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Dear Al,

I have only now received your letter of April 28, delayed either in transit or transcript, apparently the latter....I had expected to write to you earlier on my tentative opinions on the national question, but it was not possible until now. I will write you separately on organizational matters.

I am offering some opinions concerning the Committee's resolution and Johnson's article on the Socialist United States of Europe (titled "The Way Out for Europe" in The New International). I am glad to hear that Comrade Johnson intends to draft a complete resolution of his own on the national question. Then it will be possible to know what is his rounded position. If there is then a choice between the Committee's resolution and his forthcoming resolution, it will be easier to make. For my part, I do not regard Johnson's present article as a resolution or document necessarily in itself in opposition to the Committee's. As it stands, it is clearly a different approach to the European situation than the Committee's. If and when Johnson's resolution appears, I'll understand definitely its relation to the Plenum resolution. So much for that.

I find unquestioned and significant merit in Johnson's present document. I cannot dismiss it as lightly as you appear to do, though I do not want to misjudge you on that score. I like very much the broader historical scope and analysis that his article bears than is the case with the Plenum resolution. True, the Committee's resolution implies or sketchily gives that scope; or, if you will, it indicates it much more in the Political resolution. But whether, and to what extent, significantly different perspectives of an immediate or ultimate kind are involved in the different approaches to the national question in Johnson's article and the Plenum's resolution, I shall know better when Johnson's resolution emerges.

The Plenum resolution would undoubtedly be stronger, in my estimation, if it had been presented in the larger scope that Johnson's article does. Then the reasons for presenting the struggle for national freedom as the primary action or mobilizing slogan of the period would be better understood; or, in my opinion, be fitted more accurately into the whole pattern of the European situation. I do not know if the detailed bill of particulars -- if you do not mind the formulation -- on the manner in which the liberation struggle will unfold, is necessary. However, that can help in precision and clarity, provided this does not, actually mean a different perspective than is generally indicated in the resolution. What I mean by this I will indicate later below.

GERMANY

I regard Johnson's presentation of the German question in respect to the national problem as a whole; in respect to the European situation; and in regard to the prospects and perspectives of the S.U.E.S., as a significant contribution; probably the most important one in arriving at the most correct estimation of the course of the struggle of the proletariat, in the immediate as well as in the later period of development.

This question was ignored or omitted in the Plenum resolution. Perhaps the omission was accidental; or certain aspects of the German problem taken for granted -- as a part of our history. Still, even our own membership, and certainly the new generation of workers, are far too little acquainted with the history of Germany, specifically the exceptional role of Germany in the European working class movement. In any presentation today of the European labor-political situation and specifically of the national question, this would warrant consideration. It still appears that Germany in the Fascist and post-Fascist period (even as in the pre-Fascist period) remains the key to the European situation; if not, as was once the case, the key to the international situation. This is the case -- either for progress or further retrogression in the future for Europe's working class. This is Germany's history.

REQUIRES FIRST CONSIDERATION

Hence, in my view, Johnson's contribution on this aspect of the national question requires not only consideration, but first consideration in the social-political estimate of Europe's course. This, however, does not negate the validity of the slogan of national liberation as the chief agitation or action slogan of the immediate period. On the contrary, it reinforces it; with the consideration, however, that this analysis bears more favorably on the prospects of shorter rather than longer periods of dual power struggles; that is, in the process by and through which the working class transforms or turns the national struggle into socialist channels; or telescopes them into one. A swifter tempo for such a development is estimated in the analysis by Johnson than is indicated or implied in the Plenum resolution.

If the Plenum resolution's perspectives (probable, not certainty or wishful thinking) for the duration of dual power periods and for the more conscious development of the socialist struggle and goal, means a period and not an epoch, then the factor of Germany enters into the picture positively, essentially along the lines portrayed in Johnson's article....In any event, the omission of the German question in the Plenum resolution requires correction. This is entirely apart from whether or not one subscribes to Johnson's full exposition thereof.

I understand that Max subscribes to the significance of the German aspect of the question by stating that if the German working class proclaims the slogan of Free Colonies, it may and can become the leader of the working class. Indeed it must in its interests alone.

The history of the German working class, in this connection, including or stemming from the attitude of the Social Democracy, is a bad one. It subscribed in the past to the imperialist doctrine of super-imperialism; it justified German colonial policy so long as it appeared to benefit the German working class, maintaining that the colonial peoples had to go through the "historic process" of capitalist development, etc. This outlook, foisted upon and accepted by millions of German workers, left its stamp on the opportunism and reformism of the German movement. It hastened and helped to ensure the failure of international solid-

arity by the German workers in the 1st world war. How much or how strongly this miseducation still has a hold on the German workers, I don't know. But certainly it betokens even more strongly the need for the German working class to declare itself unambiguously on the colonial question and not to get tied up in the future with a German imperialist policy as reflected today through Hitler.

Having read Johnson's document, I am reinforced in regard to some matters in regard to the Plenum resolution; at the same time I have several questions to put in regard to Johnson's document. However, certainly, I cannot subscribe to your description of Johnson's article as only "a heap of agitational generalizations... which have nothing to do with the National Question." Quite otherwise, I think, in the main.

THE ESSENCE OF JOHNSON'S CONCEPTIONS

The title itself of Comrade Johnson's article is the basis for consideration of the weakness or strength of the outlook: the Socialist United States of Europe -- Nearer, Not Further Away. Johnson says that the slogan is a propaganda slogan. Good; but granted that saying so is not enough. This depends on how he explains or what he does with the slogan, and here I wish clarification or elaboration.

However, I must first indicate how I understand the whole of Johnson's article, as related directly to that slogan. It is simply this:

The objective factors, (despite the obvious present weakness and almost complete economic and political lack of organization of the working class (except for small -- extent unknown at any rate-- underground movements, particularly in the national movements) are powerful enough to impel the working class with some degree of rapidity toward the socialist struggle; passing through intermediary forms of struggle (for instance, national liberation struggles; economic struggles; dual power aspects) with greater rapidity than the Plenum resolution indicates or believes to be possible or probable.

Further, these objective factors are regarded by him today, not simply as factors which have always been there (or for some decades) as the socio-economic basis for socialism. It is rather, as I understand, his contention that these objective factors today, in this period, give an impulse to the subjective factors: (the working class; and certainly to the revolutionary elements if the workers respond) to proceed onto the socialist road. Necessity -- the necessity for freedom and to live at all -- compels the workers more quickly and consciously to respond to the demands of the objective factors for a socialist solution. Latent socialist consciousness then comes more rapidly to the surface, -- latent not meaning the whole working class but at least important, fairly wide sectors of it.

GERMAN MASSES STILL WANT SOCIALISM

Thus, Johnson maintains that the objective conditions today are of such an aggravated character (not comparable to any other capitalist period), and will continue so, as to compel the masses in a socialist direction, even where they are not yet thinking in socialist terms or ideology. He also has the view, in a good measure more true, I think, than is possibly recognized or accepted by others, that unexpressed or subconsciously the masses want to get rid of the "old Europe: but not only that -- they want to establish a socialist order in some form. Interesting, in this connection, is the observation of a keen observer, (H.R. Knickerbocker) of German events: In his nation-wide survey of Germany in 1932, he concluded that "more than two-thirds of the population was in favor of some collective state... These people have now been regimented by the Nazis for 10 years, but their fundamental views can only have changed by an increasing desire to enjoy the collective society the Nazis promised but never gave them fully." His entire review reflects the socialist desires of the German masses, even of great sections of the Nazi party and anticipates civil war around the question of socialism.

However, I readily grant that, howsoever we assess the possible consequences or effects of the objective totality today in Europe, this is not sufficient to accept Johnson's thesis by itself. Abstractly, the world -- certainly Europe and North America -- have been objectively ready for socialism for a long, long time. The foundations for socialism have been here; there is no socialism; there still continues the struggle for socialism.

ROLE AND TASK OF PARTY

Certainly, we are not looking upon time in the abstract. Nor is the process by which the national struggle, for instance, gets more speedily onto the socialist road merely a matter of recognizing (if one does) the whole objective situation as favorable or good. What follows is a recognition or estimation of the significance of at least one of the subjective factors; -- the revolutionaries -- in helping to speed the process of turning the struggle for national liberation into socialist channels.

