JAMES P. CANNON: AMERICA'S PIONEER TROTSKYIST*

A Review of Bryan D. Palmer's

James P. Cannon and the Emergence of Trotskyism in the United States, 1928–38

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The contributions of Bryan D. Palmer (Professor Emeritus, Trent University) to labour and social history since the 1980s have been both prolific and extraordinarily impressive. But his most enduring contribution as a Marxist scholar is likely to be his monumental treatment of the life and times of pioneer American Trotskyist, James Patrick Cannon – arguably the most important revolutionary socialist politician yet produced in the United States but also a sadly neglected figure in American labour and socialist/communist history.

The first volume of Palmer's projected trilogy on Cannon was published by the University of Illinois Press in 2007. *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* enjoyed an enthusiastic reception as a major contribution to the historiography of the early American socialist and communist movements. With great acumen, Palmer profiled Cannon's career as a young revolutionary, at first as an organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World, then as a leader of the left wing of Eugene Debs' Socialist Party of America, and

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subsequently as a founding leader of the Communist Party (CPUSA) in the aftermath of World War One and the Russian Revolution. Throughout the 1920s, up to his expulsion from the CPUSA in 1928, Cannon was a prominent public Communist – best known as the party's first Chairman and for his contributions to its trade union and labour defense work – as well as a key leader of the Foster-Cannon faction within the party.

After a long wait, the second volume, *James P. Cannon and the Emergence of Trotskyism in the United States, 1928–38* (Brill 2021; Haymarket 2022), has arrived at last – and it doesn't disappoint. Indeed, this new work adds immensely to what must now be considered a *tour de force* – a masterpiece of the biographical literary genre, but also a work of profound historical and political significance. On those counts, Palmer's two volumes on Cannon already compare favorably with the classic biography of Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky by Isaac Deutscher, a trilogy which appeared over a span of nine years between 1954 and 1963. What's more, in both the impressive depth of its original research and the soundness of its political sensibilities and judgments, a case can be made that Palmer's (still-to-be-completed) biography of Cannon already surpasses Deutscher's much-celebrated work.

From my own vantage point as a long-time admirer of Cannon and a supporter of Trotsky's Marxism, Palmer's new volume can only be seen as a precious gift to all those who claim to support a global socialist transformation in our time. For the story of Cannon's struggle to forge a revolutionary socialist party in the 1930s is replete with crucial lessons for all those engaged in similar struggles today, regardless of their views on the multifarious groupings that lay claim to

Trotsky's heritage even as they propagate widely divergent positions on everything from the class character of the Chinese state to the war in Ukraine.

One of his most devoted latter-day admirers (the late James Robertson) once said that Jim Cannon in his prime demonstrated the capacity to be "the leader of a proletarian revolution in North America." And yet this is an accolade that Cannon himself would likely have dismissed as unwelcome idolatry, contemptuous as he was of any would-be communist leader who would indulge even a whiff of personalist politics or cultism. As Palmer brings out so well, in championing Trotsky's opposition to the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet state and the Communist (Third) International as well as his subsequent struggle to establish a new revolutionary communist Fourth International, Cannon assiduously upheld the conviction, shared by Lenin and Trotsky, that a revolutionary organization can only be constructed on the basis of *collective* leadership, a genuine *democratic* centralism, and an *internationalist* perspective.

In seeking to build an authentically Leninist-Trotskyist workers' party, Cannon faced many formidable obstacles: scarce resources, the rabid hostility of Stalinist adversaries, the repressive apparatus of the American capitalist state, unprincipled cliquism and bureaucratic passivity as well as sectarian tendencies amongst some of his closest collaborators, and not least his own personal troubles and shortcomings. Yet by the time the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) was founded on December 31st, 1937, as the American section of Trotsky's soon-to-be-launched Fourth International, Cannon had become the preeminent leader of an organization with a tested collective leadership, a vibrant internal life, an impressive record of principled revolutionary work in many arenas of the class struggle, and above all a truly internationalist program. That

program, crafted by Trotsky in close consultation with Cannon and other SWP leaders as the foundational document of the Fourth International, distilled not only the essential lessons of the Russian Revolution and the Left Opposition's struggle against Stalinism (defined by Trotsky as the social phenomenon of bureaucratic-oligarchic rule on the basis of socialized property forms) but also the practical experiences of the American Trotskyists in the class struggles of the 1930s.

