
A Manifesto to the Members of the Socialist Party.

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The Socialist Party is now engulfed in a crisis of the most profound depth and intensity. Any idea that this crisis is local or temporary, that it is confined to a few weak sections of the Party capable of being ironed out peacefully within a few weeks or months, is an illusion. The crisis is national in scope, and affects every single unit of the Party.

By the mass expulsion of more than 100 supporters of the Left Wing in New York on transparently fraudulent “charges” and the announced plans to expel the entire New York Left Wing *en bloc* immediately, the Right Wing clique has taken the initiative to split the Socialist Party.

Experience has already shown that the NEC gag resolution has served as the springboard of the expulsion campaign.† The expulsions, coming immediately on the heels of the adoption of the gag resolution, are sufficient in themselves to refute the hypocritical pretense of the authors ([Herbert] Zam-[Gus] Tyler-[Max] Delson) that the gag law would preserve “unity” in the party. These protestations of the Centrist Clarity group, allies of the right wing splitters, designed only to deceive the party membership, are empty words. The expulsions are a fact.

Moreover, it is perfectly clear that the Right Wing anti-revolutionary clique, having taken courage from the capitulation of the Centrist to launch their expulsion campaign, cannot and will not draw back. The [Jack] Altman-[Norman] Thomas Central

Committee in New York will complete the expulsion of several hundred Left Wingers within a week or two. The Party nationally will thereby be put before an irremediable split, for it goes without saying that every serious revolutionist in the party will solidarize himself with the expelled comrades in New York.

The political aims of the Right Wing combination (Altman-Thomas-Wisconsin-Massachusetts) imperatively require this split in the immediate future and they are manifestly determined to carry it through at all costs. Any idea that the demands or sentiments of the Party militants throughout the country can check or alter their course is sheer illusion. Likewise it is naive to imagine that the Centrist leaders of the Clarity group, who have already capitulated to the Right Wing, will offer any serious resistance to their expulsion-split campaign. On the contrary, they are already searching for pretexts to drop their “opposition” and join the expulsion campaign openly.

It is only political realism to expect that at the next stage of the struggle, and in the near future, the Centrists will become the most rabid advocates and the main executors of the expulsion program. Indeed this is already occurring. The Clarityite majority of the New York YPSL [Young People’s Socialist League] District Committee on July 23rd [1937] dropped four comrades from YPSL membership at Altman’s demand. The Clarityites act thus, and will continue to act, as the direct agents of the splitters. The Left Wing is obliged

†- The “gag resolution” referred to here was a prohibition on the debate of controversial issues at the branch level, intended to curb factionalism.

to see the party situation as it is in reality, to arm itself for the struggle and to prepare itself for the inevitable consequences.

Confronted by such a crisis, therefore, we address ourselves to the only proper court of appeal: to the militant and active members of the Party. We wish to make clear our analysis of the nature and causes of the crisis, and our answer to it. We wish to call upon the militant and active members of the Party to stand four-square with us. We have no fear or hesitation about the outcome.

I. — The Background of the Crisis.

This is not, of course, the first crisis in the Socialist Party. We do not refer to the great crises of past days, to the split with DeLeonism, or the crisis of the wartime or during the founding of the Communist International. These belong to past cycles of development, and are related to the present struggle so indirectly as not to bear directly upon the present period of the Party's history. But the present crisis is directly related to, is in fact the climax of, that cycle of the Party's evolution which began in 1933-1934. It was during this time that Hitler's consolidation of power in Germany, together with the role that the working class parties had played with reference to Hitler, proved finally and conclusively that there was no existing revolutionary party capable of leading the proletariat to the conquest of power and to socialism. The task was posed of rebuilding the revolutionary party against both social democratic reformism and Stalinism, and against the respective International organizations which embody the ideas and policies of social democracy and Stalinism.

In this country, this task was accepted, with varying degrees of clarity and understanding, by many of the active members of the Socialist Party. This, in its turn, meant that a fundamental issue had been joined within the Socialist Party to which the entire future course of its development would be subordinated, and which, manifesting itself in periodic crises, would continue to control the evolution of the Party until the issue itself was finally settled, one way or the other.

The issue was, simply, that between revolutionary Marxism on the one hand and non-revolutionary politics — reformism, Stalinism, centrism — on the other. The problem was: whether the revolutionary current would triumph, and would transform the Socialist Party as an organization into the revolutionary party of the American working class; or whether the non-revolutionary currents would consolidate their grip on the apparatus of the Party, condemn the Party thereby to disintegration and sterility, and compel the revolutionary current to turn elsewhere for a suitable organizational instrument. What the outcome would be, no one could foretell with certainty in advance. But what could be known was that the Socialist Party could not resume for any length of time a normal life until the outcome was irrevocably determined.

The Fight Against the Old Guard.

The first phase of the task, dictated by the nature of the Party itself, was the struggle against the ideas and the organizational control of the Old Guard. This first phase resulted in two major party crises, one occurring over the Detroit Declaration of Principles [June 1934], the second over the New York split and the Cleveland Convention [May 23-26, 1936]. In both of these, the Old Guard was defeated, and the Party was left in a position to continue its development to the Left. The struggle against the Old Guard, however, had enlisted a combination of Party members of widely varying points of view, ranging from clear revolutionary Marxism through every shade of centrism to reformism which was impatient with the Old Guard not at all because of the ideas it held but only because of its organizational passivity. Consequently, the two defeats of the Old Guard (the second of which resulted in the secession of the major portion of the Old Guard) were not at the same time clean-cut victories for the revolutionary current; and did not solve and could not have solved the fundamental issue. They served, in the last analysis, simply to leave open the question of whether the Socialist Party would become the revolutionary party of the American working class.

During the struggle with the Old Guard, individual revolutionists, and an entire revolutionary group

†- The Workers Party of the United States was established in 1934 through a merger between the American Labor Party, headed by A.J. Muste, and the Communist League of America, headed by James P. Cannon.

(the former Workers Party),† for the first time since 1919 joined the Socialist Party in order to remove the organizational barriers which separated them from the revolutionists and left wing militants within the Party, to fuse with them, and to join them in a common struggle for revolutionary ideas and a revolutionary party.

Following the Cleveland Convention, and still continuing, a new regroupment of forces has taken place within the Party. The remnant of the Old Guard, and those whose opposition to the Old Guard was non-revolutionary in character, all that is reactionary and conservative and passive in the Party, together with agents open and disguised of the Old Guard, banded together in a new Right Wing, resolved to prevent at any cost the completion of the evolution of the Socialist Party into a revolutionary party, and to defeat the revolutionists. On the other side there has been welded together into ever firmer unity the genuinely revolutionary forces within the older “anti-Old Guard” grouping, together with the newer revolutionary reinforcements. The alignment in the Party struggle has thus altered. The fundamental issue, however, remains the same as in the two years preceding the Cleveland Convention.

The Chicago Convention.

The conflict between the revolutionary and non-revolutionary currents reached a third crisis just before the Chicago Convention [March 26-29, 1937]. The new Right Wing, egged on from outside and inside the Party by the Stalinist agents, was eager to utilize the convention for the achievement of their plans through the expulsion of the revolutionists. In this aim the Right Wing failed, and to that negative degree at least, the Chicago Convention was another victory (however unsatisfying) for the Left. The reason why the Right Wing failed in its major objective at Chicago was, at bottom, because the vast majority of the active membership of the Party is opposed to the Right Wing; and because, in spite of padded Right Wing membership lists and outworn eligibility requirements, the Chicago Convention was sufficiently representative to enable the voice of the active membership to be heard on the convention floor. The Right win could not, and cannot, cope with a convention representative

to any considerable degree of the Party membership. Indeed, the Left not merely defeated the major plan of the Right Wing, but was even able to make some positive headway, as shown especially in the decisions on the questions of war, the People’s Front, and the trade union question.

Once again, however, the fundamental issue was left undecided. The victory, such as it was, was only partial; and the partial victory was counterbalanced by defeats. The decisions of the convention on the internal group organs, the exclusion of representatives of the Appeal tendency from the NEC, the failure of the convention to act on the Moscow Trials or on Spain, showed the strength and the determination of the Right Wing.

Nevertheless, the Left was prepared to accept the decisions of the convention. The *Socialist Appeal* was suspended in accordance with the convention decision. The Appeal caucus was dissolved. The adherents of the Appeal tendency, to the extent that it was possible, threw themselves into the positive job of building the Party in the mass movement.

The Right Wing, on its side, was unable to accept the results of the convention. The convention demonstrated to the Right Wing that, given a normal development of the Party, within a comparatively short time — certainly before the next convention — the revolutionary tendency would be in a decided majority, and would take over the leadership of the Party. Therefore, the Right Wing decided to prevent, at any cost, the normal development of the Party. Unable to achieve its ends at convention, where it felt the pressure of delegates expressing the will of the active membership, the Right Wing determined to proceed by bureaucratic and administrative means, in defiance of the decisions of the convention, and above all in direct opposition to the will of the membership. Rather than to permit the revolutionary tendency to achieve a majority, the Right Wing was more than ready not merely to split, but to destroy the Party.

The Right Wing’s Hand Forced.

Additional and compelling reasons force the hand of the Right Wing. During the first week of May [1937], the events of Barcelona drew a line of blood between every species of Popular Frontist, on the one

side, and revolutionary socialists on the other. From the point of view of the Right Wing, there was an imperious need to suppress the voice of the revolutionists, to forbid the adherents of the revolutionary tendency from explaining to the Party, and through the Party to the working class, the real meaning of the Barcelona events. In the Soviet Union, the unprecedented extent of the persecutions was laying bare the ultimate significance of Stalinism. The Spanish events and the Soviet persecutions, together with the threatening approach of the new war, were posing as an immediate issue the international question. Nearer home, the demands of the coming autumn elections were requiring of the Right Wing a thorough liquidation of any independent socialist politics into the Popular Frontist farmer-labor set-ups of [Robert] LaFollette [Jr.] and [Fiorello] LaGuardia. Wisconsin was becoming impatient, and showing its seriousness by its overtures to the Pittsburgh Convention of the Social Democratic Federation [May 29-30, 1937]. The Right Wing had no time to lose. On the very morrow of the convention, it began its ruthless and brutal campaign for the splitting of the Party, and the expulsion of the revolutionary left.

