

# INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

VOL. II

September, 1942

No. 3

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. "The Events in Europe" . . . . . Page 1  
(Extract from Political Resolution)
2. Three Theses on the European Situation  
and the Political Tasks, by German comrades. 3
3. Our Differences with the German Comrades  
on the National Question in the Occupied  
Countries of Europe, by Felix Morrow . . . . 8
4. On the "European" Problem, by Stuart . . . . 12
5. On Some Arguments for a "New" European  
"Perspective", by Stuart . . . . . 15

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The following is an extract, dealing with the European question, from the Political Resolution submitted by the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party to its convention.

### THE EVENTS IN EUROPE

11. The fall of France not only testified to German's economic and military superiority on the European continent; it exposed the rottenness of French bourgeois democracy as well as the inability of the French bourgeoisie to defend their own nation against the fascist invaders. After crushing the workers' bid for power in 1936, the capitalist politicians and their Stalinist, Socialist and Syndicalist lieutenants in the labor movement called upon the French workers to fight for the capitalist fatherland in order to defend democracy and national independence. Duped by the bourgeoisie and betrayed by their leaders, the French workers suffered the loss of their democratic rights and their class organizations together with national unity and independence. The main section of French capitalism has entered into collaboration with the fascist conquerors; another group has gone over into the Anglo-American camp.

12. The fate of France contains a great political lesson for the workers of the whole world. It has again demonstrated that the bourgeoisie puts its profits and privileges above either national independence or democracy. Whenever their social and economic interests and their political predominance are imperiled by the proletariat, the bourgeoisie will give up national independence, destroy democracy, substitute their naked class dictatorship and collaborate with the oppressors. For the sake of preserving private property, privileges and profits, or even in the hope of preserving some of them, the bourgeoisie will turn against their own people. Official patriotism serves simply as a mask to conceal the class interests of the exploiters. The subsequent capitulations of the French bourgeoisie to Hitler have proved this to the hilt.

13. The aspiration of the masses of France and the other occupied countries for national liberation has profound revolutionary implications. But, like the sentiment of anti-fascism, it can be perverted to the uses of imperialism. Such a perversion of the movement is inevitable if it proceeds under the slogans and leadership of bourgeois nationalism. The "democratic" imperialist gangsters are interested only in recovering the property which has been taken away from them by the fascist gangsters.

This is what they mean by national liberation. The interests of the masses are profoundly different. The task of the workers of the occupied countries is to put themselves at the head of the insurgent movement of the people and direct it toward the struggle for the socialist reorganization of Europe. Their allies in this struggle are not the Anglo-American imperialists and their satellites among the native bourgeoisie, but the workers of Germany. Peace, security and prosperity can be assured for the people of Europe only by its economic unification based on the socialist collaboration of the free nations. Only with this perspective is national liberation worth talking about, still less fighting and dying for. The central unifying slogan of the revolutionary fight is "The Socialist United States of Europe" and to it all other slogans must be subordinated.

14. The German proletariat made a revolution in 1918, only to be robbed of its fruits by the bourgeois-Social-Democratic coalition. For fifteen years thereafter the proletariat remained loyal to the parties avowing workers' socialism. A revolutionary situation in 1923 was lost by the incapacity of the German Communist Party leadership disoriented by the Comintern, already then in the first stages of its Stalinist degeneration. In the last regular election (1932) the workers' parties polled 13,000,000 votes. Hitler came to power only by the help of the rottenness, incapacity and treachery of Social Democracy and Stalinism. Betrayed by their own parties the German workers were crushed by Nazism. It may be assumed that Hitler's diplomatic and military victories created a certain amount of chauvinist intoxication among the masses for a time. Now, however, they gaze on the ruin of Europe -- and the ruin of Germany. They mourn millions of dead and wounded, the masses grow hungry as in 1916-18, and the end is far away. Chauvinist intoxication must begin to give way before the grim realities. The fear of a new and worse Versailles is the most potent weapon in Hitler's hands. But that weapon will fall from his hands with the first serious revolutionary developments in the "democracies" or in the occupied countries. The mighty German proletariat will say the most decisive word in the socialist revolution of Europe.

15. The workers of Britain are being impelled toward proletarian revolution by the collapse of the British Empire. The reformism of the British Labor Party and the trade unions was based on the crumbs thrown to a privileged section of the workers by a sated imperialist power; that reformism is losing its foundations. Therewith the road is being cleared for the stormy development of a revolutionary party of the Fourth International. Only the Socialist United States of Europe offers the British proletariat a perspective for hope. All the objective pre-requisites for a proletarian revolution are now present in the British Isles. The British Trotskyists stand before their great historic task of organizing and leading the British workers to their revolutionary destiny.

