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SOME NOTES ON THE WORKERS' PARTY RESOLUTION
"THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN EUROPE"

Never before in the history of the world has the objective situation been as favorable for socialist revolutions as it will be in the next two years. In all the occupied countries the capitalist classes stand exposed and condemned by their collaboration with the Nazis.¹ In France few believed in the continuation of the Third Republic even before the Germans broke through at Sedan -- today absolutely no one believes in its reestablishment. The only people who believe any semblance of the Weimar Republic can be resurrected in Germany are a few intellectual refugees. Even in England and the United States the horrible bungling and disorganization which has characterized the war effort simply tends to deepen the lack of confidence in capitalism which arose during the depression.

But, on the positive side things are not nearly as bright. Since 1915 the organized, conscious revolutionary movement has probably not been as weak as it now is. Both in Europe and in the Western Block the workers either stand aside from revolutionary organizations, or are under the influence of the Stalinists. They know what they are against, but they don't know what they are for, or how to get it.

This situation can be remedied in one way, and in one way only. That is for the existing revolutionary grouplets to follow a policy of maximum flexibility in working with and through all "spontaneously" arising workers' movements and through the trade unions (where they exist) for the purpose of gaining wide influence with the workers. At the same time we must keep absolutely clear our socialist-revolutionary program and theory.

The above policy has nothing new or striking about it. But in the face of a lot of talk about the struggle for national liberation in Europe it seems to need re-stating and re-interpretation.

1. Even Dorothy Thompson has been able to grasp a fact which seems to escape the framers of this Resolution when she points out that in the overwhelming majority of cases the large bourgeoisie in each country has irrevocably separated itself from the people by its open collaboration with the Nazis, both before and after the German victory. There is no way in the world in which these gentlemen can square themselves with their people after the war, least of all by appealing to nationalist sentiments. This part of the lesson of the Paris Commune has been learned before the insurrection and will not even enter as a factor during it.

"NATIONAL LIBERATION" AND THE NATIONALIST BOURGEOISIE

The struggle for national liberation is and always has been dominated by the bourgeoisie and the intelligencia. The latter has a particular stake in national independence as it makes its living to no small degree by teaching the national language and history, administering and litigating in the framework of the national laws, running the national state machine. Under foreign domination it is restricted in and eliminated from many of these spheres of activity.*

A workers struggle for "national liberation", particularly in the advanced countries of Europe tends, by its very nature, to be subordinated to the program of the liberal bourgeoisie and its intelligencia. The moment it goes beyond specifically nationalist and bourgeois aims and slogans, it becomes something much more than simply a struggle for national liberation. Of course, the workers know that they cannot settle with their own bourgeoisie until they have removed the foreign oppressor. But it is precisely the function of socialists to combat the extreme nationalist and patriotic aspects of this fight.

The great danger now is not that the mass revolutionary struggle will be exterminated by the Nazis -- but that it will be stifled in the "liberating" embrace of the Western Block and the Soviet Union. The great danger now is that the workers, looking for any and all support against their present oppressors will be beguiled into accepting and welcoming new oppressors who, even if they are not quite as openly brutal and barbaric as their present rulers, can be even more effective in the long run.

COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS...IN GERMANY

In Germany itself, the workers are not likely to have many illusions about what awaits them from a complete victory of the Western Block. As we have pointed out since the war began, the conviction among the German people that they would be completely crushed should the Allies win has been one of Hitler's trump cards in keeping them behind him. The "unconditional surrender" slogan of the Casablanca Conference has one major meaning: The Western Block will not treat with any revolutionary government which might result from the overthrow of Hitler. They will use the demand for unconditional surrender to justify the invasion of Germany and the subjugation of a revolutionary workers' movement.**

* In this connection it should be pointed out that the framers of the Resolution have suddenly made a most convenient discovery. This is that DeGaul's Committee and the governments in exile have no real support in the most important actions of the underground movement. The reason I say this is a "sudden" discovery is that for three years I have read every line written by members of the Workers Party on the underground movement (as well as much that has been written by others) and I do not recall seeing a line which would indicate that the decisive sections of the underground are opposed to DeGaul's Committee, though there has been evidence that some sections are independent of it.

** (See Page 4)

But Stalin has been much less clear in his declaration of intentions. It cannot be denied that much as the European workers may have learned to mistrust their domestic Stalinists, they look with hope and confidence to the Soviet Union. For Germany and Eastern Europe this presents a very real danger. Let us assume that Hitler is overthrown by a mass popular movement. The first act of the new government is to offer peace to both Stalin and the Western Block on a basis of withdrawal to the old frontiers of Germany, on the condition that the Western Block not invade Europe, but permit the people to work out their own political destinies. In case the Block rejects this condition, it is very probable that the German workers would invite the Russian army to come in and help them hold the line against the Allies. If Stalin accepts such an invitation, the armies advance, the workers welcome it -- sending delegations from their workers' and soldiers' councils to meet their Russian brothers. Almost at once strange and alarming things start happening. Wherever the Russian army takes over, purges commence. Instead of freely elected and responsible councils, safe and sound Stalinist commissars (Russian or German) with dictatorial powers are set up. Dissident papers are suppressed, and protest meetings bloodily broken up and their instigators jailed or shot. A new trek towards the concentration camps begins -- but the workers quickly observe that the new concentrees are not at all exclusively known and hated Nazis, but that among them are many of the most trusted, militant and courageous fighters of the underground movement and leaders of the revolution. As the news spreads that the Russian conduct themselves more like Nazis than like Bolsheviks the central council, if there is one, demands that the Russians stop their advance till "misunderstandings" can be cleared up. At this stage the fate of the German revolution will depend on the speed with which the workers can re-orient themselves to Stalinism, and the speed and effectiveness with which they can stem the Russian tide.***

IN THE CONQUERED COUNTRIES

Insurrections in the conquered countries cannot be successful before the Nazi power disintegrates within Germany unless they are combined with Allied military offensives. Such insurrections will flare up the moment large scale landings take place on the Continent, or the moment Russian successes on the Eastern Front become great enough to make the end of German military power seem imminent.

It is probable that the Polish, Greek, and Yugoslav governments in exile have little or no support at home, with the same thing being true, though in lesser degree, about the Norwegian, Dutch, and Belgian ones. This is a deduction from the fact that the first three governments were so hated when they were in their own countries that they could afford no democracy, a statement which cannot be applied with the same force to the second three. But where DeGaul is concerned, we have the classical example of the leadership of the nationalist petty-bourgeoisie in a nationalist struggle. One would think that the framers of the Resolution would at least introduce some factual data to back up such a startling discovery as this: that DeGaul is without significant support, when every report from

As successful insurrections take place, the problem will be similar. As the Nazis withdraw, the conquered peoples welcome in the soldiers of the United Nations. The Western Block has been preparing and maintaining armies under the control of the "governments" in exile for this specific purpose. These armies will probably form the spearheads of advance -- each into its own country, closely accompanied with or followed by British and/or American troops. As long as the Germans offer active resistance, the workers will no doubt welcome their "liberators", even in transition or workers governments have already been organized.****

every source indicates the contrary. It is to be feared that the framers of the Resolution have no factual data with which to back up this statement. They have, it seems, simply substituted the wish for the reality, because if the reality is held firmly in view, it becomes evident that the collaboration of revolutionists in a nationalist movement is fraught with all kinds of dangers and difficulties into the nature of which it is very convenient for the framers of this Resolution not to probe too deeply.

** Of course, if Hitler should be overthrown by the "right" people, and if these people showed themselves subservient to the Western Block and able to control their own workers, "unconditional surrender" could be forgotten. It has teeth only against workers' government, or a transitional one.

*** It goes without saying that the employment by Stalin of his army for such purposes in the advanced countries of Western Europe will be fraught with no less danger for the bureaucracy than the similar employment of British and American troops for the bourgeoisie.

**** It should be noted that it is most improbable that the insurrectionary workers will be able to establish central "national" governments for some time. The atomization and disorganization of the proletariat as well as of the old national state machines by the Nazis will, once they are gone, mean that there will be no central State machines for the workers to seize and crush. The workers' councils will be, at most, citywide or on a district basis. It will take quite a while for these to draw together, to establish contact with each other, and finally to throw up any kind of national organization. This process will be particularly difficult due to the fact that (perhaps aside from the Stalinists) there are no well organized political parties on a national scale.

It is at this stage that the governments in exile and their armies will play their diabolical role. They will be the only central authority on hand. They will have been legitimized a priori by the Allies. The efforts to liquidate the local workers' councils, to suppress revolutionary workers democracy, to insure and maintain the vested property rights of the bourgeoisie will be portrayed to the Allied soldiers as efforts to establish "law and order" against wild and irresponsible elements. (Without a doubt these will be described as "pro-Nazi" bands.) Without the establishment of some such native government, of some fiction of legality, it will be extremely difficult to order the war-weary English and American (and Russian) troops to fire on the populations of the "liberated" nations.

