politics, the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party developed an analysis and program of action for struggle against this fascist menace. The main points of the analysis are as follows:

The election of Eisenhower was a result of the prolonged refusal of the labour bureaucracy to lead the working class on to the road of independent political action and — in the absence of any political threat from the labour bureaucracy — the determination of big business to take direct control of the government apparatus. The victory of the Republican Party opened a new stage in the political development of the United States. Breaking the 20-year coalition between the labour bureaucracy and the capitalist state cultivated under Roosevelt and Truman, it ended the equilibrium that

had been achieved. All the reactionary, antilabour tendencies in the country were enormously accelerated.

The coalition, the aim of which was to tie the labour bureaucrats — and through them the trade unions — to the state, was different from similar coalitions in Europe. The workers had no mass political organisation of their own, and the labour bureaucrats were granted no government posts. This peculiar feature of the American version of coalitionism (or “Peoples Frontism”) underlined the contradiction between the enormous potential strength of the unions and the feeble political weight of the labour bureaucracy in the structure of capitalist politics. The very weakness of the labour bureaucracy made more certain their docility as junior partners and tied them all the tighter to the state, occasional protests notwithstanding.

The political neutralisation of the American working class by this process permitted the swing toward capitalist reaction to gain extraordinary momentum and weight. The point was quickly reached where the “coalition” itself could be dispensed with. And in turn the end of the coalition further accelerated the speed and depth of capitalist reaction.

The end of the coalition did not halt the efforts of big business to integrate the unions into the state apparatus. It simply changed the form. Whereas under Roosevelt and Truman it proceeded by and large through agreement and acquiescence of the union heads, under Eisenhower the tendency has been to utilise repressive antilabour legislation and intimidation of the union bureaucrats. This meant fresh acceleration of all the reactionary, antilabour tendencies in the country.

New impetus was given the witch-hunt; and, in moving toward a new equilibrium of class forces, the most favourable conditions were established for the growth of a fascist wing within the Republican Party.

As a product of the witch-hunt, McCarthyism continues to set the pace for the hysteria, but it is more than a witch-hunting excrescence of the capitalist state apparatus. It is a native American fascist movement in the early stages of formation. Having stepped out on the political arena as the murderous foe of the working class, it will not be subdued or contained by the old capitalist parties, even though they take fright, or by the well-meaning liberals or by any other force except the working class itself.

The mass base of McCarthyism is found principally in the middle class but also extends into sections of misguided, backward workers, many of them not organised in unions, segments of the extreme right-wing elements in mass production plants, declassed elements and bourgeois-minded student youth.

The McCarthyites have attracted a fringe of intellectual “theorists” and apologists. This is indicative of the depth of the crisis in the petty-bourgeois intellectual circles.

From among the renegades of Marxism as well as from the ranks of the young bourgeois intellectuals, a cadre of fascist publicists and brain trusters is being selected.

The framework of a national fascist organisation has already formed around McCarthy. All the fascist groups that flourished in previous periods but could never find a major national leader or focal point have rallied to McCarthy's banner. The Gerald L.K. Smith movement, the Coughlinites, the Christian Fronters, the Ku Klux Klan, the Minute Women, sections of the veterans organisations, vigilante groups, herds of professional scabs, sections of the underworld and the like are now linked by common devotion to the would-be American Hitler, Senator Joseph McCarthy.

The evidence is considerable that McCarthy has wide support among the police, particularly in the larger cities. And of course the sheriffs and deputies of the lynch-ridden South and South-West are natural allies of the rising McCarthyite movement.

In the legislative branch of the government, McCarthy has about 15 Senators, including Jenner, Mundt, Dirksen, and Butler. These are not necessarily fascist politicians. Some are merely reactionaries playing McCarthy's game for the moment. But they help further the fascist movement and constitute a strong segment of the apparatus at McCarthy's command.

In the executive department, McCarthy's influence is extensive. The Army-McCarthy hearings revealed to what lengths the professional military caste are prepared to go in conciliating the fascist Senator and cooperating with his aims. Even more illuminating is the growing encroachment of McCarthy's lieutenant Scott McLeod in the State Department. This fascist has set up a super-secret police apparatus that acts as a rival administrative command to Dulles himself.

On the financial side, McCarthy is supported by a group of fabulously wealthy oil tycoons of Texas. This is one of the most ominous signs of the growing power of the fascist movement. This section of the capitalist class not only supplies vast monetary resources, it constitutes a point of contact with other capitalists who can be recruited as backers of McCarthy. While they are a relatively new sector of big business and far from the decisive power in the capitalist class, their power is growing and they constitute the initial recruits for fascism in America's ruling class.

All attempts of the Democrats and Republicans to curb, crush, outflank, or brush aside McCarthy have ended in fiasco. The Army-McCarthy hearings, for instance, which resulted from the need of the Eisenhower administration to draw a line on the encroachments of McCarthy's independent power, cost nothing more to the fascist demagogue than the sacrifice of his Jewish Democratic attorney as a scapegoat.

On the other hand, the hearings counted as combat experience for McCarthy's mass following. All evidence shows that the basic core became hardened and drew

more closely around the banner of the fascist demagogue. It is true that some marginal supporters were repelled by the crudity of McCarthy's conduct. But the idea that this constituted a major setback for the fascist movement is nothing short of insane. The rise of Hitler likewise had its passionate division of the middle class for and against, with innumerable shifts and upsets. As a matter of fact, the very posing in the hearings of the question "for or against McCarthy?" constituted a major advance for American fascism. Moreover, the hearings brought into focus for millions the indispensable personal symbolism of the leader in the national political arena. There it will stay until the working class settles the issue definitively.

The struggle that broke into the open at the Army-McCarthy hearings showed most clearly that McCarthy's movement is not just another political clique that can be disposed of by the capitalist machine politicians once it transcends the limits of what is permissible in the code of bourgeois democratic politics. It is a new type of machine with independent power resting on a mass base of its own.

The hearings revealed both the depth of the cleavage between the two wings of the capitalist witch-hunters and the inability of the Eisenhower Republican and Democratic opponents of McCarthy to really smash the fascist's power. The basic reason for this impotence is that while an intolerable antagonism exists between the bourgeois state in its democratic form (even though it has been considerably modified in the direction of reaction) and the fascist form, nevertheless in the period of the death agony of capitalism, the bourgeois democratic government itself prepares the ground, sows the seed, cultivates and nourishes the development of fascism. The working class alone can cut this development short and save America from the catastrophe of a fascist dictatorship. But for this the workers must take power and extend democracy into the heart of industry on the basis of the socialist reconstruction of American society.

McCarthy's role as the architect of an American fascist movement is perhaps nowhere more vividly manifested than in his use of the blackmail technique. Blackmail is a favourite weapon of fascist demagogues. McCarthy, who has studied *Mein Kampf* very carefully, has taken a cue from Hitler, who was also able to make powerful use of the corruption that flourishes among democratic capitalist politicians in order to make them play the Nazi game in critical situations.

Like Hitler's charge of "14 years of shame and treason", McCarthy's charge of "20 or 21 years of treason", which he levels against the Democrats and somewhat more carefully but nevertheless plainly against Eisenhower, is the pivot of fascist demagogy. The treason charge marks the boundary between the official witch-hunt and its unofficial fascist offspring. In a sense it constitutes the witch-hunting of the witch-hunters. While the official witch-hunters boast about having crushed the domestic

“communist menace”, although continuing to whip up the hysteria over an alleged communist menace abroad, the McCarthyites charge that the US government has been infested with conscious and unconscious Russian agents for two decades and more. They claim that the highest military circles deliberately handed half of Germany and all of China to Moscow. They claim that the government is still honeycombed with spies and traitors.

The treason charge provides the peg for two further points that are crucial to the development of fascism. First, it is the basis for full-fledged social demagoguery as the crisis deepens. It already appeals to the disoriented and disturbed layers of the middle class, since all their woes, anxieties, fears, economic troubles, can be blamed on treasonous conspirators who sold America out to the Russians. It gives McCarthy the basis to parade before the people as their tribune and the avenger of the wrongs done them.

Second, the treason charge offers a convenient formula for taking power. As the fascists gain in strength they can step up the hysteria over this accusation. Use of the treason formula along this line was already apparent in the Army-McCarthy hearings. McCarthy called on the officers and government functionaries to funnel confidential information to him on anything involving “security”. As the outraged McCarthy opponents pointed out, he asked these officials and civil service employees to violate their oath of office. McCarthy’s reply was simple. The oath of office can be observed in essence only by violating its form because of the treasonous conduct of government heads due to laxity, stupidity ... or worse. This appeal for recruits was undoubtedly effective among careerists and those with fascist inclinations.

The unity of the developing fascist movement and the official witch-hunters is revealed basically in their common defence and advocacy of capitalism. More immediately their unity is revealed in common agreement on the witch-hunting formula: that is, that a “communist menace” exists and that it must be cut out root and branch. Their difference is expressed in disagreement over how this is to be achieved. The official witch-hunters give lip service to democratic and parliamentary forms; the fascists advocate rougher methods. Thus a rivalry exists in the witch-hunting field between the Eisenhower-Truman wing and the McCarthyites. Since the McCarthy wing does not hold power, while police-state legislation has been actually passed, first under Truman then under Eisenhower, it may seem that the greatest danger to democratic rights and civil liberties comes from the old-line political machines. This conclusion, however, is a mistake.

In the rivalry for pre-eminence in the witch-hunting field, the fascist tendency is the final winner. Truman’s witch-hunting, for example, turned out to be simply

preparation for the ascendancy of Brownellism which did not hesitate to turn the witch-hunting guns on Truman himself. Brownellism likewise simply prepares for the ascendancy of McCarthy. All the witch-hunting of the Eisenhower regime has not saved Eisenhower himself from becoming McCarthy's target. In fact Eisenhower's witch-hunting constituted essential preparation for his own victimisation.

The mechanics of this process is quite simple. Having conceded McCarthy's basic formula of the "communist menace", the official witch-hunters are caught in a dilemma. If they do not step up the witch-hunt, if they fail to continue to load the statutes with police-state measures, they are obviously being "soft on communism". McCarthy is the gainer. On the other hand, if they become more rabid and enact new savagely antidemocratic laws, they confirm McCarthy's basic formula and thereby enhance his prestige. To attack him then gives him the aura of a martyr. Doing McCarthy's work does not weaken him, it strengthens his entire position. The history of Hitler's rise in Germany is especially rich in lessons in this ABC of politics.

To think that Brownellism is a graver menace than McCarthyism is to grossly underestimate what would happen in America with McCarthy in the White House. This does not mean that Brownellism must be taken as a "lesser evil" than McCarthyism; the whole point is that McCarthyism must be fought by undertaking to oust both Republicans and Democrats from office and replacing them by a workers' and farmers' government.

The cleavage between what has been most recently called "Brownellism", after Eisenhower's attorney general, and McCarthyism, is a cleavage between the Bonapartist and fascist tendencies that have appeared on the American political scene. Just as we characterise McCarthyism as incipient fascism, so we must designate the drift toward police-statism in the ruling structure of American capitalism as budding Bonapartism.

In his analysis of the political situation in Germany immediately before Hitler took power, Trotsky characterised Bonapartism, or the "caricature of Bonapartism", as "a regime of military-police dictatorship". He defined the conditions for the rise of Bonapartism in the epoch of capitalist decline as follows:

As soon as the struggle of the two social strata — the haves and the have-nots, the exploiter and the exploited — reaches its highest tension, the conditions are given for the domination of bureaucracy, police, soldiery ... To be sure, such a government does not cease being a clerk of the property owners.<sup>a</sup>

Trotsky distinguished between the Bonapartism of the immediate prefascist period

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<sup>a</sup> Trotsky, "The Only Road", *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1971), p. 276.

and a relatively stable Bonapartism of capitalist rule as follows:

The Bonapartist regime can attain a comparatively stable and durable character only in the event that it brings a revolutionary epoch to a close; when the relationship of forces has already been tested in battles; when the revolutionary classes are already spent; while the possessing classes have not yet freed themselves from the fear: will not the morrow bring new convulsions? Without this basic condition, that is, without a preceding exhaustion of mass energies in battles, the Bonapartist regime is in no position to develop.<sup>b</sup>

Elements of Bonapartism in the capitalist government have been growing in the United States since the emergence of the American working class as a colossal power in the thirties. With the appearance of industrial unions, the United States became a house divided. Every major pulsation of the working-class struggle has tended to pose the question of who will be master. Every struggle, no matter how restricted its initial form, has tended to become a showdown struggle between the two powerful antagonists, American capitalism and the working class.

Under these conditions Bonapartist tendencies became quite marked. Roosevelt's infamous formula: "A plague on both your houses" during the Little Steel strike of 1937 when the workers were hit by a strikebreaking assault (Mohawk Valley Formula) was an expression of precisely this tendency.

During the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, the tendency toward Bonapartism — in particular American forms — can be traced in the feverish growth of the central state apparatus, the increased power of the military brass, the emergence of the secret political police (FBI) as a major independent entity within the government, the increase of the President's "emergency" powers (even to commit the country to war as in the Korean "police action"), and finally in the officially sponsored nationwide witch-hunt.

The partiality of the American capitalists for "Brownellism" at present, and their current hostility toward the "path of McCarthy" is shown by their yearning for an "economical road to fascism", or, as Trotsky characterised the Bonapartist policy of the French bourgeoisie in the pre-World War II period, "fascism on the cheap".

In our definitions of both McCarthyism and Bonapartism, where we draw heavily on the European experience, it is necessary to guard due proportions. What we have is an anticipatory mobilisation of the political forces threatening to atomise the American proletariat. These forces show a marked maturity even before the full consequences

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<sup>b</sup> Trotsky, "The Only Road", *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1971), p. 278.

of the social crisis have appeared in the United States. The maturity of the tendency toward a “preventive” reactionary settlement with the working class stems, as we have indicated, from the desperate position of American capitalism in the world arena on the one hand, and on the other from the labour bureaucracy’s strangulation of the independent class movement of the workers.

### **Perspective of American fascism**

We say that American fascism is “incipient”. By that we do not intend to minimise the danger. The fascist movement always remains incipient until a major default by the working class in one or more revolutionary situations permits the fascist movement to develop into a more advanced form. This occurs when successive defaults alienate the middle class to such an extent that the fascist demagogue can mobilise the ruined and crazed section into effective shock brigades for a counter-revolutionary civil war against the working class.

McCarthyism has not reached that stage and there is every reason to believe that the American working class can be mobilised to crush it before it ever reaches that stage. But there are a number of features about American fascism that are different from its European forerunners. That such a formidable mobilisation of the fascists has already taken place before the social crisis of American capitalism has led to the mass radicalisation of the working class as a polarising centre for the middle class, is a fact that must be assessed and understood.

The powerful initial flush of American fascism stems from the weakened world position of the United States. The reflex of the ruling class, transmitted through a witch-hunt of unprecedented scope, intensity and duration, has served to channelise the deep disturbances in the middle class in the direction of McCarthyism. This is one of the consequences of a default in leadership by the American working class due to the paralysing role of the labour bureaucracy. After the rise of the CIO the bureaucrats managed to block formation of an independent labour party that would have attracted the middle classes. During World War II, they supported Roosevelt and his war policy, once more refusing to take the road that could have attracted a middle class that was uneasy over the slaughter and its consequences. Finally, in the Korean experience, the labour bureaucrats again supported Truman and the warmongers in the teeth of mass opposition to the adventure, not only among the workers but among the middle class, primarily the farmers. These successive defaults of leadership made possible the present turn toward McCarthyism by considerable sections of the middle class who find no other means, in the absence of working-class leadership, of expressing their discontent and nervousness.

Thus taking the political scene as a whole, the mass character of McCarthy's following in a certain sense constitutes an anticipatory counter-formation to the coming radicalisation of the working class, a radicalisation that can be expected to take explosive forms.

With a sharp upsurge of radicalism among the workers this initial advantage enjoyed by American fascism can be rapidly reversed. The McCarthyites would become isolated. The greatest danger then would be the wave of illusion, assiduously nurtured by the Stalinists and the labour bureaucrats, that fascism had been defeated and that a new coalition with the liberal capitalists would bar its resurgence.

What about a different variant; namely, a "cold" victory for the fascists? If McCarthy, for instance, captures control of the Republican Party and becomes its presidential candidate, say in 1956, would this open the possibility for a fascist regime to come to power? Would this mean that the working class had been denied its historic opportunity to establish a workers' and farmers' government?

It is not excluded that McCarthy and those around him can be absorbed by the Republican machine. If they do so merely as individuals then we would have witnessed the dissolution of a group of leaders of incipient fascism into the basic bourgeois democratic political machine which has more and more tended to set up a Bonapartist police state regime characterised by the enormous power of the military and of the secret political police. This type of withdrawal was seen in the case of Mayor Hague, a potential candidate for the role of American Hitler in the late thirties. But if McCarthy follows this course, the role of fascist leader will fall to someone else who will pick up the strings by denouncing McCarthy's "treason and betrayal".

Another possibility is that McCarthy in the White House utilises this position to mobilise the middle class against the workers and their organisations. This would give him maximum "legal" cover for an all-out fight to consolidate his power and carry out his fascist program. For the working class it would mean a desperate struggle to safeguard the Bill of Rights from subversion by the highest official in the land. The historic opportunity of the working class to put a workers' and farmers' government in power would then occur in a different form and under more difficult circumstances than if they had mobilised earlier.

At present, however, the tendency of development is along different lines marked by the growing cleavage between the Bonapartist wing and the fascist wing.

A temporary deal with the Soviet Union would deepen this cleavage, as the economic and social crisis in America grew more profound. The outbreak of war, on the other hand, would give the Bonapartist elements, Eisenhower-Brownell, etc., the upper hand and enormously strengthen the trend toward a police state. The distinctive

fascist tendencies might even be smothered by such a turn of events. At the next stage, when the hopeless war brought ruin and devastation and frightful suffering, the polarisation of the country into a fascist and a revolutionary proletarian camp would proceed with terrific speed. ■

# McCarthy — A ‘Bourgeois Democrat’?

## A Reply to Vern & Ryan

By Joseph Hansen

In their “Resolution on McCarthyism”, (*SWP Discussion Bulletin*, A-24, November 1954) Dennis Vern and Sam Ryan take the curious position that McCarthy is only a “bourgeois democrat”. As a counterweight to this they take the still more curious position that all bourgeois democrats are “potential fascists”. From this they draw the conclusion that a campaign that singles out McCarthyism as the American form of fascism is ill-advised and even helps prop up the bourgeois order.

The net effect of this campaign is not to hurt McCarthy, or the bourgeois state, but to excuse the bourgeois state for the indisputable evidences of its bourgeois character, and thus hinder the proletariat in its understanding that the bourgeois-democratic state is an “executive committee” of the capitalist class, and that only *a workers state* can offer an appropriate objective for the class struggle. [Emphasis by Vern-Ryan, as in all cases where I quote them.]

To make a complete analysis of the Vern-Ryan position, to untangle everything they tangle up, and put in proper perspective the things they do have right would keep the mimeograph tied up for quite a while; and the analysis, I am afraid, would tend to become as boring and tough to chew on as its subject matter. I propose therefore only to take up the most glaring faults of the Vern-Ryan resolution and let it go at that.

The fundamental error in the Vern-Ryan position on McCarthyism, apparent in the first paragraph of their document, is methodological: “... a wide range of American politicians, from Senator Humphrey and Douglas on one hand, to McCarran and Dirksen, on the other, are all potential fascists ... This “fascist potentiality”, derives from their “support of the capitalist order”. And the capitalist order infuses them with fascist potentiality because “in certain circumstances capitalism can be temporarily maintained only through the intercession of fascism”.

This position is carried with dispatch to its logical absurdity in the second paragraph of the document. “Any supporter of the capitalist system, is by virtue of that support, a *potential fascist* ...”

How shall we apply that theory? Shall we say, for instance, that the social-democrats, having betrayed Marxism, objectively support the capitalist order; and that therefore, all social-democrats are potential fascists? And since every beast must have its name, shall we call the social-democrats — social fascists?

Vern and Ryan, we hope, will note the close resemblance of that position to the one with which the Stalinists helped pave the way for Hitler.

Naturally they will object, and with justice, that they drew precisely the opposite conclusion from their premises — that none of the capitalist politicians in Washington are actual fascists, not even McCarthy; they are all “bourgeois democrats”. I will readily grant that this conclusion is inescapable from the premises on which Vern and Ryan stand. I only call attention to the fact that precisely the opposite conclusion is equally inescapable — they are all fascists,

We are caught in this mire because of the impulsion of Vern and Ryan feel to make McCarthy out as anything but a fascist. If he is not a fascist, he must be a bourgeois democrat. If this is true of McCarthy, it must be all the more true of the other current capitalist politicians. Where then will the fascist politicians eventually come from? Either something totally new and unexpected will appear or the bourgeois democrats will become fascists. But if they can turn into fascists, it becomes of crucial importance to determine the point of qualitative change.

Out of this mire, by spontaneous generation as in the days when formal logic ruled supreme, arise the categories Vern and Ryan need — “potential fascist” now-a-bourgeois-democrat, “actual fascist” was-a-bourgeois-democrat, and the “two inescapable and basically essential features”, which we will consider later, that determine when a bourgeois democrat becomes a fascist.

As we have seen already, however, it doesn’t require a very powerful lens to discover that a potential fascist is an actual fascist and that therefore all of Vern-Ryan’s “bourgeois democrats” are fascists. Something, it would appear, is wrong with premises that permit such latitude in the conclusion to be drawn from them. What is it?

Let us examine the links of the chain of reasoning offered us by Vern and Ryan: (1) At a certain stage the capitalist order can be maintained only through fascism. (2) Anyone who supports the capitalist order must therefore eventually accept fascism. (3) Anyone who eventually accepts fascism is a potential fascist. (4) Since all capitalist politicians support the capitalist order, they are all potential fascists.

The error in logic is a gross one. It is known technically as the Fallacy of Division.

What is of true something as a whole is mistakenly held to be equally true of each of its parts. For example: “Common table salt, a compound of chlorine and sodium, is good on french-fried potatoes. Therefore, chlorine and sodium is good on french-fried potatoes.” But chlorine is a poisonous gas and sodium a light metal that would react most violently when it touched one’s mouth, if it hadn’t done so already on the potatoes.

The fact that Vern and Ryan were probably ignorant of the name of their error is no excuse for having committed it. It is possible to think straight without being a trained logician, although I will readily grant that a little training helps. In the case of Vern and Ryan it might have helped them avoid becoming so dazzled by words like “potential” and “actual”. Both Vern and Ryan are perfectly aware that the capitalist order as a whole evolves toward a fascist stage and is therefore not only “potentially” fascist but “actually” fascist in tendency. An ounce of thought should have shown that this premise does not permit us to conclude that *all* capitalist politicians are “potential” fascists or “actual” fascists in tendency even though they all support the capitalist order. Historically the capitalist class as a whole supports fascism, but not all its parts. And the “whole” can be represented by the economically dominant minority.

