The New International

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THE STRIKE WAVE
ITS ROOTS IN THE ECONOMICS OF RECONVERSION

An Editorial

HENRY JUDD:

AMERICA'S ROLE IN EUROPE
The National Question Today

FELIX MORROW:

To the Secretariat of the Fourth International

The Post-Liberation Struggle in the Philippines
Saul Berg

The Stalinist Bureaucracy from the Inside
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Historical Retrogression or Socialist Revolution
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Business Manager's MEMO TO OUR READERS

New Year's greeting from THE NEW INTERNATIONAL staff. We look forward to the year ahead with the confident expectation that our magazine will find an ever-widening circle of readers. On our part we will continue to emphasize the type of article found in the December issue—analytical and lively treatment of important issues, particularly those on the American scene. We hope that the readers who have sold Labor Action subscriptions to their shopmates will follow them up with subscriptions to the magazine.

The subscription drive started in November ends on February 1. If you hurry you can still take advantage of our special offer. This special offer gives you:

One year at only $1.50
One year and a copy of the book
The Fight for Socialism at only $2.50

Beginning with this issue the price of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL is being increased:

Retail price, 25 cents per copy.
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We believe the following preview of the contents of future issues will convince you that neither you nor your friends can afford to be without the NI in 1946.

W. H. Emmett, well-known Australian Marxist economist and author of The Handbook of Marxism, contributes an article on economics.


The GM strike will be the subject of a detailed analysis and review by Jack Wilson, who reappears as a contributor to the NI upon his release from the Army. Old readers will recall his articles on the rubber industry at the time of the CIO organizing drive, the rôle of John L. Lewis, etc.

Max Shachtman continues his series on the balance sheet of the differences between the WP and the SWP during the war.

I. J. Enright is preparing an article which analyzes the efforts of Gerald L. K. Smith to revive the old Ham 'n' Eggs movement in California.

The series by Henry Judd which starts this month will continue with articles on England and France in the February and March issues.

Other interesting articles will cover the developments in Argentina, report on Congress, reviews of timely books, etc.

The polemical material on how to fight fascism aroused considerable interest and we invite the comments of our readers on this subject.

The delay in bringing out last month's issue was due to unavoidable technical difficulties. However, with this issue we are starting the new year right and we hope to continue to meet our publication date in the following months.

PAUL BERN.
January 1, 1946, ushered in a year that may prove to be the most momentous to date in the history of American labor. It was not solely the fact that the "battle of titans"—the United Automobile Workers versus General Motors Corporation—remained deadlocked at year's end with little prospect for a speedy termination. Nor was it solely the fact that hundreds of other strikes dotted the country from coast to coast, some large, some small, some important, some of little consequence. Nor was it solely the fact that strikes loomed in such strategic nerve centers as telephone and telegraph systems. Nor was it solely the overwhelmingly important fact that strike dates had either been set or were in prospect for industries totaling several million workers, including such basic industries as steel, radio and electric, meat packing, rubber and others, and that the total contemporaneously on strike would add up to general strike proportions.

The combination of all of these factors would, to be sure, suffice to make of 1946 a most momentous year for labor. But this year will find its place in history, above all, because of the new level upon which the battle was joined. Regardless of the union or the industry involved, the issues at stake were nowhere merely a continuation of where the struggle had been left off in 1941.

The issues in the General Motors strike (December New International, "UAW vs. GM") were not merely some clever ideas concocted by Walter Reuther. Aspects of Reuther's line of argument were implicit to one degree or another in almost every one of the current struggles. It is therefore not the "deviltry" of Reuther, as the conservative press sees it, but the stubborn and obvious facts of labor's situation today that weaves a logic of its own and forces it upon labor as the only line of argument with which to support its demands. Compared to the rest of the top labor leadership, Reuther is less bound by conservative traditions and is, therefore, more conscious of his role, more daring and skillful in presenting labor's new arguments. But the arguments themselves are rooted in the objective situation and arise logically from it. If the arguments of labor today appear abnormal in the light of past trade union practice, it is only because the objective situation itself is abnormal and requires an abnormal solution. Abnormal situations have never yet been solved by normal measures.

Even Reuther is not aware of the complete implications of his demands, while the other leaders of the CIO (not to speak of the fossilized AFL officialdom) do not even begin to comprehend what is at stake. The revolutionary significance of the whole question of "ability to pay," "fact-finding" and "opening the books" remains only as an implicit factor in their position while they explicitly deny that there is anything involved which unions have not always demanded. Their denial, including the honest indignation which usually accompanies it, is an evidence of their own blundering and confusion, born out of the clash between their own level of social consciousness and the pressing needs of the objective situation.

**Industry Knows What Is at Stake**

However, the same is not the case with industry. Both because of the greater degree of consciousness of their interests and because the whole issue is more plainly seen from capital's side of the controversy, the spokesmen of Big Business are quite well aware of what is at stake. The intransigence of General Motors in refusing to make profits and prices an issue of collective bargaining and their raising it to the high level of an inviolable principle is neither simply demogogy nor tactical maneuvering. When they proclaim in full page ads placed in practically every daily newspaper from coast to coast that the principle of wages based upon the "ability to pay" would eventually ruin the "free enterprise" system they argue from solid economic fact. It is the great pity of the situation that the working class is not equally aware of this and takes conscious steps to rid itself of this "free enterprise" system in which the capitalist is "free" to exploit labor for private profit while the worker is "free" to stay home and starve if he does not like it.

In its ad of December 30 General Motors declares:

General Motors has faced what it believes is a highly critical issue. It has made its decision. It is important that the public understand the issue. The issue at stake transcends the interests of General Motors. There is involved something far more consequential—a most vital principle.

America is at the crossroads! It must preserve the freedom of each unit of American business to determine its own destinies. Or it must transfer to some governmental bureaucracy or agency, or to a union, the responsibility of management that has been the very keystone of American business. Shall this responsibility be surrendered? That is the decision the American people face. America must choose!

The idea of ability to pay, whatever its validity may be, is not applicable to an individual business within an industry as a basis for raising its wages beyond the going rate.

Consider the implications of such a principle. Who would risk money to develop or expand a business under such circum-
stances? Where would be the incentive to do a more efficient job? It would be intelligent to destroy the incentive for efficiency? Would it not be more intelligent to subscribe to the principle that no one should be forced to pay more than the going rate? Should General Motors, assuming it is more efficient, be required to pay more for materials, for transportation, for services or for wages than its competition? And how much more determined by a political governmental agency?

Do you subscribe to the belief that you should pay for what you buy or the services you use on the basis of your financial resources? Is it clear that this is the principle involved.

**Labor's Place Under Capitalism**

Considering that it is a piece of special pleading written for propaganda, it still remains a fair description of the relations which govern capitalist production. Because implicit in what they say in the above is the secret of capitalist economy, i.e., the exploitation of labor to produce profits, interest and rents. By drawing out to its full implications the "holy" principle upon which General Motors takes its stand, we lay bare their real concept of the place of labor in the economy.

General Motors complains that if they are forced to pay wages on the basis of "ability to pay" they will also have to pay for materials on the same basis. This statement only makes sense on the basis of a Marxian understanding of capitalism and its economic laws. What General Motors is saying is what Karl Marx established a century ago, that under capitalism both materials and labor power are commodities which the capitalist purchases on the market at the market price.

"We must have the right to buy materials and labor power for as little as we can get it" is what the argument boils down to. "If we must raise wages because we have increased our profits, free enterprise (i.e., capitalism) is impossible," is the conclusion which follows.

We agree with General Motors when they state that in the long run the principle of "ability to pay" is incompatible with the operation of capitalist production relations. This is precisely why Marxists must support labor's fight to "open the books" and increase wages on the basis of "ability to pay."

We see in this struggle a transition from the economic relations of capitalism to the economic relations of socialism. The latter cannot, of course, be attained without a workers government and the nationalization of industry. But today the important transition which this struggle helps achieve is the transition in the thinking of the American working class from the acceptance of the status quo to new economic relations.

The American labor movement did not embark upon this struggle with any notions of undermining capitalism. Its understanding of its own role still lies far behind the implications inherent in the demands which it makes.

**Reconversion and A "New Slate"**

The present strike struggles take place against an economic pattern unlike that which prevailed in the past, either in time of economic upswing or in time of economic decline. The prime role of the trade unions, the constant struggle to defend the workers' standard of living, was all but suspended for the period of the war by government controls and the iniquitous "no strike pledge." The gap between rising prices and frozen wages was filled by the lengthened work week with overtime rates. With the return of the forty hour week the "take home" pay drops to almost prewar time levels. However, prices continue to rise. The worker insists that he must have an increase in hourly rates to safeguard his "standard of living." But what standard of living? That of 1939? That of the war years? That possible today on the basis of his present earnings? The "standard of living" was not handed down at Mount Sinai nor written into the Constitution. It is a fluid thing. It is the result of the historical struggle of the working class upon a given economic level. What the government or the industrialists conceive of as labor's standard of living, will hardly agree with what the workers themselves conceive of. The worker argues that he needs the same take-home pay now that he earned during the war on the basis of 40, 48, 50 or more hours per week. The capitalist class sees this as an outrageous demand. What has "standard of living" got to do with it, argues the employer, when he is supposed to pay 52 hours wages for 40 hours of work?

As a result of the war-time abnormality, the struggle between capital and labor in the reconversion period begins, so to speak, with a clean slate. It is not, as in the past, a matter of affecting the standard of living by pushing wages a few cents this way or that. It is actually a struggle to establish a new, a standard of living. This means that traditional criteria cannot play the role they formerly did, above all not the criteria of the cost of living. It means re-establishing a new relationship between wages, prices and profits. As a result everything is raised anew. Old concepts that served the trade unions for decades and are written into its textbooks are discarded as inadequate. Labor is compelled to take a new approach, a broader social approach to its place in the economy. It is not that labor has never at one time or another in the past, gone into bargaining conferences to raise the question of profits, or the increased productivity of labor, or the prices the employer gets for his products, or the need to "open the books," etc. But these were usually incidental to the main bone of contention, viz; sufficient wages to cover the cost of living. Today, labor is forced to rest its case upon the total economic situation.

**Why the Broad Approach Is Needed**

Without such an approach labor's arsenal of arguments is quickly depleted and capital's supplied with strong reserves. Were labor to confine itself to the traditional single strong point of the past, the cost of living, it would have little basis for demanding a 30 per cent increase. Not that the cost of living has not gone up that much compared with the increase in hourly wage rates. But this would be a meaningless argument because it rests upon the aim of re-establishing wage-price relationships of five years ago in the midst of a vastly changed economic situation. Capital simply states that it must operate its business at a profit in the year 1946. This it cannot do, it claims, if it must increase wages by 30 per cent. Or, as in the case of General Motors, it states that it considers it exorbitant even if it could afford it. In the present negotiations, it is capital which tries to utilize cost of living statistics to bolster its case that labor does not deserve a 30 per cent increase.

The broad social approach which labor is forced to take likewise affects the old class collaborationist concept that the interests of capital and labor are mutually beneficial ones. The National Association of Manufacturers has consistently argued against wage increases during the reconversion period from this basis. The NAM states that it is necessary for labor to wait until industry has reconverted and is producing at a profit before wage increases can be safely granted, since whatever is good for industry will rebound to the benefit of labor. Implicit in the position that the books should be opened and wages based upon ability to pay is the position that wages
must be increased at the expense of profits and that, therefore, the interests of capital and labor are antagonistic.

The results of labor's new approach to wages is to make fact finding increasingly emphasize the company's books and increasingly emphasize the Department of Labor's cost of living index. In theory this means that labor shifts the basis of its argument from the value of labor power as a commodity to the social role of the proletariat in production.

The nature of the present struggles of American labor are unique in the international experiences of the working class movement. A working class so backward politically as to remain tied to the bourgeois parties is confronted on the economic field with fundamental problems that are born in the objective situation of a highly developed capitalist economy and which pose as the only "common sense" solution steps which involve a break with capitalist economic relations. This situation again permits us to appreciate the remarkable genius of Leon Trotsky, who in 1938 posed for the American Marxists this glaring contradiction between the advanced objective situation and the retarded subjective factor, the political backwardness of American labor, and outlined the program of transitional demands as the means of bridging the gap. Trotsky's contribution remains the basis upon which advanced ideas of revolutionary Marxism can find contact with a politically backward working class which faces an objective situation which permits only of revolutionary solutions.

The very questions posed by the "ability to pay" approach require that labor find it's answers in the transitional bridge to socialist solutions. In the first place in this connection is the question, "What if the books reveal that a wage increase is impossible?" Reuther has thus far tried to evade facing this question. Murray, in his negotiations with United States Steel, has avoided giving a forthright answer to the corporation's claim that the wage increase is only possible after a rise in the price ceiling on steel products. We can rest assured that the workers will not be content with an auditor's report that states that capital cannot pay what the workers consider a living wage. Labor's answer must proceed along the lines of our transitional program and demand that the bankrupt owners of industry be relieved of their liability by government nationalization and relieved of the burden of management by workers control of production. Once this demand has been fixed in the minds of labor, the steps toward an independent labor party and the struggle for a workers government become inevitable.

America's Role In Europe

The National Question in the Post-War Era

[The article printed below is the first in a series of four articles dealing with the Europe of today. Succeeding articles will be concerned with England and its Labor Government; France in 1946 and "The Germanies." In this related series, the author is not primarily concerned with descriptions of Europe's major countries, but rather with questions of American imperialist penetration into Europe, the status and perspective of the labor movement in the Europe of 1946, and new aspects of the situation of a highly developed capitalist economy and which pose as the only "common sense" solution steps which involve a break with capitalist economic relations. This situation again permits us to appreciate the remarkable genius of Leon Trotsky, who in 1938 posed for the American Marxists this glaring contradiction between the advanced objective situation and the retarded subjective factor, the political backwardness of American labor, and outlined the program of transitional demands as the means of bridging the gap. Trotsky's contribution remains the basis upon which advanced ideas of revolutionary Marxism can find contact with a politically backward working class which faces an objective situation which permits only of revolutionary solutions.

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PART I

It is almost impossible to imagine the low and sunken state of Europe as it enters the dreaded winter of 1945-46. Early snows are covering the ruined cities, concealing the rubble and dirt, but every European and every soldier who has passed through the broken Continent knows what is beneath. Soon a full year will have gone by since TIME has called "history's most terrifying peace." The revolutionary truism that the war has ended in name only is so apparent as to need no stressing. In terms of restrictions upon liberties and democratic rights; persecutions of minorities and national groups; the violent wrenching of masses of people from one area and their dispersion to another; the widespread employment of slave laborers—in a word, in terms of everything that made the war ultra-reactionary and hated by the average working class, middle class or peasant family living at the subsistence edge of real hunger, with its entire energy consumed in the struggle for food, warmth, housing and clothing; a major decline in general health standards, accompanied by sharp rises in death and infant mortality rates (with the fear of mass epidemics hovering everywhere); a breaking-up of all transportation systems, means of transport and methods of communication; an overall collapse of normal forms of trading and commerce, and a throw back to primitive individual, regional and even intra-national barter methods, with the ultra-reactionary system of Black Marketing replacing the normal exchange market of traditional capitalism.

Declining Standards

With economic debasement and widespread misery there marches a corresponding decline in moral and ideologic standards. Each family, each individual within the family, every member of European society is thrown into the wild struggle for a share, substantial enough to survive on, of Europe's meagre commodities and the thin trickle coming from America. Petty thievery, robbery and wholesale bandity are commonplace. Women from the most bourgeois of backgrounds, paragons of middle class prudery, step out on the road of prostr-
tution. Only the uniform and the language of their purchasers vary. Children, maturing in an atmosphere of uncertainty, insecurity and general social paralysis, develop the skills of grubbing, pimping, stealing and flattering. Nimble fingers offered by the war. In general, even the survival of bourgeois culture is threatened by the atrophy of bourgeois Europe. The importance of such a type as Louis Aragon, the rather despis- able French Stalinist, in Parisian intellectual life is sufficient illustration.

Ideologically, as we shall explain in this series, the same processes of "falling-apart" and degeneration must be recog-
ized. The Nazi method aroused and lifted to new heights all the ancient, sleeping chauvinisms and national hatreds. The Allied-Russian methods completed the break-up of European life to fantastic and fractional degrees (4-Power occupation of minute Austria; 4-Power occupation of Berlin and Vienna). Just as, in general, each individual unit of the European-national family was forced into the mad scramble for a share of his town's, or region's, or city's production, so whole sections of nations (southern France, Sicily, Bavaria, etc.), and whole nations are thrown into violent antagonism with one another in the scramble for Europe's surviving wealth and production.

The various national bourgeoisies, military governments of occupation and totalitarian creations of Moscow have given freedom and full play to all centrifugal forces within the battered Continent. Now Europe is dog tired, with its factories, mines and transport wrecked by war and occupation; no raw materials to begin production again; not enough coal to build up steam; its best laborers scattered and torn away from their machines. And on both flanks, the weight of two great powers whose future and whose intentions with respect to Europe, are either unknown or, when known, are only too clear.