THREE THESES ON THE EUROPEAN SITUATION

AND THE POLITICAL TASKS

By German Comrades

It is as clear in the 3rd year of the new World War as it was at its beginning that this is a war of long duration, a war that has no prospect of being decided by means of military power and thus reach its "natural" end. In ever increasing tempo it has changed the economic, political and social face of the earth; it has destroyed dynasties and nations, enslaved peoples and exterminated half of them. Poland, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Greece, and a large part of Russia, have one after another been conquered and occupied by the German armies. Austria, formerly incorporated, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania are controlled by Germany, while the rest of Europe (Sweden, Switzerland, Finland and Turkey) is to a great extent under German influence. In all these countries the regimentation of human life is making gigantic progress and changes them to German prisons. The prisons; new ghettos; the labor, forced labor, concentration and war-prisoners camps are not only transitional political-military establishments; they are just as much forms of an exploitation which accompanies the economic development towards a modern slave state and is intended as the permanent fate of a considerable percentage of mankind. As always, the first victims of a system that has become impossible are the "politically untrustworthy," Jews, foreigners, refugees, of whom the "published" number in France alone was admitted to be over 120,000 on August 20. This economic ruin is accompanied by a callous destruction of human lives and values and a migration of peoples of colossal extent. "Resettlements," transfer of workers, etc., which amounts to hundreds of thousands, follow the movement of armies of millions. The German radio made known in the middle of August that a country, such as Belgium, had supplied now 200,000 workers to Germany.

All this is the result of a process which began a long time ago and only increases in intensity in the present war. Far from being "planned organization," this process follows laws of compulsion and seeks to break through by force, where it cannot shake off, the competition on the international scale. Before as after the accumulation of capital and unheard of riches on the one side, accumulation of misery, suffering, ruin, destruction and barbarism on the other side. The world-wide depression of 1929 cost already as much as the first World War, but the technical rationalization which followed it flowed into the greater crisis of the new war ten years later. Confronted with the choice of remaining behind and seeing cannons, tanks and airships of the predominant powers trained against it, German capitalism organized its own war machines and beat down the world competition with its cannons, airships and tanks. So mechanization with progressing capitalist application leads

itself ad absurdum. The methods of destruction which are supposed to solve the crisis and lead to a solution, force production of further means of destruction and cause tremendous economic disproportions which subject the whole world. England and America answer German expansion with a rearming which is to surpass any previously known and again set back the production of consumption goods.

The English dominions, Latin America and the resources of India are drawn in increasing measure into the conduct of the war and thus, together with the deep-going changes in Asia and Africa, strengthen the tendency which leads to the common reduction in the standard of living of the masses, to destruction, to the preparation of greater disproportions and greater crises. Not only have the productive powers of mankind ceased growing, not only have technical discoveries and improvements brought about no further increase in material wealth but economy is regressing. In contrast to the use of complicated machinery, of concentration, of application of consumers' industries to war needs there is compulsory labor, that is, the mass use of manual labor which is cheaper than machine labor, the founding and extension of small and moderate firms because of necessity, the restoration of handwork, the dissipation and ruin of the money system. Uneven development is recapitulated in the whole world and along with it, agricultural production decreases constantly. Wherever one looks, there is destruction, idleness and anarchy in alarming degree which seal the catastrophe of culture.

## II

As a result of the brutal suffering and terrific pressure which the war imposed upon the nations, hate, rage and despair were accumulated and unleashed at first in the countries conquered by Germany. The political situation in these systematically exploited countries is characterized above all by the destruction of workers' and non-fascist bourgeois parties. Step by step unions, political and cultural societies of all kinds, religious organizations, etc. are wiped out according to the German pattern, changed or in some way put under direct fascist control. With certain exceptions, where this process has not yet been fully completed, there is no longer an indigenous traditional bourgeois or proletarian political or workers movement, and in these countries (especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia) even the "national" bourgeoisie is being more and more crushed by such means as "aryanization," compulsory sales and direct expulsion. All that is left of the old organized movements are today nothing but illegal circles, which have little connection with each other and can in no way act as an entity. Under such circumstances protest against growing suffering must find another outlet. In the face of unbearable conditions, it directs itself against the one visible and consistently present enemy in the form of the German Conqueror. As it is pushed to that limit to which it is daily drawn closer and closer by this enemy, it levels all and everything and takes a direction which