For example, the Plenum resolution (as is dictated by the size, limited prestige and situation of our Party in the United States) is addressed primarily to the Party members; to 4th Internationalists and sympathizers, and the radicalized workers generally; it is not therefore a resolution or manifesto addressed to the working masses as a whole. The resolution's purpose, inter alia, is to try to rouse at least these workers against the Allied imperialists' offensive of arms and food, with their object of defeating the independent aspirations of the European masses for genuine freedom and independence and; as I see it, the socialist aspirations of millions. Good.

But precisely at this point is where I think I see what Johnson's article is driving at. Namely, that imperative as this task is, the swifter turning of the efforts of the masses from primarily national freedom struggle into the socialist struggle cannot be ac-

completed if our overwhelmingly dominant emphasis is in regard to the democratic objectives; such as the right to organize, free press, and so forth.

The 4th Internationalists, meager as their forces and resources are at present, are yet able to say more; to point out and help organize types of struggle as lead more sharply and quickly into class struggle channels and conflict. For instance, the struggle against mass deportations of workers in occupied territories to Hitler's Germany -- a struggle which is apparently already beginning to assume the form of mass resistance.

In citing only one example of a form of struggle which, on the one hand, can presumably be undertaken by the nationalist movements, but on the other hand, cannot help but go beyond the boundaries and program of the nationalist movement, I mean only to make one point. Namely, that now, more so than is indicated in the Plenum resolution, we have to make clear to even those radicalized workers in the United States whom we can influence, the situation in Europe is such as is likely to propel the workers in Europe more swiftly than appearances indicate beyond the nationalist struggle and into channels of independent workers struggle for a workers government and possibly genuine workers power. The better to carry out such tasks as may be possible for the American workers on behalf of the European oppressed, the more is it necessary for them to know what are the prospects of the socialist struggle and revolution in the European countries, both as flowing and differentiated from the necessary struggle for national liberation. Johnson's article endeavors to do this and, if in this respect alone, presents what should be a necessary part of a resolution on the National Question.

ATTITUDES RE NATIONAL LIBERATION SLOGAN

Your comment on his article is to the effect that Johnson fails to see or does not accept the need for placing the slogan for national liberation in the forefront in this period. I believe it will be possible to know easily if this is the case when Johnson's resolution on the national question in its various ramifications is presented. It is difficult for me to see this in his article -- and I have several questions to ask in regard to it.

It seems to me that what his article expresses, impliedly and perhaps directly, in regard to the Plenum resolution, is a fear that the national liberation struggle, the struggle for the various democratic rights, can be made just an appendage to the national liberation movement, rather than as forms of struggle leading to the socialist struggle for workers power and socialism. His fears are probably unfounded, but that would not invalidate his approach or analysis of the European situation as compared to the Plenum resolution; for his article, besides presenting the general objective and historical picture, specifically maintains that the given military situation, including the developing great military offensive against Germany, will force the class as well as the national struggle swiftly to the fore.

Hence, it seems to me, that this conception of his must be disproven. It avails little and, in my estimation, is not correct to say that he ignores or denies the national struggle. I need only quote the opening sentences of his article:

"The immediate question for the masses of people in occupied Europe is the struggle for food and the necessities of life. Politically, they see this task as the expulsion of the German invader." That is, the democratic struggle. I wish that he had dealt in his article more amply with his views on the liberation struggle, even though his purpose apparently was to pose the problem of the USES; for then many questions below might not be necessary. We shall see, however, what his resolution will say in any event.

However, further in regard to the matter of the socialist perspective. For at least the past two or three decades, the perspectives and prospects for workers power, for the socialist revolution, were rooted in far, far more favorable subjective factors (such as a well organized working class; millions of workers consciously wanting and ready to fight for the socialist power and program, etc.), as well as in the objective conditions, than is the case today. Even so, the socialist goal was not reached, for reasons well known to us today.

Johnson places an enormous emphasis on the objective conditions, impelling a swifter subjective change. The Plenum resolution places an equally enormous emphasis on the non-existence, in any significant organized degree, of the subjective factors: both the working class and the revolutionary party. Our education causes us to see in favorable subjective conditions the only guarantee for the successful utilization of even very favorable objective circumstances (both in the general historic sense and in the immediate). Therefore, within reason, Johnson must demonstrate or prove more concretely the probability, that he envisages, of a fairly rapid development of the subjective forces (masses and Party) toward the socialist struggle and goal.

ON THE S.U.S.E. SLOGAN

In part, I understand what is the purport of his article in this respect. That is, time is not to be looked on in general, in indefiniteness. Rather, that the first stage of the struggle -- between now and the military collapse of Germany, for instance -- has proscribed limits, in the main. If and when the Germans are knocked out of the occupied territories, the national liberation struggle obviously takes another form for those peoples; to wit, for instance, the possibility or probability of variations of capitalist "democracy", or workers democracy and/or socialism, and for Germany especially. Certainly in this preceding period we also point to more than the democratic struggle.

However, further, Johnson discusses mainly the slogan of the SUSE, and emphasizes its "urgency" in the European situation today. In respect to the slogan of the SUSE, and implicitly as respects related slogans, Johnson says: the SUSE -- Nearer, Not Further Away. How near is near? I do not mean to over-simplify the ques-

tion in this respect, any more than I mean to do so when I ask, later on, similar questions in regard to the Plenum resolution's more specific perspectives. Nor is such a question abstract or academic. I do not ask or require an answer in terms of months, but, reasonably, within a number of years. For my part, such a period -- that is, the struggle toward the socialist goal -- may mean several years.

What I ask from Comrade Johnson, therefore, is a political reply arising from Johnson's historic analysis and perspective: which will then be understood and accepted as a general truth and necessity of the period or epoch; or as a concrete truth and necessity that will impel, early, a course of action by the European masses toward the socialist goal -- toward workers power and the socialist transformation. This development would hence take place despite what may be their subjective outlook or consciousness today. Or, further, the impelled course of action on socialist lines would necessarily more swiftly change their consciousness, thus bringing about a swifter reorganization of the working class organizations, economic and political. Within reasonable terms, therefore, a political reply is indicated.

The SUSE is only a propaganda slogan today, says Johnson, not a slogan of action. If this is true, more is required when a political reply is made to the perspective of the propaganda slogan in terms of time or tempo. The propaganda slogan must be specifically related to an immediate course of action that the working class will take, or is advised to take by revolutionists.

Here, obviously, it is necessary to have more exact knowledge or understanding on what the immediate course of action is actually going to look like. The Plenum resolution also clearly declares the SUSE slogan to be a propaganda slogan, not in contradiction (indeed not to be confused or improperly linked with the propaganda slogan) to the national liberation slogan. Obviously again, if both these statements are accepted, we get nowhere and leave matters limp unless more is said or proposed.

Broadly, I prefer the general analysis and approach that Johnson's document makes on the character of the period, including the perspective or prospect that the SUSE is closer than is indicated or implied in the Plenum resolution. Certainly, this opinion is subject to discussion. However, if one says a slogan is a propaganda slogan, then it must be so presented in one's thesis as to leave no doubt that it is something else. Otherwise only confusion can follow.

PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION SLOGANS

This means that Johnson has to make clear in his resolution that the propaganda slogan is not to be regarded as the immediate central slogan for setting the masses into motion against the Fascist oppressor and for socialism. I think your interpretation of his article on this score is wrong. However, since Johnson says that the SUSE is a propaganda slogan, then it should be simple enough for him to establish its real relation to the slogan or program of action for the immediate period.

Certainly, instead of settling my mind on the basis of impressions, I will await his own full resolution on the National Question. A statement or document could set forth a historical position that is true. But if it failed then to set forth today's course or program, it would legitimately invite criticism as sectarian. Definitely needed, also, is the establishment of relations between general slogans and specific proposals that can result in getting the workers into motion and into movements that lead toward the main need or objective.

Of course it is necessary, as you say, to distinguish between propaganda and action slogans; and to know when and under what conditions the former can be transformed into the latter. Certainly, without making this distinction real and concrete in the presentation of perspectives, a slogan or program can prove sectarian and sterile. If our advices are accepted; if an attempt is made to put them into life; and if it is then shown that the slogans are unrelated, either to the immediate objective or subjective possibilities or to both, then sectarianism turns into adventurism. Workers take a drubbing they don't quickly forget. But this is general.

