Apologia

The publishers regret the condition of the following number (Volume 2/##2). After unsuccessfully attempting to locate a perfect copy in every major collection in the United States, we finally settled for the fragments reprinted on the following eight pages, in favor of not reprinting the issue at all.

Although some text is missing, the context of the various articles is for the most part clear. If any library has a perfect copy of this number, we would appreciate their bringing it to our attention so that it can be reproduced and sent as a replacement to those libraries who have purchased this imperfect copy.

—The Publishers
Old Guard Defies Decision of N.E.C.

The New York old guard came to the last N.E.C. meeting with the request that the N.E.C. cancel the debate between Norman Thomas and Earl Browder arranged by the Socialist Call. The N.E.C. refused. 

Every thinking Socialist understands the necessity of defending the viewpoint of the Socialist party against all other parties. Under no circumstances can we afford to refuse to debate any party with a substantial following. The Old Guard, composed of people who are unable to think at all when it comes to the question of communism, plays into the hands of the communists by refusing to defend its point of view.

Most important of all, however, is the fact that the debate is held under the auspices of the Socialist Call. The old guard, determined to put the Call out of existence, seized upon the debate as a pretext to expel or suspend leading elements of the Militants.

Charges have been preferred against Norman Thomas, Jack Altman, Max Delson and other Militants for promoting the debate. Since the N.E.C. approved of the debate these charges constitute a violation of discipline by the New York old guard.

It is obvious that the New York right wing is determined to suspend or expel leading Militants and thus precipitate a split in the party. The debate will go on regardless of the action of the old guard. What will the old guard do?

The left-wing throughout the country must be prepared to meet the situation. It must back up any Militant suspended or expelled with all the forces at its disposal. The right wing moves to split, the left wing must move to unify the party.

Atonement by the N.E.C.

It is in the nature of the present National Executive Committee of our party not to be able to act decisively and consistently for a long period of time. There is no majority representing any definite tendency and consequently the actions of our N.E.C. have a contradictory character just as the resolutions of the N.E.C. on almost all important matters are full of contradictions aiming, as they invariably do, to please every tendency in the party.

A legitimate and praiseworthy desire to achieve harmony within the party leads the N.E.C. to favor the right wing at one time and the left at another time. This middle of the road path does not and cannot solve any problems and simply means that the party not only cannot grow but must actually lose members and influence. And as a matter of fact the party has lost over 9000 members within the last two years. A weak and indecisive N.E.C. is unable to lead the party in any direction.

Hope surged high in the breasts of many influential party members after the "peace pact" between the N.E.C. and the old guard. Now we could work and grow. Those of the left wing openly stated that no problems were solved by the agreement, consequently the party could not proceed to function, fully since the old guard had come out with all it wanted the agreement, were looked upon as born disrupters but we confirmed the prognosis of the revolutionary Marxists of the optimistic utopians.

We stated here that in any struggle between two tendencies within a party there can be peace only by adhering to every thinking proposition: 1) that the minority does not proceed against the wishes and actions of the majority.

The old guard utilized every unfair means to prevent the minority of New York to present its viewpoint and achieve power in a normal manner the division between the two groups could not be reconciled on the basis of a minority obeying discipline. There can be no discipline if the minority is not permitted full freedom.

It is the desire of the old guard of New York to crush the growth of revolutionary ideas and it does not hesitate to use any means to achieve that aim. Consequently there can be no peace so long as these right-wing tactics continue. The attempt of the N.E.C. to achieve peace was doomed to failure.

The majority of the N.E.C. realized that it had made a mistake by giving in to the old guard at the New York section. No peace had been consummated in New York and the party was not growing as predicted. The old guard was using the pact to exterminate the ideas of revolutionary socialism. If the majority of the N.E.C. had to be convinced of the fact that the growth of the party depends not upon the old guard but upon the virile left wing forces the trend of events subsequent to the pact should have convinced it.