can be described as nothing but a "desire for national freedom." In a few countries (Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, in part, Poland, etc.) this drive has crossed the limit and has turned into a real mass movement, which also passes the limit of the old movements. In it participate all classes and strata, from workers, farm laborers, farmers, urban petit bourgeoisie (tradesmen and artisans. . .) that is, together with the farmers, those classes, which in spite of their large numbers are remnants of pre-capitalistic modes of production) to officials, priests, intellectuals and generals. In other countries, where it has not reached the point of mass resistance, the movement goes underground and finds respective expression in individual acts of sabotage, arson, train wrecks, accidents, outrages, etc. But everywhere there are involved in protest movements workers, peasants, besides students, journalists, professors, officers, priests, merchants, etc. And they range without distinction amongst the victims of the German repression. The longer the war lasts, the more will German fascism appear as the main enemy to the enslaved and exploited peoples. Everything will be leveled to a desire for the overthrow of this enemy and in fact, it must be recognized that without it there can be no question of change in existing conditions.

### III

If in the Europe dominated by Germany there is no longer an organized and active workers' movement and even the bourgeois organizations are out of the picture, there can also be no talk of the existence of real revolutionary organizations, insofar as they are understood as united structures, which even illegal, would be willing and capable of influencing the development by means at least of correct agitation and propaganda. What is left of the revolutionary tendency are individuals and uneven groups, more or less correctly oriented in connection with the general evaluation of the situation and the abstract principles, but living at the brink of events and failing to understand how to formulate their concrete tasks. The mood and initiative of the masses for which every revolutionist, as every revolutionary party, should have a fine sensitivity, meet these organizations completely unprepared and passed over them to the order of the day which can be called "struggle for national freedom." It is no exaggeration to state that revolutionary socialism may once again miss a chance and compromise itself, if it continues to face this struggle any longer without taking part. The responsibility lies with international socialism, to assume the needs of all oppressed -- in no matter what form they appear -- to raise its voice loudly and clearly, mobilize its forces, to enlighten the world on the meaning of events, to assist the national sections in word and deed, and to lead to the right path. There is no more burning problem in Europe than the national freedom of nations enslaved by Germany and its solution with the help and through international socialism is important and indispensable for three reasons.

First, it is a matter of democratic demands, which must always and everywhere be supported and without the realization of which socialism cannot win.

Second, socialism cannot find the necessary allies in the city and country for the accomplishment of the revolution, cannot mobilize the masses for the final battle and cannot win their sympathy if it hasn't stepped forward as the determined defender of their demands during an entire period and thus won the leadership in battle.

Third, only revolutionary socialism is in the position to realize the democratic program and to give a goal and direction to the movement at hand, without which it must sooner or later relapse and bury socialism under itself.

Along with these general reasons which are applicable under all conditions, there are specific ones which arise from the present situation.

Fourth, in order to be able to join by the backward trend in Europe isolated socialism with the workers and mass movement, it is necessary to build revolutionary parties and restore the labor movement. But to change the existing cadres into revolutionary parties, it is necessary to have a sympathetic milieu which allows them under illegality to test their forces, to school themselves, to educate new forces, to gather the most progressive elements around it, to overcome the leveling, to introduce the absolutely essential differentiation and to step forward as the vanguard of freedom. The gulf which up to the moment of revolution exists on the one hand between the program of the socialist revolution and the realization of the objective suppositions, and on the other hand between the consciousness of the masses and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard, is today especially wide. This gulf, the most important element of which is at present the inexperience of the younger generation, can be bridged only by a system of transitional demands, but the world situation and the peculiar conditions in Europe make such a system a matter of life and death in the near future.

However one views it, the transition from fascism to socialism remains a utopia without a stopping place, which is by its contents equivalent to a democratic revolution. The advantage of the European situation consists in the fact that the masses are being forced on the path of national freedom and that the struggle for this because of the general situation offers a complete transitional program which encompasses all democratic demands from freedom of assembly, press, organization and religion and the right to strike to the right of self-determination of nations. It would be absolutely false to conceive it possible to take part in politics and ignore the democratic demands, and the attitude that national freedom could not further socialistic interests would be very dangerous. The danger of standing with "tied hands" does not confront the one that takes part in the restoration of democracy and becomes

its daring standard bearer but the one who stands passively by, does not participate and allows the movement to pass him by and thereby permits the imperialists, "democrats", and reformists to give it a bourgeois instead of a socialist character. The passive bearer of the socialist revolution is comparable to those Italian Maximalists who upon receiving word of an uprising in Turin decided, after the collapse of the uprising on the fifth day, to deny their aid because it was not a question of a "true communist" uprising. The result was the victory of fascism, the discrediting of socialism, the crisis of proletarian leadership, the second World War. With the continuation of the World War the "European" problem becomes acute even for American socialism and makes a clear, active connection with it essential. It is enough for every revolutionary to render an account of the forces led into battle in this war in order to come to the same conclusion which was the starting point: It is a war of long duration, which must completely destroy all human culture, if the rebellion of the masses does not end it. Nothing can free World Socialism from the duty of stirring up this rebellion, preparing for it and acknowledging all means of struggle, to form a revolutionary party which has as its object the accomplishment of an immediate and specific result. An abstract attitude toward revolution, however, which fails in the smallest as well as the most important tactical (misses) questions, can lead to nothing but another defeat.

