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F O R E W O R D

The first document reproduced below, The Situation and the Workers' Tasks, is a resolution adopted by the national conference of the Internationalist Workers Party (Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste). This conference was held on September 15, 1941, somewhere in Western Europe, with representatives of both zones of France. Parts of this document are published in the March issue of Fourth International. We give here the complete text.

The second document is an amendment to the previous resolution, presented by the regional committee of the unoccupied zone and proposing a new formulation for Paragraph 15 of the resolution, which deals with the attitude toward the Gaullist movement.

The last document, On the Slogan of 'National Convention', is a part of a longer document, Gaullism and Stalinism, published in the March issue of Fourth International, with the exception of the part given here.



THE SITUATION AND THE WORKERS' TASKS

(Resolution adopted by the National Conference of the Internationalist Workers Party, September 15, 1941.)

1. The imperialist war which began in September, 1939 is approaching its culminating phase, practically the whole world is at war.

2. This war is fundamentally an imperialist struggle for a new distribution of raw materials and markets, for the conquest of new fields for expansion of finance capitalism. It is not giving birth to a new progressive society - a "New Order" - as the fascists and certain naive or cynical petty-bourgeois politicians would have us believe. Nor is it a war for the victory of democracy. (Pertinax himself denounces the Gaullist plan for a restoration of the monarchy.) It is still much less a war for the defense of socialism. Anglo-Saxon imperialism is trying to make use of the USSR merely as a war machine against Hitler.

3. Since 1917 the imperialisms have continually wavered between two policies: The clash of two blocs fighting for a new division of the world and the pro-imperialist coalition against the working class and against the USSR. Not only is there a struggle among the imperialisms, but there is also a basic conflict between imperialism and the economic, military and revolutionary forces of the workers State, and through the latter, the forces of the international proletariat. In this conflict all the workers of the world are with the Soviet people and cooperate with them. With their class methods, they take part in the struggle against the forces of reaction in order to convert it into the first of the coming struggles for socialist revolution. The USSR can count on them alone. Its imperialist "allies" will try to reach a compromise with their rivals at the expense of the USSR and the oppressed as soon as the situation becomes directly menacing. In the present situation of the crisis of capitalism, such a compromise would only give grounds for a new and fiercer conflagration among the imperialisms.

4. Hitler signifies a Europe directed, colonized and crushed under the military boot for the benefit of German finance capital. Anglo-Saxon "liberation", as defined by the Roosevelt-Churchill Eight Points, signifies open military domination of the victors for the benefit of Wall Street, and the abandonment of the Wilsonian formulas of peace and humanity. For the proletarians of all countries, therefore, the task is to prepare the proletarian socialist revolution through the military crisis. They must take up whatever political or economic struggle leads toward this objective, no matter what may be the immediate political consequences. However, this struggle takes on different forms in different countries.

In the so-called "democratic" camp, the struggle for the revolution has as its mainspring the conquest of power by the working class, in order to take over and transform the war into a truly anti-fascist one.

In Hitler's camp the necessarily more primitive struggle of the workers chained by fascism (sabotage, strikes) is tied up with economic and political demands. In the oppressed and occupied countries all direct, anti-fascist struggle (sabotage, etc.) must be directed toward an economic mass struggle.

5. By straining the forces of both camps the imperialist war increasingly threatens their internal equilibrium, and throws their military, political and economic machines out of gear. (Crisis of the Axis, of German economy, symptomatic character of the Hess affair, on one hand; on the other, the continual wavering of the democracies between a policy of concession to the different classes and an ultra-authoritarian bureaucratic policy.)

6. Inevitably the social problems tend to take first place in the progress of the war itself. The German crisis and the Russian campaign has given birth to the guerrilla war in the Balkans. The operations in the Near East (Iraq, Syria and Iran) poses, in all its gravity, the problem of the liberation of the Arab peoples. From India to China a gigantic uprising of colonial peoples is in preparation. Finally, the demands of the proletariat in the democratic countries, the movements of large popular masses against misery and famine, a proletarian re-awakening in the USSR, all these are signs of a new world-wide revolutionary wave.

