

Dear Ed:\*

One of the comrades tells me that you are quite bitter over my decision to resign. If this is true, it comes as a surprise to me. I knew that you would be deeply disappointed. ~~xxxxxxx~~ However, I had made in the course of our long discussion ~~xxxxxxx~~ it clear/that I could not agree with your arguments as to why <sup>therefore,</sup> I should remain in the party and fight it out and my final action, could <sup>been</sup> unexpected to you. hardly/~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ I understand and appreciate your <sup>most</sup> attitude on this question. From what I can gather, ~~many~~/comrades in the ranks feel the same way. However, they are wrong and I am confident that after the first reaction has worn off they will understand my position in the matter. This causes me all the more to regret that there should be <sup>at present</sup> any bitterness toward me, since this can <sup>only</sup> ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ cloud clear thinking on the issues involved, ~~and~~ not to mention its effect on personal relations. Permit me, therefore, to try ~~xxxxxxx~~ once more to make explicit the reasons why the course you argued for was impossible.

It is necessary to understand fully the distinction between differences <sup>as a whole.</sup> within the framework of a political concept and a rejection of that concept. A party is not merely a collection of people trying to find their way in common ~~throughxxx~~ to a solution of problems. A party is a tradition and a <sup>an ideological geneology,</sup> program. It has/~~xxxxxxx~~ a method, an outlook, a common education and an acceptance of those views that mark it off as a separate tendency. The WP is what it is because it traces its ancestry back through Trotsky to Lenin. I don't say that I differ with this heritage in one or two particulars, but accept it in fundamentals. I say frankly that I find I can no longer accept it precisely in that which constitutes the distinctive features of Leninism. What basis of argument is there for an anti-Leninist in a Leninist party? About as much as ~~xxxx~~ there is for a member of the Catholic Church who has become an atheist. (I intend no reflection on the WP in this comparison. I

\* Ed's party name was Ed Findley; real name, Ephraim Friend. Deceased (sometime in 1987). Ed became a psycho-analyst, practiced in Israel and NYC. He remained a Shachtmanite, including membership in the SDA.



who becomes converted to religion.")

I know that you believe this to be exceedingly formal. As a matter of fact, you accused me of thinking like a sectarian in this matter. An examination of the practical side of the question, however, must lead to a different conclusion. I wrestled with this problem ~~for many years~~ ever since the plenum. I tried to view it from both the theoretical and the practical side. The latter, if anything, convinced me that resignation was the only alternative. I will try to explain why.

Let us suppose I presented my ~~document~~ statement to the party. How would I go about it? ~~I would like to present it for publication in the bulletin or the NI. The PC must first have a discussion and take a position. This is unavoidable in a Leninist party. The PC rejects the views as "Menshevik" and "social patriotic" and condemns them as heresies that must be fought and rooted out of the movement. (I am not saying they would expel me or someone else who agreed with these views. Shachtman has already stated that "social patriots" will not be expelled. But would Shachtman remain in the party if the "social patriots" became the majority? Shachtman's position in this matter is not different from Cannon's general attitude against minorities. Cannon once told us, not entirely in jest, that he had nothing against <sup>a</sup> minorities as long as they did not try to become <sup>a</sup> majority.)~~ I present it for publication in the bulletin or the NI. The PC must first have a discussion and take a position. This is unavoidable in a Leninist party. The PC rejects the views as "Menshevik" and "social patriotic" and condemns them as heresies that must be fought and rooted out of the movement. (I am not saying they would expel me or someone else who agreed with these views. Shachtman has already stated that "social patriots" will not be expelled. But would Shachtman remain in the party if the "social patriots" became the majority? Shachtman's position in this matter is not different from Cannon's general attitude against minorities. Cannon once told us, not entirely in jest, that he had nothing against <sup>a</sup> minorities as long as they did not try to become <sup>a</sup> majority.)

a statement

How does the PC go about combatting my views? It issues ~~a statement~~ condemning them and organizes a membership meeting for a majority and minority report. Shachtman poses a series of questions to me: 1) Am I prepared to accept the democratic decision of the membership as expressed through a convention? My answer would have to be no. 2) Do I regard myself a loyal member of the WP in that I am prepared to abide by its discipline and carry out its decisions? Given my views, I could, in honesty, only answer no. 3) Do I intend to remain



my ideas now is that the attack has to rely on slander. This will boomerang in the long run. However, had I remained in the party, the attack upon my role would have been unanswerable.

