

Is Russia a Socialist Community?

The 1950 Max Shachtman-Earl Browder Debate

Editor's Preface

Max Shachtman was perhaps the most brilliant and original socialist thinker America ever produced. He helped to found the Communist Party and the Young Communist League; he was a delegate to Congresses of the Communist International in Moscow in 1925 and 1927; he edited the *Daily Worker*. Expelled from the Communist Party in 1928 (with James P. Cannon and James Burnham), Shachtman founded the Communist League, later the Socialist Workers Party. For years he was a prominent leader in the international Trotskyist movement, and represented Trotsky at the founding congress of the Fourth International. After Trotsky's death, Shachtman became the administrator of his literary estate.

After breaking with Trotsky in 1940, Shachtman founded the Worker's Party, later the Independent Socialist League (ISL). The ISL pursued a strategy of "independent socialism" based on a "third camp" counterposed to Stalinism and capitalism. The split with Trotsky was the result of a debate over the character of the Soviet Union. Shachtman took the position that the Stalinist regime represented a new social system, neither capitalism nor socialism, in which the Soviet bureaucracy represented a new ruling class. He called this new order "bureaucratic collectivism."

During the 1950's the ISL began to develop a strategy of "regroupment" on the Left, aiming to create a broad, Debsian mass organization which would encompass every tendency within the socialist Left. Efforts to unify with the Socialist Workers Party and other groups failed. By 1958, most of the ISL members decided to join the Socialist Party, headed by Norman Thomas. Shachtman's influence within the Party grew, and in 1968 his group—the Realignment Caucus—won a majority in the Party. It aimed to have the Socialists play a role in the Democratic Party. Shachtman's student, and former Chairman of the ISL's youth section, Michael Harrington, was elected the Socialist Party's National Chairman.

Shachtman died in 1972 in the midst of a major factional battle that ripped the Socialists apart. At the time of his death, he was working on a history of the Communist International.

The debate which follows shows Shachtman at his finest. It also seeks to answer a question which is increasingly being asked, particularly in the European left: "Is Russia a Socialist Community?" The debate itself took place on March 30, 1950, and was held in Webster Hall in New York City. The debate was sponsored by the Eugene V. Debs Society of Brooklyn College, whose president, Victor Kaplan, opened the meeting with a brief address and introduced the chairman of the debate, C. Wright Mills, at the time a Professor of Sociology at Columbia University. The text which follows is reprinted from the May-June 1950 issue of *The New Internationalist*, which is in turn taken from a tape recording made of the debate. Unfortunately, the final section of the tape, containing Browder's three-minute sur-rebuttal, was defective, and only the first word is audible.

The debate was reprinted in full in the French revolutionary syndicalist journal *Revolution Proletarienne* in August, 1950, and appeared as a pamphlet in India.

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And now, the debate.

Eric Lee

Introduction by Irving Howe

An editor of the New International Review phoned to ask whether I could write an introduction to a reprint of the Shachtman-Browder debate of almost thirty years ago. No, I couldn't; no time. But then I remembered that in a book I'm writing these days, a kind of political-cultural narrative in which I figure as seeing eye, there is a brief account of this debate. It's not an "objective" account and, given the kind of book I'm writing, it brings in its author more than would be seemly in an "objective" account. But for this, perhaps, I may be forgiven. My account of the debate forms part of a larger section dealing with the pain of a small, anti-Stalinist, left-wing group during its years of disintegration after the Second World War. Here are the two pages about the debate itself:

Even in its doldrums, the movement offered a few pleasures and intellectuals gains. One pleasure we shared in 1950. Earl Browder, the leader of the American Communist Party, had been expelled after the war once international Stalinism took a "leftward" turn. This drab, owlish man suddenly found himself cut off from his familiar milieu, a leader without followers. He had once been a powerful figure, advisor to influential unionists, recipient of weighty messages from Moscow, honored

with wild applause when he appeared at Communist mass meetings. Now he had half a dozen followers who came to meetings with their leaflets, just like any other miserable sect. We challenged Browder to debate Max Shachtman, the head of our group, and Browder rashly agreed—though as leader of the CP he would never have even answered our letter. The world at large went about its business, oblivious to this event, but for everyone on the left it held a blazing interest: it was our first chance to engage in a confrontation, face to face, with this detested spokesman of Stalinism!

We sat about for a few days in our dingy 14th Street headquarters talking about Shachtman's speech. I'm sure he had it all clear in his mind, but like other, more powerful leaders, he pretended to uncertainty in the hope some of us would come up with an idea. I came up with one, the suggestion that he treat Browder as if he, Browder, were one of the East European Communist leaders slated for show-trial and purge. It struck a chord.

The evening of the debate, chaired with reasonable impartiality (as much as flesh could bear...) by the sociologist C. Wright Mills, some 1200 people crowded into a hall, most of them one or another sort of anti-Stalinist. They were eager for blood, metaphorically speaking. Browder spoke in his usual leaden style, the slow drawl of a pedantic schoolteacher, and periodically he would glance up to the balcony, as if to savor once again the cheers of the party faithful. But no cheers came, neither solace nor fix. It was a tonic experience for Browder, this shock of the common fate—perhaps his later efforts at some independent thought were stimulated by the drubbing he took that evening. Shachtman, a virtuoso debater, spoke with repressed fury, as if years of waiting for this moment had enabled a rare discipline. Mounting to a tremulous climax, he started reciting the names of Stalin's victims, leaders of the Polish Communist Party, leaders of the Bulgarian, the Rumanian, the Hungarian, the Czech, all victims of frame-up, all shot in obscure cellars—but there's a sudden interruption, he has gone past his time, and chairman Mills, trying hard to be fair, asks him to sit down. Shachtman brushes him aside, no mere rules are going to interfere with *this* climax. His list of victims concluded, Shachtman turns sharply toward Browder, stretches a finger of accusation, and cries out: "There but for an accident of geography stands a corpse!" The effect is terrifying: Browder turns ashen. As Shachtman sits down he notices me at the press table and winks—his only way of acknowledging his debt. It's enough, that wink, now and forever: one of the best moments of my life. On such symbolic victories, if so you agree to call them, we managed to subsist.

Text of the Debate

Introduction by Chairman C. Wright Mills

Ladies and Gentlemen: I am happy to say that neither of the speakers that we are going to hear tonight in any way represents the official line of U.S. ideology toward the Soviet Union. This does not insure, but I think that it does make possible, and perhaps even more likely, that what they have to say separately and particularly when taken together may enlighten our understanding of what is going on in the world, and particularly those portions of it that are now within the Russian zone.

There is no need for me to introduce either of the speakers. You know Mr. Earl Browder, former General Secretary of the Communist Party in the United States from 1930 to 1944, and Mr. Shachtman, Chairman of the Independent Socialist League. The topic that they are going to debate is, "Is Russia a Socialist Community?" And this debate will be organized in the following way, to which both speakers have agreed: Mr. Browder will speak for approximately 45 minutes on the affirmative. Mr. Shachtman will then speak for the same length of time for the negative. There will then be a few announcements by Mr. Kaplan, the president of the Debs Society, and then there will be rebuttals. Mr. Browder will speak then for about 20 minutes; Mr. Shachtman will speak for 25 minutes, and finally the debate will be ended by a statement by Mr. Browder not to exceed 5 minutes. That is the timing, which was not in my hands but was agreed to by both of the speakers, as I think is the usual manner of proceeding in these occasions. So without any further ado I give you Mr. Earl Browder on the affirmative: Mr. Browder.

Presentation by Earl Browder:

Ladies and gentlemen, friends: Is Russia a socialist community? This is the question presented by our sponsors tonight, the Eugene V. Debs society of Brooklyn College. I assume that you are not interested in the proper usage of words so much as in estimating the significance of the the new society in Russia for the world and for America in particular. I will discuss history, therefore, rather than philology. I speak for myself alone as a student of Marxism, and not on behalf of any organization. I address myself to those who seek the truth as the prime value in life. Now to our subject.

I am aware, of course, that some people deny the right of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics to use its own chosen name. They say it is not socialist because it does not conform to their preconception as to what socialism must be like. There are many varieties of socialism and there is little profit in disputes as to their right to use the name. The USSR has not asked our permission to use the name socialist. It has proclaimed itself a socialist country for about 33 years, has organized the new type of

economy under that name, and has achieved certain successes, for which it has paid a very heavy price. It sustained its right to existence as a socialist country by victory in the greatest of all wars.

Words are useful to explain history, but they have no primary role in determining history. On the contrary, it is history which determines the meaning of words. The only type of socialism existing in the world of fact as distinct from ideas is that of the USSR. You may like it or not, understand it or not—but there it is. It is a fact, a very important one. It is the course of prudence and wisdom to recognize facts and try to understand them. It is a question of history as to whether the new system in Russia which calls itself socialist is an entirely new variety of socialism or whether it realizes a pre-existing body of ideas identified by that name. Specifically, this is the question—whether the Russians are correct in claiming their new system as a realization of the body of ideas known as Marxism, or scientific socialism. This is a question the answer to which is capable of proof by reference to objective facts and not merely by citation of theories.

Marxism is an interpretation of history which explains the progress of society as a product of the expansion of the forces of production of the material means of life, that is, the development of economy. The stage of the development of the productive forces determines the political and ideological superstructure of society which are crystallized into a system of social organization. The social system grows rigid but the productive forces continue to expand, and conflict ensues between the forces of production and the social conditions of production. This conflict finally reaches a stage in which a fundamental change of the social conditions becomes necessary to bring them in harmony with the continued growth of production. This is the stage which produces revolution, a relatively brief period in history in which outmoded social forms are discarded and new ones are created which free the shackled productive forces for a new leap forward in their expansion.

Marxism traces this process in past history from the primitive tribal commune through slavery, feudalism, early capitalism in the form of simple artisan manufacturing, the rise of modern capitalism in power-driven machinery, and the final stage of capitalism marked by huge trusts and monopolies and the trend toward state capitalism, in which state power becomes the collective capitalist. Marxism conceives of the new system of socialism as the necessary outcome of all previous history made possible and necessary only by that previous history. Because capitalist society has expanded the productive forces so enormously, the social conditions under which it arose lag behind and become fetters holding back the further growth of productive forces.

Socialism is nothing more nor less than the social, political and ideological system which breaks the fetters upon economic growth created under capitalism and opens the way to a new period of economic and social expansion on a much larger scale. So long as bourgeois society, that is, capitalism, reigned supreme throughout the world and dominated the lands of free capitalist development, the dispute between various schools of thought was conducted primarily on the level of theory, that is, the struggle between ideas, as to which most correctly foreshadowed the next stage of development in history which had still not appeared in fact, in life.

But in 1917 the Russian Revolution introduced a new phase, that of testing theories in their practical application in life. Socialism was introduced as a living reality. It is now to be tested not only in theory, in the mind, in thought, but also by reference to fact, to objective reality, to the

real world. The question as to whether Russia is a socialist community is thus reduced to the question of fact, as to whether this new system has introduced a higher stage of economic development into the world. Since the new system has existed for one-third of a century, since it has overcome the challenges to its very existence, it may now be judged first of all by this test.