7. The imperialist war has once and for all discredited the Second International. The German-Russian conflict can only end with the liquidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the Third International. In the face of a new world-wide wave of revolution the time has come for the international revolutionary vanguard to put an end to the period of tiny circles of discussion and propaganda, and to translate into reality the activity of the Fourth International.

8. France is the cross-road of all the imperialist rivalries. The Vichy government is a miserable clique whose existence is due only to the balance of existing forces; a balance between the two imperialist blocs; a balance between the rival clans of French imperialism (speculative capital versus industrial capital); a balance between the classes momentarily incapable of promoting their historic solutions (fascism or socialism). Springing from this extremely frail balance, without social or economic base, the Vichy government leads an existence made up of perpetual wavering and impotence.

9. The only real basis for Vichy is the French Empire. Vichy tries by every means to preserve it in the face of its rival imperialisms, as well as against the demands of the colonial populations. But the extreme weakness of Vichy makes the dislocation of this empire inevitable. The present period is favorable to the development of movements for national liberation in the colonies.

"Liberation of the colonies from the yoke of French imperialism" is one of the essential slogans of a revolutionary party in France.

10. The requirements of the German army leave no room for any serious perspective for restoration of French economy. Increased unemployment, lowering of the standards of living of the masses, low salaries, price rises, hunger, these will be the essential characteristics of the months to come. The antagonism between the working class on the one hand, and the owning classes, state and invader on the other, can only become more acute. The only possible economic improvement is that which is based upon a socialist solution (workers' control, nationalization). Any other solution can only end in the strengthening of the German grip on French economy.

11. The Vichy government is incapable of securing for itself a basis in the infuriated petty-bourgeoisie and can organize nothing more than a police-and-priest ridden caricature of a totalitarian state. All its bureaucratic and reactionary edifice is undermined from within by the contradictions inherent in the political and the economic situation. Political life continually spreads out beyond the limitations which Vichy would impose upon it.

12. The most immediate expression of popular discontent is the movement of national resistance to oppression. This is the first spontaneous petty-bourgeois expression of the rising revolutionary tide. To the extent that French economic dependence and German internal difficulties will draw Berlin and Vichy together, popular national sentiment will turn the masses more and more violently against Vichy.

13. The development in a proletarian and anti-capitalist direction of the popular movement of hostility to Hitlerism is the necessary condition for a fraternization with the soldiers and workers of Germany. The Party does not forget that without the collaboration of German workers and soldiers no revolution would be possible in Europe. Thus, fraternization remains one of our essential tasks. Any act which widens the breach between German and European proletarians is directly counter-revolutionary.

14. A single liberation party, contrary to the claims of British propaganda, cannot exist; for no program of the party in power is possible which would be acceptable to all Frenchmen without distinction as to class. The London program is even less acceptable to the masses with its call for the restoration of liberal capitalism and guardianship over the peoples of Europe.

Only the Socialist United States of Europe and of the world can achieve a real upsurge of productive forces and provide a solution to national and democratic problems. (The right to express oneself in one's own language, to develop one's own culture, the right to self-administration, the right of assembly in political federations, freedom of the press, freedom of labor, etc.)

15. The shapeless Gaullism of the masses remains, nevertheless, the most important political phenomenon of this period. In real-

ity there are as many forms of Gaullism as there are social classes. The owning classes will always be ready to abandon the national struggle as soon as the imperialist oppressor offers them crumbs from his profits, or as soon as the working class will take up class action (betrayal of the strikes in the North by the Gaullist foremen)*. On the other hand, the Gaullism of the workers, the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie represent something fundamentally healthy. It represents a readiness to fight to liberate the country from the Hitler yoke and to reestablish democratic liberties and social gains. Our party is prepared to fight shoulder to shoulder with this movement. It gives its support to any popular Gaullist movement which is trying to establish a broad front for liberty. It will be in the forefront of such a movement in spite of the confusion and dangers inherent in such a movement. The revolutionary party, of course, maintains its full liberty to criticize and its freedom of action in order to direct the evolution of the masses towards the socialist solution. The party is opposed to any attempts to put this movement in the hands of leaders revived from the Popular Front, and struggles instead for a mass organization in the factory, the home, district or village in forms appropriate to the situation and circumstances. This movement can end in a serious political re-groupment only to the extent that the actions undertaken prepare for the organic re-groupment of the working class and give it political cohesion.