It is long standing tradition in our movement that a minority view must be fought for until its proponents are either expelled or decide ~~xxxxxxx~~ that it is to their advantage to split. If someone in our movement came to agree with the <sup>the</sup> Ohlerites, he would ~~would~~ feel it his duty to remain in and fight tooth and nail for his views, denying all the while any ~~split~~ intentions to split or any connections with the Ohlerites (or whatever his ideological tie was). I consider this immoral. Not because <sup>lying is wrong</sup> ~~xxxxxxx~~ in the abstract, but because one must have an unquestionable moral basis for lying. Such a basis exists ~~xxxxxxx~~ only when one's opponents (really, one's enemies) permit one no alternative. I refer to <sup>underground</sup> ~~the~~ activity ~~xxxxxxx~~ in a Stalinist or fascist country, to employment under conditions where one's political views would result in dismissal, to unions where one's political views would result in expulsion, etc. But no one forces me to belong to the WP. Nor does it even mean that ~~xxxxxxx~~ members of the WP will be sealed off from my views if I am no longer a member. It is true, ~~xxxxxxx~~ my views would be presented more advantageously from within. ~~xxxxxxx~~ But to remain in on that account constitutes ~~xxxxxxx~~ the use of subterfuge for purposes of political advantage; exactly what I consider immoral in this tradition. That is why our split from the SP as well as our split from the SWP were dishonest maneuvers. <sup>We began</sup> The factional fight in each case with a split perspective agreed upon in the top leadership. The decision to split from the SWP was taken two or three days after the plenum at which the fight started, sometime around the end of Sept. or beginning of Oct. in 1939. We had not even ~~xxxxxxx~~ raised the organizational question at that time. The question of the public organ was worked out much later as a means of justifying the split. Meanwhile we solemnly attacked Cannon as a splitter and accused him of driving us out

4.11. because he wanted a preventive split. This was the same tactic



Cannon had used against Norman Thomas in 1937. Such dishonesty gets into the bones in the long run and ~~warps~~ warps all internal political relations. When I decided to break with Leninism, I decided to break ~~with its~~ with its political morals also, ~~but~~ I found it impossible to attack Leninism in the theoretical sphere while basing my tactics upon a Leninist tradition of ~~fighting~~ fighting for every advantage, even at the price of double dealing.

You stated that I owed the WP the obligation of ~~xx~~ fighting for my views since I developed them in the WP. ~~It~~ It is only partially correct to say my views were an outgrowth of the development of the WP. In measure they were that. But they also were equally the result of the <sup>ideological</sup> impasse of the WP. Those views which were an outgrowth of the WP's development, ~~known~~ were known to the party, above all, to the leadership, on the war and the revolutionary prospects. To make sure that my views would not come as a surprise to Shahctman, I wrote a long letter to him while he was in Europe. He never bothered to answer or to discuss <sup>it when he returned,</sup> ~~them~~ beyond saying that the development of a social patriotic tendency was to be expected in the present situation and that he would not expel "social patriots".

~~My views on Bolshevism were undergoing re-examination in the course of the last year.~~

Many comrades, above all those who frequented the city office, knew that my views on Bolshevism were undergoing re-examination in the course of the last year. My answer to Howe confined itself to a polemic against his method of re-examination, which I still hold to be incorrect. Farrell sent me a ~~letter~~ letter at the time ~~saying he was~~ saying he was <sup>and</sup> very disappointed in my article because it did not defend Bolshevism ~~but~~ that a member of the PC had told him that this was due to the fact that I had no real differences with Howe. The youth comrades at City College were very disappointed because my "debate" with Louis Clair on Stalinism and Bolshevism was not a defense of the latter in the orthodox sense. I told them frankly,

both before and after the debate, that I was no Bolshevik in the John G.