The contributions made by Jim Cannon, Vincent Ray Dunne, Max Shachtman, Farrell Dobbs and other leading American Trotskyists to the manifesto known as "The Transitional Program" deserve the fullest recognition; and so too should that program's enduring centrality to revolutionary socialist practice today and going forward. Not only did this document encapsulate the most valuable programmatic and strategic concepts codified in the resolutions of the first four congresses of the Communist International – the Comintern of Lenin and Trotsky between 1919 and 1922; it also extended, refined and in important ways solidified those ideas. For the first time, this foundational program of the Fourth International explicitly grounded Bolshevik-Leninist practice on a well-articulated *system of transitional demands* – a system that builds a bridge between the defensive and partial struggles of the working class (and its potential allies) and the achievement of workers' power: the dictatorship of the proletariat. Taken as a whole, the Transitional Program anticipates and prefigures the social, economic and political content of a workers' state and the early stages of socialist construction, *decisively breaking* with the utopian-reformist projects of incrementally replacing capitalism with socialism through bourgeois-democratic channels or, failing that, reconstituting capitalism as a more humane, democratic and rational system.

With all this in mind, Palmer's account of Cannon's political journey as a Trotskyist leader in the tumultuous period from 1928 to 1938 takes on the shape of a manual – albeit, at about 1200 pages, a very long manual! – on how to construct a serious revolutionary Marxist organization capable of leading the struggles of the working class and its oppressed allies through to the *overthrow* of capitalism and the establishment of workers' rule.

Cannon once wrote: "Politics is the art of making the right move at the right time." Under his leadership, and with the inestimable benefit of Trotsky's guidance from afar, the American Trotskyist movement of the 1930s rose to the challenge of "knowing what to do next." The major problems faced by Cannon and his comrades as well as the means by which they sought to meet them are described eloquently and in great detail by Palmer in six lengthy chapters along with an Introduction and a substantial Conclusion. Doing justice here to so massive and deeply researched a work is clearly impossible, but a sense of the book's scope and import can be conveyed by surveying some of its most politically salient topics and themes.

Chapter One, entitled "An American Left Opposition," picks up where the "1890-1928" volume ended: the fight waged by Cannon, Shachtman and the Canadian Communist Maurice Spector for the theses advanced by Trotsky in "The Draft Program of the Communist International: A Criticism of Fundamentals." This document, suppressed by Joseph Stalin and smuggled out of Russia by Cannon and Spector following the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, subjected Stalin's nationalist doctrine of building "socialism in one country" to a devastating critique while also exposing its disastrous consequences for Comintern policy in Europe (including the betrayal of the British General Strike of 1926) and in China (the subordination of a revolutionary upsurge

of the Chinese working class to the bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang, resulting in the bloody defeat of the Shanghai Commune in 1927).

Reasserting revolutionary Marxism's strategic aim of world socialist revolution and its rejection of all political alliances with the capitalist class, Trotsky's document announced the emergence of an International Left Opposition (ILO) committed to a return to the policies and perspectives of the early Comintern and resolutely opposed to the Stalinists' "national-reformist" efforts to turn world communism into a tool of the Soviet bureaucracy's foreign policy and diplomacy. Furthermore, it called for an explicit embrace of Trotsky's long-held theory of "permanent revolution" – which maintained that in an era of capitalist decline the "national bourgeoisie" can nowhere play a progressive role, and that every proletarian revolution, whether starting on the national terrain of a developed country or a more backward one, can only be *completed* on the world stage. Accordingly, the duty of a victorious workers' state is to support the workers of all lands in their struggles for socialism rather than seek an accommodation (peaceful co-existence) with world capitalism *at the expense of those struggles*.

The declaration of support for Trotsky by Cannon and his co-thinkers led to their speedy and grossly undemocratic expulsion from the U.S. and Canadian Communist parties, a campaign of vilification against them in the parties' ranks, and their initial efforts to win a following for the ILO both inside and outside the parties they still sought to reform. Those efforts culminated in the formation of the Communist League of America (CLA) as a publicly proclaimed external faction of the Communist Party with its own newspaper, *The Militant*, and a modest book publishing program. At first comprising little more than 100 members – concentrated in New

York, Minneapolis, Boston and Toronto – what the CLA lacked in numbers and material resources was compensated by the presence of veteran Marxist politicians (among them, Antoinette Konikow, Arne Swabeck, Vincent Dunne and Carl Skoglund), several talented writers and orators, and a contingent of battle-hardened trade union militants fiercely committed to the ideas of the ILO.