Had Vern and Ryan used the dialectic method, they would have been less likely to commit such a blunder. They saw what was common in fascists and liberals — both species of politicians support the capitalist order. It was an achievement to see this and a good illustration of the fact that formal logic, even unconscious formal logic, has a certain power. The dialectician, however, begins with that. Having discovered the “one” — what unites the fascist and liberal politicians — he turns his attention to “division of the one”; that is, the difference between them. It doesn’t require much analysis to indicate that the difference can develop into contradiction. Historical experience shows us that heads can roll, particularly the heads of liberals — even though they faithfully support the capitalist order. In fact, it is precisely because they faithfully support the capitalist order that their heads roll.

This paradox would remain inexplicable if we stayed at the level that sees only the unity between fascists and liberals. To the logic of contradiction, however, the paradox is easily resolvable. First of all, capitalist politicians are interested primarily in the welfare of a particular section of the class they represent. Differences in particular interests can lead to sharp clashes between capitalist politicians, as we see every day, not only between major machines but within the machines. A capitalist politician tends to become identified with the interests of a particular group and the changes in the relative weight and importance of the group are projected on the national political scene as changes in his personal standing. Since the development of capitalism itself

pushes to the forefront successive economic groupings, these are reflected in a succession of different types of politicians. In this framework, personal characteristics play a considerable role in the choice of individuals to play these leading roles. We may be sure, for instance, that Taft's innermost convictions were a faithful reflection of the outlook of the Cleveland real-estate barons and that he acted in full sincerity out of those convictions. That was an essential personal requirement to achieve leadership of the grouping. At that stage of capitalist development where the general interests of the system are best expressed in democratic forms of rule, the particular grouping whose interests most closely coincide with those forms will be found dominant and its individual politicians take the centre of the stage. When the general interests of the system come into contradiction with democratic forms, this signifies that a different grouping has come to the forefront, and along with it, with more or less delay, a different set of political leaders.

I have stated this in the most condensed and abstract way with the understanding that in actual life these generalities are subject to considerable modification. However, we must begin with such abstractions to find the points of departure for our own policies in the national arena.

For instance, if a regime that rules in principle through democratic forms is threatened by the rise of a fascist movement (which is committed in principle to the destruction of democratic forms), it would be a fatal error to consider the liberal regime as potentially fascist. And it would be just as fatal not to recognise the real character of the fascist movement and to consider it only "bourgeois democratic". In fact the two errors are simply two sides of a single fault — *incapacity to differentiate*. The truth is, that as the capitalist representatives of democratic forms, the liberals are threatened with annihilation at the hands of the fascists. But democratic forms include freedom of speech, of assembly, of the press and the right to organise in unions and political parties. In a struggle involving those rights, the working class cannot stand aside. To do so would mean its own atomisation at the hands of the fascists.

Let us look once again at the opening paragraph of the Vern-Ryan document: "... a wide range of American politicians, from Senator Humphrey and Douglas on one hand, to McCarran and Dirksen, on the other, are all *potential* fascists ... Giving the authors of that concept the benefit of the doubt, perhaps we should assume that, confused over the complex interrelationship between liberals like Humphrey and Douglas and fascists like McCarthy, they impatiently decided to dispose of the problem by considering them all one reactionary mass and labelling them inappropriately enough — "bourgeois democrats". The proposed solution, it must be admitted, has the attraction of simplicity if nothing else.

Liberals like Humphrey and Douglas feel threatened by fascists like McCarthy. They also feel insecure, quailing at what must seem to them virtually impossible tasks — maintaining prosperity and carrying forward the war program to its conclusion. They have lost confidence in the efficacy of democratic forms, which means that as politicians they have lost confidence in themselves and their own future. Nevertheless, they cling desperately to their positions and attempt to shore them up. Thus in face of the pressure from McCarthy, they even try to go him one better. They try to outflank the fascist. Hence their prominence in espousing such legislation as outlawing the Communist Party. Superficially they thus appear even worse than McCarthy. From their viewpoint, however, it is only protective colouration. They still remain liberals. And they are right; they are only liberals. All their witch-hunting will not save them should McCarthyism come to power.

Fascists like McCarthy, on the other hand, feel in tune with the times. Despite the blows and setbacks they take as well as give, they display confidence in themselves and their future as if they knew that so far as the capitalist system is concerned, their turn is next, even though it may take a few years. Hence their arrogance and their contempt for the liberals of both parties. They can afford to let the liberals run interference on witch-hunt legislation; it helps them, just as the witch-hunt itself prepared the way for their entry as major figures on the political arena although the witch-hunt was not started by them but by the Democrats under Truman. Ironically, the very measures the liberals sponsor in their own search for protective colouration provide protective coloration for the McCarthyites in extending the witch-hunt and building their own forces. It's all been legalised with the blessings of the liberals.

In this contest between the liberals and the fascists should the working class abstain with a curse on both their houses? Should we follow the method of Vern and Ryan and refuse to separate McCarthy “in any way from all the other supporters of capitalism” and call him, as they do, nothing but another “bourgeois democrat”? To do so would be to follow the politics of abstention and actually facilitate McCarthy's work.

The correct course is based on the major differentiation between the liberals and fascists. We defend the democratic forms against the fascist threat. We do so by attacking the liberals for capitulating to the fascists, for performing their own historic function of paving the way for the fascists, for betraying the people to McCarthyism. From the concessions the liberals make to the fascists — concessions of deep injury to the labour movement — we demonstrate the necessity of removing the liberals from power. We fight to replace them with working-class politicians at the head of an independent labour political movement capable of defending labour's rights and gains and of stopping McCarthyism. And to accomplish that task we level our fire in the

labour movement at the bureaucrats who support the liberals and thereby stand in the way of truly representing labour's interests and of smashing the fascist threat. Is that so difficult to understand?

### How to tell a fascist from a liberal

To concretise our analysis still further, let us make one more observation about the interrelationship between liberals and fascists. If McCarthyism should succeed in mobilising the middle class and getting the nod from Wall Street, it can be expected that some liberal politicians would knock at fascist headquarters for entrance and assignment to posts in the movement, no matter how modest — even posts as window dressing. A few would undoubtedly be accepted. The youngest of them might succeed in living down their “red” past and carving out some kind of career in the fascist machine. The older ones would be nothing but pitiful captives. On the other hand, if the McCarthyites were dealt a major defeat we could expect a share of them to appear hat in hand before the Republican and Democratic machine bosses, and there would be no doubt whatsoever that some of them would be absorbed as part of the effort to liquidate them as an opposition.

At this point, I suppose, we might expect Vern and Ryan to demand a minute to ask a “damaging” question: “First you admit that the so-called liberals try to outdo McCarthy in passing police-state legislation and even succeed in this. Then you admit that liberals can become fascists, which is what we contended all along, and that fascists can also switch over. In view of this, would you mind informing us just how you propose to tell a fascist from a liberal if you reject our position? It seems to us that you have helped confirm what we pointed out in our document; namely, that in determining ‘the *lowest* common denominator’ you cannot have less than its promulgation of a ‘radical’ program and organisation of ‘special bodies of armed men’. To quote from our document: “These two features — a radical program of “anticapitalism” and special armed gangs — furnish the two inescapable and basically essential features of a fascist movement.’ Consequently, so far as McCarthyism is concerned, ‘Until the movement outlines a “radical” program and organises special bodies of armed men around it, it may be a reactionary and a dangerous movement, *but it is not fascist*, and will very likely degenerate into the well stocked limbo of previous middle class movements.’”

The fact that Vern and Ryan are prepared to recognise that McCarthyism can be termed “fascist” if and when it advances a “radical” program and “organises special bodies of armed men around it” is to be welcomed. At that time we may look forward to finding ourselves in common agreement in our analysis of the movement and what should be done about it. Meanwhile, however, we face a political problem that cannot

be evaded: What should be done right now to prepare the working class so that it can properly defend itself if and when McCarthyism advances a “radical” program and “organises special bodies of armed men around it”? Or can we complacently adopt the Vern-Ryan position and assure the working class that McCarthyism “will very likely degenerate into the well-stocked limbo of previous middle class movements”? The posing of the problem shows at once how sharply the Vern-Ryan position diverges from the program of action needed to really cause McCarthyism to “degenerate”.

Is our science so limited that we cannot tell a fascist movement until its “two inescapable and basically essential features” have reached full-blown forms? Are we forced to call its leaders “bourgeois democrats” before then? It seems to me that we should be able to do better than that. Let us start with ordinary common sense.

As Vern and Ryan observe: “Senator McCarthy has been branded a fascist over a number of years now by a great many bourgeois politicians such as Tydings, Flanders, Benton, Eisenhower’s brother, Mrs. Roosevelt, and Adlai Stevenson.” To this evidence, our spetzes respond, “Marxism disagrees”. The common opinion of the bourgeois politicians is brushed aside because McCarthyism doesn’t fit in with the preconceived ideas of Vern and Ryan. Naturally we must disregard factional exaggerations made by the bourgeois opponents of McCarthy but also we must note the damage that is done them by their admission. What do they have to gain as supporters of capitalism by confessing that American capitalism has spawned — a fascist movement? In addition, we should note this important fact, which seems to have escaped Vern and Ryan, that these bourgeois politicians represent leading figures in both the Republican and Democratic parties. They do not consider McCarthy a specifically *Republican* phenomenon, but something apart and in opposition to *both* parties. The unanimity of opinion, furthermore, shows that it does not represent individual aberrations, but represents the general view in America’s ruling circles. Those circles should know what McCarthy is.

In this respect, one outstanding fact alone must be duly weighed: that is the financial support a section of the ruling class is already providing McCarthy. Do Vern and Ryan actually believe that the Texas oil tycoons consider McCarthy only another bourgeois democrat? Or lacking the advantages of Marxist method, have the Texas billionaires made a mistake, feeding oats to the wrong horse?

If it is any consolation to Vern and Ryan, it can be expected that these ruling circles and the bourgeois politicians, who now admit that McCarthy is a fascist, may in the future adopt the Vern-Ryan position — that McCarthy is only another “bourgeois democrat”. That will be about the time they decide to turn to the fascist solution; and McCarthy, advancing his “radical” program and organising “special bodies of armed

men”, needs such propagandistic camouflage. What will Vern and Ryan then say about the earlier admissions of the bourgeois politicians?

In addition to the evidence from bourgeois ruling circles that McCarthy is a fascist, we have the evidence of European opinion. Vern and Ryan leave this completely out of consideration, yet it is based on the most solid grounds — actual experience in the rise of a number of fascist movements that have displayed considerable differences. Are we to simply dismiss the warning of European public opinion, which is virtually unanimous in considering McCarthy a fascist and which has been shouting to the American people to wake up, heed what happened in Italy, Germany and Spain, and take action while McCarthyism is still weak? To brush aside that opinion, as Vern and Ryan do, is to close our ears to the voice of experience in order to avoid profaning the preconceived forms we demand that McCarthyism meet before we will grudgingly concede that it is indeed a fascist movement. The experience of the European working class, earned at such cost, deserves better from us.

Still confining ourselves to the empiric level, let us take another look at McCarthy himself. Here, I offer in evidence the opinions of Vern and Ryan, stripped however of their theoretical interpretation. We have already seen that the Vern-Ryan use of the “potential-actual” categories constituted a gross error in logic. Through the error they were able to take the actual fascist McCarthy, convert him into a “potential” fascist, and therefore through their wrong method into nothing but a “bourgeois democrat”. By pointing out the error, we topple the entire Vern-Ryan construction with one kick. But out of the ruin we are able to salvage a few bricks. For instance, they admit that McCarthy “does have personal qualities that equip him for fascism’s task”. How did they arrive at that conclusion? By what criteria? Obviously in the same way that such people as Flanders, Eisenhower’s brother, Mrs. Roosevelt, and Adlai Stevenson did. Through observing McCarthy in action.

They go even further. “McCarthy has openly been — possibly as part of a conscious plan to present himself some day as an American fascist leader — not even as ‘antilabour’ as some of the other bourgeois democrats.” How did Vern and Ryan reach the conclusion that McCarthy may be operating today with a “conscious plan” to present himself in the future as “an American fascist leader”? By what criteria? Again, obviously, by observing McCarthy in action. But isn’t a politician who follows a conscious plan to present himself as a fascist leader an *actual* fascist? Most telling of all is the recognition by Vern and Ryan of McCarthy’s obvious purpose — to appear “not even as ‘antilabour’ as some of the other bourgeois democrats”. Doesn’t that very fact give an intimation of McCarthy’s *potential* capacity to use radical-sounding demagoguery?

So far we have confined ourselves to only some of the facts that hit you in the eye.

Let us extend our range a bit and see what we can turn up. In accordance with the Marxist method, we must examine the origin of McCarthyism, something Vern and Ryan forgot to do. The record is absolutely clear. When McCarthy first won national prominence in 1950, we noted that he had done so through a “super witch-hunt”. This was an obvious fact, but our conclusion is also interesting from the viewpoint of methodology. As Marxists we noted a qualitative difference in the witch-hunt. We “differentiated”, found “a division of the one”. Then we followed the development of that difference until it became so great that the author of the witch-hunt, Truman, was himself witch-hunted. We were cautious, even conservative about applying our label. However, when not only Truman, but at the same time, Eisenhower in the White House, was witch-hunted; when it was clear that McCarthy had a large middle-class backing, that he was organising independently, that every fascist grouping known to us since 1937 was hailing him as leader, no mistake was possible — a fascist movement had crystallised out of the witch-hunt. That was when we put the correct label on McCarthyism as the American form of fascism. The fear, and even panic, of such well-known liberals as Humphrey, Douglas, Lehman, and the rest, in face of McCarthy’s rise only confirmed the correctness of the designation.

In contrast to this method of determining the difference between McCarthyism and the bourgeois democracy that spawned it, note the position of Vern and Ryan: “Fascism in America will not arrive as an integral part of the present witch-hunt; it is ironic but true that *it is not the success but the failure* of the witch-hunt that will force American capitalism to take the fascist path.”

McCarthyism is an “integral part of the present witch-hunt”. That’s absolutely true. And it’s just as absolutely not true. Vern and Ryan do not see any differentiation in the witch-hunt. They view it statically. The witch-hunt is only a witch-hunt. “A” = “A”. And “A” can’t possibly equal anything else. Small wonder they are unable to see a fascist movement proceeding from the witch-hunt. But viewing it dynamically and not statically, that is, dialectically and not purely formally, can we say that the witch-hunt is still what it was when Truman started it? Did Truman begin by witch-hunting himself? Did McCarthy set the pace in 1947? By what magic did McCarthy come to national prominence if there was no internal differentiation in the witch-hunt?

The static, pigeonhole approach leads Vern and Ryan into a further serious deviation from Marxist method. The witch-hunt, if I interpret them correctly, is a single chapter that will fail, leaving us with nothing new as a heritage of its existence. It will drop into the “limbo” as one of a series that have dropped into that chute like empty tomato cans. Something else, perhaps unforeseen will then develop. Maybe even a movement headed by such bourgeois democrats as Douglas or Humphrey or

Lehman! Who knows? This will finally prove to be genuine fascism. The intermediate links are thus left out completely. Vern and Ryan have failed to take into consideration the continuity of American fascism.

Although in obverse form, this is in essence the same methodological error committed by the Cochranites in relation to the continuity of the revolutionary socialist movement in America. The Cochranites crossed off the past of the revolutionary movement and, for the future, think something novel, without any links with the past, will emerge. Vern and Ryan utilise the same method in relation to fascism in the US.

They do not grasp the central fact that so far as the development of capitalist politics is concerned, the “success” of the witch-hunt is manifest precisely in the emergence of McCarthyism; that is, the American form of fascism. To conclude that the witch-hunt has succeeded only in grouping the “lunatic right-wing fringe” behind McCarthy, to use the words of Vern and Ryan, is to repeat the error of those who considered Hitler nothing but a “lunatic” at the head of a “lunatic right wing fringe”. What is most lunatic is to repeat such an error with McCarthy after the experience with Hitler. It is an instructive example, however, of how similar methods lead to similar results.

### **Vern & Ryan set Trotsky straight**

The reference in the draft resolution to Mayor Hague of Jersey City is picked up by Vern and Ryan for a dissertation on what they consider to be an error by Trotsky. The pertinent quotations are taken from a transcript of a discussion with Trotsky published in the February 1946 *Fourth International*. The entire discussion deserves careful study, but here we will confine ourselves to the alleged error.

In the United States it might be different but the fundamental tasks are the same [Trotsky said]. I read about the tactics of Hague. It is a rehearsal of a fascist overthrow. He represents small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened. He has his gang which is absolutely unconstitutional. This is very, very contagious. With the deepening of the crisis it will spread all over the country and Roosevelt who is a very good democrat will say: “Perhaps it is the only solution.”

It was the same in Italy. They had a minister who invited the socialists. The socialists refused. He admitted the fascists. He thought he could balance them against the socialists, but they smashed the minister too. Now I think the example of New Jersey is very important. We should utilise everything, but this especially”.

Further on, Trotsky continues:

In Newark the Mayor begins to imitate Hague and they are all inspired by Hague and by the big bosses. It is absolutely certain that Roosevelt will observe that now in the

crisis he can do nothing with democratic means. He is not a fascist as the Stalinists claimed in 1932. [Or a “potential” fascist — J.H.] But his initiative will be paralysed. What can he do? The workers are dissatisfied. The big bosses are dissatisfied. He can only manoeuvre until the end of his term and then say goodbye. A third term for Roosevelt is absolutely excluded.

The imitation of the Newark mayor has tremendous importance. In two or three years you can have a powerful fascist movement of American character. What is Hague? He has nothing to do with Mussolini or Hitler, but he is an American fascist. Why is he aroused? Because the society can no longer be run by democratic means.

It would of course be impermissible to fall into hysteria. The danger of the working class being outrun by events is indisputable, but we can combat this danger only by energetic, systematic development of our own activity and under adequate revolutionary slogans and not by fantastic efforts to spring over our own heads.<sup>a</sup>

Now let’s hear from Vern and Ryan.

It would be futile, and the evidence of a conception of Trotsky as some kind of infallible “pope”, were one to deny that this analysis is primarily incorrect. A third and a fourth term for Roosevelt was clearly not “absolutely excluded”; Roosevelt did not observe that in the crisis he can do nothing “with democratic means”; nor was his initiative “paralysed”; he did not manoeuvre until the end of his term “and then say goodbye” (except in Sinclair Lewis’ book). With his accustomed bourgeois democratic methods Roosevelt maintained the democratic state as an adequate instrument of the American capitalist class, was elected to not only a third term but to a fourth term as well.

Trotsky’s analysis was incorrect as any Monday morning quarterback can plainly see.

Hold on there, Monday morning quarterbacks. That’s an illegal play and you’ve got to bring the ball back and take a penalty. When Trotsky made that prediction about Roosevelt, what was he doing, trying to read tea leaves? Or cast a horoscope for Roosevelt? Isn’t it proper for us as disciples of Trotsky to ask ourselves what theoretical considerations led to these conclusions?

Roosevelt came into power as the representative primarily of light industry, that section of the capitalist class interested first of all in the New Deal. By 1938, when the discussion in question was held, the New Deal had pretty well run its course. This was indicated by the economic downturn of 1937 and by the development of a fascist movement in America as a reflex to the formation of the CIO and its objective tendency

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<sup>a</sup> See this volume, pp. 57ff.

toward independent political action. But it is a general law of politics, as I indicated at the beginning of this article, that the personal fate of politicians is bound up with the grouping and even current in a grouping they represent. To say that “A third term for Roosevelt is absolutely excluded” is simply to personalise an abstract theoretical conclusion — the New Deal is finished.

Was Trotsky right in drawing that conclusion? In 1938 it was quite clear that a fascist movement was on the rise and it was therefore legitimate to also conclude that: “It is absolutely certain that Roosevelt will observe that now in the crisis he can do nothing with democratic means.”

What happened? A little item that Vern and Ryan left out — the outbreak of the Second World War. This sliced right through all the trends and along with it the Marxist projections of those trends. Roosevelt won his third and fourth terms on *that* basis. But he confirmed Trotsky nevertheless by announcing himself that the New Deal was dead. And as for continuing to rule by the “accustomed bourgeois democratic methods”, as Vern and Ryan declare, Roosevelt violated them in principle not only by breaking his campaign promise to keep out of war but by turning to decree rule, slapping on a wage freeze, persecuting the miners union; and, we may add, by imprisoning the Trotskyists for exercising their democratic right to oppose imperialist war and advocate socialism. The Bonapartist element in the Roosevelt regime grew considerably. As for the fascist movement, it was cut off short, not to resume until the world conflict came to an end.

Studying Trotsky’s error, then, we see that it was one of form and not of substance. Trotsky was aware, we may be sure, that a certain amount of political risk was involved in choosing the form he did for making his prediction. On the other hand the chances for political gain were considerable. And since only something as major as a world war could affect it, that kind of error could be handled without too great disadvantage. It took the new world war Trotsky had predicted to cancel out his prediction Roosevelt would not serve a third term!

But let us continue with the correction offered by our Monday morning quarterbacks. They see Trotsky’s error as “twofold”. First it was an error “*in tempo*”. Trotsky’s forecast about “the inability of the American bourgeoisie to rule indefinitely with democratic means” came true much later than he expected. The worth of that “correction” can be judged in the light of the failure of Vern and Ryan to consider the intervention of World War II. They just don’t know what they are talking about.

Secondly: “Trotsky’s error in the tempo of events may very well have derived from his other error which consists in a *misconception as to what Hague was and represented in New Jersey.*” We are then informed that “Trotsky’s error in tempo derived from

misinformation as to the nature of Hague's political activity and the forces upon which it was based". Where Vern and Ryan got this information remains a top-drawer secret. I had the rare good fortune and privilege to work with Trotsky and I can assure his correctors that he was very well informed. He not only read the *New York Times* the same as Ryan (if I recall the discussion correctly, Trotsky's reference, "I read about the tactics of Hague", was to the *New York Times*) but he was in correspondence with Marxists in the US well able to separate fact from fiction, read the American Trotskyist press closely, and was also visited by any number of Americans, both Marxist and otherwise, who reported what was happening.

The truth is that our Monday morning quarterbacks feel quite correctly that their method, based on their information, would never reveal Hague as a fascist. First of all, Hague, according to them, did not have his own gang. Secondly, Hague did not represent the small bosses, for this "would inevitably have been expressed in the formulation of some sort of 'radical' or 'anticapitalist' program ...". And so — Trotsky must have been wrong. Hague wasn't a fascist. He must have been just a "bourgeois democrat".

Permit me to set the facts straight by quoting from a letter from a participant in the struggle against Hague, George Breitman:

I leave aside the question of whether Hague represented "small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened". (The key here is the meaning of the word "represented". I am inclined to think that Trotsky's estimate on this was fundamentally sound.) All I deal with here is the question of extralegal gangs.