October 19, 1941



OUR DIFFERENCES WITH THE GERMAN COMRADES ON  
THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN THE OCCUPIED COUNTRIES OF EUROPE

By Felix Morrow

In my opinion there are today two different positions in our international movement on the national question in the occupied countries of Europe. One is that of a group of German comrades, expressed in their "Three Theses." The other is that of the Political Committee of the SWP, expressed in Paragraph 13 of our Political Resolution. I think that the position of the French comrades (stated in "Gaullism and Stalinism in France" in the March 1942 Fourth International; in Marc Loris' "The National Question in Europe" in the September 1942 Fourth International; and in an important and comprehensive document just received from a leading French comrade which will shortly be translated) is in all fundamentals identical with the SWP position.

There is no difference between us and the German comrades as to the reality of the existence of national oppression in the occupied countries. There is no difference between us as to the fact that national oppression now exists in Europe on an unprecedented scale, requiring of us an attentive and sensitive understanding of what is new in the European situation as well as what is similar to the first World War.

Our differences center around the relation between the slogan of National Liberation and the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe. We insist that these two slogans must go together, for otherwise the slogan of National Liberation degenerates into mere bourgeois nationalism in the service of one of the imperialist camps. On the other hand the German comrades, it is all too clear, raise the slogan of National Liberation independently of the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe. In discussions they have indicated that they consider National Liberation as an immediate agitation slogan and the Socialist United States of Europe as a propaganda slogan, i.e., not at present suitable for immediate agitation. (Despite repeated requests they have not as yet written anything on this question except the "Three Theses.") Their separation of the two slogans must be characterized as a nationalist deviation.

This difference between us on slogans expresses a difference in perspectives. We say that, whichever imperialist camp were to win the war, national oppression in Europe would continue; Anglo-American occupation of Europe would likewise constitute national oppression. An Anglo-American victory would not only bring national oppression to Germany and its allies but we believe would continue national oppression of France and other occupied countries in order to crush the socialist revolution. The bourgeois groups in the occupied countries would undoubtedly be agents of the "democracies" in this task. The German comrades, on the other hand, speak of taking part "in the restoration of democracy" and of a "democratic revolution" (Theses III) which, if words mean anything, can only mean a "revolution" other than a proletarian and the participation of the bourgeoisie and their labor agents in the "restoration of democracy." The German comrades, then, have a perspective of a new democratic epoch in Europe. "Of

course" they think it will be merely a stage on the road to international socialism. But they base themselves on working for that stage of (in essence) a revival of the Third Republic in France, the Weimar Republic in Germany, etc. For them it is a necessary stage preceding the direct struggle for socialism.

### Who Resists the Nazis?

Pursuing this false theory of stages the German comrades are driven by their logic to a completely false description of the actual composition of the fighters for national liberation in the occupied countries. Who resists the Nazis? Comrade Loris and the French comrades have provided irrefutable proofs that the movement of resistance is predominantly proletarian. The big bourgeoisie collaborates with the Nazis; the rest of the bourgeoisie in part also collaborates or plays no role; even the Gaullist, Andre Philip, apologetically says that the anti-Nazi bourgeois elements "do what they can" but that the proletariat is the core of the resistance. Our German comrades, however, more consistent than Philip in their search for the elements of a "democratic revolution", write: In the resistance movement, "participate all classes and strata from workers, farm laborers, farmers, urban petit bourgeoisie. . . to officials, priests, intellectuals and generals. . . Everywhere there are involved in protest movements workers, peasants, besides students, journalists, professors, officers, priests, merchants, etc." (Thesis II). Thus they place on an equal plane the resisting masses of workers and the handfuls of resisting bourgeois elements! Their false theory leads them to a false description of the actually existing situation.

While they thus evoke a mythical scene of a great movement of the bourgeois elements -- they do not even mention the bourgeois collaborators of the Nazis! -- our German comrades insist that the workers' movement is practically non-existent. There "is no longer an organized and active workers' movement" and "there can also be no talk of the existence of real revolutionary organizations." (Thesis III). Hence, "Under such circumstances protest against growing suffering must find another outlet." (Thesis II). That is, while the workers' movement does not and cannot exist at this stage, "another outlet," namely an all-national movement, can and does exist. Thus the German comrades COUNTERPOSE the national movement to the workers' movement. It can now be seen clearly why they will not link together the slogans of National Liberation and the Socialist United States of Europe. They consider National Liberation as "another outlet" than the workers' movement.