16. Thanks to its apparatus and its numerous military cadres, the Communist Party remains the principal rallying point of the working class. Yet its policy has the permanent aim of turning the masses away from the true revolutionary path. After the Popular Front and the sabotaging of the 1936 strike movement, after its defeatism in the war in 1939, after the collaboration with the occupying authorities in 1940, it is now trying to hurl the masses into the hopeless adventure of terrorism in order to save the Stalinist bureaucracy and its privileges at the very edge of the abyss. The incipient revolutionary movement can triumph only under the leadership of a truly proletarian revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party. The first step in the renewal of the workers' movement has brought about the beginning of an organizational regroupment of the vanguard. The decisive social and military events in Europe and the USSR will bring about the regroupment of the broad masses under the leadership of the revolutionary party.

17. The military debacle, the economic crisis, the territorial division of the country, and the collapse of the traditional working-class organizations had disrupted the ranks of the working class and shattered its organizational and ideological cohesion. The impotence of the French bourgeoisie and its inability to create a totalitarian state has allowed the working class to again realize - although dimly - its historical mission. We perceive among the

*This is an allusion to the coal-miners' strikes which took place in the Departement du Nord (occupied zone) at the end of May, 1941. These strikes embraced over 70,000 workers and, in spite of the ferocious blows directed against them, lasted three weeks. -- Ed.

masses at the present moment a profound current toward "political-ization," toward radical and revolutionary solutions.

The first task of the revolutionists is to restore to the working class its elementary cohesion; to recreate its organic unity on the basis of a political consciousness of its goals as a class. Every legal means of regroupment must be utilized (e.g. unions of corporations in particular), to organize groups for independent working class action (people's committees, united front groups, groups of workers unaffiliated to any party.). The aim is, above all, to recreate working class cohesion by action and for action.

18. To lead such action effectively it is necessary to concretize a program which connects the problems of the masses at this moment with the fundamental socialist demands (workers' control, workers' councils, the arming of the people, the Socialist United States of Europe).

The most urgent task at the present time is to adapt to the present period the transitional program of the Fourth International.

19. When decisive fissures in the structure of imperialism make their appearance, the popular masses long oppressed by fascism and reaction will break into the political arena with irresistible violence, with the power and confusion of an elementary force. This movement can definitively triumph only if it is led by the proletariat as a class, conscious of its historical ends; it can achieve definitive victory only on the international scale.

20. The eruption of the masses will be as sudden as it is brutal. The role of the party as an agency of clarification and organization necessary for victory will be more than ever decisive; a) even now by pressing the activity of the party amidst the masses; b) by effecting the regroupment of all the healthy revolutionary elements of the working class vanguard into a sizeable section of the International.

AMENDMENT PRESENTED

BY THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE UNOCCUPIED ZONE

TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

"THE SITUATION AND THE WORKERS TASKS."

15. The shapeless nationalism of the masses, which leads them to hope for an English victory, remains, nevertheless, the most important political phenomenon of this period. In reality this tendency has as many forms as there are social classes. The owning classes will always be ready to abandon the national struggle as soon as the imperialist oppressor offers them crumbs from his profits, or as soon as the workers will take up a class action (betrayal of the strikes in the North by the Gaullist foremen). On the other hand, this nationalism of the workers and peasants represents something fundamentally healthy. It represents a readiness to fight to liberate the country from the Hitler Yoke, and to re-establish democratic liberties and social gains. Our party does not fear to conclude tactical agreements of greater or lesser duration with any popular Gaullist movement. Any collaboration with such organizations must have as a counterweight a vast ideological work, and it is here that the vanguard must prove its political maturity. Our activity must in the end tend to break up Gaullism and to liquidate it as a current in the working masses.