Hague, it is true, had an understanding with the racketeer-ridden AFL and therefore felt no need to try to destroy the AFL unions immediately, but that doesn't mean he wasn't out to destroy the union movement as a whole ultimately. His main target was the CIO for the time being since it was the CIO that represented the real threat then. Vern-Ryan say: "In this endeavour Hague did not employ 'his own gang' which is absolutely unconstitutional but the Jersey City Police and Democratic Party hangers-on, sworn in as special police and deputies. This use of the police was as unconstitutional as is their usual use in labour disputes; but there is a qualitative difference between using a legal armed body in an unconstitutional fashion and forming an unconstitutional armed body as the nucleus of a 'new' state."

What are the facts? Hague did use the police in unconstitutional activities. On occasion he also swore in deputies, etc. But he did more than that. He also organised his own gangs, and these gangs were used to cow and beat up or drive out of town organisers, leaflet distributors, speakers, etc. In 1939 (June 4) one of these gangs even travelled to Newark to break up an open-air meeting Norman Thomas was to address.

(See pamphlet, *The Fight Against Hagueism*.) These weren't deputies or cops, but a gang. Previously the CIO and other groups trying to organise Jersey City decided to organise a free-speech meeting. (See pp. 3-4 of same pamphlet.) Hague had not only his cops and deputies there but thousands of people whipped up by his gang — including all the veterans, carrying clubs. The result was that two members of the US Congress did not dare to even enter Jersey City to speak there. Another attempt was made. (See pp. 4-5.) Our party participated actively in this one. Through us an incipient workers' defence guard movement was started, with the Newark CIO and Workers Alliance agreeing to provide support for the congressman who was to defy Hague. I was there in Pershing Field with one of the Workers Alliance guards. But the whole thing fell through due to political timidity and poor organisation. Thousands of people roamed the field, most of them in well organised bands, led by Legionnaires carrying clubs. The minute O'Connell was spotted he was grabbed and slammed into a car, banging his arm brutally on the way, and he was run out of town. An assistant CIO regional director was treated even worse, being beaten so badly he had to be hospitalised. It wasn't the cops or deputies that did this.

Such are the things Trotsky was talking about, and he was absolutely right when he called them unconstitutional gangs. The trouble with Vern and Ryan is that they don't know what they are talking about on this matter, or if they did know, have forgotten facts that were well known at the time Trotsky made his estimate of Hague as a fascist. These bands were not made permanent because the war came, the Stalinists became prowar and even pro-Hague, openly supporting his candidates, and Hague, in return for their tolerance and Roosevelt's, decided that he could get along with the CIO. In other words, Hague changed. But before he changed, he definitely followed the fascist pattern in his organisation of extralegal bands to war on the CIO.

Now that the facts are clear, perhaps Vern and Ryan will feel half willing to change their estimate of Hague. Half willing, because the "bourgeois democrat" Hague definitely had one of the "two inescapable and basically essential features" of a fascist, he had "his own gang". It is tempting to leave it to Vern and Ryan to puzzle out whether Trotsky committed a half error or whether Hague didn't somehow or other have the second "inescapable and basically essential" feature they need to tell a fascist from a liberal, but perhaps we should suggest a way out of their dilemma. Doesn't Hague's whole course of action itself constitute a program with eloquent appeal to the "small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened"?

Now let me demonstrate how completely beside the point this whole elaborate attempt to pontificate on Trotsky's "error" really is. "In a fit of impatience to be about the settlement of tasks not yet posed by history", Vern and Ryan declare, "well-

intentioned comrades run the risk of ignoring or misapplying the science of Marxism. In picking up the error that Trotsky committed in regard to Hague, they unconsciously turn a great revolutionist into a prop for the bourgeois order: if Hague was a fascist, then McCarthy is also; the class struggle is developed, then, not so much against the bourgeois state as against this ‘fascism’ of one of its parliamentary bodies”. Note that phrase, “if Hague was a fascist, then McCarthy is also”. But that was not at all the analogy drawn in the draft resolution. Our analysis of McCarthyism does not rest on such an analogy but on observation of the McCarthyite movement itself and general theoretical considerations. The analogy with Hague concerns the possibility of McCarthy *ceasing to be a fascist*. “It is not excluded”, we said, “that McCarthy and those around him can be absorbed by the Republican machine ... This type of withdrawal was seen in the case of Mayor Hague, a potential candidate for the role of American Hitler in the late thirties. But if McCarthy follows this course, the role of fascist leader will fall to someone else who will pick up the strings by denouncing McCarthy’s ‘treason and betrayal.’”

Isn’t it clear that Vern and Ryan were so busy nailing together a jerry-rigged platform of opposition that they couldn’t even read straight? They didn’t even notice that magic word, “potential”, qualifying the candidacy of Mayor Hague, not to speak of the fact that as an example, and there are such, of a “bourgeois democrat” changing into a fascist, Hague meets their criteria rather well, or should we say half well?

By the way, while we are on the point it would undoubtedly prove instructive to hear from Vern and Ryan on how their “two inescapable and basically essential features” for telling a fascist apply to General Franco. The Spanish Generalissimo had the armed gangs without doubt, but how about a “radical” or “anticapitalist” program? Having “corrected” Trotsky on Hague, it seems in order for them to proceed a bit further and “correct” him also on Franco. Perhaps Trotsky’s “error” — or half-error — in regard to Franco also “derived from misinformation” as in the case of Hague?

### **Why we call McCarthyism ‘incipient’ fascism**

In contrast to this tangle of errors, confusion and misinformation, let me summarise the approach used in the draft resolution. McCarthy’s whole course of action reveals his aim — the destruction of bourgeois democratic forms. Once this aim was clearly revealed, it was sufficient to demarcate him from the bourgeois democrats. And as soon as it became clear that his principal means to achieve this was the organisation of a middle-class following independently of the Republican and Democratic machines, we had sufficient criteria to characterise him as a fascist. But if we are prepared to call McCarthyism “fascism”, why do we put the adjective “incipient” in front of it?

The reason is that although McCarthyism is fascism in essence it is far from being fully formed. It has not even built its own party. At present it exists as a faction primarily in the Republican Party but also extending into Democratic ranks. This stage of its existence still remains to be completed. Therefore, in form it is not yet an independent organisation. Its propaganda likewise is far from finished form. And the same goes for its extralegal squads and activities.

If Vern and Ryan can follow the analogy, it is incipient fascism the way a crocodile egg is an incipient crocodile. Although the egg has a form that enables us to recognise what species and genus it belongs to, thereby enabling us to differentiate it from say an egg laid by a liberal goose, it lacks completely the shape and articulation of the adult animal. Naturally, to people accustomed to approaching such phenomena solely with a frying pan or griddle in mind, the distinction is of little value. For them the important thing is to be able to recognise an egg when you see it. In the case of McCarthy, however, I would say the egg has about hatched, giving us sight of a reptile that shows little inclination to passively accept being whipped up into a liberal omelette.

Having determined what McCarthyism is in essence, it is not too difficult to determine the tendencies of its evolution, for these will all be toward the development of fascism in its full-fledged form, with such modifications as the American scene imposes. Thus McCarthy's factional activities indicate the trend toward independent organisation. His "treason" and "communist menace" themes indicate the trend toward social demagoguery, as does his use of the big lie technique. (Note to Vern and Ryan: The political need to appear anticapitalist is not so pressing for McCarthy as it was for Hitler, who faced a social-democratic and communist movement having millions of members and influencing tens of millions more.) The links already formed between him and the conscious fascist groupings about the country, the racists, Legionnaires, and so on, project in no direction except the formation of gangs such as formed around Hague and Coughlin. (Here, I must observe that it would be the most criminal irresponsibility to assure the Jews, Negroes and foreign-born, as do Vern and Ryan, that American fascism does not have "a predetermined attitude" toward them — that it might not even be officially "anti-USSR an anti-Stalinist"! To make such assurances would be nothing less than to assist in disarming the first prospective victims of McCarthyism.)

How impelling these tendencies become will depend finally of course upon far greater forces than the McCarthyite movement in and of itself. The political resolution considers these in the order of their importance. First of all, is America's world position. If you grant that America's relative world position has been seriously weakened by the development of revolutionary movements abroad, then with iron logic it follows that

this weakening will have a domestic reflex in greatly heightened economic, social, and political tensions. But after the experience of two world wars and the depression of the thirties, this can only signify a mortal crisis for American capitalism.

The socialist solution is put on the order of the day. But both theory and experience teaches that the American capitalist class can be expected to put up the most desperate resistance, and even choose a suicidal course analogous to that taken by the German bourgeoisie. The growth of McCarthyism, expressing the anguish and despair of the middle class, would begin to press actively on big business, seeking a decision from the ruling class to turn to action. Under such conditions it would be foolhardy to say in advance that big business would not yield to the pressure and go down to their doom eyes shut, but dragging a great deal along with them.

Fortunately for America and the world, big business and McCarthyism will not come to that unchallenged. American labour will be granted its historic opportunity and will surely justify the judgment of every great Marxist that it is the most dynamic in the world. And the American Trotskyists will do their part to assure success by offering a program of action based on a truly scientific analysis of the reality we face. That happens to include a correct analysis of McCarthyism as the American form of fascism. ■

## **Section VI**

# **Protests Against the American Nazi Party**





George Lincoln Rockwell (centre), leader of the American Nazi Party, as 'international commander' of the World Union of National Socialists (formed in 1962).

Following the decline of McCarthyism, fascist groups remained on the outer fringes of US politics. One group formed in this period was the American Nazi Party, formed in 1956 by ex-army officer George Lincoln Rockwell. It vowed to exterminate Jews, Blacks and gays. Obviously, its name and style limited its appeal. In 1967 the ANP changed its name to the National Socialist White People's Party but Rockwell was murdered that same year by the leader of a breakaway group.

In 1960-61 Rockwell attempted to gain publicity by several public appearances, including a planned one in New York on July 4, 1960. The city administration denied him a rally permit. The following articles once again focus on the question of democratic rights in the fight against fascism.

# Letter from James P. Cannon to Tom Kerry

Dear Tom,

I learned by way of radio and TV last night that Mayor Wagner denied the preposterous American “Nazi” outfit a permit to hold a meeting in Union Square; and that he said the people “would stone them out of town”. Then the TV report showed the scene of the attempt to mob the American Nazi leader outside the courtroom. I am disturbed by this little offbeat episode and wondering rather anxiously to what extent, if any, we were mixed up in it and how the paper is going to handle the occurrences in its report.

No doubt it was “a famous victory”. But a victory for what and for whom? Certainly not a victory for the right of free speech and assembly as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights to which we are firmly, and I hope sincerely, devoted. For us, I take it, under any reasonably normal conditions, free speech is a principle — not only before the revolution but also after it, when the workers’ government becomes stabilised. But free speech is also a practical necessity for us, of particular burning importance when we are fighting as a small minority for the right to be heard.

We certainly didn’t win anything to sustain this right by Mayor Wagner’s decision. It sets a dangerous precedent. The reasons he gave for denying the constitutional rights of the American “Nazi” screwballs, and his incitement to violence against them, can be applied just as well and just as logically to us or any other minority. We will be greatly handicapped in fighting against such discriminations if we give direct or even indirect sanction to this treatment of others. People who demand free speech and constitutional rights for themselves but want to deny it for others do not get much public sympathy when their own rights are denied.

This was demonstrated quite convincingly by the public and labour indifference to the persecution of the Stalinists in the period since the cold war began. The Stalinist

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Dated June 23, 1960.

record of claiming rights for themselves and denying them, or trying to deny them, to their opponents boomeranged against them. It gave other people a reason, or an excuse, to stand aside or even to join the hue and cry against the persecuted Stalinists on the ground that “free speech is all right, but not for communists”.

I don't think the “Nazi” crackpots lost anything by this New York decision. They got a lot of nationwide free advertising, and a chance to appear as a persecuted minority, and the ground to appeal for funds and recruits. If they had a cause with any semblance of appeal to popular sympathy they would profit by this flagrant denial of their rights under the Bill of Rights.

The whole episode is quite obviously a tempest in a teapot. It has very little relation to social and political realities in present day America. But there is a *symptomatic* significance and we should ponder it. The problem, in one form or another, will come up again and again; and we must not stumble into an improvised policy each time. We have to have a *line*. As I see it, our line is free speech. We have to fight for it and convince other people that we mean it. With truth on our side, we have the most to gain by freedom of discussion and the most to lose by its suppression. It is true that, as the class struggle develops, we will have to fight the fascists, and not only with words.

But this will not be a fight to deprive the fascists of the right to speak and to meet, but a defensive fight to prevent them from interfering with the rights of the workers.

Fraternally,

*James P. Cannon*

## Wagner Hands Rockwell an Issue

George Lincoln Rockwell, the American Nazi who advocates Hitler's gas-chamber way of ending "the menace" of "Jews and Negroes", announced June 27 that he is calling off his plans to stage a rally in New York's Union Square on July 4. At the same time he is pressing the New York Civil Liberties Union to protect his right to speak.

"The New York Civil Liberties Union hates my guts", he is quoted as saying, "but they have a terrific stake in protecting my right to speak. They can't afford to protect the rights of communists and Jews, and look the other way while my rights are being denied."

Mayor Wagner is to be blamed for handing this grievance to Hitler's American admirer. At a court hearing June 22 over an injunction to bar city officials from issuing a permit for Rockwell's rally, a crowd expressed its opposition to Rockwell's provocative statements in such vigorous fashion that the police intervened and rushed the Nazi out of town. Utilising this incident as a pretext, Wagner denied the permit for the rally.

The groups that first took notice of Rockwell's plan to stage a Nazi rally in Union Square did not question his right to free speech. The Committee to Protest Racist Defamation, for instance, did not seek to stop Rockwell from speaking. The New York Local of the Socialist Workers Party likewise did not question his right to address a crowd in Union Square. What the antifascist forces proposed was that everyone interested in the issue should come down to Union Square on July 4 and exercise their right of free speech, too, by expressing their opinions of Rockwell's racist views.

Conrad J. Lynn, representing the Committee to Protest Racial Defamation, put it like this in a letter to the Department of Parks in which he pressed for a permit for a public meeting in Union Square on July 4 to answer the Nazis: "We believe that evil thought must be allowed to express itself as long as truth is free to combat it."

The *New York Post*, after first publicising the Nazi rally, closed its columns to further news until the court incident occurred. Then, in an editorial, it advocated a

policy of silence toward Nazis like Rockwell. The logic of this view is that opponents of would-be American Hitlers should not exercise their own right of free speech in the form of rallies — or even discussion in the press!

The latest moves are to illegalise the American Nazis and put them on the so-called “subversive” list. New York State Supreme Court Justice Louis L. Friedman signed a temporary injunction June 28 “restraining” the party and its commander “from engaging in any subversive activities in New York State”, according to the press. The judge also accepted a disorderly conduct complaint made by the Jewish War Veterans and signed a warrant of arrest for Rockwell if and when he comes back to the state.

In our opinion, such moves are wrong on two counts. First of all, they are infringements of the right of free speech and the right to engage in politics. Such infringements of anyone’s rights, no matter who it may be, inevitably put in question everyone’s democratic rights. Didn’t America learn that to its cost in the witch-hunting days of President Truman and Senator McCarthy?

Secondly, such moves are ineffective in counteracting the poisonous racist views of the Rockwells. In fact, by victimising them, it helps them win sympathy.

We think the most effective way of handling these vermin is to keep them out in the open, to meet them in the public forum and through the exercise of democratic rights, including free speech and free political activity, to defeat them before they can get started as a serious menace.

To follow any other course is to betray lack of confidence in democratic rights and democratic institutions. ■

# No Victory for Nazis

*By Joseph Hansen*

On February 14 the Appellate Division in a 4-to-1 decision handed down a verdict in New York that was interpreted by the capitalist press as a victory for George Lincoln Rockwell, head of the swastika-wearing “American Nazis” party. Actually the grounds of the decision favoured Rockwell’s opponents, the defenders of civil liberties and democratic rights in America.

Last summer Rockwell applied for a permit to hold a rally in New York’s Union Square on July 4. It was denied by Commissioner Newbold Morris on the ground that a riot would result.

The American Civil Liberties Union took up the case and carried it to State Supreme Court Justice Henry Epstein. He upheld the commissioner.

Justice Charles D. Breitel voiced the majority opinion of the Appellate Division in upsetting Epstein’s ruling. Breitel held that it was unconstitutional to deny any minority the right to voice its opinion.

“The unpopularity of views”, said Justice Breitel, “their shocking quality, their obnoxiousness, and even their alarming impact are not enough. Otherwise the preacher of any strange doctrine could be stopped; the antiracist himself could be suppressed, if he undertakes to speak in ‘restricted’ areas; and one who asks that public schools be opened indiscriminately could be lawfully suppressed, if only he chose to speak where persuasion is needed most.”

Fear of a “riot” was the Wagner administration’s excuse for denying Rockwell his democratic rights. They pointed to the fact that many New York workers were preparing to appear at Union Square to protest Rockwell’s views.

But the organisation that initiated the protest movement did not deny Rockwell’s democratic right to hold the obnoxious rally. On the contrary, they recognised the right.

This was the stand taken by the Committee to Protest Racist Defamation, headed by the well-known civil-rights attorney Conrad J. Lynn, which sought a permit from the city authorities to hold a protest meeting in Union Square on July 4 from 10am to 2pm, preceding the 3pm Nazi rally. The *Militant* backed this position when it supported the appeal for a big turnout at the protest meeting.

The city's denial of a permit to Rockwell set a dangerous precedent which, unless it is upset by the courts, will most certainly be used at a future time against organisations holding views diametrically opposed to those of the Nazis.

When Rockwell learned of the ruling by the Appellate Division, he immediately wired Commissioner Morris a request to hold a rally in Union Square at 10am May 1. He told the press that he had 50 or 60 "troopers" in training at Arlington, Va. for the rally "and we should have them in top condition".

When asked what he intended to speak about, he answered: "The race issue and anticommunism ... the overwhelming Jewish participation in communism." He added that he was scheduling the rally for 10am "so that all these little Jews who try to meet ahead of us will have to get up early".

It is doubtful that Rockwell will get a permit for a rally in Union Square by May 1, since the city is now appealing to the State Court of Appeals. However, the ACLU is prepared to take the case to the US Supreme Court.

If the ACLU succeeds in finally winning and Rockwell ultimately gets a permit to appear in Union Square, there is no doubt many thousands of New Yorkers will be down real early to exercise their own democratic right to protest Rockwell's provocative efforts to convert Hitler into an example for America to follow. ■

# Letter from Joseph Hansen to Larry Trainor

Boston

Dear Larry:

Yes, we received the article about the demonstration against the Nazis together with the clippings and copies of the leaflet that was distributed.

I thought the article was well written and gave a very dramatic and vivid picture of what happened.

However, we thought it politically inadvisable to print the article; and instead wrote a short account based on the total material sent us. Aside from its shortness the main difference between the printed article and the one submitted is the line. In the *Militant* we felt it absolutely necessary to indicate what the party position is in relation to Rockwell's outfit. For example, the article sent us did not indicate that we do not oppose the democratic right of the Nazis to demonstrate. The *Harvard Crimson* however, did report that "most of the students said they felt that the Nazis had a right to picket the theatre, but upheld their own picketing as 'the only way we can protest against what they stand for'." We considered this very important evidence that this was the attitude taken by the Boston branch of the SWP. The fact that it was reported by the *Harvard Crimson* made it all the more impressive.

I should like to call your attention to some differences in the way the New York local handled the Nazi demonstrators and the way the Boston branch went about it.

In New York, the SWP at no time assumed leadership of the counterdemonstration or even sought leadership. No leaflets were put out in the name of the SWP. The reason for this was that in view of the relative size of the party it would be an illusion to think that we can directly take leadership of the struggle against fascism. Our role is to urge the mass organisations to engage in this struggle.

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Dated February 6, 1961.

To attempt to bypass the mass organisations can only sow illusions in our own ranks about our real strength and our real role; and insofar as it is noted by the members of other organisations it can create the illusion that the SWP will handle the job; they don't need to worry about it.

We did help to create a committee that called for a counterdemonstration and this committee succeeded in getting some big organisations to take action.

Another point of difference concerns the estimate of the Rockwell outfit. Does this represent incipient American fascism? I do not think so. The real American fascists look more like Mayor Hague, Senator McCarthy, possibly Senator Goldwater. It can be put down with absolute assurance that in no case will they wear Nazi uniforms, swastikas and praise Hitler. To picture Rockwell's outfit as representing American fascism thus helps create the illusion that the real fascists, when they show up, will be identifiable with similar ease and will similarly openly stir up the most violent antipathies (including those of the most patriotic Americans).

Finally, in everything the New York local did, it stressed the fact that Rockwell's democratic rights were not being challenged. On the contrary. The counterdemonstrators were similarly exercising their democratic rights.

Aside from the question of principle involved in this, it would be a great political mistake to permit our worst foes to manoeuvre us into the position of seeming to deny democratic rights to others, no matter who, and to claim them only for ourselves. The consequences of this mistake is that we put ourselves into position to become the very next victims.

We had a discussion about this in the PC last June and Jim wrote us his opinions. I suggest you check the PC minutes for July 20, 1960, which included two letters (dated June 14 and June 23) from Jim.

With best regards,

*Joseph Hansen*

## **Section VII**

# **Countermobilisation: A Strategy to Fight Racist & Fascist Attacks**





Antiracist march, Boston,  
December 14, 1974.

This section contains the transcript of a May 6, 1975 discussion between leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance on problems of strategy and tactics in the struggle against racism and fascism.

The discussion was sparked by a March 1975 incident at San Francisco State University. A small demonstration sponsored by ultraleft groups had forced the cancellation of a talk by a member of the fascist National Socialist White People's Party. However, most of the campus saw the demonstration as an attack on freedom of speech. The university administration seized the opportunity to attempt to expel several radical groups from the campus.

The campus YSA chapter issued a leaflet which opposed the victimisations but criticised the ill-considered tactics that had led to the situation. However, in line with the then-YSA policy, the leaflet held that the fascists had no right to speak on campus.

The YSA later reversed this policy. The June 7-10, 1975 YSA National Committee reaffirmed the organisation's basic strategy on the building of a mass movement in defence of democratic rights but opposed any call for the suppression of anyone's free speech. The discussion reproduced here was part of the process of reconsideration that led to the change of line on this point.

The discussion was led by Farrell Dobbs, a former national secretary of the SWP and a leading participant in the 1930s Teamster struggles in Minneapolis and the Mid-West. Other participants were SWP national secretary Jack Barnes, SWP National Committee members Doug Jenness and Betsey Stone, Marxist philosopher and longtime SWP leader George Novack and YSA leaders Steve Clark and Ginny Hildebrand.