Europe: 1946

France and Belgium: lacking materials, railroad systems shattered, black markets absorbing their remaining strength and meagre production, bomb destroyed ports. France, with its devastated Normandy; Belgium with its devastated Ardennes. Spain: still under Franco, still living in the aftermath of its Civil War. Portugal: under its traditional military despot. Italy: ripped open from end to end, systematically shot up, with hungry Sicily at its toe. The Balkans: its mysteriously expanding totalitarian dictatorships, swallowing up Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Roumania. Greece: under a White Terror, reduced to hunger and cave-dwelling. Norway: salt herring as the main food and the aftermath of five years of occupation to overcome. Holland: half-drowned and dieting on American "C" rations. Central Europe: war-destroyed Poland and Hungary, and 800,000 Russian soldiers camping on a minute portion of minute Austria. Czechoslovakia without supplies and grieved by its minority questions. And finally, rapidly outstripping all other nations in the depths to which it has sunk. Germany: cut up, dispersed, as a reality non-existent. Such is, in summary, the state of Europe, 1946.

Do we mean, then, that the situation in Europe is one of complete hopelessness, with only the blackest of perspectives? No, this is not at all our contention. On the contrary, despite these most unfavorable circumstances, the European masses have already made several important efforts to lift themselves up (the overthrow of Italian fascism, the French movement of resistance, ending in the Paris insurrection, the Belgian strike struggles), and have shown repeatedly the general direction in which their social and ideologic thought is moving (British elections, French elections, etc.). Still more important is the definite, steady and growing revival of the Fourth International movement, and its European sections. There could be no greater error than to cross off Europe as a source of revolu-

Role of U. S. in Europe

Now, where does America and its imperialist bourgeoisie fit into this chaos of modern Europe? The illusion that Ameri-

But America's main weapons in Europe are economic in character. As the great victor power in the war, with its in-

America is on the verge of leaving Europe to its fate and washing its hands of the continent, fostered by the rapid withdrawal of our military forces from Europe, seems fairly widespread. Of course this idea is nonsense. Certain die-hard remnants of "isolationism" may still urge total withdrawal, but the reality is otherwise. To begin with, even the completion of redeploy-

America is far ahead of other nations in this position that prevent its attaining perfection, the general awareness of our superiority is the determining factor in American policy, behavior and attitude toward Europe. Even the common attitudes and the daily actions of the Ameri-
can GI toward the people of Europe can be traced back to this knowledge of imperialist superiority and domination. The American soldier (as we are beginning to realize more and more) is generally intensely disliked in Europe. What could be more startling than the fact, clearly admitted by bourgeois journalists, that the American soldier is liked by (and, in turn, liked by) the people—especially the enemy, conquered nation—and is heartily disliked by (and, in turn, dislikes) the English, French, Belgian, etc., peoples—the "allied," liberated nations! The politically backward and ignorant GI, particularly in France, displays that typical imperialistic arrogance associated with conqueror nations. He practices, even in small ways, that typical economic callousness associated with petty exploiters. He is a bulwark of the Black Market, one of Europe's most sinister institutions. (Carton of cigarettes, $10.00—cost to him, $5.00; "K" ration, $1.00—cost to him, zero; and cast-off army clothing sells for fantastic prices).

Even Leon Trotsky's well-known warning that America aimed at destroying the European market and then placing the continent on rations, even this may be described as an understatement of the facts. Even Trotsky's perception could not foresee the literal correctness of his prediction—great masses of Europeans living on the tasteless "C" and "K" rations of American mechanized production; a large percentage of Europeans dressed in the worn, cast-off clothing of American GI's and American charity donors (black marketed to them at fancy prices). In placing Europe upon material, financial and political rations American imperialism believes it has so cornered the continent that the ultimate objectives of its policy are within range of fulfillment. In addition to this rationing scheme, America—as we shall illustrate in this series—pursues virtually any method that will further weaken, divide and disintegrate Europe. America will not hesitate to let loose any force that will add to the sum total of centrifugal forces which are now whirling Europe about and causing its further break-up, provided, of course, such measures fit in with our general imperialist objectives.

The Objectives

What are these objectives? To the thinking European individual they were most concretely expressed in the "plan" of Bernard Baruch, published some time last year. They may be summarized as follows:

1. To keep Europe in a weakened and internally divided state, thus making the continent much easier to "handle."

2. To prevent the reorganization, reconstruction and growth of such industries and exports as have, in the past, seriously interfered with American economic life; to limit and control (whenever possible) the recovery of other industries and agricultural life.

3. To halt, or block, the growth of any popular democratic, revolutionary, unifying or competing tendencies within Europe.

4. To consolidate and maintain control over the European division of the world market, as an essential step on the road to conquest of the latter.

5. To organize (through diplomatic maneuvers, blocs, power politics, etc.) Europe, in its preliminary phases, for its future participation, under American leadership, in the Third World War.

It is understood that every world power having sufficient strength left after the exhausting years of war is likewise intriguing and maneuvering in Europe. Imperialist America and Stalinist Russia are merely the leaders in this victimization of Europe's masses, with England and France—their concrete action shaped by their particular designs and interests—following closely behind. Nor do the ruling cliques of the satellites of these great powers hesitate to fall in with the game. Conspiracies, plots and intrigues; blocs and counter-blocs; bribery and treachery, power politics and counter-politics are so rampant in the Europe of 1946 that the entire continent resembles the court life, with its atmosphere of stink and decadence, generally associated with any of the pre-war Balkan monarchies. The territorial "Balkanization" of Europe by the victors is accompanied by a "Balkanization" of its political and social life, with the proletariat and small petty bourgeoisie, including the farmers and peasantry, as its victims.

Threat of a New War

Yet, as any European will promptly reply to his questioner, the basic trend in this maze is already clear, too clear. A Swiss newspaper recently summarized this general view by stating that every maneuver and each effort on the part of the powers tends toward the erection of a "line of steel" down the heart of Europe. Above and "beyond" the many national boundaries that divide the masses of each nation from one another there stands the armed line that separates yesterday's Allies from one another. Splitting Europe and its former leading nation, Germany, almost in twain, this line has a greater significance today that the most traditional, fought-over national or geographic boundary. For the peoples of Europe it symbolizes the most frightening of their new fears—the dreaded possibility of a new, Third World War. How ironic they find it that this artificial, bristling "line of steel"—the most closely watched boundary on the continent—should be precisely the same line where, scarcely a year ago, the enlightened Allies joyously met, supposedly to end the agonized war and begin the task of a reconstructed Europe at peace! On the western side of this fateful line stand the Anglo-American imperialists with their satellites; on the eastern side stand the neo-Russian imperialists with their satellites. All Europe knows this and while it knows that war will not come "tomorrow," it has nothing but a weary hope that "tomorrow" will never come.

It is against this dark background that we must list and measure the general aspect of present European problems. During the period of the war itself, the Workers Party and virtually every section of the Fourth International concerned itself at great length with the so-called "national question" in Europe. That question is still very much alive today, and it would be a mistake of a high order to think that the formal end of the war has abolished the question, or its prominence. Those comrades and those European sections of the International who refused to recognize any "national question," who clung to orthodox formulae, proved to be catastrophically wrong. They deceived themselves cruelly about a coming "German revolution," or a lasting dual power in northern Italy; their central political slogan for a unity of Europe proved to be an abstraction of abstractions; the scope and power of the French and other resistance movements caught them open-mouthed and unprepared; and most telling proof of a false analysis and perspective, in a period of growth and upsurge is, that we have understood the grasp of Europe and its needs. The "national problem of Europe" received its clearest exposition (and still does) from comrades originating in the most nationally-oppressed country of Europe today—Germany.

Let those who consider the "national question" non-exist...
ent, or resolved by the war’s end, consider the following propositions:

1. A whole new series of nations and vast territories have been hurled back into a state of national oppression, foreign occupation and lack of independence. Germany stands at the head of a list that includes every nation beaten down in the Russian zones of occupation and influence (the Baltic states, Poland, etc.). In these areas the problem of national independence has been re-posed in an acute and immediate sense.

2. A whole new series of small nations and weakened nations feel the presence, weight and pressure of the foreign, victor imperialisms in a manner that directly relates to their social and historic future, right down to the elementary victor imperialisms in a manner that.

3. A whole new series of nations and vast territories have been hurled back into a state of national oppression, foreign occupation and lack of independence.

4. Standing in the background, but conspicuously in evidence, is the general, all-European aspect of the “national question.” That is, in what manner and by what means shall the peoples of Europe, taken as an entity, free themselves from the burdensome weight of the great powers? How shall they

*We note the threat by American Imperialism, to place a coal embargo upon Switzerland. Even the most stubborn, traditional and aloof "independent" nation of Europe finds itself threatened, and thereby drawn into the general struggle, in a manner that even the Nazis did not attempt to apply to it.*

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De Gaulle As Military Theoretician

How False Reputations Are Built

For Glory gives herself only to those who have always dreamed of her.—General Charles de Gaulle.

Nothing illustrates the depth of the profound crisis in France today and the utter bankruptcy of its present leadership quite as well as the fact that a one-time obscure army brass hat has been elevated to the position of “strong man and savior of France.” Only a few years ago a miserable politician, Daladier, was similarly projected to the world. Who recalls Daladier today? Tomorrow one will be able to ask the same question about Gen. Charles de Gaulle.

In the time just mentioned, as we should be, to the volumes of lies palmed off as truth in wartime, one would truly be surprised at the impudence of the bourgeois journalists in presenting events and individuals like Charles de Gaulle to the people.

Let us take, for example, General Charles de Gaulle as presented by one of his ardent admirers, the American writer, Walter Millis. In his foreword to de Gaulle’s highly touted book, *The Army of the Future,* Millis writes: “This is the now famous little book by a French officer on the principles on which the French did not act—while the Germans did... The book brilliantly etches the quality of mind which he brings to the task. His record sufficiently demonstrates his capacity as a man of action. The book shows that he combines with them intellectual powers to which we are, perhaps, too little accustomed in our own military men.”

As a matter of fact, a simple reading of de Gaulle’s work reveals that there is nothing original in his military ideas; he lacks social vision of any sort; and at best he can be described merely as a brass hat who is able to write lucidly, if not accurately.

The political wisdom of de Gaulle, to those who have not followed his opportunistic career in the last four years, is displayed clearly in his major theoretical work. Here is how de Gaulle sees the future of France—this is his social vision:

Gaping wide open, exposing her defenseless body to blows, deprived of all respite and all refuge, where then can our country find her latent protection except in arms? The sword is not only the last argument in her quarrels, it is also the only thing that makes up for her weakness. Everything that is ill-adapted in her territory, absurd in her political system, infirm in her character, has, in the last resort, nothing to offset it but the war-like arts, the school of her troops, the sufferings of her soldiers.

When one recalls that this book was written in the year 1934, it is quite obvious that de Gaulle was nothing but a flag-waving, war-mongering brass hat.

De Gaulle had a classic solution to the problems of France in 1934. He wanted a professional army; plus, to be sure, “our mass of reserves and recruits (the principal element of national defense).” It is not disclosing a military secret to point out that...
de Gaulle's views were simply a copy of the military views that had been adopted in Germany and Russia ten years before de Gaulle wrote this book. (Incidentally, one of de Gaulle's "potent" arguments in this "now famous" book was to demand a three-year period of conscription instead of one year.)

To be sure, de Gaulle understood the impact of a technologically age on warfare better than the dullards of the French general staff. His chapter outlining a panzer division and the effect of a mechanized army is quite lucid. He also understood the tactical use of air power. But every idea he expresses in this book of 1934 was ABC to the Red Army and the Wehrmacht; besides which, de Gaulle lacked the courage of a Douhet or a Gen. "Billy" Mitchell to fight for his views. Like every other brass hat, he failed completely to understand the only decisive new development of warfare since the first World War, namely, strategic air power. That de Gaulle was a "brilliant" man in the French army simply indicates that it was still the backward, corrupt, and reactionary army of the Dreyfus case, the blunders of the First World War, and its hero, Marshal Petain.

De Gaulle's Professional Soldiers

In this allegedly brilliant work, there is no major criticism of the views symbolized in the so-called Maginot Line mentality. How could de Gaulle attack the rotten core of the French army? He was a protege of Petain's. As a matter of fact, his argument for a professional army and a specialized army in a mechanical age was dictated not so much by the strictly military needs of the day as by the political requirements of the reactionary French regime. His military system is concerned with other things.

France would be imprudent to rely entirely on native troops to protect the Empire in Algiers, which reverberates to all the rumblings of Islam, and in Indo-China, which reacts to every disturbance in Asia. From the day upon which a force shall be created of men from our own country who are professional soldiers and in consequence more prepared to go on distant campaigns quite unconnected with politics, and from the day upon which from time to time we can parade some of our well-trained troops in carefully selected regions, from that day we shall be sufficiently guarded against danger to render it immediately less probable.

De Gaulle's future policy today is crystal clear from a reading of that notation written in 1934. De Gaulle is concerned primarily with the question of how to preserve the French imperialist plunder of bygone days.

It is easy to understand why de Gaulle refused to play Charlie McCarthy to Churchill and then to Roosevelt when one reads his major work. It is not so much because de Gaulle is interested in a democratic France or a solution of its burning problems. Quite the contrary, it is primarily because he has a MacArthur complex, but, alas, lives in a poor country. Listen to this gem of profound wisdom:

“Actually, everything shows that she (France) is destined to shine in the realm of quality. Our country, with her tinted skies, her varied contours, her fertile soil, our bread full of fine corn and vines and livestock, our industry of artistic objects, finished products and luxury articles, our gifts of initiative, adaptation, and self-respect, make us, above all others, a race created for brilliant deeds, and a picked body of specialists. Independence of tasks, cooperation of ingenuity, that competition of skill in the use of adaptable machines which will in the future require fighting by professionals, are naturally suited to aptitudes of our best brains. The same causes that give us many specialists in our delicate work will also favor us in the series of technical exploits which tomorrow will give the victory to specialized troops. It would appear that Destiny, in opening out the fresh path, desires once more to serve the fortunes of France.

If we were to change the word France to Germany in this quotation and credit it to Hitler instead of de Gaulle, it would be accepted everywhere as a typical example of the false racial superiority theory propagated by the Nazis.

Is it any wonder that de Gaulle concludes his book with this stirring call to arms: "In the hard task of restoring France's youth, the new army will serve, remedy, and leaven, for the word is the axis of the world and greatness cannot be shared." Sieg Heil!

As for de Gaulle and his glory complex, perhaps a fitting epitaph can be found in Thomas Grey's Elegy:

"The voice of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

WALTER JASON.
That shows its relative place in the scale of the things we value. From the Germans we shall exact in reparations, coal, machinery, chemical and steel plants, labor, financial assets. But we will give them democracy, the only thing, apparently, which it is better to give than to receive. We Americans put first things first.

**Put Physical Needs First**

The German people are also putting first things first. They are using their earliest public opportunities to do so. For instance, on October 18, 1945, the Bavarian city of Fürth staged its first mass political rally in twelve years. Ten thousand people attended, and they were addressed by representatives of the four new political parties in Bavaria. "The speakers," reports an American observer, "dealt with the physical needs of Germany as well as political aims of their respective parties. Housing and fuel shortages topped the list of emergencies. 'First comes the fulfillment of soldiers and their entirely. Many girls who earliest public opportunities to do so.

Thus the post-war thoughts of the German people, until now a general smoldering more confused and impotent than the feelings of the Italian people, for instance, are rapidly flowing together into the channels of deepest necessity and developing direction and pressure.

It is still not clear to many Germans what takes place when one loses a war. Goebbels told them that they would be slaughtered, enslaved and dispossessed (he was haunted, no doubt, by visions of the millions to whom the Nazis had meted out that fate). But nothing like that happened, except to some party members and the obvious criminal element (Gestapo, SS, SD, etc.), and the Germans breathed with relief.

They found Americans to be human beings very much like themselves, too. After discounting the topheavy percentage of American soldiers, who carried on quite boorishly and were offensively obsessed with a conqueror complex, the rest were quite decent when known personally. Many girls who were being whistled at for the first time in their lives very quickly caught on to the idea that it was not a sign of disrespect, but of enthusiasm. They found American soldiers and their chocolate and cigarettes much to their liking.

**Resent Americans' Wealth**

But here is where the first expression of resentment—from German males—made its appearance. German youths—Wehrmacht discharges and teen-agers—passed the word around that German girls seen in the company of American soldiers could expect to have their hair cropped and would be "blacklisted." Leaflets and chalk scrawls carried the message. It sprang up in so many places in Germany at once as to indicate spontaneity. This was not entirely a positive case of "wolves" versus "wolves," nor an affair of German honor. Nor was it a case of German men versus American men. It was the resentment of poor men, without chocolate or tobacco even for themselves, against rich men, whose advantage lay in the candy bars, cigarettes, K-rations, chewing gum, soap and sometimes coffee and sugar and canned goods, which they carried with them. It was a "class" struggle, and it reached such proportions that it was brought out into the open before the 10,000 persons who held their first political assembly in Fürth not so long ago.

With the withdrawal of the majority of Yanks from Europe, this particular issue will vanish and German youth will find far more serious things confronting it. But the pattern will not change: poor land v. rich land.

There is the problem of jobs, for instance—a problem not unfamiliar to the United States either. Unemployment in Germany is acute. Hundreds of thousands of former workers in war industries have been "laid off" with finality. "No more war—no more work." The rediscovery of that fact is world-wide today, but there is this difference here in addition: reconversion, which would mean jobs, is barely taking place.

If ever a country could logically expect a building boom, ruined Germany should. But what to build with? Virtually every item necessary for the construction of a house is listed as a scarce commodity: tiles, tarpaper, cement, lime, plaster, lumber, nails, wire, plumbing, glass, porcelain insulation. Not even the plants that produce these things can be rebuilt without imports from abroad to help start them rolling. Meanwhile, the railroads are overtaxed transporting American troops out of Germany. Freight cars are scarce; unsubstructed rail lines are scarce; engines are scarce; coal is scarest of all. Germans will use wood this winter because there isn't enough coal to run the factories with if they were standing. All these things put together make it no wonder that, as an American newspaper states, "Large-scale rebuilding has not started yet in German cities." It is doubtful whether "large-scale" rebuilding will start even in the coming year.