However, I shall be very much surprised if Johnson fails, as you allege, to make the necessary distinctions in fact between the propaganda (SUSE) and agitation (liberation) slogans. Since both Johnson and the Plenum resolution proclaim the distinction between propaganda and agitation slogans, it should be easy to overcome any dither on the matter. In his forthcoming resolution, Johnson has the opportunity to set forth precisely his attitude on what is the agitation slogan or program of action for today; to indicate the course the workers must take now to bring closer the objective of the SUSE.

It goes without saying that the declaration of general historic truth is not enough. If only matters of emphasis are involved between Johnson's views and those of the plenum resolution, that can surely be cleared up. If the Plenum resolution emphasizes the greater probability of a long democratic interval; and if Johnson's view foresees, comparatively, a shorter period before the workers are impelled toward the socialist struggle; then it is necessary to state how, as well as why. Your letter interprets Johnson as maintaining that the working class will go over, in the next stage -- in the engulfing of Hitler -- directly to the socialist phase of struggle. I am sorry: I don't find that he makes any such impossible statement; nor can I read any such outlook into his article.

IMMEDIATE STRUGGLE AND SOCIALISM

The Plenum resolution, on the other hand, sets forth a detailed picture on the immediate course of struggle. This may or may not be necessary; for my part I generally welcome as complete a picture as possible of a course of action. However, besides detail, the resolution lays such great emphasis on the character and form of the immediate struggle, that I have obtained the impression that the resolution sees the socialist perspective in

fact as far in the offing. At the same time, the sections on dual power (the best sections of the resolution, in my eyes) present alternatives on dual power possibilities in terms of duration, etc. which every person considers.

Everyone will emphasize the necessity for socialists to participate actively and as revolutionary socialists, in the national movements. However, what I do not see in the Plenum resolution is that which is declared in the Political resolution: namely, that the workers will proceed quickly to put their own stamp or program (i.e., the socialist program) on the already developing struggles. If the position stated in the Political resolution is correct (and for my part I think it is,) then I accept also what I conceive to be the essential meaning of Johnson's article. That meaning is simply that, despite the tremendous obstacles of imperialist and other bourgeois elements; despite the opposition of Stalinism to genuine democratic and working class objectives, the working class nevertheless will find itself impelled and in a position to reorganize its forces, its organizations and move toward the realization of its independent class program.

In respect to the slogan of national liberation itself, possibly Johnson considers it as obvious and that it does not require belaboring. That is beside the point; it would not necessarily -- and in fact it does not -- lessen the importance of the liberation slogan as the prime immediate slogan for rallying the workers in struggle. And if the slogan were patent, conceivably, then, the workers militantly engaging in the nationalist struggle, (and more or less recognizing its limitations) can aim more rapidly to place a socialist coloration on the struggle. Therefore, it seems to me, all that is required of Comrade Johnson, is for him to indicate more clearly and precisely where and how he would place the immediate program (liberation slogan and other democratic demands) within the confines of his historic and political analysis -- specifically in relation to the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe.

To demand or envisage the socialist solution is not enough. I don't know anyone who presents matters that way. There is much talk of socialist planning and socialism in the post-war period by people who can't be taken seriously. A recent conference at Stockholm of socialist emigres and so-called workers delegations demanded a 'planned economy' and a 'socialistic democracy'. Only they didn't indicate very clearly what manner of struggle they advocated to impress the bourgeoisie and the workers with their goals. We, however, try to outline, as precisely as possible, the measures to make such goals real. I make reference to this conference because I see it as a straw in the wind; a straw that indicates that socialist consciousness and the will to struggle for socialist objectives may exist in wider numbers than the Plenum resolution seems to indicate. Also, because it helps to bring better into focus the problem of the democratic struggle and the democratic interval that the Plenum resolution deals predominantly with.

THE "DEMOCRATIC" STAGE

Certainly everyone understands that the European masses must fight for freedom from foreign oppression; for bread, a greater degree of security, etc. Almost any kind of "democracy" (as the Plenum resolution shows) that might be achieved in getting rid of Hitler provides a better basis for the promotion of the socialist struggle. That, in itself, would be a good reason for militant workers and revolutionists becoming decisive factors in the liberation struggle.

Certainly, also, if any "democracy" is achieved by and under the domination of the native bourgeoisie (aided by Allied imperialism), far less gain will result therefrom than if the workers are the prime factor in gaining liberation from foreign oppression and exploitation. Moreover, if national freedom from Hitler's domination turns out to be primarily bourgeois in character, then the efforts of the workers to get onto the socialist path will encounter difficulties (military dictatorship, etc.) different only in degree from those experienced under Hitlerism.

Hence, surely, the masses are concerned with the manner in which democratic objectives are achieved. The forms and scope of the struggle for democratic ends help to determine the duration of any democratic interlude. The resolution of course points this out. Does Johnson gainsay this? Not that I can see from his article. What the Plenum resolution does is to lay emphasis upon emphasis on the significance and inevitability of the democratic stage of struggle. If Johnson does not wish to give the same degree of emphasis, it is not decisive one way or another. All that Johnson must establish in his resolution is what slogan or program does he propose for the immediate stage of struggle -- in the transition from the democratic struggle to the socialist struggle or their merging.

LIBERATION STRUGGLE -- "DEMOCRACY" -- DUAL POWER

In the presentation of the liberation struggle as the prime task of the day, the Plenum resolution states that the democratic phase may be long; that is surely possible. A question in my mind is whether the resolution really sees the socialist perspective as near at all. If that is a fact, that is all there is to it, and we have to be guided accordingly. At any rate, it presents a program for a period. If anyone can present another program (economic or political) other than the slogan of national liberation as the immediate prime slogan for mobilizing the workers for their immediate and general interests, I am sure it would be welcomed by all. However, Johnson's article definitely validates the national struggle. I want to see more precisely how he fits the immediate program (liberation struggle, etc.) into his general perspective. Then I, for one, will know which resolution is correct or superior.

The Plenum resolution deals considerably with the question of dual power in considering the manner and speed of the transformation of the struggles of the workers onto the socialist road

specifically. For my part, I would not for one moment ignore or minimize this factor; it already here and there emerges to some extent in life. Now Johnson visualizes the possibility of workers' governments or workers power as nearer in the present fluid situation in Europe than does the Plenum resolution. But I do not find thereby that Johnson attaches only incidental significance to the factor of dual power and its variations from country to country.

Where, for instance, does he say (and who could possibly say this?) that he envisages virtually no intervening period before the masses strike directly for workers power? I don't find this viewpoint in his article. The question of dual power must certainly receive adequate treatment in his resolution too, so that if and where there are any distinctions between the Plenum resolution on this question and his views, they will be clear.

RATE OF WORKING CLASS DEVELOPMENT

No one wants to talk of time in general -- either in respect to the democratic period, dual power, how far is socialism, and so on. But what is involved, presumably, in the issues raised in the Plenum resolution and Johnson's article, flowing from the general analyses of the two documents, is the rate of development of the working class movement in Europe, prior to and following the defeat of Hitler. From an estimation of this rate comes the adoption of methods and slogans of the advanced or vanguard elements. Their success in advancing and building the revolutionary party, now, today, will depend on the correctness of the perspective and program adopted.

It is necessary that the working class pass through the stage of the national liberation struggle as rapidly as possible; that the workers emerge from this struggle with as great a degree of socialist consciousness and organized preparedness as is possible. The task of the Party (of each revolutionary Party, with its special tasks understood) is to help speed the above developments of the working class. Depending on the way in which the objective situation is understood, will in a good measure help to determine the effectiveness of the Party and its slogans in relation to the working class. In this fundamental sense, I agree that it is necessary to establish the relative validity or non-validity of Johnson's essential outlook that the slogan of workers' government -- workers power -- SUSE -- is emerging, or will emerge sooner, rather than later, on the European scene than is indicated in the Plenum resolution with its great and almost exclusive emphasis on the slogan of national liberation.

DUAL POWER ASPECTS

To consider, further, a few aspects of the dual power question. At an early stage of the struggle, and despite the undoubted opposition of the workers, the United Nations might well be successful in foisting some bourgeois government-in-exile (or whatever name it might be called) onto the people. Such governments would have no roots or support in the masses. Still, they

would be there to contend with especially in view of the aid of their imperialist masters. Under such conditions, dual power struggle could easily ensue; for how long and with whom the final victor, one certainly couldn't say in advance.