# Countermobilisation: A Strategy to Fight Racist & Fascist Attacks

*A Discussion with Farrell Dobbs*

**Farrell Dobbs:** I think we should start by abstracting for the moment from the immediate situation and take a look at the fight against fascism in a broader, more fundamental sense. In the process of discussing that, we will come around to the immediate problem. It would be better to spend a little time looking into broader, more general, more basic aspects of the fight against fascism. I'm talking about the strategic concepts of this fight and some broad lines of tactics that flow from these concepts.

Fundamentally, what are you up against? Good generals are always very careful to try to perceive as accurately as they can what the situation is on the opposing side and what the enemy's line of approach is. It's always very important for the leaders of a combat force — that's what we're talking about now, a combat force — to know how to get ready for combat and also how not to go into combat foolishly and precipitously.

What is the tactic of the ruling class? How does the ruling class proceed when it's getting ready to utilise fascism? What they want at that point is to turn from the existing form of bourgeois rule to a ruthless fascist dictatorship. The objective is to crush the organisations and the combat capacity of the working class, the main opponent of the capitalist class.

In a given country at a particular time when the bourgeoisie opens this chapter, there will be one or another degree of democratic rights. Our situation is one where there are on the lawbooks a somewhat extensive body of formal democratic rights won by the masses in the history of the class struggle in the US. The approach of the ruling class is to begin to move toward a deterioration of those rights.

Their tactic is to protect the rights of the fascists while at the same time using fascist forces to try to keep others from exercising those rights. One of the forces used to implement this is that most malevolent of all the repressive instruments of capitalist

rule, the police forces. The police structure is of a character that makes it a breeding ground for fascists.

You don't only have an army of capitalist cops that represses opponents of capitalism, you have a ripe recruiting ground for fascism itself. You not only have cops implementing ruling class orders in aiding the fascists, you have a police force that is honeycombed with fascists. In this country at this time, it is not yet honeycombed, but there are plenty of reactionaries and racists there. The more the lines of confrontation deepen and sharpen, the more the tendency is for fascist formations to attract adherents within the police department. It's an important thing to keep in mind. Apart from the fact that the cops aren't neutral in the class struggle, but are neutral on the side of the capitalists, you will be facing a formation that has a lot of fascist-minded elements in it.

The line of the police is to defend the exercise of the formal democratic rights of the fascists, on the one hand, and not to "see" the violations of the democratic rights of the fascists' victims. Meanwhile, the cops take full advantage of any violation of bourgeois democratic law that the antifascists may commit. In any kind of confrontation between antifascist and fascist forces, the basic line of the cops is to protect the fascists in any way they can and to join in the victimisation of the antifascists.

Anybody that's purporting to develop a strategy and shape tactics to fight fascism and doesn't start with an understanding of what method your enemy is going to use, can fall into all kinds of traps. Such missteps disadvantage the antifascists and aid the fascist forces. They also make things easier for the repressive arms of the ruling structure that are abetting the fascists.

Let's be a little more specific about some of the problems that arise if we fail to understand the nature of the confrontation. Let's take the demand raised by some that the government ban the fascists from speaking. This implies that the masses can rely on the government to protect them from the fascists. But that's only the beginning of the negative aspect of this demand. Anybody with an ounce of perception can see immediately that when you rely upon the government to protect the victims of the fascists, you are sowing illusions about the readiness of the government to defend the exercise of the democratic rights that are incorporated in the bourgeois constitution. But the capitalist regime absolutely can't be relied on to do that job.

The minute you say that the government should stop the meeting, you have to say the next thing. Unless you're fatuous enough to believe that the government is going to act, you're still left with the question, what are you going to do when the government doesn't act.

The implicit logic is this: No matter what the situation is, no matter what the stage of development, this approach means that your objective is to prevent the fascists

from speaking. Now what kind of problems does that posture lead to?

Let's assume for the moment that it is possible to develop a sufficient action in the concrete situation to limit or suppress the fascists' speech.

Now it's conceivably possible that enough pressure could be developed to make the ruling powers do a little something to curb the democratic rights of the fascists. Then you simply arrive at a new stage of the problem.

The capitalists are always looking for ways to contravene the formal democratic rights of the antifascists. Anything the government might do to interfere with the exercise of democratic rights by the fascists, they will at the same time apply to the left, to the antifascists.

In the section of *Teamster Politics* on the WPA strikes, I discussed the loyalty oath that Roosevelt imposed on the WPA workers as part of whittling down the rolls. As always happens in such cases, the oath proscribed from participation the German-American Bund and all communist organisations. They always strike against the left at the same time as they hit the right.

Then they tend to give less and less enforcement to the proscription against the right. The more intense the struggle becomes, the more they will be inclined to use their seeming neutrality in the class struggle as a cover for paying less and less attention to what the fascists are doing. The government will let them do what they damn please, while more and more using its authority to curb the rights of the left. Thus, even if the government does something in passing to curb the rights of the fascists, all that happens in the last analysis is that the rulers get a new pretext for attacking the anticapitalist forces. They will piously claim to be moving in a perfectly fairminded way against the "extremists" on both sides of the controversy.

Thus, by demanding that the government suppress the formal rights of the fascists, you create a whole new set of tactical problems for yourself. The government does nothing that would really cripple the attack of the fascists, so you still have the essential problem of fighting the fascists. However, you now have the additional problem of fighting to defend some of your own rights against new restrictions adopted by the bourgeois democratic state supposedly against the fascists. As Napoleon said to one of his generals, one more victory like that and we'll be back in Paris.

This tactic of demanding that the fascists be prevented from speaking puts you at a disadvantage in other ways. Two categories of the population at large can become a problem here.

There are people in capitalist society who are professional civil libertarians. They not only believe in the Bill of Rights, but believe in it as a kind of mystical object of worship that stands above the realities of the class struggle. It looms in their eyes like

a first cause uncaused, as remote from and unsullied by all the confusions and conflicts of class society as God is from the realities of life on this planet.

If you demand that the government suppress the freedom of speech of the fascists or declare your intention of suppressing it, you automatically put the civil libertarians on the other side. That will be so even though your real aims in the fight are to defend your democratic rights against the fascists. You make a new tactical problem for yourself.

To take another example, is it not true that if you fight on a campus around the demand that fascists should not be allowed to speak, you can get in the way of elevating the consciousness of the very students you are trying to reach? Part of the process of radicalisation is that they don't want anybody to tell them who to listen to or what to think.

If you are insisting that fascists can't speak, you risk antagonising students. You risk making them, not in the last analysis but in a formal sense at the given moment, into allies of the fascists. They are radicalising and often are recruitable to the revolutionary movement, but instead they get jockeyed into a position that confuses them greatly. You wind up making another tactical problem for yourself.

The implication of confidence in the ability of the government to oppose the fascists and protect democratic rights is only the most obvious error in the demand to prevent fascists from speaking. You create problems that get in the way of mobilising an ever broader mass opposition.

What, then, should be our line of approach? Let me refer here to our approach to the organisation of the union defence guard in Minneapolis in 1938. We didn't say a word about anybody depriving the fascists of their right of free speech. We didn't say a word to the state or federal authorities about doing anything to prevent the fascists from speaking.

Our remarks were concentrated on explaining to the workers why they couldn't rely on any arm of the state apparatus to protect them against the fascists and why they should rely only on themselves to do so. It was along those lines that we set out to educate the members of Local 544 and the rest of the union movement.

How did the union defence guard go about this? Did we say we're not going to let the fascists speak and if they meet, we're going to break up their meeting? No. It wasn't us who said that, it was the Silver Shirts organiser. He said that in a statement that was quoted in the St. Paul press on the morning after they sneaked over to St. Paul and held a meeting, protected by the cops. They were afraid to have a meeting in Minneapolis. He said, the leaders of 544 say we can't have a meeting in Minneapolis.

That's what *he* said. What *we* said is that we're organising a union defence guard

and the guard is going to so conduct itself that it will show the fascists that they can't operate in Minneapolis without a fight. We just cut through this whole free speech business because that was not the crucial issue.

The issue is not for or against free speech for fascists. These people are not trying to promulgate an idea and convince somebody of a new line of thought in an academic way. They're organising to commit acts of violence against others in order to destroy the fundamental rights of working people. They want to make the working people victims in a new and even worse form of this decaying capitalist system. There is nothing academic about that.

That's something we can seize on in explaining our antifascist struggle. In fact, you've got an even better case today than we had in 1938. The Silver Shirts only *said* they were going to make an armed raid on Local 544's hall. The fascist terrorists bombed the SWP twice in Los Angeles. It's a very peculiar form of friendly persuasion, isn't it? There's nothing academic about their objective in Los Angeles.

I'm talking now about how you combat the fatuous notions of professional civil libertarians and begin to intensify the education of students. If you put the struggle on the basis of whether the fascists have or don't have the right to speak, you create a real problem in trying to wake such forces up and mobilise them. We put our fight on the basis of what these fascists had said they were going to do — raid the union headquarters.

The essence of it then was to counterpose to the fascist actions the democratic right of a countermobilisation. We bypassed the whole free speech question. Instead, we related intimately to that concrete situation by posing a second democratic right — the right of self-defence.

Keep in mind that the SWP was not a big organisation at that time. However, it was not a question of the party stepping out to act against the fascists when there wasn't much to back it up. This was a union that had thousands of members.

Yet what did we do? You'll notice if you read *Teamster Politics* how careful we were to avoid giving any impression that this was a fight between 544 and the fascists, even though this union had a membership of thousands.

The situation was such that there could be no defence guard unless Local 544 took the initiative. We could not build a guard in a hurry that would be strong enough to repulse a Silver Shirt raid on the headquarters unless it was principally made up of 544 members. But we were not so foolish as to organise a 544 defence guard and confront the fascists on that basis. We wanted it to be the fight of the whole labour movement.

We thought it out tactically and used the device of setting up a provisional formation alongside the union. It wasn't an official part of the union. It was associated with the

union only in the sense that its formation was discussed at a Local 544 membership meeting that voted to authorise the leadership to take the initiative in the name of 544 to set up a trade union-wide defence guard.

At the same time that we were concentrating on organising a guard big enough to be effective, concentrating principally on building it in 544, we were careful to set the stage for a wider body. Just as quickly as we could, we brought at least a few members of other unions into the guard. Nobody minded that this formation was called the 544 guard because the name 544 was kind of a mark of honour among the organised workers of Minneapolis, sort of like being part of the Grand Army of the Republic in the North after the Civil War. All it meant was that 544 had taken the initiative in organising an antifascist defence within the Minneapolis trade union movement as a whole.

Local 544 not only took the initiative in building this trade union defence formation, but held that the labour movement should organise all of labour's allies — the unemployed, the youth, and others. Right from the beginning, we projected the concept of acting in a united way and trying to develop an ever broader united front of victims and potential victims of fascism, drawing them into the self-defence forces.

How did we organise the counterdemonstration? The Silver Shirts scheduled a meeting in Minneapolis. We knew what was on tap so we planned to send the guard to picket the hall where Pelley, the chieftain of the Silver Shirts, was scheduled to speak.

In *Teamster Politics* I described how on the appointed day a cab driver called Ray Rainbolt, a leader of the guard. The cabbie said he had just driven Pelley to a house in the silk stocking district. That's the kind of intelligence system we had.

That is an important thing to realise about the working class. There isn't a nook or cranny of the capitalist machine where you won't find workers. Depending on the mood of the class, an individual worker who at one moment is a servitor of the ruling class, can at another moment become the eyes and ears of the workers in the camp of the enemy. When the struggle heats up, the working class develops the kind of spontaneous intelligence system that capitalist money can't buy.

Ray Rainbolt called Pelley and told him there might be trouble at the meeting. I didn't tell him to do that, he thought of it himself. Anything to keep the enemy worried, to give your forces an edge. Some people don't think these tactical niceties are so nice, but they're effective and perfectly principled. Rainbolt's idea was to scare the piss out of Pelley. Rainbolt was a good guy for this. He was a *mean* son of a gun. His ancestors were veterans of the clobbering of Custer and he hadn't lost the knack.

Here I'm getting at a concrete example of how the dynamics of a confrontation in the class struggle lead from one stage to another. We scared Pelley out of even going

to the meeting. He decided against it. The minute the guard showed up the Silver Shirts began to take off like chickens in a barnyard, scampering this way and that. A few of them weren't fast enough and there were altercations that weren't entirely pleasant for the fascists.

We were not there formally or actually to prevent the fascists from speaking. We were there to show them that we were just as determined that they weren't going to carry out an attack on the trade unions as they were determined to carry one out — maybe more so. The question was not whether or not Pelley had the right to speak or whether these people had the right to come and hear him. We cut through that to the heart of the issue. Pelley was trying to organise forces to attack our headquarters and we were against that.

I have suggested that, instead of raising an attack on the formal democratic right of the fascists to speak and peddle their program and recruit goons, we counterpose the democratic right to counterdemonstrate. According to the tempo and development of the situation, we infuse into it the concept of the democratic right of self-defence.

Let's assume that a fascist is going to have a meeting. What kind of counterdemonstration are you going to have? What do you propose as the slogans or strategy of the demonstration? Are you going to rally on the site of the meeting? At UCLA [The University of California at Los Angeles], if they tried to send a Nazi goon on campus to exercise the right of free speech and to try to recruit, wouldn't an indicated theme of a counterdemonstration be the bombings of our headquarters?

If you have a counterdemonstration, this gives the government and its repressive arm no basis for moving toward real suppression of the democratic rights of the left in the name of evenhandedly suppressing both sides. On the contrary.

The police like to say that they're simply doing their duty under the constitution by protecting the fascists. Well, they are also duly sworn to protect the democratic rights of other Americans. One of the rights won in the class struggle is the right to picket, to hold counteractions. So you jockey the repressive forces so that, if they try to do something to help the fascists, it constitutes an overt and clear attack on the established democratic rights of the antifascists.

If you do that, the professional civil libertarians have no grounds for getting themselves worked up about how you are jeopardising the Constitution by demanding the suppression of somebody's freedom of speech. Instead, you are in a good position to demand that the civil libertarians denounce the repressive forces that are using the phoney excuse of protecting the fascists' rights to justify violating the democratic right to counterdemonstrate.

If you do the opposite — make a big noise about how you're going to prevent the

meeting, suppress the speaker — won't many students get confused and take the wrong stand? They don't want anybody to dictate to them who they can listen to, do they?

With the right approach, the students instead see a counterdemonstration outside the meeting. They see that the thrust is not on the right of the fascists to speak but on what they are actually doing in Los Angeles, for instance, to suppress our rights. Isn't that a favourable way to present it?

Starting from our initial premise — the aim of the capitalists with regard to fascism — I'm trying to look at each tactic from the point of view of its *effect*. What happens if you start out with the premise that you're going to organise a battle to prevent the fascists from saying one word in public? What happens, on the other hand, if you operate on the basis of asserting and exercising the right to counterdemonstrate, to confront the fascists in this form without getting bogged down in the question of the fascists' right of free speech? The first approach is to the advantage of the ruling class. The second approach puts you in a more favourable position and the ruling class in a more difficult position for carrying out its basic aim of crippling the rights of the antifascists.

To use a slight reformulation of that phrase of Malcolm X, the essence of the ruling class tactic toward oppositional movements like the struggle against fascism is to make the criminal appear to be the victim and the victim appear to be the criminal. They try that in every struggle, without exception. You always have to keep that in mind when you deal with the tactical nuances in the struggle.

Remember that tactics have to serve a strategic course, and the strategic course has to be closely attuned to the programmatic aims. It's not advantageous to grab hold of a tactic because it seems appealing at the moment without always seeing the tactic in relation to the whole fundamental problem.

Strategy is a system of tactics and something more as well. It contains the fundamental aim that you are moving toward. It is attuned to the conjunctural realities of the relationship of class forces and is readjusted as the relationship of class forces changes. Strategy is subject to variations in scope and tempo concerning the possible extent of its implementation. Simultaneously strategy is also the means by which you develop a system of tactics to serve your aims, and the regulator concerning the fundamental course that you follow in seeking to build the anticapitalist movement. It's always very important to see the struggle against fascism not only in its tactical aspect, but in its relationship to strategy and program.

Do you stop with a counterdemonstration against the fascists? No, but conceptually we start with it. What are the stages of struggle if we organise a protest confrontation

against a fascist meeting? The first thing you can do, depending on the situation, is to alert those who go into the meeting that there's more going on than meets the eye in what the fascists have to say. You alert those going in the meeting or who observe the demonstration that the fascists are so dangerous that a lot of people are concerned about it. These people have gathered in front of the meeting hall to warn people that they're getting sucked into a trap, something that's against their own interests.

You don't start on the basis of the party confronting the Nazis. You try to muster the broadest forces possible. No matter what you do in any area, you draw on everybody you can.

There are two sides to that. The building of the broadest possible united front becomes an effective mechanism for educating the masses about the fascist danger. It creates the potential for drawing in ever greater masses to confront the fascists. The more actively and consistently you apply this, the more difficult it is for the police forces to attack the antifascists and violate their democratic right to demonstrate against the fascists. You start on that basis and the action develops according to the interplay of forces.

Does that mean that it's always going to be that way? That the fascists will always be speaking inside and a counterdemonstration will always be outside and that's that? No, at a certain point the situation changes. There are several reasons why this is the case.

First of all, the fascists have a basic task to perform. They are trying to mobilise confused and demoralised victims of the capitalist system. One of the things they've got to show potential recruits is audacity. That causes them to lean in the direction of provocation.

Moreover, they know the cops are on their side and this makes them still more provocative. It's not as if one day, instead of a counterdemonstration, you take your forces and give the fascists a taste of their own medicine. It's not a question of on what date this can be done; the fascists also set the stage so that other things happen.

Don't forget Lenin and Trotsky made a revolution under defensive slogans. If you are obliged to clobber some fascist in order to protect your rights, it's always good if this is done in the name of defending yourself. It helps you to involve more allies. The fascists tend to be provocative and thus bring the situation past the stage of a counterdemonstration.

You start out on a realistic basis that gives the fascists no chance to fool people into thinking that you are violating democratic rights. This helps you to mobilise young people and win over civil libertarians. You build up the forces that will be able to deal with the fascists when the reality of the conflict between fascists and antifascists manifests

itself in a more physical form.

One final point. Don't get the notion that you're facing the future fascist enemy when you face kooks like the Nazis or even the Klan. Don't get that notion for a minute. That's not the kind of animal we're talking about. In fighting against these screwballs today, keep in mind that you are shaping a strategic line and a set of tactics to face something that will be much different, much more sophisticated and even appealing to some, and not so easy to cope with.

There are two errors you can fall into if you don't keep this in mind. If you develop tactics based on the expectation that you're going to be facing this lunatic fringe, you'll find that you have the wrong strategic and tactical weapons in hand when you face the real thing. You can also obstruct the education of the masses about the threat of fascism because you alert the masses to the wrong creature. You get them on the lookout for monkeys when an elephant is going to charge them.

When the real thing comes along, it's not going to extend you the courtesy of being obvious like the Nazis in Los Angeles. They're not going to *start* by throwing bombs at you so that you can mobilise against them before they have a following. They are going to be more subtle.

They will claim that they are going to lead the masses out of the crisis created by capitalism. They will act in the name of promises that the masses believe will improve their desperate situation. They are going to pin the blame for the crisis on scapegoats. In this country, the Blacks are the most obvious target. By demagogically promising to do things for the people that they have no intention of doing, and by singling out scapegoats, the fascists aim to lead a demoralised and disoriented middle class, segments of the working class, and the lumpenproletariat to crush the organisations of the working class. Their fundamental aim will be to use some of the victims of capitalism to mobilise a force to crush the struggle capacity of the working class and perpetuate capitalist rule.

When you run up against the real thing, they're not going to start by putting on Nazi uniforms and swastika emblems, and they're not going to wear sheets, either. They'll look more like the man in the gray flannel suit than the ultraright we see today.

The capitalists are very happy to use the far out types we run into today. They cause some confusion, stir things up a little, and plough a little ground for a more serious development of fascism. But they are not the real animal we will be fighting when the combat gets really tough.

**Steve Clark:** The concrete incident that led Ginny Hildebrand and I to want this discussion occurred at San Francisco State University. A professor invited a Nazi onto

the campus to address his speech class on March 10, 1975. No right-wing student or faculty group was involved. In fact, the professor was known to have left-liberal leanings. The way he conducted his class was to bring in all kinds of professional speakers — preachers, communists, and in this case a Nazi.

A demonstration was called with the stated aim of running this Nazi off campus and preventing his appearance before the class. It was called by the Spartacus Youth League, which describes itself as the youth section of the Spartacist League. The Progressive Labor Party and the Revolutionary Student Brigade were involved in one way or another on the same basic line. The real organisations with influence on campus — the Chicano student organisation, the Black students' organisation, the women's organisation, and some others that were approached — didn't want anything to do with the action.

The Young Socialist Alliance [YSA] refused to support or endorse this demonstration because of the way it was projected. We were aware of some of the basic ideas that Farrell laid out. We had learned the dangers of the confrontationist approach in the antiwar movement.

Until recently, there was some confusion in the YSA on the question of asking the government to ban fascist organisations, but we cleared this up. We incorporated the correct position on this into the Black struggle report that was adopted by the July 1974 Plenum of our National Committee.

In the same plenum report, however, we took a different tack than that proposed by Farrell on the question of the rights of Jensen, Shockley, the other academic racists, and, by implication, the fascists. We incorporated a lot of the lessons Farrell discussed. We opposed calling on the administration or the government to ban speakers. We thought we were avoiding the trap of placing the axis on freedom of speech, by avoiding actions like shouting the speakers down and other things which have led to unnecessary victimisation of antiracists. But we said that the YSA does not believe racists and Nazis have the right to speak on campus.

After the National Committee approved this report, we published an article in the December 1974 issue of the *Young Socialist* [monthly newspaper of the YSA] about a demonstration against a Ku Klux Klan leader that spoke on a campus in St. Cloud, Minnesota. We thought the article would be useful for orienting the YSA membership about the kind of stand that should be taken.

Among other things, we really didn't differentiate clearly in this article between organisations like the KKK or the Nazis on the one hand, and racist academicians like Shockley on the other hand. We tended to lump them together.

In this situation in San Francisco, I think that 95% of what the YSA did was quite

good. The YSA was clearly seen by the students as the one socialist group on campus that did not get caught up in this ultraleft attempt to keep a Nazi away from a speech class.

The Nazis only sent a few of their uniformed goons to the campus. It was easy, of course, for a few dozen students to chase them out. That is what happened. The Spartacists, Progressive Labor et al. considered this a very successful action because they had succeeded in doing what they set out to do. They did prevent this guy from speaking in that classroom. A historic triumph in the struggle against fascism, in their view.

This made the front page of the San Francisco *Chronicle*, the big daily out there, and there was a great deal of alarm on the campus that a small group had taken upon itself to decide who could speak. The administration used it to whip up a little campaign against the student movement.

So the YSA at San Francisco State issued a statement which was right on the essential points. However, it repeated what had appeared in this 1974 YSA National Committee plenum report. It argued that, although the YSA opposed the fascist's appearance on campus, we were opposed to preventing him from speaking unless a majority were educated to approve this course. We criticised the ultraleft action. Of course, we stated our opposition to any disciplinary measures against the students who had participated in this adventure.

