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Reprint: 1939

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CAN STALINISM CARRY THRU A SUCCESSFUL REVOLUTION
IN FRANCE AND ITALY?

THE NEW "LEFT WING" OF CENTRISM.

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REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS
LEAGUE

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CHARACTER OF THE STATE IN THE SOVIET UNION

(Note: The following article is reprinted from the August 1939 International News with a view to explaining the position of the Revolutionary Workers League relative to the Soviet Union. The present world situation places this question in a primary position.)

No question is so little understood and more distorted than the Russian question. Fundamentally this confusion is a continuation of the petty-bourgeois concepts of the state that existed in Lenin's day. Having failed to understand the character of the bourgeois state yesterday, the ultra-lefts and opportunists cannot comprehend the meaning of the Workers State today.

Their objections fall under six heads. Let us list them and treat them one by one:

- 1- The terror by Stalin against the former revolutionary leaders and others.
- 2- Wage labor and surplus value exist in the Soviet union today.
- 3- The Soviet State today is made up of bourgeois forms and must consequently be bourgeois in character.
- 4- A small minority make exorbitant sums and reap the fruits of the large majority; therefore, state capitalism exists.
- 5- The Soviet Union is moving back towards capitalism and is in the process of transition. It is neither a Workers State nor as yet a capitalist state.
- 6- Stalinism plays a counter-revolutionary role in all revolutionary situations; therefore the Soviet State cannot be a Workers State.

I -- THE STALIN TERRORISM

"Look at the terror in the Soviet Union against old revolutionists," our "Marxists" say. "Can that be a Workers State?" Our good "Marxists" have forgotten all that has been said on the question of the State. For them it is merely a moral question -- bourgeois morals at that. In a similar vein the Social Democrats of yesterday pointed to the terror under Lenin and Trotsky to "prove" the same point.

Terror, however, is a characteristic of ALL states, slave feudal, capitalist and worker. In itself it denotes that classes exist and that there is a class struggle. Furthermore, even the question of whom the terror is directed against does not solve the question of the CONTENT of the state. It will determine who has control of the state.

The state under Robespierre in the French Revolution directed its terror in its first period against thousands of bona fide capitalists and their agents in the Assembly. It passed innumerable measures against the usury and exploitation of the banks and indus-

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trialists and actually ENFORCED most of these. Yet who will deny that this was a CAPITALIST state which Robespierre headed?

/The state is a product of class antagonisms and the social relations of a particular mode of production. Quite apart, then, from the wishes of the men or classes involved, the character of a state is determined by its economic base -- the MODE OF PRODUCTION. Every important change in the mode of production will have a bearing on the form and structure of the state. Revolutionary changes in the mode of production cannot be effected without revolutionary changes in the CHARACTER of the state.

Although episodically the GOVERNMENTAL REGIME can be at variance in its political and social outlook with the given mode of production under the state, nevertheless such a lag can only be short-lived and in no way effects the character of the state.

"By way of exception, however," says Engels in his ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, "there are periods when the warring classes so nearly attain equilibrium that the state power, ostensibly appearing as a mediator, assumes for the moment a certain independence in relation to both."

Our bourgeois moralists who go by the borrowed name of "marxists", point with horror to the murder of thousands in the S.U. "A revolutionist is more persecuted in the Soviet Union than in Germany," is the argument of these people. The full historical meaning of this sentence is lost on them. The contradictions between a bureaucracy composed of bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and a small proletarian strata, objectively working for the reintroduction of capitalism, on the one hand, and a socialist economy on the other, will obviously be far greater than the contradictions even in a Fascist nation where the proletariat has not yet achieved power. When the fact is added that the Soviet Union is an isolated Workers State within a whole general framework of capitalism in decay, one has the historical basis for the unprecedented terrorism of Stalinism.

TRANSITION ECONOMY MOVING BACK TOWARD CAPITALISM

The terror in the Fascist regimes is occasioned precisely by the economic decay, the near-bankruptcy of the economy, the economy of scarcity. Otherwise the bourgeoisie could continue to rule by the old forms -- bourgeois democracy. Let our so-called Marxists explain on their basis why a "capitalist" nation which created 300 cities in ten years; which increased its productivity 900% from 1913 -- the "greatest accomplished by any country in the world", a nation which these people claim is capitalist, whose share of industrial production in the world rose from 4.9% in 1928 to 17.5% in 1938 DESPITE THE WORST DEPRESSION IN CAPITALIST HISTORY -- let these revisionists explain why such a "capitalist" nation must resort to such horrible terrorism. Strengthen the capitalist economy of any nation and you strengthen the base of bourgeois democracy. Obviously the terrorism in the Soviet Union cannot be explained by any formula that capitalism exists there. Such a hypothesis can lead only to the Stalinist idea that the increases in production have paved the way for the highest form of democracy in the capitalist world. The only explanation

for this phenomenon lies in the gigantic contradictions of a TRANSITION ECONOMY moving backward TOWARD CAPITALISM.

Obviously what we are dealing with here is what Engels referred to when he spoke of the warring classes attaining such a close equilibrium (in this case the proletariat and world capitalism with its agents within the Soviet Union) that the state for a period is able to function with a "certain independence in relation to both", Bonapartist, etc.

II -- SURPLUS VALUE AND WAGE LABOR.

The ultra lefts constantly prate about the similarities between capitalist economy and Soviet economy. In both instances they say there is a surplus value and wage labor.

Yes, it is true that in the Soviet Union there is some production for the market, but planned economy is the KEY factor even though the planning is poor. And it is also true that surplus value just as under capitalism, is still being created.

But our good "critical Marxists" fail to deal with the dissimilarities. They fail to point out that surplus value is NOT privately appropriated but is appropriated by the state. They fail to point out that the planned economy has, despite the Stalinist warpings of the system, increasingly changed production for the market under an economy of scarcity to an economy of abundance.