In the face of this campaign, the NEC, nominally under the control of the Zam-Tyler-Delson ("Clarity") group, soon crumpled up. Trying to shut its eyes and to raise itself above the shattering internal conflicts, and to "ignore" the campaign of the Right Wing, the NEC and the National Office were unable to perform even the simplest technical tasks. The *Call* staggered along from week to week, and soon began to omit pages. The *American Socialist Monthly* appeared in one apologetic issue, and was heard from no more. The inner-party organ, solemnly voted by the convention, disappeared altogether. The convention resolutions themselves had to wait three months for publication!

The NEC, timid, fearful, dismayed by the demands of the swift succession of mighty historical occurrences, frightened by the determination of the active membership to respond to these events with revolutionary courage, was unable to stand up against the relentless campaign of the Right Wing. At Philadelphia, in May [1937], faced by the Barcelona events, the NEC laid the political basis for its capitulation to the Right Wing by voting the shameful Spanish Reso-

lution. Thomas returned from Europe, and took his unambiguous place in the ranks of the Right Wing. At the special session in New York, the capitulation of the NEC to the Right Wing was completed, and the block between the Clarity leadership and the Right Wing sealed, by the unanimous adoption of the famous "Emergency" Resolution. By the terms of this resolution, the NEC abdicates power to the Right Wing, assigning it full freedom to pursue to the end its campaign to eliminate the revolutionary Left.

Without hesitation, the Right Wing has accepted its cue. On July 6th [1937], the Altman administration of Local New York voted the first expulsion and suspension of adherents of the revolutionary tendency. The "split situation" thus passes from threat to actuality — an actuality created by the Right.

It is necessary to understand with absolute clarity the *political foundation* of the crisis in the Party. This is all the more important, and more difficult, because systematic efforts have been and will be made by the Right Wing and by the NEC to obscure and cover over the political foundation. There will be much talk of "discipline," "method," "tone," "Party loyalty," "Constitution," "disruption," and whatnot. It is, however, a universal rule that under conditions of acute political crisis, all such talk is a mere smoke screen. The real roots lie much deeper. No one is going to try to smash an organization to pieces because of a dispute over "tone" and "method," or a legalistic argument about disciplinary procedure. Not in the least. In such cases, it is always a question of basic political opposition.

In general, as we have already stated, the division in the Party can be traced back to the conflict between the ideas and practices of revolutionary Marxism on the one side, and non-revolutionary (reformist, Stalinist, centrist) ideas and practices on the other. The conflict this involves in the last analysis every key political question, from the road to power to the nature of work in the unions. The present crisis, however, arises not over systems of ideas and methods taken in general and in the abstract, but concretely over certain specific issues which arise out of the real circumstances of the present moment. Among these, four can properly be singled out as of major significance:

II. — *The Political Basis of the Crisis.*

1. Spain.

In the Spanish Civil War, the international class struggle reaches the point of highest intensity since the Chinese events of 1927. No one will doubt the crucial importance of what is happening in Spain. The success of the Spanish proletarian revolution would have the most powerful and immediate effect on the entire course of the history of continental Europe (and thus of the world), providing an impetus which would send the international working class surging victoriously forward. The defeat of the Spanish revolution would be a most terrible blow to the European and international proletariat.

The *form* of the Spanish Civil War, however, has not been that of a direct class struggle for power between the working class and its allies, on the one side, and the bourgeoisie on the other. The treacherous policies of the working class parties had, long before the Civil War broke out, subordinated the working class to the bourgeois coalition government of the Popular Front. In July of last year [1936], Franco, believing in the necessity for a fascist as against a democratic form of capitalism for Spain, struck against the Popular Front regime. The reply of the workers to Franco was the immediate and direct mobilization of their own forces for military combat, and the establishment of their own councils and committees to direct and control the army, the factories, and the land in their own interest. The extension and consolidation of the power of the workers' committees would have involved the transfer of state power to them, the establishment of a workers' state on the basis of the committees which state alone could conduct to victory a revolutionary war against Franco in the interest of the Spanish masses and the socialist revolution.

The May Events in Barcelona.

Such an outcome would not merely have defeated Franco, but would have meant the death of Popular Frontism and the Popular Front regime, which, as a bourgeois government, was irrevocably bound to the capitalist order. The government, therefore, after the first heroic days, was compelled to carry out system-

atically the liquidation of the power of the workers' committees and of all organizations and individuals holding the perspective of the proletarian revolution, and thus to reconsolidate a firm bourgeois power on the basis of its own regime. In this betrayal of the Spanish revolution, the government had the full assistance and participation of the Socialist and Communist parties of Spain, tied also to the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois order through their Popular Frontist policy of class collaboration.

Nevertheless, the exact meaning of Popular Frontism in Spain was, until May [1937], obscured by the fact that the government, through carrying out its liquidation of workers' power and its reconsolidation of bourgeois power behind the lines, was conducting a military struggle of a socially progressive character against the Fascist armies of Franco. Revolutionary Marxists pointed out that the necessity for full united action and material support of the government in its military struggle against Franco — a necessity accepted and urged by all Marxists — was not in the least incompatible with, was in fact inseparable from, relentless *political* criticism of the policies of the government and positive steps to protect and extend the basis of workers' power and the socialist revolution.

Until May, the point of view of the Marxists, and their predictions, seemed to many to be abstract and academic, swallowed up in the apparently sole immediate need for a united military struggle. Popular Frontism, it was felt, could not be quite what the Marxists stated, for was it not fighting stalwartly against Franco? They forgot that it was the workers who had begun the military struggle not along with but *against* the intentions of the Popular Front regime; and above all they forgot that the government was fighting *for* and not against capitalism. Theories were even invented to justify political support of the Popular Front government in the eyes of Left Wingers — such as the fantastic theory that it was a “provisional revolutionary government,” a hybrid with no class nature.

In the first week of May, the blow fell that smashed through the masks. The revolutionary workers of Barcelona, in the ranks of the POUM and of the Anarchists, reaching the limit of their endurance of the provocations of the government, rose to defend their right to bear arms, to publish their own press, and to struggle for socialism. The reply of Popular Frontism

was unambiguous. The Catalan government, reinforced after three days by the troops of the Valencia government, and assisted by the past compromises, the timidity, and the outright betrayals of the leaders of the workers' own organizations, massacred the workers in cold blood.

The question of Popular Frontism thus tumbled completely down from any academic shelf. No longer could an answer be evaded by grandiose phrases on "united support of the struggle against Franco." No one disagreed about a united struggle against Franco, but it was now clear that this problem also was inseparable from the answer to another question that could not be avoided. The political attitude toward the Popular Front was now put in just this brutal way: On which side of the Barcelona barricades do you stand.

Spain and the Party Crisis.

In our own Party there could be no doubt of the attitude of the answer to this question given by the answer of the Left Wing, overwhelming bulk of the active members; they stand in unbreakable solidarity with the revolutionary workers of Barcelona, and against their assassins. But there is no doubt, either, of the answer of the Right Wing, compelled by the Barcelona events at last to disclose itself: the Right Wing stands on the other side of the barricades, along with the assassins of the Catalan workers. And the pitiful leadership of the NEC and of Clarity tries, again, to shut its eyes; tries to straddle the barricades by deploring in one breath "all uprisings against the government" and in the next "all suppression of the workers."

There is a close and interlocking connection between the Spanish events and the crisis in our own Party. In Spain, the Stalinists, Socialists, and other brands of Popular Frontists, together with their allies of the "democratic" bourgeoisie, utilize their control of the government in an attempt to betray the revolution and to destroy the revolutionary workers. At a less grandiose stage of the class struggle, their defenders and political bed fellows in our Party utilize their hold on the apparatus of the party in an attempt to suppress and expel the adherents of the revolutionary tendency. The parallel is neither abstract nor accidental; it is exact and necessary. It is the Right Wing in the Socialist Party which defends and supports the assassins of

the Spanish workers; and, on its own ground, carries on precisely the same type of policy in its campaign against the Left.

The parallel goes even further into details. In our Party, the leaders of the Clarity group have tried to maintain a balance between the revolutionary tendency and the Right Wing. They beg for a "truce" in the Party, by which they mean in actuality the cutting off of all political discussion and criticism from the Left, and a free hand for the Right Wing. They are sorry and upset by the "factional atmosphere." Now, if we turn to the position of Clarity on Spain, we discover that Clarity is the defender of Caballero, whose government they defined as "provisional revolutionary." It was, it should be remembered, under Caballero's regime that the Barcelona events occurred. But, it is argued, Caballero himself was against the suppression of the workers and their organizations, and against their massacre in Barcelona. Quite possible, if we are speaking of his personal wishes and preferences. But it was Caballero's policy from the beginning that entailed the liquidation of the conquests of the workers, prevented the extension of the revolution, involved the oppressive and provocative acts against the revolutionary workers and their organizations, and culminated in the Barcelona events. By "postponing" the problems of the revolution, by not fighting *against* the Popular Frontists and concretely *for* the workers revolution, Caballero in reality turned the direction of events over to the Stalinists and outright reformists, and through them the bourgeoisie. He therefore shares fully in the responsibility for the assassinations of the workers. And his reward for having acted as a "left front" while the counterrevolution gathered headway, is, of course — to be thrust aside in favor of the more outright Negrin when he had served his purpose. And in just the same way, Clarity, by trying to "postpone" the conflict within the Party, by not fighting against the Right Wing and concretely for and alongside of the revolutionary tendency, turns over control to the Right Wing. And their reward will be, like Caballero's, to be thrust aside when they have served their purpose.