**New Soil for Fascism**

There is another aspect to the problem of jobs, if we are to believe a news heading in the Stars and Stripes. "Germans Found Reluctant to Work, Await U. S. Aid," it states, and continues: "Germans in the American zone still are reluctant in many cases to accept jobs, even though facing food shortage and cold this winter, an official survey revealed today...." "As released prisoners of war return to civilian life, some reluctance has been evident with respect to accepting jobs other than those of pre-service days. Office workers particularly have shown little interest in physical labor or agricultural work."

You can't blame a man who was drafted into the Wehrmacht when half way through his law studies for not wanting to swing a scythe or a pick for the rest of his life (yes, they still cut the hay and the wheat in the old-fashioned way in Germany). And a girl who had her heart set on clothes designing won't willingly turn to clothes washing now. Yet if Germany is to be de-industrialized and agriculturalized that is what tens of thousands of Germans will have to do, and they will bear an eternal grudge against those who they feel robbed them of a fuller life. Long after they have forgotten that, they, or else their parents who used to cry "Heil Hitler!" will be resentful, and if you try to remind them of their Nazi days they will remind you that it was just such resentment that started Hitler on his way to power after the last war—resentment of the under-privileged against the privileged, of those at the bottom against those at the top, of the vanquished against the victors.

The meeting of ten thousand persons in Fürth two weeks ago was a meeting of the vanquished. The emphasis there presented to them by the man who said "Houses first—democracy afterward" is the emphasis of the bottom, and it is diametrically at variance with the emphasis of the top (i.e., the American conquerors). It will not change. It cannot change as long as the under-privileged-versus-privileged relationship exists.
How MG Uses CP

Here is some convvent the meeting drew. It is a further quotation from the Furth item: "High MG official here, who attended the rally, observed that the Germans were not ready for free elections. He advanced two main reasons for this opinion. First there is a fear and a distrust of the power of a single outstanding party, and secondly, there is still a reluctance to express political views, a hangover from the days of Nazi domination."

The second reason is easily enough accounted for. Political views are at the crystallizing stage now and will be expressed soon. In the first reason we are left to guess what "single outstanding party" is disturbing a "high MG official's" mind. I advance, therefore, another, more candid, news item which may shed some light where it is needed: "Eisenhower Charges Red Bloc Hampers Democracy in Berlin."

"Berlin, Oct. 17 (AP)—Gen. Eisenhower reported today that the Communist Party had formed a political bloc in Berlin, and indicated that such a device would find no welcome in the American Zone. This bloc, Gen. Eisenhower said in his second monthly report on occupation policies, is "counter to the traditional American concept of political activity and vigorous political life in a democratic sense."

General Eisenhower is putting first things first, as seen from on top. What follows, now that we know that communist political blocs will find no welcome in the American Zone?

Soon you will be reading editorials in your local paper in the following vein: "The German people have been so perverted by nazism that it will take many years to purgé them of it. They have not proved capable of adapting themselves to democratic methods, and as evidence of this we cite the fact that they have allowed one party to dominate them. The idea will be that democratic elections are being monopolized (sabotaged) by the communists. Therefore no elections should be permitted until the monopoly has been broken. It will be proposed in polite language that to get rid of the communists we should get rid of democracy. This is not a new idea. But you carry on the prediction from there."

Can you imagine an audience of Germans—defeated Germans—applauding a speaker who proclaims: "We hail the victorious Red Armies!" That's what most of the thousand and women in the Nürnberg opera house did this morning at the local Communist Party's coming-out convention.

Except for the unusual time—eight a.m. on a Sunday morning—it was a typical communist meeting. It could have been taking place in the States. The stage was backdropped by a huge red hammer-and-sickle. A banner proclaimed "Brüder, in einem zusammen die Hand!" The opera house was full by the time I got there. With very few exceptions those assembled were older people—pre-Hitler communists, and perhaps 25 per cent were women. One of the main speakers, however, was thirty years old and vigorous in speech and physique.

After an orchestral rendition of the William Tell Overture, the master of ceremonies gave the keynote speech: Germany had been at war for six years; the communists have been at war since 1933, and even before that they were fighting Hitlerism and pointing out its dangers to the people. Many have fallen (here a standing tribute to "those present with us in spirit"). But right has prevailed in the end. Yet the struggle against capitalism is not over, nor are the insidious roots of Nazism killed off.

For Party Unity

We admit our mistakes. Had we stood united against Hitlerism in 1932 the Nazi system could not have come to power. But we must not hang our heads despair at the ruins we see about us. Though we Germans stand low in the esteem of the nations of the world, it is up to us communists to prove that Hitler did not act in our name.

The program: First and most important: unity of parties—specifically of the social democrats and communists. Chief argument: "Had we been united in 1932... etc." Whether a united front or an actual integration is intended was not made clear.

Second: Strong upbuilding of and support to the new labor unions.

Third: Rooting out of every trace of nazism in every shop and office in the land—in whatever guise it tries to cling to its outlawed domain. This touched a tender spot in the audience, which gave howls of assent to some impromptu speakers who rose in their seats to shout the names of specific agencies which they considered insufficiently purged: Reichsbank, Wohungamt (Housing Bureau) and some other city departments.

Yet the Communist Party's speaker went on to point out that just as many persons who never were Party members are worse Nazis at heart, many members of the party were forced to join or else were swayed in the early days by false promises and unable to extricate themselves later. "The time has come for all persons who were members of the NSDP (Nazis) to show their good intentions by redeeming themselves with deeds," he said.

Fourth: A program for youth—mentioned but not dwelt upon.

Fifth: We all agree there is a hard winter ahead of us.

Cheers for Russia

Somewhere in the process of apologizing to the world for Germany's misdeeds the main speaker mentioned that Russia had suffered more than any other country from the war, and right after that he made his allusion to the victorious Russians—and then I knew that I was listening to the classic party line.

Applause and cries of "Bravo!" "Sehr richtig!" (That's right!) had been spotted right along through two main addresses, wherever a rising inflection, ending in a climactic pause called for it, and here again an accolade was obviously anticipated by the speaker. He got it; the convention was well under control. But there was just a brief moment of hesitation before it came, and perhaps it came a little reluctantly. I might be mistaken. Anyhow, the same well-regulated applause and a little less hesitation will be forthcoming next time, and on the third and fourth occasion the audience will have learned that whenever the Russians are mentioned enthusiasm is in order.

The victorious American, British and French armies went unnoticed.

The meeting lasted a little over two hours and ended with the singing of a party hymn (not the "International") which I had never heard before, though everybody knew the words.

A. JEFFERS

Nürnberg, Germany
November, 1945

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, JANUARY, 1946

11
THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING CLASS


Even for the returned soldier, who has seen that silent wasteland which capitalism has made of so much of Europe, it is difficult to comprehend the extent of the destruction which has been wrought. What centuries of work and heartbreak created, six years of capitalist war have reduced to piles of rubble among which old men and women poke and try to make a home.

Along with the material destruction and the human slaughter went a political and moral abasement unparalleled in modern times. Systematically brutalized by capitalist nationalist propaganda, whipped on by chauvinist socialist and communist parties, abandoned by Russia, which has long since cynically trampled under foot socialist internationalism, whole populations have reached new lows of political passivity and contempt for the human personality.

Only the most politically advanced and resolute representatives of the working class, the parties of the Fourth International, in spite of everything, struggled for the cause of socialist brotherhood in a world riven by nationalist hatred. The Trotskyist Struggle under the Nazi Terror, published by the International Communist Party, the French section of the Fourth International, is the proud record of the struggle for socialism by our French comrades during and after the occupation by the nazis.

The First Organ of the Resistance

Truth (La Vérité) which began to appear clandestinely in August, 1940, was the first newspaper of the resistance movement to be published. Up until June, 1941, when Russia was attacked by Germany, Humanité, the organ of the French CP, said almost nothing regarding the activities of the nazis in France. In fact, during this period the French CP was negotiating with Otto Abetz for the legal appearance of their paper. All in all, seventy-three issues of Truth were published during the occupation. In addition, several issues of Our Word (Unser Wort) and Worker and Soldier (Arbeiter und Soldat) were published in German and distributed in the barracks in editions of from 5,000-10,000.

In 1940, in action and through its press, the ICP, well before the other organizations of the resistance, began the initial task of aiding in the reorganization of the scattered forces of the working class. Self-defense groups were formed which drove out the fascists from the Youth Hostels, the last remaining free youth organization. The struggle against Hitler and Pétain was begun under the slogan of the workers and peasants movement.

In 1941 and 1942 the French working class began to raise its head. Great strikes broke out in the North. The ICP supported and increased the militancy of the strikes; fought for a better rationing program; it was the first to call upon women workers to form housewives' committees and to demonstrate and take into their own hands the rationing program in a fight against the black market and the Vichy officials who were the agents for German imperialism's requisitioning program; it organized the struggle of the city workers in close alliance with the poor peasants.

But especially, alone among all the organizations of the resistance, alone among all the workers' parties, the ICP did not separate the struggle against German fascism from the struggle against world capitalism.

Against the Stream

At the same time, the ICP conducted a struggle against low wages, the reactionary Charter of Labor, increased hours, and night work. It conducted agitation against racism and anti-semitism. It fought the conscription of laborers for work in Germany. It organized a service for the manufacture of false identity papers, which saved thousands of young workers from deportation and jail sentences. It organized support for the maquis, and individual members fought in its ranks. It called for and engaged in fraternization with German soldiers. In August, 1944, it launched the slogan of occupation of the factories and led several such movements.

Such was, in brief, the activity of the ICP during the occupation. That serious political errors were committed is incontestable, especially in the organization's failure to appreciate the progressive role of the resistance movement and to participate in it as an organization. The negative aspects of their work we shall examine at some future time. What is important to note at the moment is that in spite of the chauvinist tide which engulfed France and in spite of the brutal repression by the Vichy and German police, our comrades remained constant to the great principles of Marxist internationalism.

Needless to say, once France was liberated, the bourgeois, assisted in its thought processes by the "suggestions" of the Russian embassy, rewarded the heroic struggle of the ICP with semi-legality: though the party is technically legal, public meetings of the organization have been broken up, the legal appearance of Truth is forbidden, and members of the ICP are subjected to recurrent arrests.

"The Barbarians Wished to Kill Them. They Have Rendered Them Immortal!"

Our French comrades paid the full price for their struggle against the barbarians of German and French capital. They were among the first to fall under the nazi bullets, two of them having been shot in 1941 in the infamous Chateau-briand executions. Nearly thirty—no small number considering the size of the organization—were executed by the gestapo, died at Auschwitz, Dora, and other concentration camps, died during the insurrection of Paris in August, 1944, or were killed by the Vichy militia. Scores of others were imprisoned in nazi jails or were deported to Germany as forced laborers.

To these brave men and women who came from all walks of life to serve the cause of the proletariat may be applied the eulogy paid Marcel Hic, an outstanding founder and leader of the French organization, who died in a German concentration camp in 1944:

For all who knew him, Marcel Hic will always remain the most admirable example of the revolutionary leader and the most magnificent proof that our revolutionary struggle is not only the sole solution for a humanity victimized by the misery of the capitalist agony, but is, also, a school for superior men.

JAMES M. FENWICK.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL - JANUARY, 1946
To the Secretariat of the 4th International

(The following letter first appeared in the Internal Bulletin of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States. It is published here for purposes of information and discussion—Editor.)

I urge upon you the necessity of undertaking a new approach to the situation, quite different from that embodied in your February 1944 theses and the January 1945 resolution.

To plunge immediately to the heart of the question, what was wrong with the theses and the resolution was that their authors were bewitched by the "objectively revolutionary" situation. True, one can find a paragraph or two in which they recognize well enough that a revolutionary party is needed. But even these paragraphs are revealing of the falsity of the approach. The whole weight of the documents is given over to portraying the revolutionary nature of the situation, and then, almost buried amid the glowing picture of the coming (and already begun) revolution comes: "The only thing lacking in the principal countries of Europe is true revolutionary parties."

The inevitable result of such an approach is that your conception of the perspectives is dictated by your preoccupation with the "objectively revolutionary" situation, and is not even modified by your recognition of the need for a real revolutionary party.

Some Examples

To demonstrate this, let me cite a few examples from the February 1944 theses:

1. "With an inexorable necessity, the imperialist war is developing toward its inevitable transformation into civil war." Here Lenin's exhortation to turn the imperialist war into civil war becomes, instead, an objective function of the social process independently of the intervention of the revolutionary party (which in actual fact does not exist yet).

2. Extending this objectively revolutionary situation to the Soviet Union, you conclude that "the rapid development of revolutionary events and the situation in the USSR will create all the conditions for a break between the masses and the Stalinist leaders." But can this break inside the Soviet Union come without the leadership of a revolutionary party? And is there such a revolutionary party? Here you don't even mention the problem of a revolutionary party in the Soviet Union. Making revolution an objective function of the social process you end up with such fantastic ideas as that "the large scale use of the Red Army as a counter-revolutionary force is excluded," and that the Soviet bureaucracy will be unable "to control the revolutionary movements which the occupation and even the approach of the Red Army will unfurl in the countries of Central and Western Europe."

3. "The German revolution remains the backbone of the European revolution." "These masses will not stop with a few fake conquests... The German proletariat, stronger than ever in numbers, more concentrated than ever, will from the first play a decisive role. Soldiers' committees in the army and workers' and peasants' councils in the rear will rise to oppose to the bourgeois power the power of the proletariat... The most favorable conditions will exist for a victorious revolutionary movement." You wrote all this without a single reference to the fact that the German proletariat would begin its life after Nazi defeat under military occupation and without a revolutionary party; and without the slightest attempt at appraising the state of class-consciousness of the German proletariat after eleven years of Nazism. Is this not a clear example of assuming a revolutionary development purely on the basis of objective factors without any regard for the subjective factors? (And even then you did so by leaving out the objective factor of military occupation.)

I was very much dismayed when I first saw this false approach in the theses, but consoled myself with the thought that they were written under the conditions of Nazi occupation, when so much information was lacking and the need imperious to hold out great hope for the future. But the January 1945 resolution, written under quite different conditions, begins by confirming the February 1944 perspectives, repeats the formula about the "inexorable necessity" which transforms the imperialist war into civil war, etc.

The Greek Lessons

You were writing after the terrible defeat in Greece, yet you wrote: "The recent Belgian and Greek events constitute the first phase of the revolution which has effectively commenced in these countries." The defeat becomes proof of "the first wave of the revolution which has begun." This would be true enough if revolutions were an objective function of the social process. But since instead they are made by workers of flesh and blood, the Greek defeat has proved to be a very strong deterrent on the workers of all Europe, weighing them down with the thought that their struggles might meet the same fate; especially weighing them down because there is no revolutionary party (one, that is, big enough to reach them and get them to listen) to explain to them why the Greek proletariat was defeated unnecessarily thanks to Stalinism.

I hope I have proved my point that the theses and resolution were based on a false conception. I should add that the next resolution of the European Secretariat should in all honesty not pass over the mistakes of the earlier documents but should note them and explain how they came to be made.

What is urgently necessary today is to draw all the necessary consequences from the fact that our cadres everywhere are tiny and that the great masses, insofar as they are politically active, are following the Communist and Socialist parties. This approach, if systematically carried out, does not ignore the objective situation but does subordinate it to its proper place.

Not 1917-23

One of the first conclusions to be drawn from this approach—and we must say it openly—is that the present situation is not to be compared with the aftermath of the last war. We are not repeating 1917-1923. We are in a far more backward situation. At that time the October revolution made all the difference. It was the inspiration for the German revolution. It meant that under the inspiration of the example of the Russian Bolshevik Party, there could be established very quickly although starting from very little, mass revolutionary parties in Germany, France, etc.

Now, however, we cannot expect such a process. Instead of mass revolutionary parties confronting reformist parties of relatively equal size, our tiny cadres confront two mass reformist parties. In
France, our few hundreds confront a Stalinist party of nearly a million.

Under these conditions, can we proceed directly to the building of a revolutionary party? Or must we enter one of the reformist parties, constitute a faction in it and work in the direction of a split out of which we will come with sufficient forces to begin seriously building the revolutionary party?

It is, unfortunately, rather late to pose this question. It should have been posed two years ago, certainly a year ago. At the October 1943 plenum it was already clear to me that the Italian events demonstrated that throughout Europe the Communists and Socialist parties would emerge as the parties of the masses, but I failed to draw then the necessary conclusions from this fact concerning the question: party or faction?

The question, of course, cannot be answered for all countries uniformly on the basis of the general situation. But I am positive that in Italy, where the Socialist party disposes of considerable masses, our comrades should never have formed a party but should have gone into (in the case of most of them it would have simply meant, I believe, to remain in) the Socialist party. I am also positive that it would be a terrible error if our German comrades attempted immediately to form a party of their own in Germany; their place is in the Socialist party.

In Italy the Labor Party is still the party of the masses. I am sure that in the rosy hue of the days of liberation, our Italian comrades could have gotten in and established themselves as a faction, with their own paper, etc. Today no doubt it would be far more difficult, but I suspect that it could still be done. In any event, I propose that the question be investigated without prejudice and with a cold-blooded realism.

French Problem

I don't claim a priori that entry is imperative and can be achieved in every single country I have named. Investigation by you and those in each country will have to determine the facts. But what I demand is a real recognition of the problem, and a serious investigation without reservations in advance.