Again our critics forget all the laws of decay capitalism. "Planning" under decay capitalism is the planning of an ECONOMY OF SCARCITY. It means destruction of the living standard of the masses, rations, etc. Those who glibly speak of the Soviet Union as a Fascist State must be prepared to explain the increase in the TOTAL forces of production, including in the consumption fields. In the worst years of the depression the Soviet Union geared up its producers goods from 7 billion rubles in 1928 to 19.1 billions in 1932. In the worst years of the depression, from 1928-1932, the Soviet Union added 7,000 kilometers of railroads, added 70 million kilometer tons of freight. From 1932 to 1934, two short years, the Soviet Union rose from the 6th producer of electric to the 3rd; from 1928 to 1934 worst depression years, it rose from the 6th coal producer to the 4th, from 6th to 2nd in production of pig iron; from 5th to 3rd in production of steel; its output of machinery was 7 times as much in 1934 as in 1928; in addition it was the leading importer of machinery. From 1928 to 1932 the output of United States coal and oil, 15 and 11 times, respectively; that of the Soviet Union, fell to only five times as much in 1932. Food and consumers goods rose by 3.2% and 4.4% from 1933 to 1934. These are not official (Stalinist) figures. They are taken from the figures of the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce which has such people on its board of directors as the vice-president of Bethlehem Steel, the chairman of Chrysler Export Corporation, the president of Goodrich Tire, the general manager of RCA communications, etc.

Figures alone, of course, are not conclusive. But how do our critics explain an increase in capitalization of 88 billion rubles

in 5 or 6 years? Despite all the bureaucratic excesses of Stalinism, it is a tribute to the intrinsic vitality of the warped Workers State and to the Transition Economy that in such a backward country, it is possible to lay down, even theoretically, the general rule of the 7 hour day, while in America the general rule is a 40 to 48 hour work week, in France the 60 hour week is legalized, in Germany 60 to 72 hours, etc. Planned Economy under the Soviets has proved superior to the capitalist anarchy of production for markets in its "free" competition (democratic) or its planned scarcity and barter (fascist) forms what we object to in relation to Stalinism is its wrong planning methods, its bureaucratic excesses and the false relation of internal development to the world revolution.

What is misunderstood is the CHARACTER of a Dictatorship of the Proletariat in general, and the character of such a Dictatorship in the Soviet Union in particular.

Generally speaking, a Transition Economy (the economic phase of the Proletarian Dictatorship) has elements of both capitalist and socialist economy, and in that sense represents a contradiction of the two.

The Soviet Union, however, has two other important contradictions: 1- It was a BACKWARD link of the world capitalist chain, one of the least developed of all capitalist countries in the world in every sense of the word. 2- It has remained isolated for 20 years as a Workers State totally surrounded by capitalist powers and is now moving back toward capitalism instead of forward toward socialism.

Under such circumstances obviously the limits of economic progress WITHIN THE SINGLE WORKERS STATE were greatly proscribed, at best, with the capitalist factors outweighing the socialist factors. But with the bureaucratic distortions and excesses of Stalinism as an additional weight at the throat of the young, isolated and backward Workers State, the capitalist factors must certainly begin slowly to replace more and more the socialist factors. But that does not change the CHARACTER of the economy which at best is only a dialectical combination of capitalist and socialist factors.

For our ultra-lefts there is only black and white; for the centrists there is only shadings of impurity; but for the Marxists there is a dialectic understanding and exact labelling of black and white and the other colors.

THE STRUCTURE OF TRANSITION ECONOMY

Capitalist economy does not become converted in a moment to socialist economy. A long transition period is needed for this. The important thing is that the proletariat shall seize state power, shall expropriate the big capitalists and BEGIN planned production. But the complete elimination of the capitalist sectors of economy can take place only when: 1- The decisive capitalist states have been overthrown by a proletarian revolution; and 2- Planned socialist production has proceeded to such a point that it naturally replaces all forms of capitalist production and has raised the standard of living of all workers and farmers far above the highest capitalist standard.

Until such a period Transition Economy will be an unknown equation depending on the level of development of the country involved, the relationship of forces of the Workers State with WORLD capitalism and the policies of the leadership of the Workers State. The main distinctions from the capitalist mode of production will, however, always be present, except that they will not be in a finished form but in a dialectical process of development. Private appropriation under Transition Economy is eliminated in favor of State appropriation, and later under Socialism, of Social Appropriation. Commodity production TENDS TO BE DISPLACED by production for use. Wage labor tends to become Social Labor; that is, wages are less and less determined by the value of labor power on the open market of competition, but by planned relations to the totality of social production and the individual needs.

Despite all the excesses of Stalinism, its unjust and bureaucratic share in the produce of society, its bureaucratic and faulty planning, its enormous concessions to world capitalism, and to capitalist strata within the Soviet Union, the above fundamental factors still obtain in the Soviet Union. The only point of departure is that the equation of capitalist to socialist factors, due to the Stalinist warpings and the isolation of the Soviet Union, are constantly favoring more and more the capitalist factors, so that today the whole structure -- economic, political and social -- of Transition Economy is on the verge of being caved in.

III -- THE BOURGEOIS FORMS.

The third argument of our critics against the Workers State is that bourgeois forms are prevalent in the state apparatus. The Soviets have been liquidated in favor of a parliament structure. Workers democracy no longer exists in any form, etc.

Again those who hold to this position fail to take into account the historical and subjective phenomena.

No state is carved out of the whole cloth. The forms of state power are as variegated as the number of states. They are conditioned by the economic base beneath the state. The FORM of a state is a very important but not decisive in determining the class content of the state. The 1918-19 Scheideman regime accepted the Soviet and Workers Militia forms LEGALLY INTO THE STATE STRUCTURE OF GERMANY. However, this did not make Germany a Workers State any more than the acceptance of bourgeois forms by Stalinism makes the Soviet Union a capitalist state.

The Hungarian bourgeoisie, before Bela Kun in 1919, also accepted the Militia and Soviets directly and legally into the state structure. The Companys regime in Catalonia not only accepted for a time -- although not in its constitution -- not only the Red Guards and the Anti-Fascist Committees, but even tolerated the seizure of bourgeois property. Nevertheless, not one of these regimes was a Workers State. In FORM they had great similarities with the Workers State form. In content they were capitalist states: they continued the old capitalist mode of production and the old capitalist private appropriation.

Some of the present colonial countries in FORM approximate Feudal states more than they do capitalist states -- backward states in Asia, Peru, etc. for example. In content, however, the economy is dominated and in the grip of the capitalist mode of production; and the state -- product of irreconcilable antagonisms -- serves the interest primarily (despite the wishes or desires of thousands of feudal landholders) of capitalism, especially foreign capital.