Among other things, Palmer's treatment of this history reveals the grievous extent to which both the leadership and the ranks of the CPUSA were corrupted by the anti-Trotskyist campaign foisted on them by Stalin and Co. – a campaign that involved slander, burglary and physical violence against the CLA. Through its leadership of successful workers' struggles and other activities, the Communist Party retained the loyalty of most would-be revolutionary workers and intellectuals; but its betrayal of the fundamental principles of workers' democracy was palpable, besmirching its reputation in the broader labor movement and hardening its internal "Stalinization" with all the debilitating consequences that entailed.

Chapter Two, entitled "Dog Days," focuses on the early years of the Great Depression and the downturn in the class struggle that this brought about. In particular, considerable space is devoted to exploring the demoralizing conditions, both material and psychological, that produced a harmful factional rift between Cannon and a younger coterie of CLA leaders (Shachtman, Spector and Abern), as well as the long-distance intervention by Trotsky (now in exile in Turkey) to prevent an implosion of the CLA. Beyond this, Palmer discusses the dramatic change in Comintern policy that accompanied the Stalinist turn toward rapid industrialization and forced collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union. For almost five years, beginning in 1929, the

Stalinists adopted an ultraleft-sectarian policy that complicated the Trotskyists' portrayal of them as opportunist "bureaucratic centrists" but also and more importantly helped to pave the way for the triumph of fascism in Germany.

During this period, the CLA prioritized the propagation of Trotsky's brilliant analyses of fascism and his calls for a combative united front of Germany's working-class parties (above all the Communist Party [KPD] and the Social Democratic Party [SPD]) to prevent Hitler's rise to power (which came to pass on January 30th, 1933). Denouncing the SPD (which sought parliamentary coalitions with anti-Nazi bourgeois parties) as "social fascists," the German Stalinists scorned Trotsky's admonitions as "counter-revolutionary" and pursued a policy that precluded *working-class unity in action* against the fascist menace. The subsequent failure of the KPD to organize any meaningful fight against the consolidation of the Nazi regime, along with the Stalinists' insistence that KPD policy had been correct all along, led Trotsky to conclude that the Comintern was finished as a revolutionary force. Henceforth, the task of revolutionaries was not to reform the Comintern (or indeed its governing Soviet section) but to lay the foundations for a new International.

The implications of this reorientation were profound for the CLA as they were for the erstwhile ILO as a whole. It meant deprioritizing attempts to win over the ranks of the Communist parties, and a new focus on engaging and potentially fusing with leftward moving social-democratic or "centrist" currents, while also undertaking their own independent campaigns under a new banner. The goal was now to foster a process of "regroupment" with a view to launching the Fourth International. The vanguard of this process was the "International Communist League" led by

Trotsky. How this new orientation played out and yielded important gains for the American Trotskyists is the subject of the book's remaining chapters.

In Chapter Three, entitled "Daylight: Analysis and Action," Palmer delves into the CLA's efforts to elaborate new and innovative approaches to a series of important questions: the campaign for a labor party based on the unions (an issue that had caused much confusion and contention among American Communists throughout the 1920s); revolutionary policy in the struggle against Black oppression in America (an issue that the Stalinists, during their ultra-left "third period" phase, were approaching as a question of "national self-determination" – even secession – for Black people, rather than as a problem that required a revolutionary struggle for racial equality culminating in a workers' government); and strategies for work in and around the unemployed leagues that had sprung up as a result of the depression, as well as the sort of labor defense work in which Cannon had specialized as a CPUSA leader.

The CLA also moved toward greater involvement in trade union work, albeit with decidedly mixed results. The first major CLA foray in this field was the New York hotel workers' unionization drive and general strike of January 1934, which was led (or rather misled) by the mercurial B.J. Field, a CLA intellectual who was expelled for his mishandling of the strike and breach of party discipline. Fortunately, the Field fiasco was soon overshadowed by the truly inspirational Minneapolis Teamsters rebellion of the same year, in which the CLA's most seasoned union militants (including the Dunne brothers and Cannon himself) played a decisive leadership role.