No one can avoid the issue of Spain. The white heat of civil war cuts through every organizational or verbal barrier. Least of all will the revolutionists in the Party avoid it or allow it to be avoided. We stand with the revolutionary Spanish workers fighting to

defeat the armies of Franco through the triumph of their revolution. And we stand irrevocably against the Popular Front's betrayal of their revolution. There is no restriction which can or will silence the expression of our solidarity.

2. The Soviet Persecutions.

The last year, and especially the last months, have witnessed a growing change in the problem of the Soviet Union. There is a certain analogy between this change and that involved in the problems of the Spanish events. Until a year ago, a wide range of opinion could be concealed under the general formula, "Defend the Soviet Union," just as a wide range hid under the slogan "Defend the Spanish workers against Fascism." Even where "Defense of the Soviet Union" was accompanied by certain criticisms of the Soviet bureaucracy, there was no guarantee of unanimity of opinion. Even Stalin was capable of criticizing Stalinism, and the most ardent "Friends of the Soviet Union" were eager to insist that they recognized certain "defects."

But with the Trials of last August [Zinoviev-Kamenev] and this January [Piatakov-Radek], and with the unexampled series of persecutions during the past few months, the question deepens profoundly. The Trials and persecutions pose a question of the same kind as the Barcelona events. It is no longer possible to skate around it on neat phrases. Stalin is either the legitimate heir to the October Revolution; either this, or he is the destroyer of the October Revolution. The middle ground has sunk away.

The truth is that, with the internal Soviet difficulties, the failures of the Five Year Plans, the smoldering discontent, and the approach of the new war, Stalin has been forced to disclose his hand quite openly. In an attempt to consolidate his own reactionary position against actual and potential threats, he has been compelled to undertake, within the Soviet Union and indeed on a world scale, the liquidation of the revolutionists. Within the Soviet Union he is annihilating physically the entire generation of those who made the October Revolution. Wherever, as in Spain, Stalinism influences the state power, the same process goes on — the physical annihilation of the revolutionists; elsewhere, as in this country, Stalinism must for the time being be content with the campaign to drive the

revolutionists out of the labor movement. Stalinism is forced to take these measures against the revolutionists because of the nature and policies of Stalinism; because, within the Soviet Union, Stalinism is engaged in uprooting the last remnants of the October Revolution itself; because, on a world scale, Stalinism is no longer in any sense whatever a progressive force, but is now a major bulwark of capitalism.

Stalinism is Not an Ally.

The task of defending the October Revolution, the task of building the revolutionary party capable of leading the proletariat to the conquest of power, these are inseparable from the constant, intransigent, and unrelenting struggle against Stalinism. Stalinism is not an ally seeking a common goal; but an enemy blocking the road. These are the simple facts, made brutally clear by the events of the past year. No program failing to base itself upon an understanding of these facts and the practical consequences which flow from them can even pretend to be adequate.

Stalinism is the enemy of the revolution and the revolutionary tendency. It is not, therefore, surprising, to discover that the Right Wing of the Party includes prominently both open and disguised political agents of Stalinism. There is Paul Porter, whose contribution to the pre-convention discussion was an elaborate pamphlet of Stalinist propaganda, subsidized through a block sale to the Workers' Bookshops — and still for sale both within and outside the Party. There is the group of members of the Wisconsin organization, whose letter setting forth the full Stalinism position on the Trials was featured in *The Daily Worker*, and distributed in Moscow during the hearings of the Sub-Committee of Enquiry into the charges against Trotsky. There is the Connecticut Committee of Correspondence which spends its energies demanding the expulsion from the Party and labor movement of all "counterrevolutionary Trotskyites." There are the other stooges in New York, Denver, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, busily doing their chores for the Kremlin assassins. All of these are the staunch and unwavering supporters of the Right Wing.

On a subtler and more vicious plane, there is the Altman group proper, the basic character of which is strikingly revealed by its attitude toward the Tri-

als. From the beginning, the Altman administration in Local New York has consistently sabotaged the work of the American Committee for the Defense of Trotsky, and has prevented the Party from undertaking the great political tasks imposed by the Trials. It has brought members up on charges for speaking on the question of the Trials, and has forbidden public meetings of branches to be held with the Trial as a subject. Immediately after the [March 1937] Chicago Convention, simultaneous with the culminating drive of the Communist Party to smash the American Committee, the Altman group undertook its own campaign, ending with the proposal to the Philadelphia NEC meeting to have the Party withdraw its support from the American Committee. It is the Trials which today pose in its most naked form the whole question of Stalinism. And on the question of the Trials we find that the Right Wing includes as an integral part of its forces those who flatly defend and support from the American Committee <line missing> who defend them in practice, with whatever verbal modifications.

The revolutionary Left Wing does not permit itself illusions. It understands Stalinism and its agents and influences for what they are; it says so, and acts accordingly. Nor will the Left Wing be silent. We will brand the destroyers of October, the executioners of the Russian Revolution and the generation which made it, the banner-bearers of social-patriotism and the betrayers of the world revolution for what they are. To be silent in the face of betrayal is to share in that betrayal. We speak plainly to the Right Wing, to the Party and the entire Party membership. Our voice will be heard.

3. The Fourth International.

The Spanish events, the Soviet persecutions, the approach of the new war, all place in the immediate foreground the *international* question. This is perhaps clearest of all in the case of the Spanish events. Just as the causes for the Spanish Civil War are to be found in world economy, so, even more obviously, does its solution depend upon international forces. No single important phase of the civil war can be separated from international considerations.

This is equally true whether we approach the Spanish events from the point of view of Franco, or of

the Popular Front governments, or of the revolutionary workers and the struggle for socialism. Thus the Spanish events provide one more decisive testing ground for the two existing Internationals of the working class. The answer to the test is unambiguous: The Spanish events prove beyond any remaining doubt the hopeless bankruptcy of the two existing Internationals.

Within Spain, the Socialist and Communist parties, in harmony with their parent Internationals, have pursued a basically identical policy of class collaboration. Under the slogan of the Popular Front, they have attempted to confine the struggle of the workers within the framework of capitalist democracy, subordinating their policies to the demands of the Foreign Offices of England, France, and the Soviet Union, and to their own "democratic" bourgeoisie; and they have systematically suppressed and in the end executed those who stand for the perspective of the workers' revolution. Outside of Spain, by advocating and upholding the treacherous "non-intervention" pact, the parties of the two Internationals have played the game of Stalin-Blum-Eden.

During the same time, the two Internationals and their constituent parties have, under the slogans of "collective security" and "defense of democracy against fascism," passed over to an open policy of social-patriotism. This is most strikingly symbolized by the voting of the war budget in France by both the Socialist and Communist parties in January of this year [1937] — an act which at the time of the last war took place only after the war had been declared.

The Two Bankrupt Internationals.

Throughout the world, the two Internationals and their parties have undertaken the systematic persecution and destruction of the revolutionists and the revolutionary organizations. The Soviet Union is only the most striking and terrible example. Within Spain the two parties jointly carry out the persecution. In France and its colonies, it is the Popular Front government, supported by the parties of the two Internationals, which jails, tortures, and executes revolutionists, suspends the revolutionary press, and sends its police and Mobile Guards against striking workers. Throughout the world, the parties of the two Internationals conduct their campaign to drive the

revolutionists out of the labor movement, in order to try to remove the last obstacle to their plans of betrayal in the coming war.

No illusion about the possibility of “reforming” the existing Internationals can any longer be retained. “Reform” is excluded both politically and organizationally — politically, by crystallization of the Internationals on the basis of class collaboration and social-patriotism; and organizationally by the iron monolithism of the Third International and the purely bureaucratic structure of the Second. There are, it is true, large numbers of workers now adhering to the parties of the Internationals who can be won to revolutionary Internationalism, and perhaps even entire party organizations; but these, as well as now unaffiliated workers, can and will be won only by resolute break, both political and organizational, with the two existing Internationals.

The break cannot be left as a mere negative act, but is inseparably bound up with the positive task of the regroupment of the revolutionary forces in a new, Fourth International, based upon the theory and practice of revolutionary Marxism. This is the immediate and inescapable task imposed by the demands of the present, following equally from the lessons of the past and the perspective for the future. This task cannot be put aside. The hollow argument that the bulk of the militant workers still remain within the old Internationals, and that therefore the time is not yet ripe for the new International, is only a cowardly attempt to slough off responsibility on to the backs of the masses. The fact that the bulk of the militant workers still adhere to the existing Internationals, only strengthens immeasurably the argument for the new International. For the masses, in so far as they adhere to the existing Internationals, far from being led in any degree toward the workers’ revolution, are thereby tied hand and foot to the bourgeoisie, and prepared for slaughter in the coming imperialist war.

It is the new International which alone can blaze the trail for the masses toward power and toward socialism. From the very first days, a genuine and functioning International center can alter powerfully in favor of the workers the balance of forces. How great a role it could have played in Spain, where the absence of such a center has rendered vain so much sacrifice, has meant that the magnificent heroism and

militancy of the Spanish workers has been left the prey of traitors and cowards, with no pole of firm and unswerving revolutionary perspective around which to crystallize.

Right Wing and Fourth International.

Once again, we find that the fundamental question of the new International, posed in all its immediacy by history itself, is directly related to the internal crisis in the Socialist Party. The spearhead of the attack of the Right Wing is formed by the International question. The culminating charge of the Right Wing against the Left is that the adherents of the Left are Fourth Internationalists. This was the main theme of the address of Levenstein to the Special Session of the NEC, in which he demanded the expulsion of the Left Wing *en bloc* because it believed in the Fourth International. For months in Local New York, all applicants for Party membership even suspected of sympathy to the idea of the Fourth International have been rejected by Altman’s membership committee. Thomas utilizes his public column in the *Call* to polemicize against the Fourth International, and to declare the incompatibility of belief in the Fourth International with membership in the Socialist Party. At the Special Session of the NEC, proposals were made to exact a loyalty oath from all members pledging allegiance to the Second International, and rejecting the Fourth.

