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DEFENSE POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

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OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

INTRODUCTION

Increasing victimizations of Afro-American and other nationalist freedom fighters, student rebels, anti-war activists, militant workers and socialists by local, state and federal authorities make it necessary time and again to build defense movements in their behalf. Unfortunately, their supporters all too often do not know how to go about organizing the right kind of defense committee or conducting the most effective campaign to protect the lives and liberties of the defendants.

In the class struggle, as in military affairs, knowledge of the best methods of defense are as important as the techniques of offensive operations. However, as a result of the disruption of continuity between the radicalisms of the 1930s and 1960s, the young generation does not have ready access to the traditions, principles and means of defense of legal rights and civil liberties devised and tested by their predecessors. They lack elementary information which is indispensable for all volunteers in the army of liberation.

Over the four decades of its existence the Socialist Workers Party has had considerable experience in this sector of the class struggle. The two contributions in this collection are designed to transmit some lessons drawn from that experience to new members of our movement as well as to other militants concerned with such problems.

The first is the text of a talk given in New York City in the spring of 1968 by the prominent Marxist scholar and writer, George Novack, as one of a series of commentaries on Letters From Prison by James P. Cannon, SWP National Chairman, at the time of its publication. In it Novack reviews the record and presents a summary of the principles of American Trotskyism in the field of defense work.

The second document is a resolution adopted by the National Committee of the SWP at the beginning of the cold war witch-hunt in 1950. It served to guide the SWP through that period of intense repression of dissenters against the capitalist regime in the United States. Although written eighteen years ago, the ideas and positions it sets forth retain full validity and value under contemporary conditions.

July 8, 1968

TRADITIONS AND GUIDING IDEAS OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY
IN DEFENSE ACTIVITY

By GEORGE NOVACK

Letters From Prison is the latest of three works by J. P. Cannon which were literary by-products of the Minneapolis Labor Case. The other two are Socialism on Trial, which gives his testimony for the defense, and Defense Policy in the Minneapolis Trial, which was a refutation of the ultra-left criticism of the courtroom strategy made by Grandizo Munis. (He was a Spanish comrade who played a role in the Fourth International for a time until he broke with the Trotskyist movement in the late 1940s.)

These three productions do more than explain the approach of the Socialist Workers Party to this particular prosecution. They throw light on the basic problems connected with protecting the rights, principles and free functioning of a revolutionary socialist party under attack from a democratic capitalist government. A study of them can teach a great deal about the nature and methods of defense activity.

Few political organizations in the world, and none in the United States, have so rich a tradition in defense work as the SWP. The young members of our movement can enter into the possession of tested methods in this field. These have come from two sources: one of international, the other of native derivation.

The key constituent is those teachings which have been handed down from the leadership of the Bolshevik party and of the Third International in its formative years. These show how to adhere to a principled and effective course in parrying the blows of the class enemy.

The other part consists of the lessons learned from the experiences of the past hundred years in our own country. Many people have been victimized in all the vicissitudes of the class struggle since the Civil War. A long line of cases have been fought in the courts and in the wider arena of public opinion to establish and uphold the rights of free speech, free association, union organization, the right to strike and to disseminate unorthodox views on issues ranging from birth control to socialist revolution.

Whatever democratic freedoms the American people, the labor movement, and Afro-Americans now enjoy, by statute or in practice, were not generously bestowed upon them as free-will offerings from good-hearted possessors of property and power. They have had to be torn from the ruling class powers through bitter and prolonged battles, and sometimes with arms in hand.

They are, first of all, the results of two great bourgeois-democratic revolutions, one in the eighteenth, the other in the mid-nineteenth century, and of lesser encounters before and after these mighty upheavals. The prodigious exertions it has

taken over the last decade to force a reluctant Congress to enact a few civil rights measures which do no more than promise the enforcement of constitutional guarantees to black citizens is fresh testimony to this process. And even after such laws are passed through strenuous struggle, unremitting vigilance is required to prevent them from being ignored, violated or restricted by authorities at varying levels.

The Trotskyist movement had the rare good fortune of being founded by individuals who had engaged in many outstanding labor defense cases and civil liberties campaigns in this country since the early years of this century. In this book Cannon recalls how he was stirred into indignation and action by the frameup of the Western Miners Union leaders, Moyer, Heywood and Pettibone, in 1908 and later participated in defense movements for Schmidt and Kaplan, the McNamara brothers, Mooney and Billings. Along with Vincent Dunne and other veteran comrades, he was involved in the free speech fights of the Wobblies and was himself arrested and imprisoned as a union organizer and an opponent of imperialist war.

In the 1920s he and Rose Karsner were instrumental in launching and administering the International Labor Defense, the defense arm of the Communist party. They not only organized massive campaigns on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti, Tom Mooney and other martyrs of class justice in the United States but actions and demonstrations in solidarity with victims of reactionary persecution in other parts of the globe. Ironically, they helped save the life of Rakosi, the revolutionary of the 1920s, who after World War II became the detested Stalinist ruler of Hungary.

The initiating nucleus of the Communist Left opposition in 1928, Cannon, Karsner, Shachtman and Abern, worked together in the national headquarters of the ILD which, so to speak, became the cradle of American Trotskyism. Some of the first recruits came from Communists who had been associated with them in various defense efforts.

Along with their revolutionary Marxist principles, these pioneers endowed our infant movement with a precious store of knowhow in this special domain of the class struggle. In all areas of revolutionary work it is often no less imperative to know what not to do as what to do and how to do it. Such knowledge is acquired as the product of earlier trials and errors. If the experiments performed by our predecessors have already exposed what ways and means are inadequate, correct measures can be unhesitatingly applied from the first.

Without such tested guidelines the militants of each successive generation would be condemned to a primitive accumulation of experience. This would result in the wastage of time, energy and personnel before the right road is found and in the repetition of old errors that can lead people far astray. The bad consequences of a lack of learning from experience can

be discerned in the fumbblings and gropings of many New Lefts in the most elementary matters since they set out to discover America all over again early in the sixties without the benefit of any compass of codified generalizations to direct them. Those who bank on spontaneous combustion all the time soon run out of fuel.

We are not empiricists or pragmatists but historical-minded scientific socialists of the Marxist school who integrate theory and practice. We didn't have to be a Christopher Columbus either in revolutionary program or in defense activity. The ample fund of expertise possessed by the founders of American Trotskyism formed part of the basic capital of our movement from its birth. That capital has been put to good use and considerably augmented in the four decades of our existence, as James Kutcher, the three students in the Bloomington case and Pfc Howard Petrick can personally testify.

Let me summarize the fundamental features of defense policy which the pioneers of our movement worked out and which have guided all our subsequent activities and achievements.