Chapter Four, “Minneapolis Militants,” is entirely devoted to this momentous labor uprising – a protracted series of battles which, along with the dock workers’ strike in San Francisco and the Toledo Auto-Lite strike, marked 1934 as the year in which the movement for industrial unionization took off in North America. The chapter draws extensively on Palmer’s earlier book *Revolutionary Teamsters* (2014), but also includes some important new material on a struggle that featured some of the most advanced methods of class struggle ever undertaken in North America. The titles of the chapter’s subsections provide a sense of the broad terrain covered: “General Strike,” “Trotskyists Among the Teamsters: Propagandistic Old Moles,” “Lessons of the Coal Yard Strike,” “Strike Preparations, Unemployed Agitations and Industrial Unionism,” “The Ladies/Women’s Auxiliary,” “The Tribune Alley Plot and the Battle of Deputies Run,” “May 1934: Settlement Secure, Victory Postponed,” “Stalinist Slurs,” “Farmer-Labor Two Class Hybrid vs. Class Struggle Perspective,” “A Strike Declared, A Plot Exposed,” “Bloody Friday, Martial Law/Red Scare,” and “Sudden and Unexpected Victory.”

The victory in Minneapolis, despite brutal state repression (mobilization of the National Guard at one stage) and the treacherous role of the Teamsters national leadership, set the stage for the over-the-road organizing campaign that not only extended the geographical reach of the Teamsters throughout the American mid-West but did so on an *industrial* as opposed to a craft basis. Once again Trotskyist leadership was instrumental, in particular the leadership provided by Farrell Dobbs, who was praised years later by Jimmy Hoffa as the master organizer of the campaign.

Chapter Five, entitled "Entryism," tells the story of the CLA's fusion with A.J. Muste's left-centrist American Workers Party (AWP) and the formation of the Workers Party, as well as the subsequent entry of the latter into Norman Thomas's Socialist Party of America (SPA). The AWP "Musteites" had provided the leadership core of the victorious Toledo Auto-Lite strike in Ohio, a key win for organized labor that paved the way for the United Auto Workers and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The fusion of the CLA with the AWP in 1935 significantly increased the weight and prestige of American Trotskyism but also became the preparatory ground for an even more audacious attempt to grow the movement. By applying the "entry tactic" that Trotsky had urged his French followers to implement in relation to France's social-democratic party (the SFIO), Cannon and most of the Workers' Party leadership reckoned that they could win over a significant portion of the SPA membership to revolutionary socialism. But this plan also faced stiff resistance from a minority faction (the sectarian Oehlerites), which ended up leaving the party. Palmer explores this struggle over the so-called "French turn" tactic in a fashion that convincingly shows that what was lost in adopting the tactic was more than made up for by the big gains that were made by the party in little more than a year and a half.

The turn by the Stalinists toward a pro-Roosevelt stance, in accordance with the new Comintern policy of promoting a class-collaborationist Popular Front against fascism, had opened a space for the SPA to posture as a viable, left-wing alternative to the CPUSA among radicalizing workers and young people. Cannon's Workers Party saw an opportunity, and they took it. After making certain organizational concessions to the SPA leadership for admission to the party, they were soon functioning within it as an organized caucus with their own newspaper, *Socialist Appeal,* and engaging in work to both build the party and advance their own agendas.

Concurrently, a differentiation was taking place within the reformist/centrist SPA leadership and a crisis of perspective was developing rapidly over a key question: Should the SPA maintain its traditional (Debsian) stance of steadfast opposition to the capitalist Democratic Party, or should it yield to growing pressures to join with the Stalinists, however informally, in supporting the Democratic president Franklin Roosevelt? The entry of the American Trotskyists exacerbated this emerging rift by posing another stark question to the SPA membership as a whole: whether to turn right and embrace class collaboration or turn sharply to the left and embrace the class-struggle program championed by the Cannon caucus entrists. In the end, it took a protracted six-month struggle by the SPA leadership to rid themselves of the Trotskyists but when they finally did so, they lost hundreds of members, as well as a majority of their youth organization. One can say that this *short-term* entry into the SPA, lasting from mid-1936 to late in the fall of 1937, was surely the most successful application of the "entry tactic" in the history of world Trotskyism.