We are in the forefront of any broad movement for liberty in spite of the confusion and dangers inherent in such a movement. The revolutionary party, of course, maintains its full liberty to criticize and its freedom of action in order to direct the evolution of the masses towards the socialist solution. The party is opposed to any attempts to put this movement in the hands of leaders revived from the Popular Front, and struggles instead for a mass organization in the factory, the home, district or village, in forms appropriate to the situation and circumstances. This movement can end in a serious political re-groupment only to the extent that the actions undertaken prepare for the organic re-groupment of the working class and give it political cohesion. To this end we oppose the Stalinist slogan of a "National Front" by the slogan of a "Socialist Front for Liberty," intending thus to indicate that the proletariat must be at the head of the movement.

ON THE SLOGAN OF "NATIONAL CONVENTION"

"All the fundamental demands of the democratic platform are realizable in the period of imperialism only partially, in a mutilated form and as rare exceptions. But in no way does it follow from this that the social-democracy renounces the immediate and resolute struggle for all its demands. While broadening and stimulating the struggle for each democratic demand we must transform it into a direct attack by the proletariat on the bourgeoisie." Twenty-five years later there is not much to add to this general formula of Lenin. It is quite true that in the present epoch, even after the military defeat by Nazism, there is no place for a lasting democratic stage. But it is none the less clear that the proletariat cannot abstain from the struggle for the right of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom to organize, right to strike, etc. The degree of freedom won by the workers will depend in the last analysis on the relation of forces between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Yet even supposing that the revolutionary explosion will be so powerful as to leave no space for the democratic stage before the seizure of power, the road which leads to this last phase nevertheless passes by necessity through democratic demands. Let us never lose sight of the fact that control of production, the most important of the transitional measures, is also a democratic conquest. In spite of its purely working class character it still does not break through the frame of formal democracy at the moment of its birth. It is in the course of its development that it bursts these bounds and reveals the sole issue to be that of the seizure of power, "subordinating in this manner the struggle for all the democratic demands, which the republic comprises, to the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie." (Lenin.)

Now what place shall be assigned in the list of democratic demands to the slogan of a "National Convention," elected by all Frenchmen and women over eighteen?

And in the first place what could be the nature of this National Convention?

In the abstract, three explanations can be presented:

1. This Convention could be the representation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and would then play the role of a Central Council of Workers and Peasants. The difference is purely terminological.

2. It could be the parliamentary representation of a democratic bourgeoisie, termed "Convention" to gain popular favor.

3. The third variant is provided by the Parisian version:*

*This is an allusion to a document of the Paris group, which, unfortunately, we are not able to present to our readers.- Ed.

"The people of France desire an energetic, popular and revolutionary government. The hour calls for measures of public safety. France must have a government possessing the somber energy of Robespierre and Saint-Just. A committee of Public Safety is necessary, selected from the ranks of a National Convention elected by all French men and women over eighteen, the deputies being constantly subject to recall by their constituents, the entire assembly being organized into working committees, collectively directing each one of the ministerial departments." The quotation is long, the thought is not very clear. It is a question apparently of a representation which is simultaneously a government ("committees directing the ministers") and which is neither the dictatorship of the proletariat nor bourgeois democracy. The new type of "democracy" re-appears.

There are then theoretically three variants. Practically there is only one: The National Convention will be a euphemistic and demagogic term for the bourgeois parliament of the Fourth Republic - or it will not exist. The proletariat will have no need of this historical travesty to safeguard its power (which moreover is not the product of the electoral will of all Frenchmen without distinction of class), and a Committee of Public Safety which is a revolutionary government full of somber energy without being a Workers' Government, - that is somber confusion.

"Finance capital, in the course of its expansion, has corrupted and will continue 'freely' to corrupt the free democratic and republican government and the elected functionaries of any country whatever, even independent ones," wrote Lenin in the article from which we quoted above and from which we will quote again.

We are well aware that the Parisian comrades know this text and that they are capable of supplying dozens of quotations to the same effect. Their formula is no proof that they are ignorant of the ABC's of Communism; rather it is the result of an impatient attitude, - which had already been overcome, we thought - in which one wishes to become a decisive factor through an equivocal policy, through language full of "guile", concealing its purpose, through ever seeking a miracle that will place the vanguard by means of verbal sleight-of-hand at the head of the mass movement.