With the failure to achieve peace in New York and the obvious failure of the party to go forward as a background, the N.E.C. met in Chicago and the general tendency of the meeting was an attempt to undo the damage wrought at the New York meeting of the N.E.C. A turn towards the left wing was made but again in such an indecisive manner that it cannot possibly satisfy either the right or the left.

Actually nothing that was done by the N.E.C. can be characterized as left wing. That could not be expected from the very nature of the composition of the majority of the N.E.C. The best that can be said is that the N.E.C. did not do what it wanted it to do. It did not prohibit the Thomas-Browder debate; it did not reelect James Oneal as delegate to the International; it did not place the New York Yipsicks under the domination of the old guard; it did not pass a resolution of war favoring sanctions. This and this only was the extent of the concession to the left wing.

Obviously the left wing prefers the N.E.C. to do what it did at its last meeting to what it accomplished at the New York meeting. But it would be a colossal act of self-delusion to act on the assumption that from now on the N.E.C. has turned to the left. The left wing of the party, now being hammered into a unified group by the Roundbrook conference and the mid-west conference, should and does realize clearly that without an N.E.C., the majority of the members of which are revolutionary socialists, the party cannot grow.

But to achieve an N.E.C. with a majority of revolutionary socialists it is first of all necessary to educate the membership so that a majority of the party will be willing to struggle and support revolutionary policies. To educate and guide such a majority is the task of the left wing.

Progressives and the A.F. of L. Convention

The top leadership of the bureaucratic machine has been in control of the American Federation of Labor so long and so completely that it was taken for granted by everyone that a convention of the A.F. of L. would simply rubberstamp everything that the Executive Council proposed. A real struggle on some fundamental principle was about inconceivable and the most that one could expect in the way of opposition was some howl from the wilderness.

As a consequence the really bitter struggle that took place at the last convention held at Atlantic City and the splitting of the controlling element of the Federation machine was of the whole convention. A new expression in the way of opposition to the old guard was sanctioned.
Socialists in the Teachers' Union

At times it seems possible to keep the factional struggle within the party from interfering with the work of the party members in trade unions and other mass organizations. It would appear that within the party we can assuage another on some questions involving the principles of socialism and work harmoniously in organizations outside of the party. The situation in the Teachers' union and in several other unions shows conclusively that when a deep gulf in principle separates one group of socialists from another it is utopian to expect to be able to keep the conflict between the two groups away from the non-party organizations.

A controversy involving fundamental principles must sooner or later be transferred to tactics involving every day activities. The conception of socialism which the right wing has, necessarily involves a close working agreement with the bureaucrats of the labor movement. The right wing wants to and does adapt itself to the conservative wishes of a conservative labor bureaucracy. It has no desire to organize the working masses for militant struggles for better conditions regardless of the wishes of the top leadership of the American Federation of Labor. In any struggle of any militant group against the labor bureaucrats the right wing of the party will inevitably be found on the side of the bureaucrats.

Needless to say the left wing of the Socialist party must use different tactics within the trade unions. Upholding the principles of revolutionary socialism, left wingers within the unions cannot and must not be servants of the labor bureaucracy. Their task is to organize the militant and progressive forces of the unions and wage a struggle for militant unionism which must inevitably bring the top leadership of the American Federation of Labor into conflict with the top leadership of the American Federation of Labor. In any struggle of any militant group against the labor bureaucracy the right wing of the party will inevitably be found on the side of the bureaucrats.

It is the duty of members of the Socialist party working in the same union to organize themselves and, together with progressive and militant forces, strive to make the union progressive, democratic organization. Of course the bureaucrats will howl that the Socialists are interfering in the internal affairs of the trade unions. But their theory of non-interference is an utter sham. What they mean is that no socialists should conduct a struggle against the labor bureaucracy. The right wing always interferes but on the side of the conservative leaders.