### The Workers' Tasks

This theory is false in fact, since the liberation struggle has actually unfolded under the leadership of workers' organizations and workers' groups. Suppose, however, there did exist, say in France, a powerful nationalist organization led by the bourgeoisie, which had drawn into it large sections of the workers. What would be our task then? Obviously, to draw the class line between the bourgeois nationalists and the workers aspiring for national freedom, to teach the workers that there is not "another outlet" for the

workers, but that, whatever the tasks facing the workers -- including national liberation -- they must fight ONLY under the leadership of their OWN workers' organizations.

The workers under the Nazi boot want national freedom. Good. Our task is to explain to them that national freedom in this epoch is the task of the working class under the leadership of the Fourth International. Our task is to expose and condemn bourgeois nationalist organizations as agents of the imperialists who can lead only to further national oppression and repression of the workers. We must show the workers, as proved by the spectacle of bourgeois collaboration with the Nazis, that only the working class can free the country by proletarian revolution.

These are the ABC's of Marxism. It is embarrassing to have to repeat them, but the German comrades make it necessary.

### What Is Really New

There are new problems, opportunities and tasks, but not in the direction where the German comrades seek them. It is astonishing to me that they can write that the struggle "levels all and everything and takes a direction which can be described as nothing but a 'desire for national freedom.'" As if, while the Second World War is still going on; the Nazis had succeeded in obliterating the difference between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the occupied countries! What is really new in the occupied countries is that the national sentiment of the workers and peasants is sharpening their class bitterness against the collaborating bourgeoisie. National oppression has given a new edge to the class struggle. National sentiment, hitherto serving only the bourgeoisie, today can be used against the bourgeoisie of the occupied countries. That is what is new.

While national sentiment can now help the revolutionary movement, it is also still susceptible of perversion to the uses of imperialism. That is why we reject most of the methods of combat advocated by the bourgeois nationalists and their labor agents. What is the main content of the De Gaullist tactics, for example? Espionage for the British, individual terrorism, individual sabotage. We condemn all these as serving one of the imperialist camps and as incompatible with the proletarian methods. Individual terrorism against German officers and soldiers creates a situation in which it is impossible to fraternize with the German soldiers -- the absolutely indispensable prerequisite for unity of the German and French workers and soldiers against all the imperialists. Terrorism and individual sabotage, aiding the Soviet Union very little if at all, places terrible obstacles in the way of the fraternization and revolution which can alone really aid the Soviet Union. The Gaullists and their Stalinist allies are by these methods uselessly sacrificing heroic fighters who could be invaluable to the revolutionary struggle. It should be plain, then, how important it is to combat the false ideology and methods of the bourgeois nationalists and their labor agents. Ideological victory over them is the prerequisite for the efficacious struggle by the working class for national liberation. But there is not a word about this in the theses of the

German comrades. In their search for a national movement as distinct from the workers' movement, they falsely subordinate the workers' methods of struggle to the "unity" of national struggle.

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We welcome a reply from the German comrades. We shall be only too happy to find that any of our criticisms are but the result of misunderstanding of their vague, confused and contradictory theses. Let us also note that their nationalist deviation is not as serious as the same deviation if it were expressed by French comrades, who would thereby be tending to capitulate to the Gaullist bourgeoisie. It may be that the German comrades embarked on this false road in the course of attempting to show their complete freedom from German nationalism. A similar phenomenon was apparent when the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed; some German comrades then, fearing to give any indirect aid to German imperialism, wavered on the question of continuing to defend the Soviet Union. But I must confess that I also recall the false importance which the present German comrades gave to the resistance of the German churches to Nazi coordination; these comrades then thought that the workers could make significant advances through support of the churches' resistance. I cannot help feeling that the German comrades have throughout exhibited a tendency to dissolve the workers' movement into "broader" bourgeois movements. In all comradeship, we must ask them to think -- and write -- their position out to its ultimate implications.

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ON THE "EUROPEAN" PROBLEM

By Stuart

1. In our Manifesto on the development of the second world war, written in 1940, we declared: "Contrary to the official fables designed to drug the people, the chief cause of war as of all other social evils -- unemployment, the high cost of living, fascism, colonial oppression -- is the private ownership of the means of production together with the bourgeois state which rests on this foundation." Correspondingly, we reissued as the main slogans those incorporated in our 1934 theses: "Against the reactionary slogan of 'national defense' it is necessary to advance the slogan of the revolutionary destruction of the national state. To the madhouse of capitalist Europe it is necessary to counterpose the program of the Socialist United States of Europe as a stage on the road to the Socialist United States of the World." This was the guiding line for our propaganda, agitation and action laid down in May 1940. It remains correct today.