No one denies that the question of Workers Democracy is of decisive importance for the Workers State. No Workers State can exist long without it. Nevertheless, the fact that Workers Democracy as a rule no longer exists in the Soviet Union does not in itself predetermine the CHARACTER of the Soviet State.

There are innumerable examples in bourgeois history where democracy for the exploiters or large sections of them did not exist. The Robespierre regime was one example in point. Lenin refers to a few other examples, the two Bonapartist regimes, etc. But this factor in itself does not determine the character of a state.

THE MEANING OF WORKERS DEMOCRACY

Workers Democracy is based on economic development. Workers Democracy in Russia could not possibly be as advanced as Workers Democracy in a newly-formed Workers State say in England, Germany or the United States. The level of economic development in Russia was too low and still is too low for the same level of Workers Democracy to obtain. But instead of developing and aiding democracy for the workers, Stalinism, in order to maintain its bureaucratic rule suppresses it.

The ultra-lefts adduce from this fact the idea that Bolshevism always was an anti-working class tendency, deliberately confusing Bolshevism, Marxism, with Stalinism. The opportunists, on the other hand, renew their request for "democracy" in the Soviet Union, i.e., Bourgeois Democracy, the legalization of all parties, etc.

Workers Democracy cannot be re-established through the legalization of the various parties that objectively or subjectively serve the bourgeoisie, from the White Guards to the centrist groups. Workers Democracy must be reestablished primarily through the Soviets and the arming of the working masses. As a decisive and important adjunct of this, the right of factions WITHIN the Marxist Party must be recognized and adhered to. Those parties which together with the Marxist Party have seized power and have accepted the basic principles of the Workers State must take immediate steps toward unification into one powerful Marxist organization. At the conclusion of the process of negotiations and unification which will be of short duration, that group or party not accepting the Marxist program must be suppressed the same as the other parties that do not accept the basic principles.

Stalinism, however, has warped or destroyed whatever semblance of Workers Democracy did exist or was possible. For the moment the Stalinist-controlled state enjoys, as Engels points out, an "ostensible independence" of the classes involved because of the back-

ward sweep of the Workers State, both in the economic and political spheres, has caused a temporary and unstable "equilibrium" of the classes. But that does not alter the CHARACTER of the State; it merely alters its DIRECTION and DEVELOPMENT.

For the character of the state to be altered, not only police measures must be used against the proletariat but a violent counter-revolution must replace the October property relations by a capitalist mode of production.

IV -- STATE CAPITALISM

When you confront the anti-Soviet "theoreticians" with the question, "who are the capitalists in the Soviet Union?", they invariably answer that the top bureaucracy that controls the machinery of state live in palaces and fine summer homes, draw dozens of times as much pay as the average worker -- that is the new capitalist class in the Soviet Union. According to these people, the form of capitalism is somewhat different than in other states, but it is State Capitalism nevertheless.

State capitalism is a fancy myth. The control of the whole system of production through STATE OWNERSHIP is theoretically conceivable but practically it is impossible under capitalism. The concrete examples in Germany and Italy tend to confirm this fact. In Germany, especially, state ownership is practically negligible.

THE STATE AND DECAY CAPITALISM

In the period of decay capitalism the bourgeois state is forced to intervene more and more in the economic affairs of the nation, to aid the natural process of "big fish eat little fish," to help through state coercion the natural process of capitalist crisis, of reorganizing industry and economy on new levels, or eliminating greater and greater portions of the middle class and lesser capitalists, and of passing the burden of this reorganization onto the shoulders of the proletariat with a lower form of economy of scarcity.

This intervention sometimes takes on the form of state ownership. When certain industries no longer can show a profit in the ordinary processes of capitalism, the bourgeois state may step in take over the industry (or firm), and in exchange for the capitalist stocks bearing no dividends, the government gives good government bonds bearing interest. In all such instances, actual control will rest with a group of government-appointed men representing -- more than likely -- the same interests who have been "bought out." In other words, state ownership under capitalism (State Capitalism) is merely a form of "alleviating the distress" of the most pressed sections of capitalism by means of government aid. It is merely another form of government subsidy, in addition to all other forms, (direct subsidies, contracts at exorbitant prices, state loans at low interest rates, state grants of land, mail contracts, etc.)

State ownership under capitalism is due to the basic decay

State ownership under capitalism is due to the basic decay of the system and the attempt to hold back the forces of production. State ownership under Transition Economy is for productive development.

In the Soviet Union there was none of the above-cited hocus pocus. The bourgeoisie was not reimbursed; it was EXPROPRIATED. It got nothing in return for its properties except an opportunity to work just like the proletariat. Furthermore, in the first years of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat the wage differentials between various layers of the working class were being constantly reduced.

With the triumph of Stalinism, however, and the theory of "Socialism in One Country" which changed the direction of the Workers State back toward capitalism instead of forward to Socialism -- with this triumph the whole process was reversed. Bureaucratic ultimatums replaced free working class initiative and control (through the trade unions, Soviets, Party, etc). A new layer of the proletariat had to be developed as the shock troops for forcing the Stalinist line and economic excesses down the throats of the rank and file workers. Differentiations within the working class instead of being eliminated were constantly fostered and further developed.

That process reaches its culmination today with the gigantic excesses of the members of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Furthermore this process is culminating in the legalization of private property in certain spheres; the accumulation of capital by many kolhoz members and bureaucrats; the introduction on a far wider scale of government bonds, forced loans, etc.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOVIET UNION

One must look at the Soviet Union from the point of view not of its excesses and the capitalist FORMS that are being reintroduced and eating up the vitals of the Workers State and Economy. One must look at the Soviet Union from the viewpoint of its dialectical development:

- 1- The seizure of power and expropriation of the bourgeoisie.
- 2- The failure of the world proletariat to extend the revolution to other countries.
- 3- The temporary retreat to the NEP and then the movement towards planned socialist production.
- 4- The failure of the world proletariat in the 1923 year to again extend the revolution and the rise of a petty-bourgeois clique within and outside the Workers State, which warped the character of the dictatorship in all of its forms.
- 5- The development back toward capitalism, enormous concessions to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata within the Soviet State, and political concessions to the world imperialists on the outside (The U.S., France, Germany, etc.)