For that matter, at the inception of any such bourgeois "democratic" governments, the masses may even afford such governments a breathing spell without too great resistance on their part. However, what disturbs me about the Plenum resolution is this. Despite various alternatives which are outlined, the resolution gives me the impression that the democratic interlude is conceived of as years and years of democratic interlude and dual power. I know that one cannot estimate the duration of any such historical periods. I do not attempt that. Only my present judgment in regard to the unfolding of dual power struggles -- following the devastation of the world war -- points either to the ability of the masses to strike early for workers power; or else to succumb for another period to domination to a variety of fascism; a military dictatorship; or the same thing perfumed with a "democratic" label.

Do the masses have a fear of dictatorship? Even a horror, I would say. Their experiences with Fascism and Stalinism have undoubtedly left their powerful impress. Genuine bourgeois democracy in the classical sense won't appear again in Europe. The new "democratic" states that may come into being will probably be quite dictatorial from the outset. Even so, I can well believe that a return of democratic rights, in some important ways, would be regarded by the masses with a great sense of relief and even of victory. Maybe that is all they will be able to achieve in the incipient struggles and for some time thereafter.

BRINGING SOCIALISM TO FORE

Nevertheless, I am inclined to Johnson's view that although or even if, the subjective outlook for a socialist solution is not obvious on the surface, it exists to a much greater degree, at least, immediately beneath their consciousness; and that, further, events can bring their socialism rather quickly to the surface. I find it impossible to ignore that there are still countless revolutionary socialists and even more countless numbers of workers in Germany, France, etc., who regard themselves as socialists; and that they will reveal their fundamental outlook at the first favorable opportunity. In this respect, I attach importance to various responsible commentators in regard to the expressed and unexpressed outlook of the masses in various European countries.

What issues and slogans will bring socialist consciousness and the will to struggle for workers power and socialism more quickly to the surface? They might be many under conditions of dual power, or even otherwise. Demands of an economic, social, political character. For food, for land, for democratic rights, etc. For the early, the present stage, it is the slogan of national liberation that stands out as best able to impel the workers to struggle for their interests: for their freedom; toward the development of dual power situations; toward the social-

ist struggle. The Plenum resolution is sound here. Other issues besides the liberation slogan will of course simultaneously arise, as indicated before. However, in regard to an estimation of the strength of the liberation slogan at this stage, I cannot find in Johnson's article that he differs basically from the Plenum resolution.

In describing the "democratic interlude", the Plenum resolution implies that it may prove to be a period of Allied domination, dominantly if not entirely. This is possible; Certainly the United Nations imperialists are making every possible preparation to achieve such a consummation, among other objectives. The Party's chief task in the United States is to arouse workers against these objectives of the imperialists. In any event, if Allied domination does not become firmly fixed for a period, the job then becomes one of shortening or termination such domination, advancing workers interests as much as possible.

Moreover, it is a fact that after terrific struggles -- and war is the most terrific and terrifying of them all -- the masses do seek a period, if possible, to catch their breath; to re-form and reorganize their forces in order later to be able to pick up the struggle on a higher plane. Sometimes, they are not given even an opportunity for a breathing spell, For instance, where the bourgeoisie are on the offensive. And/or where the objective circumstances force the workers into sharp struggles. One may even say this is obvious.

As related to the questions under discussion -- the National Struggle, SUSE, etc., -- I would say the following. Johnson's document endeavors to describe the conditions or factors that can turn the workers' struggles in an offensive direction. However, in order to refute allegations or suggestions that such a possibility has no real base in reality, and is an arbitrary or schematic conception, Comrade Johnson has to fill out his position, beginning, middle and end, in his forthcoming resolution.

STALINISM REMAINS MENACE

The Plenum resolution gives consideration to Stalinism as a very real menace in the thwarting of both the immediate and ultimate objectives of the masses. I would surely underscore the reality of this danger. Stalinism exists all right -- not only in Russia, but all too much yet in continental Europe itself. The "dead" have risen too often in the past to haunt us. Here Johnson must make clear what he means in respect to the role of Stalinism. In one section he describes the prestige today of Stalin because of Russia's military efforts. Elsewhere, he appears briefly to dismiss both Stalinism and Social-Democracy as major factors in the determination of the course of struggle of the European masses. Johnson, then, should make more clear in what organizational and political light he views the Stalinist menace in the coming period.

A determination by the Party on the role of Stalinism in the European situation should be easiest to arrive at. Their influence is all too plain in the DeGaulist - CP tie-up; in the civil war in Jugo-Slavia; in the underground nationalist movements generally. While I think that objective need may move the workers quickly from the struggle for immediate demands toward the socialist struggle, experience shows that one must not for a moment pass by the deadly role the Stalinists can play in defeating the democratic and socialist objective of the masses.

Does a realization of the nature of the objective situation making for socialist struggle in Europe mean that I would dismiss as inconsequential single, or all, subjective factors aiming to keep the working class in subjection, after Hitler as under Hitler? This would be nonsense; quite otherwise. I would not underestimate the strength of the native bourgeoisie (even if in exile now). It doesn't greatly matter how they might get back into power (if they do), such as with the aid of the Allied powers. The workers are the sufferers. I don't really know much about the Social-Democracy in Europe today; others will have to enlighten. Admittedly, the working class movement, en masse, remains knocked out yet. A correct immediate program can be vital in determining how and if the working class can revive and reorganize itself.

The only significant organized expression of anti-fascism, etc., in Europe today, so far as known, is to be found in the nationalist movements. The reorganization of the working class movement and its revolutionary vanguard will take place almost exclusively, at the beginning in any case, states the Plenum resolution, through participation of the militant and vanguard workers in the amorphous national movements. This may be, possibly is so; in any event there is no need to contest this particularly in itself.

However, in relation to the possible or probable means for the revival of the working class, I would like at least to make the following observation. When the disintegration of Fascism develops more swiftly, it is in the factories, it seems to me, that solid, substantial organizations will rapidly take shape, Further, that the programs of these factory organizations from the outset will embody proposals or a program that go beyond the objective of national independence... But a beginning must be made wherever there is an opening; this opening today exists in the nationalist movements.

Johnson possibly fears that all else except the national struggle will be forgotten. This is possible. That depends, among other considerations, on what kind of socialists there will be in the nationalist movements. If, however, only a question of emphasis re the national struggle is at issue, then Johnson is in a position to place (if others don't or won't.) the national liberation struggle in its varied aspects in relation to his presumably broader conception of the struggle in the next period.

FOOD AND THE WORKERS STRUGGLE

Now on another aspect of the discussion. Assume that some form of national freedom is achieved in the process, or following the defeat, of Hitler. The problems only begin there. Freedom is swell; only it cannot be eaten, nourishing as it is in all other respects. From the outset, the struggle for bread and other necessities will be intense. For a time, bread may be largely in the hands of the Allied imperialist conquerors. They intend to use food as a weapon far more strongly than it was employed in the first world war.

It may well be that the "democratic interlude" (with less and less "democracy" actually existing as time passes) will exhibit its character plainly; by forced acceptance of political domination by the Allied and/or the native bourgeoisie in order for the workers to obtain a piece of bread and some semblance and period of peace. This would betoken a very weak working class, not able to struggle effectively as yet.

However, more probably, while accepting food handouts, the workers will endeavor to put forward their own interests and to build their own organizations. Also, some aspects of the socialist program will appear at the outset of any form of struggle.

This, I believe, is unavoidable as the war between the "nation" and the foreign invader is removed from the agenda ; and the class struggle is transferred directly into division and conflict between the native bourgeoisie and the masses. Dual power struggle can here quickly assert itself, as the resolution shows. However, further, Johnson's article endeavors to indicate that the conscious socialist struggle will then exhibit itself.

This view is rooted essentially in the economic process and the polarization of the classes at such extreme sions in the present period (not in the general historic sense), that the working class is compelled to make serious efforts to break capitalist political domination and private property relations. Unless we consider the proletariat doomed for decades, and nobody that I know of has any such outlook, then it is necessary to estimate more fully the possibilities or probabilities for the earlier revival of the socialist struggle.