The mass expulsions in New York were largely based on the charge of expressing belief in the Fourth International. There is a certain irony in reflecting that this same Second International, to which the Right Wing is now so eager to profess devotion, refused to endorse the 1936 independent election campaign of the Party, is in the closest relation with the Social Democratic Federation, and holds and pursues policies on every important question directly opposed to the avowed policies of the Party adopted at the [1937] Chicago Convention.

The International question is neither abstract nor postponable. It is given in the circumstances of world politics, and in the conditions of the crisis in the Socialist Party. The Fourth International is not in the least a mere phrase to conjure with. It is the perspective which sums up all the great problems of our time; the slogan which in condensed and concentrated form

draws the full conclusion of revolutionary Marxism to the experiences of the present epoch. To those who direct their attack against the Fourth International, who defend and support the Internationals of treachery and betrayal, the revolutionary Left replies proudly and defiantly by unfurling, at the head of its column, the ideas, the banner, and the goal of the Fourth International.

4. Farmer-Laborism.

The fourth of the key political questions forming foundation stones of the present crisis in the Party is the issue of Farmer-Laborism. We refer not to the question of a Labor Party or Farmer-Labor Party in the abstract, but to the very concrete problems of the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation of Wisconsin and the American Labor Party of New York; that is to say, to the LaFollette and the LaGuardia movements.

The labor movement in this country has, during the last two years, surged forward. The chief symbol of this upsurge is, of course, the CIO movement. Never before in this country, and at no time anywhere else in the world, has there been anything quite comparable to the CIO movement. In gigantic strikes and demonstrations and organization drives, the American workers have been displaying an unprecedented militancy and class solidarity.

As yet, the conscious political expression of this upsurge has lagged far behind its direct action on the field of the class struggle. The profound problem for the bourgeoisie and for all of its hangers-on is to try to make sure that this class militancy finds a political outlet in channels altogether safe for capitalism; as, conversely, the problem for Marxists is to direct it along a revolutionary perspective. In 1936, by a variety of devices, the bourgeoisie was successful in chaining the class militancy of the workers to the sugared demagoguery of Roosevelt, and the Roosevelt machine. In the bulk, the workers have still not broken fully with these chains.

Nevertheless, the possibility of this break already gives rise to nightmares in the minds of the bourgeoisie, the liberals, and the reformists. A new straightjacket, knit firmly on the capitalist looms, must be made read. And such a straightjacket they find at hand in the conception of what they call a Labor or a Farmer-

Labor Party.

Labor Party — Real and Ideal.

It is not necessary to discuss the “ideal” labor Party, made to order in the minds of dreamers, or to determine whether it is a “good” or “bad” thing for the workers. The revolutionary Left Wing has a clear answer to the theoretical question. The only Labor Party which meets the requirements of Marxists is the revolutionary party; and, while permitting under certain given conditions critical support of or even participation as an autonomous organization in a Labor Party having the backing of the majority of the organized working class, revolutionists do not believe that it is ever their proper business to “advocate” or “build” a reformist party which will prove to be their most bitter rival. But the theoretic question is not here at issue. It is the specific question of LaFollette and LaGuardia. The movements backing them are not dreams, but the genuine, homespun authentic American type of “Farmer-Labor” and “Labor” party.

And what sort of movements are they? About this no elaborate argument is needed. Are they “anti-capitalist”? Not one of their leaders would dream of pretending so. They are dedicated heart and soul to the preservation of capitalism. Are they against imperialist war? Quite the contrary, they are busily preparing a mass base for the coming “defensive” war. Are they “free of all entanglements with capitalist parties” (a foolish question enough, when they are themselves capitalist parties)? How absurd: their chief task in 1936 was to gather votes for Roosevelt. Do they run genuine representatives of the proletariat for office? LaFollette and LaGuardia are the answer.

The Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation and the American Labor Party are both vicious muddles of class collaboration, Popular Frontism, outworn Populism and atavistic liberalism, the docile instruments of labor bureaucrats and careerist “progressive” capitalist politicians.

Support of these movements at the present time in actuality represents the perspective of the liquidation of independent working class politics. That is the long and short of it. And it is, again, not in the least an accident that the Right Wing of the Party is made up of those who in practice are the ardent and eager

supporters of these two movements. They support them exactly because they are for the liquidation of independent working class politics.

The Wisconsin organization of the Party has already largely dissolved itself into the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation. Wisconsin "socialists" run for office not on the Socialist but on the Federation ticket. Raskin frankly declared at the Philadelphia NEC meeting that if forced to choose between the Federation and the Party, the bulk of the Wisconsin members would choose the Federation. Hoan's eyes placed greedily on the US Senate see the seat not with a Socialist but with a Federation label. The Party as an organization becomes more and more of a burden to Wisconsin; and in fact is still retained only as a means for maneuvering within the Federation.

Right Wing for LaGuardia.

Months ago, spokesmen of the Left declared that the Altman group in New York was headed straight for support of LaGuardia through the American Labor Party. At that time, the charge was dismissed, in the usual manner, as "slander." All sections of the Party will take it more seriously today. On July 12th [1937] the City Central Committee held a meeting to consider the question of the autumn elections. The Altman majority motion (the summary for which was delivered by Thomas, though Thomas is not a member of the City Central Committee), proposes a full slate of Socialist candidates; but included is the following paragraph:

2. Our candidate for Mayor against LaGuardia may be withdrawn if in the course of discussions with the ALP, and in the development of the campaign, it becomes apparent that such action will strengthen the labor movement and our hope of usefulness in building a national labor party.

Does anyone doubt the meaning of this paragraph? If so, those doubts would have been removed by attendance at the July 12th meeting. It was made entirely clear that the majority resolution meant, concretely, support of LaGuardia. LaGuardia! — candidate and member of the Republican Party; institutor of the Sales Tax; breaker of a hundred strikes; favorite of the Citizens' Budget Commission — that organization of the big property owners in the interests of "efficient government"; whose police have developed the most accomplished technique in this country for

"the preservation of law and order"; whose own pet, the Independent Subway, is the last of the big traction systems to hold out against unionization; whose agreement with the bankers on New York City finances differs from Tammany's only in being more acceptable to the bankers.

The direct relation of this issue to the Party crisis is apparent on the surface. The autumn elections are fast approaching. Wisconsin wants to rid itself of even nominal attachment to a party which includes revolutionists in its ranks. Altman and Thomas know that they could never put across their capitulation to LaGuardia without the suppression and expulsion of the Left Wing. This is an additional and compelling reason for their haste and the brutality of the campaign. And, in general: the Right Wing stands for the expulsion of the Left as an indispensable step in its liquidation of the Party as an independent political force.

The attitude of Clarity on this question is equally revealing. Clarity stands, in theory, for a "genuine" Labor Party — that is, for the dream of a Labor Party in their own heads. Consequently, they are always left in confusion by the disparity between a real, flesh-and-blood Labor or Farmer-Labor Party (such as the Farmer-Labor Political Federation or the American Labor Party) and their dream. They recognize and state there is something rotten in such movements as these. But what to do about it? To do anything would mean to undertake a sharp political offensive against the Right Wing; and this the whole nature of Clarity's politics forbids.

The Silence on Wisconsin.

Thus they endure in pained silence Wisconsin's "unsocialist" behavior, and Raskin's and Biemiller's taunts and contempt. In New York they introduce as a counter-motion to Altman's a motion of their own which is full of radical phrases, but yet does not specifically renounce support of LaGuardia. In their speeches, of course, they condemn Altman and LaGuardia roundly. But their mode of procedure permits them to capitulate "gracefully" in the end, with their tracks covered by the radical phrases.

The issue is well worth pondering. Is this what the membership is building a party for? To support LaFollette and LaGuardia (or, as it might read, Azana

and Companys and Chautemps)? Let this much be clear: this is not the kind of Party which the Left Wing proposes to build. Our aim is to achieve the workers' revolution, not to put salve on death sores of capitalism.

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These four, then, are the central political questions which lie back of the present crisis in the Party. It is they that control and determine the course of the organizational struggle. This must never for a moment be forgotten. The fight of the Left Wing is not basically a fight for posts or "constitutional rights" or new committees. It is, in general, a fight for revolutionary Marxism; and, in particular, a fight for solidarity with the Spanish Revolution, for the heritage of the October Revolution against the Kremlin hangmen, for a revolutionary International, and for independent working class politics. This is the real meaning of the fight.

III. — Stalinism and the Party Crisis.

The relations between Stalinism and the crisis in the Socialist Party are numerous and profound. A proper understanding of the Party crisis is impossible without taking into account the influence of Stalinism upon what is happening in the Socialist Party. The relations are of several kinds: both external, in what the Communist Party has done and is doing with reference to the Socialist Party; and internal, through the activities of Stalinist agent within the Party, but far more important through the effect of Stalinist ideology on different individuals and groups within the Party.

Throughout the world, the Communist International is now the greatest obstacle within the working class to the achievement of the proletarian revolution. The entire force of the Comintern, backed by the mighty Soviet bureaucracy, has undertaken the task of blocking the revolution. This means that it must, at all costs, prevent the growth of new revolutionary parties and the new revolutionary International. To do so must at all times be the first item on the Stalinist agenda.

Consequently, when the leftward development in the Socialist Party of the United States began to make headway, the Communist Party could not stand

idly by. It had to exert every possible effort to keep the leftward development from maturing, to find means to seduce, drown, or strangle it. These efforts we have witnessed during the past several years. They increased in intensity at the time of the great step forward marked by the split with the Old Guard and the entrance of the former Workers Party members. They continued unabated throughout the entire election campaign of 1936. In Browder's report to the Central Committee following the elections, the drive to smash the Socialist Party was put forward as the key problem. The Party was flooded with literature, leaflets, articles, pamphlets in the pre-convention period. Since the convention, the campaign of the Stalinists has continued with even greater bitterness, with speeches and editorials and even more with the campaign in the mass organizations — in the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, the unions, and the Workers Alliance.