These designs of the rulers of the Allied nations will be greatly facilitated if, in the initial stages, the workers themselves in these countries are deceived into welcoming Anglo-American or Russian intervention. If, on the other hand, these workers from the very beginning reject the "governments" in exile, make it plain to the Allies and their armies that they accept their help only against the Nazis but that they want no armies quartered on them, it will be much more difficult to start any monkey business.

It is for this reason that all our efforts must be directed, at the present time, not to throw fuel on the nationalist movement for "national liberation", but to throw cold water on all the illusions which are unavoidably created by such a movement. But if we merely act as a fire department against wrong ideas, we will not get far. We must be the fire-bugs of the positive ideas of socialist revolution, and particularly, in this context, of the fight for a Socialist United States of Europe. None of us who are not living in France or one of the other occupied countries can know exactly how much the thinking of the masses there has been able to rise over the level of their immediate trials and their desire for revenge. But just as in this country every passing week of the war puts the problems of post-war organization increasingly before the workers, so, the workers of bleeding Europe must be growing never more alert to what the collapse of the Nazi power will bring in its wake.

THE TIME IS NOW!

It is absolutely essential for the revolutionary movement both here and in Europe to understand that the war against Hitler Germany will not last beyond the fall of 1944. To work now as if we have two, three or more years ahead of us in which to fight for national liberation, in which to consolidate and develop the revolutionary cadres through a slow processes of assimilation and education is to court disaster.

In America, the workers are on the march now. In Europe it is now that we must differentiate ourselves clearly from all bourgeois-nationalist elements and above all from the Stalinists. It is now that we must act with the utmost audacity in spreading our ideas among the workers -- in putting the face of the party before them -- in attracting to us all those revolutionists who have been timid and despondent in the last few years and those advanced workers whose experiences are impelling them on the revolutionary road.

We are just two years too late with our attention to the problem of national liberation in Europe. In 1940, 1941, and 1942, when it seemed that the Nazis had a good chance to consolidate their European conquest for some time, the struggle for national liberation was the highest possible expression of the revolutionary aspirations of the masses. The Nazis were the most immediate, brutal and powerful oppressors, and any fight for better conditions or for freedom itself had to be waged against them. In this fight it was quite right for the workers to join with all other elements of the population who wished to throw off the Nazi yoke. It was obviously the height of folly to speak of fighting for socialism, or even for civil liberties or better economic conditions, when the only way in which any of these objectives could be even approached was by throwing out the Nazis bag and baggage.

At that time the strength of the German war machine and the military weakness as well as political vacillations of its opponents gave the "New Order" an appearance of strength and solidity which was completely lacking in the "Democratic" camp. Say what you may, at least the Nazis had a "plan" for the organization of Europe which was much more definite and, in many ways, much more "reasonable" and "practical" than anything the Western Block has been able to think up to date.

But if anything is clear today, it is that the "New Order" has no chance of ever becoming consolidated. In practice, as a war-economy, it has been unable to give the people of Europe anything but misery and starvation, coupled with a complete denial of all human rights, whether democratic or otherwise. Further, and this must be even plainer to every worker within Europe than it is to us at this distance, the whole Nazi war economy is falling apart from inside even more rapidly than the Axis armies are being battered to pieces by their foes. Nothing but such a disintegration can explain such things, for instance, as the catastrophic decline of German air power in the last few months.

Now that it is clear to all that the Nazis are on their way out, that they can't possibly last beyond the fall of next year, the point of departure as well as the perspective of the struggle of the people of Europe is undergoing a rapid change. The battle against the Nazis is no longer the desperate, hopeless kind of struggle the main object of which is a small measure of revenge and the retention of one's own feeling of human dignity and self respect, or merely the blind lashings out against intolerable brutalities and provocations. The end of the Nazis is now in sight, and every conscious worker (and certainly every conscious capitalist) is asking himself: "after the Nazis -- what then?"

Our isolation from Europe, from the conditions which confront workers in fascist countries, is pitifully exposed in the programmatic heart of the Workers Party Resolution on the National Question in Europe which reads: "...it (Fascism) tends to replace at the top of the order of the day the direct struggle for social democracy (socialism) by the struggle for formal or political democracy, or for specific demands in the program of formal democracy". The slogans of "formal democracy" were the advancing slogans of the workers during the period of expanding capitalism -- not during the period

of its decay! Then it was possible to wring concessions from the bosses because they could afford to give them. For years we have been pointing out that those who raise these "purely democratic" slogans as the major ones in our own country are fighting a rear-guard action against advancing fascism -- and that the only way in which to go over to the attack is with the slogans of socialism. Certainly, we are ready to fight rearguard actions when necessary -- but once fascism has been established that kind of a fight is simply irrelevant -- and every worker under fascism knows it! Such demands are not even transitional ones as economic and political freedom is so obviously and blatantly incompatible with fascism that to demand it without demanding the total overthrow of totalitarianism is to act like a man who is being hanged who demands that the rope not be permitted to pinch the skin on his neck.

The fight for these "democratic" liberties can, from now on, be conducted only as a part of the fight for power, in the very real and concrete sense of the term. That is, civil and political liberty cannot be won in the course of a long-term gradual and "normal" development of the social conflict as it was won in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Civil and political liberties can only come into being from now on when the proletarian-revolutionary fight for power has reached such a stage that the bourgeoisie no longer has the strength to deny these rights.

NATIVE FASCISM AND FASCISM IN CONQUERED COUNTRIES

The Resolution describes the barbaric nature of Nazi rule in the conquered countries, speaks of the "Growth of Resistance to Hitler", then discusses the "Movements of Independence". In general, throughout the Resolution, there is no clear distinction between the struggle against fascism in the countries where it represents a mass movement -- where it took power by "peaceful" means -- where its power is exercised by "native fascists", and the struggle in the countries which have been conquered by the former, where fascist rule is, so to speak, something external, imposed by foreigners.

Yet this is one of the key questions to which the Resolution should have addressed itself. Whatever the extent of their political ideological development might be, the fight of the people in a conquered country cannot be directly for the seizure of power, for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as it can in a free country. In a conquered country the source of state power is beyond the reach of the local population. As long as the conqueror has the support of his own people at home and sufficient military forces at his command, he can put down any rebellion within a conquered country. It is impossible for the revolutionary masses to bring the executive of the state power (the army) over to their side, as its greatest masses are within the "mother" country, and can be shipped in for counter-revolutionary purposes at any time.

But this is not a situation which prevails in any specific or more concentrated form under fascist domination than under that of democratic capitalist countries. It is the problem with which every conquered country is faced. That is why in every conquered country

the the revolutionists must be for the withdrawal of the foreign oppressor (for "national liberation"). About this there should and can be no argument. The "only" points on which there should and be no argument. The "only" points on which there can be differences of opinion among revolutionists are those dealing with the organizational forms of the struggle, the ideological and programmatic position of the proletarian revolutionists within the struggle, the long range perspective with which they operate.

In this respect, the Resolution seems, from time to time, to be approaching a correct and clear position. But the position never seems quite to get itself concretized, quite to clear itself of ambiguities and evasions:

A GOOD START WHICH LEADS...NOWHERE

The working class movement, the Resolution says, has been discouraged, dispersed and atomized by the Nazi invasion. The more conscious workers enter the struggle for national liberation, in which they have only one thing in common with members of the other social classes who are also in this movement -- and that is the desire to drive out the invader.

"It would", says the Resolution, "be a gross error to conceive of the 'underground' movements as 'classless' or politically uniform. In the first place, it is more accurate to speak not of a movement but of movements, not of a group but of groups...every political current...is represented in the general movement in varying degrees of strength and popularity... Each political current seeks to assemble wider sections of the population...around its program and its organization and...to acquire political and organizational leadership over the underground movement as preliminary for leadership over the people as a whole."

The Resolution goes on: "...the workers in the underground movement...are not striving for national freedom and nothing else, that is, for a return of the status quo ante bellum, that is, for the Poland, the France, the Yugoslavia, the Greece of August, 1939... the Masses want to be rid of foreign rule in order that, under conditions of national independence, they may be able to put their native capitalist class 'in its place'. Wide differences undoubtedly exist among the masses as to what the future 'place' of the French, Polish, Yugoslav, Greek, Dutch, etc., capitalist classes should be..."