It is in this sense, too, that I understand Johnson's endeavor to examine more completely the subjective possibilities for the working class and revolutionary vanguard as related to the present objective situation in Europe. Certainly, such an approach can hardly be regarded as mechanical or abstract in the examination of the relations and effects of objective-subjective relations with one another. This doesn't make the discussion of the National Question one of determining -- or guessing -- how long socialism will take. That would be a meaningless discussion. The Plenum resolution, for instance, gives considerable space to the question of the possibilities of the

working class after national liberation is obtained and in the dual power developments that are likely to take place. Well, to separate the struggle for national liberation from dual power possibilities, rather than to see them as possibly and also probably taking place simultaneously would be to make a mechanical division of the processes.

No one can possibly conceive of the revival of the socialist struggle without intermediary forms of struggle. No one would put arithmetical time figures on the length of all these forms of struggle and processes. But this does not preclude, indeed it makes it more necessary, to pose more fully to the radical workers and our own movement, not only or almost exclusively the necessity for the liberation struggle and our participation in it, but also the possible or probable socialist developments, precisely for the purpose of roundedly orienting the radical workers and our own forces to the tasks of the day.

FREEDOM AND SOCIALISM

Let us look at the problem from still another angle. That is, in respect to the position of a worker in occupied territory; and in respect to the position of a revolutionist listening to and advising such a worker.

The worker in occupied territory burns at the occupation. He is ready to do anything to get the foreign oppressor out of his country. And it is the worker's country. In this respect, too, Marxism gives definite consideration to the national sentiments of the masses, even if their conceptions of nationalism, from our standpoints, are distorted.

Today this worker wants, admittedly, a "Free France". Good. So does the revolutionary. We are certainly in favor of, and will help him to expel the foreign invader by any means at our disposal -- except that we will not give support to the imperialist war; and we tell him our reasons on both counts.

Nevertheless, the expulsion of the foreign invader is a first task in the worker's eyes. We do not and must not forget that. Hence, we do adapt our immediate or transitional slogans to the situation -- the attitude of the masses and the prevalent objective condition. Only, without just arbitrarily talking 'goal', we always keep the goal in mind and try to fit our slogans toward the goal. The mistake and crime of Social Democracy is that it concerned itself exclusively with day to day problems (or so it thought); and that in fact it abandoned the goal. Opportunism became the curse of the movement everywhere. Granted that ultra-leftism, subjective purposes notwithstanding, can become the danger in a given situation, such as on the National Question now under consideration. However, I'm sure many persons will point out the 'leftist' dangers. I want at least to make mention of the opportunist possibilities sticking out of the National Question.

In any event, the worker wants to achieve national liberation. How? Through a "Free France", he says. All right. It is at this point, too, that we have to say to him, despite and because of his experiences with Stalinism, Fascism and bourgeois democracy; and howsoever we fit our approach to his prevailing conceptions:

"A 'Free France' must and can only be a Workers France. You want your democratic rights. You want your labor unions; your parliament; your civil, economic and social rights that you once had in some degree. Very well. Today, in the light of the whole situation as we see it, these and other rights can only be accomplished through and by a Workers Government."

What is a Workers Government in his eyes? It might be all kinds of things. He, with other workers, will create and develop it in accordance with their understanding and, in time, with their needs. He might, probably will shy away from the term "dictatorship" of any kind. Yet he will learn to establish a workers dictatorship, a worker's government -- whatever name he labels his government.

From the beginning, we tell him that a Free France can only mean a Government that is his -- a government of the masses, a workers government. So we tell him plainly. "If you really want your democratic rights, you won't get it from the DeGaulists, et al. They are your enemy; no less, you will learn, than the foreign oppressor if you depend on them or turn over power to them."

To obtain a government of his own, of the masses, certainly isn't the easiest task. He may still insist on going ahead with a species of the "new democracy" or "national independence", bourgeois style. We can only warn him. We tell him at all times that a Free France must be a workers France -- more precisely, a Socialist France; that all else will prove dross. Therefore, from the outset of the liberation struggle (or any other), we pose the socialist solution.

Naturally, in the process, much more is said, Simultaneously, we educate regarding the character of the period or epoch; the anachronism of the old national boundaries; the need for economic and political integrations (but not Churchill or American imperialist integrations, with their fake independence, Allied Quislings, etc.)

It is possible to do all this in varying degrees, adapted to the locale and background of any given struggle (France, Jugo-Slavia, Poland, etc.) However, I likewise stress that slogan #1, the prime immediate slogan, is that of national liberation. However, from the outset, in daily political life, it must be associated with the Socialist goal. Obviously not in hackneyed, sectarian terms, but with a real knowledge of the attitude of the masses as well as of the objective conditions. If dual power factors develop early, then the national liberation slogan manifests its link more quickly and plainly

to the Socialist solution. Thus, the slogan of national liberation must be organically linked with the socialist solution.

IMPERIALISM AND SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

Now a few concluding remarks to this very long letter. The revival of the socialist process without one or another intermediary form of struggle of varying significance is not conceivable in the present circumstances; even if I do not see the duration of these struggles for as long a time as the Plenum resolution seems to indicate. Moreover, one may obviously see factors that can delay socialist progress.

For instance, the bourgeoisie endeavored by military and economic means to crush the Bolshevik revolution -- AFTER the revolution. This time they aim, beforehand, to head off the socialist revolution. Arms -- policing, etc. -- will of course be used. Arms failed to crush the Russian Revolution. I believe that arms again will fail, by themselves, to stem the socialist tide. The economic weapon -- the food blockade of the European masses, if necessary -- can be a very potent weapon in holding the masses in check for a time; and in keeping them from entering more deliberately and consciously into the struggle against the capitalist order in the post-Hitler period.

Therefore, it is conceivable that the social or socialist movement can temporarily be checked at national doors (or less). while the masses undergo the task of reorganizing and reinvigorating their forces for later struggles. Yet granting that such a delaying period is possible, I cannot visualize a stranglehold of the bourgeoisie sufficient to intrench themselves again for even a few decades. I don't see that anyone sees imperialist possibilities in this light. Indeed, for anyone to see the period of the struggle for liberation and the democratic interlude in such terms, would mean that one would have to check socialism at the doors, as beyond our day.

However, the cold analysis of the effects of war on human beings (Louis Dublin, statistician, Metropolitan Insurance Company) should lend encouragement to the possibilities of human and socialist revival. Although war, he concludes, has a most destructive effect upon population, the recuperative powers of the people are very great. "My Day", our day, hence, still foresees the socialist revolution. That is another reason why I seek more concreteness, if possible, on the socialist perspective as well as on the liberation struggle from the Plenum resolution and from Johnson.

Finally, recognizing the validity of the liberation struggle, revolutionists must participate actively and consciously in the national movements. We do this militantly, with a sureness of its value for the class interests of the proletariat and its vanguard. We know, too, that the bourgeoisie are unable to fight seriously even for their class interests, if the potentials of that struggle go beyond bourgeois bounds, as is

implicit in the liberation struggle. If it is the only way they can prevent a full working class development of the national struggle, the bourgeoisie will choose slavery (with the economic and social benefits they can still obtain even under totalitarian political rule). Anything is preferable to them as against the struggle for national freedom from foreign imperialism entering the field of struggle for freedom from class exploitation.

This only emphasizes the need (while taking part in the national movement) to bring the class, the socialist features simultaneously to the front; precisely to demonstrate that the reality beneath the national struggle is the class struggle, and to try to give a steady impetus to the latter. This can result in a swifter conjuncture of the national and the class or socialist struggle.

Because this possibility is as real as any political situation or perspective can be real, emphasis needs to be given to Germany, to the German revolution. If the German masses can avoid complete military annihilation and its consequences, then all signs point (under the conditions of a defeated Hitler) to the ability of the German masses (without the "assistance" of the Allies) to dispose of the German regime and system in their own way; and then also to take care of their own political future. For the ideology of Nazism is discredited in Germany, too.

Thereby, too, is established the key role of Germany in relation to the national and European situation and the manner in which I estimate or approach Johnson's evaluation of Germany in relation to Europe.

As the war proceeds and moves toward conclusions, a condition develops or will develop, in Europe, which has been described as populations without Government and the end of national solidarity -- in the accepted bourgeois sense. That is then the social chaos of capitalism; and that fluid condition which operates favorably for the intervention of the working class for the struggle for power and the Socialist organization of society. Since blue prints for revolution are silly, it is all the more necessary to see all the major factors in the situation in order better to be able to establish the position of the liberation slogan in the class struggles of the next period.

Hence, in view of all the foregoing, I have decided to await the issuance of Johnson's resolution on the entire question before I adopt a final position.