Wright tradition and would defend Bolshevism only from the kind of vulgarized attacks of the Bolshevism equals Stalinism school. Since it turned out that Claff's views were not too widely different from mine, the debate turned into a discussion of differences on secondary questions. The question of Bolshevism arose during the class I taught for the SYL this summer and I found myself in an exceedingly trying situation, since I could not give the traditional answers of the movement, while, <sup>on the other hand</sup> education in our ranks does not provide for the academic freedom which permits ~~xxxxxx~~ a teacher to express himself freely. This did not prevent comrades around the city office from directing jibes at me about undermining Bolshevism in the class.

But, regardless of all this, it is still true that I did not raise the question of my views on Leninist doctrine in the PC. I ask: how does one go about this? Does one place "Bolshevism" on the agenda and discuss it? This is obviously ridiculous. Well, one writes an article about it. But what does one say? That the author is troubled with questions about Bolshevism? This is equally ridiculous. One only presents his views when they are definite. Here we are back to where we started from. A presentation of my views and all their implications, a factional fight, questions of my basis for being in the CP with my views, etc.

Though I should have known better long ago, the July plenum taught me a lesson for all the folly of trying to think out loud in the ~~xxxxxxx~~ part. I had no concrete views on all the implications of my position on the Marshall Plan. There was still much I had to think through. I made no effort to conceal this and spoke in that vein. I did the same ~~xxxxxxx~~ Shachtman's propo



on Shachtman's proposal to change the party's name and become a propaganda group. He had made the proposal to the PC only some ten days or so before the plenum. He reported the proposition in his own name. It was a new question. I sought to ~~xxxxxxx~~ "think out loud" in presenting the direction in which I thought the party should move. I questioned the need for a Bolshevik-type of organization and stated that I thought a wide educational group that would include Marxists from varied backgrounds, including non-Trotskyists and anti-Trotskyists was the direction in which we should move. The replies to me on both the Marshall Plan and the party ~~discussion~~ perspective left no room for discussion, which should have the purpose of mutually exchanging ~~my~~ views. ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ The replies in each instant proceeded to attack me for "vagueness", "confusion", failure to present ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ definite propositions, etc. I determined then and there that I would henceforth shut up in the party until I had a full program, worked out in concrete detail. As I set my views down on paper, I realized how far my thinking had departed from the ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ fundamentals of the movement and, after wrestling with the question, I concluded that resignation was the only step that made sense.

I understand that Shachtman now charges that I worked out my position in seclusion and sprang it upon the PC. This, I must say, hardly coincides with the ~~xxxxx~~ whole truth. To the extent that it is true, I found it unavoidable. The movement affords no opportunity to think out loud, above all, when one is thinking what are considered "dangerous thoughts".

But could ~~xxxxxxx~~ I not have discussed personally with other leading comrades? With whom? Draper, Gould, McKinney? This was not a very enticing prospect. I did exchange many views with Garrett and Judd and I am sure that my document was not great surprise to them. But why not Shachtman? This, of course, is what is really meant by ~~xxxxx~~ the charge that I did not discuss with "leading comrades." I came to conclude quite some time ago that Shachtman is incapable of a frank political discussion, in the real sense.



But could I ~~xx~~ not have discussed personally with other leading comrades?

Such discussions are possible only when proper personal relations prevail.

the WP's

The sad fact is that/~~xxx~~ leadership has been shot through with petty jealousies,

antagonisms and mutual suspicions ever since the end of the war. The blunt

remark of one of the PC members that "our PC consists of a Number One and

six others guys who each think they are Number Two" is an apt description.

Face-saving and prestige politics play a ~~fantastically important~~ role in

the leadership that is fantastically out of proportion with the size and

importance of the party. ~~It is rooted, of course, in the notion that someday~~

~~xxxxx the WP will lead a revolution and the order of importance of the leading~~

~~members be a continuation of their positions today, like the hierarchy of~~

~~men around Lenin in Switzerland.~~ Where each of the Number Two/<sup>s</sup> is seeking to

trip up the next one, the climate is most ~~unfavorable~~ unfavorable to

"thinking out loud," even in personal discussions. I must, however, in all

fairness, state that I had fruitful discussions with Manny and Henry and I

am sure that my document did not surprise them too much. Since I am now out

of the party, I will not comment on the role of Shachtman and question of

discussing with him, beyond saying that I found it/<sup>as</sup> ~~frustratingly~~ trying and

frustrating experience, especially in recent years.