1. The democratic, constitutional and legal rights of the American people are the most valuable political acquisitions of their past struggles. Socialists must staunchly uphold these indispensable instruments of the workers' struggle for emancipation against any encroachment, assault or erosion by the forces of reaction. A strong defense of existing rights is the best way of extending them.

2. The right of legality is a crucial democratic right. It has taken tremendous sacrifice to secure the legality of trade unions and their right to strike, and of socialist parties and their right to advocate revolutionary views. These and similar conquests must not be taken lightly. The free and legal functioning of all progressive organizations and causes should be safeguarded at all costs by the revolutionary vanguard.

3. At the same time it must be recognized that the capitalists run the machinery of state and control its repressive agencies. They will honor the rights of the individual citizen and the people only so long as these do not cut deeply into their vital interests. None of the agents of the plutocracy can be relied upon to adhere even to their own legality.

4. Regardless of their claims to the contrary, the ruling class of the capitalist state and their servitors are the inveterate enemies of democracy. They fear its application and resist its expansion. This imposes the obligation upon the forces of socialism and spokesmen for the working class to be the most vigorous and consistent champions of democratic liberties. They must defend all victims of reactionary persecution, no matter what their special beliefs. This injunction is summed up in the solidarity slogan of the IWW: "An injury to one is an injury to all."

5. Whatever illusions liberals and others may have, Marxists should repose no confidence in the capacity or will of the capitalist regime, its courts, officials or politicians to grant democratic rights. The best way to balk their frameups and insure a modicum of justice within class society is to develop a broad defense movement based upon those sections of the population which will lend an ear to the issues and respond to appeals on behalf of the defendants. Thus the counter-pressure of aroused public opinion can be brought to bear upon the authorities to frustrate, or make more difficult, their attacks upon democratic rights.

6. It is crippling and self-defeating for a defense case, committee and campaign to be conducted in a sectarian or exclusive manner. Appeals for support should be based, not upon agreement with the ideas or approval of the real or alleged acts of the defendants, but upon general civil liberties grounds. Care should be taken to point out how the issues at stake concern and affect the rights of others. Support should be solicited and welcomed from anyone willing to aid the defense on such a broad basis, regardless of their positions on other matters. The defense committee should stand ready to collaborate with other groups which have similar purposes in opposing violations of legal or human rights.

In addition to these comprehensive directing principles, the ILD contingent transmitted many tips on how best to apply them, "practical knacks of doing things, learned the hard way," as Cannon notes. These included the importance of keeping careful, accurate and unchallengeable financial accounts, such procedures in launching a defense committee as securing the written signatures rather than the verbal assurance of sponsors, how to keep a campaign moving along without flagging or sagging, how to set up the right kind of relations between the lawyers, defendants and defense committee, and so on.

This sort of information was especially impressive to that group of intellectuals, myself among them, who came to the Communist League of America in 1933 after their disenchantment with the Communist party. As journalists, editors, writers, teachers, we had made our main practical contribution to the movement for socialism up to that point through defense work. We had been the chief organizers and administrators of the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, an adjunct of the by then Stalinized International Labor Defense, which listed such literary notables among its sponsors as Dreiser, Anderson, Dos Passos and Waldo Frank.

We had been active in sending delegations to expose conditions in the Harlan, Kentucky, mine region and in mobilizing support for the Scottsboro and Angelo Herndon cases. It may be hard to believe nowadays but, as advertising manager of the conservative publishing house of E. P. Dutton, I was given permission to use its storing and shipping facilities for the Political Prisoners Book Committee from which books were sent every

month to over a hundred long-term class war prisoners. Such was the temper of the depression days.

Our group first collided with the realities of Stalinism over issues connected with the proper handling of defense cases. We objected to the ultra-sectarian attitude, prompted by the Stalinist invention of "social-fascism." This absurd theory forbade solidarity with any person or political tendency which was not a satellite of the CP. The Stalinists pursued a "rule or ruin" policy toward Social-Democrats, Trotskyists, Anarchists or independents which precluded any form of united action with them in defense work.

As often happens, this excessive factionalism was complemented by lapses into opportunism when the CP got into a pinch or sought short-cuts out of difficulties. Thus we criticized the ILD's mismanagement of the legal side of the Scottsboro case. While refusing on principle, in that first stage of the fight, to seek collaboration with other organizations like the NAACP, the ILD relinquished control over the trial procedure to a careerist lawyer, Samuel Liebowitz, who later became notorious as a hanging judge in Queens. He made compromising statements to the press and unjustifiable moves in the courtroom conduct of the case.

These criticisms, among others, led to our forced resignations from the NCDPP and break with Stalinist politics. It likewise made us highly sensitive to questions of defense policy. The help we received from the Trotskyist leaders on these matters clarified many obscure and disturbing points and enhanced their authority in our eyes.

Upon joining the Communist League, we continued to be active in the defense field not only as a matter of personal honor but to provide a better model of conducting such work along correct class lines. Together with the Musteites and the Italo-American Anarchists, we set up the Non-Partisan Labor Defense which, between 1934 and 1936, handled a variety of cases, from fighting the deportation of anti-fascists to defending indicted agricultural organizers in California who had been abandoned and calumniated by the CP. This committee was dissolved into the newly formed Workers Defense League when the Workers party membership entered the SP in 1936. We helped draft the charter of the Workers Defense League.

By far the biggest defense movement we undertook in the 1930s was the campaign to expose the Moscow Trials which was initiated by the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky. This was consummated with the report of the Dewey Commission of Inquiry in the fall of 1937 which branded the trials as frameups and found Trotsky and his son Sedov innocent of the monstrous charges against them. (The report of the hearings in that case has just been reprinted by Merit Publishers.)

This historical struggle to establish the truth about the foremost crime in the annals of socialism was carried on

against great odds. It split the radical intellectuals into fiercely opposing camps and drew a number closer to our ideas. The impact of this controversy on the New York literary community is depicted in two of Mary McCarthy's works: The Company She Keeps and On the Contrary.

2.

I have filled in so extensive a background to indicate what resources our movement had to draw on when the fight against Teamster President Tobin broke out and the FBI raided the SWP headquarters in Minneapolis and St. Paul on June 22, 1941, the day after Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. The federal indictments of 29 SWP and Local 544 leaders followed 23 days later.

If the party was not to be demoralized and crushed, this prosecution had to be unflinchingly met with all our forces. No time was lost in springing into action on the defense front. Luckily the central leaders of the party, Cannon, Dobbs and Dunne, were in Minneapolis directing strategy and tactics in the union showdown with Tobin. Amidst the clashes of the embattled 544 Teamsters with Tobin's goons in the streets and on the highways, they were holding top strategy meetings in a house which Evelyn Reed and I had sublet for the summer in St. Paul.