At that point, Bob Chester and some of the leaders of the SWP branch in San Francisco expressed doubts to the YSA leadership about whether it was correct to advocate suppression of free speech at all, even conditionally. Bob Chester gave some classes on fascism and how to fight it, laying out his view on this.

That convinced the YSA organiser who wrote a letter and asked me whether the position taken by Bob and others there stood in contradiction to the line of the YSA plenum report. It seemed to me that there was a contradiction. I wanted to consult with some more experienced comrades on this matter and that was the genesis of this meeting.

Right now there is a defence case at San Francisco State because the administration did just what Farrell said they would do in such circumstances. They took pictures of the students that were involved and now they are trying to victimise the organisations that demonstrated.

The Nazis are talking about coming back on campus sometime in the near future. They put out a leaflet with all kinds of racist epithets and drawings that says roughly: "Free Speech? These radicals who talk to you about free speech are trying to tell you who to listen to and what to think. Are you going to take that?" So they're trying to get

a little mileage out of the exposed position the ultralefts put themselves in.

The Spartacists and some others have set up a March 10 Defence Committee to oppose administration reprisals. Unfortunately, we haven't really been able to participate in this committee since it demands that we support the ultraleft action as a precondition for united front defence. But we are doing our own defence work, mainly propaganda. We've put out a second leaflet opposing any victimisations. We see the outcome of this case as being important for the whole student movement on campus. The outcome is up in the air at this point. In the course of our propaganda, it is necessary for us to have a clear position. On campus, the general impression of the YSA is that we are not opposed to free speech.

At the upcoming plenum of the YSA National Committee, we will begin a process of discussion in the YSA to clarify some of these questions. Farrell's comments have convinced me that the formulation we used in the 1974 plenum report is a bad one. It's basically self-contradictory to say that we don't call upon the state or campus administration to ban these fascist groups and at the same time say that they have no right to speak.

That's a stand that legitimises state repression even if it is hedged in by statements that oppose capitalist state repression of fascists. The formulation provides cover for capitalist repression even if, as we did, you insist on mass action with majority support. Of course, it legitimises it even more when you propose repression by small groups of radicals as the alternative to state repression, as the Spartacus Youth League and the others did. I think we will have to straighten out this contradiction in our position at the next plenum.

A more knotty question is our attitude to racist professors and geneticists like Shockley, Jensen, Herrnstein, and others who are going on speaking tours of the campuses to promulgate racist theories. We've tended to say the same thing about them that we said about the Nazis.

The way we tried to keep the issue off the free speech axis was to say that these people claim to be exercising free speech, but that's not the issue. Their racist theories simply bolster attacks on Black people by the KKK, ROAR, and the rest. Their speeches are not just talk but inspirations to racist violence and racial discrimination. At the same time, we've also opposed confrontationist actions that put activists in needless danger. I now think we've been wrong in opposing in our propaganda the "right" of these people to speak on campus.

There is another problem related to the previous ones. We in the YSA more or less raised refusal to debate Shockley to the level of a principle. On the other hand, we unhesitatingly seek out the most rabid Zionists — who are every bit as racist — for

debates. That's because there is such a small anti-Zionist audience and it helps expose the Zionist position. It attracts uncommitted people who want to hear a confrontation of views on the Middle East.

Whenever Shockley comes to campus, several wings shape up in the meetings that prepare the antiracist response. There is a wing that says stop him at all costs and the mood of the campus be damned. Then there's another wing that argues that the best thing we can do is try to turn this meeting into a debate.

They propose that we should get some professor who is a competent geneticist or, even better, an antiracist activist who knows his stuff in this area and debate Shockley. Then you have the contention of ideas before the students rather than letting them simply be saturated with Shockley's racist pseudoscience inside the hall while all we have is a few slogans outside.

Thus far the YSA has said: "No. This only helps to build the meetings. We shouldn't dignify these racist views by debating them."

I've begun to have some doubts whether this was a wise stance for us to take. These racists are coming on with pseudoscientific arguments and some students listen and take it for good coin.

It's a tactical issue with a strong emotional impact associated with it. We debate all sorts of people on all sorts of questions. In my opinion, we based our "no debate" tactic on the emotional intensity of the issue. As I said, I'm beginning to think the YSA was tactically wrong on some of these things.

**Jack Barnes:** It is fortunate that this is coming up now. It will make it much easier to educate people on these questions.

There are several problems that are closely linked to the points made in Farrell's presentation. I think one of the problems is the middle-class view of the campus that is unconsciously held by a lot of people in the radical movement. They think of the campus as some kind of unsullied sea of reasoned discourse that is somehow different from the rest of society. One reason why we are opponents of student power strategies and proponents of the red university strategy is because we recognise that the university is deeply interlinked with class society. The processes going on in society, including class polarisation, reflect themselves on campus. Let's begin with that reality, and then we can fit all our strategy and tactics on campus into the broader strategy and tactics of the class struggle.

That's why I think Farrell was right to begin where he did. We don't start with the Constitution, or the Bill of Rights, or the fascists. We start with the preparation of our class and its vanguard for the coming struggles. That's the axis that everything we do

revolves around.

This idea of the special character of the campus plays into the hands of the right wing liberals and professional civil libertarians who want to pretend that there's some way to keep class polarisation away from the campus. Some say let the Nazis go out to a white working-class neighbourhood and talk to those racist workers, but not on our campus. There's a lot of that. It's middle class.

It also plays into the hands of the ultralefts who think there are different rules for combat on campus than exist somewhere else.

With this outlook, the YSA's concept of the red university and the student movement will be seen in a new light and a new facet will come to view. We have to drive home this idea of the class polarisation and its reflection on the campus.

Over the next 10 or 15 years, many of your fascist-minded speakers on campus are going to have tenure. They're not going to be outsiders or guys wearing German SS uniforms. There are going to be fascist professors and teaching assistants. Some of them will be effective organisers and ideologues and spokespersons for a genuine fascist movement.

This correct view of the campus, our strategy, and the role of the fascists within it, will differentiate us from the liberals and the ultralefts. It will help our cothinkers around the world. This problem is even less understood in other countries where there are real traditions of university autonomy. Police aren't supposed to set foot on the campus. Of course, whenever social tension is high, all that goes by the boards.

What is the problem that our comrades really face in their day to day work? A major one is ultraleft pressure. They have to handle the ultraleft arguments of the Maoists, the, new left remnants, the Marcyites, the Workers League, the Spartacists, etc. Every campus must have four or five of these groups — ultraleft student groups, ultraleft organisations of the oppressed nationalities, ultraleft feminists, etc.

The pressure comes because our people hate the fascists and the right wing and so do these people. It's like a discussion within the movement, not outside it. Our people don't bend to the civil libertarians, to the Republican and Democratic politicians, but on this point they were bending to ultraleftism.

I think one thing we have to do is put the whole question of fascism into proper proportion. The main approach to fighting these people today is as *racists*, not as fascists. Fascism is not an imminent threat in the United States, but the mobilisation of racist forces is.

The racist offensive is not only an imminent threat but a gigantic campaign that has been organised and mobilised for over a decade by the ruling class. Showdowns with real social forces are taking place over education, jobs, housing, from Milwaukee

to Boston to Los Angeles to Chicago to Houston to Baltimore.

I would think that the axis for the mobilisation of broad forces — not just a few ultralefts — would be to concentrate on the racist aspect. Racist mobilisations, racist theories, racist opinions, and racist agitators are part of this attempt to build up a racist offensive. They show the need for a counteroffensive. That should be the stress in our statements. When it would be accurate to say so, we can also point out that these people are fascists and what that means.

I was impressed by a story Steve Chainey, the SWP organiser in San Francisco, told me about a probusing demonstration held by the National Student Coalition Against Racism. It was attended by a significant number of Blacks, students, and youth. Black youth made up a large part of the defence guard. The Nazis came up in their truck with their storm troopers uniforms and a sound system. They started a racist harangue. Of course, the first reaction of people on the demonstration was to throw taunts back at them.

The marshals had a discussion and they recognised that this Nazi display was a provocation. Its objective role was to direct attention away from the real enemy, the segregationist Boston school board, the rulers in Boston, and their backers in the White House. The effect of a confrontation with the Nazis would be to focus attention instead on these 10 nuts in a halftrack. The papers would report that a bunch of us beat up 10 of them or they beat up some of us, instead of having to report about a thousand people mobilised against the racist school board.

So the marchers just ignored the Nazis and drove ahead with the rally. You start with the struggle against racism and the practical needs of that struggle. That makes sense to a serious Black militant or a serious worker or student. The ultralefts, of course, don't see it that way. In their view, you are obliged to drop everything, throw all other issues to the side, and start showing this little bunch of Nazis how rough and tough you are.

You might want to consider including some comments in the report you are preparing for the YSA plenum on the National Caucus of Labor Committees. While none of these little fascist groups of today are like the real critter that is going to come down the road, there are more aspects of it in the NCLC (or "US Labor Party" as it sometimes styles itself) than in the Nazis.

Here you have people who attack the union movement, the Black movement, and radical groups of all stripes. They have goon squads. They orient toward the lumpenproletariat, the cops, and toward sectors of students and middle-class radicals who are shaken up by the growth of the crisis and are looking for answers. The axis of their presentation is the road for the masses out of the crisis produced by the

“Rockefeller-CIA conspiracy”.

They put out newspapers and magazines that campaign on this, claiming that they are for a radical solution in the interest of the masses. They have people in some of the unions and they carry out radical-sounding antilabour propaganda among the workers. The labour movement has more problems with the NCLC than with the Nazis. They cause more confusion, because people think of them as radical or even communist rather than reactionary. The same was true of the real Nazis, the German ones. While I don't predict that the NCLC is likely to become a mass organisation, it is a better example of the more serious and complicated aspects of fascism than the American Nazis.

I think the YSA's only mistake was the one statement opposing the fascists' right to speak on the campus. That was unnecessary. In one sense, of course, these murdering goons have no right to breathe air. But that sentence could be interpreted as meaning that radical groups are taking it upon themselves to decide that these individuals have no Bill of Rights protection. We don't say that.

I think too much credence is given in the *Young Socialist* to the idea that the big goal is to stop the racists from speaking — if not now, then later. I noticed that the last line in the *Young Socialist* article on the antiracist demonstration in Minnesota states that while it didn't stop the head of the Klan from speaking, it did begin to educate. This gives people the wrong impression of our objectives. If it really did begin to educate and mobilise, then that's the important thing — and not whether you stopped one fascist from talking for an hour on one campus.

The structure of the passage gives your cadres the wrong impression that the number one goal was to stop him, but it was premature to carry that out. It's going to be necessary to stop fascist forces one day, but they will not be a direct outgrowth of this individual. Whether he speaks or not is not what will decide the future struggle between racism and antiracism, or fascism and antifascism. The key thing is how you mobilise, organise, and politically arm and prepare the mass forces that are going to have to do the stopping. What you *did* in Minnesota was very good in that regard.

The YSA organiser in San Francisco wrote in her letter that our approach has to be firmed up because we are going to confront this problem frequently if we are successful in helping to organise a strong antiracist movement. For instance, if a fighting youth organisation for desegregation develops, or if the NAACP or other forces move in the direction of taking on the racist forces, the whole antiracist movement will be continually confronted with these problems.

All kinds of people will want the antiracist movement to spearhead premature efforts to stop the racists or bust up a Nazi meeting, or tear out the telephone in the

house where Chicago's racist hotline is quartered. That's because the people we work with will have a healthy hatred for these racist scum and will size them up for what they are, the spearhead of a national racist offensive. With that in mind, the report that is given to the YSA plenum should be understandable not only to your national committee, but to antiracist activists all over the country.

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Tactically, you have to differentiate between Shockley and the Nazis. There is a whole spectrum of outright fascists, right-wing professors, right-wing students, secretly right-wing types, open racist elements, secretly racist elements, groups that favour a stronger role for the military, etc. You have to be aware of the qualitative differences between some of these shades as well as the breadth of the spectrum. You handle each type slightly differently.

At the point where we are in the evolution of class consciousness in this country, and the state of the student movement in relation to that overall level of class consciousness, you cannot deal with Shockley or Jensen exactly as you would deal with fascists.

On these questions we have the job of winning the minds not only of the masses but of the vanguard. Even many of the more capable students cannot self-confidently explain what's wrong with these theories. You've got to take them on at that theoretical level, as well as on the level of the implicit politics of what Jensen and Shockley are doing. It will be greatly appreciated in the Black community if forces come forward to rebut this racist fakery in plain language, cogently and scientifically. On this question, one of our weapons is science.

Of course, we don't invite these people to campus, but we also know that they are going to be on campus. There are going to be debates and people are going to go to them and a lot of racists are going to look to these pseudoscientists for ammunition. The young militants will want to know how to rebut the Jensens. They really appreciate it when you give them ammunition, answer their questions, clarify their confusions so that they can answer the questions of others in their milieu. We should mobilise some of our better young minds that have experience and knowledge in science, genetics, and history and provide people with the whole picture of why they're wrong. Then the main support the right-wingers will have on this point will be the hard-core racists and fascists.

You can't laugh off these racist theoreticians. On the question of debating racists, there is an important thing to keep in mind. The fascists *educated* millions on theories of racial superiority and inferiority. They didn't just appeal to emotions and use violence

and mass psychology. They also educated on the basis of their racial myths. They had books and textbooks and they made use of the rising film industry. People went around and lectured, showing alleged skulls of Jews and jawbones of Blacks and claiming to prove scientific points with them. They talked learnedly about migrations and where the different races came from. It was all pseudoscientific claptrap, of course.

In many cases, the fascist leaders were completely cynical about their own ideologies. That was just bait for suckers. But the people they appealed to were not always cynical about the Nazi ideology. In the context of a social crisis, these ideas were a recruiting tool. The fascists recognised that, among other things, you have to win over the minds of the people and give them the rudiments of explanations that seem to be in line with reality to the listeners.

So we can't just ignore these ideologists. We have the duty to provide counterinformation to the racist propaganda, and there should be no embarrassment about doing it. We have to get the *Militant* and the *Young Socialist* involved in this process.

The emotional reaction against such debates is natural. Black people know they are not genetically inferior to whites. They are in a better position than anybody to know white people as they really are. They have no illusions on that score.

But, if they think it out they are going to see that the battle is to win the minds of the masses in this country. There is nothing more popular in the Black community than a speaker who can give a wonderful talk on Black history. Malcolm X was one example. Black people know they have a great history. But when someone articulates it, inspires people by it, there is tremendous appreciation for that in the Black community. They will feel the same way about militants who can go into a debate and tear these racists apart with the facts, and the political explanations that underlie the facts.

Progressive-minded people are open to thinking scientifically, thinking materialistically, and thinking dialectically. They appreciate this kind of education and it arms them and inspires them. The ultralefts are thinking about street-fighting tactics. But we are arming people with the ideas they will need over the long haul. That way we will come out ahead not only today, but in the real street fighting that history tells us is going to take place in a profound social crisis.

**Ginny Hildebrand:** I have a couple of questions regarding very specific situations. I agree with Jack and Farrell completely about getting off the axes of free speech and preventing the meetings. We have opposed confrontations.

We have said concerning Shockley and Jensen that their theories are aimed at

dehumanising Blacks, etc. When these people come to campus, we make use of that move on their part to spur on a movement that is counter to the racists. We also put forward demands around whatever specific antiracist struggles are going on at the time.

We also point out that Shockley and Jensen represent certain fringes of the racist movement, and that the Nazis and the Klan represent in a certain sense its ultimate logic.

One thing I have a question about is how we use this term “rights”. If one of these racists comes on campus and we’re having a counterdemonstration and a reporter comes up and asks, “Do you think fascists or racists have the right to speak”, we take the approach that this is not the issue.

But if you are in a planning meeting before a demonstration against a Nazi or a Jensen, it isn’t only the sectarians who place the axis on barring these people from speaking. You have a lot of serious students, including Black students, who feel the same way that we do, that these purveyors of racist violence don’t have any right to do this.

What we want to do in that situation, I would think, is strategically explain the tactical approach that needs to be taken. But when this question comes up, don’t you have to identify with the sentiment that they don’t have the right to speak, and then explain that this is not the real issue? Shouldn’t we say that even though others will pick it up and use it in an ultraleft way? What should we say in such meetings to avoid either being misunderstood or encouraging harmful adventures?

There is one thing that can’t be stressed enough that I know we are all in agreement on. The struggles on the campuses have in large part revolved around this question of opposing free speech for racists. We will often be in a situation where an ultraleft tendency or a student group that has a different orientation from our own gets the jump on us in organising against some racist speaker. They begin to organise a demonstration with slogans against the right of free speech and possibly even set the goal of breaking up the meeting. I think that we should not simply abstain, even though we may not be able to participate in this or that action. I think comrades should be aggressive about carrying out educational work against the racists or even helping to initiate another demonstration on a more realistic basis. We have to be active in this struggle even if some forces are a little bit off the track at times.

Finally, how in general do we go about defending people who do engage in adventurist confrontations against the Nazis and the racist academicians? They’ve gotten themselves into a spot where their intentions can be misunderstood, where they don’t appear to be defending themselves against the racists but to be attacking

the racists, and they've isolated themselves somewhat. What's the best approach to take in defending them?

**Farrell Dobbs:** There's one aspect raised by the ultraleft action in San Francisco State that is particularly interesting. How do you go about defending them against the measures taken against them by the authorities?

This can be used to drive home a lesson that has a very deep thrust and wide application. You don't put it on the axis of apologising for them by saying they did something wrong, but they shouldn't be victimised. You can use the attack on these ultralefts to show the students that, in the confrontations with fascism, the government — in this case, the university administration — is on the fascists' side and against the antifascists. In San Francisco, the ruling authorities are trying to punish people who prevented a fascist from speaking. In Los Angeles, their counterparts in the ruling structure can't seem to find the right-wing terrorists that bombed our headquarters. The San Francisco comrades might find similar examples closer to home. That way you can turn a negative, a tactical disadvantage, into a positive, a tactical advantage.

Never approach these situations on the basis simply of the narrow factors involved in the specific situation. Don't think of it in terms of defending people who got victimised by the ruling class because they carried out an incorrect line. Approach it from the angle of how are we going to turn that against the capitalists. When you are thinking about tactics, place every episode into the larger picture of your strategy and objectives. To view the episode only in isolation is a mistake.

Once you do that, two things immediately suggest themselves here. One, these people got caught in a bind. They demonstrated in life the foolishness of trying to substitute themselves for the masses in trying to put a stop to the fascist efforts to recruit on the campuses. The other side of it is that they are being clobbered by a government that isn't doing a damn thing when the fascists violate the right of free speech for other people. They even look the other way when these forces commit crimes that come within the definition of attempted murder. The attack of the authorities in this instance focuses on the discriminatory policies of the government in the confrontation between the fascists and the antifascists.

One of the key problems for a tactician is to think out ways to turn negatives into positives. It's natural to feel: "Jesus Christ, we could have done without this! If it isn't our enemies who create problems for us, we've got to watch out for those who say they want the same things we do."

It's better to say: "Okay, the ultralefts botched it. Now how can we take this situation and turn it against the enemy and even make the ultralefts useful in spite of

themselves.”

Let me add a little fillip to Jack’s description of the San Francisco parade in solidarity with the Black students in Boston. SWP and YSA members weren’t the entire monitoring force, of course, but they played a significant part.

Not only did the monitors interpose themselves between the marchers and the Nazis, but they deliberately and demonstratively formed a line with their backs to the Nazis. I liked that little note. It was a very effective way of silently signalling to the marchers, don’t let these Nazis divert us from our purpose. Don’t let them screw up our demonstration as they would so very much like to do. Masses understand such silent signals. I like that kind of thinking. Knowing how to do such little things makes a skilful tactician. When you find someone who is capable of thinking fast and acting accordingly in matters of this kind, you’ve got the makings of a tactician.

**Steve Clark:** It’s not just sectarians and ultralefts who have these emotional responses to the idea of allowing Nazis to speak or debating Shockley and Jensen. There are Black students and Black student organisations that react to these racists by wanting to take action to stop them here and now.

It isn’t just a question of Black students who are organised into political tendencies either, although this is part of what the Young Socialist Alliance members confront. The point Jack made about pressure from the ultraleft has validity but it is not primarily an ideological problem.

In dealing with the question of how to fight the Nazis at San Francisco State, for instance, we had the problem of differentiating ourselves from the Spartacus Youth League without appearing to be siding just a little bit with the Nazis, without appearing to be soft. These sectarian groups have orators who will try very hard to whip up a frenzy on this theme and sometimes this will have an impact on militant Black students, although this was not at all the case at San Francisco State.

In the case of a Shockley meeting, a similar problem arises. How do you take a stand in favour of debate, for instance, when these Black students just hate the guts of these racists and for very good reason. Many of these Black students don’t have any civil libertarian hangups. They just have a gut hatred for these racists that sometimes blinds them to the tactical considerations Farrell and Jack have raised. How do you deal with sentiment of this kind in a Black student organisation, for instance.

That’s a source of the pressure the YSA faces. It’s not the broad student milieu that is the source of this pressure. The average student is almost always confused by this free speech issue, as Farrell said. But it isn’t the sectarian groups that are the main source of pressure, either.

When we participate in a united front demonstration against Shockley, these Black students are bitterly outraged by him. A couple of them will sometimes go into the meeting and hear what this guy is spewing out. They bring it back to the demonstrators. Several times the picket line monitors have lost control of the demonstrations because of this. Fifty or 60 Black students just went inside and started shouting down the racist. These are often very large meetings and the relationship of forces is against them. The result is that the Black students get victimised. This happened at Yale, for instance.

To the extent that our members may be uncomfortable with the educational process that we have to carry out on this issue, I think that the problem will not be how do we answer the Spartacist League, but how do we present our arguments to people like those Black students at Yale.

**Jack Barnes:** The problem is ultraleftism. In this case, it is ultraleftism on the part of Black students.

It is understandable ultraleftism. They hate the racists who deny their rights and their humanity. The source of the ultraleftism of the Spartacists is also their antipathy to racism, capitalism, fascism, and all the other evils of society. They are also individuals who believe they hate the racists and the right. They also have gut reactions.

You can begin with an entirely justified gut reaction, but its reflection on the level of tactics, strategy, and action in these cases is ultraleftism. The ultralefts in the Black student movement don't know the time of day any more than the Spartacists. There's no difference on that level at all.

The worst disservice you can do to the Black liberation movement is to adapt to ultraleftism because of the colour of the ultraleftist's skin. We don't adapt to class-collaborationism when Black Democrats run for office and we shouldn't adapt to ultraleftism in the Black liberation struggle either. In both cases, of course, we run into gut reactions that are different from our class struggle position.

We give the same arguments to the Spartacists as to the Black students and *vice versa*. You have to begin with the time of day.