The secret of correct tactics in the struggle for progressive unionism is in the organization of true progressives on a definite program and in the independent activity of the progressives with reference to every problem and every leader. To support a trade union leader in one case on a certain policy and to attack him in the next is perfectly correct even though the leader will have to fight on different occasions. But to make a permanent and essentially far from being
Socialists and Attack of Italy Upon Ethiopia

IN THE last issue of the Appeal there was an editorial dealing with a proclamation of the National Executive Committee calling for the defense of Ethiopia. That proclamation was issued prior to the October meeting of the NEC. At that meeting the NEC adopted a resolution on war which is certainly a vast improvement over the proclamation. Nevertheless it is not a resolution which revolutionary socialists can support whole-heartedly. The proclamation on the war question adopted by the NEC of the Young People’s Socialist League (Local New York’s official “youth movement”) who carried signs alleging that there was no strike in the store. Both groups then resorted to street meetings.

In pursuance of Local N. Y.’s professed policy of neutrality (sic) in the situation August Claessens, N. Y. Labor Secretary, spoke from the platform of the outlawed “union.” Word of this spread like wildfire. A wave of disgust spread over the city. Murray Baron, a member of the National Labor Committee was called upon by the A.P. of L. union, and spoke in the capacity of a trade unionist, in the hope that the S. P. would not be concerned. Subsequently the strike was settled and an amalgamation was effected on condition that Nemser step out of the picture. Pressure from the legitimate elements Nemser was forced or

Why did the right wing in New York back a legitimate A. of L. union and support a shady dual union? For factional reasons? Nemser, a member of the New York Central Committee, voted with the right wing on every issue. Possibly for other reasons?

Factionalism once more precipitated the Old Guard into an impossible position in the Teachers’ Union. Again we need not concern ourselves with the merits of the contending sides within the union. If, as the Linville-Lefkowitz group asserts the Communists in the N. Y. local of the American Federation of Teachers were obstructive and undisciplined, then they should have been dealt with in accordance with the usual democratic procedures provided for in the constitution and by-laws of the union. This was entirely indefensible to demand that a substantial part of the local, well over one-third of the membership, be ousted because it disagreed with the leadership. Defeated in its attempts at the convention to split the local by official action, it pleaded advanced by the left socialists and other progress groups within the union, to remain and fight its battle, Linville-Lefkowitz group, with the backing of the Old Guard leadership, resigned. They then organized a dual union.

Their hope, of course, was to receive the support of the Centra. TRADES OF NEW YORK and of the A. F. of L. convention. This hope proved abortive, when Mulholland, vice-president of the N. Y. Central Trades, sharply criticized the right wing position of support for splitting tactics. The union today is as strong as it was before the defections. The attitude of the splitters was such as to galvanize the sentiment of people who had hitherto been only passive supporters of the union, resulting in a large number of new applications for admission. Although not in agreement with the Communists in the Teachers’ Union, left wing Socialists fought well against disruption and split.

The objectives of the Old Guard stand out clearly. It determined to discredit the left wing socialists in the union led by Maynard Krueger. It hoped to curry favor with the top leadership of the A. F. of L. on the spurious “communist” issue. Recent articles in the Jewish Daily Forward and the New Leader confirmed the suspicion that the Old Guard in New York no longer stand with the right wing on every issue, probably for other reasons.

The policy of the left wing in the union: FOR PROGRESSIVISM, WHETHER IT BE WITH OR AGAINST THE UNION LEADERS.
while it is true that expressions can be found to justify the claim that the new resolution enters to every tendency, it is unbrokenly correct to state that the prevailing note of the resolution is a positive one. It appeals to all people and to all classes of peace. Probably the most characteristic sentence in the whole resolution is the last one in the first paragraph.

Nothing less than the maximum effort of the American people, based on the most realistic policies, colonial peoples cannot afford to be drawn in.” One can hardly imagine a more utopian and well-intentioned attitude than that reflected by that sentence.

To appeal to the deep desire for peace which exists in all sections of the population in order to attract a great number to the banner of the Socialist party is a temptation which only those comrades who are grounded in revolutionary Marxism can withstand. To give expression to beautiful sentiments for international peace and good will is indeed simple but exceedingly dangerous. It throws the struggle against war off the rails of the class struggle and in effect lends assistance to the capitalists. No working people should be necessary than the

that the eleven million pacifists votes recently obtained in glied on behalf of the League of Nations, actually serves to blur the masses behind the British imperialists in their recent struggle against Italian imperialism. How easy it is for capital governments to convince peace-loving people that they must go to war in order to fight for peace.