At the first conference after the arrests, the decision was made that I should leave forthwith for the East to lay the groundwork for the defense effort. Off I hightailed to make three important stops. First, to confer with the New York comrades; second to visit Carlo Tresca, his companion Margaret DeSilver, and John Dos Passos who were summering at the tip of Cape Cod. Dos Passos and Tresca agreed to serve as vice-chairmen of the Civil Rights Defense Committee and Margaret to help financially as she had so generously done with the Dewey Commission. Then I sailed off to Martha's Vineyard to confer with Roger Baldwin, head of the ACLU, and Arthur Garfield Hays, its General Counsel, who promised legal and moral backing from that organization with which we had had both agreeable and disagreeable dealings in previous situations.

Back in Manhattan, the novelist, James T. Farrell, who was then a very close sympathizer, was persuaded to become chairman of the projected defense committee. The staff which shouldered the daily organizational chores consisted of a team of hard-working comrades with Evelyn Reed in charge from beginning to end.

The National Committee proceeded to enlist such sponsors as Warren K. Billings, a living link with the past with whom I spoke at a meeting in San Francisco during 1944, John Dewey, W. E. B. DuBois, Prof. Mark De Wolfe Howe, Mary McCarthy and Edmund Wilson, Prof. Alexander Meiklejohn, A. J. Muste, Adam Clayton Powell and Max Shachtman, with whom we had not been on the best of terms but who collaborated loyally with us in this

fight. Official endorsements secured from the more respectable ACLU and the Workers Defense League helped us solicit funds and gain access for CRDC representatives in other organizations.

The activity of the entire party from July 1941 to February 1945, when the last comrades quit prison, revolved round the case. Such priority was warranted by the grave issues at stake. Let me itemize five of them.

1. The legal existence of the party was endangered. Through its prosecution the government was trying to brand the Socialist Workers Party as conspiratorial and criminally subversive and thus force or intimidate us into a semi-legal situation or frame of mind, as they did with the CP from 1948 on. We were determined, if at all possible, not to allow the government to make us into outlaws. We cherish legal status, not because we are worshippers of bourgeois or bureaucratic legality at any price, but because we are well aware of the serious disabilities and disadvantages imposed by any degree of illegality. As he has related elsewhere, in the first chapter of The History of American Trotskyism and The First Ten Years of American Communism, Cannon found out these facts of political life through his unfavorable experiences in the underground Communist movement of this country from 1919 to 1922. He had taken the initiative in extricating the young Communist party from its undergroundism with the help of Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin and other Comintern leaders in 1922.

2. The freedom of our best political and union leaders was involved. Apart from the personal hardships and loss of liberties, this threatened to behead our party at a critical time when it needed expert guidance.

3. The direct connection of the indictments with a conflict between the union members and an arbitrary and dictatorial bureaucracy squarely posed the right of the ranks to run their own union and freely choose their affiliation. Such issues of union democracy became exceedingly acute under wartime conditions. Many CIO leaders who rallied to our defense recognized that Minneapolis could be used against militant unionists elsewhere.

4. The case was a test of the Smith Act. This was the first statute since the Alien & Sedition Acts of 1798 to make mere advocacy of ideas a federal crime. If upheld, it would place a fearful instrument of inquisitorial thought control in the hands of reaction, as it turned out to be in the postwar witch-hunt.

5. Since the defendants were accused of conspiracy for adhering to the doctrines of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky and wanting to duplicate the October Revolution in the United States, (which was neither a lie nor a crime), the right to advocate and disseminate the ideas of Marxism was at stake.

The totality of these issues made the Minneapolis Case the most important civil liberties cause during World War II. Thanks in no small measure to our sustained propaganda, it became so at the time and its significance has not diminished since. For example, the General Counsel of the ECLC, Leonard Boudin, wanted to consult the record of the Minneapolis proceedings in preparation for the legal defense in Dr. Spock's indictment.

A rounded defense against a government prosecution must take two sides into account. One is the specific political stand of the party itself which asserts its position as a revolutionary socialist organization. The more general undertaking to mobilize the widest possible support for the defendants is complementary to this.

To illustrate the first aspect, let me quote the defiant declaration which concluded the editorial published in the July 1941 issue of Fourth International magazine as our first response to the indictments.

"As our tragically long list of martyrs throughout the world eloquently testifies, we Trotskyists cannot be terrorized by government prosecutions but will be tempered and tested in that fight. Our party has been built under the most adverse conditions over twelve years of struggle. We survived the terrible blows of world-wide working-class defeats and the triumph of reaction. We survived -- and grew stronger. We survived the most terrible blow of all, Stalin's murder of Leon Trotsky -- and grew stronger. We answer Roosevelt's persecution as we have answered Stalin's persecution -- You can put some of us out of the way, but you can never kill our party, for it is based on the unconquerable ideas of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, and you can never kill those ideas.

"We shall not retreat an inch. We shall recant nothing. We shall fight to the last ditch and with all our strength.

"In our fight against these monstrous prosecutions, these Washington versions of the Moscow Trials, we are confident that we shall have the support of the progressive sections of the trade union movement and of all those who still retain any respect for democratic rights and civil liberties. In bearing the brunt of this attack, we are defending dearly-won rights of the entire labor movement. No matter what their political differences with our party and its program and activities, all workers must recognize that in this battle we are defending principles which we hold in common with the entire working class: the independence of the trade unions from governmental domination; the democratic rights of labor; the right of a political party of workers to advocate its pro-labor views. These are the broad interests of the labor movement which we are defending against federal prosecution. We pledge our solemn word to the American working class to defend these interests to the very end."

More than a quarter of a century afterwards, these sentiments may strike a detached observer, accustomed to curb the tongue of passion under any provocation, as somewhat overheated. But we meant every word of it and went to work with a will to make it a reality.

Note that our political message was addressed to organized labor as well as to liberal and civil liberties circles. Remember that the prosecution, while essentially political, flowed from a big union battle with the AFL on one side and the CIO on the other. The combativeness that built the industrial unions was still strong and seething in labor's ranks. From the start the defense committee could count upon a significant amount of moral and material backing from progressive unionists. That would not be so today, though it may be tomorrow.

Although wartime conditions raised supplementary difficulties, several factors facilitated our efforts to secure support for the case. Many people feared a revival of the Wilsonian repressions and the witch-hunts of the Palmer Red raids. I know this was a compelling factor in inducing Dos Passos, who had written about these events in his famous trilogy, to become vice-chairman of the committee. Then there was the knowledge that Roosevelt had ordered the FBI into action as a favor to his union henchman Tobin. Apart from the vindictive Stalinists, many CIO officials and members regarded the federal intervention as a blow aimed at their own organization. Finally, despite the Stalinist slanders, we had gained some respect as revolutionists of integrity. This reputation was an asset in times of trouble.

Without going into detailed description of the steps in the case, let me cite a few facts to denote the extent of our success in amassing support. When I went to Washington on August 2, 1944 to present the bundle of petitions submitted by the CRDC asking a presidential pardon for the 18, these were signed by organizations representing three million members.