What do the facts show? Has the new system in Russia proved itself to be socialist in this Marxist sense by demonstrating a higher stage in the growth of the forces of production? In past history, it has not always been possible to give final proof of this nature in economics of the progressive character of great political changes so soon after such a change was initiated. American independence, for example, was judged by most European intellectuals throughout the 19th century as having condemned America to the status of a backward and uncivilized nation. Such a distinguished mind as that of Charles Dickens, for example, reporting on a personal visit of inspection to America, delivered the judgment of backwardness against it, which, if his premises were granted as being the decisive ones, was annihilatingly conclusive. Even American intellectuals suffered from a crippling sense of inferiority to Europe from which they have not entirely liberated themselves in 1950.

We know today, however, that Dickens and all who followed that line of judgment on America's role in world progress were profoundly mistaken. They were misled by exclusive preoccupation with secondary and irrelevant matters. Despite the handicap of lacking self-conscious understanding of her historical role, America was in the vanguard of political progress during the 19th century. What Dickens and his school of thought considered the root of American backwardness, namely, its deep cleavage from the older civilizations of Europe, was in fact the absolutely necessary precondition to realization of America's tremendous productive potentialities which finally made America the giant of the bourgeois world, the highest expression of productive forces under the now declining capitalist system. Liberation from Europe and its outmoded social and political system alone could and did clear the ground for the free development of America's potential productive forces. This was the foundation, the moving force of America's role in the vanguard of world progress throughout the 19th century. Everything else was secondary or irrelevant to this basic condition.

My central thesis in tonight's debate is that the role played by America in the 19th century in leading the development of the world's productive forces under capitalist society has passed to Russia in the 20th century in the development of the world's productive forces to a stage higher than capitalism, which is the foundation of socialism. The evidence which proves this thesis is known to all, even if it is still generally overlooked by Americans for much the same reasons that Dickens overlooked the American vanguard position in the 19th century, because of preoccupation with secondary matters.

The new system called socialism came to power in Russia about one-third of a century ago. It took over a backward, shattered and defeated country, the chief laggard among the great powers. It had been defeated and shattered precisely because of its backwardness, its huge heritage of medieval reaction that had crushed the potentialities of progress of its peoples for centuries, keeping its vast area and population outside the main current of historical progress. Under its new system called socialism, the Russian people and the smaller nationalities which had formerly composed the Russian Empire speedily forged ahead from last place among the great powers of

Europe and Asia to a position of unchallenged preeminence as the first. In the whole world, only the USA is today at all comparable in power and influence with the USSR. This radical transformation of world power relationships reflects primarily in the case of both the USA and the USSR the growth of the productive forces. Not only did the new socialist system overtake and surpass all other powers in Europe and Asia; in its rate of growth it has already surpassed America. In broad historical outline, this fact is seen in the span of 150 years required for the rise of America to its present position as one of the two world giants compared with the span of 30 years required by the USSR to make the same transition.

Let us bring this broad historical fact into closer focus and examine some of its details. Let us compare the highest rates of economic growth measured in decades of the two great powers as exhibited in manufacturing production, the heart of modern economics.

In the five decades of the 20th century, American economy experienced only two periods of relatively rapid expansion. These were concentrated in the ten years 1914-1924 and the similar period of 1938-1948. In the first, volume of manufacture rose from an index of 100 to 266, about one and two-thirds times; and in the second, when the similar index figures were 100 and 180, something less than double. These are the decades of maximum growth of American manufacturing industrial production.

The new socialist economy system went into full operation in the USSR in 1928 with the inauguration of the Five Year Plan. In the ensuing decade of 1928-1938 the growth of production in manufacturing industry is measured by the index figures of 100 and 700, a sevenfold increase, or more than four times the high American rate of the decade of 1914-1924. During the following decade of 1938-1948, Soviet socialist economy suffered the most extreme disruption and destruction ever visited upon any country in modern times through the invasion of Hitler's army. It lost about 40 per cent of its industrial area where its oldest industries were located, and when the enemy was driven out everything had been systematically destroyed, down to the individual dwellings. Its entire economy had to be switched to war production and entirely subordinated to war economy. The country went on to a military subsistence basis. Direct war losses exceeded the total capital value of the country in 1928.

Yet the socialist economy overcame these war losses and reached the end of the decade in 1948 with a net growth over 1938 of about 60 per cent, that is in the same general scale of magnitude experienced in America during the period without direct war devastation. When allowance is made for replacement of direct war losses, it is clear that the rate of growth of socialist manufacturing industry was even greater than in the previous decades.

In the light of this evidence, if the proposition is valid that the growth of productive forces is the basis for progress, then the new system in Russia called socialism is the most progressive that history has ever produced. This is progress on a hitherto unknown level. It is revolutionary progress. The economy of the USSR has satisfied the basic test of socialism that is set up by the theory of Marx and Engels in full and in a relatively short historical span of time.

Our newspapers and magazines tell us in a thousand variations that Soviet production figures are mere Potemkin villages built by Bolshevik propaganda. It is true, of course, that statistics can be falsified. But Soviet statistics of production were confirmed in resistance to the Nazi invasion backed up by the industry of conquered Europe. Modern war is first of all

a battle of production. When Hitler lost the war, those who denied the validity of Soviet production records lost their argument. Artillery, planes and tanks were the direct means whereby the war was won. Such things as modern armaments, including atom bombs, do not come from falsified statistics. They are produced only by modern industry with the highest technique, with the most highly skilled labor, and with the most advanced and socially organized science. For all these things have come into existence so recently and so rapidly; and so little was inherited from a previous stage of development, they prove the existence of a progressive society of the highest order able to readjust itself quickly to changing social problems and conditions. They presuppose a rapidly rising standard of literacy and education, stable and improving conditions of life for the masses and the other most necessary accompaniments of progress. They guarantee continued peacetime progress.

Many Americans fail to correlate the different parts of their thinking. They believe simultaneously that the USSR is powerful and that it is backward and unprogressive. But a backward, unprogressive nation cannot become powerful. A nation that has become powerful can turn blackly reactionary. That is what happened to Germany under Hitler and might happen to America to the same full extent if the American people do not stop the progress.

But if Russia under her new system was really as pictured by official American propaganda today, or by my opponent, she could no more master all the elements of economic progress and develop them to a higher stage than could Chiang Kai-shek in China. Political reaction puts a halt to all progress, as American science is feeling so keenly today under the hysteria of the current Red scare. Political reaction results in a decline of power, not its rise. Reaction can only loot the treasures produced by the past but cannot create new ones.

It is true that the economic progress of the new socialist system is not fully translated at once into the abundance of the luxuries of life. Life remains hard and austere in Russia. The main bulk of the economic gains go to the support and development of three phases of Soviet life which are not included in the average American's conception of the good life. These are, first, the expansion of the means of production, that which in capitalist America we call accumulation of capital and in which the average citizen here plays no conscious part. Second, an enormous expansion and intensification of public education in science. And third, the guarantee of national security by a military establishment able to meet all possible dangers. From the point of view of the Soviet peoples, these three are the supreme necessities of life, and their satisfaction by the new socialist system is the final proof to them of its superiority. If these things had not been always their first consideration, the result would have been that Hitler would today be ruling them and the world. They are, therefore, willing to wait a while for fine clothes, rich foods, refrigerators and radios in every home, and all those lighter amenities of life which make up the popular concept of good living that has been created for America, not so much by their enjoyment directly by the people as by the influence of Hollywood movies.

The cold war that rages between the USA and the USSR hinges primarily around the American refusal to recognize the Soviet requirements of national security, and as this cold war has developed it has become an official American policy, a crusade to halt the spread of socialism in other countries. The world is being organized in two blocs between which there is con-

stantly diminishing practical contact and understanding. This is the major problem for America and the world today. The cold war is bringing more hardships to the American people, and if not halted may well bring catastrophes, if not of war itself, then of economic crisis which might be almost as damaging.

It is folly to expect to solve the cold war by preaching the desirability of socialism to America. But it is an essential contribution to bringing this war to an end, to spread a more realistic understanding of what the new socialist system really is, and the facts about the relationship of forces between the socialist and capitalist parts of the world. It is certainly not impossible to rouse and organize an effective public opinion that will demand and secure a halt to and eventually a settlement of the cold war. But mutual vilification of Russia and America certainly is not a serious contribution to anything, not even to a real struggle between the two.

I must sadly admit that I have no complete blueprint for achieving peace between Soviet socialism and American capitalism. But I do know what are some of the essential conditions for such a peace. First of all, I know what all America is slowly beginning to recognize, that war as a method of attempting to settle the disputes involved has become entirely impractical for either side. A military decision of the rivalry between capitalism and socialism is impossible. No one can win a war of world proportions. War was scientifically defined in former times as the continuation of policy by military means. But this definition is no longer accurate. A major war today makes sense for no conceivable policy. It means only a collapse of policy. The advance of military technique has reached the point at which between major powers it can bring only mutual extermination of mass populations. Between the major camps in the world there exists a military stalemate. If there is not to be war, then peace must be organized.

The Trotskyite slogan of neither war nor peace was always stupid. But today it serves the suicidal war party to quiet the people while moving surreptitiously toward war. There is no condition of peace in the world until its main terms in state relationships have been defined and generally accepted. The terms of such a peace cannot be dictated by either side of the present cold war, and America must understand that it is impossible to deny to the USSR those measures of security which the USSR considers essential and already has the power to take over by her own unilateral action if necessary. Among these measures are the elimination of Germany and Japan as bases for possible hostilities against the USSR. It may be difficult for Americans, who have not experienced hostile armies on our soil since the War of 1812 with England, to understand the importance of this to Russia, who suffered major attacks from her neighbors twice in one generation. For our own good, we should make an effort of the imagination as to what lengths America would go, placed in a similar situation, to guarantee that Germany and Japan would not be able to invade a third time.

A defined peace settlement between the great powers is thus a *modus vivendi*, a way of living together without war between antagonistic systems. It is no refutation of this idea to say that the two systems are irreconcilable. America herself was founded on two irreconcilable systems within the body of a single nation, the system of commodity production by free labor, and the system of slavery, with an unstable and explosive *modus vivendi* between them. The terms of such a problem were very fully explored in American history, where for several generations the central theme of wisdom and statesmanship was to maintain this *modus vivendi*, to reconcile

the irreconcilable. Without this wisdom and statesmanship of early American leaders, the American continent would have been Balkanized for a century, and world progress would have received a major setback. It would have been historic folly and irresponsibility to demand a showdown settlement between the two systems as a condition for establishment of the United States as a single nation. It will be equally folly and irresponsibility to demand the final conflict between capitalism and socialism as the condition for the establishment of a functioning United Nations organization under a defined peace settlement.