On some campuses you may be able to prevent these racists from being invited. Instead you may have a public meeting in the chapel paid for by the university and attended by thousands of students and faculty members. You may have a talk on the real origins of humanity, the real history of Black people, exposing the racist frauds. That's the best variant. That means the particular campus is at a certain political level and the relationship of forces is such that there's no base of support for the racists. You can transform that campus into an educational megaphone for science against racism and for mobilising against racism — on and off the campus.

That's the best situation. At Yale or Duke University, to take two examples, the relationship of forces is not that good. The level of consciousness is not that high. It follows that Shockley will appear. If you physically try to break up the meeting, whether or not you succeed, you will be worse off for your efforts. You begin with the time of day, not with your gut. You use your head. Shockley is going to appear on a lot of campuses.

So what do you do? You size up the situation and figure out what's best. Maybe it's a picket line. Maybe it's to get the university to provide \$3000 for one of the Black students to articulate another point of view.

Steve noted that the leaders of an anti-Shockley demonstration at Yale that we were involved in lost control of the picket line. You lost control of that picket line because you broke a fundamental rule. You didn't think out your real goals and prepare beforehand to achieve them. The troops didn't fully comprehend why they were there and for what reason. If the political objective is presented, with whatever provisos and hesitations, as preventing the speech, then demonstrators are going to feel drawn toward doing that, and they will suffer setbacks accordingly. There has to be clarity on the political objectives. It's a good lesson to learn and I'm glad you were able to learn it with so few casualties. There will be more important picket lines in the future and the provocation is going to be much greater.

We had to take on ultraleftism in many of its forms in the antiwar movement. There were some ultraleft tendencies in the Black struggle that played a destructive role in the antiwar movement. We had to teach the entire movement how to deal with these things politically and we won over many Black militants in that way. It's a much worse disservice to pander or adapt to a wrong political concept that is coming from a serious Black militant than it is to give ground to a hardened sectarian, if you want to deal with differentiations of that kind. We have got to persuade people to transform their gut feelings, which we also have, into conscious strategies that can achieve the defeat of racism.

On defending groups that get caught up in adventures — somehow the victims of these adventures always turn out to be the demonstrators and almost never their intended targets — we have to take the cases as they come. Why does the administration victimise these students? Because the demonstrators were opposed to the fascists, that's why. In the course of defending them, you try in a nonsectarian way to get across the lesson of the outcome of their action. The logic of these situations is that if the radical students and the oppressed nationalities follow the ultralefts' lead, they'll all be off the campus sooner or later.

It's like walking into the administration office and saying: "We'd like you to get rid

of the lot of us.” The administration is happy to oblige. Let’s defend the victims but let’s also educate so there won’t be any more victims.

If the Spartacists insist on setting up a defence committee that supports their adventurist actions, we can’t be part of it. If they want us to sign a loyalty oath that we think their tactics are great, we will have to politely say “no”. In that case, we do whatever is practical and useful to oppose the victimisations.

**Doug Jenness:** I would like to comment on Ginny’s concern that comrades might be put on the spot if they came out for the right of fascists to come on the campus. It strikes me that comrades should not feel they have to make some kind of moral declaration that would put us in the position of conceding that such and such a group doesn’t have any rights. It’s a trap.

These are racists who are bombing Black people’s homes and threatening Black school children. The issue is how to fight them. We have to figure out how to build the most effective and biggest protest against their violations of democratic rights.

Ultralefts accuse us of just wanting to educate. We certainly want to educate, but our proposals are also a more effective form of struggle. We aim at mobilising the largest number of people with the least chance of victimisation.

\* \* \*

I would like to make one point on debating these racist geneticists. In general, you may find that it is better to have an antiracist militant debate one of these geneticists than a liberal professor, even one who has excellent knowledge of the scientific issues involved. Shockley and Jensen are pretty slick at giving a pseudoscientific form to what is essentially a political argument for keeping Black people at the bottom.

I’ve seen cases where one of these liberal professors would debate Jensen and get pretty badly mauled because they were less clear and consistent than Jensen on the *political* issues. They don’t understand the real nature of racial oppression. They may stumble around and give ground where absolutely none should be given.

Often a Black militant who is a capable speaker will give a more effective presentation because he or she knows what racial oppression is and how it works. So it might be better to have an antiracist militant study the scientific aspects of the question and take on these racist theories from a more consistent political point of view than some of these well meaning liberal academics can put forward.

**George Novack:** The basic position of the party on this question was formulated in a resolution on the capitalist witch-hunt adopted at the February 1950 Plenum of the

SWP National Committee.<sup>a</sup>

On the question that was posed about how to answer when we are asked whether or not racists or fascists have the right to speak on campus, my opinion is that this question has to be turned around.

Our concern as socialists and antiracists in this instance is not whether this individual or that individual has the right to speak. Our concern is the abuse of this right by the fascists and racists to rationalise and encourage taking away the rights of the masses of Black people, the abuse of this right to incite violence against Black people in Boston or elsewhere. Put the question in the proper framework and on the right axis.

This problem has to be seen in the light of our long-range tasks. There are three major sites of social struggle in this country — the factories, the communities of the oppressed nationalities and national minorities, and the campuses. The Young Socialist Alliance as a student organisation has its attention focused on the campuses.

There are 10 million college students and hundreds of thousands of faculty members in a country that is probably the oldest democratic republic in the world. People in this country are very sensitive about their democratic rights, and rising expectations have made them even more sensitive. That is why they can respond to attacks on our rights. We can't get ourselves into the position where we advocate the abrogation of anyone's democratic rights as such.

This country is divided into classes and the classes contend with each other. In this contest, we counter the meeting of fascists or racists on a campus with the demand for a countermobilisation. Here you have the counterposition of democratic rights by two sides. The contending forces appeal to the same democratic rights, codified in the same bourgeois-democratic constitution. That is the ground on which the conflict initially and formally stands.

That is where the concrete realities of the class struggle come to the fore, sometimes leading to physical combat. If that happens, it is all part of the struggle. We don't go in for adventures and we don't encourage adventures. It's just that when opposing forces come to grips, fighting sometimes results. That is part of the process of determination of the relationship of forces on a campus, in a city, and in the nation.

We certainly want to be in a position where the relationship of forces is changed in favour of our class and its allies. We want the fascists, racists, and sexists to feel intimidated and afraid of doing their dirty work. But we don't want this to take the form of restrictions on democratic rights, because that can lead to restrictions on our

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<sup>a</sup> "The Capitalist Witch-hunt and How to Fight It" in Cannon, *Socialism on Trial* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1999).

advocacy or that of any progressive force.

We do what we have to do without indulging in orations against anyone's democratic rights.

**Hildebrand:** This discussion has clarified my thinking on how to proceed and on what line should be taken to the YSA plenum to begin the educational process on this question. By presenting the whole issue in this perspective, we should be able to clarify a lot of things for the YSA members.

**Betsey Stone:** The activity of these fascist groups is alarming a lot of people in the Black community and they want to do something about it. The first reaction is very emotional because these fascists are challenging the very right of a people to live. But the Black community is very interested in and ready to listen to practical and effective ways of combating these forces.

When we talk about this issue, it is always from the point of view of hatred for these fascist forces and the perspective of destroying them. The ultralefts want to debate about free speech. The Nazis figure they have nothing to lose from this. That's just falling into their trap.

**Farrell Dobbs:** One point, specifically on the right of free speech. We don't fight for free speech for Nazis. We defend the right of free speech against the fascists and against the government, and we don't want to hand them any weapons for suppressing our free speech.

We don't advocate free speech for Nazis the way the professional civil libertarians do. We don't view it as a concept that rises above the laws of the class struggle.

Our aim is to crush the fascists. That aim is dictated by their nature and the methods they use against our class. The civil libertarians may dream that this conflict will be resolved by polite exchanges of views. The struggle with fascism won't be settled that way. Either the workers are going to crush the fascists or the fascists will crush the workers.

We stand in opposition to the government trying to put restrictions on the Nazis, because they turn any such restrictions against our class and its allies. We stood in opposition to the government of New York City in 1961 when it tried to prevent the American Nazi leader Rockwell from speaking in Union Square.<sup>a</sup>

If we had kept silent or supported the government's action in that instance, we

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<sup>a</sup> See this volume, Section VI. Protests Against the American Nazi Party.

would have been helping the government set a precedent for use against the next four or five civil rights or peace actions. We don't make speeches against free speech for anybody because of the same kind of considerations. But we are under no illusions that the fight with the fascist groups will be settled by speech.

It's a coldblooded tactical proposition. A lot of people are already in our party and I hope an infinite number are yet to come. As people mostly born and bred in the USA, they will come around us with all the thinking habits of American pragmatism and formal logic. They may think that since the SWP doesn't call for the suppression of free speech in the case of fascists, therefore the SWP is interested in the fascists' right to speak.

No. Our concern is with the rights of our class and its allies. It's in the nature of things that our rights and the rights of the labour movement and the Black movement will collide with the supposed rights of the fascists — because the fascists view their rights as a licence to kill, a licence to crush the workers' movement.

Secondly, when you talk about the fight against fascism, you are talking about combat. The object of the ruling class in trying to build a fascist movement is to prepare, alongside the institutions of parliamentary rule, extraparliamentary forces to crush the working class and its allies and lay the basis for capitalism to impose a very brutal form of dictatorship. Between now and the time that showdown comes — and it's going to come, that's a law of history — the ruling class will resort to every possible means including the most bloody violence to perpetuate its power and its privileges.

The ruling class always comes to the point where it seeks to pass from bourgeois democracy through interim stages like Bonapartism or military dictatorship to fascism. The whole period between now and then is one of mobilisations and countermobilisations leading to the final showdown. Viewed in that perspective, mobilising forces for self-defence against the extraparliamentary attacks of the fascists can be seen as a step in a process that leads to the formation at a certain stage of a working-class army like the army that the Bolsheviks forged in Russia after they came to power.

The line up in the preliminary stage is one of the ruling class attempting to mobilise initial fascist forces. The conscious revolutionary vanguard has the task of mobilising the forces that are going to prevent the fascists from imposing their dictatorship in the crunch. That crunch occurs later when we're at a higher, more intensive stage of struggle, when the capitalist crisis has become far deeper than today.

If you start by attempting to hastily gather together a vanguard force and crush fascism in the egg, you are playing into the hands of the fascists. You are losing ground in the mobilisation of the real class that can do away with fascism, and the fascists are

gaining ground as a result. Now that's the problem the ultralefts fell into in San Francisco.

With a new wave of the current radicalisation, we will witness the beginning of a process that was characterised by the appearance of a diversity of phenomena in the '30s. On the one side there was the German-American Bund or the Silver Shirts, counterparts at that time of the Klan and the Nazis.

On the other hand, we had Coughlin. He was a somewhat different animal. Frank Hague, the mayor of Jersey City, was yet a different animal. Study that period in this respect, with all its nuances.

Until Roosevelt, the Stalinists, the social-democrats, and the old-line union hacks like Tobin succeeded in blocking the political radicalisation of the class, the ruling class was terrified that they might see a revolutionary explosion. It was no accident that the first signs of an incipient fascist development began in the early 1930s. Pelley started the Silver Shirts in 1932.

It was also no accident that the right-wing polarisation began to take a more serious form when it appeared in the late 1930s that the labour radicalisation had been stalled. Confusion was created by the failure of the working class to respond independently to the new depression of 1937-38. This was no little economic dip but a very severe slump. In those circumstances Coughlin and Hague, the serious fascists, were able to enter a confused political scene that resulted from the crisis of working-class leadership. The fascist danger was not washed out by anything the labour leadership did, but only when the path followed by the ruling class led into World War II. Then all the ground rules changed.

What has happened since then? A long period of cold war and witch hunt transpired, with economic stability and quiescence in the class struggle. Things began to change with the turn in the Black struggle in the 1950s, the student radicalisation, women's struggles, and the antiwar movement. With the new economic depression and the beginning of new thinking in the working class, you are seeing new signs of incipient fascism interrelated with the repressive actions of the government.

You are going to see the rise of counterparts of Hague and Coughlin in a different form, in different garb, but a comparable type. Remember, you've now got a more desperate ruling class that had to haul its ass out of Saigon in a hurry. The imperialists scrambled out with their tails between their legs the way the special deputies left the market in the 1934 Minneapolis strike.

We have to see the next period as a period of mobilisation of fascist forces and countermobilisation of working class forces. That is the context in which we develop our tactics. Someone who begins with the concept that you can defeat the enemy

without a major battle is making a big error. There is going to be a battle, a direct confrontation with whatever forces the capitalist class can muster to perpetuate its rule. Don't go out with a corporal's guard thinking that if you can smash a few scouts on the other side, the real enemy army will cut and run and never take to the field of battle. You've got to meet them power to power.

Tactically, your actions must be calculated to aid the mobilisation of the workers and their allies and obstruct the mobilisation of the fascists. The fascists are trying to do the same thing. They are trying to develop a system of tactics that will facilitate the mobilisation of fascist forces and block the mobilisation of our forces. Look at the line they are taking at San Francisco State. They are able to gull a lot of people who are raw material for the antifascist forces because of this mistake by the ultralefts.

This is no game for fools. This game is for all the marbles. The question is: Is there going to be a victorious proletarian revolution or is there going to be fascism in power? The conscious forces on both sides know the game is for keeps.

It is important to keep these things in mind in our discussions, to inculcate these lessons into our cadres and through our cadres into the mass movement. There's nothing wrong with the instincts of most of these young ultralefts. The instinct is in line with the task, that is, the destruction of the fascist forces. The problem is that they just do not know what time it is.

They remind me of grade school kids. An immeasurable number of black eyes and lost teeth are caused by the fact that youngsters don't know how to fight intelligently. They run in swinging their arms like a windmill. That's what these people are doing. But much more is at stake in this fight than there is in a schoolyard brawl.

We'll try to educate as many of them as we can but that's not the main thing. The main thing is to educate a growing army of antifascists. The issue at stake for every fighter is: Are you going to be ready for the real thing when it comes? And it will come. ■

**Section VIII**  
**Appendices**





Leon Trotsky

## Appendix 1

# The Danger of Ultraleft Tactics in Fighting Fascism

*By Leon Trotsky*

On February 6, 1934, a fascist riot in Paris came close to toppling the government. The attempted rightist putsch sparked a tremendous upsurge among the French working class. On February 12 a massive antifascist demonstration took place in Paris. While the Communist Party was swept along on February 12, it was still locked into the ultraleft, Stalinist “Third Period” line of the international communist movement.

This argued that revolution was on the immediate agenda. Since the situation was revolutionary, the reformist organisations could be ignored. Rather than seriously trying to build the working class unity in action which alone could successfully confront fascism, the French CP talked about a “united front from below”, i.e., simply calling on the non-CP workers to abandon their organisations and join with the CP. The emphasis was not on building unity but on ultraleft, sectarian stunts, fighting the cops, etc.

It also completely misunderstood the crucial fact that the bourgeois state was not yet fascist. This was the same strategy which had so disastrously failed to halt Hitler’s rise to power in Germany.

On February 26, 1934, fascists from various far-right groups such as the Croix de Feu, Action Française, Solidarité Française and Jeunesses Patriotes attempted to stage a provocation in the working-class Paris suburb of Ménilmontant. Workers clashed with cops protecting the small group of fascists; one worker was killed.

Trotsky’s reference to living in Switzerland and having been in Germany is a

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A letter to the leadership of the French Communist League, March 2, 1934. By permission of the Harvard College Library. Translated from the French by Josephine Hunt.

security subterfuge; since the beginning of November 1933 he had actually been living incognito at Barbizon near Paris. He was barred from participating in French politics.



Dear friends,

Being in Switzerland, I cannot follow events in France from up close. I can make judgements only on the basis of newspapers and letters. However, let me say that before emigrating to Switzerland, I accumulated a good deal of experience in these matters whilst in Germany, and the Mémilmontant affair fills me with the worst sense of foreboding. If things continue to develop along this line, catastrophe is inevitable.

What is our aim, not only in an immediate sense, but over the whole of the next period? We must involve the workers in a struggle against the fascists before they have become the dominant force in the state. We must accustom the workers to facing the fascists without fear, teach them to strike the fascists and persuade them that it is they who are more numerous, more audacious, etc. ...

In this period we must clearly distinguish between the fascists and the state, which does not yet wish to give in to the fascists; it wants to be an “arbiter”. We know what this means from a sociological point of view, but this is not about sociology. It is about striking blows and receiving them. Politically, we can see that the pre-Bonapartist, “arbiter” state is one in which the police are hesitating, manoeuvring, vacillating, and in short, are far from identifying themselves with the fascist gangs. It is our strategic task to deepen every hesitation and apprehension of this “arbiter”, and of its army and police. How? By showing that we are stronger than the fascists — in other words, by giving them a good thrashing under the gaze of this “arbiter”, without directly involving the state as long as this is not forced upon us. This is the crucial point.

Now, at Mémilmontant, as far as I can tell from here, things were done entirely differently. According to *L’Humanité*, there were no more than 60 fascists, in a solid working class area! The tactical, or “technical”, task was really very simple — to grab each fascist or each isolated group of them by the collar, to confront them several times with the pavement, deprive them of their insignia and their fascist papers, and without further aggravating the conflict, leave them there with their tattered nerves and a few good bruises. The “arbiter” defended freedom of assembly in this case (for the moment, it also defends workers’ meetings from the fascists). Thus it was absolutely stupid to want to provoke an armed conflict with the police. Yet this is precisely what was done. *L’Humanité* exults: “They built a barricade!” But what for? There were no

fascists on the other side of the barricade, and it was precisely the fascists people had come to fight. Or was this an armed insurrection? To establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in Ménilmontant? This is utter nonsense. Marx said: “One does not play with insurrection.” That means: “One does not play with barricades.” Even in the case of insurrection, you can’t build barricades wherever or whenever you feel like it. (Something can be learnt from Blanqui on this count — see the documents published in *La Critique Social*.)

This is what was achieved: (a) Papa’s boys all got home safely; (b) a worker was killed in the clash with the police; (c) the fascists gained an important argument — “the communists are putting up barricades”.

The idiot bureaucrats will say: “So, it’s for fear of the fascists and love of the police that we’re supposed to renounce barricades?”. To refuse to erect barricades when the political situation requires them, and when you are strong enough to build and defend them, is a betrayal. But it is a disgusting provocation to make mock barricades because of some little fascist meeting and to completely distort the political proportions of it and to disorient the proletariat.

We must *involve* increasing numbers of workers in the struggle against fascism. These exploits at Ménilmontant can only isolate a small combative minority. After that experience, a hundred or a thousand workers, who would be quite ready to fight arrogant bourgeois youths, will say: “No way! I’m not getting beaten up for nothing”. The result of the whole exercise is completely the opposite of its aim. In fact, to be honest, I wouldn’t be surprised if we found out down the track that the loudest cries for barricades had come from fascist agents in the ranks of the Stalinists, who wanted to extricate their friends by provoking a conflict with the police. If that’s true, then they were very successful.

So what should the most active and astute forces have done on the ground? They should have improvised a small general staff, including another socialist and if possible, a Stalinist. (At the same time it should have been explained to the workers that the neighbourhood general staff should have been operating as a permanent organisation the day before the demonstration.) The improvised staff, with the help of a map of the locality, should have drawn up the simplest plan in the world — to divide 100 or 200 protestors into teams of 3-5 fellows, a leader for each team, and let them do their work. Afterwards, the leaders should meet to draw out the results of the exercise and the necessary lessons for the future. This second meeting would form a good core for a permanent general staff, and a mainstay for a workers’ militia in the area. Of course, we should also have had leaflets explaining the necessity of a permanent general staff.

The conclusions for astute revolutionary elements are:

- a. Have your own small general staff for occasions like this.
- b. Anticipate the possibility and the likely outcome of conflicts.
- c. Make some approximate plans (with several variations).
- d. Have a map of the area.
- e. Have leaflets appropriate to the situation.

This is all I can say for the moment. I am almost certain that these suggestions will coincide entirely with your own ideas. So much the better. ■

## Appendix 2

# ***From* The Death Agony of Capitalism & the Tasks of the Fourth International**

*By Leon Trotsky*

### **The picket line / defence guards / workers' militia / the arming of the proletariat**

Sit-down strikes are a serious warning from the masses addressed not only to the bourgeoisie but also to the organisations of the workers, including the Fourth International. In 1919-20, the Italian workers seized factories on their own initiative, thus signalling the news to their “leaders” of the coming of the social revolution. The “leaders” paid no heed to the signal. The victory of fascism was the result.

Sit-down strikes do not yet mean the seizure of factories in the Italian manner; but they are a decisive step toward such seizures. The present crisis can sharpen the class struggle to an extreme point and bring nearer the moment of denouement. But that does not mean that a revolutionary situation comes on at one stroke. Actually, its approach is signalled by a continuous series of convulsions. One of these is the wave of sit-down strikes. The problem of the sections of the Fourth International is to help the proletarian vanguard understand the general character and tempo of our epoch and to fructify in time the struggle of the masses with ever more resolute and militant organisational measures.

The sharpening of the proletariat's struggle means the sharpening of the methods of counterattack on the part of capital. New waves of sit-down strikes can call forth and undoubtedly will call forth resolute countermeasures on the part of the bourgeoisie. Preparatory work is already being done by the confidential staffs of big trusts. Woe to the revolutionary organisations, woe to the proletariat if it is again

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Written in 1938; for the full text see Trotsky, *The Transitional Program and the Struggle for Socialism* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1999).

caught unawares!

The bourgeoisie is nowhere satisfied with official police and army. In the United States, even during “peaceful” times, the bourgeoisie maintains militarised battalions of scabs and privately armed thugs in factories. To this must now be added the various groups of American Nazis. The French bourgeoisie at the first approach of danger mobilised semilegal and illegal fascist detachments, including such as are in the army. No sooner does the pressure of the English workers once again become stronger than immediately the fascist bands are doubled, trebled, increased tenfold to come out in bloody march against the workers. The bourgeoisie keeps itself most accurately informed about the fact that in the present epoch the mass struggle irresistibly tends to transform itself into civil war. The examples of Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain, and other countries taught considerably more to the magnates and lackeys of capital than to the official leaders of the proletariat.

The politicians of the Second and Third Internationals, as well as the bureaucrats of the trade unions, consciously close their eyes to the bourgeoisie’s private army; otherwise, they could not preserve their alliance with it for even 24 hours. The reformists systematically implant in the minds of the workers the notion that the sacredness of democracy is best guaranteed when the bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth and the workers are unarmed.

The duty of the Fourth International is to put an end to such slavish politics once and for all. The petty-bourgeois democrats — including social-democrats, Stalinists, and anarchists — yell louder about the struggle against fascism the more cravenly they capitulate to it in actuality. Only armed workers’ detachments, who feel the support of tens of millions of toilers behind them, can successfully prevail against the fascist bands. The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory — and ends in the street. Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. *Strike pickets* are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike, and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating *workers’ groups for self-defence*. It is necessary to write this slogan into the program of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions. It is imperative wherever possible, beginning with the youth groups, to organise groups for self-defence, to drill and acquaint them with the use of arms.