If the cost of entry in some cases is the temporary loss of a public faction organ and/or no guarantee of the right of constituting a faction, that is no argument against entry. Remind the comrades that in the U. S. we entered, the SP with neither an organ nor an admitted faction. For a time we were in one caucus with the miserable so-called Militants who allowed us about one innocuous article per month in their weekly and monthly organ. Two or three good pamphlets can serve as a substitute for a public faction organ for a while. It might be very advantageous to live for a while in one of the "left" factions instead of openly having one of your own.

As loyal members of the Socialist party you will be able to contact Communist party workers in a direct and political way which is scarcely open to you today.

I could go on at length on this question, but I leave further comment until I can grapple concretely with your objections, if any.

Whether in the Socialist party or outside, the primary approach to Communist and Socialist party members must be geared, not to our estimate of the situation but to their consciousness. This generalization will be readily agreed to by every comrade, but perhaps not some of the examples I offer.

Question of Monarchy

The question of the monarchy in Italy and Belgium is an example.

I would like to know why the Belgian party's program of action was silent on the monarchy. If I recall correctly, the demand for a democratic republic was in the 1934-36 program of action. Why isn't it in the present program? The problem of problems is to tear the masses away from the SP and CP. The way to do this is on the vital political questions which actually arise and appear vital to the masses, and not on the questions we think vital. Ever since the expulsion of the Nazis, and with Leopold out of the country, the question of his return was brewing. It seems clear the masses felt very strongly on the question. When he did attempt to return, what was our task? To condemn the SP and CP ministers for saying they would resign if he returned, and to demand instead that they remain the government, expel the bourgeois-royalist ministers, arrest the royal family and proclaim the democratic republic. In other words, transform the dispute on Leopold into a question of abolition of the monarchy. This would be in consonance with the feelings of the masses and would appear to them as a reasonable and possible demand upon their leaders.

The European Secretariat's theses went on at great length about Italy but neither there nor in the resolution is there any reference to the demand for a democratic republic in Italy. Yet there the question is even more sharply posed than in Belgium, so sharply that the CP and SP have to give lip-service to it. Fortunately, our Italian party understands this question; it has the demand for the republic in its program of action. But I fear that it is too isolated from the masses to drive home the point (and perhaps the fact that they are not encouraged by the rest of the International causes the Italian comrades to hesitate to concentrate on this demand). If we have a faction in the Socialist party, it could make great capital contrasting the actual behavior toward the monarchy of the Socialist ministers with their lip-service to the struggle against the monarchy; demand that the SP and CP press concentrate on the demand for ending the monarchy; demand demonstrations to force Umberto to abdicate, etc., etc.

The mechanical question would enable us to say to the SP and CP members: Your leaders promise to lead, you eventually to socialism and meanwhile point to the difficulties which prevent going now to socialism; but those difficulties do not prevent us from finishing now with the monarchy; can leaders and a program which cannot even get rid of the monarchy, can they be trusted to lead us to socialism?

I give the example of the monarchical question only because it glaringly absent from your documents. But even the democratic demands which you do mention, you do so in such a way that I cannot help but consider perfunctory. For example, you mention the demand for the constituent assembly but hasten to add: "On the other hand, to launch such demands in the midst of a revolutionary crisis, when there are actually in existence elements of dual power, would be the most unpardonable of errors." Here again you are bewitched by your idea of an "objectively revolutionary" situation and without considering the effect on that situation of the fact that the revolutionary party is still only a tiny cadre. In another paragraph you say "that in the present period the economic and democratic 'minimum' program is very rapidly out-distanced by the very logic of the mass struggle itself."

The Fight for Legality

I will venture a prediction, dear comrades: that the "minimum" program will not be outdistanced in France until you have won the status of a legal party and Verite is a legal newspaper.

Everything should be subordinated to
the fight for legality today in France.
One or two issues of Vérité were very good in this connection, particularly that devoted to the letter, Liberté de la Presse. But neither from Vérité or other sources do I get an impression that the French party is making a really systematic fight for legality.

Such a fight requires among other things a perfectly legal defense committee in whose name it is to be made. I think I have some understanding of the difficulties in Paris today, but I am sure that some literary people like Gide, some politico-literaries like Malraux, etc., can be gotten to sign their names as members of a defense committee or to a petition asking the legalization of Vérité. With this legal cover, party members can be mobilized to go from door to door collecting names. Vérité or its successor should be filled with letters endorsing your campaign, not only from big names but also from simple workers. You should ask the British and American parties to circulate petitions getting well-known people to petition de Gaulle for the legalization of Vérité, and publish this material in France. In a word, the usual techniques of defense work.

Before you can hope to succeed in such a defense campaign, however, you have to believe in it and convince the party membership that it is important and can succeed. For my part, I am certain it can succeed. There is no removable political obstacle to it. If you carry out the campaign wholeheartedly, you can make life sufficiently miserable for the SFIO and CGT leaders to have them beat themselves—and they have good reasons of their own to want to see the Trotskyists legal—to ask somebody in the DeGaulle entourage to have it done. France is entering a period of parliamentarism, however, short it may prove to be, and in such a period, you should be able, if only you do what is necessary, to win legality.

During the fight for legality, do not be afraid of making Vérité appear entirely as an organ fighting for nothing more than real democracy. That is fighting for a great deal today! It should be a period in which, instead of negative criticisms of the SFIO and the CP and CGT, you should appear instead as urging them to certain positive actions. Don't be afraid that if you don't end each article saying the leadership won't do what you're proposing, that you will be sowing illusions. The illusions are already there and you will not be adding to them. On the contrary, if you convince a worker that something positive should be done, and then his party doesn't do it, you will be teaching him to be critical of his party.

Two examples: Call upon the workers' organizations to inspire the workers to rally to the polls in the elections, by an agreement among the workers' organizations that they will elect a workers' representative as Provisional President of France. Take up the resistance's perfunctory demand for democratization of the army, and really explain its profound necessity, the lesson in this connection of Petainism, gather together all the horror tales about Petainists still leading the army, royalists, etc., etc. Explain the urgent need for political meetings of the soldiers, their need to protect themselves by having delegates. Take nothing for granted but argue the question as if the workers had never heard of it before. Give it a legal handle, by urging that the workers' delegates in the coming Assembly include it in the new constitution.

Instead of continuing, let me refer you to the Program of Action of 1934 for France, particularly all of which is apropos today. But before you can apply it, you must rid yourself of all traces of a conception of the "objectively revolutionary" situation today. The absence of the revolutionary party—and it is absent—changes the whole situation. Instead of saying, "Only the revolutionary party is lacking," we must instead say, at least to ourselves, "The absence of the revolutionary party transforms the conditions which otherwise would be revolutionary into conditions in which one must fight, so far as agitation is concerned, for the most elementary demands."

I must close now. But I hope to continue very soon.

With warmest greetings,

FELIX MORROW

July 10, 1945

The Post-Liberation Struggle in the Philippines

Political Trends in the "Model" Colony

The war has left the Philippines in a state of complete economic dislocation. In the colony which American imperialists have always held up as a model of "enlightened colonial policy" the masses are today the victims of the policies imposed by the United States and its political agents, the Nacionalistas.

For forty years the Nacionalistas have been in office—for the last thirty without even major opposition. During this time the party built up an all-embracing political machine. Among its leaders were the most prominent capitalists and landowners in the country. In many sections the agricultural workers and sharecroppers were herded to the polls by the estate owners to vote the straight Nacionalista ticket. On matters of social and economic policy there were never any serious differences between the party leaders, but rival factions would struggle to gain dominance in order to get a larger share of the political spoils. Usually such struggles are accompanied by "differences" designed to appeal to different elements among the voters, but so brazen were the Nacionalistas that even the historians of the Philippines, in analyzing the struggles between the Osma and Quezon factions of the Nacionalistas over a thirty-year period, remark that there was no discernible difference in political program.

The labor and socialist movements throughout this period were very weak. There is very little industry outside of Manila, and the industry of Manila is all light in type. A National Federation of Workers existed, but worked closely with the employers and the government. Strikes were extremely rare.

The one exception to the general lack of organization of the masses was the radical agrarian movement of central Luzon. Here the National Peasants Union carried on agitation against the oppressive conditions of existence of the sharecroppers and tenant farmers. In a single province of central Luzon, Pampanga, a strong Socialist Party existed, with an astounding record of agrarian struggles to its credit, considering its isolation in a single small part of the Philippines. This party had, however, no influence or link with the workers.
of nearby Manila. In 1939 it fused with the tiny Communist Party to form the Socialist - Communist Party, and it emerged from the war with the Socialist part of its name deleted. Its actions since have proven that it is thoroughly Stalinized in leadership.

Several small bourgeois opposition parties exist. The Democrats, strong up to thirty years ago, but weak ever since, are the traditional party opposed to independence. The Frente Popular (founded in 1912 and not related to the Peoples Fronts of Europe), Young Philippines and the Philippine Youth Party are all small parties that snipe at the Nacionalistas, but have no substantial differences in program or outlook. Lastly, the Socialist Party, the most militant and anti-American nationalists, were a well-organized minority before the war, but they degenerated into a pro-Japan movement and are non-existent today. In any case, the Nacionalista Party consistently obtained more votes than all these parties put together.

**Ruling Class Collaborationist**

With the conquest of the Philippines by Japan, the bourgeoisie and the landowners, together with their political machine, plumped whole-heartedly for collaboration. Of the 300 leading Nacionalista politicians, 270 held office under the puppet "Republic of the Philippines." The difference between these and the remaining thirty seems to have been merely one of political and military judgment as to the future of the war, because these thirty, far from representing any radical tendency among the Nacionalistas, included big capitalists. One of these was Andres Soriano, Manila millionaire and vociferous Falangist sympathizer, who went through the war as "Colonel Marking," a guerrilla leader in the Luzon mountains. Such men as Alfredo Montelbano and Vicente singosson-Eccentrico, guerrilla leaders now holding leading posts in Osmena's cabinet, and both big business men, are other examples.

During the period of Japanese rule, the radical agrarian movement made rapid strides. The Hukbalahap (anti-Japanese people's army) was built up by the Communist Party, starting in Pampanga, and achieved a strength of 15,000 men under discipline, plus countless thousands of peasants who could be mobilized in an emergency, if only with knives for arms. The stubborn resistance of this movement, in the face of the collaboration of ninety per cent of the Nacionalistas, resulted in their mass support spreading from Pampanga to all the neighboring provinces of central Luzon—Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Pangasinan—comprising the richest agricultural section of the country. In this area, with a population of about 3,000,000, they are today a powerful political force.

**The rôle played by the American Army in Luzon was the same as elsewhere in the world. The Counter - Intelligence Corps saw as its main enemy not Japanese Intelligence but the Hukbalahap. Throughout central Luzon the American landing at Lingayen was the occasion for the Huk’s to drive out the Japanese garrisons. Huk municipal governments were set up, which welcomed their American "liberators" with red flags flying from the municipal buildings. Result—the Huk commanders, Luis Taruc and Castro Alejandrino, were thrown into prison without charge, the local governments disbanded, and Osmena appointees installed. But the official governments here remain without real power. To this day the appointed mayors find it necessary to consult local Huk leaders if they want any national government decrees enforced.**

**Huk Leaders Imprisoned**

The Counter - Intelligence Corps was much tougher on the imprisoned Huk leaders than on collaborators. Half the Congressmen and Senators who sat in the puppet government were cleared of any charge of collaboration, on the ground that they did not actively aid the Japanese in the prosecution of the war. Of course, any real definition of collaborators would have meant imprisoning almost all the politicians of the ruling class. To make it perfectly clear who was considered most dangerous, those politicians who were imprisoned were released on bail, while the Huk leaders were still kept in prison. Recently they were released, after a demonstration in Manila of peasant delegations numbering several thousand, who marched to Malacan, the presidential palace.

With the "liberation," the old politicians have come to life, but with them a new party, the Democratic Alliance. This party has a mild program of social and agrarian reform and is a federated organization, roughly comparable to a federated farmer-labor party. Its affiliates at present are: Communist Party, Hukbalahap, National Peasants Union, Committee on Labor Organization and Blue Eagle Guerrillas. The National Peasants Union has some roots in Rizal, Laguna, Cavite, Tayabas and Batangas provinces, all in southern Luzon, where the Communist Party is weak, but its stronghold is central Luzon, and there Stalinist influence is dominant. The Committee on Labor Organization is the first genuine labor union in the Philippines and has already carried on successful strikes. The Blue Eagle Guerrillas are the guerrillas of the Chinese, who form a large part of the Manila population and who bitterly resent the anti-alien blasts that daily issue from most of the Senators and Congressmen and from the pro-collaborationist dailies.

**Movement Limited**

Aside from the fatal strategy of the lesser evil that the Alliance has adopted, and which we will examine below, it should be borne in mind that the movement is limited—strong in central Luzon, fairly well rooted in Manila and southern Luzon, but almost completely non-existent in northern Luzon and all the outside islands, that is to say in two-thirds of the Philippines. There are many thousands of armed guerrillas in these other sections, but they were exclusively under the leadership of the anti-collaboration minority of Nacionalistas.

A number of large guerrilla organizations whose leaders were Nacionalist in political complexion helped to found the Democratic Alliance, but these outfits soon found themselves uncomfortable in the same bed with the agrarian radicals and left. They form today the main base of Osmena's political machine.

Osmena and his "guerrilla" faction of the Nacionalistas are threatened with possible defeat in the coming elections at the hands of Roxas, the darling of the collaborators. Roxas' corkscrew career is typical of Filipino politics. Leaving his office of Senate president, he became a brigadier general in the USAFFE (U. S. Army Forces in the Far East) at the beginning of the war. Taken prisoner by the Japanese, he soon was busy working for the puppet government, whose constitution he wrote. However, Roxas kept contact with the more "respectable" guerrillas, and was at one time in a Japanese prison camp for six months as a result of his activities. Nevertheless he rejoined the puppet government later and was a member of the cabinet when the Americans landed. Escaping from the
Lessons of the Detroit Elections

The Detroit municipal election, in which a United Auto Workers Union vice-president, Richard T. Frankensteen, ran for mayor against Mayor Edward Jeffries, Jr., attracted nation-wide attention and interest. Workers throughout the country and the capitalist press gave careful scrutiny to the progress of the campaign and the election results. The interest aroused by the Detroit election was entirely warranted by the importance of the event and the issues involved.

A full understanding of the Frankensteen campaign will help materially to arm and train the politically advanced workers in the political struggles of the working class. To reach this full understanding we must examine first the general background and context of the election and the class forces in operation. Otherwise the contradictory factors in the situation will result in a fog of confusion instead of providing the key to understanding.

The Frankensteen campaign is part of the total picture of the working class and can only be understood in its relation to the whole. In Detroit the organized labor movement, despite the minor defection of the AFL officialdom, rallied to the support of the PAC-endorsed slate in the election headed by Frankensteen. The backbone of the campaign was the powerful and militant UAW, which dominates the city. It took place during the major strike wave that swept Detroit and the nation almost immediately upon the conclusion of the war. It was part of the general offensive of labor and was itself an indication of the depth and power of that offensive. But it was not merely a part of the specific union offensive during which it took place. It was integrally connected with the striving of the working class in this whole period to break out from the restrictions placed upon it by the conditions of capitalist decay and disintegration.

The workers of Detroit supported Frankensteen and the PAC candidates. In this they demonstrated their readiness to strike out along independent class lines. This was only the latest expression of what Leon Trotsky called “the instinctive striving of the American workers to raise themselves to the level of the tasks imposed on them by history.” This striving is indicated in the formation of the American Labor Party in New York State, in the formation of the CIO Political Action Committee and in a dozen and one other direct political manifestations during the last decade. Not merely Republican and Democratic Parties, but Franklin Roosevelt himself became increasingly unable to arouse the direct support of the working class. The workers were looking for new roads, new paths. To say that the ALP and PAC were organized to block those paths, to lead the workers into the camp of Roosevelt, is to say at the same time that the working class is traveling in a new direction and that this far progress in that direction has been hindered by the perfidy of the labor leadership.

Reflects Basic Problems

This striving is only a reflection of and a result of the problems which the decline and crisis of capitalism forces upon the working class. What are these problems, these conditions? Essentially
they revolve around the questions of security, decent living standards and imperialist war—jobs, wages, peace. Capitalism cannot provide the minimum needs of the people. Regardless of its political forms, whether Roosevelt New Dealism or Hoover conservatism, American capitalism presents to the working class and the people as a whole only the prospect of continual crises, permanent unemployment, insecurity, degraded living standards, fascism and imperialist war.

The workers, increasingly conscious of the depths of the crisis, strive instinctively for a way out. They have demonstrated, time and time again, their willingness to struggle, their desire for independent class action, only to find themselves blocked and thwarted by the official labor leadership. The Detroit election demonstrated both forces in operation. To the extent that it indicated the willingness of the working class to embark on independent political struggle, it indicated the perfidy of the labor leadership in confusing, distorting, and thwarting that struggle.