As matters stand now, America is losing battle after battle of the cold war. This fact, after several years in which our statesmen and newspapers assured us of victory after victory, is now being generally recognized. So long as the USA was supposed to be winning the cold war, we were assured that peace was not necessary. Now that the USA is admittedly losing the cold war, we are told that peace must wait until the US is winning again. According to these formulae from our supposedly wise men, the time to make peace will never come, until the Soviet Union runs up the white flag and agrees to accept a counsellor appointed by Washington. If King George III had adopted a similar position toward revolting American colonies in the last years of the 19th century, he would have been much more realistic than the present American attitude toward the Soviet Union which was never our colony—and may I predict never will be? King George III knew when he was licked, and signed a peace treaty, which did not prevent Great Britain from enjoying some years of prosperity thereafter. And today the British themselves, in accepting largesse from America, congratulate us on having won the War of Independence, proving thereby that the political passions of a historical moment do not last forever.

The main problem of the world today is peace. This problem has different connotations for different countries. For much of Europe the struggle for peace has become indissolubly united in the immediate struggle for socialism. In America the struggle for peace has an immediacy that is not shared by the issue of socialism. For America the realization of these two goals is not to be achieved at the same time, even though both are a part of the same continuous historical process. In America all adherents of socialism have the duty to fight for peace as a form of co-existence of the two systems, capitalism and socialism. It is fortunately a fact that the leaders and spokesmen of the new socialist system in the Soviet Union clearly recognize the historical necessity for a long-term peaceful co-existence of the two systems, organized in business-like and mutually beneficial relations between the states involved, as a basic component of Soviet policy. This fact is itself further evidence of the socialist, in the Marxist sense, character of the new system in Russia. Socialism developed on Marxist principles is essentially peaceful. It has no urge toward war, and finds no profit in it. It justifies and supports wars of national liberation, and wars of defense against reactionary invasion. It does not justify war as an instrument for the spread of socialism to unwilling and unprepared peoples and nations. Socialism is not a commodity for export and import. Socialism cannot be imposed on the points of bayonets. Socialism must be firmly grounded in the material conditions and the history of each major nation before it can be realized there. Socialism requires the free choice of conscious people as the main condition for its realization. These are fundamental principles of the Marxist theory of socialism, and these principles are deeply imbedded in the new society that has arisen in Russia under the

banner of Marx and his disciples.

What conditions does America, continuing under capitalism, require from a peace settlement in order that it shall be mutually beneficial to both sides? What America needs above all, without the slightest doubt, is to have markets for the surplus products of her industry and fields of investment for surplus capital, both of which far exceed the capacity of the domestic market. That is indeed the aim of the cold war, to obtain such markets by conquest and subjugation, by all means of coercion short of shooting war and by the threat of shooting war. This type of market is the traditional one of the past, but it is no longer possible to achieve. Markets on the scale America requires can only be organized by agreement, not seized by power. Such markets must be mutually beneficial to all the peoples involved, not merely to America. Such markets cannot be gained by crusading against socialism, but only by cooperating with socialism, which must be an essential and growing part of those markets. The cold war, or any conceivable hot war, cannot produce the needed markets for America. But a durable peace with the socialist part of the world can and will do so. Peace, and only peace, will open up the markets of the world on a new and larger scale than ever before—the rise of socialism has enlarged the world market, not diminished it—once America is ready to make peace with socialism, instead of trying to wipe it out.

One of the most confusing things about our American ruling class in modern times is its habit, when it is about to embark upon some historic line of development, to firmly proclaim to the world its determination to do the exact opposite. Thus, at the opening of the 20th century, America adopted the Sherman anti-trust law, which declared trusts and monopolies in industry to be outside the law, to be destroyed. This step initiated a period of the most feverish growth of the greatest trusts and monopolies the world has ever seen. The more these monopolies dominate American life, all the more does the American bourgeoisie pledge its allegiance to the ideology of free enterprise, of which monopolies are the negation.

When the Second World War was shaping up, and during its first period of the phony war, it was certain that America would be in it. The only uncertainty was which side America would be on. The American ruling class solemnly and emphatically proclaimed neutrality in its determination not to join the war under any conditions. The rule seems to be that the American bourgeoisie firmly and resolutely faces the past and then moves into the future by backing up. Under this rule, we may possibly assume the present war-like attitude of the American bourgeoisie really represents its preparation to move into peace, backward as usual. We may say of this method, not that it is the best one, but that it is better to make progress by moving backward than not to make progress at all. The technique of backing into the future is possible only for an established ruling class with a great apparatus of power under its control. It is not at all suitable for a democratic mass movement of the people, the leadership of which must make crystal-clear the immediate objectives for which it fights. It is a fatal weakness for a democratic mass movement to permit any ambiguity in the definition of its immediate goals.

In the fight for peace and the mobilization of the American masses for peace, we may set the immediate goal as the establishment of peaceful co-existence of two systems, or we may declare that peace can be achieved only by establishing socialism in America. The first aim, properly, energetically and intelligently pursued, has the possibility of raising a powerful peace

movement in America that will influence the course of history. The second course, while it has much lower potentialities of immediate power and influence, is at least intelligible even if mistaken in its judgment.

But to try to combine both aims in one single mass movement, as seems to be taking place in America, produces nothing but chaos, confusion and disunity among the masses. It produces a combination of the weakest sides of both approaches and loses the strength of both. It produces a movement of the limited aim of the first and the limited mass influence of the second. It is a sterile hybrid. That is why in America we have the most tremendous, diffused and unorganized peace sentiments and aspirations but the most pitifully weak organized mass movement for peace. Only political idiots can believe that socialism can be smuggled into America, that this country can be backed into socialism, maneuvered into a fundamentally new system of society without its own knowledge. There are such idiots, of course, on both the Right and Left, and their influence makes of American politics a bedlam of confused babbling. They dominate the newspaper headlines, even if not the thinking of the country. They run the party machines, they write the slogans of the day.

But when socialism comes to America, it will not be through the back door. It will come only when a Marxist party, having won the confidence of the working class through its correct leadership in the struggle for all progressive measures short of socialism, is able further to convince the majority of the country that socialism, that is, the social ownership and operation of the means of production, has become necessary also in America. Are there steps which the country takes toward socialism without knowing it? Yes, of course, there are. Everything of a progressive nature is a step toward socialism. Even the building of every new great modern factory is a step toward socialism. If Mr. Taft and Mr. Dewey want to halt all steps toward socialism, they will have to pass a law against the building of modern industry. These are the most powerful steps toward socialism that are being taken in America today.

But a socialist society is not created by steps toward socialism. Socialism is a result of conscious social building, planned and conducted by the organized workers who have won political power and supported by the majority of the population. There are no short cuts and no new routes by which America can reach socialism. Every country must find its own path and its own forms for the transitions of history, but in the finding of its own path and its own forms, it will be working out the universal laws of social development, and it will not be going in violation of those laws, which are the laws of science, not the decrees of some political authority.

Yes, the new system of social organization in Russia, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, is socialist, the kind of socialism of which Marx and Engels conceived as the inevitable product of historical progress. We in America have much to learn from it as the first manifestation of socialism in life, in history. We will learn, however, through thinking, and not through imitation. Those who wish us to imitate the Soviet Union would follow the method of the old chicken farmer who, to encourage his hens to lay bigger and better eggs, hung the egg of an ostrich above their nests on which was a placard reading: "Look at this and do your best." That system does not work with chickens; it will not work with men.

Chairman Mills:

Mr. Max Shachtman will now speak for the same length of time. Mr. Shachtman.

Presentation by Max Shachtman

Mr. Chairman, comrades and friends: I have been waiting for an occasion like this for a long time—more than twenty years! Like so many of you, I have waited patiently for a free and public debate between a revolutionary socialist and a spokesman of the Communist Party, authorized to defend the position that the Stalinist regime in Russia represents a socialist society.

It seems that the only way you can get a Stalinist to defend this position in fair debate, like tonight, is when he has been cast out of the inner darkness into the outer light, and branded publicly as an agent of capitalism and as an enemy of the Soviet Union. So, for a debate with the genuine article, we must still wait patiently, or, rather, impatiently. Meanwhile, beggars can't be choosers: I must content myself with the second-hand article, the somewhat used (applause) — don't take away my time, please—the somewhat used, or, as I read the *Daily Worker*, the somewhat abused article.

I am not here debating this evening—that was not my understanding of the subject—war or peace. Any time Mr. Browder is ready to debate that with me, 24 hours' notice will suffice. I can state, and it will be adequate for the purpose tonight, that our organization and I with it are uncompromisingly opposed to American imperialism, to American capitalism, to the American capitalist regime and to the American capitalist ruling class, uncompromisingly opposed to the atom bomb or its use. We didn't endorse it in the last war; we didn't approve of it in the last war. And if Mr. Browder is prepared to debate that, I will also give him an answer on the "stupid Trotskyist slogan of neither peace nor war" that he won't forget for a year.

Our debate simply concerns one of the most vital questions of our time—indeed, *the* most vital question, and I start on it from these fundamental considerations: If the cold horror of Stalinist despotism, that vast prison camp of peoples and nations, represents the victory of socialism, then we are lost; then the ideal of socialist freedom, justice, equality and brotherhood has proved to be an unattainable Utopia; then the National Association of Manufacturers is right in saying that while capitalism is not perfect and has a couple of defects here and there, socialism is a new slavery; then we must be resigned to that appalling decay of modern civilization that is eating away the substance of human achievement. But if it can be shown that Stalinist Russia is *not* socialism, that it has nothing in common with socialism, that it is only another and very ominous lesson of what happens to society when the working class fails to fight, and extend its fight, for socialism, or when its fight is arrested or crushed; if it can be shown that Stalinist Russia is a new barbarism which results precisely from our failure up to now to establish a socialist society, to extend the Revolution of 1917 that took place in Russia — then, despite the agony that grips the world today, there is a hope and a future for the socialist emancipation of the race. It is from that standpoint and no other that I will seek to show that Stalinist

Russia has nothing at all in common with socialism. The best way to begin is by defining socialism.

Socialism is based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and exchange, upon production for use as against production for profit, upon the abolition of all classes, all class divisions, class privilege, class rule, upon the production of such abundance that the struggle for *material* needs is completely eliminated, so that humanity, at last freed from economic exploitation, from oppression, from any form of coercion by a state machine, can devote itself to its fullest intellectual and cultural development. Much can perhaps be added to this definition, but anything less you can call whatever you wish, but it will not be socialism.

Now, if this definition is correct—as it has been considered by every socialist from the days of Marx to the days of Lenin—then there is not only *not a trace of socialism in Russia*, but it is moving in a direction which is *the very opposite* of socialism.

It is absolutely true that by their revolution in 1917 the Russian working class, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, took the first great, bold, inspiring leap toward a socialist society. And that alone, regardless of what happened subsequently, justified it and made it a historic event that can never be eliminated from the consciousness of society. But it is likewise true that the working class of Russia was hurled back, it was crushed, and fettered and imprisoned, and that every achievement of the revolution, without exception, was destroyed by the victorious counter-revolution of the Stalinist bureaucracy which now rules the Russian empire with totalitarian absolutism. Let's examine a few decisive aspects of life in Stalinist Russia as it *is*, not in the propagandist mythology but in the incontrovertible reality.