Among them were the top officers of the Auto Workers, the Marine and Shipbuilding Workers, the Textile Workers, the ILGWU of the AFL, the Michigan and New Jersey State CIO Councils, 58 UAW locals, 22 Steel locals, and hundreds of other unions. All the civil liberties bodies, most of the prominent black organizations and labor fraternal groups endorsed our plea.

Although liberal and labor political publications carried stories from the first, the big press played down the case. We had to break through this silence by our own publicity efforts. The CRDC issued over 200,000 pamphlets and leaflets; mobilized 30 active local committees to promote its campaign; and raised more than \$50,000 to defray the costs of the case and aid the families of the defendants while they were behind bars.

In addition to the customary indifference and inertia, we had to contend with other types of resistance. We expected

opposition from Tobin and his fellow fatcats. But the most vicious opposition came from CP sources.

A month after the indictments, on August 16, 1941, the Daily Worker heartily approved the government action, although it expressed preference for a Stalin-type frameup rather than a Roosevelt Smith Act prosecution. The CP editors phrased their views in this fashion.

"The American people, whose independence as a nation, together with that of the people of Great Britain and the Soviet Union is endangered and at stake in the fight for the defeat of Nazi Germany, can find no objection to the destruction of the Fifth Column in this country. On the contrary, they must insist upon it. The leaders of the Trotskyist organization which operates under the false name of 'Socialist Workers Party' deserve no more support from labor and friends of national security than do the Nazis who camouflage their party under the false name of 'National Socialist Working Party.'"

Observe the concoction of patriotism, anti-fascism, pro-Sovietism and anti-Trotskyism to cement an amalgam between revolutionists and counter-revolutionists and implement a thoroughly abominable policy.

This rabid opposition was not confined to journalistic slander. Its poison was injected into all areas subject to Stalinist influence, above all into the unions. Wherever they could contrive to sabotage our appeals for aid, they did so. In Minnesota, for example, the seat of the trial, the Stalinists and their dupes controlled both the city and state CIO Councils. There they prevented these bodies from solidarizing with their brother unionists and were happy to see the best militants crushed and sent to jail.

Another, though milder, obstacle was the obstinate refusal of many liberals to believe that their idolized Roosevelt really meant business. When the Justice Department handed down the indictments, they said the charges were so far-fetched they couldn't stick and the government would have to drop the case. Then when the trial was held, they said a jury wouldn't convict. After the convictions, they predicted these would be reversed on appeal. When the lower court upheld the verdict, they swore that the U.S. Supreme Court would rule the Smith Act invalid.

But that august body was more than usual blindfolded to justice in wartime. It three times refused to review the sentences, although these were the first under the clearly unconstitutional Smith Act. Finally, these spirits ever-optimistic at someone else's expense said the 18 would never serve out their terms; the merciful man in the White House would pardon them. Roosevelt refused.

On that occasion I was moved to paraphrase a familiar quatrain from Oliver Goldsmith as follows:

"When trusting liberals stoop to folly
And learn too late their loves betray,
What charm can soothe their melancholy
Or wash their sense of shame away?"

An equally revealing insight into capitalist realities and liberalistic illusions has been provided by the belated testimony of the Washington official who set the prosecution into motion, Solicitor-General Biddle. He was rewarded with the Attorney-General cabinet post soon after. In his autobiography, In Brief Authority, published twenty years later, this ornament of American liberalism made the following confession:

"History showed that sedition statutes -- laws addressed to what men said -- invariably have been used to prevent and punish criticism of the government, particularly in time of war. I believe them to be unnecessary and harmful. This particular law made it criminal to advocate destruction of the government by force and violence. I doubted whether any speech or writing should be made criminal. I thought this provision might be declared unconstitutional under the First Amendment of the Constitution, which protected freedom of utterance. And, with some reluctance, I authorized a prosecution so that the law would be tested at the threshold, and taken to the Supreme Court, where it would, I hoped and believed, be knocked out...

"The judgment was sustained on appeal to the Circuit Court of Appeals; but to my surprise the Supreme Court refused to review it. The victory for the government became a defeat for me. The law stood on the books. Uncomfortable about the result, I was not surprised when the American Civil Liberties Union and some of my liberal friends attacked me...

"I have since come to regret that I authorized the prosecution. I should not have tried to test the criminal provisions of the statute in this particular case...There had been no substantial overt acts outside of talk and threats, openly expressed in the time-honored Marxist lingo."

Despite restrictions, the CRDC managed to fill the prisoners' requests for books and periodicals as a result of negotiations with the now retired head of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, James Bennett. When the last legal move on appeal was exhausted, I went, in my capacity as secretary of the defense committee, to Washington by appointment to discuss with Bennett where the 18 would surrender to the marshals, what prison they preferred, and other matters pertaining to their terms. He was amenable to minor concessions for several reasons. Official Washington was aware of the scope of the sympathy for us and the unpopularity of the prosecution. He was also apprehensive about the trouble such a disciplined political group might provoke in prison.

Consequently, he gave the CRDC permission to send

whatever books the 18 requested, subject to Washington's approval of the list submitted each month, as well as the New York Times and later The Militant. This last concession was unusual since publications of this type were normally banned from the federal prison system. However, the assurance was given that The Militant would be read only by the addressees -- and I presume our comrades kept that promise -- in mind.

Cannon refers to another avenue of communication with the world outside: the visits Evelyn and I made to the comrades; she to Grace Carlson at Alderson, West Virginia, and I to the comrades at Danbury, Connecticut. Most memorable was my stop at Sandstone on a nation-wide speaking tour, where most of the comrades were imprisoned. Some of my best friends have spent time behind bars but I have led such an exemplary or lucky life that my acquaintance with such places was quite scanty. I was not sure how to conduct myself when the fourteen filed into a room at Sandstone and disposed themselves around me under a guard's surveillance.

I started out talking safely and sanely about the pardon campaign and defense activities. After a few minutes Cannon, as spokesman for the group, interrupted that line of remarks and said: "Now tell us what's going on in the Political Committee and the International movement." Being a disciplined comrade, I cautiously mentioned some political problems under consideration in New York, meanwhile glancing at the guard for fear of going too far out on a limb. By questions and comments Cannon kept encouraging me to speak up more freely. Taking the cue, we plunged into an animated exchange of views on aspects of the political situation at home and abroad. I was later informed that the guard, who was nicknamed "Skyhawk", was utterly indifferent to what was being said, was a bit deaf, and had supposedly once voted for Debs.

3.

What was achieved through our collective efforts over the four years? Although we did not save our leaders from jail, we did create a strong, honorable and wide-ranging defense movement around them. This helped deter the Roosevelt administration from further moves against our party. His Postmaster-General did try to deprive The Militant of its second-class mailing rights in 1943 because of our defense of the black struggle, but we had this decision reversed with assistance from the ACLU.