Chapter Six, "Trials, Tragedies and Trade Unions," overlaps with the period covered in the previous chapter while delving into the activity of the American Trotskyists in a number of areas they chose to prioritize …. But first a little background is needed. In his own words, Leon Trotsky had been a political exile on a "planet without a visa" since his expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1929, moving successively to Turkey, France and Norway before finally being offered refuge in Mexico by the left-nationalist populist government of Lazaro Cardenas. As he and his wife Natalia arrived in Mexico in January 1937, shadowed by menacing Stalinist agents, Trotsky was preoccupied with three questions above all others: the infamous Moscow trials, organized by Stalin to liquidate all real or imagined opposition to his regime, the fate of the

revolutionary working class in Spain as the country was convulsed by civil war, and the consummation of his plans to launch the Fourth International before war broke out once again across Europe.

Not surprisingly, from 1936 to 1938 these matters also became major preoccupations of the American Trotskyists, even as they fought to win supporters in the SPA, strengthen their influence in the labor movement, and build on their successful work in Minneapolis. In this context, Cannon and his comrades, while still operating inside the SPA, sought to facilitate and secure Trotsky's residency in Mexico and build a campaign to defend the "Old Man" against the perfidious frame-up charges levelled against him in Moscow. Tried and convicted *in absentia* by Stalinist prosecutors, it was imperative for Trotsky to defend himself *in absentia* and expose the criminal nature of the Moscow show trials in their entirety. If the charges against him were to be upheld by an independent inquiry, Trotsky declared he would voluntarily surrender himself to the executioners of Stalin's GPU.

Palmer provides a detailed account of the origins and activity of the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky, headed by Trotskyist intellectual George Novack, and the subsequent Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials chaired by the famous American liberal philosopher John Dewey. Chapter Six also addresses the work of Trotsky and his American followers in exposing the betrayals of the Spanish revolution by the Stalinists, the social democrats, the anarcho-syndicalists, and the centrist Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), led by the former Left Oppositionist, Andreas Nin. Trotsky's indictment of the POUM for capitulating to the class collaborationist "Popular Front" drew a major line of demarcation

between the ICL and various left-centrist elements in both America and Europe – groups and individuals that had previously professed sympathy for Trotsky's ideas. This separation of the wheat from the chaff was vital in preparing the ground for the Fourth International.

The chapter winds up with two lengthy but interesting sections on American labor-movement matters: "Trotskyism Finds its Sea Legs: Cannon and the Maritime Federation of the Pacific," and "Trotskyism on the Line: Footholds in Mass Production and the CIO."

Palmer's important Conclusion to his book, titled simply "Party/International," returns to the last months of the Trotskyists' entry in the SPA, the circumstances surrounding their expulsion, and the founding of the Socialist Workers Party. It then proceeds to a discussion of the strongly supportive role that Cannon and his comrades played in drafting the Transitional Program and founding the Fourth International in Paris in September 1938. Among other things Palmer's discussion underscores the significance of the American Trotskyists' positive example in constructing a serious revolutionary rival to Stalinism and social democracy in the U.S. workers' movement as ICL delegates from eleven countries met in Paris to consider their movement's future. When the question of proclaiming the Fourth International was put to a vote, nineteen delegates voted in favor and just three against including two Polish delegates who based their objections on a document written by Trotsky's future biographer, Isaac Deutscher. The position of the majority of the delegates is ably and sympathetically presented by Palmer, while Deutscher's never-renounced position on this question is summarized somewhat tendentiously in *The Prophet Outcast* (1963).

The Jim Cannon that Palmer portrays was always at his most energetic and politically effective when immersed in mass work: in the coal fields of Illinois in 1932-33, in the Minneapolis Teamsters strikes of 1934, with the entry into the Socialist Party and his involvement with the Sailors Union of the Pacific during his lengthy stay in California in 1936, and of course when addressing mass audiences on questions ranging from winning strikes and fighting fascism to exposing the Moscow trials and making the case for a new, revolutionary International. Mass work, particularly involving militant workers' struggles, was clearly his element and his inspiration. But Cannon never wavered from the conviction that such work was only truly significant when linked to the struggle to build the Fourth International – the world party of socialist revolution.