The most heavily emphasized claims—we heard them here only tonight—of Stalinism are based upon the tremendous growth of industry. The figures are exaggerated; the figures are juggled and twisted; but I don't have the time to dwell upon that, and I have no need to do so. I will simply grant without hesitation that under Stalinist rule, *under Stalinist rule*, Russia has experienced a vast increase in the industrialization of the urban and rural economy. But I will add the following comments which will throw some light on the social significance of this increase:

First: If we were to accept every single one of the exaggerated figures on industrialization in Russia, how would that prove that there is *socialism* in Russia? At the end of the 19th century, over 50 years ago, Russia in six years more than doubled her production of cast iron and steel, almost doubled her production of coal, naphtha. Lenin wrote at that time—I am quoting him—"The progress in the mining industry is more rapid in Russia than in Western Europe and even in North America. . . . In the last few years the production of cast metal has tripled." And so on and so forth. Russian industrial output under the Czar doubled between the Russo-Japanese War and the beginning of the World War. The Czar built the Trans-Siberian, for example, the longest railway in the world. But that didn't show that Russia was a "socialist community"—it was what it was, Czarist autocracy.

Between 1932 and 1937, according to the official Stalinist statistics, the total value of the Russian heavy-industry products increased 238 per cent. That's impressive. But in the very same period, 1932-1937, heavy-industry production in Japan — a country far less endowed with population and

natural resources—increased by 176 per cent. That, too, is impressive. But nobody thought of saying—nobody, I hope, will—that this proves the existence of socialism, or—to be statistically exact—three-fourths socialism in Japan.

The Communist Manifesto over a hundred years ago went out of its way to pay tribute to the bourgeoisie which, as it said, "has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts and Gothic cathedrals," but Marx and Engels didn't, therefore, call capitalist society a socialist community. We will see in a minute what wonders the Stalinist bureaucracy has accomplished and what it has surpassed. The statistics of production by themselves tell us nothing whatever about the social nature of production.

Second: Labor productivity, in industry and agriculture to this hour is much lower in Russia than it is in the United States, the outstanding capitalist country in the world, which, from the socialist standpoint, i.e., this capitalism of ours — is exceedingly backward. According to *Planned Economy* for December, 1940, the Russian miner, in spite of the vicious speed-up system of Stakhanovism, produced less than half the tonnage of the American (370 tons as against 844). What's more, while production in an American mine is three times as large as in a comparable Russian mine, the latter uses eleven times as many technicians, twice as many miners, and twelve times as large a supervisory staff. Twelve times as large a supervisory staff! — wherever you go, the dead hand of bureaucratism in Russia!

According to another journal, *Problems of Economy* for January, 1941, agricultural labor in America exceeds the productivity of the Russian kolkhoznik: 6.7 times in the production of wheat, 7.7 times in oats, 8.1 times in sugar beets, 3.1 times in milk and 20.1 times in wool. Now, the function of technique is what? It's to economize human labor, and nothing else. Socialism must guarantee—*socialism must guarantee*—society a higher economy of time than is guaranteed by capitalism, but by capitalism at its best! Otherwise socialism represents no advance. What kind of socialism is it where the productivity of labor is so inferior to that which prevails in an advanced capitalist state?

Third: Browder wrote a book a few years ago—*What Is Communism?* I read it—a very radical book. He referred to the construction of Boulder Dam, to the fact that Roosevelt was very proud of it. What did Browder ask in commenting on that? He said, this dam, achievements similar to it—what have they contributed to the material welfare of the American workers? That's the challenge he threw in the face of the American bourgeoisie in connection with Boulder Dam. Legitimate question to ask of it. It's not less but more legitimate to ask it of those who claim that the industrialization in Russia is *socialist* in character, that the big technological advances there prove that Russia is a socialist community. And is that not what we are discussing right now? Now let's look—*official* figures.

I want to emphasize first of all that I'll not refer to Russia during or since the devastation of the country by the war. I will refer to 1939 and the years before it. It makes no difference really. As early as 1935 the Stalinists officially announced that socialism had already been established in Russia—and irrevocably at that!

At the end of the Second Five Year Plan, in 1937, the output of steel was four times as great as in 1913, the last pre-World War I year in Russia—dairy products lower than 1913; petroleum products three times higher than 1913—tea was available only to one-third the extent of 1913. There's a big airplane industry non-existent in Czarist Russia, absolutely.

But in 1912, Russia had 1,166,000 department stores, wholesale units and retail shops, which the consumer depends upon—while on October 1, 1937, according to *Planned Economy* of 1938, issue No. 2, with a population far greater—no less than 160,000,000—there were only 228,000 distribution stores and 98,000 warehouses. The plan for rolled steel was completed almost 100 per cent; they now have a big chemical industry; but the plan for the production of soap was not even 40 per cent completed. Browder refers so lightly, as we Americans can, to radios and refrigerators, and television, and other Hollywood products, that even we don't really enjoy and that the Russians don't care about. *Tea*, we're talking about, not television sets! *Soap!* The production of machines is twenty times as high as in 1913, at the end of the Second Five-Year Plan. But wages were lower than in pre-war Russia—*real wages*.

Which brings me to my *fourth* comment: The only valid criterion for *socialist* industrialization—and we're not talking about industrialization in general, are we? We're talking about whether Russia is a socialist community—the only valid criterion, I repeat, for that, is the improved economic welfare of the workers—that's a minimum, that's basic. What's happened to *real wages*—under Stalinist rule? In other words, what's the real standard of living for the masses under Stalinism—not in terms of television sets, not in terms of radios, refrigerators, and Buick automobiles. No, not many workers have them here, not as many as should. We're talking about ordinary standard of living. Have real wages kept pace with the growth of industrialization, which has been great—with the growth of production, which has been great—with the growth of the national income, which has been great? By Stalin's official figures or any official figures? No, they have declined! The real facts are hard to find in the official Stalinist press, which does everything to conceal and twist them out of shape. The Stalinist press for years has not published one single line officially about prices of commodities. You don't find that there. But although it's hard to find, it's not impossible. I will take my figures only from the Stalinist press, in Russia.

According to *Pravda*, May 14, 1938, the average wage of workers in 1938 was 259 rubles a month. Bear that figure in mind. That's *Pravda*. What could the Russian worker buy with this wage? What could he do with it? Inadvertently, *Pravda* itself tells us. On April 8, 1938, it reports that food for a patient in a Moscow hospital costs 7 rubles a day, that is, 210 rubles a month. On May 17th of the same year, it says, and I quote, "The fee for a child in a Pioneer camp should not be more than the cost of maintenance, 250 to 350 rubles a month." Now everybody knows that hospitals and children's camps do not provide the richest variety of food, the best food. Not at all. Everybody knows that hospitals purchase in large quantities; they purchase collectively, they prepare collectively. Things are cheaper. If a hospital patient requires for food 210 rubles a month, if a kid in a Pioneer camp requires from 250 to 350 rubles a month for food, what could the Russian worker buy with an average wage of 259 rubles a month? That's not after the Hitler invasion; that's in 1938, after socialism had irrevocably been established in Russia. The average is wretched, but it doesn't yet tell the whole story, because we have to find out what are the extremes. Averages are the most deceptive things in the world sometimes.

What about inequality? There is no country in the world, bar none, where inequality is as great, as deep, as extensive as it is in Stalinist Russia—nowhere. In the United States, the spread between the poorest-paid and the

best-paid worker is what—three to one, four to one, and, in extreme cases, five to one? Is it much more than that—in extreme cases?—the best paid and the poorest paid? In Russia, according to a very objective and fair economist and statistician, Dr. Abram Bergson, in his book on *The Structure of Russian Wages*, in October, 1934—I am quoting him now—"the earnings of the highest paid Soviet worker were more than 28.3 times the earnings of the lowest paid worker at that time." And it's much worse today. It's much worse today. 1947, average annual wage: 7100 rubles. The Stalinist press reports all the time earnings of some workers between 10 and 15 thousand a month, that is, 120 to 180 thousand a year, when the average is 7100. Typical report is in *Trud*, the labor paper, so-called, for January 1, 1949, which reports that three Donbas miners averaged 60 to 75 thousand rubles for the three years 1946-1948. Now if with the lowest paid the average is 7100, is it an exaggeration to assume that the lowest paid do not go over 3000? That makes a ratio of what between the lowest paid and the highest paid?—anywhere from 50 to 60 to 1! Find me a working class anywhere in the world that shows that disparity. Now if that's how it is among workers, imagine the gap between workers and the ruling class—the factory directors, the managers, the army and navy officers, the brass, the millionaire kolkhozhniks, as they call them in the Stalinist press, the bureaucrats of all varieties, stripes, ranks, sizes and weights!

The Russian Revolution established the socialist principle: no official is to be paid more than the average worker—the skilled worker, if you wish; no functionary, no official. That's the principle of the Commune, said Lenin. Marx praised that principle, as the only socialist standard. That's one of the means, he repeated a thousand times, for shattering bureaucratism, for making possible rotation in office, for introducing workers' democracy as the prelude to socialist democracy. No official above that of the skilled worker in income. And then he added later on, when the problems became a little more complex than he had imagined, if we have to pay a lot more to bourgeois "spetzes," the specialists—he repeated that a hundred times later on—it is only because we are forced to. But, he said, that's *not socialism*; that's a concession to capitalism, that's a violation of the socialist principle, the Commune principle; that's a *retreat* from socialism! There are a thousand quotations from Lenin, and I refer to them not because they are quotations but because they are correct.

What did Stalinism do to this Commune principle, this principle of Bolshevism? We have already seen the division of the workers into paupers at one end and aristocrats at the other. What about the ruling classes themselves, the bureaucracy of all shades? Here is the decree of January 17, 1938. (Remember the average worker is earning an average in that year of 259 rubles a month, according to *Pravda*.) The decree provides that deputies, *deputies*, that is hand-raisers, Russian Gil Greens, get a thousand rubles a month, plus 150 rubles expenses for every day's session they attend; presidents of the eleven federated republics, as they are jocularly called in Russia, get 12,500 rubles a month; presidents and vice-presidents of the Union get 25,000 a month. What does that mean, that figure? One hundred times more than the average worker's wage, 100 times more! A 10,000 per cent increase as over the average wage of the worker! That's socialism? Why, John L. Lewis would almost break his back getting that kind of socialism! Show me such a spread in that miserable capitalist-exploited United States—and that's what it still is! Wouldn't the National Association of Manufacturers be delighted with such a differential in this

country? The only thing they'd have to worry about is to conceal their delight. It would be too, too revealing, would it not? That's what you call socialism? You make a mockery of that ideal!