2. Already at that time, we noted in our manifesto: "In recent years and even months, the world has observed with astonishment how easily states vanish from the map of Europe: Austria, Czecho-slovakia, Albania, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium. . . . The political map has been reshaped with equal speed in no other epoch save that of the Napoleonic wars. At that time it was a question of outlived feudal states which had to give way before the bourgeois national state. Today it is a question of outlived bourgeois states which must give way before the socialist federation of the peoples. The chain breaks at its weakest link. The struggle of the imperialist bandits leaves as little room for independent small states as does the vicious competition of trusts and cartels for small independent manufacturers and merchants." Has anything changed to warrant a re-evaluation of this picture? What has happened? In addition to the states enumerated above several others have joined the list of the vanished: Greece, Jugoslavia, the Baltic states and. . . part of France ("Occupied" France). The chain has revealed itself as very weak even in its supposedly stronger links. That is about all that can be adduced as new objective conditions.

3. Do these new conditions warrant a change in the main guiding line? Does the conquest of France, Greece, etc. require us to change our view and declare that today "there is no more burning problem in Europe than the national freedom of nations enslaved by Germany"? Such a point of departure, which bases itself upon the conjunctural turns of the imperialist struggle, is -- we must say that frankly -- as far apart from Marxism as two poles are from one another. In fact, all the demoralized intellectuals and camp followers who have deserted to the camp of social patriotism have chosen precisely the same point of departure.

4. We are told that in German-occupied Europe "economic ruin is accompanied by callous destruction of human lives and values, etc." -- all as an argument for adopting the above point of view. But it was precisely "to the madhouse of capitalist Europe" that we found it necessary to "counterpose the program of the Socialist United States of Europe." The madhouse has only become madder, more unbearable, in the visio of the German conqueror. The program of the Socialist United States of Europe has become only more burning -- the only answer to the German conqueror.

5. In the last war large masses fought in the hope of establishing their national independence and democratic rights. Into this second world war, the masses entered apathetically, their national and democratic illusions blasted by their experiences in the inter-bellum years. Undoubtedly the Hitlerite conquests, with the wake of oppression and destruction that has followed, have thrown the masses of Europe into deep despair for the moment. A thinking man will seize even on a straw, it is true. Even on a hope that he has already seen blasted once before. It is quite probable that national illusions have again received great currency among the masses who have recently come under Hitler's hell in the occupied countries. And it is just on these illusions of despair that the democratic imperialists and their whole string of lackies in these countries bank for support of their own predatory aims. As before, they continue to exploit the illusions of the masses. But what business has the revolutionary internationalist to nurture and to foster this product of mass despair in Europe? Quite the contrary, the revolutionary internationalist in Europe has as his main task to help the masses destroy this spawn of their own despair, to expose their would-be exploiters in the "democratic" imperialist camp and to give them new hope in the struggle against fascist and capitalist oppression by relentlessly pursuing the program of the Socialist United States of Europe.

6. Does that in any way imply, as some comrades seem to think, standing passively by, with "arms folded", while mass sabotage against the German conqueror and other mass movements of struggle against Nazi oppression unfold? On the contrary. Precisely when we are armed with the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe can we fruitfully participate and organize into proper channels every wave of mass discontent and struggle. Under this banner and this banner alone can the various sectors of the oppressed -- in a process of large national transmigrations instituted by the conqueror -- be welded together; and only in this way can a road to united action with the proletariat in the Nazi homeland itself be found.

7. Does this mean that we cannot take advantage of mass actions organized by nationalist groups, even those sponsored by the lackies of the "democratic" imperialists? Not at all. Revolutionary internationalists participate in and take advantage of every form of mass action. In given united front actions, they will seek strength in the struggle

against the oppressor at hand from every possible ally. But they always remember the policy of the united front: strike together but march separately; keep your own banner aloft; put your own program forward!

8. Does putting forward the slogan for a Socialist United States of Europe imply that we deny the peoples of Europe a right to a national existence? Not at all. We stress as the main guiding line of the struggle against a Hitlerite Europe the establishment of a Socialist United States of Europe, because without it the Nazi conqueror and the decaying capitalism which produced him cannot be overcome. At the same time, subordinated to this main guiding line, we continue to present our traditional program for the oppressed nationalities: complete self-determination to the point of the right of seceding from the socialist federation. It is only necessary to put first things first. The national barriers, along with private ownership of the means of production, have been for a whole epoch the main causes of the plight into which present-day Europe has been plunged. The main task of the revolutionists is to awaken the consciousness of the masses to these truths and to guide them in action -- by participating in their experiences -- to the solutions that these facts call for. The propagation of our position on national self-determination can only be regarded as a means to this end. To place the "struggle for national freedom" as the first task is to disregard the bloody lessons of two holocausts and the years of misery that intervened between them. It is to completely misunderstand the program of the Fourth International. It would mean only disorientation for the revolutionary internationalists in Europe and indirect aid to the official fables of the "democratic" imperialists "designed to drug the people".