The Stalinists' Aim.

The aim of the Stalinists is not obscure. It is to drive all non-Stalinist ideas and all individuals who persist in holding such ideas out of the labor movement. This aim is imposed upon them by the nature of Stalinist world policy, and they cannot be content with anything short of its complete accomplishment. In this country, that means first to make sure that the Socialist Party does not become a revolutionary party. And this in turn means to smash the Left Wing in the Socialist Party, upon which the future of the Party as a revolutionary organization — indeed, its future as any kind of independent political organization — wholly depends.

Revolutionary Marxists, all Left Wing socialists — called all of them "Trotskyists" by the Stalinists — are "counterrevolutionary fascist agents." "They are professional disrupters and saboteurs. They are against the unity of the working class. They are treacherous sectarians. They should be driven entirely out of the labor movement." And wherever Stalinists have sufficient power, they take steps to drive them out. "They are members of Franco's Fifth Column. They are impossible for honest workers to get along with. They are incurable factionalists." By all of these epithets, the Stalinists mean, of course, that Marxists are unalterably opposed to the ideas and program of Stalinism.

The Stalinists do not leave these characterizations on paper. They act in accordance with them. They refuse to enter a united front in which “Trotskyists” participate. They use their control of the North American Committee to bar Left Wing Socialists as speakers. They frame Left Wingers in the unions and the Workers Alliance. They demand the right to veto Socialist Party representatives on joint committees, in order to eliminate Left Wingers. They beat up Left Wingers distributing leaflets and literature. And day in and day out they hammer home their drive to smash the Socialist Party by expelling the Left Wing.

Political Source of Right Wing.

In considering even so briefly these facts we discover the final source of the campaign of the Right Wing against the revolutionary Left. The source is: Stalinism. This is not at all to say that all of the adherents of the Right Wing are Stalinists, which is not the case; indeed, there are some in the Right Wing who consider themselves bitter opponents of Stalinism. But all the strength and vigor of the campaign of the Right Wing derives at one or another stage removed from Stalinism. It is Stalinism which sustains and nourishes it.

This is shown, most obviously, by the fact that the Right Wing contains as an integral and consistent part of itself many outright Stalinists (whether or not these are members of the Communist Party is irrelevant; they are completely Stalinist in ideology): the members of the Connecticut Committee of Correspondence; Paul Porter; the signers of the Wisconsin letter on the Trials; numerous single individuals scattered throughout the Party. Much more important, however, is the fact that the arguments and aims and method of the Right Wing are all borrowed (sometimes with minor alterations in transit) from the arsenal of Stalinism. The central aim — the suppression and expulsion of the Left — is identical with the aim of the Stalinists. The political basis of the Right Wing ideology — support of the Spanish assassins, attacks against the American Committee for the Defense of Trotsky, unbelievable bitterness against the perspective of the Fourth International, class collaborationist Farmer-Laborism — all of these, in the hands of the Right Wing, are only watered down versions of the Stalinist program. It is from Stalinism

that the Right Wing learns its characterization of Left Wingers as disrupters and factionalists, with whom “no one can get along” (they could not have learned it from experience, for during the past year it is the Left alone which has built the Party and advanced it in the mass movement). The Stalinist methods are likewise reflected in the exclusion of adherents of the Left from responsible posts, from the NEC, the press, from all important functions and committees in sections of the Party where the Right has control. In the Workers Alliance, Lasser spends the major part of his energies in struggling against the “Trotskyists” among his fellow party members. Even more: the ruthless and bureaucratic manner in which the Right Wing conducts its campaign is only a faint copy of the time-honored methods of the Comintern.

We should not allow ourselves to be deceived by the occasional flare-ups of “anti-Stalinism” from the camp of the Right Wing, such as the recent articles in the *Call*, signed jointly by Sam Baron and non-Party member Liston Oak. Taking these articles as a concrete example, we may observe:

Spurious Flare-Ups Against Stalinism.

(1) The conclusions of the articles are directly at variance with the speech of Baron to the New York membership, in which he repeated the slander that the Barcelona events were caused by Franco’s Fifth Column within the POUM and the FAI. In large part, these articles represent an attempt on Baron’s part to cover his tracks and to shunt aside the thoroughly justifiable reaction to that speech. And, in general, it is true in politics that a Right Wing tries to put a strong Left foot forward just at the point when it culminates an attack against the Left.

(2) Baron has a strong personal grievance against the Stalinists from some time back, reinforced strongly last year by his run-in with them in his former union (the BS&AU) and kept alive by inconveniences which he endured in Spain.

(3) Lastly and most important, if we examine Baron’s “anti-Stalinism” — or that of virtually any other member of the Right Wing — we discover that it is altogether without basis in principle. It is a purely *bureaucratic opposition*: Baron and the others object to the Stalinists because the Stalinists are the more suc-

cessful bureaucrats. His objection is a form of envy. It has no roots, and can disappear overnight. This is brought out strikingly in his articles on Spain by the fact that nowhere in them does he attack the *policies which govern* the Stalinists; by the fact he does not even mention other organizations (for example, the Socialist Party) which have the same policies.

The same lesson can be drawn from Wisconsin. Even so short a while ago as the Cleveland Convention, the Wisconsin representatives were (apparently) the most bitter anti-Stalinists in the Party, threatening to withdraw if the united front resolution was passed. In their case, too, the opposition is now merely bureaucratic, with memories of a past (the "Third Period" of Stalinism) when it was something more. At Chicago such full-fledged Stalinists as Porter and [Meta] Berger were honored leaders of the Wisconsin delegation. Within their home state, they pursue a line identical with the Stalinists in their major activity, the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation; altered only by their need to continue for a while a non-Stalinist line with respect to the AF of L (because of the local voter-getting power of the AF of L machine, closely tied up with the Hoan forces) and their wish not to let the Stalinists have too much of the gravy.

To fight successfully it is always necessary to distinguish with absolute clarity the real enemy. In the present crisis in the Party, the enemy, or at the very least, the main enemy, the bulwark and driving power of the enemy's forces, is: Stalinism. It is Stalinism which above all will rejoice (and this a revealing test) if the Right Wing succeeds — will rejoice even more freely than many members of the Right Wing itself, for these have certain qualms as they look forward to the smash-up of the Party which their course promises. The Stalinists and the Right Wing, however, will rejoice for only a short while, and in vain: the revolutionary tendency will emerge not weaker but far stronger from the struggle.

IV. — Altman-Wisconsin-Lewis.

The initial combination which went to make up the main body of the Right Wing was formed by a coalition of the Wisconsin organization, the Altman group in New York, and the Lewis group in Massachu-

setts, under the leadership of Altman. At first glance this combination is rather incongruous: municipal socialists, left over by a kind of historical accident from the Old Guard; one of the most prominent sections of the old anti-Old Guard Militant grouping; and an old-fashioned, passive LID [League for Industrial Democracy] group from New England. However, during the past year, the paths of these three have gradually come together. On the four key political questions they have discovered a remarkable unanimity: on Spain, on the Fourth International, and perhaps especially on the necessity for liquidating the Party into a Farmer-Labor movement — an end largely accomplished already in Wisconsin, in motion form in New York, and wished for eagerly by Lewis in his pre-convention documents in the Massachusetts State Bulletin. Above all, the three are unbreakably at one in their unrelenting opposition to revolutionary Marxism, and the revolutionary tendency in the Party. It is this last powerful motive which really keeps them together; when it is removed, they will no doubt again go their different ways.

The three groups are well known to the membership. It is not necessary to discuss them at length. A few observations are, however, worth repeating.

The "mass base" of the Right Wing lies in Wisconsin. Every month a check paying for 2,000 dues stamps arrives at the National Office (the role which dues stamps play in such matters as Party Conventions should be kept in mind). The maximum estimate of actual Party members in Wisconsin run to about 400. The former members, and indeed most of the remaining 400, have transferred their allegiance to the Farmer-Labor Political Federation.

Wisconsin's "States' Right."

Wisconsin has always stood firmly on the traditional American doctrine of States' Rights. "Live and let live," they have tolerantly felt. It goes without saying that while the Old Guard was in the Party their rights were never infringed. Nor, in this respect, has there been any change since the time when the Old Guard left. Wisconsin paid its dues, and that was the end of it. It had its members on the National Action Committee, but they naturally never attended meetings. The State Committee went its own way, worked out its own problems, joined the Federation, fought

the CIO, conducted its own propaganda, supported its own paper (the *Call* has only 75 subscribers in Wisconsin), without ever bothering the national organization. But Wisconsin none the less has been feeling more and more restive. Rumors came across the state borders that the national Party had taken steps to the Left, that there were determined revolutionists in the Party, that some of the literature and speeches of the Party were very close to Marxism. Such a state of affairs was irksome, and might prove grossly inconvenient.

Wisconsin came to the [March 1937] Chicago Convention in a truculent mood. There, though it succeeded in keeping adherents of the revolutionary tendency off of the NEC, and though it commended the vigorous measures against “factional” organs, yet it saw some of its worst fears realized. Quite unacceptable resolutions were passed on a number of subjects, and there was a good deal of talk about discipline. When the delegates returned, the clamor grew demanding that something be done. Voices were raised calling for a walk-out. The difficulty was: where was there to go? The Social Democratic Federation could not be of much use to Wisconsin; there was not yet a national Farmer-Labor setup, and the Farmer-Labor Political Federation had not yet sufficiently matured. Still, something had to be done. Broad-mindedly, a representative (nominally of the *Milwaukee Leader*, but with expense paid by the Milwaukee Local of the Party) was sent to the Pittsburgh Convention of the Social Democratic Federation [May 29-30, 1937]. The report was not in all respects satisfactory. Membership meetings were held. And at them, and at conferences, the emissaries of Altman — for example, Lasser and Siegel — arrived. Siegel explained: Let us get together; we must join to drive out the Left Wing; that is the first step toward any suitable solution; stay with us at least long enough for that; we will promise that you will not be troubled by any discipline” or any demands to live up to Party Resolutions and the Party Constitution. There was some argument about just who should be driven out — only Left Wing leaders, or all ex-WP members, or all these plus the Left Clarityites; but the general plan seemed plausible and the deal was put through.