In contradistinction to the party resolution the Yipsel proclamation breathes the spirit of the class struggle and emphasizes the necessity of organizing the workers to wage such a struggle. There is no real hope that the masses behind the British imperialists in their recent struggle against Italian imperialism. How easy it is for capital governments to convince peace-loving people that they must go to war in order to fight for peace.

Defense of Ethiopia

Three major problems are involved in any discussion on the question of the attitude of the Socialist party to the Italian attack on Ethiopia. They are: 1) the question of defending the independence of Ethiopia; 2) the question of sanctions by the imperialist governments; 3) the question of fighting for peace.

In the struggle of Ethiopia against Italy we must raise the slogan of defending Ethiopia. The Yipsel proclamation takes a very peculiar attitude to the question of defending Ethiopian independence. In a sublime aloofness it declares that “socialists cannot limit their judgment to a weighing of the wrongs of Italy as against the rights of Ethiopia.” In their legitimate desire to emphasize the imperialist rivalries between Great Britain and Italy and the possibilities of an imperialist war arising out of the attack of Italy upon Ethiopia, the Yipsels are willing to forget that at the present moment the actual struggle is against Italian imperialism. What a comfort it must be to the Ethiopian people to know that we are analyzing all the possibilities of an imperialist war and meanwhile preparing only for those possibilities. Nor can it gladden the hearts of the Ethiopians laying down their lives fighting the Italian invasion to know that the Yipsels are in favor of all colonial peoples.

It is a sign of a surrender to opportunism to clothe oneself in high sounding generalities and disregard the necessity of taking definite stand on a concrete problem. The Yipsel proclamation is absolutely correct in pointing out that Ethiopia must also be defended against British imperialism and that Great Britain is not at all interested in the independence of Ethiopia for any altruistic reasons but that does not relieve us of the responsibility of taking a definite position in favor of Ethiopia as against Italy and of saying so clearly.

Victory of Ethiopia is Defeat Also of Great Britain

But if Ethiopia wins Great Britain wins, argue some comrades. That is taking a short-sighted view of the struggle. Should Ethiopia win, repercussion would undoubtedly occur all over Africa and Asia. The colonial slaves of all imperialist countries would be encouraged to raise the standard of revolt. That is the real reason why Great Britain is so anxious to settle the matter without a struggle. Great Britain does not want to see Italy victorious but neither does it want to see the Ethiopians the victors. It fears the effects of such a victory amongst the colonial slaves everywhere. To help the Ethiopians come out victorious in the struggle against Italy is, in the last analysis, to help defeat not only Italy but also Great Britain.

No argument is necessary to support the proposition that should an imperialist war break out in Europe as a result of the Ethiopian conflict then hinting the independence of Ethiopia is relegated to the background and the main emphasis must be placed upon the struggle of the working class against their own governments. That does not mean that we cease to support Ethiopian independence but that we raise the matter more clearly over with the proposition that...
DEEPER AND DEEPER IN THE SWAMP

With express-train speed the war policies of the Communist International are unfolding themselves, each unfoldment disclosing more clearly the amazing depths of chauvinism in which the Comintern is now wallowing. After the decision of the Seventh Congress against the mechanical transference of policies from one country to another, one might expect at least an apparent orientation to the conditions in each specific country. Instead, we find the opposite: All the Communist parties in all the capitalist countries are orientating less to conditions in their own countries, and more and more exclusively are being guided entirely by the policies of the Soviet Union. We pick up Browder's report on the Seventh Congress, for instance, (Daily Worker, Oct. 5, 1935) and find:

"It is not clear, therefore, that every effort to fight for peace, against fascism, requires in every country that we should take as our basis and starting point the peace policy of the Soviet Union? Is it not clear that every one who rejects or casts doubt upon that peace policy is helping the fascists and war makers?"