The membership successfully passed through a rigorous testing period. After effectively resisting the first assault, they held on tenaciously and proved capable of moving forward again with a turn of the tide in 1944-45, despite unfavorable wartime conditions and the absence of the front-rank leaders. After the party convention in November 1944 Cannon had ample reason to be jubilant over the signs of progress in various fields.

The Minneapolis Case stands out in party history as

the keystone of its experience in defense activity. It was both the culmination of previous decades of work in this field and the springboard for all the postwar undertakings, notably the Case of the Legless Veteran and the Bloomington Case. And these are two high points in dozens of defense actions of various kinds the party has engaged in during the past two decades. The Fontana case in California, the Hickman case in Chicago, the "Kissing" case and the Monroe cases in North Carolina are four among many involving black victims alone.

With the challenge of each new prosecution either against ourselves or others whom we aided, we did not have to start from scratch but could summon considerable assets from the word "go." Such preparedness and preconditioning of our reflexes are largely responsible for the effectiveness of our interventions which is recognized by friend and foe alike, including Pentagon generals.

It has been gratifying to see how quickly recent recruits have picked up our basic ideas and here and there improved upon their application. When the American Committee for Justice to Latin-American Political Prisoners was in process of formation, Paul Sweezy remarked to its initiating group: "It should be set up like the Alexander Defense Committee which is a model." This tribute from the Monthly Review editor was fully justified.

If we compare the defense policies and procedures we follow with those of rival tendencies, our superiority is incontestable. Let me cite a few examples.

When the Communist party was hit by the Smith Act prosecutions from 1949 on, they were unable to rally a sizeable popular protest movement which went much beyond their own supporters. Some of the reasons for this narrowness were rooted in the Cold War conflict and beyond their responsibility or control. However, their isolation in time of need was partially self-created by their previous refusal to support the Minneapolis Case and the Trotskyists.

They persisted in this suicidal course even while they were themselves under prosecution. In July 1949 they staged a Civil Rights Congress in New York to mobilize support for their defendants. There our spokesmen headed by Farrell Dobbs publicly proclaimed our solidarity with them, asking that the Congress also approve a pardon for the 18 Minneapolis defendants and back James Kutcher. The Stalinist refusal to defend the civil rights of their political opponents created a scandal and lost them much sympathy and support for their own cause. In fairness, it must be said that they have since revised that attitude of hostility and non-support to the Trotskyists, although their defense policy remains very defective in other respects.

The current offspring of the CP, who have had the misfortune to be educated, miseducated, or uneducated in the

school of Stalinism, have committed a series of blunders which could fill a handbook on how not to behave in defense work.

Thus, when the DuBois Club came under attack from HUAC and the Subversive Activities Board, instead of building a broad defense movement along general civil liberties lines, their leaders called upon indignant individuals to join the DuBois Club as a sign of their protest. This not so clever gimmick may have given them a few temporary paper members, like Staughton Lynd, but it proved fatal to the formation of an adequate, expanding and correctly based movement.

It is possible and desirable to recruit in the process of a defense campaign, as we and others have done many times. But this accrues as a byproduct, an accessory result, of a properly conducted and constituted case, not as a direct and explicit demand of the defense.

The Maoist-minded Progressive Labor contingent has shown itself to be as inept as the Khrushchevists they belabor. When the leaders of the student delegation to Cuba were indicted on alleged passport violations, they proved utterly incapable of organizing a nation-wide defense movement around a popular issue. Contrast that default with the accomplishment of the Committee to Aid the Bloomington Students. Fortunately, the defendants in the passport case had a first-rate lawyer in Leonard Boudin which enabled the case to be won in the courts.

Despite their political disagreements and organizational rivalries, these undergraduates of the Stalinist school display certain common characteristics in this area of activity. They are incurably sectarian and ultra-factional, determined to impose their own shibboleths and objectives and fearing close and loyal collaboration with other tendencies. We take no great satisfaction from their failures to pursue a correct or consistent course since they not only injure their own efforts but weaken the whole civil liberties front.

4.

Our general defense policy for the present period was formulated in the resolution adopted by the February 1950 plenum of the SWP National Committee on "The Capitalist Witch-hunt and How to Fight It." This was published in the March-April 1950 issue of Fourth International magazine.

Although written eighteen years ago at the beginning of the Cold War reaction and repression, it is not at all outdated in essentials. It remains a valid guide to the problems confronted in this domain today.

That document pointed out that the trends toward thought control and the police state were not episodic and peripheral but permanent and growing features of an imperialistic and militaristic monopoly capitalism in decay and at bay. It further

stated that "the objective of our party is the creation of a broad nation-wide defense movement, composed of all forces menaced by repression and devoted to the defense of all victims of reaction. Such a movement would revive on a higher level the spirit of class solidarity characterizing the pre-World War I Socialist and labor movement."

Such a movement has yet to be built, although circumstances for its emergence are riper than they were at that time. The need for united defense both in particular cases and permanent form remains and will become more urgent as the resurgent radicalism and antiwar sentiment mounts, the black liberation struggle intensifies and labor reawakens. As mass opposition grows, persecutions multiply.

These prospects make it incumbent upon younger comrades and friends to get better acquainted with our rich store of traditions, methods and ideas in this field. I hope this talk will help do this.

The Capitalist Witch-Hunt --- And How to Fight It

(Note: The following resolution was unanimously adopted by the February 1950 Plenum of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party.)

Since the close of the war for "the four freedoms" the American people have been subjected to unparalleled attacks upon their democratic rights. These attacks testify to the ever-sharpening conflict between the monopolist masters of the United States and the interests of the great majority. Determined at all costs to maintain their privileges, powers and profits against the unsatisfied demands of the masses for peace, security, equality and liberty, the representatives of Big Business are compelled to deprive the people of their hard-won rights, destroy democratic institutions and head toward transforming the nation into a police state.

These capitalist-inspired assaults upon civil rights directly threaten the very existence of democracy and the labor movement in the United States. They provide daily proof that the American people cannot preserve, enjoy or enhance their free-

doms unless they replace the dictatorship of the plutocracy with their own Workers and Farmers government.

The witch-hunt was planned and initiated by the highest agencies of the capitalist regime. It was unleashed in connection with the cold war under the pretext of eliminating the Stalinists as agents of a foreign power. This maneuver was facilitated by the fact that the Communist Party is so widely discredited, distrusted and detested as an apologist and tool of the counter-revolutionary Kremlin oligarchy.

But subsequent developments have unmistakably shown that the hue-and-cry against the CP was a prelude and cover for an all-out offensive against the basic rights of the entire American people. By now the thought-control system issuing from Washington has invaded almost every important department of American activity and affected the lives and liberties of the most diverse categories of citizens.