March, 1942

ON SOME ARGUMENTS FOR A "NEW" EUROPEAN "PERSPECTIVE"

By Stuart

Elsewhere, we have reiterated our old position as the valid answer to the problems raised at present by comrades who maintain that on the order of the day as the foremost task in Europe is "national freedom of nations enslaved by Germany." Our position is, that against the Nazi enslavement of Europe the only effective banner of struggle is that of the Socialist United States of Europe; that this banner, incorporating the right of each people to self-determination, contains also the most realistic answer to the national question involved in the struggle.

Several arguments, of greater and lesser merit, have been raised against this position. It is these arguments that we wish to take up here.

1) Comrades say: "Before you can have United States you must have states to unite; at present Hitler has wiped out a whole series of European states and enslaved the people within them; consequently, the first task is to agitate for the 'national freedom' or 'national independence' of each of these states."

This argument appears to me extremely mechanical. It is not only undialectic in its formulation. It even ignores empiric fact.

First of all as to its form. It is not unsimilar to the arguments brought forward against the slogans in the program of a proletarian revolution for Russia before 1917: "Before you can have a proletarian revolution you must have a highly developed capitalist economy; how can you call for a proletarian revolution in a predominantly agricultural country existing under semi-foual conditions? The first and foremost task is the bourgeois democratic revolution." Students of Russian Marxism, readers of Trotsky's works, are familiar with this kind of mechanical argument and how it fared in the polemics that enriched Marxist literature with the theory of uneven and combined development. That an argument on present European tasks within our ranks should be cloaked in the same mechanistic approach is rather astonishing.

Even more astonishing is the fact that those who raise it ignore the experience of the Russian revolution on the national question. The proletarian revolution swept over the Czar's empire from one end to the other; the national republics in the Soviet federation were established long after the revolution itself had firmly achieved its victory in the Soviet regime. The revolution which established the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics did not wait until each of these republics had first been created by struggles for "national independence". The Bolshovik program, incorporating the right



of self-determination, not only sufficed to solve the problem, but was the only one which actually solved it. Where the Bolshevik forces were weakest (Finland, Georgia) and where the Mensheviks proceeded with "national independence" as the "foremost task", the imperialists quickly got their strongest points of support against the revolution. Isn't it worthwhile pondering over these empiric facts, at the very least, before such an argument as has been cited is brought against the use of our slogan "For the Socialist United States of Europe" as the fighting slogan for the revolutionists of that continent today?

2) Another argument runs as follows: "We issued the slogan 'For the Independence of the Ukraine' from the U.S.S.R., which is a workers' state. Shall we refrain from issuing the slogan 'For the Independence of Belgium' -- for example -- from the dastardly Nazis?" Unfortunately the authors of this argument are too overwhelmed by the tragic events to retain their political judgment.

They do not realize the vast political difference involved in the two questions.

In the first case, that of the Ukraine, you had a case of revitalizing the heritage of October, imperiled by the Stalinist bureaucracy, by utilizing a part of that same heritage -- the right to self-determination -- which the Stalinists were suppressing to the point of endangering the existence of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics as a whole. The slogan "For the Independence of the Ukraine" of the Soviet Ukraine, thus corresponded to the concrete need of rallying mass support against the usurping bureaucracy on an issue -- self-determination -- on which the Soviet Federation was founded and based, for its preservation and renewal. (Even so, in the polemics with the petty bourgeois opposition in the S.W.P., Trotsky pointed out that faced with a struggle against German imperialism, or any other imperialism for that matter, the slogan would of necessity have to be withdrawn for the time being, since self-determination for revolutionary internationalists is subordinated to the main socialist aims).