From the very start of the campaign, the PAC leaders in Detroit tried to prevent any indication of a "labor" campaign. They rushed about frantically looking for a respectable candidate to support against Jeffries (who, although at one time endorsed by the UAW, had made an outstanding record for himself in labor-baiting and Negro-baiting.) They canvassed a whole list of hack Democratic politicians but none was available. PAC was just about reconciled to being neutral in the election or to endorsing the conservative Friel when the startling word came that Frankensteen's name had been entered in the primary at his request. Put on the spot, the PAC leaders had no alternative but to endorse him. But they, with the active cooperation of Frankensteen, continued in their efforts to keep the "stigma" of labor from being attached to the campaign. Constant repetition of "Frankensteen is the candidate of all the people," attacks on "wildcat" strikes, and the failure to present any kind of program beyond a few insignificant municipal reforms such as cleaning out the alleys and improving bus transportation characterized the campaign. An indication of the lengths to which Frankensteen went was his charge that Jeffries was to propose an increased fare for the city-owned transportation system and his contention that only through an increased fare could service be improved. A labor candidate for higher bus and street car fares,

**Dodges Race Issue**

On one of the major issues of the campaign, the Negro question, Frankensteen spent his efforts decrying the introduction of the issue by Jeffries. The problem of discrimination and segregation, of racial tension is more acute in Detroit than in any other northern city. It was made the core of Jeffries' campaign with the most vicious campaign of slander and vituperation against the Negro people and appeal to the lowest and basest prejudices of backward whites. Instead of taking the offensive and proposing a program to end discrimination in the city, Frankensteen opposed the introduction of the issue and through his refusal to take a stand helped to confirm the existing prejudices of the whites. This was clearest on the all-important housing question. The terrible overcrowding in the Negro sections of Detroit is recognized by everyone. Even Jeffries' own Housing Commission has openly admitted that new housing for Negroes can only be built in areas that are not segregated to Negroes. There is just no room in the Negro neighborhoods. Jeffries took a clear-cut stand that he was opposed to changing the racial characteristics of any neighborhood and therefore refused even to attempt a solution of the Negro housing crisis. What did Frankensteen say? When asked directly where he stood on the questions of bi-racial housing and changing neighborhood racial characteristics he replied, "I think the main problem is inadequacy. We need modern housing for everyone in Detroit, and in the Negro sections particularly." In the Negro sections where no new housing can be erected!

**Democrats Endorse Frankensteen**

There is no need to go into greater detail on the campaign itself. It is clear that the labor leadership rejected independent working class politics. This rejection served to disorient the workers. An incident reported in Labor Action of October 15, 1945, indicates the extent of this discrimination. Labor Action reported that "several CIO members wearing Frankensteen sweaters were discussing the Detroit election. Frankensteen's election, they held, would greatly benefit labor. 'Why if Dick becomes Mayor of Detroit, the next step would be to run him in the Democratic primaries for Senator or Governor.'" This disorientation was the necessary result of the Detroit election campaign. To insure it was the conscious policy of the labor leadership and the capitalist politicians. A report from the Washington correspondent of the Detroit News noted that Democratic National Chairman Robert E. Hannegan was concerned with the shift of labor away from the Democratic Party. He therefore instructed the Michigan Democratic organization (of which Frankensteen is a leading member) to give full support to Frankensteen in the campaign. This was subsequently done.

On this basis it was impossible for a revolutionary socialist to extend any support to Frankensteen and the PAC slate in the Detroit elections. While we must not lose sight of the basic movement of the working class in Detroit and in the nation, we must recognize that the Frankensteen campaign was a brake on that movement. If we understand that Detroit workers are moving toward independent labor political action, we can aid and intensify that movement only by exposing as a fraud the campaign of the labor leadership and the Democratic Party for Frankensteen. Frankensteen was not an independent labor candidate. But we can say with equal certainty that the working class will brush aside these phonies and misleaders and move with irresistible force to great independent class actions. The decay of the capitalist system assures it.

**The New International - January, 1946**
The Stalinist Bureaucracy From the Inside

Some Comments on Barmine's Book

The Russian Revolution collectivized the property of one-sixth of the earth's surface; it also transformed a horde of columnists and speechmakers into overnight "experts" on the Russian question. The famous "Russian enigma" became a trade, like writing mysteries. A "name," with a reputation resting sturdy on two or three reportorial pot¬boilers, could lecture-tour the country, plow through the Russian enigma in city after city and rake in a small fortune. The book stores are loaded with "exposés," "inside stories," "I was there," "The Russians are like this, the Russians are like that" reports. As book publishers' commodities, these items serve their purpose well. As information and truth about Russia, they are little more than selected facts on which the authors hang their particular prejudices.

The nimble acolytes of the Stalinist Church return with accounts of the modern nurseries for children and glowing, rhapsodic descriptions of red-cheeked, ample-breasted young maidens; the Rick¬enbackers, the would-be wardens over the American working class, evince unrestrained enthusiasm for the prison-like system of labor control of the Russian workers; the salesmen of free enterprise (e.g., W. L. White) deplore the dirt and disorganization in the Leningrad factories and conclude with the objectivity of a prosecuting attorney that it is all due to the fact that the Russian people destroyed the capitalist system in 1917. For the simple minded, life is simple: with an axe to grind it is even simpler than that.

One Who Survived, by Alexander Barmine, is of an entirely different stamp. Not that Barmine escapes the modern fallacy that the degeneration of the Russian Revolution has refuted the "basic assumption" of socialism—that would be too much out of vogue and out of character, nor that he offers any sound analysis of this degeneration. In this respect Barmine differs from Eastman, who wrote the introduction, only in his lack of snarl and lesser sophistication. What distinguishes Barmine's book is that it contains the memoirs of a "typi¬cal Communist functionary," one who fought in the Civil War, studied in the Red Army College, served in Persia, France and Greece on diplomatic and trade missions and worked intermittently in Moscow as a functionary of the government régime.

Was a Party "Regular"

He was an active member of the Bolshevist Party, participated in the fight against the Trotskyist opposition, and retrospectively explains that he "was one of those who invariably backed up the findings of the Central Committee," "a naive supporter of the official Party Line." The special value of these mem¬oirs—aside from their being a fascinating story of one man's eventful life—lies in that Barmine's experiences and party activ¬ity were substantially representative of a whole layer of the party. The story of how he, despite his boundless admiration for Trotsky and his expectation that Trotsky would be the inevitable succes¬ sor of Lenin, finally voted to expel Trots¬ky from the party under the barrage of Stalin's campaign of slander is in capsule form the story of how Stalin con¬fused and captured a large section of the party. Also, the full horror and ruthlessness of the purges emerges from Barmine's account. A whole section of the party which could not stone for the sin of hav¬ing fought for the Revolution under Lenin and Trotsky by even the most slavish and abject loyalty to the Stalin régime was thoroughly exterminated. Sol¬diers and officers of the Red Army col¬lege, from Tukachevsky down, promi¬nent members of the party apparatus, were wiped out. In the course of the nar¬rative, you no sooner become acquainted with some leaders, some outstanding par¬ty personage, than a footnote tells you that he was a victim of the purges. The cumulative effect of these footnote obit¬uaries is one of such a relentless, merciless snuffing out of human life that no statistic can possibly convey. There was a literal erasure of a generation. After reading the book, the temptation is to change the title to THE One Who Sur¬vived, and even he by a hair's breadth.

The thread of Barmine's experiences leads one into the internal party life and behind the closed doors of the Rus¬sian officialdom. That is its special fasci¬nation. Well-known, cold, sharp facts of history are rounded out and receive the warmth and fullness of a human dimen¬sion. It becomes possible, for example, to appreciate the truly monumental achieve¬ment of Trotsky in organizing the Red Army as it is recounted by Barmine, who was trained in one of his colleges. "In the midst of the civil war, Trotsky found time to establish more than sixty of these Red military schools all over Russia—five times as many had existed under the Czar." Barmine tells the story of one of Trotsky's visits to the front, the speech he delivered to the soldiers, its inspiring effect. He describes life in the war colleges, the courses given, the epic achievement of transmitting raw illiterate peasants into disciplined, political soldiers who knew the mysteries of geom¬etry as well as the political theories of revolution.

Democracy in Early Period

Those people who are so busily en¬gaged these days in explaining that Lenin's methods of party organization planted the seeds of Stalinism would do well—if they do not mind disturbing their 'theory'—to read some of Barmine's ac¬counts of party democracy in the first years of the revolution and during the civil war. "Intra-party democracy was, during those years 1925 and 1926, still alive though approaching its end. Discus¬sion among Communists went on with¬out censorship. Questions were freely raised and 'Bolshevik self-criticism' still meant something besides a purge of the lower ranks by those on top." That in 1926. But even during the critical year of the civil war, 1919, the following took place:

I was sent to Simferopol with a Red Army mission to contact the staff of Dybenko, who was in command there. One of our mission, Maxim Stern, was a member of the Central Committee of the Menshevik Party of the Ukraine. Although Simferopol was then under siege, and the White armies of Leni¬kin, holding the eastern Crimea, were only fifty miles away, Stern requested the use of the Simferopol city theater for the pur¬pose of a political meeting. The theater was turned over to him gratis, and he held a mass meeting composed of citizens and Red Army soldiers, to whom he expounded with eloquence the Menshevik point of view and his basic opposition to the principle of the one-party dictatorship. In the manner of a town hall meeting, and with the same good feeling, I myself and two other Bol¬sheviks replied to him. The discussion was hot, but never passed beyond the bounds of courtesy. Although he had all the time he wanted and said everything he had to say
without mincing words, the audience voted by a large majority for our resolution. I record this incident because there is a tendency now among critics of Stalin’s murderous repressive regime to imagine that something similar dates back to Lenin and the first years of the Revolution.

Examples of discussion in the Red Army college on the trade union question and other issues are cited by Barmine. He correctly describes and evaluates Kronstadt—that fortress in the theories of super-democrats—as the focal point of counter-revolution. It is a tribute to his honesty that Barmine has not suffered the convenient lapses of his “introducer” Eastman and other members of the Circle of Historical Amnesiacs.

Hitler once uttered the pregnant observation that “democracy was a luxury of wealthy nations.” Stripped of their wealth, Germany and Italy dispensed with their ‘luxurious,’ parliamentary democracy, and resorted to naked force. Totalitarianism became a condition of life for capitalism. Where a broken-down productive system could not feed the mouths of its working class to keep it quiet, it accomplished the same end by use of the gag. Whether scarcity and poverty are due to the muscular dystrophy of production that comes from private ownership of the means of production or to the native backwardness and belated development of the country itself, they give birth to the gendarme, the Gestapo in the one case, the NKVD in the other. This truth is the keystone of any analysis of Russia. The backward, industrially weak Russia, left to fall back on its own meagre resources by the failure of the German revolution, was forced to resort with increasing intensity and frequency to totalitarian rule from above. The indispensable condition for a socialist development—an advanced, developed technology—was absent. The internal stresses and strains caused by the lack of the minimal needs of life were prevented from rending the whole country asunder by the repressive visé of totalitarianism. The impoverished country could not ‘afford’ democracy. The objective consequence of ‘socialism in one country’ was Totalitarianism in Russia.

**Decline of Workers’ State**

The beginnings of the encroachments on democracy after the revolution, necessitated by its defense against counter-revolution, its intensification in the fight against the opposition and their expulsion from the party in 1927, the elimination of the right wing, and its final culmination with the purges in 1934-37, are the measure of decline of the workers’ state. But if poverty, backwardness and isolation were causes of the determination of workers’ democracy, this very decline of democracy in turn made it more difficult to emerge from the state of backwardness and poverty. Russian development was enshrined in a vicious circle. The lack of democracy, as Trotsky pointed out as far back as 1923, was an obstacle in the path of economic development. Democracy was not a mere whim or utopian ideal to be turned on or off depending on the personality on top; it was a rigorous economic necessity. A workers’ state without democracy was an economic impossibility as well as a contradiction in theory.

Barmine, in recounting his experiences in various administrative duties and trade bureaus, provides examples that illustrate this inexorable truth. Fantastical schedules were often decreed from above. Protests from below, constructive criticism from engineers, economists or workers were denounced as “opportunist of the Right.” The critic was publicly vilified. He either recanted or was condemned.

Initiative on the part of subordinate bureaucrats is stifled. Everyone seeks to avoid responsibility. Everyone looks to the top for a covering order. And since thousands of relatively unimportant as well as all-important problems must pass through Stalin’s hands for final decision, the top is always jammed. Weeks are spent in waiting; commissars wait in Stalin’s office; presidents of companies wait in the offices of the commissars and so on down the line.

Barmine cites many instances of the extravagant waste and costliness of the entrenched bureaucratic system. False face-saving inventories; bureaucratic pugnaciousness; blindness; the purgeing of all criticism; the bankruptcy of the top bureaucrats that took precedence over planning for the country, in a word, all the diseases that stem from the germ of totalitarian rule in Russia prevented the economic growth that was inherent in a collectivized economy. Where critics, Barmine included, conclude from Russia’s relatively stunted growth that a collectivized economy cannot match a capitalistic economy for productivity, they overlook the fact that they are taking the pulse of an economy whose socialist heart has been cut out.

**On the Defeat of Trotsky**

Although rich in personal detail and information on the interior workings of the Party, the army, the purge and the windings of red tape, the book is ludicrously weak in political analysis. Barmine was the “naive follower of the party line.” If he understood little of what was going on during the fight against the opposition—during which he supported the majority throughout—he has learned little of the nature of the fight since. Time and perspective have added to his naiveté. For example, he reduces to its absurd the theory popular with people who are fond of the tales of St. George and the Dragon. One bold stroke of the sword and the monster is destroyed. The trouble with Trotsky was that he did not make the bold stroke. He rarely designed to descend from the Olympian heights of pure principle and dip his fingers into practical politics to fight Stalin. He was “Quixotic,” idealistic, etc. And alas! He could have won easily. Was he not Lenin’s inevitable successor? Was not the refrain “long live Lenin and Trotsky” on everybody’s lips for years? Then why did he fail? In Barmine’s opinion, Trotsky was asleep. “Had Trotsky made the slightest sign that he was ready to fight, the majority of the Party would have followed him. . . . When Trotsky decided that the time had come to fight, it was too late. Whereas a little while before (this is 1927—G. E.) a simple speech (!) delivered by him at a Moscow Party conference would have turned the tide, Trotsky now found that Stalin was in effective control of the party.”

If only Trotsky had made a ‘simple speech’ only a ‘little while before’ all would have been different. Thus Trotsky missed the boat (how easy a theory to formulate!) by neglecting to deliver a simple speech and history was changed! The defeat of the German revolution and its depressing effect on the morale of the Russian workers, the paralyzing fatigue of the Russian masses, the demagogic attractiveness of ‘socialism in one country’ to the millions who had been through the wracking years of world war, civil war and war communism, the hold Stalin had on the major bureaus of the party already in 1925, the widespread unemployment and consequent dilution of the ardor of oppositionists who would lose their jobs, the “Lenin Levy” of 1924 which weighted the path with workers who joined the party of power and not the party of revolution, the barrage of lies and slander on the peasant question that was heaped on Trotsky, and finally the fight that Trotsky DID put up, the extent of the support he DID get; all of these crucial factors are either neglected or slightly touched on in Barmine’s “analysis.” The clumsy political—lofty idealist Trotsky in one cor-
ner versus crafty politician—base cynic in the other—is too simple a theory. If history is more complicated, so much the worse for it thinks Barmine.

Barmine's Political Views
This example of political understanding is of a piece with other political comments that crop up to mar an illuminating personal document. But it is unfair to take these political lapses seriously and challenge them for Barmine is no politician nor pretends to be. The "naive follower of the party line," the unswerving supporter of the Central Committee, the man who admittedly was taken in by every ruse, falsification and obfuscation of the majority and, finally, voted to expel Trotsky, with "a heavy heart" to be sure, and finally the current devotee of free enterprise can not be expected to have achieved political wisdom overnight.

Today Barmine believes in capitalism. The functionary who escaped from the GPU in 1937 and found asylum in the capitalist world seeks to refute the "basic assumptions" of socialism. "Abolishing private property in the means of production does not abolish exploitation of man by man." He decries the "all pervading hypocrisy of the 'workers' state" theory. His own credo? "A real betterment of life conditions for the masses can be best achieved under a democratic system, with private enterprise and competition, held within reasonable bounds, by a progressive social administration, but neither owned as in Russia, nor strangled as in Germany, by the state." Barmine has transferred not only his body but his soul as well from Russia to America.

The defeat of the Russian Revolution has not only not refuted the "assumptions of socialism," it has confirmed them with terrible force. The leaders of the Revolution, its theorists, themselves predicted its defeat unless it were aided by the European Revolution. ALL of their efforts up to 1923 were to advance the German Revolution, even to the temporary disadvantage of the Russian position. The Brest-Litovsk negotiations are one example among many. Is a confirmation of a prediction a refutation? Only in the minds of those who have rejected socialism first and cast about anywhere for plausible-looking reasons. To ignore the essence of socialism, workers' democracy, and then to accuse it of being undemocratic, reveals no more than that the wish to reject socialism is the father to its misunderstanding and distortion. The monstrous, historical growth of bureaucracy in Russia, insistently underscores one of the 'basic assumptions' of socialism, workers' democracy.

Barmine's Alternative
And is not this a strange passion, this passion for democracy and justice that tears people out of the arms of the shabbily dressed prostitute of the East into the fur-lined, rouged-up prostitute of the West? "Abolishing private property in the means of production does not abolish the exploitation of man by man."

Tragically true! But neither does the maintenance of private property abolish the exploitation of man by man. To embrace the capitalist system today when it has not quite finished with the most destructive war in history in which its victims outnumber even the enslaved and murdered millions of Stalin's Russia, the capitalism which leads remorselessly to fascism, to further wars and to the intensified brutalization of man, the capitalism which has drawn the picture of its very soul in the landscape of Europe today... to embrace that in the name of justice and humanity is a very high price indeed to pay for disillusionment with Stalin's Russia.