Best wishes,

Harry Allen

5/5/43

P.S. Since my visit to New York and the brief talks with you, Max and Jimmy, I have only been confirmed in my present attitude.

Issues on the National Question:

A Reply to Harry Allen

Dear Harry:

I have your letter of May 5th dealing with Johnson's article on the national question and the situation which developed as a result of his vote against the plenum resolution. It is certainly a peculiar letter you have written - 19 single space pages to announce that you have doubts on all sides, have no real position on the question itself, and don't know what to do about it all. On the other hand, on the basis of no position and considerable confusion, you stand prepared to defend Johnson's views, which you do not fully comprehend or agree with, as against those of the Plenum. Moreover, you also seek to explain what Johnson himself is unable to explain, in your section "The Essence of Johnson's Conceptions." Such a method of polemics is fantastic. It avoids the real issues in dispute, and substitutes secondary questions which both J. and you have introduced, and in a totally confused manner. To put it bluntly: the issues raised by J. and supported in such a "peculiar" way by yourself, are false issues calculated to prevent a clarification of the single most important and new proposal contained in the plenum resolution.

Let us clear the air. What is the history of the plenum document?

More than a year and a half ago, the new position of the NC was discussed and adopted in a provisional way. From that time until the present, a continuous discussion has been going on inside the Party and in the NI. We finally reach a point at the last plenum where the NC was in a position to adopt a definitive position based primarily on the new idea (national liberation) previously accepted unanimously by everyone. A detailed document is introduced at the plenum and adopted after considerable discussion. All our friends participated, presenting new ideas, different nuances on some questions, disagreements with other parts of the document. But the discussion ended with every single member of the NC supporting the main line of the resolution. Or so it appeared at the time. Aware that the new ideas were introduced in the discussions, amendments posed, deletions desired, the plenum decided to permit a period in which amendments and corrections might be made. Such amendments and corrections were made and for the most part, became part of the resolution. The resolution, in my opinion an excellent document and one of the really original contributions made in our movement during the many years of its existence, was thereafter adopted by the PC on the authority unanimously granted it by the Plenum - including you and Johnson.

You voted for this resolution. If you made representations about changing your vote after the plenum, they were not made to the NC, nor was there any indication, until J. presented his article, that your views differed from the Committee's. With the publication of your letter, we now know that you do not agree with the plenum resolution, but it is impossible to say what you do believe. No one will understand what your position is from a reading of your letter.

An unenviable position for a leader to present to a membership he is supposed to help clarify and educate!

How Johnson Presented His Views

How do matters stand in relation to J.? For a number of unfortunate reasons, J. was unable to participate in the post-plenum discussion which completed the document. If he had an important point of view, not contained in the resolution, there was no reason why he did not discuss those views first in the Committee. In that way he would have availed himself of the opportunity of exchanging his views with the leading body and the possibility of either convincing it, or correcting himself of erroneous impressions and false ideas. But he is not interested in the leading body - and neither, apparently, are you.

An exchange of ideas is always fruitful, even though they do not always change one's views. In that way, at least, the Committee would have been apprised of Johnson's views. This is correct procedure; it is the way responsible leaders conduct themselves. Not so with J. What does he do? He communicates to the committee his vote against the resolution in two lines. But the detailing of his position and the explanation of his vote are made publicly known before the committee is formally or informally advised.

In explanation for this action, J. says: While I agree with 3/4 of the resolution, i.e., agree with what it says on the colonial question, agree with the slogan for national liberation in Europe(!), I am voting against the resolution! Why? Listen to this: because there is no Cannonite opposition to the resolution. My views, therefore, can be discussed on their own merits. If a Cannonite opposition existed, I would vote for the resolution with amendments. This specious reasoning has made it possible for J. to present "his own" platform on the national question.

It is possible for J. to take such a ludicrous position because he does not, in fact, agree with the resolution and its main emphasis. These remarks are made because they have bearing on what follows.

After the first public discussion revealed that Johnson was pursuing an irresponsible procedural position, he announced that he would introduce his own resolution on the dispute. But more than two months have elapsed and no resolution has yet been produced. Obviously then, J.'s organizational conduct in relation to his vote and the first discussion was not due to excessive haste - but to his erroneous politics. How do you help to clarify matters? Instead of trying to educate Johnson in the theory and practice of revolutionary organization and procedure, about which he knows nothing, refused to learn anything, and seems to care little, you write a 19-page letter of confusion which only muddies up the water. Thus in a negative way, you offer an opportunity to set the issues straight and guide the organization to a correct position.

This is what I endeavored to do in my NI article (June issue). Because that polemic appeared in a public organ, I felt myself

bound by certain forms, felt it necessary to "pull punches," J.'s article hardly warranted such an approach because it is in all respects, an attack on the plenum resolution. Lip-service support is given to the slogan of national liberation, while every conceivable argument is leveled against it to prove that the slogan of the SUSE is the "urgent" slogan, the one that is "on the order of the day."

You say that J's article and views are "not necessarily in itself in opposition to the committee's." On the contrary, they are fundamentally in opposition to those of the plenum, and you have yourself written 19 pages of doubt to prove that.

The Party is now engaged in a discussion of the national question. Around what does this discussion revolve? In New York, it is based on J's article. I have no doubt that this is true elsewhere. As I told you when you were here, some of J's supporters (they were supporters of his position before it was even known by the Committee) have already categorized themselves as the "minority." On what basis? Perhaps a contrary resolution? A political motion? An amendment? No, none of these things which are normal. That would be contrary to J's mode of procedure. They are taking a position on a question upon which they cannot take a position and formulate a faction program: namely, is the Socialist United States of Europe nearer or further away?

I note too that you have fallen in with this abysmal kind of debate, although somewhere you ask the question: how near is near? There must be some order to this discussion, otherwise it will be impossible to bring clarity to the organization.

What is the Importance of Johnson's Methodology?

When I wrote you that J's document spends a great deal of time describing the objective character of capitalist society, that there was no necessity for this, that it was of no special value to this discussion, I tried to direct your attention to the matter of his methodology, hoping that you might thereby catch the cue and see the essential error of his primitive thinking. While at that time, I did not see all the ramifications of his views, I do now, and I say the Party must reject them decisively, lest it becomes entangled in a skein of misleading generalities, not worth the paper they are written on. For Johnson, these generalities on the nature of the social order are necessary in order to reject the main thought of the plenum resolution.

To repeat some contemporaries, this was not by accident. In his fight with Lenin over the same question (self determination) Kievsky (Piatakov) also invoked the objective character of imperialist capitalism, constantly shouting about the nature of the "epoch," as if this generality answered the concrete problems.

You write that you find unquestioned and significant merit in J's document precisely because of this approach. You also write that you "like very much the" broader, historical scope and analysis that his article bears..." This is only possible to you

for want of a position. In absence of a position on the concrete questions, you, like J., must prefer the "broader" and "historical" approach, since it commits you to nothing but a favorable attitude toward socialism. Lenin had J. in mind when he wrote about Kievsky: "According to him, to speak concretely is to speak about the 'epoch!' This is exactly where he is wrong!" (Emphasis mine-AG)

Elsewhere in his essay "A Caricature of Marxism," Lenin writes: "An epoch is called an epoch precisely because it embraces the sun of different phenomena and war, typical and non-typical, great and small, characteristic of the advanced countries, and also characteristic of backward countries. Brushing these concrete questions aside by advancing general phrases about the 'epoch', as P. Kievsky (read: Johnson) does, is an abuse of the term 'epoch'."

Again, in relation to continued arguments by Kievsky against Lenin's position, the latter wrote:

"The whole of his arguments can be boiled down to this one point: the socialist revolution will solve everything." (See Johnson on Germany)

Johnson's description of the social epoch would be meritorious under other circumstances and for other occasions (a class in capitalism, an attack on the bourgeoisie, a public agitational meeting for socialism). There is, however, nothing significant in his contribution on the epoch, and it has served no purpose in this discussion except to provide the basis for J's opposition to the plenum resolution.