I have concluded that the Leninist concept of a party places a straight-

jacket on the ideological life of the leadership. The leadership leads its

own political life in isolation from the membership, except as it formally

presents ~~its own political life in isolation from the membership, except as it formally~~ a difference of opinion

on an important question in majority and minority reports. The exaggerated

emphasis upon "committee discipline" and "responsibility" stunts intellectual

growth and most certainly kills the spirit of free inquiry. ~~xxxxxxx~~ I

most of the leaders

have come to wonder whether this is not the reason why/~~xxxxxxx~~ of the  
to be worth their salt

Russian Revolution who proved/~~xxxxxxx~~ came from a non-Bolshevik background,

while the men who had been closest to Lenin through the years proved to be



I have come to see more clearly of late what is really involved in the question of party democracy/<sup>to</sup> which we have devoted ~~is~~ so much attention ~~is~~ in past years. ~~XX~~ The WP has done more in the years of its existence to establish conscientiously the rights of members in discussions, the party bulletin, etc., than any party I know of. However, formal democratic rights are only one side of the question. Real democracy requires the proper party atmosphere. This ~~must~~ is possible only if there is respect for another's opinions. Despite everything we have done to create a democratic machinery in the WP, such respect for opinions is still singularly lacking. It pervades all our internal disputes as well as our external expressions. (An example of the latter is Draper's debate with Macdonald.) Can you visualize a factional fight in the WP on the questions of "Menshevism" and "social patriotism"? All stops would be pulled on demogogy. Every deeply ingrained emotion the movement has come to hold on these subjects would be unleashed. Everything but the bodies of Liebknecht and Luxemburg would be dragged into the arena, and I am not too sure about the latter. Even the use of the term "social patriot" for one who advocates defensism in a specific situation is ~~indicative~~ indicative of the frame of mind ~~xxxxxxx~~ to which I refer. The movement is asked to vote for or against social patriotism when ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ everyone has been taught for years that social ~~patriotism constitutes xxx~~ patriotism constitutes ~~one of the worst crimes against Socialism and the "social patriot" is a loathsome person.~~ one of the worst crimes against Socialism and the "social patriot" is a loathsome person. Were our Chinese comrades social patriots because they were defensists against Japan? Obviously not. In other words, social ~~patriotism~~ patriotism is not the equivalent of defensism. Social patriotism is the placing of the interests of one's own country above the interests of Socialism. When Shachtman refers to me automatically as a "social patriot", but says that I will be tolerated in the party despite my social patriotism, he assumes that my position is already judged and condemned; I am already convicted of placing the interests of the United States above the interests of Socialism. What kind of a party



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discussion can take place with a convicted criminal? What is the aim of the discussion? Can it be that the party is to listen to both sides and then decide whether it wants to be loyal to Socialism or to betray Socialism? How can an atmosphere conducive of intelligent discussion be possible when "Menshevism" and "social patriotism" are ~~known~~ attributed to one position and spoken of in the manner of a Catholic theologian discussing fornication and blasphemy? Had I gone through with a discussion on these questions, the bitterness that would have been engendered would have left its mark on the movement for years, not to speak of its mark on me. I ~~claim~~ no immunity from all the vices of discussion in such a poisoned atmosphere. I would inevitably have succumbed to the human weakness to retaliate in kind.

You may deny that the WP could be the scene of such a discussion. I hope you were right, but I fear you are deluding yourself. Innumerable experiences in the party, above all in the PC and at plenums, have left an indelible impression on me. I recall four in particular. I will never forget the rank demogogy, ~~and~~ chicanery and deceit that was practiced against me at the pre-convention plenum in January 1946 when the cadre question ~~was~~ ~~discussed~~ was being discussed, not for its own merits, but as a test of the NC's approval of the party's direction during the war. My relations with the leading comrades were never the same after this experience. I came away with a sense of moral revulsion which never completely wore off. This feeling was reinforced in the PC's handling of Irving Howe, especially in keeping him off the NE Editorial Board. Howe's letter to the PC ~~after~~ would make an interesting document for the membership to read. I regard the PC's ~~relationship with~~ ~~the~~ treatment of Howe as an indication of how little progress we have really made in overcoming the moral degeneracy of Cannonism. Shachtman likes to use the phrase "resistivity of materials". It is appropriate in regards to this question. As long as the material is soft and the going is easy, one can afford to use <sup>e</sup>honest and comradely methods. But if the resistivity is great, the "good old methods of the movement" come into play. I wish to call another experience