NEC Capitulates to Wisconsin.

The combination functioned smoothly at the Philadelphia NEC meeting, and continued firm at the Special Session. Raskin and Minkley, in their own way, made clear where Wisconsin stood. They announced that Wisconsin would stay in the Party as long as the Party did not interfere with Wisconsin, and provided the purge of the Left and of Left Wing ideas was carried through. They explained that Wisconsin objected to the War Resolution, the People’s Front Resolution, and the Trade Union Resolution, and would of course be unable to act in accordance with them in Wisconsin. The NEC listened, cowered, and accepted. On the touchiest point of all — the Trade Union Resolution — administration was turned over to the Wisconsin State Executive. Wisconsin’s terms were granted. Minkley graciously concluded that the Wisconsin members of the National Action Committee would begin attending meetings as soon as the Action Committee stopped talking about Spain and France and Russia, and began really trying to convince the man in the street about the superiority of socialist mayors.

Such, then, is Altman’s main ally in his struggle against the Left: the Wisconsin organization, reactionary, entangled with old-line trade union bureaucrats, contemptuous of the Party, insolent and brazen in its attitude, social-patriotic virtually to a man, anti-revolutionary to the core.

Of Lewis not much need be said. His following has dropped to a pitiful, worn-out handful. He himself and his associates have made their perspective clear: Liquidation of the Party into a Farmer-Labor Party, any kind of Farmer-Labor Party, with the “socialists” functioning within such a party as an “educational group.” One last Party duty remains: to join his feeble force to the lynch campaign against the Left.

It is Altman who provides the cement that keeps this crew together, and Altman who maps out its strategy. Around himself he has assembled all the dregs of Local New York: leftover Old Guardists; Stalinists open and disguised; pacifists of fifty-seven varieties; and stalwarts of the LID; People’s Fronters; petty trade union bureaucrats; all the “graveyard” socialists, who scarcely know the address of party headquarters. He has whipped them into a group under his slogan: Drive out the Left Wing.

Altman's Wrecking of New York.

Altman has had time and experience to prepare himself for his campaign. For a year he has systematically run Local New York into the ground. Not a single independent Party campaign; three or four mass meetings in all that time under Local New York auspices. Exclusion of all revolutionary Left Wingers from all responsible posts and committees. Strangling of Party activities in Stalinist "united fronts," from the North American Committee to the American League. Sabotage of independent socialist work in the trade unions, with pro-Stalinist Altmanites and pro-Stalinist policies shoved down the throats of the Leagues. Sabotage of the work of the American Committee for the Defense of Trotsky; no Local New York mass meeting on the Trials; no membership meeting on the Trials. No vote ever taken at a membership meeting. Elimination of the City Convention. Constant pressure against the *Call* to make it revert to its character under the editorship of the Altmanite Levenstein. Systematic, day by day, provocation of Left Wingers, whenever they open their mouths, whether in public or inside of the Party. Flooding of the Labor Committee, when some of its decisions displeased him. Driving full speed toward support of LaGuardia.

Now, as his campaign nears its climax, Altman's tempo increases, and the bureaucratic blows fall fast. By a combination of provocateur and policeman tactics, he breaks up the membership meeting of June 4th [1937], in order to prevent discussion on Spain. He passes a ruling that branches cannot instruct delegates to the City Central Committee without a week's previous notification. He rules that it is a breach of discipline for branches to recall City Central delegates except under charges. He gerrymanders the membership allocations. He rules that a branch protesting any ruling of the City Executive is subject to the lifting of its charter. He turns down applications for Party membership from all those suspected of sympathy to revolutionary ideas. He prefers charges against Left Wingers on every conceivable ground. And, on July 6th, his Central Committee began the expulsion and suspension of Left Wingers from the Party.

In Altman, the Right Wing finds its fitting leader.

V. — *The Role of Norman Thomas.*

Norman Thomas has, for many years, been the outstanding figure of the Socialist Party. As has often been the case with outstanding figures, Thomas has for a long time believed that his position could enable him to rise above the Party and its conflicting tendencies, much as the state sometimes aspires to rise above the warring classes. Unfortunately, this is not possible, no matter how outstanding the figure may be. This Thomas should have learned from his experiences in the struggle with the Old Guard. Then, too, he tried to rise above the conflict, tried up to the last moment, at the Chicago Convention, and even thereafter tried to minimize and delay the consummation of the conflict in the split. In the end, with sorrow and indignation, he nevertheless had to choose.

In the past few months, also, Thomas had to choose. It is a painful thing to have to choose, when either alternative of the choice really costs something, particularly when you are one who considers himself above the petty squabbles of ordinary mortals. It is disturbing to one's disposition; and somehow seems to break through the shell of the grand generalities — "socialism in our time," "defense of civil liberties," "unity against war and fascism," "elementary decency," and the rest — which are so pleasing and often so convincing to utter, and which commit oneself to so conveniently little.

Thomas with Right Wing.

We must give Thomas this credit, however: he has chosen. After some delay, some hesitation, some effort to eliminate the necessity for making a choice, after days when — as immediately following the November Elections — he talked at length about quitting the Party and the movement, Thomas made up his mind, and made it up firmly. He decided to join forces with the Right Wing; and he made this decision just preceding the Chicago Convention [March 26-29, 1937]. The decision was not accidental, but it is not necessary here to trace its political genesis and development.

Thomas is a determined man, and once having decided, he acted in a determined fashion. At every crucial point, he dominated the Chicago Convention.

Under his whip, the alleged Clarity majority went down like wheat before the storm. The real and telling blows against the Left were struck by Thomas. And in fighting against the Left, Thomas, like all others of his kind, finds no difficulty in forgetting his pacifism and his love of democracy and “civil liberties.” Anything goes in a fight against the Left. Thomas is no legalist when it comes to opposing revolutionary Marxism. On the question of the suppression of the internal organs — that outrageous violation of genuine party democracy, on the exclusion of members of the Appeal tendency from the NEC, Thomas threw down his gauntlet. When resistance developed, he did not hesitate to deliver his cheap ultimatum: do it my way, or I refuse the leadership of the Party.

Following the convention, Thomas traveled in Europe for two months. During this time, however, he kept his stand unmistakably clear to the Party membership by appointing Lewis as his alternate at the Philadelphia NEC meeting. There was some speculation in certain sections of the party about where he would stand upon his return. Such speculation was wasted. Immediately upon his arrival back in this country, he held a series of conferences with representatives of the Right Wing. He gave them his guarantee that he would go down the line in the drive against the Left Wing. All doubts were set to rest.

The Thomas Line.

As in other cases, Thomas’ attitude toward the internal situation in the Party could just as easily be deduced from his point of view on the key political questions. His column — which like all his public utterances and writings he conducts without the slightest regard for Party discipline or legality — during the weeks since his return has made an interesting study. He assigned responsibility for the Barcelona events to the POUM and the Anarchists. His criticism of the Soviet persecutions has been consistently from the right, using them as a text from which to attack the whole conception of a workers’ state (and, in passing, suggesting at least the partial guilt of Stalin’s victims). Openly in his column he attacks not merely the Fourth International, but the members of the Party who believe in the Fourth International. ‘

These things are not out of keeping with

Thomas’ traditional politics. It is important to observe, however, that since his solid incorporation into the Right Wing, Thomas’ politics have actually suffered a retrogression — a natural and usual result of his present lineup. For example: Thomas, in his column, gave the lead for what is by now, apparently, “Party policy” — the demand that the neutrality embargo be applied by the US Government to Germany and Italy. This demand is, in political fundamentals, identical with the reformist-Stalinist position on “sanctions” (and is of course supported by reformists and Stalinists); and is diametrically opposed to the Marxist position on war and the War Resolution of the Party. In the issues of July 10th and 17th [1937], the column has contained a series of downright reactionary comments on the CIO and the strike movement, repeating the timeworn statements about labor militancy provoking fascist reaction; demanding, with the capitalist press, greater union “responsibility” (i.e., less of a class struggle policy); and (July 17th) attacking the concept of a closed shop.

Thomas for LaGuardia.

Every day, the implications of Thomas’ course become clearer. At the July 12th meeting of the New York Central Committee on the New York City election campaign, it was Thomas who was chief spokesman for the Altman resolution. Thomas, who has so often written and spoken about “genuine” and “bona-fide” Labor parties, who has, in words, been so critical about Stalinists and liberals for their “opportunistic” approaches to the Labor Party question, showed in his remarks that the resolution would mean support of LaGuardia. In the voice of a “tired radical,” he complained that he never again wished to go through another campaign like that of 1936, where “everyone was against us,” and the Socialist Party isolated. Still more revealing is another incident: A short while ago, as part of the general drive in Spain against revolutionists, several Americans were arrested by the government in Barcelona. These included three of our own party comrades — Harry Milton, Charles and Lois Orr (the latter two subsequently released), and Hugo Oehler, Secretary of the Revolutionary Workers League, and for many years a well known militant in the labor movement of this country. Thomas — who

for so many years has capitalized on his “defense of civil liberties” — has made no public utterance on the arrest of our three comrades; has declined to participate in a public committee or speak at a public meeting in their defense; and was influential in the decision of the Workers’ Defense League not to intervene. His one specific statement appeared in his column, where he used the arrests to make a vicious thrust at Oehler. Civil liberties, it seems, are all very well in normal times; but these comrades were on the wrong side of the barricades — the side of the revolutionary workers — during the Barcelona events.