A capitalist is one who owns and controls means of production and is able on that basis to pocket surplus value created by the proletariat which operates those means of production. Is the Stalinist bureaucrat, then, a capitalist? What means of production does he own? What surplus value does he appropriate? Of all the

values produced in the Soviet Union, the producers -- the proletariat, kolhoz people, etc. -- take a certain share. The rest is used for state expenses and the introduction of new means of production. It is true that the bureaucracy takes a disproportionate share of the values produced. This disproportionate share is reaching the level that a NEW FORM OF PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION AS A PRELUDE TO A NEW CAPITALIST ORDER IN RUSSIA is taking place. PRIVATE capital in the Soviet Union and PRIVATE property (the basis of capitalism in all its forms, even State Capitalism) AS THE DECISIVE ASPECT OF ECONOMY does NOT exist in the Soviet Union. It is being reintroduced precisely through this new form of primitive accumulation.

But to label these "beginning" processes back towards capitalism as capitalism is just as fallacious today, as the labelling of the period of primitive accumulation in the final stages of Feudalism (throwing of the serfs off the land, etc) as capitalism itself.

Precisely because the process of accumulation represents only the "beginning" processes back to capitalism, precisely because the basic property relations of October still exist, we refer to the Stalinist bureaucracy as a STRATUM rather than as a class. The bureaucracy is composed of a growing capitalist stratum, a constantly smaller proletarian stratum, and the Stalinist force balancing itself between the two, with its main weight supporting the growing bourgeois force. Whether the proletariat again regains full power, or the bourgeois force with the aid of world imperialism is successful in its counter revolution, the Stalinist force will be crushed.

Before this accumulation in the Soviet Union reaches capitalist proportions, the growing bourgeois STRATUM must SEIZE POLITICAL POWER? MUST EXPROPRIATE THE WORKERS STATE? AND MUST REESTABLISH PRIVATE PROPERTY AND CAPITAL AS THE LEGAL BASE OF SOCIETY?

V -- THE PROCESS OF "TRANSITION"

Another argument which has cropped up in the movement lately is the argument by certain groups that the Soviet State is in a state of transition back towards capitalism, and that a Workers State no longer exists. These people argue that the character of the economy, despite the warpings of Stalinism, still remains Transition Economy, a socialist, not a capitalist mode of production. But the forms of the state power of the proletariat no longer exist -- the Soviets have been liquidated, Workers Democracy destroyed both in the civil realm and in the army, etc. Consequently the State cannot be called a Workers State, but the workers of the world must still defend the remnants of the October Revolution.

This position, although it admits of the proletarian character of the economy, nevertheless feeds grist to the mill of all those who consider the Soviet Union to be capitalist, who are against its defense in any shape, form or manner.

A trade union dominated by gangsters and bureaucrats will be used by them against the workers interests but objectivity still

reveals that even such warped trade unions are workers organizations.

One must speak not only of the DIRECTION of any phenomena but of its CHARACTER as well. The revolutionary transition period from capitalism to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat can be defined not only as to DIRECTION but as to CHARACTER as well. The dominant State during Dual Power and up until the forceful seizure of power by the proletariat remains a BOURGEOIS STATE. Its base rests upon private property capitalist economy. That is the DETERMINING FACTOR.

As pointed out above, bourgeois states quite often UNDER proletarian pressure, accept proletarian forms -- soviets, etc. While this tends to show the direction in which society is moving--on towards the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, it does not obliterate the character of the remaining state.

The International Contact Commission designates both the direction and the character of the present state in the Soviet Union by the term "warped Workers State." To designate the character without giving the direction can lead to opportunist errors--that Stalinism is leading the Workers State towards Socialism. But to designate the direction without giving the character can lead to ultra-left errors--that there is no longer anything in the Soviet Union to defend that Capitalism already exists there.

Either error if not corrected in time, leaves the door open to much greater errors.

VI -- THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY ROLE OF STALINISM

As a final argument against the Workers State, the revisionists point to the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism on a world scale, especially its recent role in Spain, where Stalinist soldiers manned the guns that shot down workers on the barricades, fighting for their liberation from capitalism.

Again, however, of what decisive importance is this factor in relation to the character of the Soviet Union itself? The counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism merely emphasizes that within the Soviet Union as well, it is the objective agent of the world imperialists repaving the way for capitalism.

To assume that the character of a Party in a workers State determines the character of that State is to give support to the STALINIST THESIS that the Party and the State are synonymous. For the Marxists the Party is a GUILTING organ for the State apparatus; the decisive ruling organs of the working class and the state, however, are the Workers Councils, the Workers Militia, etc. The degeneration of the Party merely means that the State guiding force has degenerated. The character of the State is determined by the economy underneath it, not the Party over it.

Let us take an analogy of a trade union that is run by a bunch of unscrupulous bureaucrats who work hand in hand with the bosses--the building trades of the AFL for instance. As revolutionists we

call on the building trades workers to join these unions, despite the reactionary role of its leadership, and to work to throw that leadership out. In practice everything done by the union officially is against the interests of the workers; nevertheless we consider the union a working class INSTRUMENT, which is warped.

The same can be said of the Soviet Union. Based on the property relations introduced by the October Revolution, the State is a Workers State, but a warped Workers ** (Note 1)

WAS SOCIALISM POSSIBLE IN THE SOVIET UNION?

Many of our ultra-lefts and reformists are now busy re-studying the events in the Soviet Union. Every bit of degeneracy of the Stalinists gives them another opportunity for petty-bourgeois Platitudes: "Lenin was not correct after all. Had he lived he would have realized that there could be no PROLETARIAN revolution in Russia, that only a bourgeois revolution was possible."

At the root of this error is the poor memory of our critics. They entirely forget that no one of the Bolshevik leaders of 1917--including even Stalin--expected Russia to build Socialism. On the contrary, they made it clear that Socialism in one country was impossible that without the extension of the proletarian revolution to other and more industrial countries, the Soviet Union itself would inevitably fall.

What has caused the decline is the false nationalistic policy, a reversal of the Marxian theories of Lenin, and in his time, of Trotsky--the false theory that Socialism CAN be built in one country. The failure to extend the proletarian revolution, which this theory necessarily involved, made the warping of the Workers State and a reversal of its DIRECTION--within the framework of Transition Economy however--inevitable.