A new upsurge of the mass movement should serve not only to increase the number of these units but also to unite them according to neighbourhoods, cities, regions. It is necessary to give organised expression to the valid hatred of the workers toward scabs and bands of gangsters and fascists. It is necessary to advance the slogan

of a *workers' militia* as the one serious guarantee for the inviolability of workers' organisations, meetings, and press.

Only with the help of such systematic, persistent, indefatigable, courageous agitational and organisational work, always on the basis of the experience of the masses themselves, is it possible to root out from their consciousness the traditions of submissiveness and passivity; to train detachments of heroic fighters capable of setting an example to all toilers; to inflict a series of tactical defeats upon the armed thugs of counter-revolution; to raise the self-confidence of the exploited and oppressed; to compromise fascism in the eyes of the petty bourgeoisie and pave the road for the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Engels defined the state as bodies of "armed men". *The arming of the proletariat* is an imperative concomitant element to its struggle for liberation. When the proletariat wills it, it will find the road and the means to arming. In this field, also, the leadership falls naturally to the sections of the Fourth International. ■

### Appendix 3

## *From* **Why I Consented to Appear Before the Dies Committee**

*By Leon Trotsky*

The Dies Committee was the House Un-American Activities Committee headed by Texas Democrat Martin Dies. In October 1939 Trotsky was invited to testify before the committee in Austin, Texas “on the history of Stalinism”. Seeking to use the committee hearing as a platform, Trotsky accepted. But shortly before he was to make the journey, the invitation was withdrawn.



Why did I agree to appear before the Dies Committee? Naturally not in order to facilitate the realisation of Mr. Dies’ political aims, particularly the passing of federal laws against one or another extremist “party”. Being an irreconcilable opponent not only of fascism but also of the present-day Comintern, I am at the same time decidedly against the suppression of either of them.

The outlawing of fascist groups would inevitably have a fictitious character: as reactionary organisations they can easily change colour and adapt themselves to any kind of organisational form since the influential sections of the ruling class and of the governmental apparatus sympathise considerably with them and these sympathies inevitably increase during times of political crisis.

As for the Comintern, suppression could only help this completely degenerated and compromised organisation. The difficulty in the Comintern’s situation is a result of the irreconcilable contradiction between the international workers’ movement and

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The following article, written on December 11, 1939, first appeared in the December 30, 1939, issue of *Socialist Appeal*.

the interests of the Kremlin ruling clique. After all its zigzags and deceptions, the Comintern has obviously entered its period of decomposition. The suppression of the Communist Party would immediately re-establish its reputation in the eyes of the workers as a persecuted fighter against the ruling classes.

However, the question is not exhausted by this consideration. Under the conditions of the bourgeois regime, all suppression of political rights and freedom, no matter whom they are directed against in the beginning, in the end inevitably bear down upon the working class, particularly its most advanced elements. That is a law of history. The workers must learn how to distinguish between their friends and their enemies according to their own judgment and not according to the hints of the police.

It is not difficult to predict an *ad hominem* objection: "But just that Soviet government in which you yourself took part proscribed all political parties except the Bolsheviks?" Entirely correct; and to this day I am ready to bear responsibility for its actions. But one cannot identify the laws of civil war with the laws of peaceful periods; the laws of the dictatorship of the proletariat with the laws of bourgeois democracy.

If one considered Abraham Lincoln's policy exclusively from the point of view of civil liberties, then the great president would not appear very favourably. In justification of course he could say that he was compelled to apply civil war measures in order to cleanse the democracy of slavery. Civil war is a state of tense social crisis. One or another dictatorship, inevitably growing out of the conditions of civil war, appears fundamentally as an exception to the rule, a temporary regime.

It is true that the dictatorship in the Soviet Union did not die out, but on the contrary took on monstrous totalitarian forms. This is explained by the fact that out of the revolution arose a new privileged caste which is incapable of maintaining its regime except through measures of a hidden civil war. It was precisely over this question that I broke with the Kremlin ruling clique. I was defeated because the working class, as a result of internal and external conditions, showed itself to be too weak to liquidate its own bureaucracy. I have, however, no doubt that the working class will liquidate it.

But whatever the situation in the USSR may be, the working class in the capitalist countries, threatened with their own enslavement, must stand in defence of freedom for all political tendencies including their own irreconcilable enemies. That is why I do not feel the slightest sympathy for the aims of the Dies Committee. ■

## Appendix 4

# On the Question of Workers' Self-Defence

*By Leon Trotsky*

Every state is a coercive organisation of the ruling class. A social regime is stable so long as the ruling class remains capable, through the means of the state, of imposing its will on the exploited classes. The most important weapons of the state are the police and army. The capitalists refrain (though by no means completely, it is true) from maintaining their own private armies, yielding this function to the state, the better to ensure that the working class should be prevented from establishing its own armed power. So long as capitalism is in the ascendant, the state monopoly of armed power is perceived as something natural, even by the oppressed classes. Until the last world war the international social-democracy, even in its best periods, never raised the question of arming the workers, and moreover, rejected any such idea as a romantic echo of the distant past.

It was only in tsarist Russia that the young proletariat began in the early years of this century to resort to arming its own combat detachments. This was a particularly clear sign of the weakness of the old regime. The tsarist monarchy proved increasingly unable to regulate social relations with the help of its normal organs, that is, the police and army, and was forced more and more to seek the help of volunteer bands (the Black Hundreds, with their pogroms against Jews, Armenians, students, workers, and so on). In answer to this the workers, along with various national groups, began to construct their own self-defence detachments. These developments marked the start of the revolution.

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Dated October 25, 1939 but unpublished during Trotsky's lifetime; it was signed "A non-pacifist". By permission of the Harvard College Library. Translated from the Russian by Renfrey Clarke.

In Europe the question of armed workers' detachments arose only towards the end of the war, and in the United States even later. In every case without exception the capitalist reaction has been and remains the first to resort to establishing special combat organisations alongside the police and army of the bourgeois state. This is due to the fact that the bourgeoisie is more farsighted and merciless than the proletariat. Amid the stresses of class contradictions, it no longer relies completely on its own state, inasmuch as the hands of the state are still bound to some degree by "democratic" norms. The emergence of "volunteer" combat organisations aimed at physically crushing the proletariat is an unmistakable symptom of the incipient collapse of democracy, due to the impossibility of controlling class contradictions using the old methods.

The hopes held out by the reformist parties of the Second and Third Internationals and by the trade unions to the effect that the organs of the democratic state would defend them from the fascist bands have invariably proven illusory. During severe crises, the police always maintain a position of friendly neutrality, if not direct cooperation, with regard to the counter-revolutionary gangs. However, the extreme tenacity of democratic illusions means that workers start organising their own combat detachments very belatedly. The name "self-defence" fully reflects the purpose of these detachments, at least in the initial period, since the attacks invariably come from the side of the counter-revolutionary gangs. Monopoly capital, which stands behind the gangs, launches preventive warfare on the proletariat, in order to render it incapable of socialist revolution.

The process through which workers' self-defence detachments arise and develop is linked indissolubly to the general course of the class struggle in the country, and hence reflects the inevitable intensifications and slackenings of this struggle, its ebbs and flows. The revolution does not advance on society in uninterrupted fashion, but as a series of convulsions separated by various intervals, sometimes lengthy, in the course of which political relations become softened to such an extent that the very idea of revolution comes to seem unreal. Accordingly, the slogan of self-defence detachments either encounters a sympathetic response, or is met with what seems like the silence of the desert, becoming popular once again after a certain period.

This contradictory process has been especially evident in France in recent years. As a result of creeping economic crisis, reaction went openly onto the offensive in February 1934. Fascist organisations soon arose. Meanwhile, the idea of self-defence became popular among rank and file workers. In Paris, even the reformist Socialist Party was forced to practise something akin to self-defence. The politics of the "popular front" — that is, the total prostration of the workers' organisations before the

bourgeoisie — shifted the threat of revolution off into the indefinite future, and allowed the bourgeoisie to take a fascist coup off the agenda. Moreover, after freeing itself from the immediate internal danger and finding itself faced with a growing threat from abroad, the French bourgeoisie immediately started exploiting the “salvation” of democracy for imperialist purposes. The impending war was once again proclaimed to be a war for democracy. The politics of the official labour organisations took on an openly imperialist character. The Fourth International section, which in 1934 had made important progress, found itself isolated in the period that followed. The slogan of workers’ self-defence hung in the air. Who were workers to defend themselves against, when “democracy” was triumphing across the board? The French bourgeoisie went into the present war under the banner of “democracy”, and with the support of all the official labour organisations; this allowed the “radical-socialist” Daladier to immediately establish a “democratic” facsimile of a totalitarian regime. The question of organising self-defence will revive within the French proletariat along with the growth of revolutionary opposition to the war and imperialism. The further political development of France, as of other countries, is now linked indissolubly to the war. The growth of discontent among the masses will at first elicit a furious reaction from above. Militarised fascism will come to the aid of the bourgeoisie and of its state power. The question of organising self defence will confront workers as a question of life and death. This time, we can expect, the workers will have at their disposal rifles, machine-guns and artillery pieces.

Similar phenomena, though in a less striking form, have also made their appearance in the political life of the United States. After the recovery under Roosevelt betrayed the hopes placed in it and gave way to a vertical collapse in the autumn of 1937, reaction started behaving in open and aggressive fashion. The provincial city mayor Hague immediately became a “national” figure. The thuggish preaching of Father Coughlin made a wide impact. The Democratic administration and its police retreated before the gangs of monopoly capital. During this time the idea of combat detachments to defend workers’ organisations and the press clearly began winning a response among the most conscious workers and the most threatened layers of the petty bourgeoisie, in particular its Jewish component.

The new economic upturn that began in July 1939, and that is undoubtedly linked to the growth of arms manufacturing and the imperialist war, has revived the faith of the “Sixty Families” in their “democracy”. To this, meanwhile, has been added the danger of the United States being drawn into the war. Now is not the time for upheavals! All sections of the bourgeoisie are concurring on a policy of caution and of maintaining “democracy”. Roosevelt’s position in the congress is growing stronger. Hague and

Father Coughlin are retreating into the distant background. At the same time the Dies Committee, which no-one either on the left or right took seriously in 1937, has acquired a significant authority in recent months. The bourgeoisie is once more "against both fascism and communism"; it aims to show that it can cope with all sorts of "extremes" by using the parliamentary road.

In these circumstances, the slogan of workers' self-defence has inevitably lost its attractiveness. After an encouraging beginning, the organising of self-defence has seemingly entered an impasse. In some places, it is hard to draw workers' attention to the issue. In others, where workers have taken up self-defence in significant numbers, their leaders do not know how to apply the workers' energies in practice. Interest in the issue is declining. There is nothing unexpected or mysterious in this. The whole history of the workers' self-defence organisations consists of the alternation of periods of rise and decline. Both reflect the spasms of the social crisis.

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The tasks of the proletarian party in the field of workers' self-defence flow from the general historical conditions of our epoch, and from its concrete oscillations. Drawing relatively broad circles of workers into the combat detachments is immeasurably easier when the gangs of reaction are directly attacking workers' pickets, trade unions, the press, and so forth. But when the bourgeoisie thinks it more reasonable to renounce the use of irregular bands, and gives priority to the methods of "democratic" rule over the masses, the interest shown by workers in organising self-defence inevitably diminishes. This is happening right now. Does this mean, however, that in these conditions we have to renounce the task of arming the workers' vanguard? By no means. Now that the world war has begun, we proceed more than ever from the position that the international proletarian revolution is inevitable and is drawing near. This is the fundamental idea that marks off the Fourth International from all other workers' organisations. It is the determining factor behind all our activity, including with regard to the organising of self-defence detachments. This does not mean, however, that we fail to take account of conjunctural swings in the economy and politics, of temporary ebbs and flows. If we proceed only from a single general characterisation of the epoch, ignoring its concrete stages, it is easy to fall into schematism, sectarianism or Don Quixotism. At every serious turn of events, we adapt our main tasks to the concrete, changing conditions of the given stage. This is what the art of tactics is all about.

Party cadres with specialised skills in military matters will be essential to us. They will therefore need to continue their practical and theoretical work in the present

period, that of the “ebb”. This practical work must consist of studying the experience of the armed forces and armed struggle organisations of the Bolsheviks, of the Irish and Polish revolutionary nationalists, of the fascist organisations, of the Spanish militia, and others. It is essential to draw up a model program of classes on these questions, to compile a library, hold lectures, and so forth.

The staff work also has to continue without let-up. It is vital to collect and study newspaper clippings and other reports on counter-revolutionary organisations of all kinds, and also on nationalist groups (Jews, Blacks, and others) which at a critical moment might play a revolutionary role. Also essential is the extremely important part of the work devoted to defence against the GPU. Because of the exceedingly difficult situation of the Comintern, and also to an important degree of the foreign agents of the GPU who rely on the Comintern, we can expect the GPU to launch furious attacks on the Fourth International. We have to be able to foresee these attacks, and to block them in time!

Along with this narrow work, focused on purely party elements, it is essential to set up broad, open organisations to pursue various specific goals that are linked in one way or another to the future military tasks of the proletariat. These include workers’ sporting organisations of various types (athletics and boxing associations, shooting clubs, and so on), and also choirs and musical societies. As political circumstances change, these auxiliary organisations can provide a direct foundation for broader detachments of workers’ self-defence.



In this outline for a program of action, we proceed from the position that the present political conditions, and above all the slackening of the pressure from domestic fascism, have placed narrow limits on work in the field of self-defence. This is the situation insofar as the establishing of purely class-based combat detachments is concerned. A decisive turn in the direction of workers’ self-defence will occur only when there is a new collapse of democratic illusions. Under the conditions of world war this must happen soon, and must take on catastrophic forms.

On the other hand, the war is now rapidly opening up the sort of opportunities for instructing workers in military matters that would be inconceivable in peacetime. And not only the war, but also the period directly preceding the war.

Above all, it is necessary to make broad use of the interest in military questions that the war has aroused, and to organise a series of lectures on the topic of modern types of weaponry and tactical methods. To achieve this, workers’ organisations can draw in military experts quite without links to the party and its goals.

This, however, is merely the first step. The preparations by the government for making war must be used in order to teach military skills to the greatest possible number of members of the party and of the trade unions that the party influences.

While our basic goal of establishing class-based combat detachments is fully maintained, the carrying out of this task must be closely linked to the conditions created by the imperialist war preparations. Without departing from our program in any way, we must talk with the masses in their own language:

We Bolsheviks also want to defend democracy, but not the sort of democracy controlled by the 60 uncrowned kings. Let's first cleanse our democracy of the magnates of capital, and then we'll defend it to our last drop of blood. Are you non-Bolsheviks also prepared to defend *this* democracy? But it's necessary at least to know how to defend it properly, so as not to be a blind tool in the hands of the Sixty Families and of the bourgeois officers who are devoted to them. The working class has to study military matters, so as to produce as many officers from its ranks as possible.

The demand has to be put forward that the state, which tomorrow will demand workers' blood, should today allow workers to get the best possible grasp of military techniques, so as to achieve military results at the least cost in human lives.

On their own, a standing army and its barracks are not enough for this. Workers should have the chance to study military matters in their factories, plants and mines, at set hours, while being paid by the capitalists. If workers are doomed to give their lives, the bourgeois patriots can at least make some small material sacrifices.

To every worker fit to bear arms, the state should give a rifle, and it should establish firing ranges and military training grounds in places accessible to workers.

Our agitation on the topic of the war, and all our policies in relation to the war, must be equally distant both from concessions to imperialism, and from pacifism. "This war is not our war. The responsibility for it lies completely with the capitalists. But since we are not yet strong enough to overthrow them, and are forced to fight in the ranks of their army, we have an obligation to learn to use weapons as well as possible!"

Women workers should also have the right to a rifle. As many as possible of them should have the right to study nursing, at the expense of the capitalists. In the same way as every worker who is exploited by a capitalist sets out to learn the techniques of production as well as possible, every proletarian soldier in an imperialist army has to learn the art of war as well as possible, so as to know how, under changed circumstances, to use it in the interests of the working class.

We are not pacifists. We are revolutionaries. And we know what awaits us. ■

## Appendix 5

# *From* **The Capitalist Witch-Hunt — & How to Fight It**

Liberals, labour officials and the Stalinists often call upon the government and its agencies for action against ultrareactionary elements. Jewish groups, for example, request the Post Office Department to ban antisemitic literature from the mails. Defaming the Trotskyists as agents of fascism, the Stalinists during the war demanded the suppression of *The Militant*, etc.

### **No dependence on capitalist state**

The working class and the minorities must vigorously oppose every transgression upon their civil and constitutional rights, from whatever quarter they come, and utilise every safeguard provided by law. But they cannot entrust the protection of their liberties to the capitalist regime or expect the powers-that-be to stop or eradicate the menace of fascism.

First, the government itself today spearheads the assault upon the people's rights. The President orders the loyalty purge; Congress passes antilabour legislation; the courts levy fines and issue injunctions against the unions. Second, the capitalist parties work hand in glove with white supremacists in the South and the big business enemies of labour in the North who are behind the witch-hunt.

Third, the authorities have time and again demonstrated by their action and inaction their lack of interest in punishing or removing the perpetrators of violence against the Negroes, the unions and the liberties of the people. Neither the Federal or State governments convict any lynchers in the South. Nor have the officials displayed much

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An excerpt from a resolution adopted by the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, February 1950. The full text can be found in Cannon, *Socialism on Trial* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1999).

zeal in uncovering the murderous assailants of Carlo Tresca, William Lurye, the Reuthers, and other labour figures.

### **Government shields fascist elements**

On the contrary, the capitalist state apparatus screens and shields fascist forces and collaborates closely with them. In Peekskill the local authorities and police connived in the attacks by the mobsters and hoodlums; Governor Dewey's investigators whitewashed their role; and the entire paid press tried to unload responsibility for the violence upon the "reds".

Even when, under pressure, government officials pretend to move against mobsters and Ku Kluxers, they only make theatrical gestures to appease outraged public opinion without actually punishing the real criminals. For every slight tap the capitalist agencies offer the right, they deliver a hundred harsh blows against the left. This has been illustrated by the Smith Act. While the 30 fascists indicted under this act in wartime were let off scot-free, the Trotskyists and Stalinists were convicted and given heavy jail sentences.

The same procedure has been followed in the loyalty purge. While the attorney-general's blacklist includes a few fascist groups, in practice it is almost entirely applied against members of leftist organisations. The US Department of Defence has given away the whole game by omitting the Ku Klux Klan, Silver Shirts and similar fascist outfits from its own subversive list applied to draftees.

"Under conditions of a capitalist regime", Trotsky once wrote, "all curtailment of political rights and freedoms, no matter against whom they may be originally directed, in the end inevitably fall with all their weight on the working class — especially on its most advanced elements."

### **How to fight fascism**

Class-conscious workers should not fall into the trap of demanding infringements of anyone's civil rights, including those of the fascists. At the same time they should recognise the real situation and make it plain to others. The civil rights of fascist elements are not being threatened; the authorities are in league with them. They are in no danger of persecution or need of defence. They are not the victims but the sponsors and beneficiaries of the current repressions.

The menace of fascism does not arise from their propaganda but from their gangsterism, their mob attacks upon advanced workers, Negroes, and labour organisations. With tacit acquiescence of the authorities, the fascists operate as extralegal agencies of repression against the institutions and freedoms of the working class and

minorities. Consequently, the real situation is that the labour organisations and minorities are obliged to act in self-defence to protect themselves against reactionary violence.

The history of Italy and Germany conclusively proves the folly and futility of relying upon the capitalist government, its police, or its parties in the fight against the fascists. The masses can safeguard their rights, their lives and their organisations only by mobilising the full strength of their own forces in the most vigorous united and independent defensive actions against the race-bigots, antisemites, union-busters and mobsters who threaten them.

Organised labour has the ability as well as the duty to assume the leadership in this struggle. The trade unions are not only the chief bulwarks of democracy and the centres of proletarian power; they are likewise the main target of the capitalist authors of the witch-hunt whose ultimate objective is the destruction of the labour movement. The antilabour campaign and antired hysteria are inseparable aspects of the monopolist drive toward the establishment of a police state in this country. Thus the defence of civil liberties is a life-and-death matter for American labour.

Without full democracy and freedom of expression inside the unions, they cannot effectively fulfil their tasks of defending the welfare of the workers and leading the struggle against reaction. Thus the fight for union democracy is directly interlinked with the general struggle for civil liberties. ■

## Glossary

**Abern, Martin** (1898-1949) — Founding member of Communist Party and member of central leadership almost continuously from 1920; secretary of the CP youth organisation 1922-24. Expelled with Cannon in 1928 for Trotskyism; founding member of the Communist League of America; operated longstanding personal clique in Trotskyist movement; split from SWP with Burnham-Shachtman group in 1940.

**AFL-CIO** — American Federation of Labor was a craft-based union federation formed in 1881. In 1936, the Congress of Industrial Unions broke away when the conservative AFL leaders refused to organise the radicalising unskilled workers in basic industry. After the conservatism of the CIO unions due to the prolonged post-World War II boom and the anticommunist witch-hunt of the late 1940s and early 1950s, the AFL and CIO merged in 1956 to form the AFL-CIO.

**Black Hundreds** — The popular name for the Union of the Russian People, an organisation of pro-monarchist reactionaries formed after 1905 revolution; carried out violent attacks against revolutionaries and organised anti-Jewish pogroms.

**Blanqui, August** (1805-81) — Revolutionary socialist prominent in French radical and workers movement of 19th century, he was associated with the idea of the seizure of power by a small, conspiratorial armed group, irrespective of objective conditions or mass consciousness. Despite being in jail during the period of the 1871 Paris Commune, he was elected to its leadership. Although he spent almost half his life in prison, he remained devoted to the cause of ordinary people. *La Critique Sociale*, a collection of his writings, was published in 1885.

**Bonapartism** — Term used by Marxists to describe a dictatorial regime that governs in a period of acute crisis, due to an objective equilibrium between the opposing class forces. Such a regime bases itself upon the bureaucracy of a capitalist state (or, in the case of Stalinism, of a workers' state), elevating one of its members to the position of a supreme, unchallengeable arbiter who seems to stand “above parties” and “above classes”.