Thomas still retains a few illusions. He has hoped, and still seems to hope, that it is possible to expel a number of the “bad,” “factional-minded” adherents of the revolutionary tendency, and to retain the “good,” “constructive” mass workers. Thomas can be pardoned for his mistake: he has had no opportunity in his experience of learning the meaning of revolutionary solidarity. Prior to the Special Session of the NEC, he inclined to believe that the Party crisis could be solved by instituting a “loyalty oath” demanding fealty to the Second International, and thus weeding out the “die-hard” revolutionists. His colleagues explained to him the awkwardness of such a proposal coming at that time.

Let no mistakes be made about Thomas. Thomas no longer occupies the “independent” position which he so long tried jealously to guard. He has given up his independence. He is not an ally of the Right Wing; he is now an integral part of the Right Wing, and he must act accordingly. He has made his choice; and, through his decision, he has signed his own political death warrant.

VI. — *The Clarity Group.*

The so-called Clarity group allegedly constituted a majority in the Chicago Convention. It took formal responsibility for the majority in the new NEC. In a certain sense this is true; but what that truth means can be understood only by realizing that Clarity is not in actuality a genuine political tendency. Clarity has no program, either in general or with reference to concrete conditions as they arise in the life of the Party; and having no program, it cannot consolidate a genuine

political grouping. Clarity is a halfway house; a temporary resting spot for those whose political ideas are still confused, who have not yet made up their minds where they stand and in what direction they propose to go (which, in passing, is why Thomas appeared more or less an ally of Clarity until he definitely chose the Right Wing). Clarity is based on confusion, on words out of joint with actions, on brave motions and feeble deeds, on endless “maneuvers,” on temporizing, hesitation, delay. Clarity spends its time building houses of cards, to watch them blown over by a puff from Left or Right. Clarity holds endless caucus meetings which can never decide anything; writes documents and makes speeches that have no relation to reality and complains bitterly at reality’s rudeness in contradicting its documents and speeches; makes elaborate plans which can never be lifted from the paper on which they are written. In all of these features, Clarity is a classic example of a Centrist tendency.

As a Centrist tendency, Clarity tries to mediate between the “extremes” in the Party, to hold the balance between Right and Left. For this reason, Clarity is always for “peace” and “unity” and “truce” and “putting off decisions.” In actuality, of course, such politics is nothing but unscrupulous and hypocritical double-dealing and horse-trading. In practice, it results in an unending series of miserable capitulations to the Right and treacherous blows to the Left.

Evolution of Clarity Group.

The evolution of every such Centrist grouping is the same. While political conflicts are developing, and before lines are drawn to complete clarity, such groupings show signs of strength and growth, and even may appear for a while as the “majority.” Then, as the conflict matures, the ground is cut away from the middle, and only two roads are left. The Centrist grouping is pressed to the wall. It has to jump. Normally, the bulk of the *leadership* of the Centrist grouping enters a bloc with the Right (not openly or honestly, of course, but with suitable “formulas”); while the active and militant ranks of the Centrist grouping take their proper stand with the Left (which they were formerly prevented from doing only by the ambiguous and two-faced politics of the Centrist leaders), and the passive and reactionary sections of the Centrist ranks go over to

their natural home in the Right. The Centrist tendency, as an independent grouping, is blown to pieces; and remains, if at all, only as a pitiful clique.

Clarity reached its point of maximum surface development at the Chicago Convention, where it claimed an outright majority. Even then, however, underneath that surface the inner decay was well advanced, and showed itself in a dozen instances. The chief symptom was the fact that whenever Thomas cracked his whip, the Clarity “majority” crumbled without a shadow of resistance. Nevertheless, Clarity took over its “majority” on the NEC. From then on, the disintegration of Clarity proceeded with cumulative speed. The general process outlined above has been taking place in condensed form.

It was impossible from the outset for the “Clarity NEC” to function. The only NEC which could have functioned would have been one which was really determined to develop the Party firmly into a revolutionary organization. This would have meant prominently an NEC which would have laid down the law to the disloyal and anti-revolutionary Right Wing, whose sole aim is to prevent the revolutionary development. But a Clarity NEC, by the nature of Centrist politics, is not that kind of NEC.

Impotence of NEC.

The character of the NEC became at once obvious in the fact that it could not run the Party. It took the NEC more than 3 months even to publish the convention proceeding! Only one issue of the *American Socialist Monthly* has appeared to this day, and not a single issue of the discussion organ voted by the convention — and subsequently scuttled by the NEC itself. Two issues of the *Call* have been cut to 8 pages; and the decision to move the *Call* to Chicago [from Milwaukee] has of course never been carried out. The Party “registration,” scheduled for immediately after the convention, is only now getting under way. No pamphlets have been published. Not a single organized campaign has been conducted. Where the Party has been active, this has been due solely to local initiative. All of these symptoms are due, not to “sabotage” on the part of either Right or Left (as Clarity would like to pretend in order to excuse its own responsibility), but to the fact that the NEC has provided no firm leader-

ship; and, because of its political nature, could not.

The Right Wing, however, had no intention of waiting around for Clarity and the Clarity NEC to make up their minds. They went ahead at once with their plans to smash the Party and drive out the Left. The first big test came at the Philadelphia meeting of the NEC. There the Right Wing permitted, without too much worry, a long list of temporary Clarity “victories” on organizational questions — posts and committees, Trager for Labor Secretary, Tyler for the *Call*, Zam for the *Monthly*. The Right Wing knew — and Altman and Siegel expressed this openly in intermissions — that these victories meant nothing, and that if anything Clarity would only discredit itself the more thorough its prominence in the apparatus. On the question of the Trotsky Committee — where the Right Wing itself is partly divided between its Stalinist and not-so-Stalinist segments, and where the full weight of the campaign of the Left Wing on the Trials pressed against the NEC — the Right Wing suffered a defeat. But its main energies during [the meeting were concentrated upon the] Spanish question, which with the Barcelona events forming the background of the Special Session and the attention of the entire Party concentrated on Spain, the Right Wing knew to be the central issue of the meeting.

The Right-Center Bloc.

On the Spanish question, as the membership knows, Clarity capitulated miserably, shamefully, to the Right Wing. The infamous and cowardly resolution of solidarity with the assassins of the Catalan workers was passed unanimously — with the exception of the abstentions of Trager and Tyler (the latter of whom, at least, has subsequently become a defender of the revolution). No counter-resolution was even offered.

By this vote on the Spanish resolution, the Clarity leadership laid the political basis for its bloc with the Right Wing against the revolutionary Left.

The Right Wing went ahead faster than ever. Altman broke up the New York membership meeting. Thomas returned, and lined up with the Right Wing. The question of split was put on the order of the day. The Special Session of the NEC was called.

Meanwhile Clarity, terrified as its house of cards tumbled about its ears, called tragically for — a “truce,”

a “peace.” The Right Wing sneered contemptuously — it would accept no “truce.” The revolutionary Left asked what Clarity meant by a truce. Clarity explained: it meant the giving up of all right to discussion and criticism within the Party for the Left Wing, the complete political disarmament of the Left Wing, and not a single measure against the Right Wing already fully armed and in battle array; it meant that the Left should lie passively and in silence while the Right Wing tore it to pieces. The Left was compelled to decline Clarity’s generous proposal.

At the Special Session, the Right Wing put forward various schemes, including the “Loyalty Oath,” for expelling the Left at once and *en bloc*. None of these seemed workable. The Clarity “truce” proposal was accepted as a basis; and its reworked form emerged as the “Emergency Policy” Resolution. This resolution was adopted unanimously by the Special Session.

The Gag-Law Against the Left.

What, exactly, is this resolution? We must be entirely clear about it. We should observe that even apart from the specific circumstances of the Party crisis, this resolution is a direct violation of the spirit and letter of the Chicago Convention, and of the Party constitution. It attempts to establish in the Party a regime of martial law, prohibiting internal political discussion and the expression of differences of opinion. Still more does it violate the entire theory, tradition, and practice of internal party democracy. It is quite literally true to say that for a comparative piece of bureaucratic usurpation of the rights of party members we would have to turn to the history of the Comintern under Stalin. But martial law does not function in the abstract: it is a repressive device made use of by one group or class against another; and to understand the full meaning of the resolution we must take it in relation to the actual present conditions in the Party.

Not one word or phrase of the resolution is directed against the Right Wing, which is solely responsible for the precipitation and continuance of the Party crisis. What does this lack mean? It means that the Right Wing, by the terms of the resolution, is given a free hand to proceed unhampered in the carrying out of their campaign against the Left.

Every provision of the resolution, understood in

the concrete, is directed squarely against the Left. The NEC never for a moment suggested that Wisconsin or Altman or Lewis or Siegel should stop saying and writing and doing just what they pleased — and they have shown that they would not stop, either within the Party or in public — whatever the NEC might say. What the resolution aims to do is to silence the voice of the Left Wing on Spain, on the Soviet persecutions, on the International question, on LaFollette and LaGuardia. The NEC has already stated that even the alleged “discussion meetings” to be provided under the resolution (which will, besides, probably never take place) are not to discuss differences of opinion, but, in true Stalinist manner, to discuss “how to put into effect the decisions of the NEC.” The literature and speeches which the resolution aims to remove from the eyes and ears of Party members are not the pamphlet of Paul Porter — still on sale both within and outside the Party — or the articles of New York Right Wingers attacking the Party position in the *Jewish Day*, the *Stampa Libera*, or the public and private speeches sponsored by the LID, but the pamphlets and documents and addresses of revolutionary socialists.

The answer of the Special Session of the NEC to the mighty international and national events and to the profound crisis of the Party itself was: the attempt to suppress by administrative decree the voice of the revolutionary Left Wing, and the simultaneous grant of a *carte blanche* to the Right Wing.

Clarity Final Stage.