We have yet to analyze the "Marxist" defense of the slogan of "National Convention." While admitting that what is involved is a more attractive term for Constituent Assembly, the convention is defended in the Parisian document as the end result of a program with concrete content.

The defenders of the National Convention add: If a person is for democratic demands, he cannot exclude from our propaganda their culmination, namely the National Convention freely elected, etc., etc.

This reasoning is false and does not contain an atom of dialectics. "Complete democracy", that is, real democracy - opposed to the formal bourgeois democracy - finds the culmination of democratic demands even before the seizure of power in Workers' Councils (at least in a country where the bourgeois progressive national movement has long since come to an end), and not in a Constituent Assembly. The latter, seen already in France, after having "democratically" liquidated the Commune, voted a republican constitution with a royalist and bonapartist majority.

That is why one would search in vain for this slogan in the political line traced by the Congress of the Fourth International for the groups and parties struggling in the fascist countries. There a constituent assembly is referred to exclusively with relation to colonial countries, where the essentially democratic phase has not been passed through. But France, even invaded, conquered, is not a colonial country and any parallel with China, for example, limps on both legs.

Does that mean that we exclude in advance the possibility of a democratic stage after the collapse of fascism? Not at all. We hope that a new period of democratic illusions will be avoided; but we are well aware that the historical process does not always take into account "historical necessity." Around "democracy" will be found arranged all the forces of social reaction the day that fascism falls under the blows of the revolutionary movement. We are so little ultra-left, that we even concede our trying to utilize the slogan of "National Convention," should it be launched some day by the bourgeoisie in their effort to deceive the masses. What we do not voluntarily concede is that our present task consists in creating propaganda that veils the class content of a concrete slogan, instead of explaining to the masses where to look for their class interests in each manifestation of bourgeois politics, even when this manifestation appears in national or indeed revolutionary guise. The French bourgeoisie is inured to every form of opportunism and every recantation. There is but one role that it cannot possibly play today: to become anew a progressive force.

Let us be certain of this: should the bourgeoisie one day begin to speak a la Saint-Just, that will be only the better to strangle the people a la Thiers. And if it should pretend to act a la Robespierre, that will be only the better to wield the guillotine.

Is it one of our tasks - to please some petty-bourgeois allies - to facilitate this sinister game of political hypocrisy by certifying the revolutionary disguise of the counter-revolutionary democracy?

We do not think so. The tasks of the moment demand less broad-mindedness - among other things, the constant struggle against the revival of democratic illusions.

We are passing through a stage of preparation, in which the

movement of the masses, still embryonic, evolves spontaneously, with recoils and inevitable defeats. We can reach, for the moment, only a limited number of advanced workers. But the Marxist nucleus, the party, will not be forged without a program of precise and firm principles, which will become, through the experience of struggle, the political consciousness of ever larger proletarian strata. This formation of revolutionary consciousness is impossible unless we combat without the least compromise all bourgeois and pettybourgeois ideologies.

If we seek an example for our tactic to follow, let us be inspired by the Leninist tactic against pacifism. For two and a half years the Bolsheviks had denounced pacifism under all its forms and fought against the slogan of peace. Then in 1917 they made the revolution under the banner of "peace and land." The desire for peace was from the first day of the war most legitimate and to the highest degree justified. But the Bolsheviks utilized it only when it permitted them to orient the masses toward the socialist revolution.

The last objection, finally, against our rejection of the National Convention, results from a misunderstood terminology: "You are against the right of self-determination of peoples if you do not accept a Constituent Assembly." "The right of free determination of nations signifies exclusively the right to independence in a political sense, the right to political separation from the country which exercises the oppression." Exclusively, said Lenin.

Still another argument. You wish then to leap over stages of political evolution? Without losing ourselves in sterile quibblings we merely respond: all that we wish is not to leap over the present stage, which with the growth of Stalinist influence still forces us to swim against the current.

November, 1941.