Public and private workers alike, teachers and students, scientists and writers, clergymen and lawyers, unemployed and

foreign-born have already been caught in the widening net of the witch-hunt.

Totalitarian Methods Used

The witch-hunters resort to a wide variety of reactionary methods and totalitarian techniques. They have instituted purges for opinion, political blacklists and frameup trials. They have done away with traditional safeguards of legal procedure by introducing the practices of conviction without hearings or trial; acceptance of the doctrine of "guilt by association"; presumption of guilt in the absence of proved innocence; and punishment of attorneys for the defense. They have developed the FBI into a far-flung secret political police, relying on stool-pigeons and paid informers.

They have pressed every branch of the government into their service. The administration conducts its purge by usurping unconstitutional powers by decree. Congress enacts anti-labor legislation like the Taft-Hartley Law and subsidizes odious investigating bodies like the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The courts levy fines and issue injunctions against labor organizations like the miners. Posing as champions of "law and order," the Attorney-General and FBI do not hesitate to flout the law by wiretapping, perjury, etc.

The two principal weapons of the witch-hunters have been Truman's loyalty program and the Smith "Gag" Act. The first proscribes organizations solely because of their views and penalizes their members and supporters by arbitrary administrative action. Organizations are placed on the Attorney-General's blacklist without notification, hearings, or specification of charges. There is no precedent in American history for such an official political blacklist which is borrowed from the "thought-control" arsenal of totalitarian states.

The government purge with its subversive blacklist has provided the inspiration, model and sanction for the entire campaign against civil rights.

The Smith "Gag" Act, first invoked in 1941 to imprison the 18 Trotskyists, has now been employed to stage a political trial and convict 11 leaders of the Communist Party. The upholding of the Stalinist convictions by the higher courts would considerably promote the government's aim to outlaw and suppress all minority political parties to its left.

The Aim — War and Fascism

All these measures serve to pave the way for still harsher legal and extra-legal moves against the rights and liberties of the American people. The monopolists and militarists are deliberately working with a twofold end in view.

First, they are perfecting plans to impose a totalitarian military dictatorship in the event of war. The drive of American imperialism toward world domination and its preparations for war against the Soviet Union require regimentation of American labor, militarization of the country, and the suppression of tendencies and voices critical of imperialist policies and practices.

Second, the witch-hunters are provoking mass hysteria against "reds" and against labor to create a political and psychological climate in which the most vicious ultra-reactionary ideas, forces and activities can operate with impunity. A series of incidents over the past year indicates how the atmosphere generated by the witch-hunt encourages and incites mob violence against blacklisted groups, Negroes, Jews, and union leaders. Most spectacular were the attacks on two Robeson concerts near Peekskill where the local press, police and officials collaborated with hoodlums and legionnaires to beat up

hundreds of people peacefully exercising their right to assemble.

The North witnessed an attack upon a white union organizer in Chicago who had invited Negro fellow unionists to his home; the South saw a reign of terror in Groveland, Florida, where the entire Negro community was driven out in fear of their lives.

This atmosphere has contributed to the renewal of murderous attempts on labor leaders, including the shooting of Victor Reuther, the placing of dynamite in the UAW headquarters in Detroit, the assassination of ILGWU organizer William Lurye in New York, etc.

The ultimate aim of the capitalist forces behind the witch-hunt is to stamp out all organized opposition to their autocratic rule. This means, above all, to cripple and crush the mighty labor organizations. The anti-union provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act are interwoven with its anti-communist clauses. The destruction of the unions cannot be decisively effected without eventual resort to fascism. Taft-Hartleyism, red-baiting, political blacklisting, thought-control, the instigation and protection of mob violence, race-hate are typical pre-fascist phenomena. They serve warning that the present witch-hunt is ploughing the ground and sowing the seeds for the future sprouting of outright fascist movements in the United States.

Role of the Union Bureaucracy

Only in the light of these circumstances is it possible to gauge the real role of the top union leaders and the full measure of their betrayal of the cause of democratic rights. Organized labor leagued with the Negro people and other minority groups can summon more than enough power and pressure to halt the onslaught of reaction. But the union officialdom has been unwilling and unable to mobilize these forces in a mighty protest movement.

The union bureaucrats cannot combat the enemies of civil rights because they support the main foreign and domestic policies which have produced the witch-hunt as well as the Truman administration which is its prime author and promoter. Moreover, they have themselves become indispensable cogs in the witch-hunting apparatus.

With rare exceptions, the union leaders either enthusiastically endorse the prosecution of the CP under the Smith Act or take a non-committal attitude toward it. Although formally on record against the Truman purge of government employees, they do not offer any vigorous opposition to its operations. They do not even put up a principled fight against the penetration of the purge system into private industry through political blacklisting, restricting and firings of union members in the plants.

Because of their commitment to State Department policy and tolerance of Truman's purge they are compelled to make one concession after another to the witch-hunters. Their resistance is actually reduced to occasional ineffective, half-hearted complaints against the most flagrant abuses and worst excesses of the drive against civil rights.

Far from heading a mass movement against the witch-hunters, the AFL and CIO officialdom is busy carrying out parallel purges of their opponents within the unions. Here the concern of the union bureaucracy for self-preservation meshes into the "cold-war" plans of U.S. imperialism and its political executives. The union leaders seek to cover up for their lack of fighting spirit against labor's foes and the failure of their policies to improve the workers' condition by an orgy of red-

baiting, not simply against the Stalinists, but against Trotskyists and other militants. They hope to forestall and stamp out all criticism in the ranks by a wild hue-and-cry against the "Commies," by penalties, intimidation and expulsions of union members and their spokesmen.

The AFL leadership has long been notorious for red-baiting. The new factor is the involvement of the CIO and the unrestrained participation of its top officials in the anti-red crusade. This came to a climax in the 1949 National CIO Convention where the Murray machine voted itself unprecedented centralized authority over all CIO affiliates; established discriminatory political conditions for full membership rights by barring "communists" from CIO national offices; ousted the United Electrical Workers and moved to expel other Stalinist-controlled unions.

The purge begun against the Stalinists is being extended to other individuals and groups disagreeing with the Murray machine or the anti-democratic actions bound up with its "CIO National Policy." The crudest application of this purge is taking place in the National Maritime Union where Curran's machine has instituted loyalty pledges, resorted to large-scale expulsions, trampled on the elementary rights of the members and even called in the cops to suppress the majority opposition in New York. Similar purges and unconstitutional expulsions have occurred in the AFL maritime unions, the SUP on the West Coast and the SIU on the East Coast.

The bureaucrats are abusing their complete control of the union apparatus, the hiring hall and the closed-shop, not only to deprive critical union members of their democratic rights, but also of their jobs.

Thus the struggle to maintain democracy inside the trade unions against the bureaucracy is directly linked with the struggle against the witch-hunters on a national scale.