The overwhelming fact is that Socialism or Barbarism are no longer the vague alternatives of an epoch seen in long perspective, but the immediate, burning choice of the moment. The war, capitalism's most fitting unmonument, has given content and detail to the concept of Barbarism. It is as real as Europe today. It is less relevant now that Socialism is the only way towards the just society than that it is the very condition of life itself. The flare thrown up by the atomic explosion should have made that apparent to the qualified, the myopic seers, the 'people accustomed to sitting between two stools.' But where blindness can lead one to mistake the wrinkled hag of capitalism for a vestal beauty, even an atomic explosion can not restore normal vision.

George STANLEY

On WP-SWP Unity Negotiations

James P. Cannon, National Secretary
Socialist Workers Party,
New York, N. Y.
Dear Comrade:

Our Political Committee has discussed the resolution adopted by the PLenum of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party on the question of unity. Before making a definitive reply to this resolution, we wish to afford the SWP the opportunity to make clear to us its position on a number of points. They relate to matters on which the resolution is either ambiguous or erroneously motivated, or which it does not deal with at all.

Your resolution states that "Both parties acknowledge that the programmatic differences which led to the 1940 split have not been moderated but that, on the contrary, some of them have been deepened and new important points of divergence have developed in the interim." So far as any acknowledgement on the part of our delegation to the preliminary discussions is concerned, this statement is erroneous, at least in part. The "programmatic differences which led to the 1940 split" were confined to the question of the “unconditional defense of the Soviet Union.” In the war. Our delegation did not and could not acknowledge that the difference on this question has not moderated but deepened. On the contrary, the first resolution on unity adopted by our National Committee took "note of the fact that the SWP itself has officially taken the view that the slogan of 'unconditional defense of the Soviet Union' does not, at the present time, occupy the prominent position it was given at the beginning of the war, that it has receded into the background."
The only political difference involved in the 1940 split was the one over unconditional defense of Russia. If there were other, and programmatic, differences, they have not yet been brought to our attention. It is true that since the split other differences have developed between the two organizations. It is also true that on many questions these differences have deepened. We have not sought to conceal this fact or its importance. We emphasize at all times our attachment to our point of view. What we find it necessary to insist upon, however, is that these differences, deep as they are, are compatible with membership in a revolutionary Marxist party, as contrasted with a party based on the concept of monolithicism.

Your resolution refers also to "This proposed unity without programmatic agreement." If this refers, as it seems to do, to our proposal for unity, the statement is erroneous. We have indeed mentioned in

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other documents our “important differences with the SWP on a number of political and theoretical questions.” If, nevertheless, we declared that unity is both desirable and possible, it was, as stated in our letter to you on September 15, because of the fact that on this plane, the plane of basic program and principle, the two parties are close enough in their positions to require and justify immediate unification, on grounds similar to those which made their membership in one party possible and desirable in the period prior to the split. If it is your view now that there is no programmatic agreement between the two parties, or no programmatic agreement worthy of significant consideration, an explicit statement would contribute to the necessary clarification.

Any Number of Precedents

Your resolution states further that “This proposed unity without programmatic agreement, in fact with acknowledged disagreements between the two tendencies, has no precedent—and as we know, in the history of the International Marxist movement.” This statement is also erroneous. Our delegation stated that it was hard to recall an example of a similar unification between divergent tendencies. In the international Trotskyist movement. This is so, largely because the Trotskyist movement was for so long a faction, formally or in fact, of what it considered the International Marxist movement. However, this faction (tendency) repeatedly proposed unity with the then International Marxist movement (Comintern), which meant its unification with the Stalinist faction, that is, a tendency with which it had far less in common than exists in common between the SWP and the WP today. Furthermore, the International Marxist movement is much older than the modern Trotskyist movement. If the SWP is concerned with precedent, the more than a hundred-year-old history of the International Marxist movement groups and tendencies, with greater divergencies than exist between our parties, would suggest the advisability of agreement.

Your resolution concludes with the decision “To reject any united front for propaganda.” This statement is erroneous, because it is misleading. It gives the impression that previous united fronts have been proposed by the Workers Party. You must be aware of the fact that this is not the case. As we recall them, not one of our proposals for united action between the two parties could be placed in the category of united fronts for propaganda. All of them dealt with proposals for united action in different fields of the class struggle. We proposed, for example, united action in the Minneapolis defense case; in the fight against fascism (anti-Smith campaign); in the trade unions, on such questions as all progressive unions, let alone revolutionary Marxists, can and do unite on; in the New York election campaign. We reiterate our point of view on such practical agreements whether or not unity between the two organizations is achieved.

A more important question is the question of unity itself. In our letter to you, dated October 4, we made several specific requests of your Plenum. Except perhaps for the last point, that dealing with practical collaboration, we do not find in your resolution specific and precise reference to proposals made by us, and where it is even unable to declare that the SWP has decided in favor or in opposition to unity itself.”

Your resolution replies with a vigorous attack upon our proposals, but omits course its right. The attack can and will be answered in due course and in such a way as to promote clarity and understanding of the differences between the two tendencies. But the resolution does not in any way inform us, or any other reader, of the position of the SWP on the most important questions relating to unity, or even inform us as to whether or not such a position has been taken.

Resolution Evades Answer

Is the SWP now in favor of unity, or opposed to it? In the preliminary discussions we were informed by the SWP delegation that the Plenum of its National Committee was convoked for the purpose of giving an answer to precisely this question; in fact, that the late of your Plenum had been advanced to give the earliest concrete consideration to this question. We do not find the answer in the resolution. At least, it is nowhere stated explicitly. We are therefore obliged to conclude that the SWP has rejected the proposal for unity, either as put forth by ourselves, by the minority group in the SWP or by anyone else, and to act on this conclusion unless you indicate to us that we are in error.

Is the SWP now in a position to act on the concrete proposals made by us on the question of unity? In the preliminary discussions, your delegation pointed out that it was not authorized to do so until its National Committee met and arrived at decisions. We find no mention of the Plenum resolution to our proposals.

Our delegation stated our point of view as the basis for the unification. Summed up in one sentence, it is this: Sufficient programmatic agreement actually exists that not the slightest ambiguity remains.” We for our part welcome any discussion of the differences between the two tendencies. We are prepared to do so to the best of our ability so that the positions are precisely fixed and all ambiguity eliminated. But ambiguity on the question of the unification itself must also be eliminated.

However, your resolution does not give any indication of how the discussion is to be carried on, or what its purpose is with reference to the unification of the two groups.

Demand Definitive Reply

It is possible that not all the members of the two parties are acquainted with the full nature and the full scope of the differences. A discussion will help acquaint them. But the leadership of the two parties is quite well aware of the nature, scope and depth of these differences. It has expressed itself on them repeatedly and in public. This was also established “formally,” so to speak in the preliminary discussions. The head of the SWP delegation observed, and rightly, in our view, that for the present period these differences are not only known but “frozen.” The question we raised then, and now, was simply this: Knowing the nature and scope of the differences as it does, and knowing also that for the present period these differences are “frozen,” does the leadership of the SWP consider that unity is possible and desirable? Does it consider that the differences are compatible within one revolutionary party? Your resolution, which was adopted, we note, by the leadership of the Party, fails to give an answer to these questions. The same holds true, we note also, of the question asked with regard to the position of the SWP on the behalf of a minority in a revolutionary Marxist party to issue a bulletin of its own tendency inside the party.

We agreed with what you wrote in your letter of August 28, that “the question of unification must be discussed with complete frankness and seriousness.” You will understand from what we have written above that we find your resolution erroneously puts it quite exactly, “That they would insist on the right to publish their own discussion bulletin under their own control.” We asked that your Plenum take a position on this proposal. You have indicated that this is what its Plenum would do. Your resolution, however, merely records our statement, but does not say if the SWP accepts or rejects our proposal.

Your delegation stated that the preliminary discussions was not in a position to make counter-proposals, or proposals of any kind, until the meeting of its Plenum. In the resolution adopted by the Plenum, we find only the proposal “to authorize the Political Committee to prepare and carry through a thorough discussion and clarification of the theoretical, political and organizational issues in dispute, and fix the position of the party precisely on every point in preparation for the consideration and action of the next party convention.” The resolution also states that “all the differences between the two parties (should) be probed to the depth so that not the slightest ambiguity remains.”

We for our part welcome any discussion of the differences between the two tendencies. We are prepared to do so to the best of our ability so that the positions are precisely fixed and all ambiguity eliminated. But ambiguity on the question of the unification itself must also be eliminated.

However, your resolution does not give any indication of how the discussion is to be carried on, or what its purpose is with reference to the unification of the two groups.
motivated, in part, and in other parts ambiguous or silent on what we consider the most important questions. We have before us the statement issued at your Plenum by the minority group in the SWP on the resolution adopted by the Plenum. It declares: "The resolution is designed to prevent unity." We do not wish to agree with this conclusion. That is why, before we arrive at a definite conclusion of our own, we wish to hear from you a reply to the questions we have raised in this letter, and elsewhere, and which your resolution either deals with unclearly or fails to deal with at all.

Upon receipt and discussion of your reply, our Committee will be better able to express its opinion in detail and to make any further proposals it may have. In this connection, we ask you to consider now the matter which has thus far not been dealt with in our discussion, namely, the matter of informing all the other groups of the Fourth International about the developments in the unity question in the United States, and of the contribution to solving this question that they are called upon to make.

Fraternally yours,

Max Shachtman, National Secretary
Workers Party
New York City, N. Y.

Dear Comrade:

The SWP plenum resolution on unity, in referring to the proposal of the WP negotiating committee on a tendency bulletin in the united party, merely states the following: the WP "would insist on the right to publish their own discussion bulletin under their own control." Ostensibly, therefore, the SWP majority does not take a position on this question. However, in the actual life of the party it has become clear that the majority advances the tendency bulletin proposal as a great stumbling block to unity.

For our part, we do not believe that this is the real stumbling block to unity. Nevertheless we believe that it should be removed. The plenum refused to take note of its resolution of the distinction between the right to a tendency bulletin and the exercise of that right. We believe that the WP should make that distinction and pledge itself not to exercise the right in the united party under the following conditions:

1. That the SWP cooperate closely with the WP for the purpose of preparing the membership of both parties for unity, and that after unity there will be real cooperation of the SWP and the WP;
2. That the SWP recognize the right of a minority to issue its own bulletin for the purpose of convincing the membership of the correctness of the minority's position.

Needless to say, nobody could demand nor could the WP comrades agree to, refrain forever from exercising the right of a minority to issue its own bulletin. No responsible minority would exercise that right without great justification, but no responsible majority would ever prohibit it from exercising it. If the right is used unjustifiably, a majority should easily be able to discredit a minority for doing so. But a united Trotskyist party is so all-important today that for the sake of it, we appeal to the comrades of the WP to pledge themselves not to exercise this right, subject to the conditions indicated above.

Fraternally yours,

FELIX MORROW, for the SWP Minority

November 16, 1945

Felix Morrow
SWP Minority Group
New York, N. Y.

Dear Comrade Morrow:

Our Political Committee has agreed to the proposals on the question of the tendency bulletin made by the Minority Group of the Socialist Workers Party in your letter of November 16. Your proposals afford us still another occasion for reiterating and amplifying our position. It has been stated with sufficient clarity in our written communications to the Socialist Workers Party and at the two oral discussions that took place between the negotiators of the two Parties prior to the recent Plenum of the SWP.

What was involved from the very beginning of the discussion on the unity of the two organizations was not a determination of the Workers Party comrades to issue a tendency bulletin of their own on the very first day of the existence of the projected unity Party, regardless of circumstances. For example, so far as our Political Committee was concerned, this was made clear in the first report made by its representative to a general membership meeting of the New York Local of our Party, a report substantially repeated to most of the other Locals of our organization several months ago.

Involves Right to Publish

As you know, the question involved in reality was the right of the minority in the SWP for the purpose of preparing the membership of both parties for unity, and that after unity there will be real cooperation of the SWP and the WP. Therefore, it serves as the concrete test, at the present juncture, of the conceptions held on the kind of Party we must build—a sterile "monolithic" faction, or a united democratically-centralized organization in which there is freedom of opinion and grouping, and the assurance of democratic rights for all views compatible with the fundamental program of revolutionary Marxism.

This is how the real issue stands. To it, the other considerations can well be subordinated, including the matter of whether a minority would issue a tendency bulletin the morning after the unification, a year afterward, or at all. It is in this sense that we are prepared to accept the proposals of the SWP Minority.

Fraternally yours,

MAX SHACHTMAN, National Secretary
Workers Party

November 27, 1945

Copy to:
J. P. Cannon, National Secretary
Socialist Workers Party
116 University Pl.
New York, N. Y.

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THE FARMERS' LAST FRONTIERS, by Fred A. Shannon. Farrar & Rinehart. $5.

This book is the fifth volume of a nine volume series entitled The Economic History of the United States. It covers the Homestead period of 1860-1897.

This is not the type of book one takes to bed (unless you want to encourage nightmares) or reads at one's leisure. In the preface of the book Shannon states: "I have not written a history of the technical advances in agriculture ..." This is a direct sign of guilt, for what Shannon denies doing he accomplishes with eloquence. He goes into an elaborate description of soil types and characteristics and other natural forces in his section on "Nature and the Farmer." This section, as all the others, is embellished with charts and graphs, and statistical data galore.

Shannon runs the gauntlet with a section on "Land and Labor in the New South," discussing the Civil War and its effects, changes in land ownership, rise of sharecropping, crop lien system, white and Negro farm labor, and Southern class structure. He devotes another section to "Southern Crops and Special Problems," discussing primarily the staples, cotton and tobacco.

The "Progress of Farm Mechanization" is also included in Shannon's study and everything from the new seed planters and cultivator to the economic and social effects of mechanization is discussed.


The Author's Theory

The above listing of topics offers sufficient reason why it is essential that the main thesis of the book be dealt with rather than just a segmented analysis of each section. In the section entitled "Agriculture Settlement in New Areas," Shannon states his thesis. It is as follows: "The movement of population to new lands after 1860 was largely along lines drawn before that time, and to a great degree was merely a further spreading out over already partially settled areas."

It is true one has to dip deeply and push aside a conglomeration of details to find his main trend of thought. Although it is clouded, it is worthy of examination. Shannon's thesis of gradual settlement, of slow extension of frontiers, is offered in lieu of the hypothesis presented by Walter Prescott Webb in The Great Plains: Study in Institutions and Environment. Webb discusses the 100th Meridian as a major dividing line, creating the so-called "institutional fault." Webb contends that the environmental factors caused a major break in the settlement of this country in that the Great Plains were settled last, i.e., settlers moved from the North Central States to the West Coast before the Great Plains were settled.

The environmental factors that Webb stresses are such things as lack of water for grazing or homestead farming, absence of woodlands or forests—resulting in scarcity of lumber for building and wood for fuel—and adverse climatic conditions, such as strong winds and dust storms.

Shannon counters with statistical data showing that a frontier was established first in Ohio, then settlers moved to the Midwest and then on to the Plains. He sees the process as one of gradual adjustment rather than one of sharp breaks and cleavages.

This type of academic shadow boxing is interesting, but adds little to our understanding of the problematical situation and the adjustments of the people.

On the Public Domain

Shannon does make a contribution in the section entitled "Disposing of the Public Domain." The myth of homesteading is exploded by proving conclusively that of the eighty million acres of homesteads settled under sixty thousand patents, less than one-sixth of the acreage went to homesteaders who lived and kept their holdings. He proves that the homesteaders were pawns of the monopolists and the land speculators, with the bona fide homesteaders receiving the least desirable tracts, in poorer lands and far from transportation facilities.

In the last section of the book Shannon invalidates the old "safety-valve" hypothesis. His data shows that from 1860 to 1900 the flow was from the farm to the city and not vice versa, as is usually thought. He contends that it is time that a new hypothesis were advanced: that the rise of the city was a safety valve for rural discontent. In this section on "The Farmer and the Nation," Shannon depicts agriculture as declining in importance. He shows that from 1860 to 1900 agriculture's share in the national income and national wealth was steadily decreasing.

The book contains some very important factual material and also some major ideological contributions, but it falls short in analyzing the problems involved in the farmer's last frontier.

Shannon fails to grasp the problems involved in a maturing agriculture. He did not gear his analysis toward an examination of a problematical situation, and the shifts in the process which are brought about by institutional changes. The instability of agriculture, the increasing rate of farm tenancy, and the loss of the owner-operator ideal, are all dealt with as fixtures.

Not daring to suggest a new institutional setting to cope with the closing of the frontier, Shannon must manipulate his charts and graphs and elaborate in a matchbox. For if he were to poke his nose into the outer environs, things might be combustible.

Jim BLACK.

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PART I: THE THEORY OF THE QUESTION

The retrogressionists post their thesis in Hegelian terms. We have therefore first to grapple with the dialectic.

In the Dialectic of Nature, Engels lists the three basic laws: (1) The law of the transformation of quantity into quality. (2) The law of the interpenetration of the opposites. (3) The law of the negation of the negation. The third “figures as the fundamental law for the contraction of the whole system.” The interconnection can be demonstrated as follows:

Capitalist society is a negation of a previous organism, feudal society. It consists of two opposites, capital and labor, interpenetrated—one cannot be conceived without the other. The contradiction between capital and labor develops by degrees in a constant series of minor negations. Thus, commercial capitalism, through quantitative changes in the mode of production, develops a new quality and is transformed into industrial capitalism with, of course, corresponding changes in its opposite, labor. This industrial capitalism is further negated by monopoly capitalism which is further negated by state-monopoly capitalism. But this increasing negation reaches a point where the constant transformation into a higher stage in a certain direction, only sharpens the fundamental antagonism which constitutes the organism. The maturity of the organism is demonstrated by the fact that the contradictions become so developed that the organism can no longer contain them. There arises the necessity of a complete negation, not of successive stages of development but of the organism itself. The organism will be negated, abolished, transcended by the antagonisms developed within its own self, without the intervention of any third party. That is negation of the negation. That is abolition, self-abolition.