The question of methodology and purpose is of acute interest for all of us. Our movement is grounded upon a certain concept of present-day capitalism. It is based upon the theory of the decay and disintegration of modern capitalism, a theory which has been the foundation stone of revolutionary socialist thought and practice since the 1st world war. Objective conditions have made socialism an overripe necessity, and these conditions have been with us for a long, long time. All our thinking is qualified and influenced by this conception. Everything we write, is with that analysis in mind. It has become ingrained in our politics and is a lasting tradition handed down by Lenin, Trotsky and the early Comintern. Our movement, our particular party, its program, its system of ideas, its activities, are all predicated explicitly and implicitly on the conviction that it is a matter of either capitalist barbarism or socialism. All our previous programmatic documents were drawn up with this basic concept before us. The political resolution just adopted poses the problem of the day in that way. The national resolution contains it as the introduction to all the ideas which follow.

Why do I cite all of this? To convince you? No, I am reminding the party of these facts. You are supposed to know all of this very well. Your document is therefore all the more incomprehensible.

When I see a document on a specific question like the national question which is new for our party, and I find J. taking page after page to describe the epoch under which we live, I am again reminded of Lenin's comment on Alexinsky, after he spoke cuttingly of Kievsky's "phrases." Lenin wrote:

"Even at the London Congress in 1907, the Bolsheviks turned away from Alexinsky when, in reply to theoretical arguments, he assumed the pose of an agitator declaiming high-sounding phrases against some form or other of exploitation and oppression, totally irrelevant to the subject. 'The squealing has started,' our delegates used to say, when he held forth. And this 'squealing' did Alexinsky no good."

J. declaims and agitates in place of providing an answer to the real question. But there is a purpose behind his rhetoric. Otherwise all of it would be unnecessary. The purpose is to formulate another point of view (in itself perfectly permissible) while protesting that he agrees with the main new idea of the resolution. If this is what you call J's different approach, then either you do not understand what he is driving at, or you agree with him. In case of the latter, there is nothing for you to do but to say so and formulate a clear-cut position so that the party will know where you stand.

The Nature of the Plenum Resolution

In my NI article I state that J. does not know the difference between a partial, an agitational slogan and an ultimate, a programmatic slogan, or between a democratic and a socialist slogan. In that article, I quoted the first paragraph of his contribution, and then I presented a number of quotations which show that he believes and advocates the use of the SUSE slogan as the active, agitational slogan in opposition to the slogan of national liberation. I shall reproduce them for your benefit.

Before that, however, it is necessary to emphasize the place of the plenum resolution. The resolution deals with something new. Why? Because we gave up any idea of national question in "advanced" Europe a long time ago. Because we never before had a perspective that national liberation was an acute and living question for those countries of Europe. The adoption of this resolution by the committee, marks a departure from our previous position. It is not necessary to convince our people that capitalism is ripe for socialism. It is not necessary to convince the party that the SUSE is our programmatic aim and that there is no hope for the European masses except through the realization of the SUSE. But it is necessary to educate our movement in an understanding of why the national question has been revived in Europe, what it means, how it is to be used, and what are the possibilities of a socialist development arising from the struggle for national liberation. Because it is new, because the resolution is oriented towards this new idea, it occupies and must occupy the central position in the document.

With Johnson, however, it is altogether different. To him there is nothing new except the fact that capitalism is at an impasse and that we are faced with the alternative: barbarism or socialism. To him, the most important thing in the new situation is not the new idea, but an old position, which he regards as "on the order of the day," "nearer, not farther away."

You ask whether the concept of national liberation is for a few years or an epoch, i.e., whether the dual power will be resolved favorably or unfavorably for the proletariat, and how soon. Don't you know better than that? Is there anyone who pictures the dual power as lasting for an epoch? Or for years and years? The plenum resolution is very explicit on this point. It views the situation dynamically, and sees the swift development of the class struggle in the very process of the national struggle. After all, the whole matter will be resolved by the organized power of the working class. I cannot tell you how long that will be, nor can anyone else. If a powerful proletarian movement is revived, the transition will be shorter (we will be closer to workers' power). If we fail to rebuild the party and the International on the Continent, the dual power will be resolved in favor of the bourgeoisie. Posing the slogan of the SUSE, "nearer, not further away" is totally without meaning; it does not help to clarify the question. It is father to confusion. It is wishful thinking of a purely idealistic character.

You continually mix up and confuse matters by saying that the resolution "implies" that the programmatic slogan is further away. In the first place, from what? In the second place, where does it say that? Or, where does it imply that? Isn't the whole section on the dual power a refutation of this charge? Johnson makes the charge because he doesn't understand the question at all. He evidently doesn't know what the dual power is. But why should you repeat it? Is it because muddling is now a virtue in the movement? You add that, in your belief, the tempo will be swifter than is "indicated or implied" in the resolution. Therefore, I ask you: swifter than what? In days? In months? In years? It is unanswerable, although in one instance in your letter you indicate your belief that it will be some years (Johnson in speaking of his new discovery of Germany, repeatedly speaks of 1943). This is, however, not the kind of question which can lead to clarity, because in the last analysis, the struggle in Europe will be resolved by the working class and therefore, everything is dependent upon the rebirth of its organizations and its revolutionary parties.

Propaganda and Agitational Slogans

I set out to say that Johnson negates the slogan for national liberation by the manner in which he poses the slogan for the SUSE. In the very first paragraph of his article, he admits that it is a propaganda slogan. Then he says that this slogan has its place! (Whom is he arguing against?) He adds that any orientation which placed the SUSE further away and not nearer is due to a "deep, a profound, miscomprehension! of the European crisis." (Emphasis mine). Mind you, a deep, profound, miscomprehension! Is Johnson serious, or is he exercising his customary literary license? Again, will you kindly explain the content of this hidden polemic? I ask

the question of you, because Johnson says it in his article:

"To push into the background or to moderate the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe. This is completely false. Exactly the opposite must be done. (page 149)... If you grasp the basic fact of degenerating capitalism, grasp it in its concreteness, the slogan can be seen here in its true relation, nearer, not further away...(page 149)"

In speaking of the Roosevelt-Churchill offensive to control Europe, he again reveals his position:

"The revolutionary movement, whatever its size (!) must on this issue take the offensive. But it can do this only around the slogan, the Socialist United States of Europe." (Emphasis mine)(Page 151.)

Or:

"But the very circumstances of Germany, with seven and a half million foreign workers revolting against German capitalism concentrated in the fascist state, automatically places on the order of the day the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe." (Emphasis mine) (Page 151)

I shall return to the question of Germany to show how faulty is Johnson's whole concept regarding the probable developments in Europe. But let us continue on this slogan. The way to defend the German masses from hounding by the victors, the way to win the German masses from Hitlerism, is not by "mere assertion" of declarations of friendship for them, or in a struggle for their basic interests. No!

"It must take the form of a ceaseless pounding day and night of the slogan, the Socialist United States of Europe." (Emphasis mine) page 152.

Further:

"The living truth is that the slogan is now more concrete than at any time since 1933." (Emphasis mine) page 153

Finally:

"It is this dual role of collapsing capital which undeviatingly and inexorably moves the slogan, the Socialist United States of Europe, from the realm of abstraction to the realm of actuality. (page 154)

What About the Socialist United States

The slogan as conceived of by the Bolsheviks and adopted by us was not and is not now an abstraction. Its degree of "nearness" has nothing to do with whether it is an abstraction or an actuality. The question is whether the living class forces are at hand to make it a reality. Its objective reality is created by the acute and insoluble crisis of capitalism and by the necessity of socialism. But its realization is dependent upon certain indispensable factors which J. does not understand, which do not even figure in his scheme.

The slogan is not more urgent today than it was 20 years ago. It is not more on the order of the day than it was in 1923. It is not more concrete than it was in Germany in 1933, Austria in 1934, Spain in 1935-37, or in France during the same period. If anything, it is less "urgent". For twenty years ago, ten years ago, and even six and seven years ago, there was a living movement in existence on the continent. There were parties and labor movements which were the basis for preparing the struggle for power, not in the abstract, but in the concrete. Bear in mind that before you can have a SUSE, nay, before you can use the slogan in a "concrete" way, there must of necessity be a revolutionary party in one or more countries in a position to struggle for power and to seize it.

The Comintern embodied this slogan in its program - not as the "urgent" day to day question, but as the propagandist slogan of the International. It fitted in correctly with its concept of the international character of October and the historical and social necessity of its extension, with the prospects of a proletarian victory in Germany. The first four congresses of the Comintern developed the strategy and tactics for what? For the seizure of state power by the workers in a series of countries, the victorious results of which would have led to the concretization of the slogan of the SUSE! Who sees this problem correctly: the N.C., or Johnson, with his vapid generalizations, or you, with equivocation and doubt?