Treachery of the Stalinist Leaders

Although the main target of the anti-red drive, the Stalinist leaders have followed a no less perfidious policy in the field of civil rights than have the AFL and CIO officialdom. In 1941 the CP applauded the prosecution of the 18 Trotskyists in Minneapolis under the Smith Act which provided the precedent for their own trial and conviction in 1949. This conduct in turn has given union officials a precedent and plausible pretext for turning their backs upon Stalinist victims of the witch-hunt. Where the Stalinists have sought support beyond their own circles they have found themselves confronted with their rotten record of civil rights, and especially their denial of support to the Trotskyists.

The apologists for the totalitarian rule and countless crimes of the Kremlin find it difficult to come forward as exponents of democracy either in foreign affairs or in the trade unions. The Stalinist controlled unions are notorious for their lack of democracy, bureaucratic practices, and suppression of free speech.

Even now while under severe repression, the Stalinist leaders continue their criminal behavior, although it harms their own defense and enormously discredits them before public opinion. They try to sabotage aid for James Kutcher and oppose a presidential pardon and restoration of civil rights to the 18 Trotskyists. They demonstrated at the national Bill of Rights Conference in New York in July 1949 that they preferred to blow up a promising united-front defense movement rather than support any demand for civil rights to their political opponents.

The American agents of the Kremlin have amply shown

that they cherish as little regard for the elementary duty of class solidarity and united action against the witch-hunt as the union leaders who follow the line of the State Department. Their symmetrical policies of denying support to political opponents reinforce each other, helps the forces of repression, and weakens the fight against them.

Growing Resistance to the Witch-Hunt

The American people have a firm attachment to democratic principles and glorious traditions of fighting for them. Over the past year there have been multiplying signs of resentment against the witch-hunters and a growing resistance to their attacks on civil rights.

The disclosures in connection with the Coplon trial that J. Edgar Hoover's secret political police was operating a huge network of paid informers and stoolpigeons, invading the private lives of many citizens and breaking the law by widespread wiretapping have called forth protests from prominent public figures, metropolitan newspapers, and even U.S. Senators.

Numerous leading educators, learned societies and professional groups have criticized the encroachments on academic freedom arising from loyalty tests, red-hunts, and the drive for ideological conformity. Presidents and faculties of universities in California, Illinois, New York and elsewhere have vigorously spoken out for free thought and free expression in the face of attempts to saddle their institutions with loyalty tests. This opposition stopped the textbook-burning plans of the House Un-American Committee.

The National Conference of the NAACP took a strong stand against the entire witch-hunt as an instrument of racial as well as political discrimination. The National Civil Rights Mobilization conference at Washington this January grew out of the distrust and impatience of the Negro people at the failure to enact civil rights legislation.

Among the most encouraging manifestations of the determination to combat the loyalty purge has been the broad range of backing behind James Kutcher's case. Outstanding representatives of almost every section of the American people menaced by the thought-controllers have come forward to support his campaign, including hundreds of national, state and local unions.

The volume of protest has become so loud and the alarm among many of his liberal supporters so acute that Truman has had to issue soothing hypocritical assurances that the "hysteria" his administration fosters will soon die out.

"Critical" Supporters and Opponents

Two different attitudes toward the witch-hunt can be observed among the liberals. On the right, the Social Democrats inspired by the New Leader philosophy and other Trumanites have eagerly participated in the anti-communist campaign, although now and then deprecating certain "excesses" of its overzealous executors. These elements prefer a purge limited for the present to the Stalinists.

But the direct agents of the monopolists and militarists pay no heed to such reservations but take advantage of the red-scare and cold war propaganda to proceed against all opponents of their policies. They are even using the Hiss verdict to smear highly placed figures in the witch-hunting administration itself as dupes or tools of the "reds."

Against these collaborators with the witch-hunters stands another group of more militant and consistent liberals, a num-

ber of them associated with the Wallace movement, who are genuinely concerned over the drive toward a police-state and have proved willing to defend the rights of all victims of the repression, regardless of their political ideas or affiliations. It was these non-Stalinist liberals and Wallaceites who opposed the Stalinists and joined with SWP representatives at the national Bill of Rights Conference and elsewhere to uphold the principled position of defending civil rights for all.

Moreover, numerous members, unionists and sympathizers of the CP have balked against accepting the shameful and suicidal Stalinist line.

All these forces rising to resist the imposition of thought control upon America provide the basis for building a powerful united front mass movement dedicated to the preservation and extension of civil liberties.

Capitalism, Stalinism and Democracy

Pointing to Stalinism as the horrible example, the propagandists of Big Business assert that socialism means slavery and that maintenance of the so-called "free-enterprise" capitalist system is the sole guarantee for preserving liberty in America. They are guilty of a double lie. First of all, the capitalist rulers and their henchmen who are carrying on the witch-hunt are the chief enemies of civil liberties and labor's rights today in the United States.

In the second place, Stalinism is not only anti-democratic but anti-socialist to the core. Stalinist totalitarianism flows from the irreconcilable hostility of the Soviet bureaucracy and its agents to the program and advocates of socialism.

The real situation is quite different. From the stand-points of both democracy and socialism, there are many bonds of identity between imperialism and Stalinism. Despite their different social bases, the destruction of democracy, either through the witch-hunts of the capitalists or the police-state methods of the Stalinists, have a common source in the concern for the perpetuation of the powers and interests of privileged groupings and their fear of the masses. That is why the imperialists and Stalinists can so often and easily join hands and align themselves against the interests of the people.

On the other hand, a movement which defends the welfare of the people and has no interests separate or apart from them, has no reason either to fear the masses or hesitate to submit everything to their judgment and decision. The struggle for emancipation from capitalist domination and all forms of servitude can be most easily and effectively conducted under conditions of the greatest freedom for the masses. That is why, while recognizing the inherent limitations of freedom under capitalist rule and in class society, revolutionary socialists have always demanded the widest possible democracy and have everywhere been in the forefront of all struggles for the defense and extension of the liberties of the people.

Today the intensified reactionary offensive against civil rights and the free functioning of the trade unions makes the struggle against the capitalist witch-hunters the urgent task of every worker and every individual concerned with the advancement of American society.

Unconditional Defense of All Victims

The cardinal rule of this struggle must be the unconditional defense of all victims of reactionary repression and united opposition to every restriction upon democratic rights. "An injury to one is an injury to all." Toleration or support to the infringement of the rights of any group or individual em-

boldens the witch-hunters and opens the way for further assaults upon others.

The Stalinists have provided a memorable lesson of the dangers arising from violating working class democracy and the principle of class solidarity. They began by breaking up meetings of political opponents; then refused to defend their opponents against persecution; and finally called upon capitalist authorities, including the FBI, to act against their opponents. These disreputable deeds have not only boomeranged against them but inflicted great damage in the entire field of labor defense by nullifying unity of action and handing the union bureaucracy an excuse for a parallel line of conduct.