Lest we might conclude that this is due to Browder's failure to understand the decision of the Seventh Congress, we turn to another authority, Harry Pollitt, the leader of the British C. P. (Labor Monthly, Oct. 1935) and find almost the same statement:

"... and there is not an honest man or woman in this country who professes to be Socialist who can say to us that at any price and at any cost they are not prepared to defend the Soviet Union, because it is the text of our Socialist faith."

We will not argue here as to what "as any cost" might or might not mean. What we are concerned with is the outlook which is here with us in the entire world: those comrades: the Soviet Union is our basis and starting point. Furthermore, the defence of fascism has to be carried through along lines of principle, in each country, but in line with the Soviet Union itself. That is, to remain at peace with the ruling class, which takes specific form in each country, also becomes the basis of the Comintern's policies. In the last analysis this means a democratic struggle (and wherever it is strong) and the capitalist countries.

Now that follows is a problem which the N.S.C.C.C. see fit to solve. It, on the other hand, does not dare to cast their teeth with rage if they should see food being sent at the request of socialists which food is helping Mussolini to victory over defeat. Every socialist will agree that war is a horrible thing, but a revolutionary socialist will insist that we have to struggle against it with all the forces at our command and not with humanitarian gestures. The only real and consistent humanitarians are revolutionary Marxists.

The task of a revolutionary socialist is clear: For the defense of Ethiopia against Italian imperialism by independent working class action; against sanctions by any capitalist government; no support of neutrality legislation but a real struggle against the capitalist government to prevent its declaring war against the proletarian revolution if war is declared in spite of all our efforts.

NOTE: At the last minute we were told that a combination of right wing and centrist elements succeeded in amending the Virolin resolution on war to be carried through along lines of principle outlined in above article.

A. G.
Lenin's attitude on Belgium and Ethiopia

Some people or other who oppose the slogan of defense of the independence of Ethiopia point to Lenin's attitude on the question of Belgium and Serbia during the World War. To see the name of a great: revolutionist who, more than anyone else, insisted upon supporting the struggle of colonial peoples against imperialist bandits, in order to avoid the elementary duty of every socialist to support the struggle of the Ethiopians, is to evidence an indescribable confusion. It was not against the idea of the self determination of Belgium and Serbia that Lenin fought but against the policy of the socialists in supporting their own governments on the pretext of fighting for the independence of the small countries.

And it would be a mistake to compare Belgium and Serbia with Ethiopia. The former countries had a proletariat and socialist parties; Ethiopia has not yet graduated from the feudal system. Capitalism has practically left it untouched. Serbia and Belgium are so interconnected with the European imperialist powers that it is almost impossible to make any valid separation. That is not the case with Ethiopia, the last semi-independent country of the African continent which is totally under the domination of European imperialist countries including Belgium.

Lenin suggests that if Belgium or Serbia had been attacked by a big power and no other factor were involved the socialists would look with sympathy upon the efforts of the bourgeoisie of the smaller countries to guard their national independence. But he simply suggests it as an abstraction and hardly considered it as a possible reality. That Lenin, were he alive to-day, would support the struggle for Ethiopian independence and at the same time fight bitterly against the Communist and Labor and Socialist Internationals for advocating sanctions by the imperialist governments is a conclusion which we are certainly justified in making from his writings and actions.

But is not Haile Selassie the feudal lord and exploiter of the Ethiopian people? And are we not, in defending Ethiopia, actually defending the interests of one exploiter as against another? To consider the matter from this angle means to lose all sense of proportion and to stray far from the realm of Marxism. To see a certain socialization of the position of supporting a war always revolves around the interests of the proletariat. In the early days of capitalism Marx supported the wars of capitalist nations against feudal powers because they served the interests of the development of the revolutionary proletariat and consequently were progressive. In the epoch of imperialism a Marxist must support a colonial people in its struggle against an imperialist power in spite of the fact that the colonial people may be living under a feudal regime, because the victory of the colonial people is a defeat for imperialism and advances the interests of the international proletarian revolution which will destroy all forms of slavery in the backward countries. The right of self determination of a colonial or semi-colonial people is not conditioned upon the form of government which that people may have.