The key word for us here is the word abolition (German: Aufhebung). The retrogressionists use the word Selbst-Aufhebung. The implication is that this means self-abolition, while aufhebung means plain abolition. But in the dialectic of Hegel and Marx, all abolition of an organism means self-abolition. Two years ago I had to deal with this very question and wrote as follows:

“For the word abolition, aufhebung, Marx went again to Hegel, to show quite clearly what he had in mind. Aufhebung does not mean mere non-existence, or abolition, as you abolish a dog or wipe some chalk off a board. As Hegel explains at length (Logik, tr. Johnston and Struthers, vol. 1, p. 129), it means for him transcendance, raising of one moment or active factor from its subordinate position in the dialectical contradiction to its rightful and destined place, superseding the opposite moment with which it is interpenetrated, i.e., separably united, in this case, raising labor, the basis of all value, to a dominant position over the other moment, the mass of accumulated labor. Thereby self-developing humanity takes the place formerly held by self-developing value. The real history of humanity will begin.” (Internal Bulletin, April, 1947.)

In The Holy Family, Marx has a long passage, of which this is a fair sample:

“...The proletariat is as proletariat forced to abolish itself and with this, the opposite which determines it, private property. It is the negation of the negation, the negation of the negation; the principle of unrest.”

“If the proletariat is victorious it does not mean that it has become the absolute side of society, for it is victorious only by abolishing itself and its opposite. Then both the proletariat and its conditioning opposite, private property, have vanished.”

In Capital itself, the word he almost invariably uses for the abolition of capitalist production is Aufhebung, i.e., its substitution by socialist production, its own interpenetrated opposite.
ical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation,” the most famous chapter in Capital and all Marxist writing. This for the regressionists is their “center of gravity.” Let us see what Marx says: a capitalist production bring forth the “material agencies” for its dissolution—concentration of production and socialization of labor. But on these material agencies as basis spring these material agencies as basis spring the inalienable right of the proletariat to the product of its labor. Marx says: “The proletarian is the foundation. A certain kind of property based not upon the class struggle in production between the German proletariat and the German working class. For them, the basic analysis is of one imperialist nation oppressing and expropriating other nations. The native bourgeoisie of the occupied countries is not defined basically in its economic association with the centralized capital of Europe but as part of the expropriated and exploited nations. The class struggle of the European proletariat against the existing capitalist society is thus replaced by the national struggle of individual nations, including bourgeois and workers. Hence the national struggle for them is not primarily a class struggle to overthrow a certain mode of production but a struggle to “reconstruct the whole screwed-back development, to regain all the achievements of the bourgeoisie (including the labor movement), to reach the highest accomplishments and to excel them.” But if the proletariat is to “reconstruct the whole screwed-back development,” etc., etc., then the task of the proletariat can only be to rebuild the whole bourgeois-democratic, i.e., the national, structure. Turn and twist as they may, the regressionists are in a vise from which they cannot escape.

The Economic Laws of Motion: The “General Law”

Without a firm grasp of the laws of production, you are blown all around by every wind. Let us see what the regressionists do with the general law of capitalist accumulation which is Marx’s theoretical basis for the historical, i.e., the actual, living tendency. The regressionists say:

“The theory of the retrogressive movement is therefore no more than the theoretical grasp of the laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production at the point of transformation into their opposite in the revolution in which they behave as if they were to develop, not as a product of the collapse of the capitalist revolution.” (P. 334.)

Marx has summed up the general law as the law of the organic composition of capital, the relation of the organic capital (the machinery, concrete labor, use-values) to the variable capital (labor-power, the only source of value). The relation is 1:1, then 2:1, then 3:1, then 4:1, etc. This developing ratio is the organic law of capitalist society, i.e., it is of the very nature of the organism.

So we would expect that anyone who had discovered economic laws of retrogression would show how this law was in retrogression. But you search the regressionist document in vain. Not a word. Why? Because no such economic movement exists. When in the world is there any retrogression in this organic law? In fascist Germany the relation of constant to variable capital increased enormously. In Britain, in the U.S.A., in Japan, in China, in India, in Latin America, the war has seen a vast increase; the post-war will see a still greater. What happened? “Accumulation,” labor and capital, to force a labor ratio of its neighbors. Whatever production does take place in Germany will take place according to the organic composition of 1946 and not according to that of 1848.

If the victorious powers dare to try to rebuild Germany, all that they will do is to displace millions of proletarians into an industrial reserve army on a vast scale which is precisely the “absolute general law of capitalist accumulation.” Colonization of France or Germany can only be an agitational phrase. In the sense of a historical retrogression it means creating a countryside like that which the victorious imperialisms, as Lenin foresaw, cannot do it. Capitalist competition, which is in its present form imperialist war, compels them to obey the general law of capitalist accumulation and tomorrow will force them to rearm, i.e., reindustrialize Germany. Into these Marxist fundamentals they have introduced an inexplicable confusion.

Retrogression and the Industrial Reserve Army

The regressionists say: “Under imperialism production is carried on in a capitalist manner from A to Z, but all relations from A to Z are qualitatively the same.” (P. 335.) Let us see what Marx says: “This they tell us is the ‘destruction’ of the value of a law of nature even if the socialistic revolution fails to come.” This tells us the “deeper essence of the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation,” so that when Marx wrote “the negation of the negation” he did not mean socialism only. He meant that capitalist private property and capitalist production were going to be negated, destroyed, proletarian or no proletarian. This, Marx’s most emphatic statement of the proletarian socialistic revolution as the inevitable alternative to capitalism, is historically, i.e., in life, interpreted to mean that capitalist property can be abolished and a new kind of state (bureaucratic-collectivist, managerial) will take its place. This certainly is the most remarkable interpretation of Marxism ever made and is likely to remain so.

Class Struggle or National Struggle

I have to confine myself here to its immediate political consequences. The material self-abolition of capital is for the retrogressionists a process by which the capitalists expropriate one another and the many capitalist nations are expropriated by one. In their present form they expropriate the property, they lose sight of the antagonistic roles of bourgeoisie and proletariat in the process of production. It appears immediately in their analysis of Europe. This is based not upon the class struggle in production between the German capitalism of European capital and the European working class. For them, the basic analysis is of one imperialist nation oppressing and expropriating other nations. The native bourgeoisie of the occupied countries is not defined basically in its economic association with the centralized capital of Europe but as part of the expropriated and exploited nations. The class struggle of the European proletariat against the existing capitalist society is thus replaced by the national struggle of individual nations, including bourgeois and workers. Hence the national struggle for them is not primarily a class struggle to overthrow a certain mode of production but a struggle to “reconstruct the whole screwed-back development, to regain all the achievements of the bourgeoisie (including the labor movement), to reach the highest accomplishments and to excel them.” But if the proletariat is to “reconstruct the whole screwed-back development,” etc., etc., then the task of the proletariat can only be to rebuild the whole bourgeois-democratic, i.e., the national, structure. Turn and twist as they may, the regressionists are in a vise from which they cannot escape.

Without a firm grasp of the laws of production, you are blown all around by every wind. Let us see what the regressionists do with the general law of capitalist accumulation which is Marx’s
restore democracy. They must write this. Socialized labor, the social structure produced, has vanished into the labor camp. The historical initiative is placed entirely in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

According to their mode of scientific analysis, the world revolution cannot but fail to come. The throwback of labor to the Middle Ages is their general law of capitalist accumulation. To think that freedom and democracy can come from it, to regard the bourgeoisie as a transitional form is, to posit presently, a retrogression to the Utopian not even of the nineteenth century but of the Middle Ages.

The Productive Forces

The retrogressionist thesis claims to be based upon the collapse of capitalism. It is clearly the extension of the market." (P. 333.) Very good. To this, as is characteristic of them, they give not a word of analysis. I have to try to illustrate the difference between this theory and that of the underconsumptionists.

If you observe the growth of capital empirically, i.e., with bourgeois eyes, then it must appear that as the market declines, the productive power also declines and therefore brings the whole process to a standstill. In reality the struggle for the declining market makes each competitor increase its productive power in order to drive its competitor off the field. Naturally this leads to a fine crash. But in the crash the technologically backward units go under and the system as a whole emerges on a higher technologicoal level—of course to start the whole process again. But the growth of capital which makes for forward development can come only on a higher organic composition. This leads to the falling rate of profit and it is the falling rate which compels a crisis. In Vol. III of Capital (p. 301) Marx says that it is "the fall in the rate of profit [which] calls forth the competitive struggle among the stronger and it is the stronger who prevails; the weaker falls off the field." Most Marxist commentators recognize that the Marxian crisis is not a crisis of incapacity to sell goods or, in bourgeois terms, of "effective demand." It is when the crisis is imminent that capitalists rush to sell goods and naturally the bottom falls out of the market. Blak expresses it very well, in An American Looks at Karl Marx:

"Thus the limiting factor of consumption is a precipitant, the discharge of workers in the means of production is a manifestation, the transferred crack in consumers' purchases the 'cause of a panic, while all along the crisis is implicit, overcome by accumulation by the stronger..."

Now every serious dispute by serious people about the future of capitalist society will in the long run find the protagonists lined up, in the camp either of the Leninists or the underconsumptionists. The retrogressionists say that they follow the Leninist interpretation. Yet their thesis is that the productive forces have ceased to grow and they quote Lenin and Trotsky. I do not propose to take up Trotsky here. He undoubtedly wrote this many times. He also wrote many other things that are not apparent contradiction. At any rate he left no developed economic thesis. But Lenin did. He wrote Imperialism to prove the decline of capitalism. Nevertheless he states (and more than once): "It would be a mistake to believe that this tendency to decline precludes the possibility of the rapid growth of capitalism. It does not. In the epoch of imperialism, certain branches of industry, certain strata of the bourgeoisie and certain countries betray, to a more or less degree, one or another of these tendencies. On the whole, capitalism is growing far more rapidly than before."

But argument about this does not need quotations from Lenin. In 1929 the productive power was higher than it had ever been; in 1939 it was still higher than it was in 1929; by 1942 it had reached fantastic heights compared with 1933. Do the retrogressionists dare to deny this? War is only capitalist competition carried out by national units, and the laws hold firm. In times of peace the fundamental movement is development of the productive power precisely because "the market" is declining. In war, where the market is exhausted and can only be redivided, each national state fanatically develops the productive power. If capitalism lasts until 1948, then the preparation for World War III would result in a productive power far beyond that of 1942.

What then is responsible for the retrogressionists' thesis of lack of growth of the productive forces? It is only because they have abandoned the inevitability of the socialist revolution, and having adopted a theory of the tendency of capitalist accumulation, which increasingly disorganizes and destroys the productive forces which organizes and disciplines the proletariat in the process of production and prepares it for the socialist revolution. Having given up the process of production as the means of developing the productive forces and organizing the proletariat, they must look outside the process of production, i.e., to democracy.

Productive Forces and Social Relations

Underconsumptionists are distinguished by the fact that value no part in their analysis. Thus they lose sight of the fundamental contradiction of capitalist production. They claim to be concerned with the means of production in its value form (the main concern of the bourgeoisie) and means of production in its material form (the main concern of the proletariat). They thus ruin the possibility of future analysis. A recent article in the Saturday Review (Vol. 27, No. 27) is entitled: "The World Market is Exhausted and Can Only Be Reconfigured." Their own side of this question. Admiral Ramsey says that all the existing planes must be systematically destroyed because in five years' time they would be obsolete. And not only planes, but means of production. General Arnold demands "research laboratories for ever-increasing aeronautical development, a progressive aviation industry capable of great expansion quickly." Thus essentially as in competition for the market, the material form of the products may be still valuable and able to give great service to the proletariat and the people. But their value, in terms of socially necessary labor time on the world market, is equal only to that of the latest discovery, actual or potential. Hence reorganization of production for more and better production, socialist of labor, increase of the industrial army. The mere presence and the admiral and forward management can come neither from the productive forces which organizes and disciplines the proletariat in the process of production and prepares it for the socialist revolution. Having the productive forces in its value form (the main concern of the bourgeoisie) and means of production in its material form (the main concern of the proletariat). They think the world is exhausted and can only be reconfigured. But they are mistaken.

What then is responsible for the retrogressionists' thesis of lack of growth of the productive forces? It is only because they have abandoned the inevitability of the socialist revolution, and having adopted a theory of the tendency of capitalist accumulation, which increasingly disorganizes and destroys the productive forces which organizes and disciplines the proletariat in the process of production and prepares it for the socialist revolution. Having given up the process of production as the means of developing the productive forces and organizing the proletariat, they must look outside the process of production, i.e., to democracy.

The vital question is to get hold of the intimate connection between retrogressionist theory and their practical conclusions. In his Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic, Marx pays noble tribute to Hegel for his discovery of the dialectic but foretells that his incapacity to take it further, i.e., to socialism, opens the way to uncritical idealism and equally uncritical positivism. The retrogressionists fall inescapably into both.

In Vol. II Marx divided capital into Department I, means of production and Department II, means of consumption, and bases his final analysis upon this division. The retrogressionists divide the productive forces into means of destruction and means of construction. What is this but idealism—classification according to moral criteria? One stands almost in despair before this muddle. The economic aspect of the productive forces was forgotten during the winter of Phillip Murray. The retrogressionists do not know what means of production they are playing. All Marx's economic categories are social categories.
In the analysis of capital as value, constant capital symbolizes the bourgeoisie, variable capital the proletariat. But men use not value but steel, oil, textiles. Thus, in his analysis of capital as material form, Department I (means of production) is in essence representative of the bourgeoisie, Department II (means of consumption) is representative of the proletariat. The struggle between constant and variable capital, between Department I and Department II is expressive of the struggle of classes. What struggle goes on between means of destruction and means of consumption, production and consumption, is the very source of the antagonism between the classes. And this antagonism agamst the whole system explodes with terrible power.

The Phenomenology of Mind

Marxism is distinguished from idealism and positivism of all types by the fact that (a) it distinguishes the proletariat from all other classes by its types of labor and (b) by the revolutionary effect upon the proletariat and society of this type of labor.

The concept of labor is the very basis of the dialectic, and not merely of the Marxian dialectic but of the dialectic of Hegel himself. In the Phenomenology of Mind,* in the section on Lordship and Bondage, Hegel shows that the lord has a desire for the object and enjoys it. But because he does not actually work on it, his desire lacks objectivity. The labor of the bondsman, in working, in changing, i.e., in negating the raw material, has the contrary effect. This, his labor, gives him his rudimentary sense of personality. Marx had this idea in mind when he wrote of the laborer in the automatic factory:

"It is as a result of the division of labor in manufactures, however, there exists the division of labor, and here instead of making one object, man begins to produce fragments of an object. In the process of production, there begins a stultification, distortion and ossification of his physical and intellectual faculties.

With the productive process of heavy industry, this stultification is pushed to its ultimate limit. Man becomes merely an appendage to a machine. He is now no longer uses the instruments of production. As Marx repeats on page after page, the instruments of production use him. Hegel, who had caught hold of this, was completely baffled by it and seeing no way out, took refuge in idealism. Marx, using the Hegelian method and remaining in the productive process itself, discovered and elaborated one of the most profound truths of social and political psychology. In the very degradation of the workers he saw the basis of their revolutionary consciousness. They say that "the minute the proletarian loses his right to strike, his freedom of movement, and all political rights," he ceases to be the "classical free proletarian . . ." (p. 331) For the analysis of production and the stages of production, they have substituted the legislative or representative action of the bourgeoisie for the action of the proletariat. The retrogressionsists deny consciousness. They say that "the modern slave differs much less poetically from the slave of antiquity than appears at first glance." (p. 331) The retrogressionsists carry their democratic concepts into the process of production itself. They say: "Politically, and to a large extent economically, it is not the conditions and forms of slavery." (p. 339) They seem incapable of understanding that increase of misery, subordination, slavery is part of capitalist production and not retrogression.

At this stage we can afford to be empirical. In 1944 the Italian proletariat in North Italy lived under fascism. Mussolini, to placate this proletariat, called his state the Socialist Republic. Every worker who punched the clock and found no work got three-quarters of his day's pay. Mussolini passed decrees which aimed at making the workers believe that industry was socialized. When the Germans were about to leave, these workers negotiated with them and with Mussolini and drove them out. They seized the factories. They hold them to this day. Such is modern industry that a mere general strike places the socialist laborer, not the question of the state-power with workers organized in factory committees and Soviets. Yet the retrogressionsists say in 1944 that because of the absence of bourgeois-democracy the more you looked at these workers the more you saw how much they resembled the slaves who lived in the Italian latifundia 3000 years ago.

Revolutionary Perspectives and Proposals

Except seen in the light of their analysis of the proletariat in production, the revolutionary perspectives of the great Marxists have always seemed like stratospheric ravings.