In 1939, Marshal Voroshilov—under socialism we have marshals! living ones and dead ones!—Voroshilov announced publicly that a lieutenant in what they jocularly call the Red Army is to get 625 rubles a month, a colonel 2,000 a month. Now, relatively speaking, is an American colonel better off, as compared to the average worker's wage in this country? Not at all. Between 1934 and 1939, according to official statistics, wages for workers increased, nominally, 120 per cent; for army lieutenants, 240 per cent; for generals 305 per cent. I say nothing about the exceptional privileges that the bureaucracy, including the brass, enjoys in Russia. You call that socialism? Is that what you expect to introduce into this country, openly or behind the back, or any other way? Go peddle your socialism to the Pentagon Building!

When the Russian workers yearn for greater equality, what does Stalin, the leader of the country, say? He answers to this at the 17th Congress of the Party in 1934, that it is, and I'm quoting—this is the leader of socialism, its spokesman and idealist, its best disciple—it's "a reactionary, petty bourgeois absurdity worthy of a primitive sect of ascetics but not of a socialist society organized on Marxian lines." That's what the yearning for equality is. Naturally, the applause from the assembled bureaucrats was deafening! It would be just as deafening and enthusiastic at a convention of the National Association of Manufacturers, wouldn't it, if you could get anybody to advocate it openly there. And that's where it belongs, and it also belongs in a convention of the Stalinist ruling class, the collectivist bureaucracy. It's an abomination to socialism.

There is not a working class in a single modern country—modern country—that's as brutally exploited as the working class of Russia, not one as cynically disfranchised and deprived of its elementary rights. The Russian worker has no trade unions. The Russian worker cannot determine hiring and firing—forbidden by law—wage scales, working days, working conditions. Trade unions are pure and simple speed-up organisms of the state. And what organisms! I quote, just typical, believe me, from *Izvestia* of May 16, 1937, that the central trade union committees are composed entirely of appointed officials. What's Lewis got that they haven't got? We hear from Andreyev, a Political Bureau member, in *Pravda* of December 9, 1935, and I'm quoting: "The wage scale must be left entirely in the hands of—[whom, under socialism, whom?—]the heads of industry. They must establish the norm." No wonder unions hold no conventions and leaders are appointed by the state. In no modern country do the workers have to endure the regime applied to the Russian workers.

Every worker must carry a labor book. Are we to have that under socialism in this country, introduced in the back door, the front door, or whatever door you want to? It was first introduced by the imitation Bonaparte, Napoleon III, in 1854. It was introduced into Germany in 1935 by whom? Hitler! And you've got it now in Russia, don't you? It lists all your fines, your dismissals from work with the reason therefor, your insubordinations.

The decree of September 24, 1930, reaffirmed on August 11, 1940, in the Russian press, not in the press of the NAM, says that workers are forbidden to leave their factory without permission of the employer, the boss, the director; violation of that is desertion, and the penalties go up to 10 years in prison.

The decree of October 11, 1930, renewed January 1941: Worker must accept work wherever he is ordered to be or to go.

Decrees of December 16, 1932, reaffirmed June 26, 1940: Absence from work without justification can be punished by dismissal, involving loss of the so-called trade union card and lodging; three latenesses totalling 20 minutes per month are equal to an absence.

The Czar, the Czar—not the socialist one, the real one—had the system of internal passports. The revolution abolished them, because, as they said—the Bolsheviks said—it's a police means for oppressing the people. Naturally, Stalinism reintroduced the internal passport on December 27, 1932. It exists to this day. It lists your parents, your grandparents, their class position and social activity; the members of your present family; the divorce record of the bearer; dismissals from work, the reasons for them; organizations you belong to; decorations, if any; dates of subscriptions to the "voluntary" loans, and how much you subscribed. Without a stamped authorization of your internal passport, you cannot take a train out of the city, you cannot move from one city to another, you cannot be absent from home for more than 24 hours at a stretch. And permission is granted only by the bureau of the GPU in the factory. You cannot leave the country without authorization; you cannot get authorization.

On June 6, 1934, they adopted a new decree on "flight" abroad, that is, leaving the country without permission which you can't get. It's punishable by death, and if there are extenuating circumstances—ten years in prison. That's a permanent, not a wartime, regulation. It's not applied to the military personnel but to the civilian population.

Article III provides, under the socialism of Stalin, that if adult members of the military personnel family helped him to flee abroad, or failed to denounce him to the authorities in time, five to ten years in prison for them, with loss of wealth. Other members of the traitor's family living with him or dependent on him, even if they knew nothing about the preparations for the flight—this is Article III—lose their citizenship and get five years in Siberia. It's the system of hostages, in peacetime, for the civilian populations. Tell me another country in the world that has it.

The czarist regime, the regime of Nicholas the Bloody, abolished capital punishment for all crimes except assaults on the Czar, political assassination. In Stalinist Russia, they have the death penalty for counterfeiting gold and silver money; acts of sabotage—and almost anything is interpreted as that; for strikes in enterprises, death penalty; for illegal slaughter of cattle, death penalty.

On April 7, 1935, another decree. As reported in *Izvestia*, for example: All children from 12 years upward, guilty of theft, violence, murder or attempted murder, go to criminal courts and may be punished to the full limit of the law, which includes the highest measure of social defense, which is translated, as you know, as execution. From 12 years on. Am I vilifying Stalinist Russia? I'm giving you a photograph of it. Where else will you find such barbarism?

The workers have no rights! The workers live in terror! If I'm told, by the way, I almost forgot—if I'm told: but how do you explain, didn't they whip Hitler? Doesn't that show it's socialism?—I'm aghast! The most powerful army in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century was whose? Napoleon's! The man who spread bourgeois rule over feudal Europe. Napoleon! The Grand Army of the Republic! Who whipped him? Czar Alexander, with his serf army, with his Marshal Suvorov. They fought well, didn't they? Does that prove that bigoted, semi-feudal, backward,

czarist Russia of the early 19th century was socialist, or that Czar Alexander was the best disciple of Lenin, or that he was the sun who radiates light throughout the world, as you read about Stalin in the Stalinist press, or that he created the world, as you read about Stalin in the Stalinist press? No, he was the Czar, the autocrat of all the Russias.

Bernard Shaw went to Russia in 1931 and he made a broadcast about his visit to the United States, and here is what he said—listen: “A considerable share of the secret of the success of Russian Communism consists in the fact that every Russian knows that if he will not make his life a paying enterprise for his country, then he will most likely lose it. An agent of the GPU will take him by the shoulder and will conduct him to the cellar of this famous department and he will simply stop living. And his relatives will be politely informed that they need have no anxiety about him because he’s not coming home any more.” Who am I quoting—a vilifier of Russia? A man who wants to create war, not peace? Bernard Shaw! And where do I take it from, this excerpt? *Pravda*, May 13, 1932, where it is printed without one word of comment!

We hear a lot about housing. I wish I had the time. Housing conditions have grown worse for the workers under Stalinism. The legal minimum is a miserable six square meters, about six by ten feet, per person, the minimum required for hygiene. Nizhni Novgorod, about which we have figures from the Stalinist press: five by seven, as compared with larger quarters before, in 1928. Moscow: average floor space, habitable floor space in 1937, a decline as against 1928. But—BUT, on March 9, 1936, Mr. Dyelukin, the Moscow construction chief, announced in *Izvestia* that in 1937 the city will build 400 buildings with apartments of two or five main rooms, with the latest improvements and servants’ rooms of six square meters, with master rooms of from 12 to 24 square meters. Who’s that for? Who? The worker? The skilled worker? The workers live, as everybody in Russia calls them, in “coffins.”

We hear a lot about rest homes. I hope it will be referred to, then I will refer to it in my rebuttal. We’ll see what the rest homes are like, and who they’re for, and who enjoys them, and what kind there are for the heads of industry, and for the workers who get them. The Russians like to employ a phrase: *Gnyat e peregnyat*, catch up with and outstrip! Catch up with and outstrip the capitalist world. In inequality, *gnyat e peregnyat*, far exceeding anything that we know in any modern country. Don’t insult the good name of socialism by applying it to this brutal regime of exploitation and social inequality.

Lenin wrote early that the legislation on women alone would justify the Bolshevik revolution. He was right. It was the most advanced in the world, admired not only by socialists but by every sincere reformer. What has Stalinism done to the status of Russian women? Take two things, which are not only sufficient by themselves, but which amply and accurately reflect the whole social structure, the whole situation of women under Stalin.

First, divorce: Engels said, and so rightly, a long time ago, when love is at an end, “a separation becomes a blessing for both parties and for society.” Under socialism, he said, “humanity will be spared the useless wading through the mire of a divorce court.” Lenin said, and not once, it is impossible to be a socialist and a democrat without immediately demanding complete freedom of divorce.

On July 8, 1944, there is a decree, printed next day in *Izvestia*, and what does it do? It reforms the divorce laws. Now you have to go through two courts and drag your case through the mire, and there is no formal basis

now for allowing divorces; it is entirely up to the judge. The proceeding is humiliating, it’s drawn out, expensive. The mere registration fee is now raised from 500 to 2,000 rubles. Do you know what the wage of the worker is? Do you know who can now enjoy divorce legally? Not only that, but they now record your divorce in your labor book. You not only have to wade through the mire but they splash some of it on you permanently.

Infinitely worse, infinitely more shameless and depraved is the Stalinist legislation on abortion. The decree of June 27, 1936—in spite of numerous protests, so great that they had to be printed in the Stalinist press!—a penalty of two years in prison for the physician performing the abortion; public rebuke to the mother for the first offense, 300 rubles’ fine for the second. Abortion is a dreadful business, and every socialist, every human being with intelligence, with feeling, must recoil from this blow at what might become a human life. But we are neither hypocrites nor religious bigots. If a law prohibiting abortion is an abomination in this country, in the United States, it’s a double abomination in a country like Russia. Just think! A low standard of living; hospital service which is exceptionally poor. You can’t buy shoes for kids. *Pravda* of March 30, 1938, reports—this is an absolutely typical and current picture—“To buy shoes, a coat or a change of underwear for the newly born, the parents spend a great deal of time going from one store to another. For the entire railway district of Moscow with more than 100,000 inhabitants there was only one store for infant wear, and this store has been a long time without infant underwear or shoes for school children. Because of the lack of goods, the store sold underwear only six or seven days in the month. In the stores of the capital city [Moscow itself] mothers searched in vain for an infant bathtub or a round basin for bathing the baby and a tub for washing the clothes.”

Say what you want about Russia, that’s the situation. Let us not blame Stalin for that. Let’s say that is not his fault at all. But to prohibit abortion under those circumstances? To force the women to have an unwanted child under those conditions? At a time when contraceptives are at a premium, when diapers are almost impossible to get, when there is little or no food, when you cannot find a baby basinette or a basin for washing its underwear, when it’s even hard to find a nipple for the baby’s milk bottle—the dirty, mailed fist of the bureaucracy grabs the working woman by the throat and snarls at her: “Breed!”