Needed least to say no revolutionary socialist would fail to explain that Haile Selassie rules the Ethiopian peasants and nomads with an iron hand for the benefit of the feudal nobility. Only the Stalinists are capable of making a hero out of every miserable despot. This kind of practicality is a negation of the class struggle and the fulfillment of the class traitor. In the class struggle socialism, and if, because of that, we are involved in a war, how can we fail to support our government? All this abstract "logical" reasoning, however, is irrelevant. The fundamental consideration is the necessity for the Socialist party to support the struggle of the workers and the bourgeoisie of Ethiopia for the independence of their country.

Against Sanctions by a Capitalist Government

If we want to reason in a "logical" manner there is no logical reason why we cannot support neutrality legislation introduced by a capitalist government, and without such legislation our government would make it easier, when war is declared, to mobilize the masses behind the capitalist government, so any declaration of neutrality by a capitalist government must serve the same purpose. No worker should be misled into thinking that a capitalist government will be bound by neutrality legislation whatever it declares. The fact remains that Italian imperialism under Mussolini is striving for a betrayal of the proletariat. The NEC resolution says nothing about the attitude of the Bolsheviks toward such a war? All this abstract "logical" reasoning, however, is irrelevant. The fundamental consideration is the necessity for the Socialist party to support our government in its struggle against an imperialist war. But if we do not support neutrality legislation at all, not only will we thereby, indirectly at least, encouraging the capitalist government to involve us in any war; the Socialist party must struggle to prevent such a government from declaring war. But the Socialist party must teach the working class and the people in general that no reliance whatever can be placed in the hypocritical declarations of a capitalist government in favor of peace. It must be repeated over and over again that only the workers, supported by other classes, through their own organized efforts, can prevent a capitalist war.

Lenin fought for the independence of Ethiopia and we cannot support any government which tries to subjugate Ethiopia under Selassie and not against the policy of the socialists in supporting neutrality legislation. But if we do not support neutrality legislation we are not thereby, indirectly, encouraging the capitalist government to involve us in any war; the Socialist party must struggle to prevent such a government from declaring war. The working class does not want our capitalist government to involve us in a war. But the Socialist party must teach the working class and the people in general that no reliance whatever can be placed in the hypocritical declarations of a capitalist government in favor of peace. It must be repeated over and over again that only the workers, supported by other classes, through their own organized efforts, can prevent a capitalist war and that in the last analysis only a revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system can usher in permanent peace.

No capitalist government ever openly declared that it was in favor of war; peace is always what every capitalist government, including Hitler's, is striving for. Just as pacifists, in the capitalist government machine make it easier, when war is declared, to mobilize the masses behind the capitalist government, so any declaration of neutrality by a capitalist government will serve the same purpose. No worker should be misled into thinking that a capitalist government will be bound by neutrality legislation whatever it declares. If we urge and support a governmental neutrality legislation, in case a war is declared in spite of such legislation, will be a thousand times greater. That Lenin, were he alive to-day, would look with sympathy upon the efforts of the bourgeoisie of Belgium and Serbia to declare war. Against Sanctions by the Imperialist States

Lenin fought but against the policy of the socialists in supporting neutrality legislation introduced by a capitalist government. The fact remains that Mussolini is striving for a betrayal of the proletariat. The NEC resolution says nothing about the attitude of the Bolsheviks toward the idea of trusting the peace declarations of a capitalist government. And should we have representatives in congress we must introduce amendments to the neutrality legislation which would show the insincerity of the capitalist advocates of neutrality.

Even admitting the questionable proposition that it is difficult to explain to the politically backward worker why we cannot support neutrality legislation introduced by a capitalist government, the difficulty of explaining why we supported neutrality legislation, in case a war is declared in spite of such legislation, will be a thousand times greater.