Despite our irreconcilable differences, despite the crimes committed against our movement and the interests of labor by the Stalinists, we Trotskyists have invariably supported Stalinist victims of repression and called upon the rest of the working class to do the same. We follow this policy, not out of agreement with the Stalinists or in remission of their crimes, but solely because of our unwavering adherence to the principle of class solidarity.

SWP Champions Solidarity Policy

Our party has become the banner-bearer and outstanding practitioner of this policy in the United States. We have consistently come to the aid of all victims of reaction, not only here but abroad. We have defended conscientious objectors, Jehovah's Witnesses, Puerto Rican Nationalists, foreign-born workers, Anarchists, liberal clergymen, teachers, scientists, writers and magazines threatened by censorship, civil service employees and many others. We have initiated and participated in many significant struggles to protect persecuted minorities like the Negroes, Mexicans and Jews, as in the Fontana, California case, the Hickman defense in Chicago, the Freeport case in New York, in Minneapolis, Los Angeles and elsewhere we have taken the lead in mobilizing labor and its allies to defend themselves against the threatened fascist violence of Gerald L. K. Smith.

In Detroit and other industrial centers our members and sympathizers helped set in motion imposing union protest demonstrations against the Taft-Hartley Law. Within the unions the Trotskyists have been steadfast fighters against any restrictions upon internal democracy and the rights of the membership, whether they emanated from the official bureaucracy or the Stalinists.

Notably around the Minneapolis Trial and the Kutcher case we have participated in and supported powerful national movements against the Smith Gag Act and Truman's loyalty purge.

This proud record has attracted many militants toward our party and won it a growing reputation as a sincere and principled defender of democratic rights.

Liberals, labor officials and the Stalinists often call upon the government and its agencies for action against ultra-reactionary elements. Jewish groups, for example, request the Post Office Department to ban anti-Semitic literature from the mails. Defaming the Trotskyists as agents of fascism, the Stalinists during the war demanded the suppression of **The Militant**, etc.

No Dependence on Capitalist State

The working class and the minorities must vigorously oppose every transgression upon their civil and constitutional rights, from whatever quarter they come, and utilize every

safeguard provided by law. But they cannot entrust the protection of their liberties to the capitalist regime or expect the powers-that-be to stop or eradicate the menace of fascism.

First, the government itself today spearheads the assault upon the people's rights. The President orders the loyalty purge; Congress passes anti-labor legislation; the courts levy fines and issue injunctions against the unions. Second, the capitalist parties work hand in glove with white supremacists in the South and the Big Business enemies of labor in the North who are behind the witch-hunt.

Third, the authorities have time and again demonstrated by their action and inaction their lack of interest in punishing or removing the perpetrators of violence against the Negroes, the unions and the liberties of the people. Neither the Federal or State governments convict any lynchers in the South. Nor have the officials displayed much zeal in uncovering the murderous assailants of Carlo Tresca, William Lurye, the Reuthers, and other labor figures.

Government Shields Fascist Elements

On the contrary, the capitalist state apparatus screens and shields fascist forces and collaborates closely with them. In Peekskill the local authorities and police connived in the attacks by the mobsters and hoodlums; Governor Dewey's investigators whitewashed their role; and the entire paid press tried to unload responsibility for the violence upon the "reds."

Even when, under pressure, government officials pretend to move against mobsters and Ku Kluxers, they only make theatrical gestures to appease outraged public opinion without actually punishing the real criminals. For every slight tap the capitalist agencies offer the right, they deliver a hundred harsh blows against the left. This has been illustrated by the Smith Act. While the 30 Fascists indicted under this Act in wartime were left off scot-free, the Trotskyists and Stalinists were convicted and given heavy jail sentences.

The same procedure has been followed in the loyalty purge. While the Attorney-General's blacklist includes a few fascist groups, in practice it is almost entirely applied against members of leftist organizations. The U.S. Department of Defense has given away the whole game by omitting the Ku Klux Klan, Silver Shirts and similar fascist outfits from its own subversive list applied to draftees.

"Under conditions of a capitalist regime," Trotsky once wrote, "all curtailment of political rights and freedoms, no matter against whom they may be originally directed, in the end inevitably fall with all their weight on the working class—especially on its most advanced elements."

How to Fight Fascism

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

The menace of fascism does not arise from their propaganda but from their gangsterism, their mob attacks upon advanced workers, Negroes, and labor organizations. With tacit acquiescence of the authorities, the fascists operate as extralegal agencies of repression against the institutions and freedoms of the working class and minorities. Consequently, the

real situation is that the labor organizations and minorities are obliged to act in self-defense to protect themselves against reactionary violence.

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

Organized labor has the ability as well as the duty to assume the leadership in this struggle. The trade unions are not only the chief bulwarks of democracy and the centers of proletarian power; they are likewise the main target of the capitalist authors of the witch-hunt whose ultimate objective is the destruction of the labor movement. The anti-labor campaign and anti-red hysteria are inseparable aspects of the monopolist drive toward the establishment of a police state in this country. Thus the defense of civil liberties is a life-and-death matter for American labor.

Without full democracy and freedom of expression inside the unions, they cannot effectively fulfill their tasks of defending the welfare of the workers and leading the struggle against reaction. Thus the fight for union democracy is directly interlinked with the general struggle for civil liberties.

Program and Perspective

The objective of our party is the creation of a broad nationwide defense movement, composed of all forces menaced by repression and devoted to the defense of all victims of reaction. Such a movement would revive on a higher level the spirit of class solidarity characterizing the pre-World War I Socialist and labor movements.

It is both possible and necessary to join together extensive forces on a national and local scale in common defense actions around specific issues and cases, as the experience in the Kutcher case and the demonstrations against Gerald Smith indicate. The militants should be on the alert to propose and initiate such united front actions, participate in them with all available resources, guide them along correct lines and imbue them with the maximum strength.

The Truman administration and its liberal spokesmen spread the illusion that the present wave of repression is the result of a temporary hysteria which will soon run its course and automatically exhaust itself. The workers should not permit themselves to be duped by this deliberate lie.

The trends toward thought-control and the police state spring from the most profound and urgent needs of the monopolist and militarist rulers of U.S. capitalism. Washington has organized and carried forward the loyalty purge and its associated prosecutions in the most planned and methodical manner. The witch-hunters do not intend to relax their persecutions but to intensify and extend them, if they can get away with it.

The repressive measures are not an episodic phase or transitory phenomenon but a permanent feature of decaying capitalism. The only way to stop the witch-hunters and their assaults is to create and set into motion a mighty mass opposition to them and to carry through the struggle against capitalist reaction to its logical conclusion in the establishment of a Workers' and Farmers' government, genuinely representing the people's interests.

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