Is the Soviet Union, then doomed? Too many people have already given up in their own minds the Soviet Union to the beasts of capitalism. They do not nor cannot conceive of the inherent strength of Transition Economy, warped as it is, still has, and the enormous potentialities of the Russian proletariat which has tasted a new form of society.

*** (Note 1) But the bureaucracy, which temporarily controls the state and acts in its name, is warping its purpose and scope, is moving the state and the economy backwards, is moving against world revolution, just as the bureaucrats in our trade union work against the interests of the workers.

The enormous political concessions given by Stalinism to the imperialists -- the latest of which, by the way, the concessions to Hitler, are helping the imperialists start their war -- bespeaks of the weakness of Stalinism internally in the Soviet Union; it bespeaks of the imminent struggle of the proletariat to regain its lost workers democracy and to oust Stalinism, and the imminent attempts by the bourgeois forces inside the Soviet Union and outside to reestablish a capitalist order in Russia. Those who no longer

consider the Soviet Union a Workers State will be taken by surprise when the workers resist the counterrevolution. For them the counterrevolution is already over. If their ideas have any strength at all in the Soviet Union, they can only serve to demoralize the working class, to check their attempts at resistance.

PREPARE THE RESISTANCE OF THE WORKERS

The Marxists must systematically-- no matter in what country they are -- prepare the resistance of the Soviet workers to the impending counterrevolution. Only those who have a correct understanding of the character, the development, and the direction of the Workers State will be able to lead this resistance successfully.

One final word to the mundane pessimists, the erudite gentlemen and Hearst-like demagogues who point to the failures of Communism, who speak of it as a pipe-dream. The bourgeois revolution took hundreds of years to develop. From the first successful revolution in Holland to the extension of that revolution to England, it was more than fifty years. From the time of this first revolution until the system of capitalism became decisive in world affairs, after the French Revolution, it was more than 200 years. The struggles of the proletariat against capitalism have by no means taken so long a period. Furthermore, the contradictions between Feudalism and Capitalism although severe, were nowhere near as strong as the contradictions between Capitalism and Socialism. In the one case it was a contradiction between two forms of private property rule. In the other it is a contradiction between private property as a whole and socialized property.

Nevertheless the working class has made gigantic strides in the last few decades, despite all its set-backs. History is on the side of the working class. A proletarian vanguard that digests the lessons of the past defeats and the one victory in October, will turn the tide in the near future, by giving guidance to the upsurges that are inevitable and leading them in the most successful revolutionary development in the history of mankind.

Revolutionary strategy must be based upon the world character of capitalism. World Capitalism today brings to the surface in abrupt changes revolutionary situations, which, if not transformed into successful revolutions by the vanguard and the masses, will be seized on by reaction to establish some form of counter revolutionary power.

Revolutionary strategy and tactics flow from revolutionary theory. The cornerstone of revolutionary strategy is the policy of independent action of the working class. The demonstration of this independent action, the bursting asunder of the bonds that tie the proletariat to the bourgeois system--has undergone a process from the birth of capitalism. Each step in the direction of independent action must be studied by the Marxian vanguard so that none of the errors of the past are made; its lessons are assimilated; and the proletariat shall not be forced to repeat past mistakes and defeats.

From the Program of the Revolutionary Workers League

HOW TO DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION

(Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted from the August 1939 International News with a view to explaining the position of the Revolutionary Workers League relative to the Soviet Union. The present world situation places this question in a primary position.)

(Editors' Note: This is a resolution adopted over a year ago -- August 7, 1938 -- by the Political Committee of the Revolutionary Workers League on the defense of the Soviet Union.)

1- When the Soviet Union will be part of an armed conflict either due to an imperialist invasion, or with Stalinism as an ally of one group of imperialists against another group of imperialists, the war will have a two-fold character: As an imperialist war with Stalinism as an ally of one group, it will be an imperialist war with elements of revolutionary war. As a war of defense against imperialist attack of the Soviet Union, it will be a revolutionary war with elements of the imperialist conflict. The contradictory position of the Soviet Union brings forth this condition.

It is the purpose of the Marxists in all cases to DEVELOP THE STRUGGLE INTO A GENERAL REVOLUTIONARY WAR TO STRENGTHEN AND EXTEND THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION.

2- Unconditional Defense means the COMPLETE support of Stalinism in periods of military struggle; revolutionary defeatism means that one considers the Soviet state and army bourgeois and struggles against it as in a capitalist country; however, the position of conditional defense means: the defense of the Soviet Union against the imperialist invasion and the imperialist agents within the Soviet Union -- the Stalinists and others. In a war Stalinism will be a brake upon the Soviet Union even more so than it is today.

If the political revolution against Stalinism is not completed before the war develops, then the participation of the Soviet Union in that war will enlarge all the contradictions within, and will lead to a violent solution of these antagonisms. The Russian masses with guns in hand will be more than a match for Stalinism and other such enemies of the proletariat.

3- The main line for conditional defense of the Soviet Union is the independent working class action, internationally and inside the Soviet Union:

a- The political and organizational independence of the revolutionary Marxian organization.

b- Revolutionary Defeatism in all capitalist countries, no matter which side of the struggle they are on.

c- Help the Russian Marxists build a Marxian Party in the Soviet Union.

d- For Soviets, a genuine Red Army and workers democracy in the Soviet Union.

4- The Red Army under Stalinism is warped and used by the bureaucracy for anti-working class ends. But as a Red Army it is based on the proletarian property relations and will have millions of armed workers in its ranks. It is not a bourgeois army. We are for independent class action inside and outside the Red Army.

We are against calling on the workers at all times to join the Red Army. We are equally against calling on the workers at all times not to join the Red Army. It is a tactical question whether under certain circumstances we call for joining the Red Army or whether under other circumstances we call upon the workers not to join the Red Army.

Our perspective is to organize Workers Militias wherever we can to strengthen and extend the October Revolution; and where we are in the Red Army we work for workers democracy and Soviets.

A healthy Red Army should always be backed up by irregulars or Workers Militia forces; even in circumstances where we favor joining the Red Army, workers militias and partisan bands must be established. However, in those places where we favor joining the Red Army we do not pose the workers militias as instruments counter to the Red Army.