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Against Sanctions by a Capitalist Government

If we are for the independence of Ethiopia why not be realistic and practical about the whole matter and ask that the powerful capitalist states apply sanctions against Mussolini and thus assure the independence of Ethiopia? So runs the argument of the reformist leaders of the Socialist and Communist parties. This kind of practicality is a negation of the class struggle and a betrayal of the proletariat. The NEC resolution and the YPSL proclamation are against sanctions and that is to their credit. The NEC resolution says nothing about the attitude of the Labor party, of the Socialist and Communist Internationals. The YPSL proclamation mentions the position of the Socialist and Communist leaders but does not specify a position of revolutionary socialists and we must not hesitate to mention.

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A Permanent Feature of the Appeal

COUNTLESS problems arise in the socialist movement. Theoretical and practical questions crowd in one upon another in different sections of the country. They cannot all be treated at length, especially in a magazine so small as the Appeal. But they should be mentioned and discussed. An attempt will be made to treat those questions which do not receive extended discussion either in the Appeal or elsewhere in our party press.

If comrades disagree they are at liberty to say so in letters, without mincing words. If not too long, the letters will be printed; if too long their gist will be given. There is nothing in the revolutionary movement so important from an educational standpoint as a serious discussion on questions of theory and practice. We can have all the lectures and classes in the world and our membership will know very little about the problems confronting our movement. One hot discussion involving an immediate problem or a theoretical question can educate our members more than a hundred lectures and classes. And what is more, party members, like other human beings, love a fight and will come to hear a discussion of opposing view points but will not come to a formal lecture or class. We hope that the readers of the Appeal will not hesitate to write and take issue with any point presented in the pages of the Appeal and in this way further light is thrown on the subject by the Communist Party of Holland which has declared its readiness to fight in a war for the national independence of Holland.

Czechoslovakia, Poland and Holland are secondary imperialist powers. Holland has an enormous colonial empire. Czechoslovakia has a highly trusted industry which dominates the country; it has within its borders several million living as oppressed nationalities. Poland has a semi-fascist governmental system, is an inveterate enemy of the Soviet Union and ally of Nazi Germany, and is ruled by a clique dominated by large landowners and manufacturers. Poland is very similar to Austria in these respects. Would we support the ruling class of Austria in a war for its national independence?

And of course, if the above countries are also to be defended, the smaller ones like monarchist Greece and Yugoslavia, imperialist Belgium, "neighborly" Rumania, Horshy Hungary follow as a matter of course, not to speak of the Scandinavian countries.

The policy is now complete. The last chapter has been written. The Comintern has not left a single loophole for refusing to fight in a capitalist war: If the Soviet Union is involved, we fight. If democratic countries fight fascist countries, we fight. If small imperialists are involved, we fight.

Only such far-fetched eventualities as a war between the United States and England alone, or between Germany and Italy alone are still open to us. Won't some good Browder-Pollitt-Stalin hurry and explain this neglect?

Perhaps the worst example of the degeneration of the Comintern attitude to war is to be seen in the manifesto of the Italian Communist Party on the Italo-Ethiopian situation. Of course the Italian Communists are unequivocally against Italy in this war, and that position is to be greeted. We must also take into account that the Italian Communists, like the Socialists, are working under the most difficult conditions, both in Italy and abroad. But we cannot overlook such gross opportunism as is found in the manifesto merely on this account. After all many have died for a false cause.

The manifesto is headed "For the Honor of Italy! Down with Mussolini and his Criminal Government!" Now this is a very peculiar reason to give for being opposed to the raid by Italy.

III

The honor of Italy was as Mussolini insists, by the invasion of Ethiopia, would then be for it? Nor is this heading an accidental reference. It dominates the entire manifesto and sets the tone. "The ruling clique says that this war is demanded by our national honor. This is false. Our honor is made slimy. Down with the fascist aggressor that dishonors Italy!"

In addition to the argument that the war is contrary to Italy's honor, here is the paragraph which summarized the reasons for the Communists' opposition:

"This war is, from a military viewpoint, a tragic folly, will completely ruin the finances and economy of the country. It focuses the indignation of the entire world against the brutality of the fascist party, and is in the eyes of all people.