How does it stand with Belgium and the other countries under Hitler's heel in this respect? What is on the order of the day here? The "national independence" movements which followed the last world war and resulted in the establishment of new as well as the re-establishment of old national states have proved their bankruptcy under bourgeois democracy. In fact, it was the very existence of these national barriers that created Europe's two and a half decades of misery after the war of 1914-1918. The rottenness of this set-up was laid bare before the masses by Hitler's sweep over the bursting boundaries in itself. Before the masses who have undergone these experiences and whose only other alternative at present is a Europe unified under the Nazi heel, "Independence of Belgium" or "Independence of France" cannot but be empty slogans. Their experience has

already offered the proof that against a Europe dominated by German imperialism only another kind of unified Europe can stand up: that a "national independence" without this prerequisite is meaningless. That is why, politically, the slogan "For a Socialist United States of Europe that will grant self-determination to all peoples" is correct, aktuell, appropos. The experiences of the Ukraine masses and of the Western European mass are politically different. That is why each situation requires a politically different slogan. Nevertheless, in both cases we have an application of one and the same policy on the national question: "Self-determination".

3) Another argument advanced attempts to compare the presently crushed European national states to the colonial countries! "We are for the national independence of India or China, this argument says, so why can't we be for the independence of Belgium or Holland? Aren't they, in a sense, in the same position of oppressed nations"? To gauge the enormity of this aberration one has but to recall what the imperialists of the democratic camp do in respect to this question. How zealously they foster the "national independence" movements in Europe! How painfully embarrassed is their silence on -- when they do not condemn outright -- the genuine movements for national existence in India and in the other colonial countries!

In our theses on the "War and the Fourth International" we declared for support of the colonial national independence movements because "by tearing the backward people out of the Asiatic system, particularism and foreign bondage, (this struggle) strikes powerful blows at imperialism." Is the problem of Belgium, France, Holland, etc. the same? Can one identify a colonial "national independence" movement which has been organically a struggle against imperialism with a "national independence" movement which recalls the woeful existence of out-lived "independent" imperialist national states? One has to be completely derailed from the Marxist track and completely devoid of realism to even attempt a comparison here!

If the colonial struggles for national independence "strike powerful blows at imperialism", the so-called "national independence" movements in Western Europe are completely taken in tow by the democratic imperialists and the nationalist slogans are certainly a boon to them; and not only to them: they help the German imperialists to keep their own masses duped with the national drug.

4) Still another argument chides us because with our traditional slogan we will not be able to approach the hundred and one varieties of petty bourgeois activists who are fighting heroically against the Nazi oppressor on nationalist grounds. And, as everyone knows, large sections of the middle classes will have to be won over before the revolution can be successful. Even this type of argument is not very new or original. We have met it in the past in other phases of the struggle.

As is well-known, Marxists support the struggle of the small manufacturer and merchant against monopoly capitalism and even constitute united fronts for common struggle with these layers of the population on given occasions. We do this without in the slightest giving up our main socialist slogans and without adopting a program and slogans for the "independence of small manufacture and commerce".

We carry on this struggle under slogans: "Expropriation of all the key industries", "For the operation of all such industries under workers' control", "For a Workers and Farmers Government" etc.

To be sure, there have been in the past groups and individuals in the socialist movement who were for ditching such slogans and for watering down the program so as to make it more palatable to the small manufacturers and merchants. Most of them have landed in one or another of the reformist camps. The revolutionary internationalists have retained their socialist slogans, devised tactical approaches to the petty bourgeoisie to make clear to them that our proposed expropriation affects the monopolies in the main, leaving the small merchant a choice to continue or voluntarily submit to expropriation; and yet found ways of involving them in joint action on specific issues against the common class enemy.

More than that, it is precisely in the course of action, when the petty bourgeoisie sees the proletarian party act with greater cohesiveness and greater resolution -- while a hundred and one different currents tend to keep its own camp in disarray -- that the bulk of the middle class is swayed to the side of the working class in the struggle. But for that the working class needs precisely a proletarian party and a proletarian program at each instance. The main slogan is the expression of the party program in every case where a burning problem agitates the mass.

The burning problem of the moment in Europe is Nazi oppression. All of the oppressed mass wants to fight the conqueror. The question is how and for what? The petty bourgeoisie has within its ranks innumerable groups with innumerable nationalist panaceas and not a few heroic fighters. What distinguishes the proletarian party from the other layers of the oppressed mass is its correct program. That is what the proletarian revolutionist must make felt in the course of his participation in the struggle. That program is summarized in one sentence: Against Fascist Oppression We Must Fight to Establish the Socialist United States of Europe! Around this slogan the proletariat that has been "atomized" will rally again and find new strength! Around a proletariat equipped with a program for the Socialist United States of Europe, the oppressed masses will rally to overthrow their Nazi oppressors.

Only an historically unwarranted under-estimation of the recuperative powers of the proletariat, only a lack of

profound understanding for the historic role of the working class, only a complete loss of presence of mind amidst the rapidly moving world events, can lie at the root of this desire to replace the slogan of the Socialist United States by the more "popular" slogans of "national independence".

March 1942.