The revolutionists work within the Red Army of Stalinism to transform it into a genuine Red Army based upon industrial structure and with genuine soldiers' democracy against the Stalinist officers caste. The Soldiers Committees must regain control of the Red Army.

5- Material Aid to the Red Army:

The Marxists must give their material aid to the Marxists internationalists and the Russians who are working for the creation of a new Communist Party.

Where workers organizations not under the control of the Marxists are willing to give material aid to the Soviet Union, the Marxists shall: Clearly state the policy of conditional defense. Endeavor through representatives to see that this aid goes to the left forces fighting on an independent class line against imperialism and the Stalinist agents.

Where the Marxists are unable to carry through this policy, as a general rule we do not oppose these workers sending aid to the Soviet Union, but the forces working for independent action work to obtain this material. Under specific conditions, as exceptions, considering the concrete stage of the struggle against Stalinism and other counter-revolutionary forces in their struggle against the workers and peasants, we shall fight against shipments to these anti-working class forces.

Above all, conditional defense means in each concrete situation the defense of the Soviet Union against ALL imperialists and their agents in the Soviet Union, the Stalinists and others.

CAN STALINISM CARRY THROUGH A SUCCESSFUL REVOLUTION IN FRANCE AND ITALY

Since the Stalinist parties are very strong opposition parties in France and Italy it is one of the most effective arguments of the anti-labor, reactionary and fascist elements to whip up sentiment for diabolic "red campaigns" and for war propaganda against the Soviet Union. It is not the starvation in Western Europe (for there is more starvation in other parts of the world. It is primarily the discontent of the masses moving in a revolutionary direction and the strong Stalinist parties in France and Italy that are the main spring of the Marshall Plan and of the other steps taken in conquered Germany, in North Africa and in the outer defense of the approaches to the Atlantic coast line.

Sometimes governments take defensive measures (even in offensive actions) when real dangers threaten them, and other times governments take defensive measures based upon false propaganda that they themselves are guilty of stirring up to fool the masses. Everyone knows that Hitler and his Cartel bosses in Germany were past masters at the art of making up giant lies and then using these lies as "reasons" for more powerful military measures or for direct acts of plunder.

That is primarily the case of the propaganda machine organized by the monopolists in the United States in the campaign against the reds today. Those who sit at the top and are the real executive committee (and not just a Truman office boy) know the facts and also know how to spin fancy fables that resemble reality.

The best way to prove our thesis is to deal with the above question in the light of the possibilities of the Cominform seizing state power in France and Italy today as Lenin and the Bolsheviks did in Russia in 1917. Upon this basis stands or falls the US war mongers arguments or our position.

The position that we are presenting is nothing new. Theoretically it was laid down by our foundation convention in 1935 long before the second world war. In fact, the faction that made up the core of our organization held this position, common with others, back in the period when we were members and later a faction of the Communist (Left Opposition) League of America. What is new is the practical application of this theory to the present concrete situation in France and Italy. And we may add, that what we say for France and Italy is also for all other countries throughout the world.

The value of the powerful Communist parties in France and Italy is not to carry through a successful social revolution. They are incapable of this task. The Stalinists have revised Marxism (dialectical materialism) on so many fundamental and principle questions since the death of Lenin and the expulsion of Trotsky that their opportunist and revisionist programmatic position no longer gives them the essential theoretical clarity for action to lead or carry through a successful proletarian revolution. In this period

of more than two decades they have revealed over and over again, and again in every decisive action for the working class and in every country where important struggles have taken place, that their revisionist positions have led them into the same blind allies as the revisionism of Kautsky and the leaders of the Socialist Second International led that stinking corpse.

No one who fears a social revolution need fear the Stalinists anymore than they fear the Socialists in carrying through these steps to the seizure and consolidation of state power.

The difference between the Socialists and Stalinists in the question of power is not only on the plain of theory but in reality itself.

The primary difference between the Socialists and Stalinists is the difference between how each organizes state power. Whereas the Socialists have revealed only state power of a bourgeois structure within the capitalist mode of production; the Stalinists on the other hand, inheriting through usurpation the dictatorship of the proletariat of 1917 have transformed this into a dictatorship of the Stalinist Party over the whole population, regardless of classes, even though they must use the working class as a base the same as John L. Lewis or any other capitalist trade union dictator and gangster must use the workers to carry out their ambitions.

The Stalinists use this dictator FORM of state not only in the Soviet Union, where transition economy toward Socialism exists, but they also use this dictator FORM of state in the Balkans where capitalism exists.

Whereas the Socialists use the bourgeois-democratic structure of the capitalist state and the Stalinists use the bourgeois or proletariat state, but only in dictatorship form, the revolutionary Marxists counterpose to the above the dictatorship of the proletariat (content) but only in the democratic form. The revolutionary Marxists organize a structure of worker's rule, worker's democracy against the exploiters; while the Stalinists present a party dictatorship OVER the workers as well as over the exploiters.

The importance of this argument on state power in relation to the above question not only involves the main question presented, but the concrete application of the problem in the different Balkan states where the Stalinists are the ruling party and where capitalism has not yet been overthrown.

The "Un-American Committee", the "Loyalty Pledge", the "Marshall Plan", the "Taft Hartley Law" and the backers of all the other anti-working class, anti-red actions argue that Communism is spreading from Eastern Europe to Western Europe and that is the reason we must take drastic action now. But these boys deliberately forget (for propaganda) that the Communist Parties that have state power in their hands outside of the Soviet Union (The Balkan States, northern Korea, etc) have this state power not because the Stalinists within these countries were able to obtain a majority and thereby lead the workers into the government. No, these tenth-rate parties of Stalinism

these blundering opportunist parties were handed power on a silver platter by the Red Army as part of the second world war strategy in the process of defeating Fascist Germany. Without the aim and goal of the defeat of Fascist Germany and the advancing Red Army through the Balkans on the heels of the retreating "supermen", these "Communist" governments would not have been possible.

Roosevelt and Churchill knew what they were giving Stalin when they agreed to invade through France and not through the Balkans. But they, (especially Roosevelt and the United States General Staff) though that even though the price was high, it was worth it for the defeat of Germany and the saving of American forces to consolidate as much as possible of the rest of the world beyond the immediate Soviet influence.