Palmer's book casts much light on many important themes pertaining to the construction of such an international party, among them:

* the profound difficulties that must be faced in any serious effort to overthrow capitalism – to actually *make* a socialist revolution, as opposed to simply fighting for a few "progressive" reforms within the existing system;

* the essential and inescapable necessity of building a revolutionary party on the Bolshevik-Leninist model: a democratic but also highly disciplined party capable of integrating diverse personalities, with widely varying strengths and weaknesses, on the basis of a common revolutionary program;

* the need to identify and combat "centrist" vacillation, a leftist politics that Trotsky, following Lenin, described as "revolutionary in words, but opportunist in deeds";

* the need to politically extend the party's trade union work beyond advocacy of rank-and-file militancy to the struggle to embed the revolutionary transitional program within the most class-conscious layers of the proletariat, and thereby potentially forge a revolutionary leadership for the labor movement;
* the need to fight against sectarianism, understood *not* as an active concern for purity of Marxist principles, but as a refusal to embrace tactics necessary to finding a road to the masses.

This last theme deserves special attention in light of what we can learn today from the entry that Cannon's Workers Party undertook in the Socialist Party in 1936-37. Refuting Stalinist and social-democratic obloquies about purported "Trotskyite splitting and wrecking," Palmer describes how the American Trotskyists actually played a largely *constructive* role within the SPA, above all in California, and how they did so without in any way compromising their revolutionary principles. As he makes abundantly clear, it was the SPA right wing and their centrist hangers-on that provoked the split by bureaucratically expelling the Trotskyists, and for little more than upholding and promulgating the ideas of revolutionary Marxism. Concerning this important episode, Palmer writes:

> Understanding that this was a *tactic* in consolidating the forces of a revolutionary vanguard, Cannon was unwavering in his resolve to build the possibility of a Fourth International with a strong American component. That this meant clearing the debris of centrism and worse from the terrain of class struggle, moving advocates of Musteism further to the left, stopping the drift of potentially revolutionary workers to either the Stalinist Communist Party or Lovestone's Right Opposition, even contributing to the

> ongoing demoralization of the Socialist Party, has always sat uneasily with Cannon's more liberal critics. The lure of an all-inclusive party of the left, somehow constructed in ways that transcend the strategic differences separating distinct strands adhering to counter-posed politics of revolution and social democratic reform, has historically been an attractive panacea. Cannon functioned within this period, not with the purpose of *destruction*, as his detractors have so often suggested, but with the intent of *construction*. He did what he could to see that this took place within the Socialist Party, appreciating the long-term unlikelihood of that prospect. (p. 944)

Skeptics may accuse Palmer of engaging in something of a sleight of hand here, since Cannon's purpose was never to rescue the already crisis-ridden SPA from further decline but instead to win its best elements to Trotskyism and thereby accelerate the construction of a new, revolutionary socialist party. All the same, Palmer's assessment is essentially correct: for what is deemed useful and constructive by revolutionary Marxists in furthering their aims can only be seen as destructive to the projects of left opportunists of every stripe – social democrats, Stalinists and centrists alike. Dismissing Trotskyists as "splitters and wreckers" has always been about diverting attention away from the central question of *program* – that is, revolution versus reform – while sanctifying a chimeric "unity of the left" that requires never transgressing the bounds of capitalism. Palmer shows that the work of Cannon and his comrades, within and on behalf of the SPA, was not that of provocateurs, but of Marxists seeking to advance the struggles and consciousness of the working class in every way they could. That said, the development of the class struggle cannot fail to produce many splits, fusions and realignments, as programmatic and strategic differences arise in constantly changing circumstances.

In an era when so many would-be socialists have been seduced by loud Siren calls to build reformist "broad left" parties while others seem content to act as cheerleaders for left-nationalist, nominally socialist governments (and/or as anti-imperialist proselytizers for "multipolarity"), the experience of the pioneer American Trotskyists' fight for Trotsky's perspective of permanent revolution and against Stalinism, along with the lessons of their exemplary work in the SPA and the trade unions, deserve to be studied with the utmost seriousness. Bryan Palmer's tremendous efforts in writing this exceptional biography of Cannon deserve grateful reciprocation by all those whose sincere objective is the final vanquishing of capitalism and the winning of a socialist world.

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