So far so good. To a revolutionary Marxist, the conclusions to be drawn from the above are, or should be, self-evident. The foreign oppressor must be thrown out, agreed. Though "everybody" in the conquered countries is for throwing him out, this means no more from an organizational and ideological-programmatic point of view than the fact that, in our country, "everybody" is against mass unemployment and too great poverty. There is not a movement, but movements, not a group, but groups. Some of these are Stalinist, some imperialist, some Fascist, and, we hope, some revolutionary socialist. As these factions and classes are contending for hegemony over the whole movement, it is assumed that the revolutionists are fighting for the hegemony of their program, their ideology. As

all are agreed that the Germans must go, there is no use agitating anyone, ourselves least of all, on this score. The fight against the German terror, against reprisals, the shooting of hostages, the starvation of millions, and, above all, the fight for the hearts and minds of the rank and file German soldiers -- this fight can be carried on in the broadest kind of united front.

But the fight inside the underground, for hegemony within it -- what of that? If the masses already feel that what they want is not the old rule of 1939, they must themselves, even without the aid of conscious Marxists, be struggling within the movement against the Stalinists and bourgeoisie. And what aid do we give them? How do we clarify the issue, make clear to them who are real friends and who enemies, what to expect the moment the Germans are out? We come to them, it seems, in the summer of 1943, when the obvious tottering of the Germans puts this struggle for hegemony and political clarity at the very "top of the list", to tell them that we are 100% for national liberation and self-determination, that the struggle now must be for "formal" democratic rights, etc., etc.

Under the section of the Resolution entitled "What is to be Done" we should have the right to expect the specific program of action which is to be followed. Nothing of the kind appears. Instead, we read: "The aim of this (the nationalist) movement...is a just one..... As at present constituted, it is for the most part a genuinely popular and democratic movement ... This movement is the only serious mass movement in Europe today, and it is impossible for the otherwise completely isolated revolutionary Marxists to establish contact with the masses without becoming part and parcel of this movement". Etc., etc. (Emphasis mine)

So, it is no longer "movements", it is now "a movement". This may look like a pretty small-gage kind of criticism. After all we speak of the "socialist movement", though everyone knows of the divisions within it, and of the bitterness of ideological and organizational struggle among them. Yet, it is often by what is omitted, or by the emphasis and vigor of language employed that we can get a better idea of the true direction of the wind than by what is explicitly stated and laboriously explained. The whole emphasis here is on getting into the "movement", working for its aspirations, not becoming isolated from it. Over and over again we hear that we must be for national liberation -- that this and some "formal" democratic demands -- and not specifically socialist education, clarification, a socialist program -- is on the "order of the day".

ECONOMIC DEMANDS AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE STATE

Under the heading "A Marxist Program" we come, at long last, to the part Marxist revolutionists are to play. They must demand that "progressively bolder economic demands for the workers" be a part of the program of the "national movement". But the fact is that in France and the other conquered nations the demands for better economic conditions cannot be made against the "national bourgeoisie", as these are completely dominated by the Germans. Wages, hours, conditions of work, rations, -- all these are determined by

the occupying authorities. Just as the struggle of the American workers for better conditions becomes a struggle not against this or that employer, but against the State itself, so in an occupied country the struggle has reality only when it is conducted against the foreign administration. This is a fundamental weakness of the Resolution - : its framers have failed to understand that the rise of fascism, or the existence of foreign conquest on the fascist model does pose before the workers directly the struggle against the State. We are warned against falling into the 1934 Stalinist fallacy of proclaiming that the rise of Fascism will bring the revolutionary struggle for power to a head. The mistake the Stalinists made was that they failed to realize that fascism would and could crush out the workers organizations -- that it could maintain itself by a combination of ideological, economic, and political forces for a long, long time. But there is another side to fascism -- both when it rules in its own country and abroad. It so organizes the bourgeoisie into the State that it clears the consciousness of the working class of the greatest and most fatal confusion to which it is subject -- the illusion that the State is something separate and different from the bourgeoisie and their economic system. Under fascism, in Germany and in the conquered countries, the workers see clearly that the State sets their wages, oppresses them in every way. If they understand anything, they understand that they can free themselves only by proceeding against the State power. Even if the action they take seems to be similar to the forms of struggle in capitalist democracies (i.e. plant-wide or industry-wide strikes, slow-downs, sabotage, etc.) they know that its only hope of success is not that it will wring a concession from the owners of the given factory or industry, but that it will exert enough economic pressure to wring a concession from the State. (Let anyone deny this is the face of the fight of the U.M.W. in this country, where the economic and political forms of fascism are just crystallizing!) Every struggle brings them, not against company thugs, but squarely against the armed power of the State.

In this sense, and in this context, every strike becomes, in fact, a small insurrection against the State. The gap between the "immediate" demands and the struggle for power is greatly reduced. Specific economic struggle can only be justified in a perspective of revolutionary struggle against the State. Pork-chop unionism is a lot deader than the Dodo.

WHAT THE WORKERS "WANT" ... AND WHAT THEY GET

The Resolution contains one other fundamental fallacy, which is closely connected with the one exposed above. This is the idea that the workers in Europe will "want" a more or less long interlude of bourgeois democratic rule within the borders of their own "national states", and that therefore the slogan for a Socialist United States of Europe will only serve to put them in opposition to Socialism.

A. "NATIONAL STATES" WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

When we speak of national self-determination, of the right of nations to independent existence, just how do we define a "nation"? Surely we cannot simply mean that we are for the reestablishment of the post-Versailles boundaries -- those boundaries which were dictated by the power-political interests of the ruling classes which won the First World War. Surely we cannot demand that some new partition take place along more truly "ethnic" lines -- when all population experts agree that the people of Europe are so interpenetrated in the national shatter-zones that no clear division is possible.

As the framers of the Resolution have taken pains to denounce the old boundaries of Europe, it might seem, on the surface, that their position in this respect is clear. But here again, as at so many other points, the true programmatic effect of the resolution is illuminated more by the silences than by the assertions. At no point does the Resolution bother to specify just what it means by a "national state" in Europe. Nowhere does it say what will be the boundaries of the "sovereign states" which the workers allegedly want before they will want to have them federated. It is embarrassing even to have to talk about something which should be as elementary as this. From time to time in the resolution we see reference to Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece, or to the "national bourgeoisie" of these countries. Try as you may, you cannot escape the conclusion that when the Resolution speaks of "national liberation" from the Germans, or of "sovereign states" it implies either a re-constitution of precisely these states, or if not that, it simply has evaded the question. But we know that the framers of the Resolution agreed that Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, etc., were themselves "internal imperialisms", that where these are concerned the borders of the State and of the Nation are far from co-extensive. We know that they were not the last to analyze the role which the movements for national self-determination within these States played in the Nazi conquest. But why then this silence, this thundering silence, about something which must be wracking the underground movement against the Nazis at this very moment? The answer is simple -- too simple. As the whole purpose and emphasis of the Resolution is to direct the workers towards the "national" struggle rather than toward the socialist fight for hegemony within the national movement, it simply becomes inconvenient to deal with these ticklish problems. The only way in which we can come to grips with this whole problem of national self-determination, both ideologically and practically, is with the slogan of the socialist United States of Europe.

The framers of the Resolution do not seem to have made the attempt, even for a moment, to think themselves into the position of, say, a Czech worker who is trying to follow the line of their resolution. As long as he discusses with his fellows ways and means of getting the Germans out, he would have no difficulties. But the moment the question turns to the re-constitution of Czechoslovakia as a free "sovereign state", he would search the resolution in vain for a guide to his policy. Likely as not, his fellow worker in the underground would be a Slovak, a Ruthenian, or even a Sudeten German. Unless these workers are exceptionally dumb, it would be clear

to all of them that Czechia, Ruthenia, Slovakia, or the Sudeten areas could never hope to be "independent, sovereign states". Our hypothetical Czech comrade who is trying to follow the resolution would be able to do one of two things: either gracefully absent himself from such a discussion, or argue for ... a Socialist United States of Europe!

Here lies the crux of the problem. The fight to oust the Nazis is not necessarily a fight for national liberation, national self-determination, in the same sense as were the struggles of the 19th and first decades of the 20th centuries. Europe has since then gone through a period of extreme disillusionment with nationalism. In the nationalist and racist theories of Nazism and Fascism the whole of Europe has seen the horrors which result from nationalism carried to its ultimate logical extreme. As if to impress this lesson indelibly on their minds, they have seen in addition the petty bickerings and national jealousies of all the European countries contribute as much to Nazi success as the superb organization of the 150 divisions of the Wehrmacht.