If the Red Army obtains approval of the United Nations today to move forward, say in the Palestine situation to keep the peace with the Arabs; or say in Spain if Fascism would start a war on its neighbor, you could expect "communist" governments sooner or later in the wake of the Red Army. In other words, that is the ONLY WAY that Stalinists could "be given" state power in France and Italy. We don't know of a situation that would bring the RED ARMY to these two countries at present. Except, if --- the monopolists are so stupid as to declare war on Russia. That would not be a third imperialist war. It would be an imperialist attempted invasion of Russia. Naturally under such a condition, that is, an attempted invasion of the Soviet Union by the imperialists led by United States the Red Army as mere defensive measures would move, or try to move for the occupation of the whole of Europe and northern Africa, as well as measures toward the Near East, India, China and Alaska.

Let me repeat, this kind of "communist" state power in France and Italy and other countries, on the shoulders of the invading Red Army in an imperialist war of attempted invasion of the Soviet Union is entirely a different question than the question presented above. Namely, can Stalinism carry through a successful social revolution in France and Italy?

Even where the Red Army put the "communists" into state power it remained capitalist economy and not a successful social revolution, except in those border countries and areas INCORPORATED WITHIN THE SOVIET UNION, such as Latvia, Esthonia, Bessarabia, part of Finland and part of Poland, etc.

The danger of the Stalinist parties in France and Italy and the other capitalist countries is not the danger of leading a proletarian revolution. The capitalist executive committees know this. The danger for capitalism is that they are a nuisance value against the imperialists and play a border patrol role for the Stalinists in the Kremlin, in their moves against Anglo-American-French-Italian imperialisms.

The danger of the Stalinist parties is the threat to the working class of beheading the social revolution as they and the Socialists have so successfully accomplished in every revolution since and including the Chinese Revolution of 1927. The executive

committee of the capitalist know this as well as the revolutionary Marxists. But the capitalists are able to use it to fool the workers. The capitalist, like a couple of clever confidence men, have, (1), joined up with their victim (workers) and proceed together to "rob" the other confidence man. Naturally the new found partner in crime always ends up behind the eight ball and the two con-men are on their way. So too with the Capitalists and the Stalinist reformists. The Capitalists tell the workers that Stalinism is Marxism, that Stalinism is revolution, that Stalinism is for the workers against the capitalists. The workers, looking for some one to lead the fight against the exploiters say -- if that is so we don't think they are so bad and thereby join them. But when the decisive struggle for state power takes place, the Stalinists lead the workers on the wrong side of the barricades. (Our literature gives years of proof of this and the November 1947 issue of the INTERNATIONAL NEWS presents twenty one basic revisionisms of Marxism by Stalinism.

A good example supporting this argument were the three terms of Roosevelt in the United States. In all three elections the overwhelming majority of the reactionary press came out against Roosevelt and told the workers that a vote for Roosevelt practically meant a vote for revolution. The workers thereby voted with their feet and elected Roosevelt overwhelmingly. Roosevelt will go down in history as one of the best and most capable clever and demagogic presidents who defended imperialism and carried through the monopolists' final achievement -- the placing of the United States as the leading imperialist nation of the entire earth.

Let us leave the variant of the Stalinist party obtaining power by action of the Soviet Army and consider one other possible variant. It is not theoretically excluded that in a revolutionary situation in one of these countries that the Stalinists would gain a majority and become the ruling party as the Social Democrats did in many countries and as the Mensheviks did in Russia. This is theoretically possible, but most unlikely because the imperialists and their local national agents are well trained in this art now and their parliamentary tricks, their election laws, have rules organized by the exploiters the same as the gambling casinos have their games fixed.

But even with these possible variants for Stalinism it still leaves us where we started. That Stalinism cannot carry through a successful social revolution in any of these capitalist countries.

Does this mean that there will be no revolution in France and Italy? Revolutions develop in countries due to economic and social breakdown of capitalism. No one knows better than the Marxists how many crimes Stalinism is guilty of, but they are not guilty of causing the misery, starvation, and revolutionary situations in France, Italy and other countries. Capitalism is guilty of this. Stalinism is guilty of bungling, of betraying the worker's interests and of transforming these favorable situations into defeats.

One can truthfully say that if France and Italy were void of Stalinist parties there would still be the same misery, hunger and

economic and social breakdown. But one can truthfully add that if -- if these powerful Communist parties were Marxian parties instead of opportunist revisionist parties they could have already seized power in these western European countries. The working class cannot seize state power in any country without at the same time fighting intervention by the leading imperialists.

The Angl-Americans have already intervened in France and Italy even more than the Soviet Union has intervened, the same as in Greece. But the French government does not object to this. They only object to intervention by the Soviet Union. When the maturing revolutionary developments in France and Italy reach a boiling point more direct Anglo-American intervention will be felt by the workers and peasants of these countries.

The Marshall Plan of intervention is NOT primarily against Stalinism. In the name of fighting the Soviet Union and the Cominform the Marshall Plan aims to behead in advance the maturing social revolutions in all parts of western Europe.

The terms communism and reds are the best terms for an amalgam to discredit and fight the maturing proletarian revolutions. By using Stalinism as their main target in propaganda and by using effective measures against the working class, the imperialists are able to do their share of disorientating the proletariat from their real goal for state power.

In spite of the Stalinist and Socialist betrayals from within and the imperialist intervention from without the social revolution in western Europe is taking on momentum and will succeed. The consolidation of the revolutionists around a scientific program and the organizing of a revolutionary Marxian program is the key question while these forces at the same time work out and present a concrete program of action to win the masses as a necessary prerequisite to the seizure of state power.

12-21-47

ON THE NEW "LEFT WING" OF CENTRISM

The ideological warfare of the exploiters and their agents in the ranks of the workers have received a new recruit with the appearance of "Left Wing", a magazine issued by former members of the Revolutionary Workers League. Coming at a time when the workers need clarity more than ever before in the fight for a new Marxist Party, independent politically and organizationally from all shades of revisionism, reformism, centrism and ultra-leftism, it adds its bit of confusionism.

What does it have to offer? "A few decades ago other issues may have been primary; tomorrow still others (for instance the Soviet Union or World War III) may attain such paramount significance. At the moment, however, the attitude of each individual towards Democracy is decisive. It must be the fulcrum for the regroupment of individual radicals into an instrument of social change, a Political Party. Left Wing intends to confine itself programmatically to this one major point which we believe separates us from the traditional tendencies of Stalinism, Social-Democracy, and Trotskyism..."