The law of 1936 provides that mothers of more than six children get 200 rubles’ premium annually for five years for each additional child; mothers of ten children receive 5,000 rubles at birth of each additional child, and so on. The bureaucracy does not hesitate to intervene into the most sacred and intimate precincts of the personal life of the working woman. We need more labor slaves; more cannon fodder! Here is your bribe! Produce! If you’re with child, whether you want it or not, whether it is a child of love or not, whether you can afford it or not, produce! Breed! That’s socialism? You call that monstrosity, copied straight from Mussolini, straight from

Hitler, you call that socialism? You have the nerve to speak before an audience when that happens? I say to the Stalinists everywhere: Go try to peddle it to the women who have freedom and fearlessness enough to give you their answer.

You have destroyed the Russian Revolution. You have garrotted it! Lenin wrote a hundred times: "The proletariat cannot achieve the socialist revolution unless it is prepared for this task by the struggle for democracy; [I'm quoting] victorious socialism cannot retain its victory and lead humanity to the stage when the state withers away unless it establishes complete democracy." Where is there democracy in Stalinist Russia today? What democratic rights does the worker have? The right to vote for Stalin whenever Stalin decides to allow what he calls an election? Is that the kind of elections Browder proposes for the United States? It would be interesting to hear something about that! Does the worker have the right to organize a trade union, to elect his own officials? Does he have the right to form a political party of his own—except for the Communist Party, as it is called jocularly? Do I have that right in Russia? Let me hear from an expert! Does Norman Thomas have it? Does Wallace have that right in Russia? Does Browder have that right in Russia? What would happen if he tried to exercise that right? Let me hear from some political idiots to whom Browder refers! What would happen if he tried to exercise that right in Russia? Isn't he an agent of American imperialism? Isn't he a class enemy spreading the poison of the bourgeoisie? I know that's true—that's what he is—I read that in a pamphlet by that pitiable Robert Thompson. I read it in the *Daily Worker*. Now, suppose Browder tried to exercise that democratic right in Russia?

Does the worker have the right to read any paper but the Stalinist press in Russia—any? Does he have the right to listen to any broadcast but the Stalinist broadcast? Does he have the right to organize a public meeting of his own, like here—not just this one, but any one? Does he have the right to put forth his own candidacy in the election? I want to nominate Browder! Can I do it? Can he run? Does he have the right to recall a single significant public official? Lenin considered that right absolutely indispensable for a workers' state, let alone for socialism! He underscored it a thousand times, laid the heaviest stress on it. He pointed to the Commune as a model. Not only election of all officials, but *recall, recall*, so that if the scoundrel doesn't turn out right you can yank him out of office. Show me a single Stalinist official of any consequence who has ever been recalled by the workers and peasants of Russia. One! *The GPU recalls*—that's all—and that is not only all but it's fatal, too!

Does the worker have the right to strike? Where? Does he have the right to move from one city to another without police permission? Stalinism has destroyed every right that the Russian workers ever had! Name me one of the tiny miserable rights that the workers had under czarism, *under czarism*, in Russia. They were miserable, tiny, microscopic—name me one that he has in Stalinist Russia today. You call that tyranny socialism? I know Stalin has given him "security." We have heard that; we hear it time and again: he's given a roof over his head. He's fed two or three times a day; he's given all the work he can stand—and a lot more! And there's no unemployment like under capitalism—and that is a curse of capitalism that you can never get rid of, that's true. But we're talking about if there's socialism in Russia. Is it a socialist community? If that is socialism, Browder, among others, has already had two experiences in socialism in the

United States alone: one in World War I in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary; the other in World War II in Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. Those are nationalized penitentiaries, commonly owned. He had work there. The bourgeoisie gave it to him as it is given to all other political prisoners, and to all prisoners in general. But at least he could get out when his term was up! Can the Russian worker? No, it's flight and treason; his family is held as hostage; he is imprisoned for life.

Look at what they have done to the great emancipating principles of the Russian Revolution! They butchered the whole revolutionary generation, with one or two exceptions! Not a word from Browder about that. A trifle! Industry is progressing—*finyat e peregnyat!* They wiped out the whole leadership of Bolshevism, of the October uprising, of the victory in the Civil War! Are they any better than the Czar? No, worse by far! Under czarism from 1826 to 1905, almost a century, 102 persons were executed for political reasons, 102! In the period of black reaction from 1905 to 1906, after the revolution, the blackest reaction cost the lives of 4,352 people. That's all! That's horrible! That's all! And they've murdered tens of thousands of the same kind of revolutionists that the Czar murdered by the hundreds. There were just twenty-two members of Lenin's Central Committee in October, 1917, the eve of the insurrection: three of them died more or less normally—Lenin, Dzerzhinsky, Uritsky; two are still alive—Kollontai, Stalin. Five out of the 22. Where are the other 17, where are the other 17 who founded the Russian Revolution? Seventeen others shot as mad dogs, as fascists, as spies, as wreckers, as counter-revolutionists, as enemies of the working class, enemies of socialism, by Stalin. Stalin murdered five out of the seven chairmen of the Soviet executive committee; almost all the members and candidates of the Soviet executive; the heads and the leaders of practically every Republic—Ukraine, Georgia, White Russia, Uzbekistan, Transcaucasia—all the others. The majority of the commission that wrote the Stalin Constitution, the most democratic Constitution in the world—the majority of the commission that wrote it became fascist and were shot down like dogs. Two out of five marshals of the Red Army; three army group commanders out of six, ten army commanders out of fifteen, 57 army corps commanders out of 85, 110 divisional commanders out of 193, 202 brigade commanders out of 400 shot as mad dogs, spies, agents of Japan, of England, of France, of Germany. Thousands of lesser officers! The whole life of these men was devoted to the fight for socialism. They breathed, they thought, they dreamed, they ate, they drank nothing else. What happened to drive them—if we are to take Stalin's version of these butcheries—what happened under Stalinism that drove them away from Stalinism, away from socialism, and into the arms of arch-reaction, Hitlerite fascism? That's if we take *your* version! Isn't that the most damning indictment that Stalin could make of his own socialism? That practically every one of the leaders in the fight for it, with trivial exceptions, hated and feared and despised his socialism so much that rather than share it, rather than tolerate it, they sold themselves to the most reactionary, the most sordid, the most rotten and corrupt imperialists in the world? You murdered the leaders of the Red Army, its great captains in the civil war, its giants, its architects, and its epic heroes. Then Stalin was free to destroy the army of socialism, of course, and establish the army of reaction which he has now.

The "International"—you sing it, don't you? Not in Russia; it's no longer the national anthem. They have a new national anthem of how "Great Russia established an indestructible union." Great Russia! The

term "general" was hated under the Czar, restored by Stalin. "Marshals"—that rank was destroyed under the Czar—restored by Stalin. Ranks, grades, class divisions, distinctions, privileges—restored by Stalin. And who were made the inspirers and models of the army? Under the names of whom did they go out to fight for socialism? Marshal Suvorov, the man who crushed the national revolution of Stanislav Poniatovsky, and Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the man who drowned in blood the peasant uprising of Pugachev! They even made medals—and the big breasts of the generals and marshals to this day are loaded down with them, aren't they, or Suvorov and his right-hand man Kutuzov. They created an Order of Bogdan Khmelnitzky, the Ukrainian Ataman who centuries ago first introduced mass pogroms against the Jews and the Poles. It was under their banner, with their names on his lips, that Stalin sallied forth for his socialism! That's what he has; Suvorov socialism, Khmelnitzky socialism! But not socialism as we ever understood it; not socialism to which we aspire with every fibre of our passion for freedom and the comradeship of man!

What have they done to the Bolshevik revolution, with its noble sentiments, its noble ambitions, and its noble goal? They've destroyed it and made Russia a nation of slave labor. Doesn't every child know that there are millions of slave laborers in Russia? I don't have the time, I will in my rebuttal; I will read you from the kodex, the photostatic copy of the kodex for "corrective labor institutions," as they call them there—10 millions of them at an absolute minimum. Here in "correction camps," federal penitentiaries and state penitentiaries, we have what?—from U.S. Census Bureau—141,000 odd in state and federal penitentiaries out of a population of 145 million, five out of every 5,000 in prison. In England, 30,000 out of a population of 50 million, three out of every 5,000. In Russia, 10 million at least out of approximately 180 million, 277 out of every 5,000! Is that a sign of socialism? Is that what your socialism leads to?

[Interruption by Chairman Mills asking Shachtman to conclude. Shachtman asks for an extension which he will take from his summary if Browder doesn't object.]

I want to conclude hastily.

I say even if Browder wants it, he'll never live to see it!

What does he have to say about Tito? One word! One word! We're discussing war or peace, Tito is an element in it. Why must Tito and his regime be liquidated? Aren't they the same—the same regime as in Russia, same medals, same economy, same politics, same structure? He must be liquidated because he insists on exploiting the Yugoslav people instead of letting the Russians do it! That's why he must be crushed, must he not? He must be crushed like Rajk was crushed in Hungary, like Gomulka is about to be crushed in Poland, like Kostov was crushed in Bulgaria.

Browder's loyalty to Stalinism cannot be questioned, can it? His defense of Stalinist socialism, of Stalinist Russia, can't be questioned, can it? You heard it yourself. But supposing this same Browder were in Russia, what would happen to him, what would have happened to him as far back as 1946? Suppose this same Browder, who calls Russia socialist, were in Hungary or Bulgaria, what would be his fate? Or suppose Browder's Stalino-socialists were successful in establishing their socialism in this country, with Foster, and Green, and Dennis, and Childs and Minor and Don and all the rest of that perfidious crew at the head of it—[turning to Browder] they are perfidious, aren't they?—who would be the first to go? Who would be the first to get the GPU bullet in the base of his skull? Who would be the first to be denounced in the obituary articles as a counter-

revolutionary mad dog, a viper, a restorationist, a wrecker? Who would it be—Browder or Shachtman? That's a sporting proposition!

[Interruption by Chairman Mills: Time's up.]

When I saw him standing there at the podium, I said to myself: Rajk was the general secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, and was shot, or hanged, or garrotted. Kostov was the general secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party. And when I thought of what happened to them, I thought of the former secretary of the American Communist Party, and I said to myself: There—there but for an accident of geography, stands a corpse!

Chairman Mills:

There seems to be quite some difference between the two speakers. Before we have a rebuttal from Mr. Browder, whom I'm going to give 23 minutes because Mr. Shachtman exceeded his time to that extent, I want to let Mr. Kaplan of the Debs Society make an announcement. [Mr. Kaplan makes his announcement.]

May I have your attention, please?

Mr. Browder will now give his rebuttal of 23 minutes. Mr. Browder.

Rebuttal by Earl Browder

As I listened to the passionate indictment of that monstrous reaction that spreads from the East, the backward, barbarian East, gradually engulfing the progressive and civilized West, I had a feeling that, well, now if this is true, I'd better enlist in the crusade that is led by those who formulate policy today, to wipe out this menace which is worse than Hitler, because it is so much more efficient, because it can even make progress in the material development of life while it is destroying everything which we hold dear, which makes life worth living.