Nazism has probably done more to break down the nationalist illusions of the workers of Europe than anything else could have done. In the International Brigades in Spain we have already seen a consciousness of common problems and common foes which was strong enough to impel men of all nations to lay down their lives together for something more than national freedom. The millions of workers from all lands thrown together in the factories and on the farms of Germany have undoubtedly gained a new vision of the common lot of all working people which cuts across national lines. Despite this development of nationalism in Russia, and despite the many illusions associated with Stalinist "internationalism" in all countries, the fact is that millions of people have come to look to Russia (in a very idealistic and symbolic way, to be sure, but symbolism is at least 60% of nationalism) as their real fatherland, not because it is Russian, but because they think it is Socialist.

B. THE REVOLUTIONARY STABILIZATION OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Aside from the question of the areas in which these sovereign, formal, bourgeois democratic regimes are to hold sway, is the question whether they will hold sway anywhere. Of course, it would be folly to believe that the moment the Nazis are out, the workers will form nation-wide councils which will proceed to establish the socialist power. It is most probable that transitional governments of a petty-bourgeois nature will be formed. But this will only be so if the pressure of the workers' councils is such that it is impossible to form national-authoritarian regimes. It is not that the workers crave democracy above all else and are suspicious of "socialist authoritarianism"...

Democracy of any kind can exist from now on only as a result (1) of a seizure of power by the workers, or (2) of such a balance of power that the bourgeoisie has no alternative but to grant democracy because it is too weak to do anything else. (Why in the world did the Kerensky regime "give" as much democracy as it did? Simply because when it tried to introduce the "strong man", Kornilov,

the workers licked the pants off it.)

But it is elementary that such a balance cannot last beyond a very, very short time. The Resolution seems to understand this, but then it turns out that it doesn't.

"But there is no reason to believe that the 'democratic interval' will or can be more than an interval If . . . bourgeois democracy proved unable to solve any serious problem in Germany and was so sickly that it could not last out fifteen years, there are no grounds for believing that in the post-war crisis bourgeois democracy will prove to be stronger and more viable..."

In Spain, we are given to understand by inference, it will be "less than" two and a half years, and in other countries similarly. What audacity -- what revolutionary optimism! It seems that we are not talking of transitional governments in a revolutionary period (Kerensky lasted just six months!) but really of a bourgeois stabilization lasting from two and a half to fifteen years!

We have already seen that the Resolution believes that "the masses want to be rid of foreign rule in order that, under conditions of national independence, they may be able to put their native capitalist class in its place". Later it speaks of power lying in the streets, of the dual power in the factories, of armed workers resisting their disarmament. Is there anyone, who will seriously contend that such a state of affairs can last for one year -- leave alone fifteen?

Yes, apparently there is. Here again it may be charged that an embellishment of literary style has been inflated into a contradiction. But the test of the true significance of any theory lies not in its verbal formulations and labored explanations - but in the practice, the program which flows from it. The program here is one of democratic demands, free speech, free press, free organization -- and above all national independence. This program is not derived from a close study of what is taking place when the power lies in the streets, when there is dual power in the presence of armed workers -- because these things characterize a proletarian-revolutionary situation in which only socialist revolutionary slogans and strategy are admissible. This program can only be justified if we are operating with a perspective of two to fifteen years of bourgeois democratic rule!

In this connection, it should be added that whether the masses consciously want to "proceed directly to the establishment of an 'authoritarian' socialist, proletarian government" or not is completely beside the point. As a matter of fact, putting the dynamic of the revolutionary struggle in terms of the masses desire for a socialist (why authoritarian is beyond me) regime is, as Runyon would say, strictly the old phonus-balonus. Did the Russian Revolution succeed because the workers "wanted" to "proceed directly" to such a regime? It succeeded, and the European revolution can succeed because the dialectic of the struggle itself forced the workers to take power because only in that way could they have peace, bread, and freedom. They found, and that very rapidly, that the regime of

"formal democracy" which they had erected on the ruins of Czarism could give them nothing, and constantly tended to convert itself into a regime of dictatorship. From the moment the Nazis are out the existence of the dual power will produce the same dynamic!

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

The Resolution correctly emphasizes the role the Allies hope to play in Europe as soon as the Nazis are ousted, both directly and through their puppet governments. But here the time-perspective is all-important. If the war is going to last two or more years longer, and if it is going to be followed by the establishment of liberal democratic regimes which will last for from two to fifteen years, there would be much to recommend a period during which the revolutionists in the occupied countries would be primarily champions of "national liberation" and later of democratic political demands. But if the Nazis are, at the very moment, on their way out, and if the allies intend at once to establish dictatorial, anti-democratic regimes, the revolutionist cannot delay for a single day the raising of anti-bourgeois, anti-allied, revolutionary socialist demands. The workers must be prepared in advance to meet the allied soldiers and the armies of the puppet governments with such hostility that there can be no doubt in the mind of one British, American, or European soldier that he is being used to put down a mass, popular movement.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEORY AND THE FORGING OF A PROGRAM

It is one of the fundamental tenets of Marxist philosophy that thought without action is sterile, and runs the great danger of being wild and undisciplined. In the social movement, the only check we have on thought is the practice, the experiences through which we go. We cannot take our theories and prognostications into the laboratory, as the physical scientist can, isolate our variables, and proceed to verify our theories under the ideal laboratory conditions. In the absence of this possibility, there is a great tendency to become very fascinated by the problems of parties and classes with which we have almost no contact and over which we can therefore exercise almost no practical influence. We can, in this realm, spin theories endlessly, argue with and denounce each other's follies, without the possibility of testing out any of our theories or programs in practice.

In our development of theory and program with regard to our own country and its social movement, the attempt to operate on the basis of a wrong theory, to work with a program which is really unworkable almost at once has repercussions which we can feel on our hides. The comrades in the trade unions or elsewhere who are responsible for putting the program into action begin to sense that something is wrong, and to press on the political leadership for a revision -- a revision made in the light of practical experience which the rank and file communicates to the leadership.

Under present circumstances, however, it is almost impossible for us to proliferate a theory and program for the European revo-

But our real job, both theoretically and programmatically, is to do what we can, right here at home, to help the European workers in their struggles. This task is helped only very little by discussions in our press of the applicability of the program and slogans of self-determination for the European movement. The level of consciousness of the European workers which dictates the programmatic emphasis for the revolutionary party (on "self-determination" or "Socialist United States of Europe") can only be determined by the revolutionists on the spot. For us, here, both of these slogans are of the utmost importance, and they must be used together. National self-determination must be pounded at as a right to prepare the workers here for opposition to the suppression of the European revolution under the guise of supporting the "sane" and "orderly" elements in each of the "liberated" countries. This must be used in conjunction with a campaign to demand the immediate return and demobilization of the American army as soon as the Nazis are overthrown. Such a demand is not only essential as an aid to our brothers in Europe, but it will also be a slogan which is highly popular with the American soldiers, their families and friends at home. In every respect it is a progressive, an anti-imperialist, a truly transitional slogan.

A NEW RESOLUTION

A critical analysis of this Resolution is really a heart-breaking task. Many things in it show acute analysis and a series of penetrating insights into the dynamic of the European revolution. But no sooner does one begin to applaud, than one is slapped in the face with some misunderstanding so crass, some formulation so loose, some idea so half-digested, that one can only conclude that the resolution was prepared in haste and under the overwhelming impact of the realization that unless the revolutionists in Europe enter the arena of the anti-German struggle they will lose all power to influence the masses in the correct direction.

Really the only way to criticize this Resolution is to formulate another one. My only hope is that the sketchy and incomplete notes introduced here will serve in some small degree to bring to the attention of the Political Committee some of the more serious results of their haste and carelessness.

F O R E W O R D

When the Political Committee of the Workers' Party presented its revisionist position on the national question in the January number of the New International, I was amazed and alarmed, not because they were so bold as to revise our established position of the past, but because of their complete misestimation of the revolutionary potential in Europe today. They deny that the millions of Europe are ready to struggle on a revolutionary proletarian basis for socialism, but they imply and believe that these same millions can be galvanized into action on the bourgeois-democratic basis of the struggle for national independence. What is more they try to steam roller all opposition with the cock-sure remark that "a contrary opinion does not even warrant serious discussion."

Instead of searching out the advanced sectors of the European workers from among "the various groups of the various conquered countries", they seek out their "common objective" - "summed up in two words: national freedom." This is not only Marxist revisionism - it is a 1943 model of the Peoples' Front.

It reveals a tail end view of European history utterly incompatible with the responsibilities of a vanguard party. It means that the mistakes of Spain are about to be repeated - as when the Spanish revolutionary organizations found themselves so far in the dust that they were petitioning the government, already overthrown, to legislate a wage increase after the workers had already seized the factories! In other words it means that the coming European revolution will be upon us before our party leadership is in any way prepared for it. They think that fascism, in stamping out the workers' organizations, has stamped out the class struggle. But the fact is, war and fascism have intensified the class struggle in Europe.