It castigates "Capitalist Democracy" as leading "inexorably to "Capitalist Fascism!" And goes on to show that the Labor Party is not worthy of support because it supports "democracy", etc., etc., and many other observations learned by its authors from their previous association with the RWL.

But, after this it has absolutely nothing else correct to say. What about imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism? What about proletarian strategy on the road to power, do they involve principles or are they a question of "approach"? What are principles, strategy, tactics? What is the correct analysis of the Soviet Union? What is the relation of the scientific Marxian program to the party of the workingclass? Can reformist and centrist parties be reformed? Or ultra-leftism? What about the program and the contributions to the class struggle of the Revolutionary Workers League? Why the complete silence about the RWL to which the authors belonged for over 12 years? We can learn nothing of these things from "Left Wing."

Instead, we learn that "Every working class party (group or grouplet) abstractly at least, in favor of a social revolution..." But "abstract principle is not enough... In the last analysis--it must be obvious--the strategical aim and approach, rather than abstract dogma is the key to the character of any political movement. Basic strategy is decisive. The abstraction may be merely a camouflage for conciliation with capitalism and its state. The strategy, however, cannot hide its true aims; it exposes its underlying principle in all its nakedness."

Such confusion! Every party, it seems, is abstractly for

(Note: Line 46 above reads as follows:

grouplet) is, abstractly at least, in favor of a social revolution..")

social revolution, but their strategy, their "approach" is "decisive." The RWL and Marxism long ago pointed out the correct position on this. The important thing to distinguish between the various forces claiming to stand for socialism is the road they map out on the road to workers power. THIS IN THEORY AND IN ACTION CONSTITUTES THEIR PROGRAM, THEIR PRINCIPLES. There are social reformist parties, centrist parties, and ultra-lefts, in the camp of revisionism, who swerve the workers away from proletarian power by their unscientific principles (not just what they describe themselves as being), and there is the Marxist parties, who by pursuing their line consistently lead the workers successfully to power.

Let anyone who wishes to see the full statement of these fundamental facts read the program of the RWL on the role of various parties. But "Left Wing" serves up a hash, which is ideal for the Norman Thomases, W.Z. Fosters, J.P. Cannons and Max Shachtmans to disorganize serious left wing elements. Principle and program are lost in a welter of words about four different "strategies." Thus political tendencies as an expression of the class struggle disappear. Instead we have "four most pronounced basic strategies within the working class movement."

Abstractly, Stalinism and the "native reformists" (Socialists, Labor Bureaucrats) are for social revolution. But both have different "strategical implementation" because one is rooted in the "giant machine of the bureaucracy in Russia," and the other in the "national capitalists of each country." You have also the "anti-party approach" by unnamed persons quite anonymous politically. Then there is the fourth strategy" of "politics based on the point of production." This last is for workers' councils and the climax is the promulgation of "such 'bridge' slogans as 'For people's repossession of the productive machine, with workers council government.'"

Let us note also that in some 31 pages of blurb along similar political lines there is practically not one word about the need for a MARXIAN PROGRAM or a MARXIAN PARTY. You pay your money and you take your choice. You can be either for or against the Trotskyist Transition program (or "bridge" slogans if you like;) you can be for or against defense of the Soviet Union (again complete silence as to whether it is a warped workers state or one of the various types of "collectivisms" that Socialists, centrists and ultralefts call it); you can be for or against support of the Labor Party under certain conditions (it repeats the Trotskyist lie about Lenin and the British Labor Party --see page 22); you can be for or against a new PQUM, which also opposed the Labor Party and SP in 1936, and Trotskyism, from an equally centrist basis.

In some respects "Left Wing" is even more reactionary, a greater retrogression from scientific revolutionary theory, and understanding of the class struggle than many long established centrist forces. For example, dealing with Czechoslovakia, we read: "A real left wing force was prohibited by the Kosice agreement" (of Stalinism and the Czech bourgeoisie. The Marxian revolutionary party is built regardless of any agreement of the exploiters and the Stalinists; what is required is the forces based on the correct program, acting towards

this end, and pursuing proper tactics, legal and extra legal. Further says "Left Wing" since the Socialists were too deeply rooted in capitalism, the masses became prey of Stalinist demagogy, the evils with the "nicest verbal trimmings." In a word, they "were really victims of the failure of powerful left wing parties to emerge anywhere in Europe. By themselves they could not possibly rebel with any hope of success. They lost the battle, therefore, without even a struggle ---" Could any analysis be more reactionary, more defeatist than this? Thus the breakdown of capitalism in Europe, especially in Western Europe, the continuing crisis in which Stalinist control is a transition phase, and future perspectives of revolutionary struggle against capitalism and Stalinism is lost in a fit of miserable sectarian blues.

The perspective of struggle of the masses is not based on the existence or non-existence of the left force, or to be more exact the revolutionary Marxian party. This derives from the objective situation, and the party can only take advantage of this, to lead the workers to power. For those who misunderstood Germany 1933, Spain 1936 showed this.

Dealing with the class struggle in the U.S., we are told among other things that as against the continuing treachery of the labor fakers in the trade unions we see: "In part the lack of a revolt against the big wigs of labor is the result of a general apathy on the part of the workingman..." Living standards are not bad enough, labor fakers are too strongly centralized. In fact, dealing with the strike wave of 1946, we learn there was nothing like the 1919 steel strike. "No battles, little animosity against management." With a wave of a hand, then, the tens of thousands of auto, steel, electrical, and other workers in struggle find it all a great sham, with "little animosity against management." The betrayals of the labor bureaucracy are made to equal workers confidence and love for the exploiters.

It is hardly necessary to deal here further with the political treachery of this organ of "Left Wing" political fakery.

The workers need for a new Marxian party is greater than ever before, to lead them in successful battle against the capitalists on all fronts, in day to day struggle up to the taking of power and establishment of workers council republics. But this is possible only by intensifying our efforts for scientific clarity, not phrasemongering pandering to all points of view. The departure of the Left Wing's authors from the RWL have helped to clear the air. Now we must go forward once again to build the Revolutionary Workers League, U.S. and unite the vanguard of the class on its scientific program for a new Marxian party and international.