And as I was debating and listening in this war to destroy the Soviet Union for which a recruiting sergeant made a very effective appeal this evening, I was forced to hesitate a little, because I had to ask myself: what is happening in Poland today, which had been engulfed by the monster, and what is happening in Italy today, which has been saved from the monster and saved for our higher concept? And I happen to know that in Poland being engulfed by this monster has meant for the first time in history that Poland has been able to rise and begin to organize its life, and is organizing it in a way that even every simple honest capitalist who has gone there has had to speak of it with admiration. For the first time in history the land of Poland is in the hands of the masses who cultivate it. For the first time in history, landlordism has been abolished. For the first time in history, the economy of Poland is rising. And I turn and I look at Italy, or France, which America has saved from the monster. And what do I see in Italy? The saving of Italy from the monster has been at the cost of riveting again upon the Italian farmers the rule of the most bloodsucking class of landlords that has been seen outside of Eastern Europe, where it has been destroyed.

We heard a lot today about declines in living standards. It is strange that you didn't hear a word about the decline of the living standards of the

Italian masses who've been saved from that monster. We saved France from the monster, and yet in this morning's newspapers you may read how the average monthly salary of the French workers has declined since the day of liberation from the Nazis. Since the Americans went in to direct French affairs, the average wage of the French worker has declined from \$50 a month — a month! — to \$24.50 a month. The price of saving the French workers from this monster was to slash wages in half. Slice them in half!

What is happening to wages in Russia and in those countries who have been swallowed by the monster, those countries where they are building socialism of the kind which is objected to by my opponent? It is quite well established that the standard of living of the workers and of the peasants has risen steadily in every one of these countries. You may say very cheaply and very easily it is a lie, but figures of production do not lie. My opponent this evening can make great play with the development of his sort of statistics to prove that the material standard of life of Soviet workers today is lower than in 1914. But in order to give you that lie, he has to conceal from you simple, basic facts of production in the Soviet Union. Well, in 1914, the standard of production of shoes, for example, to take one little thing, was 29 million pairs per year. In 1948, the production of shoes was 380 million pair. 350 million new bureaucrats, I suppose, put on shoes. The production of textiles in the Soviet Union in 1948 was four times the production of textiles in 1914. I suppose those trillions of metres of textiles produced above that of 1914 are all worn by the bureaucrats of the Soviet Union. There must be an enormous number of them. The whole country is composed of bureaucrats, of course.

It is silly to contend, and nobody does, that life is easy in the Soviet Union and problems are solved. I made it clear in my presentation that the rise in the material standard of life in the Soviet Union in no way corresponds to the rise of total production. I explained why that is so, because for the future of socialism, especially in a country which begins as one of the most backward in the world, it is necessary to go through a prolonged period, which would be quite unnecessary in America, of the basic accumulation of capital, that is, the accumulation of the material means of modern production—to have enormous expenditures in mass education to lift a whole nation up which had been kept back for centuries, to lift it up to modern standards of literacy and science. And that it above all is necessary to provide a national defense for that country, in order that socialism should not be made into an illusion by its destruction in a world of enemies. I heard not one word from my opponent about these things. Are these things important, or is immediate consumption the only test of socialism, as he says?

I say to you that anyone who can talk like that about the problems of building a new socialist society in a country where the forces of production were not developed by capitalism, that such a person is committing a vulgar fraud when he speaks to you in the name of Marx. There is nothing of Marx in that whole approach. There is only the vulgar demagoguery of such schools of socialism as, for example, that of the famous Disraeli of Great Britain. You probably know the name only as one of the great founders of the British Empire. But at the same time, Disraeli the Tory was a socialist of sorts, a violent enemy of capitalism—the kind of socialism that wants to protect the working class from the evils of industrialization and substitute the benevolent protection of the kind-hearted men like Disraeli who founded the British Empire or developed it to a higher stage. The socialism

of the Tory Disraeli is equally respectable with that socialism that has been expressed here by my opponent.

Marx said that the course which brings socialism and makes socialism inevitable is the expansion of the productive forces which reach a limit under capitalism beyond which they cannot go until they have discarded capitalism and adopted socialist forms, abolishing private ownership. My opponent this evening rejects this basic principle of Marxism. In so doing he moves to the position of the reactionary forms of socialism if it is to be dignified by the name Utopian, clerical socialism, not Marxist socialism, certainly; a Christian socialism, perhaps.

We heard a great deal about democracy and the necessity for the thorough realization of democracy as the precondition for the establishment of socialism. I yield to no one in my valuation of democracy, but when it is brought forward to us as the precondition for the realization of socialism that thorough democracy must be achieved, I can only tell the gentleman that he has a touching faith in the possibilities of capitalism which I cannot share. I have learned from Marx and Engels that socialism is the precondition for the full realization of democracy, not that the thorough realization of democracy is the precondition for the realization of socialism. If the fullest realization of democracy is possible before you have socialism, what's socialism necessary for? Socialism is a means of reaching the full development of democracy. If you can get it before you have socialism, you won't need the means.

In the same way, the substitution of the goal as the obstacle preventing us from getting the means is used on this question of consumption. Of course, the final purpose of all production is to give the good things of life to men, women and children to enjoy. Of course, that's the final aim. But when my opponent this evening comes here to tell you that because the new socialist system in Russia has not given all those good things, therefore, it is not socialism, and that that is the only test of whether it is socialism or not, what he is actually doing is telling you that because you can't have the goal of socialism today, he is going to destroy in your minds the understanding that the means of reaching that goal is being created. And because of its being created today, he is denouncing it to you here as false.

I listened with amazement to the statement that the growth of the forces of production in Russia are simply a repetition of what has been repeatedly, and everywhere where it was attempted, done under capitalism. That message, I am quite sure, would be applauded in the United States Chamber of Commerce, in the National Association of Manufacturers. But it happens to be a flat falsehood. I cited to you the basic figures to show to you that—and these figures cannot be successfully challenged—to show to you that in the Soviet Union four times the rate of the growth of production in America is now normal in the Soviet Union; that we are comparing the normal rate in the Soviet Union with the highest rates in American history so that the average rate is much faster than that. My opponent this evening tells you that's merely capitalism normally at work, a bureaucratic capitalism but capitalism nonetheless. Exploitative society, he says, which I presume is a pseudonym for continued capitalism. When given all those good things, therefore he makes this concession to capitalism, I assure you it is quite unwarranted. Capitalism does not have such possibilities of the growth of production any longer.

He also described to us with great admiration about how the rate of productivity per worker is four to six or eight times as much in America as in Russia. That is true and proves exactly the opposite of what he was

trying to tell us. It is true we have the technical achievements of productivity in America far beyond anything they have in the Soviet Union. Why then do we not have the growth of the economy as a whole that should result from it? Because capitalism prevents the utilization of these techniques. Why, with a much more backward technique in the Soviet Union are they able to make greater progress than America? Because socialism gives such higher utilization of the forces of production that a backward—technically considered—country can outstrip the most technically advanced capitalism today.

The chairman tells me I have about two minutes left. I really have taken more time than I considered was necessary to answer the shoddy presentation of the anti-Soviet case that was placed before you tonight.

Chairman Mills:

Mr. Shachtman will now give a counter-rebuttal.

Rebuttal by Max Shachtman

Mr. Chairman, comrades and friends: My opponent did a very imprudent thing. He mentioned a name he should have left unmentioned—the National Association of Manufacturers. I was afraid he would—I hoped he would not. I have here a pamphlet, *Communists and National Unity*, an interview of *PM*—that's a New York newspaper, or was—with Earl Browder, dated March 15, 1944; interview with Mr. Harold Lavin, assistant managing editor of the New York newspaper *PM*. "Question by Mr. Lavin of Mr. Browder: 'I had a discussion with two friends of the National Association of Manufacturers; and I must say that you would get along with them fine. In large sections they almost sound word for word like you. Answer by Mr. Browder: 'That's fine. I'm awfully glad to hear that. I'm not sorry when you say that leading members of the NAM talk like me. My report to the Plenum of our party was distributed to every delegate at the economic conference of the NAM, and I am told most of them read it through.'"

Now, I'm a socialist. I don't distribute my literature at the NAM. I don't defend the NAM. I have no friends among them. I don't defend its social system. I've been combatting it for 30 years almost to the day—I'm about to celebrate a modest anniversary—I've never relented in it! I didn't support American imperialism in the war! I didn't support the throwing of the atom bomb! I didn't defend the system of American capitalism and point out how it can grow.

[There is a slight break here between reels; voice unclear.]

I give a whole series of absolutely unassailable facts. I refrain as carefully as possible from taking them from enemy sources. I take them from the official Stalinist sources. I don't take accidental or incidental little things that appear in any newspaper; I take the central items which describe the regime and how it operates.

Typical is the reply. Typical is the reply. "What about Italy?" "What about France?" It's become a joke, a rotten joke. You know of the timid American visitor who is being shown around in Moscow, its glories, taken into the magnificent subway with its marble panels—by a guide, of course. They wait...they wait 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes. The timid American says: "Your trains don't run very often." "Yes, what about the Negroes in the United States?"

But I'm not defending the persecution and lynching of Negroes in the United States. I'm not defending the Marshall Plan. I'm not defending the landowners in Italy. I'm not defending the landowners in Poland. I'm not defending the bourgeoisie in France. I'm *opposing* them. *And I opposed them when Browder was on their side!* Wasn't he? I was never allied with them. Browder was. The Communist Party was. Stalin was.

My comrades were murdered because they were accused of having made a pact with Hitler. Browder says, of course, there were no documents to prove it. The Opposition, he says in one pamphlet, were clever enough to burn their documents. But there's one document that was not burned. It was printed in the *Daily Worker*, wasn't it, by Mr. Browder? And he had an article on it, didn't he—when he could write in the *Daily Worker!* And the signature of Hitler or von Ribbentrop was on that document, wasn't it? What Russian signature was on it? Trotsky's? Rakovsky's? Tukhachevsky's? Whose signature was on this document of alliance with Hitler and Soviet Russia?

You talk to *me*, a revolutionary socialist and an internationalist, about Italy? Who cares about Italy tonight? I'll discuss Italy with you in another debate! I'll discuss American imperialism with you in another debate! I have a few words to say about it. I'll repeat the things I've been saying for thirty years.

I'm talking about: Is Russia a socialist community? That's supposed to have been the subject of the debate tonight. Not one of the things I spoke about were referred to or dealt with, were they? My speech "called for a crusade of the progressive West against the reaction." Why? Why? Who said anything about "the progressive West"? Yes, Browder once spoke about that. Not I. I never did.

When Browder was an internationalist, when he opposed the imperialist war of 1917 in this country, what did the patriots say to him? On what basis was he railroaded to prison, along with hundreds and thousands of revolutionary socialists, of IWW's? What did they tell him? "By criticizing the United States you're working for the Kaiser!" Browder spit in their faces, didn't he? Debs spit in their faces! Haywood spit in their faces! Kate Richards O'Hare spit in their faces! Now he tells me that I'm recruiting for a crusade against Russia!