Without waiting another month for the second half of their thesis I set out to refute their dangerous and backward conception in an article on the class struggle then developing in Yugoslavia, which article I submitted to the New International. The article was returned with the statement that everyone in the national office was in complete disagreement with my position. I was advised to wait for the full text of the PC resolution which would surely persuade me of my errors, and then to submit my new position for internal publication.

So I waited and studied. Johnson's position was somewhat better, but confused as to the timing of his slogans. You cannot raise the "Free France" slogan and the Socialist United States of Europe in the same breath. First you must raise the transitional slogan and when the time is ripe - that is, when the workers begin to dominate in a state of dual power - then you call for the SUSE. But in one or another part of Europe that may be very soon.

In any case it is not necessary for revolutionary socialists in Europe today to descend so low as the "Free France" type of slogan or the "Free France" movement. I can imagine circumstances where that might episodically become the proper slogan and tactic,

but not in most of Europe today. During the remaining period of Hitler occupation I would raise the slogan of a "Workers' France" or a "Free Workers France". Soon we will call for "Les Soviets Partout", later for a SUSE.

Despite this confusion and his over lengthy presentation, Johnson can be credited with a proper historical approach and a proper emphasis on Germany. The fact that Shachtman claims he knew all that before does not make it out of place. Historical generalities do not prove Johnson's case, but they make it absolutely plausible.

Gates' and Shachtman's later contributions indicate increasing awareness of the imminence of the dual power struggle, but they are still off the beam in their timing and their emphasis. Allen likewise shows undue pessimism toward the immediate revolutionary possibilities.

My position does not deny the possible use of nationalist slogans. Today I would advance them in Asia and perhaps in Holland and Norway. I only insist that as the masses are drawn into action most of Europe will at once be confronted with class struggles and revolutionary situations. It has only been the quiescence of the masses which has allowed the allied governments and the upper class exiles to flourish their unsubstantial national movements. The masses will not in this day and age support any such limited movement.

Even now it is our duty to send representatives to seek out the revolutionary fractions and to support them specifically. It is not necessary to confer a vague blessing on an amorphous nationalist peoples' front. When Hitler crumbles the workers will seize the factories at once, before the allied troops arrive. With the arrival of these troops an advanced dual power struggle will be posed immediately.

After due consideration, and in view of the revolutionary situations reported as brewing in Italy, the Balkans and even in Portugal and Hamburg, I can only conclude that my original position was correct and request its publication along with this explanation.

In its details the Yugoslavia article is six months out of date, but essentially it is just as correct today, with renewed class struggle imminent in Yugoslavia, as well as Greece and Bulgaria. Of course, I know that Matchek is a nationalist and no revolutionary. But even if my picture of the Balkan situation proved to be overdrawn, the main industrial regions of western Europe are already on the point of outmoding the discussion of the national question.

PRE-VIEW OF REVOLUTION

A specter is haunting Europe - and it is not the specter of nationalist revolution.

As the war continues its ravages and brings suffering and ruin to new millions, the prospect of the eventual uprising of the peoples of Europe and Asia is ever more assured. No one can doubt the inevitable day of reckoning.

For proof of this, let us examine the recent history of Yugoslavia. This semi-feudal country was never fully absorbed by the capitalism of western Europe. Quickly over-run by Hitler, it found itself well behind the line of battle. It was not of sufficient strategic or economic importance to command a large scale military occupation like France. As the result of these circumstances, this backward country is the scene of the most advanced mass struggles to be found in Europe today.

Jugoslavia should not be overlooked by those comrades who are discussing the political forms which the coming European revolts will take. There is a great deal of disagreement as to whether they will be molded in the old forms of nationalist revolt against the foreign invaders, or whether they will shape up as profound and social revolutions with the political power passing into the hands of the workers and peasants. Or will both kinds of revolution take place, first one and then the other, or even both at the same time? Will the eventual results be the restoration of the former states and forms of government, or will there emerge a United States of Europe? Will there be private property or collective property in the means of production?

It is not necessary to answer these questions entirely a priori and in abstraction. Yugoslavia is already giving us a pre-view of the coming European revolution, and Louis Adamic in the Saturday Evening Post for December 19th, 1942, gives us a picture of Yugoslav politics and guerilla warfare - a picture which has the earmarks of authenticity. He explains how, after the invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941, the Allied world was electrified by the news of Mikhailovitch's army of some 80,000 irregular troops, giving battle to the Axis. There were other guerilla bands, the most important of which came to be the Partisans, led by Communists according to Adamic, though the personnel of these units was not made up of Communists. But for months they had no central command.

Fighting between Mikhailovitch and the Partisans developed immediately, leaders of the latter considering the old ruling class, including Mikhailovitch and the government-in-exile, as fascists. This same gang of rulers had hounded the revolutionaries for years. Soon after the fall of Yugoslavia a civil war broke out between the two guerilla armies.

Repeatedly Mikhailovitch begged the Yugoslav government-in-exile to persuade the Soviet government that the Partisans should join his forces. But the civil war still continues.

Adamic asserts that some of the "finest people" in Yugoslavia are now in the Partisan ranks. They have wide public backing, especially among the peasants whose support was a pre-requisite for waging their battles with the fascist invaders. Some of the men and officers now in the Partisans have lately switched over from Mikhailovitch's forces.

According to Adamic the Partisans are as numerous as Mikhailovitch's fighters. They control Croatia and Italy's part of Slovenia, except garrisoned cities. Matchek's powerful Peasant's Party is behind them. They make large forays into Italy where they have the sympathy of the Slovenian and Croat populations given to Italy after the first world war. They also are found all over Yugoslavia whereas Mikhailovitch's troops hold only the mountains of the south. Thus it is the Partisans, not Mikhailovitch, who are responsible for immobilizing over 30 Axis divisions.

He claims also that in some parts of Slovenia the Partisans have their own money and rationing systems, courts of justice, schools, newspapers and radio station. They even have a military force made up of German deserters and they arm themselves by seizing Italian supply trains and supplies dropped them from Russian planes.

If the above description is accurate it is obvious that a revolutionary upsurge is developing from the social chaos of occupied Yugoslavia. The nationalist Mikhailovitch is torn between the tendency to fight the fascist enemy and to appease him. But as for the Partisan "bandits and hoodlums" who want a new social regime and who represent the majority of the Yugoslav people, he urges his countrymen to rise in wrath and exterminate them for their crimes. But Adamic insists that only a minority are anti-Partisan.

As a picture of class cleavage and civil war in Yugoslavia, Adamic's article is the best thing that has yet appeared. In one significant respect, however, it is not complete. He ignores the reports from London that the Partisan armies are split into Stalinist, Trotskyist and Anarchist bands. This omission could not be accidental, for the London reports are extremely significant, even sensational. If Adamic believes them to be false, he at least owes us that opinion. We can only conclude that he has purposely omitted reference to these reports, perhaps out of deference to the Stalinists.

Are the reports of numerous Trotskyist and Anarchist bands true? No important Trotskyist movement existed in Yugoslavia in the past, but we tend to believe these reports. Who would make up and circulate such stories? It is known that Yugoslavia had a large revolutionary communist movement in the past. During the last twenty years the Communist Parties of all countries have been split as their Stalinist leadership has abandoned revolutionary positions. Why should not the same thing be occurring in Yugoslavia, especially in the wake of a revolutionary situation? This does not mean that the so-called Yugoslav Trotskyists are Trotskyists in the precise political meaning of the term, however. In Spain the Stalinists hurled this name at any revolutionary. Likely the Yugoslav "Trotskyists" are just old communist revolutionaries who refused to follow Stalin's counter-revolutionary line.

Adamic does not overlook the bearing of Jugoslavia's civil war on the world war and the post-war settlement. Though the tenor of his article is pro-Stalinist, the last paragraph flatly repudiates the Stalinist perspective and refers to the tragic Chinese revolution. Possibly this was a manoeuver designed to get his article published by the Post. In any event, the appearance of Adamic's article had an immediate effect. Within a week, Washington spoke out on the Jugoslav question, through the lips of Elmer Davis of the OWI, and gave its benediction to the reactionary Mikhailovitch. The Stalinists, on the other hand, are denouncing Mikhailovitch as a fascist with renewed fury. The Party press is not adequate. Browder's infallible word on this subject is being given out broadside at factory gates!

Furthermore, it is no accident that the United Nations front should crack on the rock of Jugoslavia. If there is to be a falling out between the Soviet Union and the United States over the spoils, this must inevitably center in the areas on the periphery of Soviet Russia. Eastern Europe is bound to be among the most cherished loot for strategic reasons.