- Breitman, George** (1916-86) — Joined Workers Party of the United States 1935; member SWP NC from 1939; editor of the *Militant* 1941-43, 1949-54; editor of *Writings of Leon Trotsky* series (Pathfinder Press, New York); produced numerous works on Malcolm X and Black struggle.
- Browder, Earl** (1891-1973) — General secretary US Communist Party 1930-45; scapegoated for CP's wartime policy and replaced in 1945; expelled for "opportunism" 1946.
- Brownell, Herbert** (1904-96) — US Republican politician; attorney general in Eisenhower administration 1953-57.
- Brüning, Heinrich** (1885-1970) — German politician; leader of Catholic Centre Party; represented those capitalists opposed to collaboration with Hitler; chancellor March 1930 to May 1932. From July 1930 he ruled by decree, passing repressive laws against press, freedom of assembly and trade unions.
- Butler, Smedley** (1881-1940) — Highly-decorated US Marine Corps officer; retired in 1931 with rank of major-general; November 1935 issue of *Common Sense* carried brutally frank article about Marine Corps interventions in which he had been involved ("I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism").
- Cannon, James P.** (1890-1974) — Active in Socialist Party and IWW in first part of century; became a founder of Communist Party in 1919 and a central leader thereafter. Expelled from CP in 1928 for opposition to Stalinism, he founded the Trotskyist movement in US and was its principal leader for the next 25 years. Retiring as national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party in 1953, he remained national chairman until his death.
- Chiang Kai-shek** (1887-1975) — Leader from 1925 of Chinese bourgeois Kuomintang (Nationalist Party); butcher of Second Chinese Revolution in 1927; headed central Chinese government 1928-45; toppled by communist-led 1949 Chinese Revolution. Fleeing to Taiwan, Chiang's Nationalists established a rump, police-state regime crushing the local population and all dissent.
- CIO** — See *AFL-CIO*.
- Cossacks** — Originally free warrior-peasants from the steppelands of south Russia and the Ukraine; in 18th and 19th centuries Cossacks served as cavalry for the repressive tsarist regime.
- Coughlin, Charles E.** (1891-1979) — Catholic clergyman; built up substantial following in 1930s as the "radio priest", preaching profascist message; his followers organised in groups such as the Christian Front and the National Union for Social Justice. In 1942 Coughlin was ordered by his church superiors to cease political activity, which he did.

- Daladier, Edouard** (1884-1970) — French politician; a leader of Radical Party in later 1920s and 1930s. Premier in 1933, 1934 and 1938-40; with Britain's Neville Chamberlain, signed 1938 Munich agreement with Hitler.
- Dies, Martin** (1900-72) — Texas Democrat; in 1938 House Committee on Un-American Activities became a permanent committee of the US Congress with Dies as its first chairperson; in 1950s HUAC became associated with the Milwaukee Republican senator, Joseph McCarthy, serving as a vehicle for the cold war witch-hunt.
- Dobbs, Farrell** (1907-83) — Longtime leader of US SWP; joined Trotskyist movement in 1934 and was a leader of the Minneapolis truck drivers' strikes of that year; indicted in 1941 Minneapolis "sedition" case and jailed 1943-45; SWP national secretary 1953-72; four times party presidential candidate 1948-60; author of four-volume history of the Trotskyists in the Minneapolis Teamsters struggles of the 1930s.
- Draper, Hal** (b. 1914) — Joined YPSL 1933 when associated with SP; elected national secretary at 1937 convention that adhered to movement for Fourth International; YPSL representative on SWP PC 1938-39; split from SWP in 1940 with Shachtman and Burnham. Member Shachtman's Workers Party (later Independent Socialist League); in 1958 ISL joined SP; in 1964 Draper led split from rightward-moving Shachtman group in SP to form International Socialists.
- Dulles, John Foster** (1888-1959) — US Secretary of State from 1953 in Eisenhower administration; an aggressive anticommunist and Cold War protagonist.
- Dunne, Vincent** (1890-1970) — A member of the Western Federation of Miners, a founding member successively of the IWW (1905), the Communist Party (1919) and of American Trotskyism (1928). A key leader of the 1934 Minneapolis truck drivers' strikes, one of the 18 SWP leaders jailed in the Minneapolis "sedition" case, he remained active in the SWP in Minnesota until his death.
- Eisenhower, Dwight D.** (1890-1969) — Leading US general in World War II; victorious Republican candidate in 1952 presidential elections; re-elected 1956.
- Ford, Henry** (1863-1947) — US industrialist; known for his strong antisemitic, antilabour views.
- Fourth International** — Formed by exiled Russian revolutionist Leon Trotsky and his cothinkers in 1938 as an alternative to the Stalinised Comintern. He hoped that out of the crisis of the coming war the small organisation would grow to become a powerful force. However, the outcome of the Second World War was a strengthening of Stalinism and the continued isolation of the Trotskyist forces. At the end of 1953, in a context of the Cold War, the International split into two factions, the International Committee, to which the US Socialist Workers Party

and the British group of Gerry Healy adhered, and the International Secretariat, among whose prominent leaders were Michel Pablo, Pierre Frank and Ernest Mandel. The split was healed at the 1963 Reunification Congress, but Healy and Pablo did not participate.

**Franco, Francisco** (1892-1975) — Spanish general; led victorious counterrevolutionary forces during 1936-39 civil war; set up fascist dictatorship.

**German-American Bund** — Pro-Nazi organisation of Germans living in the US formed in 1936; led by Fritz Kuhn (1896-1951); advocated antisemitism, anticommunism and US neutrality in European conflict; it claimed 25,000 members and 8000 “stormtroopers”; outlawed after US entry into World War II; a government campaign led to Kuhn’s jailing in 1939; eventually deported to Germany where he died.

**Giolitti, Giovanni** (1842-1928) — Longtime Italian bourgeois politician; prime minister five times; but 1920-21 ministry was unable to cope with postwar revolutionary upsurge or block fascist rise to power.

**Girdler, Tom** — Head of Republic Steel company (one of the five firms comprising the Little Steel group) at the time of the 1937 CIO Little Steel strike. On May 30, cops attacked demonstrators marching on Republic’s South Chicago plant, killing 10 (the Memorial Day massacre).

**Goebbels, Joseph** (1897-1945) — Founder and editor of the Nazi journal *Der Angriff*; minister of propaganda in the Nazi regime; suicided in Hitler’s Berlin bunker as Red Army took the city.

**Goldwater, Barry** (1909-98) — US Republican politician noted for rightist views. Ran against Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 presidential election and was heavily defeated.

**GPU** — The name of the Soviet political police in the 1930s, also known as the Cheka, NKVD, MVD, and, from 1956, the KGB.

**Green, William** (1873-1952) — Right-wing US labour leader; after death of Samuel Gompers in 1924, president of American Federation of labour until his death.

**Hague, Frank P.** (1876-1956) — Democrat mayor of Jersey City 1917-47 and a one-time Democratic Party national vice-chairman. In the 1930s he used city cops in cooperation with company goons to prevent the CIO from organising in the area; picketing was outlawed and union organisers run out of town. Trotsky saw him as an incipient American fascist.

**Hansen, Joseph** (1910-1979) — Joined Trotskyist movement 1934; secretary to Trotsky in Mexico 1937-1940; returning to the US, he played leading role in SWP until his death; editor of *Intercontinental Press* from 1963.

- Hess, Rudolf** (1894-1987) — Joined Nazi Party 1920, became Hitler's deputy 1934. At the 1946 Nuremberg trials he was sentenced to life imprisonment and remained in Spandau prison in Berlin until his death.
- Hitler, Adolf** (1889-1945) — From early 1920s leader of the fascist National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis); in 1923 jailed for role in attempted putsch in Bavaria; during spell in jail wrote *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) outlining his political philosophy; German dictator 1933-45; suicided in his Berlin bunker as Red Army took city.
- Hoover, Herbert C.** (1874-1964) — US Republican politician, president 1929-33; believed in spontaneous market-led recovery following 1929 economic crash.
- Hore-Belisha, Leslie** (1893-1957) — British Liberal politician; war minister 1937-40 in Chamberlain Tory government.
- Jensen, Arthur R.** (b. 1923) — US psychologist; advocate of racist view that intelligence is largely genetic and that differences in IQ scores between Blacks and whites are innate rather than a function of social conditions, hence educational efforts focused on the poor and coloured are a waste of resources; drew support from right-wingers wanting to cut educational spending and ultraright and fascist forces who saw justification of their white-supremacist views.
- Kerry, Tom** (b. 1901) — Joined US Trotskyist movement in 1934; played leading role in SWP's maritime work in 1930s and '40s; a central party leader in 1950s and 1960s.
- Kuhn, Fritz** — See *German-American Bund*.
- Ku Klux Klan** — US white supremacist terrorist organisation. First founded after civil war to oppose Reconstruction and new rights being granted to Blacks in the South; its influence has gone up and down since then; Catholics, Jews and leftists have joined Blacks on its hate list.
- La Guardia, Fiorello** (1892-1947) — Liberal republican, mayor of New York City 1934-45. Was backed at various times by Republicans, Democrats, American Labor Party, social-democrats, Stalinists and fascists. Republican-Fusion was a coalition in the mid-1930s between "progressive" Republicans and "good government" reformers against the corrupt Democratic Tammany Hall city machine.
- Lemke, William** (1878-1950) — Member House of Representatives from North Dakota 1933-41; ran against Roosevelt in 1936 presidential elections as candidate of Union Party, a formation largely created by Coughlin and Smith; received 890,000 votes (less than 2%).
- Lewis, John L.** (1880-1969) — President of the United Mineworkers from 1920 to 1969. He was the main leader of the CIO from its inception in 1935 to his resignation in

1940.

**Lincoln, Abraham** (1809-65)— Republican president during 1861-65 American Civil War, which was fought to preserve the Union in the face of the secession of the southern Confederate states; the contest was a struggle for supremacy between the northern industrial capitalists and the economically backward southern slave-owning plantation owners. In order to prevail Lincoln was forced to adopt increasingly radical measures (such as the 1862 Emancipation Proclamation ending Black slavery).

**Little Steel Strike** — See *Girdler, Tom*.

**London, Jack** (1876-1916) — A well-known US socialist writer (*The Iron Heel, People of the Abyss, The Call of the Wild* etc.); his lifelong socialist convictions were compromised by prejudice against non-whites.

**Lurye, William** — See *Reuther, Victor*.

**Malcolm X** (1925-65) — Radical US Black activist; introduced to teachings of Nation of Islam while in jail, joined and became minister after release; adopted surname X to replace white slave name; broke with NOI 1963-64; formed Organisation of Afro-American Unity 1964; assassinated at New York meeting February 21, 1965; murder officially unsolved but most likely carried out by state forces to silence a militant and increasingly influential figure who was moving steadily leftwards.

**McCarthy, Joseph Raymond** (1908-57) — Republican politician from Wisconsin; elected to Senate 1946; achieved prominence through role in anticommunist witch-hunt in late 1940s and early 1950s; from 1953 headed Senate permanent subcommittee on investigations; associated with House Un-American Activities Committee.

**Mein Kampf** — See *Hitler, Adolf*.

**Memorial Day Massacre** — See *Girdler, Tom*.

**Milton, Harry** (b 1905) — Joined CLA 1931; fought with POUM militia in Spain 1937; left SWP in Burnham-Shachtman split 1940.

**Mikado** — The title given to the Japanese emperor, from 1926-89 Hirohito.

**Minneapolis strikes** — Refers to three successful strikes in 1934, led by Trotskyists, which won big advances for labour movement. All were marked by outstanding leadership, intense militancy, innovative tactics and mass participation. A whirlwind February strike in coal yards won union recognition for Teamsters General Drivers Union 574 (which covered all workers in industry); in May a second strike won general recognition from trucking bosses in the city; when the bosses reneged, a third strike erupted in July and after weeks of intense battles, gained victory over the employers.

**Murray, Philip** (1886-1952) — Vice-president of the United Mine Workers under

John L. Lewis (1920-42) and first president of the United Steel Workers of America (1942-52). Succeeded Lewis as CIO president (1940-52).

**Mussolini, Benito** (1883-1945) — Founder of fascism in Italy; began his political career as a member of the Socialist Party but during World War I adopted a chauvinist position. With the blessing and assistance of the Italian bankers and big industrialists he rose to power on October 30, 1922, when a fascist government was appointed by the Italian king. He was killed by Italian resistance fighters while attempting to flee Italy in closing months of World War II.

**NCLC** — National Caucus of Labor Committees; US group founded by ex-Trotskyist Lyndon LaRouche (Lyn Marcus) in 1969 as offshoot of radical student movement; turned to extreme right-wing positions and in early 1970s embarked on a campaign of physical attacks on left and radical Black organisations.

**New Deal** — Plan of US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945) for dealing with the economic problems posed by the Great Depression of 1929-33 and the political problems posed by a working-class radicalisation. Roosevelt, who first took office in 1933, proposed various relief projects and legislative reforms like the National Recovery Act (NRA).

**Pablo, Michel** — Pseudonym of Michel Raptis. Greek Trotskyist; secretary of Fourth International from 1946; leader of International Secretariat faction in 1953-54 split in FI; took part in 1963 Reunification Congress but split in 1965.

**Pelley, William Dudley** (1890-1965) — Founded far-right “Silver Shirts of America” in 1933; ran in 1936 presidential elections as candidate of largely fictitious “Christian Party”; charged with sedition 1942; convicted and given 15-year term, released 1950.

**People’s Front** — The Anti-Fascist People’s Front or Popular Front was proclaimed by the Stalinist leadership of the Communist International in 1935. The objective of this policy was to defeat the rise of fascism in Europe by forming coalition governments of communists and liberal capitalist parties that would enter into diplomatic-military alliances with the Soviet Union. The Popular Front governments in both France and Spain in the ’30s served to brake the revolutionary movement of the masses and preserve the capitalist order in a period of severe crisis.

**Reuther, Victor** — Brother of Walter Reuther (1907-70), longtime leader of the United Auto Workers. On April 20, 1948, Walter, then CIO president, survived an attempt on his life when a shotgun was fired through the kitchen window of his home; left with crippled arm. On May 9, 1949, William Lurye, an organiser with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in New York, was stabbed to death by a gang of hired killers. On May 24, Victor Reuther, then UAW education

director, was shot from ambush; survived but lost sight of one eye. On June 12 in Marion Ohio, a shotgun murder attempt was made against Thomas S. Mitchell, an official of the Ohio Federation of Telephone Workers.

**Revolution, October** (Russia) — The October 25-26 (November 7-8), 1917 insurrection which overthrew the capitalist Provisional Government and brought to power the Soviet regime led by the Bolsheviks.

**Rhee, Syngman** (1875-1965) — Anticommunist Korean politician; first president of South Korea (1948-60), including during counterrevolutionary US intervention to maintain landlord-capitalist regime; established a police state but forced from office April 1960 by massive popular protests.

**Rockwell, George Lincoln** (1918-67) — Ex-army officer; founded American Nazi Party 1956; vowed to exterminate Jews, Blacks and gays; in 1967 changed party name to National Socialist White People's Party; murdered same year by leader of a breakaway group.

**Roosevelt, Franklin Delano** (1882-1945) — US politician; president 1933-45; put forward "New Deal" for dealing with the economic problems posed by the Great Depression of 1929-33 and the political problems posed by a working-class radicalisation; this consisted of various relief projects and legislative reforms like the National Recovery Act (NRA); died in office; succeeded by Harry Truman.

**Second International** — Established in 1889; united socialist parties in a number of countries. In the period before the World War I a great organisational and educational work was accomplished under its banner, particularly by the German social-democracy, its largest and most influential section. However, it embraced both revolutionary and procapitalist elements and failed the decisive test of the war, with most party leaderships supporting their respective governments. After the war, inspired by the Russian revolution, the revolutionary elements established the Communist International in 1919. The Second International was resurrected at a conference in Berne (Switzerland) in the same year; only the parties which represented the right, opportunist wing of the socialist movement joined it. Today it exists as the Socialist International.

**Shachtman, Max** (1903-72) — A leader of the US Communist Party in the twenties, in 1928 he was expelled with Cannon and Martin Abern for Trotskyism. He was a central leader of the Trotskyist movement until he split from the SWP in April 1940 with Abern and James Burnham to form the Workers Party. In 1958 he dissolved the WP into the Socialist Party. In the 1960s he was a supporter of the Vietnam War.

**Shockley, William B.** (1910-89) — US physicist, inventor of transistor; in 1973 moved

into field of eugenics, advocated a racist view of intelligence, called for the sterilisation of those with low intelligence; his views were met with fierce opposition and his presence at public events drew angry protests.

**Sixty Families** — *America's Sixty Families*, by Ferdinand Lundberg (1937), documented the existence of an economic oligarchy in the US, headed by 60 immensely wealthy families. The author brought the work up to date in 1968 under the title, *The Rich and the Super-Rich*.

**Smith Act** — Reactionary 1940 law named after its sponsor, Representative Howard W. Smith of Virginia. Criminalised advocacy of revolutionary ideas.

**Smith, Gerald L. K.** (1898-1976) — A key lieutenant of Louisiana populist governor Huey Long (assassinated 1935) and an organiser of his “share the wealth” campaign but lost out in struggle to inherit his machine. Emerged as a leading national right-wing figure during and after World War II; in 1942 formed Christian Nationalist Crusade and began to publish *The Cross and the Flag*; antisemitic, anti-Black, advocate of fascism; in 1945 embarked on national tours to try and build mass base but met strong opposition; although his influence waned, he was an active supporter of Joseph McCarthy in next period.

**Stalin, Joseph** (1879-1953) — Joined the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1896 and sided with the Bolsheviks in the 1903 split. He became general secretary of the Russian Communist Party in 1922. He was the central leader and spokesperson for the privileged party-state bureaucracy that came to power in the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

**Stevenson, Adlai E.** (1900-65) — US liberal Democratic politician; Governor of Illinois 1948; ran unsuccessfully against Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956; US ambassador to UN 1961-65.

**Taft-Hartley Act** — Passed in 1947, this antilabour law outlawed the closed shop, gave government wide powers to intervene in the internal affairs of trade unions and to halt strikes.

**Third International** — Communist International or Comintern; founded in 1919 as the revolutionary alternative to the class-collaborationist Second International. Guided by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in its early years it later became bureaucratised under Stalin. Following the coming to power of the Nazis in Germany without any serious opposition from the Communist Party, and the Comintern's endorsement of the ruinous policy of the German CP, Trotsky concluded that the Comintern was bankrupt as a revolutionary organisation. In 1935 the Comintern adopted the class-collaborationist Popular Front policy, supporting bourgeois coalition governments in Spain and France and the Roosevelt administration in the US. The

Comintern was dissolved by Stalin in 1943 as a sign to his wartime imperialist allies of his non-revolutionary intentions.

**Thomas, Norman** (1884-1968) — Presbyterian minister and Christian socialist; Socialist Party member from 1918; reformist leader of the SP from 1933; six-time SP presidential candidate 1928-48.

**Thyssen, Fritz** (1873-1951) — German industrialist; financed Nazi Party from 1923 and was main business leader to back Hitler before he took power; joined Nazis 1933 but broke with them in 1938; fled country 1939.

**Townsend, Francis E.** — Former doctor; in 1930s advocated panacea of a \$200 monthly income for all retirees aged 60 years or more, the money to be entirely spent before next payment made; the scheme was to be financed by a 2% transaction tax. The Townsend movement had millions of elderly supporters which made it attractive to Coughlin and Smith who unsuccessfully sought to use it for Union Party presidential effort in 1936.

**Trainor, Larry** (1905-75) — Joined CLA 1933; elected SWP NC 1938; organiser of Boston SWP branch in 1950s and 1960s.

**Tresca, Carlo** (1878-1943) — Prominent Italian-American anarchist, labour leader and journalist; a leader of the IWW before World War I and a close associate of Sacco and Vanzetti, the famous anarchist frame-up victims; assassinated in New York by unknown persons, most likely acting either for Mussolini or Stalin; a longtime friend of Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon.

**Trotsky, Leon** (1879-1940) — A leading member of the RSDLP. He aligned himself with the Mensheviks in 1903-04, after which he took an independent position within the RSDLP. In the 1905 revolution he became chairman of the St. Petersburg Soviet; during the World War I he took an antiwar position; in July 1917 he joined the Bolsheviks and became a central leader. Chief organiser of October insurrection; first commissar of foreign affairs after revolution; leader of Red Army (1918-25). After Lenin's death, led communist opposition to Stalinism; exiled in 1929; founded Fourth International in 1938; assassinated in Mexico by Stalinist agent August 21, 1940.

**Truman, Harry** (1884-1972) — Democratic vice-president under Roosevelt, became president in April 1945 on Roosevelt's death. Responsible for nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Launched cold war in 1947 with Truman Doctrine of "containing" communism and Marshall Plan to rebuild and rearm Western European capitalist countries.

**Union Party** — See *Lemke, William*.

**Wagner, Robert F.** (1910-91) — US Democratic politician; mayor of New York 1954-

65.

**Weiss, Murry** (1915-90) — Joined Trotskyist movement 1932; elected SWP National Committee 1939; leader of Los Angeles SWP; editor *Militant* 1954-56 and of *International Socialist Review* 1959-63; left party in mid-sixties.

**Weiss, Myra Tanner** (b. 1917) — Joined US Trotskyist movement 1935; elected SWP NC 1944; SWP vice-presidential candidate in 1952, 1956 and 1960; left party in late 1960s.

**Workers Party** — Organisation formed by Shachtman, Burnham and Abern after their April 1940 split from SWP; renamed Independent Socialist League 1949; in 1958 it dissolved into Socialist party.

**WPA** — Works Progress Administration; Roosevelt's New Deal public works program established to provide jobs for the unemployed; in mid-1939, Roosevelt ordered huge layoffs in the WPA, hours were lengthened and pay was cut; a massive spontaneous nationwide strike broke out in July.

**YSA** — Young Socialist Alliance; formed in 1958, the youth organisation associated with the US SWP.

**Zoot Suit Riots** — In June 1943 in Los Angeles, in the context of a racist hysteria against Mexican-American youth and crime whipped up by the establishment media, gangs of soldiers, sailors and marines invaded East Los Angeles attacking Mexican-Americans, especially any young males in their flashy "zoot suits"; the cops did nothing to stop the violence but instead targeted the victims. ■

What is fascism? Must it look like it did in Italy and Germany in the 1920s and '30s? Should it be of concern to political activists today? More importantly, how should incipient fascist groups be fought?

Washington's campaign against countries and groups declared as enemies of the United States and the "free world" might suggest that fascism should not be a great concern to socialists and progressive-minded activists. Fighting imperialist wars and national oppression seems a much more urgent matter. And it is.

Yet as this collection of articles and documents shows, fascism and fascist ideology is integrally linked to "democratic" capitalism and its policies against working people and the oppressed. Faced with a growing challenge to its rule at home, the capitalist class can readily turn towards fascism to combat the popular movement.

This volume is based on the experiences of the US Trotskyist movement over 50 years: in the antifascist struggles of the 1930s and '40s and the fight against incipient fascist ideology and groups during the Cold War; it also touches on the 1960s and '70s, in particular the question of how to pose the struggle against fascism in regard to the issue of free speech.

The episodes outlined here show that fascist groups and movements are by no means assured of success, that they can be defeated by a workers' movement armed with a correct analysis of the problem and firm adherence to a strategy of mass countermobilisation. This collection is a primer on the issue for socialists everywhere.

*Resistance books*