Not one of these reasons is a class-conscious, proletariat reason. This type of opposition sounds like the opposition of rank-and-file fascists, not of revolutionary workers. At best, these arguments are the arguments of "rotten liberals." If the war were not a tragic folly, would we support it? If instead of ruining the economy and finances of the country, would we support it? And why should we regret the fact that it focuses the indignation of the entire world against fascism? Isn't it obvious that on the basis of such arguments no revolutionary struggle against fascism or against war can be conducted?

Here is another gem.

The fascists say, the newspapers of the capitalist war profiteers say, that war will bring prosperity, riches, land, raw materials. This is false. It is a miserable lie.

Again we are compelled to ask: Suppose it were not a lie? Suppose Italy did gain all that is claimed? Would that be a reason for being any the less opposed to a war? As a matter of fact, how much will all other imperialist powers established themselves in the world except thru war? As Socialists, we are not opposed to war by this or that country, merely because they do not achieve the specified objectives. That is the point of view of the opposition groups of capitalists, but it cannot be the point of view of the working class.

If Italian fascism is weakened as a result of the war, if the finances and economy break down, if world opinion turns against Italy, then we have no reason to lament, for these conditions are the prerequisites for the success of the revolutionary struggle against fascism. This is revolutionary defeatism with which the manifesto of the Italian Communist Party has nothing in common.
P. has no intention to except Mr. Rolph O. Olson an independent...

...We are not at all opposed to socialist victories at the polls. We shall work for such victories at every opportunity. But revolutionary socialists never forget that such victories at best are only an indication as to the development of the masses. Such victories in themselves do not give power to the working class. The working class will gain power through organization and struggle and left wing socialists would much rather prefer a victory of the workers in a strike than in an election for an alderman. To utilize every election for the purpose of educating the masses in the principles of socialism and organizing them for the inevitable struggle is the task of revolutionary Marxists.

Let the right wing goat at their “victory” and ancer at those who are interested in theoretical problems. Their road is that of the social democracy of Germany. The left wing, without minimizing the importance of the gains made, will realize that the struggle is far from being over with the election of a respectable socialist as a mayor of a city.

Workers’ Party Splits

LESS than a year old, the Workers’ party has just experienced one of the inevitable “pains of growth.” Some fifty to a hundred members of that party, led by Hugo Oehler, have been expelled from or left the party. They will probably form an addition to the numerous groups of revolutionary sectarians convinced that they are the only faithful disciples of Marx and Lenin.

At the very period when the Workers’ party was being organized by the amalgamation of the Communist League of America (Trotskyites) and the American Workers’ party (Musteites) Trotsky made a sharp tactical turn which history will undoubtedly record as one of the boldest and most brilliant maneuvers in revolutionary strategy. He advised the revolutionary internationalists of France to enter into the Socialist party. Later on he advised the same tactic for most of the other European countries. Naturally such a sharp turn caught many of his followers unaware and, accustomed to repeating formulas instead of analyzing every concrete situation, they accused Trotsky of “capitalizing to the social-democracy.”

In this country a bare handful of us also saw the necessity of bringing the isolation of the Trotskyites to an end by entering the Socialist party and participating in the general left wing movement of the party. The vast majority, however, determined to launch an independent party.

From the very beginning Oehler assumed a leftist position on the French turn and accused Cannon and Schachtman, the leaders of the W. P. of harboring designs of bringing the W. P. into the Socialist party. Although experiencing a considerable growth at the beginning, the new party did not continue to grow by leaps and bounds, as predicted by its organizers, and this fact aided in the formation of a factional grouping which in turn paralyzed the party completely. The question of the “French turn” was the center of the factional struggle. The more realistic Cannon saw the leftward movement in the Socialist party in this country and realized its importance; the doctrinaire Oehler swept that movement aside as of no consequence. A different approach to the leadership would mean, in the W. P. way, the majority under Cannon advising a sympathetic approach Oehlerites initiated upon an attack all along the line. The split has been consummated the W. P. is in a position to take up the position of an independent...