to your attention. Do you remember Shachtman's speech at the Active Workers Conference of a year ago? I took notes of that speech and began to write an article in reply. Unfortunately, I never finished it. This was partially due to work in the city office and partially to a state of mind which felt that it was futile. The latter was engendered by the ease with which Shachtman had swayed the conference and the widespread remarks that this <sup>was</sup> one of the greatest speeches in the history of our party. This response on the part of the membership, above all those from out of NY, depressed me greatly. I have my notes of Shachtman's speech before me. As I reread them I must confess that my characterization of the speech in the unfinished article was an understatement. In the article I characterized the speech as "demagogic, anti-intellectual, obscurantist, crude, vulgar, psycho-analytical, hypocritical and Jesuitical". The reason I believe it to have been an understatement is that I would add to it, today, the statement that it was a classical example of the mentality of the Comintern, not under Stalin, but under ~~Lenin and Trotsky~~ Zinoviev and Radek, as trustees for Lenin and Trotsky. Shachtman's speech was allegedly aimed at bouying up the spirits of the party and especially at overcoming the demoralization in Local NY. Yet what was it? A grand amalgam of the Vyshinsky type. What did he speak about? Bogdanov and the "God-seekers"; the advocates of a "mixed -economy"; the neo-anarartists; the "Hooks and Goteskys" who are "shriveled souls in the outer darkness" seeking to lure members away from the movement in order to "justify their own renegacy" and their betrayal "of their mothers' breast milk"; "lost people" who end up like Macdonald with the slogan of "to the hills"; the anti-Bolsheviks who fear workers' power and advocate "a little power here and a little there", etc. Against whom was all this directed? Against Howe, Gray, myself and others who were "doubters". The tenor of the speech was the refrain: "Problems? What problems? We have no problems except that we are too small". Shachtman boasted that the "questions" ~~which~~ which trouble people in NY have all been answered and that at home he has "the answer in books from floor to ceiling and back again, double column".



Attack the "doubters" because they really didn't even  
The people who worried about the party's line were called "Serbian brides".  
know what was troubling them. He brought the house down by saying, "I can't

take a notebook and say 'lie down' to these comrades." Along with this  
pillorying by implication  
went a pandering to the provinces by saying that they had no time to worry  
about "answers", since they were "up to ears in the class struggle". I ask  
you, Ed, in what way was this speech, <sup>delivered at a</sup> ~~at~~ crucial turning point in our party,  
<sup>from</sup>  
different/~~than~~ Cannon's conduct in 1939-40 when he substituted ~~xxx~~ for an  
analysis of the Russian question an attack upon the "petty bourgeois",  
"independent thinkers", "NY intellectuals", "Abern", "Burnham", "innovators",  
etc.? I must admit that I never fully recovered from the effects of Shachtman's  
speech and its ready acceptance by the bulk of the membership. Even a Comrade  
like Stan Grey was unnerved by the response Shachtman received and determined  
to set aside his doubts and plunge into organizational work to redeem himself.  
I personally thought it a sad spectacle.

On the matter of the comrades attitude toward my resignation, I perceive  
three different types. First are the outright demagogues who will be represented  
more heavily in the leadership than in the ranks. These are people who honestly  
<sup>any one holding my views has</sup>  
~~believe that/xxx~~ no place in the party and should be expelled,  
~~but since I have already resigned cannot miss up~~  
on the opportunity to call me "cowardly" and denounce me for leaving. Secondly,  
are the comrades who are deeply disturbed about the party's line but ardently  
want to believe, want to be convinced, want to have their doubts dispelled.  
These comrades are angry that I did not stay and fight because it would give  
the  
them <sup>an</sup> opportunity ~~xxxxxxx~~ of joining in the ~~xxxxxxx~~  
~~the~~ wolf pack in hunting down heresy and find peace of soul in the process.  
The third type ~~xxx~~ are those who really want <sup>an objective</sup> a discussion in an intellectual  
atmosphere because they are genuinely interested. Unfortunately, these comrades  
assume that their attitude is that of the party's and that their concept of  
how the discussion is to take place is what the real discussion will be like.