In 1848 Marx said that "the bourgeois revolution in Germany would be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution." In 1868 he wrote to Engels: "On the continent the revolution is imminent and will immediately assume a socialist character." Twenty years later, Introducing Marx's Civil War in France, Engels wrote at great length at the great "political development of France since 1789, Paris has for fifty years been placed in such a position that . . . no revolution could there break out without the proletariat . . . (after victory) immediately putting forward its own demands . . . demands . . . more or less defined . . . but the upshot of all . . . the abolition of the class contrast between capitalist and laborer." The word "immediately" appears every time.

Their enormous confidence is based not upon speculation on the psychology of workers but upon the antagonism of objective relations between labor and capital. From this came their proposals.

*One of the three basic books used by Lenin in his studies for Imperialism.

**The babblers who think that all the American workers want is "full employment" are in for a rude awakening. That capitalism increases the use-values (radio, education, books, etc.) that he uses outside of production only increases his antagonism.

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In 1946 the *Manifesto* Marx says that Communists support every movement against the existing order, but “In all these movements they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the proposition of overthrowing the social order at the time.” For whatever its degree of development at the time, at the moment of insurrection, it flies to the fore.

The Revolutionary Epoch

Production, production, production. By 1906 the miserable individual production of 1871, which had nevertheless produced the Commune, had developed into genuine large-scale industry. Trotsky, watching the revolution in feudal Russia, declared that the victorious bourgeois-democratic revolution would “immediately assume a socialist character.” Lenin, as we know, opposed him. We now know who (despite many important qualifications) was essentially right. 1905 is a very important year. The development of industry brought the political general strike and the Soviets. They represent the industrially and socially motivated rejection by the workers of bourgeois democracy. Marx’s 1850 subjective demand for revolutionary workers’ organizations are now objective realities, henceforth inseparable from revolution, as 1917 and post-war Europe and Asia were to show.

In 1938 in the Founding Conference Theses, Trotsky wrote that “The Spanish proletariat has made a series of heroic attempts since the Civil War to take power in its own hands and guide the fate of society.” Are these workers in the “true-bourgeois” tradition of forty years?

He says of the French proletariat that “the great wave of sit-down strikes, particularly during June 1936, revealed the whole-hearted readiness of the proletariat to overthrow the capitalist system.” He left it to the French to all shades to point out that the Spanish workers in 1931 were thinking only of overthrowing the monarch (as presumably the Belgians today), and the French workers only of the 40-hour week.

In 1940 Trotsky’s *Manifesto* had not the faintest breath of retrogression that the workers for forty years have been dominated by “the true bourgeois tradition of revisionism” (p. 340). He says the exact opposite. For him in 1939 the workers wanted to “tear themselves free from the bloody chaos of capitalist society. In 1940 they had “lost practically all democratic and pacifist illusions.” Note that we are here a stage beyond 1940. The crimes and failures of the modern bourgeoisie have created the subjective consciousness of the modern proletariat which re-enforces the objective antagonism of developed modern industry. Trotsky calmly posed these possibilities. The victory of Anglo-American imperialism, an indecisive struggle, and the victory of Hitler in Europe. The last concerns us most. Fascism would over-run Europe. But that would only be a prelude to a ferocious war with the victorious imperialist nations, Anglo-American and Russian imperialism, will continue the same process. Hence their “democratic political revolution” still holds the stage.

Two Types of Democratic Demands

It should be obvious that what Lenin said about “democratic demands” has nothing at all to do with this dispute. It would be a crying and intolerable imposition to attempt to confuse the two. For Lenin all democratic demands in advanced countries were a means of mobilizing workers to overthrow the bourgeoisie. He said that we could have socialist revolution without one democratic demand being realized. The retrogressionists say we must have a “democratic-political revolution” so as to give the workers a chance to “reconstruct” the whole “screwed-back development,” and to learn to link scientific socialism to the labor movement. The two perspectives are at opposite poles. Never before has there been such a proposal. Trotsky proposed that the democratic slogans of right to organize and free press be raised in fascist countries, but warned that they should not be a “noose fastened to the neck of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie’s agents.” (Founding Conference.) Writing of “transitional demands in fascist countries,” he warned: “Fascism plunged these countries into political barbarism. But it did not change their social structure. Fascism is a tool in the hands of finance-capital and not of feudal landowners. A revolutionary program should base itself on the realities of the class struggle, obligatory also to fascist countries, and not on the psychology of terrified bankrupts.” For him the Soviets “will cover Germany before a new Constitutional Assembly will gather in Weimar.”** But the retrogressionists do not propose democratic demands which are to be thrown aside as soon as the masses move. They do the exact opposite. They propose a revolution for democratic demands. What is this but a rejection of the social revolution until later when the whole “screwed-back development” will have been “reconstructed.” This is the theory. Let us see how it measures up to events.

J. R. JOHNSON.

(The concluding part will appear in the next issue.)

*That, said Lenin, was not impossible. But a few months later he said emphatically that the victorious bourgeoisie might think they could do this, but they could not. The economic retrogression of Europe by political means would be a colossal, in fact, an impossible task. (Collective Works, XIX. p. 23.)

**Those who want to use the fact that this did not happen are free to try. They should, however, think many times before they begin this type of argument.

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THE NEW INTERNATIONAL - JANUARY, 1946

29
March 17, 1945.

To the Editorial Board of Labor Action,
New York, N. Y.

Comrades:

We have just received a copy of your issue of December 11, 1944, in which appears, under the title: "A Letter from German Socialists," a statement made on the name of the "Committee Abroad of the IKD."

The very fact that this committee has sent you this letter, which you introduce as coming from "our" comrades, is a disgraceful action on the part of a leadership claiming to represent a section of the Fourth International. But that is a matter which you pretend not within the ranks of the Fourth International itself.

The Committee of the IKD, by its letter, and you, by endorsing it, endeavor to throw suspicion upon the information published concerning the activity of the Fourth International on the European continent under the yoke of the Gestapo. You present this information as unreliable and unverifiable. But in spite of the still difficult communication, you were not—at the time of your publication—altogether ignorant of parts of this activity, of the clandestine meetings, the illegal publications, the many victims. You affect to ignore this and are very exacting. You are contradicted by publishing a scandalous letter: German militants have forgotten or have been unable to register with the so-called IKD leadership before being murdered by the Gestapo, everything is in order. We only repeat then: We left no group in France that would have been able to put out a printed newspaper. In all instances, the leadership of the IKD take credit for many sacrifices and casualties in France, but for no heroic deeds. The credit is due to those who had "forgotten" or else were "not in a position" to join the IKD. So why all the noise?

The SWP is at constant variance with us and intends to fish in the beclouded puddle of factional maneuvers. With the help of the European comrades, it wants to establish a counterbalance to the inconvenient IKD. For this reason the SWP is spreading slander, gossip and dirt with this implication: The IKD is not the "real" IKD. There is also an opposition (namely, those European comrades who don't belong to the IKD) which should really be considered as the "real" IKD. In their turn, the European comrades (they have long been waiting for their turn to come) who are old-timers as far as mud-dragging is concerned, write:

"It is obvious that this so-called leadership of the IKD and yourself (by this meaning Labor Action), having both abandoned fundamental points (?) of the Bolshevik-Leninist program (?), are only recognizing each other in order to fight against the program (?) of the Fourth International and the organizations struggling for it."

Hurray, dear friends; you have done well in copying this from E. R. Frank and other honorable members of the SWP! You are really "recognizing each other" and as identical twins you wear identical clothes. We wish you good results and some more "fundamental points." But alas, the poor readers of the FI will have to wait some more centuries for your "proofs."

Foundation of Our Information

We would have wasted no words at the time about the whole affair if it had been a question of fatality or even of discipline. Just as little was it a matter of those cheap "principles" sold by the SWP (a penny apiece). On the contrary, we were here in deliberate opposition to those practices of the SWP, to do with politics.\(^2\) There were concrete political
circumstances that induced us to send our letter of information. Beyond a doubt the majority of the Fourth International is made up of ultra-leftists, and not by the passers-by who spend their time printing self-contradictory statements. In one case, though, they seem to have carried their ultra-leftist heroism so far as to lead to simple adventurism, judging from these examples, of the case of Comrade Wintley ("German group") discussed above. The German Trotskyists in France (not to be confused with the IKD) have published a newspaper under the name of Arbeiter und Soldat (Worker and Soldier). Aside from the French organs, the rest of the Fourth Internationalist press, (Militant, FI, Socialist Appeal) also published enthusiastic reports about this German paper. With special diligence this was prominently put forth:

"It was in connection with the activity round this paper that thirty German soldiers were murdered by the Gestapo. The leader of this group, Comrade Wintley, was murdered by the Gestapo."

That sounds serious at first, and at this point we want to put the question of Comrade Wintley and the German soldiers (as individuals) out of the way. In other words, the good will, the courage, the idealism, the devotion and the self-sacrifice of all those who fight for the Fourth International are not to be doubted. They died as victims of fascism. Let us honor their memory and their personal valor.

But, on the other hand, we have been, and remain convinced that in Germany, France, etc., it is not the coming "proletarian revolution," but rather serious political work and revolutionary preparation that was then and is now the immediate task. For this reason we are fighting against this kind of intellectual, political and physical juggling with revolution, which not only doesn't advance our cause, but which is also ruining the Fourth International. Accordingly, we did so, among other reasons, with the excellent assistance of Comrade D. Logan, after extensive maneuverings by imposing its bureaucratic will. Ever since, the habits of the bureaucratic and political hypocrisy of the SWP don't concern him whether or how his soldiers were murdered by the Gestapo. The reasoning so far as to lead to simple adventurism, judging from these examples, of the case of Comrade Wintley, was murdered by the Gestapo.

There arose a serious political question and is not necessarily anything of which to be proud. If we are mistaken, please enlighten us, but we conjecture that the high number of casualties is the result of the inability of the French soldiers to protect themselves through the existing bureaucratic mechanism (resistance); the inability to "lose" themselves in it, and with its help to carry on work; etc. Instead, they depended on inadequate, illegal methods, on political isolation, and thereby incurred the same fate, the same "radical aims." The bitter truth is in the whole of the French organization (as the whole of the Fourth International) did not want to have anything to do with the national resistance movement; and that they condemned the slogan of "national insurrection" as being "vulgar and deceptive." It happens, though, that this vulgar and deceptive slogan exists, since the immediate necessity of the masses, who therefore left the FI alone. Result—heroic sacrifices and nothing else.

Therefore, when we learned that Arbeiter und Soldat were really German comrades, we wanted to be careful and distinguish ourselves from them politically. We would have been grateful if the "European comrades" had informed us whether the publishers of Arbeiter und Soldat were really German comrades or whether they were members of a certain Austrian group, which is known to us (and we emphasize) as being adventurous and ultra-left. We had said: "We must wait for further information to confirm or refute our assumption." But instead of further information we are flooded by a river of dirt and indignation in the form of a "Protest." However, no cause is served by that and this political question still remains unanswered:

What attitude should be taken toward the Arbeiter und Soldat, which in May, 44 (in France), calls on the German worker to establish a workers' state by overthrowing the capitalists? What should one say when this paper prints this headline on its front page:

"As of May 1st, 1944, the Road to the Revolution."

In our opinion, this sort of thing should not be encouraged (as is done by The Militant, FI and Socialist Appeal) but one should rather have a critical attitude and say: Just because Comrade Wintley and the German soldiers meant well does not change the fact that they were on the wrong road. Only when the European Executive Committee (which worked together with the German group and followed the same ultra-left policies) and the Fourth International free themselves from this grotesque "Courses Toward the Revolution" and the eternal set­
ing up of a workers' state—only then shall the danger of adventurism be banned. Only then when the Fourth relearns completely, begins to synchronize practical methods with concrete political tasks shall the thirty-one casualties in connection with Arbeiter und Soldat have any political meaning. At times it is much "easier" to die for a great ideal than to be able to live for the same ideal; we propose it through the use of correct politics.

All this is temporary conjecture and is aimed at the representation in the "official" press of the Fourth. Outside of this, though, there are other cases, where contradictions exist and we should like to come back to the case as soon as the correct version is ascertained. Again we ask our friends (and enemies) to help us obtain more facts, reports and documents. We are ready to take, a political question in one case which we would otherwise criticize in another (SWP).

For the AK of the IKD.


To the Editors.

Dear Comrades:

The article, "The International Significance of the British Elections," by A. Arlins, in the October issue of The New International is printed without any comment by the editors. Yet the "retrogression through which our party stands" as stated in the article, has never been adopted as the position of the party, or even discussed to any extent in our party. The article, in effect, rejects the theses laid down by the Fourth International which includes the "Transitional Program" as our strategy in this period of the "Death Agony of Capitalism" and upon which our party stands. At least we have never rejected the main line of these theses, nor have there been any proposals to reject them. Arlins' article throws out the window the basic Marxist tenet that the working class has the task of emancipating humanity (substituting the concept that the emancipation of humanity is the task of...humanity). And it heaps abuse upon our sister sections of the Fourth International.

In order to really deal with Comrade Arlins' article it would be necessary to demonstrate the incorrectness of his theory of retrogression. That can hardly be the job of this letter, except in so far as it calls attention to the political results of that theory as shown in his article. I want instead to deal briefly with the other points made above.

1. In the place of the transitional pro-

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gram as the strategy through which the masses are set on the road to proletarian revolution, the article substitutes national rebellions of the peoples leading to socialism. It should be noted that the official party position on the national question points out the importance of giving a class content to the slogan of national liberation and poses the perspective of proletarian revolution through the development of dual power (workers' councils).

Example of Trotsky

The theses, resolutions, etc., of the "official Fourth" are characterized by Arlins as "simply a dead alphabet for the feeble-minded," etc. To make very clear that he rejects the whole strategy of the Fourth International for our epoch, he points proudly to the fact that in previous writings he and his collaborators "did not occupy ourselves with proletarian revolutionary prospects. Except for scorn and contempt, not a single word will be found in all our writings about all this revolution rubbish of the Fourth." The chief reason why engaging oneself with proletarian revolutionary prospects is "revolution rubbish," according to Arlins, is the non-existence or smallness of a revolutionary vanguard. When Leon Trotsky wrote his thesis on the "Death Agony of Capitalism," the proletarian vanguard was also small and in many countries non-existent. And undoubtedly Comrade Arlins must put into the category of "revolution rubbish" a blazing headline in Labor Action some time ago which read "The Italian Revolution Has Begun." Further, Arlins suggests that the Fourth International "prohibit itself for two years (just as a test!) from even speaking of the proletarian revolution and its leadership by the Fourth." He should undertake a polemic against Trotsky, who did not hesitate to call upon the Spanish workers during the Civil War of 1936 to make their proletarian revolutions, despite the fact that the Fourth in those countries at the time was anything but mass parties.

2. But Comrade Arlins' rejection of proletarian revolutionary prospects is really based on his theory that the emancipation of humanity is the task of... humanity. To quote, "the development enters into a stage in an immediately practical sense, in which the realization of socialism is no longer chiefly the task of the working class but the equally immediately practical task of humanity itself." We were taught by Marx that the task of emancipating humanity is the historic mission of the working class; not because we are anxious for the working class to have the sole honor, but for the scientific reason that the working class, by virtue of its rôle in production, is the only group in the articulate species capable of creating the dictatorship of the proletariat, which, to repeat more ABC's, is the precondition for socialism. Obviously, that non-class entity, "humanity," cannot create a class state, however much the working class and will need the support of all sections of capitalist-oppressed humanity.

On Status of Proletariat

Comrade Arlins has replaced the working class with "humanity" because for him Marx's theory of the ever-increasing concentration of the proletariat is a "mechanical" and childish formula with "the new quality which forces its way through more and more in imperialism is called the decentralization of the proletariat, atomization, splitting..."

No one can deny that one of the political consequences of fascism for the working class movement is the atomization of the proletariat (although hardly forever). This political fact Arlins confuses with the economic fact that capitalism, especially in the era of monopoly imperialism, increases the concentration of the proletariat, with the consequent socialization of labor. It is precisely this socialization of labor which is the basis for socialism. This tendency is, if anything, strengthened by fascism.

3. It is no wonder that Arlins discovers that "outside of England, there is no labor movement in the world." Not in France, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Canada, Australia, America? Arlins' "partiality" to the English extends even to the English section of the Fourth International (despite its adherence to the "theses for the feeble-minded"). It, presumably, is exempt from the "Political sterility, confusion, theoretical and propagandistic unscrupulousness, ludicrous phrasemongering and fanciful maneuver..." and the "legendary internationalism" of the Fourth International. Its exemption seems to be based on its "excellently conducted election campaign," which is a sign that it is a "politically oriented organization."

I, too, think that the work of the English comrades is "excellent." But excellent organizational work must have some connection with a political line. The politics of the English Trotskyists is based on the theses of the Fourth International. Its newspaper continually talks about proletarian revolution, the transitional program, it is very friendly to the SWP in this country, etc. This, according to Arlins, should condemn it to "political sterility."

The French Movement

But the English Trotskyists are exempted from the wholesale condemnation of the Fourth International which Arlins indulges in. The French comrades do not come off so easily. They are hit with every brick in Arlins' arsenal. Now, Arlins is quite correct to criticize the French comrades if they were in "deserted factories" during the Nazi occupation. It is pretty stupid for anybody, let alone revolutionists, to hang out in deserted factories. I have the impression, however, from reprints of Vérité in The Militant, that our French comrades were engaged in more creative revolutionary activity during the occupation. Nevertheless, if they spent any time at all in deserted factories while the masses were elsewhere, their error should be pointed out. But the criticism should be made in a comradely tone. Instead, Arlins relegates them to political limbo.

If it is possible to take a friendly attitude toward the English despite their support of Stalin's army, it should be possible to see some hope for the French section of the Fourth International despite its alleged mis-