In 1917 when he was a socialist, when he was a revolutionist, Browder said: "I'm against German imperialism. I'm against American imperialism." Among other examples, his was one I learned from. I haven't changed: I'm against Stalinist imperialism! I'm against American imperialism! I'm against their cold war! I'm against their atom bomb! I'm against their H-bomb! I'm against the war that they're preparing for the destruction of civilization. Doesn't Browder know that? Of course! But years of training in the Stalinist movement teach you how to "answer" criticism of Stalinist Russia.

Browder was the editor of the paper of the Trade Union Educational League when I first met him. It was a good paper, and it was well edited. And I remember how it used to expose the rottenness of the labor leaders, and how page after page, month after month—things that I was raised on when I was a kid—would show: you've got gangsterism in your unions, you scoundrels. You've got murder in your unions. You exploit workers. You live off the fat of the land. You get \$20,000 income as president, and the workers gets only \$20 a week. And what of the Greens, and the Gomperses, and the Hutchesons, and the Lewises? What was their answer to the propaganda of the Trade Union Educational League? What did they

answer Earl Browder? "You're attacking the labor movement. You're playing into the hands of the employers. You're playing into the hands of the open-shoppers. They also say the labor movement is rotten. They also say there's racketeering." What did Browder answer? The way I answer him tonight: *The truth never hurts the working class!* I want to tell the truth about Russia, and I don't want to be told by any paid or unpaid agent of the Stalinists that I can't tell the truth about Russia because it will play into the hands of the reaction! Who has played into the hands of the reaction more than any other single force in the labor movement—who, if not the Stalinists?

"Shachtman doesn't understand"—excuse me—"My opponent doesn't understand—first you have socialism, then you have democracy. That's what I was taught by Marx and Engels," he said.

I quote again from Lenin, just one of the dozen quotes I can get you like that. I not only know them, Browder knows them; he has quoted them in his time. Lenin writes in 1916: "The victorious socialism cannot retain its victory and lead humanity to the stage when the state withers away unless it establishes complete democracy." Now, I stand on that. I stand on that now more than ever before in my life. I stand on that now so much the more firmly after I see what has happened, the degeneration of the Russian Revolution under the Stalinist counter-revolutionary absolutism.

It's plain: If you're moving toward socialism, which is a complicated business, I know, which is difficult, which is beset by a million obstacles, most of them inherited from capitalism, with its rottenness, its corruption, its depravity, you can always tell, however—not every single day, but over periods—you can tell, are we moving *toward* socialism or *away* from socialism, by two simple criteria:

One, is the standard of living of the workers going *up*?

Two, is state coercion going *down*?

Is there a trend *toward* equality? Nobody but a political idiot—to quote the elegant phrase of "my opponent"—would expect you to have it overnight—equality. We're a long way yet. But is it going *toward* equality, or is it going *toward inequality*? Isn't that simple? Isn't that an old established criterion for socialist evolution after the proletarian revolution takes place? Browder doesn't even talk about that. Now I say, if you could show me that the Russian workers' standard of living is not only as good as the low standard of living of the American workers, but four times as good—four times as good—and if I should answer, while the standard of living of the worker in Russia has gone to four times as good as the American worker's, at the same time the ruling group—call it what you want—has improved its economic position a hundred times, I say you're moving *away* from socialism. If you could show me that the working class has *more* control over the state, if you could show me that state coercion, in the form of this blood-stained GPU, is diminishing, I'd say you were moving *toward* socialism. But it is not diminishing; the Stalinists announced it twice: the state is being reinforced. We have socialism *and* the state is being reinforced!

Now (a), you won't find that in Marx or Lenin—that's not important; (b) you won't find that in Russia—and that is important. You'll find a reinforcement of the state such as has never existed. But you won't find a trace of socialism.

He imputes to me the position, since he has nothing else to say, that I claim the only test for socialism is the consumption of the masses. When

did I say that? Tonight? A year ago? Fifty years? More likely fifty years ago! But not tonight! Not tonight! I say it takes two criteria: Are class lines disappearing? Is there an increase toward equality, or is there, as there is in Russia today, an increase toward inequality? Is the state coercion increasing in intensity or decreasing?

He says, is defense important, or is consumption the immediate task for socialism? God knows that under Stalinism it's not the immediate task, it's not the remote task—consumption for the masses. I don't deny that defense is important. Of course, it's important. It's important in the United States; it's important under Hitler's Germany; it's important in every country. It will disappear when there's world socialism. But that's not the point, is it? I didn't say anything about how much they're spending on tanks. I don't know, Browder doesn't know. It's not important. I leave that aside, I don't want to argue that aspect of it at all. I ask a simple question and I give the simple incontrovertible fact: for the masses, the standard of living declined. That fraction of the production which is available to the people for consumption goes to the bureaucracy first and foremost. That's the fact and that's what's important.

He says I deny the Marxian contention that the expansion of the productive forces is what makes progress possible. I didn't; I don't dream of it. I'm talking about socialism tonight. I want to ask simply, does every expansion of the production of forces, granted all the figures of the Stalinists a hundred times over, does that produce socialism? I say categorically NO! Does it make possible socialism? I say categorically YES! When? How? When, as the *Communist Manifesto* said 102 years ago, the proletariat is raised to the position of the ruling class, is raised to political supremacy, when democracy is established! That is the first demand in the *Communist Manifesto*, the *first*: to establish democracy. When the working class democratically takes the destiny of the nation into its hands, then the previous preparation—by capitalism or by bureaucratic collectivism—can and will serve the proletariat in power as the economic or technological basis for the rational order of socialism. That says a good deal for this preparation, but no more.

You have to make up your mind about the fundamental question: Is Russia a socialist community? And there I say what I said at the very beginning: If a "socialist community" is to be used to characterize a society where the development of the productive forces, where the control of the productive force, where the control of what Marx calls the conditions of production are entirely and exclusively in the hands of a totalitarian reactionary bureaucracy; if you're going to apply the name of socialism to a regime in which the economic conditions of the working class, which is the only mover toward socialism, the only living motive force toward socialism—where the economic conditions are worse than they are, or worse than they were in the last years of czarism, where they have not even now reached the development of what I still consider a backward capitalist country—backward as compared with what the USA can and will be some day; at a time when inequality is growing, when all the political privileges, all the economic privileges, are in the hands of this reactionary upper crust, when the precepts and ideas of socialism are banned from the country, when the revolutionists who were the bearers of the socialist ideal are exterminated, only more thoroughly than Hitler exterminated the Social Democratic militants and the Communist Party militants—then I say socialism is lost! Then I say you have given to the reactionary bourgeoisie not only of this but of all other countries a

murderous weapon with which to crush the socialist movement and its aspirations, by saying: here are the socialists themselves claiming this monstrosity, this reactionary society, this new slavery—that's their socialism. Is that what you want? That's the demagogical way of the reaction. We understand it perfectly. And I say that the Stalinist movement in and out of Russia has done more than any other single force in the world, more than any single force in the world's history, to give weapons against socialism, against the working class movement into the hands of capitalist reaction.

We don't say, as again "my opponent" imputes to us, that Russia is bureaucratic capitalism; we don't contend that Russia is capitalism at all. We distinguish it both from socialism and capitalism by the phrase, perhaps not too elegant, bureaucratic or totalitarian collectivism. The Stalinist bureaucracy represents a new reactionary social order. If you are to argue that this is not provided for in Marx, then you don't understand anything about Marx. Marxism constantly, from the beginning, posited the possibility either of socialism or barbarism. The conditions conforming to that barbarism could not be envisaged by Marx a hundred years ago. We see that barbarism developing in capitalist society in futile wars of extermination, for example. We see it developing in Stalinist society, a new barbarism, a new slavery for the workers and the peasants. They are converted into state serfs, into state slaves. Engels foresaw it, Marx foresaw it, Rosa Luxemburg foresaw it, Lenin foresaw it. They kept warning, as we do to this day, kept warning the working class: You must take over society, remold it, reshape it, in the interests of socialism, on a rational basis; otherwise, society will decay into barbarism. If you do not take over, they said a hundred years ago, and I repeat it tonight, if the working class does not take over, if for example, as really happened, the working class of Europe did not come to the aid of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, there will be decay, and this decay will mean your ruin. It will mean your ruin, that's what Engels repeatedly said to the working class. At that time it was almost only a literary flourish. Today it is a bitter and cruel reality that stares us in the face.

I say again that the Stalin regime has nothing in common with socialism. It represents a form of the new barbarism. It is proof, I repeat, of the prophetic words of Frederick Engels, which I should like to remind you of again:

If the working class itself does not take the leadership of the nation and by its democratic rule reorganize it on a socialist basis, Engels said, it will sink to the level of the Chinese coolie. He says again: If the working class does not take into its own hands the power to achieve the new social order, it will pay the penalty of its own destruction.

Capitalism is dragging us down into the primitive slime of reaction and universal destruction. We don't feel it so acutely here in the United States today. Browder is absolutely right in referring to what it means in Italy, in France, tomorrow or the next day for all capitalist countries. In that he is absolutely correct. But the Stalinist alternative to capitalism, *which he offers us on the same platter with which he must offer his own head*, is nothing but a new barbarism. That's why we reaffirm our own faith in the liberation of humanity by socialism, the product of the freed consciousness of the working class. We have seen despotisms like Stalinism before. We have seen them come, we have seen them prevail, and we have seen them go!

We affirm, and we reaffirm it in the teeth of that hideousness which is known as Stalinism, that socialism for us, yesterday, today, tomorrow still means the end of class rule; the end of class privilege; the freeing of the people from all chains and all coercion, the fullest realization of democracy, the emancipation of women and of children; the end of slave camps, police terror, frame-ups, butchery of the socialists, abundance for all, and therefore liberty for all.

In spite of the black pall that Stalinism has hung over the heads of the working class in so many countries, despite the mean and cruel shame and discredit with which it has stained the shining shield of socialism, we are confident, now as ever, that socialism will triumph by the power of that invincible force, that irrepressible force, which the young Karl Marx called "the power of the expansion of democratic ideas and humanity's innate thirst for liberty."

Chairman Mills:

According to the rules of the debate to which both speakers have agreed, Mr. Browder will now give a final statement of his position lasting five minutes, after which the meeting will stand adjourned. Mr. Browder.

BROWDER:

(The remainder of the debate is inaudible on the tape.)

DEMOCRATIC AGENDA CONFERENCE

- **WHEN:** Friday, November 16, 1979 and Saturday, November 17, 1979*
- **WHERE:** Metropolitan AME Church and the International Inn in Washington, D.C.
- **REGISTRATION:** Before October 10, \$15 per person, including lunch, \$10 without. After October 10, \$20 per person including lunch, \$15 without.
- **HOUSING:** Rooms are available at the International Inn. Special discount rates are \$44 for a single and \$56 for a double. (Triples and quads can be arranged for a slight additional fee.) Some housing in private homes will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. To make reservations at the International Inn call (toll free): (800) 424-1140. Specify that you're with **DEMOCRATIC AGENDA**.

* On Sunday, November 18, ad hoc caucuses will be held for those who are interested in attending.