The Jugoslav problem is extremely embarrassing to the State Department in Washington. If military strategy should call for an invasion of Germany via the Balkan back door, it would be both embarrassing and costly to have to suppress a civil war en route. The diplomats would like to end the Civil War in the Balkans by their "conversations". They feel that something has to be done, but they do not know what to do. In some respects, however, these diplomats are better informed on the nature of the problems than are some of our revolutionary theoreticians who get left behind in the nationalist stage of the revolution.

It is difficult for any citizen of North America to envisage a revolutionary situation. Having always lived in a stable society, he scarcely believes in the possibility of social revolution. He doesn't know what a social revolution is in terms of his own experience, as did those internationalists of a generation ago; he tends to underrate its imminence. At the time of the Spanish revolution, American radicals didn't even know there was one. They completely lost sight of the powerful social revolution and concentrated their attention on the Spanish Civil War - a tendency encouraged by all the means of publicity and propaganda, of the capitalists, the Stalinists and the official Spanish government, once that government got back on its feet.

American socialists, instead of grasping the fact of the Spanish proletarian revolution, were busily engaged in theoretical discussions of the permissibility of giving support to the bourgeois democratic republic. They ended by giving their political and material support to the government and armies fighting for the restoration of the old order, when they should have been supporting the new power - the revolutionary workers committees which were ruling most of anti-fascist Spain, which had their own militia at the front, and which owned and operated almost the whole of Spanish industry and agriculture. Even after the May Days, there still existed workers' committees and militia whose independent class action should have received the entire support of all socialists.

Even today, advanced revolutionaries, other than those who were in Spain, fail to realize the depth, the rapidity and the force acquired by the Spanish revolution. The same errors may be committed again, and overemphasis of the nationalist character of the coming revolt may be one of the first. At any moment this revolt may emerge, not just in the Balkans, but in France, North Africa, China and India and elsewhere.

Long before victory over Hitler looms into sight, the Allied camp shows signs of disintegration. The lines between the Anglo-American block and the Stalinists in eastern Europe are being drawn and defined. Both parties pretend to lead the fight against fascism and they both are trying to get control of the true anti-fascist camp - the masses of plain working people - in order to restrain their revolutionary aspirations and to turn them toward nationalism. Yet this decisive group is already gathering its own armed might in Jugoslavia, resolved to rid itself of old kings and generals, of landlords, of foreign imperialists, like the United States and England, and, to some extent, resolved to fight the Stalinist parasites too.

These facts point to the extreme likelihood that the coming European revolution will quickly pass over the nationalist beginnings into a profound social revolution. The national question is being over-emphasized. Even in backward Jugoslavia the lines have already been drawn on class bases. The first time during this war that the masses came onto the stage they insist on speaking in their own name. In this respect, they have shown the way to the workers and peasants of all countries. They have told the world that they will not allow their revolt to be channelized along nationalist lines. The imperialists are trying to conceal this, but we must not be misled again, as we were in Spain. Those who do not prepare for the socialist revolution will be caught off-guard and will not be in a position to cash in on the rich opportunities which lie ahead of the international working class.

Roy GOULD

THE STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION: -BOURGEOIS-DEMOCRATIC OR
PROLETARIAN-SOCIALIST - G. TOBIN

Nations and Democracy in Class Society

The relations among men, determined by their role in the process of production, constitute the economic base of society, upon which arises the cultural superstructure of ideas, customs, etc. Nations, national differences, are produced by the economic base and depend on it.

What is the economic base of the national superstructure in society today? Between rival imperialisms such as U.S. and Germany, this base is purely imperialist, i.e., rival capitalist trusts competing for world rule. On the other hand, the economic relation between countries such as England and India is chiefly that of capitalist exploiter to exploited. This is true not only for the Indian masses, but also in part for the Indian bourgeoisie, who are but junior partners of the British imperialists.

Thus, national relations today are of two main types: first, the inter-imperialist relation; second, the imperialist-colony relation. Relations between all nations fit in somewhere between these two extremes, or consist of a mixture of both. In addition, weak ruling classes are subject to pressure from more powerful classes and tend to become their tools. The Chinese bourgeoisie, e.g., became the tool of the Allies and the character of its war against Japan changed accordingly from a liberating war to an imperialist war: the DeGaullists and Giraudists serve as tools of Anglo-American imperialism.

The national form has been filled by a different and a changing content as the class relations of society changed through the ages. A century ago, the bourgeoisie fought against feudalism, for national unity and independence, because national freedom was necessary to the expansion of young capitalist economy. Today capitalism does not liberate, but subjugates nations. Only the proletariat, in the present epoch, is the bearer of national freedom, because it is the historic mission of the proletariat to abolish all exploitation.

Democracy, like nations, is a class product. Democratic procedures of organization, and democratic rights (civil liberties: freedom of speech, organization, etc.) came into being to serve definite class interests. The young bourgeoisie, fighting feudalism, brought with it bourgeois democracy, i.e., parliamentarianism plus certain democratic rights for the workers. Senile capitalism, on the other hand, is increasingly compelled to totalitarianize its own political life, and to deprive the working class of its democratic rights. The workers find that they must struggle harder and harder to preserve the liberties which were formerly taken for granted.

Capitalism in decline does not bring democracy, but destroys it. The concepts of "bourgeois" and "democracy" which once were harmoniously united, are now antagonistic. Only the proletariat,

in the present epoch, is the bearer of democracy, because democracy is a necessary instrument of the proletariat in its fight for freedom from class exploitation as well as in its fight to build a better world tomorrow.

The democratic form has been filled by a different and changing content as the class relations of society have changed. Today, the democratic form is filled with a social content which is proletarian, i.e., objectively socialist in character, despite the non-socialist ideas which still dominate the minds of the workers.

The National Struggles Today

Today we see two "national struggles": on the one hand, the struggles of De Gaulle, Sikorski, Chiang Kai Shek, take the form of "national struggles". Some people regard these as movements for liberation of oppressed nations. In reality, these struggles are part and parcel of the imperialist war. The national bourgeoisies of these countries play the role of tools of the Allied camp in its war against the Axis. Movements decisively controlled by these imperialist agents can play no progressive role.

On the other hand, there are the struggles of the masses of the oppressed countries against their oppressors. There are the strikes in France, Belgium and Holland against deportations. There are the popular movements of resistance, taking all sorts of forms, which are relatively independent of imperialism and largely under the control of the masses in them. These movements are therefore part of the Third Camp, and merit the active support of the Marxists, regardless of the fact that the minds of these masses may still be filled with illusions about the "liberating" role of Allied armies. It is this progressive type of national struggle which is meant by the words "national struggle" as used in this article.

The outstanding fact about these progressive national struggles is that they are class struggles, between the basic classes of society, the imperialist bourgeoisie and the working class. Under the dominance of these basic classes, other classes play subordinate roles. The peasants and urban middle classes may follow the lead of the workers: the native bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation is the tool of imperialism.

A century ago, the struggle for national freedom, as well as that for democracy, was bourgeois in its class character. Today, the struggles for democracy and national freedom are objectively part of the world socialist revolution.

The European Pyramid

The class structure in Europe today is like a pyramid the German rulers, a tiny minority, sit on top, exploiting the vast masses of France, Poland, Norway, the other European nations, and also the masses of Germany. The degree of exploitation varies from country to country, the French workers more exploited than the Ger

mans, the Poles more than the French. Despite these differences, the German, French, Polish and all other workers and peasants of Europe have a common oppressor, just as the Negro and white workers in this country, despite the difference in exploitation, have a common struggle against the ruling class exploiting them both.

Now, what is the national revolution in Europe? It is not the mere replacement of the German imperialists at the top of the pyramid by American, British or Russian exploiters. Nor is it the re-establishment of the native bourgeoisie, now more than ever tools of the Allied imperialists. The national revolution, to accomplish anything for the masses, must mean the oppressed nations freeing themselves from the rule of a foreign power: it must mean the overturn of the pyramid. The monopoly by the German ruling class of all of Europe would be replaced by the equality of all European nations.

As we have seen, such an overturn could not be accomplished under the leadership of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries: a movement under such leadership can only be a tool of the Allied camp. The overturn described above is possible only under the leadership of the working class. In the course of driving out the Nazis, the workers will form factory councils, and food and transport committees, to keep society going. The peasants will form peasant committees and look to the urban workers for leadership.

As the Nazis are overthrown, the working class will have to step into the position of dominance in society. If the workers don't, the rival imperialists will, using their Girauds and Sikorskis.

Thus, the overturn of the imperialist pyramid is nothing but the proletarian revolution.