In the unanimous vote for this resolution, the Clarity leadership consummated the bloc with the Right Wing, which was prepared for politically by the Spanish Resolution of the Philadelphia meeting. Thus the Clarity leadership enters the final stage of the centrist evolution. Let no one make the slightest mistake about this, least of all the Party militants who still follow or believe they are following the Clarity leadership. That leadership is now in a bloc with the Right Wing, which is not altered by any amount of radical words and phrases. In actuality, there is now taking place a “division of labor” in the campaign against the Left. While the Right Wing proper proceeds directly and brutally to the immediate task of expulsions and suspensions and charter-liftings, the Clar-

ity leadership puts the Party members off guard and blunts the counter-offensive of the Left by “softening the struggle,” by assurances that “you can rely on us,” by promises that “the NEC will protect you.”

This must be made plain: neither the Clarity leadership nor “its” NEC can be relied on a single iota. They cannot because *they are in alliance with the Right Wing, against the Left Wing*. Is this not obvious? Is it not obvious that if the Clarity leadership and the NEC were going to act *with* and not *against* the Left, it had a perfect chance at the Special Session? There it acted with the Right and against the Left. And the Right Wing-Clarity alliance, far from weakening from now on, will necessarily grow closer with further development of the struggle.

Meanwhile, the other phase of the final Centrist development has also been taking place in the months since the convention, and still more rapidly at present. As the Centrist leadership enters its definite bloc with the Right, the ranks of the Centrist grouping fall away. The passive and reactionary sections of their following have almost entirely gone completely into the camp of the Right Wing, where they belonged in the first place, and where they find a more firm and decisive leadership. The active and militant Party members, seeing the gulf between their own view and the actions of their supposed leadership ever widening, fuse with the adherents of the revolutionary tendency. This process was well under way at the first state conventions held following the Chicago National Convention. Following the Philadelphia NEC session, with the Spanish resolution taking first place at the subsequent state conventions, the process was speeded. In state after state, we witnessed what took place, for example, at the Pennsylvania Convention: the united forces of the Clarity leaders (Felix and friends) together with the Right Wingers on one side, the adherents of the *Appeal* together with the militant and active members formerly following Clarity united on the other. The process goes on, greatly stimulated again by the direct treachery of the Clarity leadership at the Special Session. Even today, except for remnants in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, Clarity, as an “independent tendency,” remains as a mere sterile hunk.

Such is the universal fate of Centrism.

VII. — *Perspective of the Left Wing.*

Revolutionary Marxism bases its plans and proposals upon reality. There is nothing either demagogic or utopian in revolutionary politics. It does not build on hopes or wishes or fears. Coldly, soberly, it observes and analyzes and draws conclusions. Utilizing the methods of Marxism, the perspective of the Appeal Association, the organized revolutionary Left Wing of the Party, follows, thus, naturally and easily from the analysis of the actual situation in the Party.

Let us summarize briefly the situation in the Party, which has been herein stated in some detail: The Party is in the grip of an intense crisis. This crisis is a reflection of crucial national and international political events, as well as of the specific circumstances of the Party’s internal development. In this crisis, the aim of the Right Wing is the suppression and expulsion of the revolutionary Left Wing. The Center (Clarity), nominally in control of the national apparatus of the Party has not merely proved itself incapable of leading the Party and unable to resist the campaign of the Right Wing, but has, in the persons of its leadership, entered into a *de facto* bloc with the Right Wing against the Left. *A majority of the active and militant membership of the Party adheres to the Left Wing, an overwhelming majority (if we include those not yet definitively and consistently with the Left) is opposed to the plans of the Right Wing.* Nevertheless, in direct violation of the decisions of the Chicago Convention, the Party statutes, the tradition of party democracy and the will of the membership, the Right Wing and the Right Wing-Centrist bloc (functioning as the NEC), usurping the rights of the membership, carry on their campaign against the Left by brutal administrative measures and bureaucratic measures. Fundamentally, the present crisis is the culmination of the opposition in the Party between the revolutionary Marxist current and the anti-revolutionary currents; specifically, this opposition is now focussed on the four key political questions which we have discussed. The Right Wing has gone too far to be able to draw back from its split course.

Capitulate or Fight!

Even this summary shows that there is only a single alternative before the Left Wing: put bluntly, the Left Wing must either capitulate or fight. It must either sit back passively and silently while the Right Wing rides rough-shod over it, cuts it into pieces, leaves it in the end a political corpse; either this, or it must undertake a mighty counteroffensive, all along the line, relentless, sharp, uncompromising. It will need no argument to defend the choice which we have made: to fight.

Our fight is the fight for the defense and advance of revolutionary Marxism and its adherents toward the great goal of a genuine revolutionary party in this country as an integral part of the international revolutionary movement. We shall conduct this fight on the only possible basis: the full program of revolutionary internationalism. The dominant political issues — though these cannot be separated from the full and rounded Marxist program — are dictated by the terms of the crisis itself: defense of the Spanish proletarian revolution, solidarity with the revolutionary workers of Spain, irrevocable opposition to the traitors and assassins of the Popular Front and their defenders throughout the world; defense of the heritage of the October Revolution, and unshakable opposition to the Stalinist hangmen; the forging of the new revolutionary international, the summation of the Marxist answer to the problems of our epoch; the defense and advance of independent working class politics, altogether clear of every class collaborationist tangle.

As the necessary organizational instrument for our fight, we are reconstituting the Socialist Appeal Association throughout the Party and YPSL, drawing thus on the splendid and consistent revolutionary tradition of the Appeal tendency.

As a further indispensable instrument in our fight, we are undertaking the immediate publication of *The Socialist Appeal*. The solemn decision under which the *Appeal* suspended publication at the time of the Chicago Convention has been brazenly violated. The internal discussion organ has never appeared; and has, in fact, been voted out of existence by the NEC at its Philadelphia meeting. The official press is a purely factional press from which we are systematically excluded. The Left Wing is expected to stay muzzled and

now, with mass expulsions, to remain silent about the crimes committed against it. We refuse to be muzzled! The *Appeal* is our answer to the gag-laws and the split drive.

Every revolutionary consideration demands its immediate appearance as the militant and uncompromising spokesman and banner-bearer of the Left Wing.

Perspective of Fight.

What will be the result of the struggle? It is neither necessary nor useful to speculate on the precise form of the outcome. The Socialist Party is now reaching the end of the long process which started 4 years ago. For it there are only two possibilities: On the one hand, if the Right Wing succeeds in its aim, the Party will be not merely doomed as a potentially revolutionary force, but will collapse as any kind of independent political organization. The entire strength and promise of the Party, the sole force which can build the Party and lead it, lies in the revolutionary Left Wing. With the Left Wing out, there will be nothing left but a skeleton. The unholy alliance which is held together only by its common opposition to revolutionary Marxism will fall apart into its constituent elements. Wisconsin will find that LaFollette provides plenty of politics without the bother of an “independent party.” Lewis and others will be satisfied with the LID. Still others will need no more than the American Labor Party. Many, by one or another route, will jump or drift into their proper Stalinist home. Some will leave the movement altogether. A small clique (perhaps from the Clarity group, some of whom are already thinking and even negotiating in this direction) may well engineer a deal with the Lovestoneites. The Socialist Party will simply drop apart, like the one horse shay that has outlived its time.

On the other hand, if the Left Wing succeeds in defeating the Right Wing, in reconquering for the Party a normal life and the possibility of a normal development, the future of the Party is assured. There would still be a split, it is true: not because the Left Wing “desires” a split, but because from the nature of the case the hardened core of the Right Wing would quit the Party. But such a split would strengthen and invigorate the Party. With a Left Wing victory, in the face of the

mighty political events now unfolding around us and the unprecedented opportunities which they hold out, the Party will go mightily forward, expanding and deepening its roots in the mass movement, assuming leadership in the class struggle, and preparing as the revolutionary vanguard of the working class for the final conflict.

Can the Left Wing succeed in the Party struggle? The majority of the membership, above all the active membership, is with us. Many more will join us in the days just ahead. Party legality is with us, for it is our opponents who have shattered every requirement of Convention decisions and Party constitution and democratic tradition. History is with us for our ideas and aims represent the interest of the progressive class in society, and of the social revolution. But in the Party struggle we should be blind not to recognize the reality and state it openly. Our opponents control the greater part of the apparatus of the Party, and they have already shown that they will utilize their administrative position in the most ruthless and bureaucratic fashion. They have at their disposal a heavy weight of deadwood book-members. They have made clear that they will not regard in the slightest the will of the active membership. They have announced openly that they will stop at nothing in their struggle against the Left.

Forward with Left Wing.

We shall not quietly give up our position in the Party upon their request or demand or provocation. It is we who have been building the Party in struggle, who have been recruiting its members, launching it into mass action. We shall fight every inch of the way. We shall demand our usurped rights in the Party, and assert that demand through every means at our disposal. But we shall not be turned aside by mealy-mouthed

legalisms, which our opponents have been the first to spurn and throw aside. There is too much at stake to be settled by lawyers' phraseology. We announce in advance our solidarity with the revolutionists who are or may be expelled or suspended by the bureaucratic moves of the Right Wing or the NEC: they are our comrades, expelled or not, and we stand with them. We will fight along with them for the reinstatement that is their simple right; but in any case, and whatever happens, we and they will stand together and fight together. We announce in advance that our voice will be heard, and that there is no device known to Raskin or Altman or Thomas or Clarity legalists which can silence it. We will not be silent before the betrayal of the Spanish Revolution and the destruction of the October Revolution and the emasculation of the rising American Labor Movement; nor will we keep silent about those in this country and in the Socialist Party who defend the assassins of the Spanish workers, the Kremlin hangmen, and who themselves work toward these same crimes in this country.

Whatever the result of the present internal struggle, the revolutionary tendency has nothing to fear. The future lies with us. It is not the revolutionary tendency which today stands at the final crossroads; it is the Party. If the Party measures up to the choice confronting it, the road ahead is certain; if not, the Party is forever doomed. There is only one road: our road, the road of revolutionary internationalism, the road toward the proletarian conquest of power, toward the world triumph of socialism. It is along that road that we summon the membership. Forward with the revolutionary Left Wing!

National Action Committee,
Appeal Association of the Socialist Party.

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