With all this happening in the occupied countries, with the Nazi power broken all around it, is it conceivable that the working class in Germany itself will continue serenely to sustain the Nazi oppressor, as though nothing had happened? Rather, the collapse of Nazi rule in the occupied countries will be the signal for the violent outbreak of the class struggle in Germany itself. In fact, the job of driving out the Nazis in the oppressed countries will be practically impossible unless the German workers also act against the Nazis. It is even possible that the revolution will break out in Germany first, then spreading to the occupied nations.

The struggle for national freedom in Europe, therefore, is objectively a struggle for workers' power all over the continent, that is, the Socialist United States of Europe, irrespective of the ideas in the minds of the masses.

Lessons From the Russian Revolution

The Russian Revolution of October 1917 was a proletarian, socialist, revolution. But under what slogans? What were the ideas in the minds of the masses? Peace, bread, land. Political slogans, immediate economic demands, democratic slogans. No mass demonstra-

tions were held with banners inscribed "For the Dictatorship of the Proletariat". Nevertheless, the Russian Revolution was not merely a political, but a social revolution. For this reason, the slogans under which the revolution took place, even the slogan of bread, had a socialist character. Although the broad masses did not know what the word "socialism" meant, they knew it was their power that was needed to achieve their demands.

It does not follow from the above that on the morrow of the expulsion of the Nazis, socialism will be proclaimed in Europe. Side by side with the really independent movements, exist imperialist controlled movements, the De Gaullists, Stalinists, etc. A condition of dual power may therefore arise, in which the overturn of the pyramid will be only partially achieved: a condition in which the working class has raised its status in society, has taken de facto command of the factories, but has not unequivocally declared itself master due to insufficient political consciousness and the help given the native bourgeoisie in the form of American food and bayonets. This condition of dual power, however, is nothing more than an uncompleted proletarian revolution, a proletarian revolution which has stopped half-way; an unstable equilibrium which can be resolved in either of two ways; either the imperialists will regain complete power, dispossess the workers from the factories, and set up a military dictatorship under a Giraud or De Gaulle; or the workers will succeed in sweeping away the bourgeois power and establishing their unchallenged rule. Which of these alternatives takes place will depend on the speed with which revolutionary ideas spread among the workers during the revolutionary period.

In short, the national struggle today is a new struggle, compared with that of a century ago; it has a new class content; it resembles the old national struggle only in form, in appearance. The struggle for national freedom today is nothing else but the form at present assumed by the struggle for workers' power in the oppressed countries. The national struggle has this objective social character regardless of the ideas in the minds of the masses.

The National Committee Resolution

What is the conception of the National Committee resolution?

"Why is fascism reactionary, that is, why does it represent retrogression, a hurling back of society? . . . Fascism is reactionary (among other reasons) because it removes from the top of the order of the day, or tends to remove from the top of the order of the day, the direct struggle for proletarian, socialist power, and to put in its place the historically outlived, anachronistic struggle 'for democracy.' To put it differently, it tends to replace at the top of the order of the day the direct struggle for social democracy (socialism) by the struggle for formal or political democracy . . ." (emphasis in original)

In other words, the struggle now is for "democracy", rather than for workers' power. And to make sure there is no misunderstanding, the resolution says further:

"If the struggle for democracy, at least in the advanced capitalist countries, is an anachronism, it must be borne in mind that fascism is reactionary precisely because it throws society backward, and compels it to take up 'outlived' tasks all over again, even if not in the same form and by the same methods.

"The struggle for national independence is part of the struggle for democracy. In a whole series of countries in Europe, the advance of fascism has not only made the struggle for national freedom necessary once more -- a century and more after the period of the formation of the great national states! -- but has made this struggle an indispensable prelude and part of the struggle for socialism." (my emphasis - GWT) (N.I., Feb. 1943, p. 38)

In other words, today's struggle for national freedom is the "outlived" task of a century ago, which must be carried out all over again, although in a different form and by different methods. Hence the resolution says:

". . . to the extent that masses (that is, millions of people) are organized or are in movement or are animated by a will to struggle against reaction in a number of, decisively important countries, it is not on a revolutionary proletarian basis of the struggle of socialism, but on the bourgeois-democratic basis of the struggle for national independence." (my emphasis - GWT) (N.I., Jan. 1943, p.9)

According to this conception, the struggle for national freedom, the "national revolution", is democratic, even bourgeois-democratic, rather than socialist in character; it is a struggle for political rather than for social democracy, i.e., a political revolution rather than a social revolution. Thus, it says that the national struggle is a "prelude and part" of the struggle for socialism; but the whole analysis shows that it is regarded in reality as a prelude rather than a part. The liberation of the oppressed nations is counterposed to the struggle for workers' power; it takes place within the framework of capitalist society, to be followed by the struggle for workers' power:

"Once the 'national revolution' has triumphed, the struggle between the native bourgeoisie and proletariat will start. The workers will learn that national liberation to the bourgeoisie meant a return to the old capitalism and exploitation in a worse form than ever before. From this they will realize also that liberation can be achieved only through workers' power." (my emphasis - GWT) (Workers Party discussion guide on resolution, p.9)

According to the basic premise of the resolution, we face in most countries of the globe two revolutions, different in class character, and separated from each other in time; first, the "nation-

al revolution", a bourgeois-democratic political revolution; once this national revolution is accomplished, the second revolution, the proletarian revolution, will be in order. We must first have the return of a full-fledged bourgeois democracy, complete with mass trade unions and parties similar to those of old; only then will the struggle for workers' power return to the top of the order of the day.

To be sure, other sections of the resolution, especially those dealing with dual power in the concrete, appear to contradict this conception of "two revolutions". However, the passages quoted allow no other interpretation of the basic theoretical premise of the N. C. resolution.

What follows from this premise?

(1) Since the next stage is the "national revolution", not a workers' struggle for power, slogans for workers' rule and socialism must remain in the background; they must be confined to propaganda among the advanced workers, not the wide masses.

(2) The German working class is not mentioned in the resolution. This is not accidental. Since the next stage is the "national revolution", not the workers' revolution, and since the national revolution is the affair of the oppressed countries, the German working class has no part to play in this "next stage".

Trotsky on Democratic Demands and Workers' Revolution

In "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" and other resolutions, written by Trotsky, adopted by an international conference of Fourth Internationalists in 1938, Trotsky takes up in detail the problem of overcoming the gap between the objective maturity of society for socialism and the immaturity of the proletariat. To bridge this gap is the purpose of the transitional program. Page numbers in the following quotations are from the pamphlet "The Founding Conference of the Fourth International: Program and Resolutions" (my emphasis - GWT)

The N.C. resolution envisages two stages. This theory of two stages is the one most sharply condemned by Trotsky in discussing the Chinese revolution:

"But the Stalin-Bukharin leadership of the Comintern . . . resorted in China to the Menshevik policies which they had been prevented from carrying out in Russia in 1917. Counterposing the national tasks of the Chinese revolution to the emancipatory struggle of the workers and peasants, arbitrarily separating the two in accordance with a lifeless theory of 'stages', they declared the immediate tasks in China to be national unification and the expulsion of the imperialists." (p.72)

"Democratic slogans, transitional demands, and the problem of the socialist revolution are not divided into separate historical epochs in this struggle, but stem directly from one another. The Chinese proletariat had barely begun to organize trade unions before it had to provide for soviets." (p.40)

Trotsky is well aware that the particular slogans to be raised depend on the stage of development of the mass movement. However, he warns against a mechanical application of the theory of stages:

"Of course, this does not mean that the Fourth International rejects democratic slogans as a means of mobilizing the masses against fascism. On the contrary, such slogans at certain moments can play a serious role. But the formulas of democracy (freedom of press, the right to unionize, etc.) mean for us only incidental or episodic slogans in the independent movement of the proletariat and not a democratic noose fastened to the neck of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie's agents (Spain!) As soon as the movement assumes something of a mass character, the democratic slogans will be intertwined with the transitional ones; factory committees, it may be supposed, will appear before the old routinists rush from their chancelleries to organize trade unions; soviets will cover Germany before a new Constitutional Assembly will gather in Weimar. The same will be true of Italy and the rest of the totalitarian and semi-totalitarian countries." (p.44)

The telescoping of these stages can, under certain circumstances, place the slogan of workers' power on the agenda even before the ordinary democratic slogans are raised. Thus Trotsky says:

". . .It is very likely that a genuine proletarian success in one of the 'democratic' countries will be necessary to give impetus to the movement on fascist territory. A similar effect is possible by means of a financial or military catastrophe. . . .

One thing can be stated with conviction. . . Once it breaks through, the revolutionary wave in fascist countries will immediately be a grandiose sweep and under no circumstances will stop short at the experiment of resuscitating some sort of Weimar corpse." (p.44)

The theoretical warning is clear. Trotsky is saying: be prepared for the sudden eruption of the workers and the formation of soviets, due to the war and its effects -- making the seizure of power an immediate practical task.

Lenin expresses much the same thought when he says:

"The social revolution is not a single battle, but represents a whole epoch of numerous battles around all the problems of economic and democratic reforms which can be consummated only by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It is for the sake of this final aim that we must formulate everyone of our democratic demands in a consistently revolutionary manner. It

is quite conceivable that the workers of a certain country may overthrow the bourgeoisie before even one fundamental democratic reform has been accomplished." (emphasis in original) (Lenin, Selected Wks, Vol. 5, p.283)

Fascism may remove certain slogans from the order of the day, but it does not remove, and in fact propels to the foreground, the program for workers' power.

"Fascism Throws Society Backward"

Fascism came to power in Europe, smashed the workers' organizations, terrorized the working class. The workers were stunned by the blow. Society was thrown backward. But that is only half the picture.

Fascism plus four years of the war has given a powerful impulsion to the contradictions making for the collapse of capitalist society. The specific weight of the proletariat in Europe has greatly increased. The native bourgeoisie has been ground to dust between rival imperialisms, has lost every vestige of independence and is clearly a pawn of one or another foreign oppressor.

The effect of the blow which stunned the workers is wearing away. The labor organizations are reviving. Not in the old form of trade unions, hamstrung by a crystallized reformist bureaucracy, and fighting only for immediate reforms: the masses now are fighting in popular movements, uncontrolled by conservative bureaucrats; fighting by military means, for the overthrow of the state power. They still have illusions about Roosevelt. But history has shown that revolutionary ideas make rapid headway during periods of upsurge.

Only six years ago the workers in Catalonia held de facto power in their hands. Seven years ago the French workers occupied the factories. These events have not been forgotten. After the experience of the past five years, do you think that the masses of Europe want to go back to the old parliamentarism, the bourgeois "democracy" which led to the catastrophe? Even liberals, not among the most optimistic as to the prospects for revolution, report about the people of Europe:

"They have during the past decade experienced violence and suffering as never before in their history. . . .

They do not want to go back to the old capitalism they had, the old conservatism, the old clericalism, the old parliamentarism. Nor will they be content with the formal trappings of democracy, if the forms have no substance in them.

They are not frightened either by the word or by the idea of revolution, as Americans are. The fabric of their security has already been so rudely broken that if revolution is the price

that they have to pay for getting what they want, they will not draw back from it in fear." (Max Lerner in PM, May 11, 1943)

The Yearning for a New Social Order

The masses of Europe are looking for a way out, for a new order. They don't see it as clearly as we do, but they are groping for it. Why does Hitler talk "socialism"? Why does Laval promise the French workers "socialism"? Why did Giraud in a speech on May Day, say "The old capitalism is dead"? These capitalist representatives sense the feelings of the masses.

Fascism cannot turn back the wheel of history. The day when oppressed nations suffered for decades in silence is over, both in Europe and Asia.

In these circumstances the National Committee of the Workers Party comes before the workers of France and says:

"Your yearning now for a new social order is utopian. It is wishful thinking. We, the Workers Party, have analyzed the situation realistically and can report to you that the struggle for a new social order has been removed from the top of the order of the day. Of course, we sympathize with your desires, but you must understand that at the top of the agenda now is the struggle for political democracy and to oust the German rulers, not the struggle for a new social order. You must first see the replacement of Hitler and his stooge Laval by Roosevelt and his stooge Giraud. After this is accomplished, the fight against the French bosses, for a new social order, will start. Then the struggle for a new social order will again be at the top of the order of the day."

This is what revolutionary socialists should say to the masses of France:

"You, workers and peasants of France, are being tortured by the Nazi gang, aided by the Laval-Pétain clique. You are fighting to drive this gang out. Keep up the fight. Form your factory committees. Form peasant committees. Prepare yourselves to seize the property of the Nazis and of all who collaborated with them. And when you have driven the Nazis out, it is not for the generals and politicians, who want to restore the old order which led us into this mess, to come back again. Drive out the Nazis and form your own workers' government."

And on every occasion when circumstances permit, the revolutionists should add:

"The workers and peasants must form their own governments not only in France, but also in Belgium

Yugoslavia, everywhere. And we also want to see the German workers, who for ten years have suffered under the Nazi heel, kick out Hitler and set up a workers' government. It is only the united power of the workers all over the continent which can assure a new order in Europe, working for the common people and not for the power and profit of a few parasites."

G. W. TOBIN

"GETTING BACK TO THE POINT"

My letter to comrade Gates on the National Question (dated May 5, 1943) has brought forth a reply from Gates and extended comments by comrade Shachtman. Comrade Gates devoted his reply largely to the question itself. Comrade Shachtman's contribution is a polemic against the procedure followed in presenting my questions and opinion to the membership. Both Gates and Shachtman also take the opportunity to deal extensively with comrade Johnson's alleged derelictions on organizational matters.

At the outset let me assert that I regard these matters of organizational procedure as entirely beside the point of the National question. My letter dealt exclusively with the political question. In my eyes, that is the essentially correct procedure. The injection of organizational matters into the discussion by Gates and Shachtman is the procedure which can only serve to muddy up the discussion.

However, since comrade Gates and Shachtman have made certain allegations, I wish to express myself briefly in reply to them. By these statements I hope to relegate these matters to their proper places -- which is certainly not the discussion on the National Question.

First, I voted for the Plenum resolution at the Plenum. I made no representations to the National Committee as such regarding my wish to change my vote to an abstention. But even before the Plenum adjourned, I inquired of Max Shachtman regarding the desired change. His opinion was that it was not possible. He is National Secretary of the Party, and I accepted his opinion as authoritative. Moreover, I accepted his reasons and understand that officially I am on record as having voted for the Plenum resolution.

Subsequently, the inadequacies of the Plenum resolution became clearer to me, and the broader historic framework of Johnson's approach seemed much sounder. Like many other members, I asked myself more and more questions, and I set them down in writing because I knew many others wanted the answers too.

Comrade Shachtman implies that a leader should ask questions only of himself or of his co-leaders, and that he should appear before the ranks only with a fully matured, crystallized and clear-cut position. I cannot accept such a rigid delimitation or separation between the leaders and the ranks. Bureaucratic habits and conceptions can too easily flow from an outlook or practice in which the job of the leaders is to lay down the law or thesis in finished form. Moreover, in a living movement, the separation of the leaders from the ranks cannot be so great, nor is it so great among us. Were opinions handed out to the members on silver platters, the discussion in the Party would not be entirely genuine and might easily become a sham. The education of the membership is best promoted if the ranks know the questions and problems which lead to the conclusion, as well as the final conception or product itself. Slowly or quickly, the members are thus better able to make up their minds conclusively.

Finally, in respect to Johnson's procedure in regard to the National Question.

In my correspondence and discussions with comrade Gates (which covered the same ground contained also in Shachtman's "unanswered" letter), I have expressed my opinion on this matter, and I summarize my views here. After our last discussion I offered to write to the National Office all that I had told Gates, but he said it was "unnecessary". And truly, what could be resolved that way? Letters and polemics hardly provide satisfactory means for settling properly these kinds of questions. A preliminary prerequisite to any adequate solution is a genuinely fraternal attitude between the parties immediately concerned, in or outside the formal confines of the Committee. That is the first thing that should be put first, as the surest way either to an adequate solution or a decisive conclusion. It is what the membership desires and deserves.

In my view it is entirely possible to regulate and adjust matters as to ensure what everyone says he wants -- a discussion on the National Question on an educational, non-factional plane, unaggravated by the intrusion of matters utterly apart from the merits of the National Question. All efforts should be directed that way. I see nothing that need seriously stand in the way of normal organizational functioning from top to bottom in the Party.

Permit me to add: It would be a simple matter for me to enter into detail and to set forth other and all the facts in reply to a variety of assertions and allegations in the Shachtman-Gates articles. If necessary, it can be done. I have, however, refrained from consideration of secondary and extraneous matters and limited myself to a concise presentation of and proposal for the disposition of the organization issue, in the interests of the National Question discussion and the Party welfare generally.

My conclusion is: It is not important in the discussion of the National Question whether I voted for the resolution or wanted to change my vote. I take full responsibility for my political views of today--or tomorrow. What matters is the soundness or correctness of the views expressed by anyone--whether as resolution, articles or questions--and the consideration on their merits of such resolutions, articles and questions by everyone, whether leader or rank and filer. Whoever injects other questions at this time is the one who beclouds and muddies up the discussion on the National Question; and thus carries the responsibility for deflecting the discussion of the National Question onto a wrong course.

July 31, 1943

Harry Allen