J. is perpetrating a hoax on the party as a result of his ignorance of the history of revolutionary organization and revolutionary politics and practice. It is clear from his article that he does not know anything about the history of the slogan of SUSE, when it was adopted, how it was used and how it fitted in with the CI program of that period.

I indicated in the NI that the slogan was adopted at the end of 1923! Why then, and not 1919? How will J. explain this "omission" on the part of Lenin's Comintern from the years 1919 to 1923 - those bloody years of revolutionary upheaval? Perhaps he will say that Lenin did not comprehend the decay of capitalism and the crossroad: socialism or barbarism. Perhaps he will say that Lenin did not understand that socialism was on the order of the day! Why not? Why shouldn't he say that, and why shouldn't you repeat that after him? That is what he says now about us.

The slogan of the SUSE was first adopted only on the basis of a specific situation in the contest of international class forces! It was Trotsky who first raised the question in an article: Now is

the time to Raise the Slogan of the United States of Europe" (late summer, 1933) Radek followed later with an endorsement of this article. It was adopted with great hesitancy. Lenin, in 1915-16, feared that the slogan might divert the attentions of the parties from their national tasks of taking power. He thought it might create the concept of the revolution as a simultaneous, spontaneous and automatic continental upheaval.

What made it possible to adopt the slogan at this time and not before? Two things. (1) The prospect of the German proletarian revolution. (2) The existence of a revolutionary workers' state in Russia! Does J. comprehend the meaning of these two conditions? Of course not. He does not understand the slogan, he does not understand how it is used, he does not understand its specific value. Now can he when he is lost in verbiage, phrases and self-agitation, and is impervious to teaching.

How the Resolution Formulates It!

Contrast his approach with the approach of the resolution, which J. has either not read or failed to understand, and which you have obviously chosen to ignore. I want to quote at length from the resolution's treatment of the SUSE, because to listen to J. and some other brash people who do not bother to read what they criticize, one might think that we do not even mention the slogan of the SUSE. The resolution, devoted particularly to this question in its dialectical relation to the struggle of the classes, reads:

"The Marxists are distinguished from all other groups because, among other slogans, they put forward the slogan of "the Socialist United States of Europe." They link this slogan to the call for national independence of the oppressed countries, because they understand that fundamentally it is impossible to establish genuine national and social freedom in Europe except in the form of a socialist United States... Only a socialist United States of Europe can resolve the problem of a continent being bled white and threatened with ruin and decay. It alone can make an efficient economic unit of the continent, guarantee the maximum political liberty, and assure an unviolated freedom of cultural development to the multitude of national groups in Europe. No reactionary power or combination of powers anywhere in the world could seriously attack such a union. On the other hand, the examples of progress such a union could assure would have an irresistible effect upon the capitalist world and contribute to its speedy downfall. Short of a socialist union, it is no exaggeration to say that Europe is headed for sure doom...The revolutionary socialists must now more than ever before lay stress upon this point of view, which is the (in the original, strategical key to the fundamental problem of Europe today.

"However, under the concrete circumstances in Europe today, the slogan of "a Socialist United States of Europe" is primarily a propaganda slogan, which is by no means to be identified with the agitational and action slogan of "national independence" which clearly and simply expresses the wishes of the broad masses. The propaganda slogan is a socialist slogan; the agitational slogan is a democratic slogan. While in the conception of the Marxists, there is no Chinese wall between these slogans, the two should nevertheless not be identified, used interchangeably or mixed up together indiscriminately. The reason has nothing to do with literary distinctions, but with two important political considerations. (emphasis in the original)

"First, it is not reasonable to believe, and past experience does not warrant the belief, that the masses of people, having been ground into the dust for years by a dictatorial regime, in which they did not enjoy the slightest semblance of democratic rights, will upon overturning such a regime, proceed directly to the establishment of an 'authoritarian' socialist, proletarian government, which would immediately 'break the united democratic national front.' There is even less reason to believe that they will do this in consideration of the fact that most workers and peasants identify a 'socialist government' with the horrible caricature of it which is the Stalinist dictatorship. Having been deprived for so long of any democratic liberties, the masses, once they have overturned the Hitlerite despotism, will in all likelihood demand 'democracy in general,' that is. bourgeois democracy. To identify 'national liberation' with the slogan of the 'Socialist United States of Europe,' which means the proletarian dictatorship on a European scale, can only tend to cause the masses to counterpose the struggle for national independence to the struggle for socialism, whereas in reality the fullest accomplishment of the former is possible only by the victory of the latter. This truth must be learned by the masses in the course of their own experiences, however, not dogmatically imposed upon them in advance by erroneous political pedagogy of the Marxists. (Emphasis in original)

"Secondly, the slogan of the "Socialist United States of Europe" was first put forward by the Marxists under conditions when the European proletariat was ready for the socialist struggle for power, but above all, when Europe was divided into a number of independent states. To believe that this slogan should occupy the same place in the Marxian program, and above all, in the Marxian platform, in the revolutionary transitional demands, now, when Europe is

divided into one independent state and a whole series of subject nations, is the sheerest kind of abstractionism and dogmatism, and represents a failure to understand the radical change that has taken place in the European situation. Before the masses can see the 'Socialist United States of Europe' as a realistic slogan, they undoubtedly want to have at their disposal independent national states capable of deciding freely whether or not they want to be federated into a continental union. A false line in this respect can easily be interpreted by the masses, or interpreted for them by reformist and reactionary demagogues, as an attempt to shift them from one forced continental union in which each people or nation is deprived of its identity, to another union by compulsion, even if the first represented Hitlerite tyranny and the second represents the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat. Here again is seen the error and the great harm that can be done by identifying the democratic slogan for national liberation with the socialist slogan of the United States of Europe. Here again, it is necessary to emphasize that only by speaking and acting as the most resolute champions of unequivocal national liberation for the now oppressed peoples of Europe can the revolutionary Marxists help these peoples learn most speedily from their own experience that true national freedom and equality for all of them can be assured only under the banner of a socialistically united continent and, eventually, a socialist world. (All emphasis, mine except where indicated.)

Compare this organized thought, this properly placed analysis of the slogan and its relation to the living struggle, with the disorganized and schematic analysis given by J. What you have to answer is what is wrong with this picture. Is it wrong from the point of view of Marxist theory? Is it a false appreciation of the European situation? Does it falsely describe the probable development of the concrete struggle? Does it "negate" the struggle for socialism or does it "slow down" this struggle? I believe that the position of the Committee is clear, and moreover, unassailable. Do you disagree with this? Then say so. Does Johnson disagree with this? Let him say so. Then everyone will know where the differences are in relation to a concrete position taken by the committee. To take positions on the ground of "inferences" and "implications" is, in my opinion, impermissible.

Immediately following this clear and adequate presentation of the place of the propaganda slogan, is a long section on the dual power. Is there anything you disagree with in that section? If so, what is it? Does Johnson disagree with any part of it? Let him say so. Let's have done with equivocation and debate based on a "belief" that this might be implied, or that might be inferred.

The Essence of the Question

My own special emphasis on this whole question, I already made clear in my NI article. I should like to summarize it here again. The need of the hour is the resurrection of the workers movement in general and its revolutionary socialist wing in particular. Without that, my dear Harry, we have nothing.

From that I am led to what I believe to be the real meaning of Johnson's apparent preoccupation with the character of the imperialist epoch. He sees the whole problem resolved automatically, spontaneously, on the basis of the social crisis. But do you know that there is no such thing as the final crisis of capitalism - no such thing as the "final collapse"? Johnson sees the crisis automatically impelling the workers onto the socialist road. That is an empty generalization. It holds true not only for the Europe of today, but has held true for a long time. Circumstances, that is, the objective conditions, for an extended period prior to the war were just as ripe, and the prospects for success even better, as was evidenced by the existence of large movements of the workers and by the fact that you did have a civil war in Spain, which was, in essence, a struggle for socialism. What have you got now?

There is not a single revolutionary or any other labor mass party in existence in Europe. Is the recognition of this truth pessimism, or is it the first essential step toward a realistic and correct policy? Unless you want to call Johnson's "six workers of Lyon" an organized mass, you cannot but acknowledge this state of affairs. Now, without the existence of a vanguard movement, what can be achieved? Can you supply the answer? Then what does it all add up to? Simply, that the fundamental task in Europe is the recreation of the revolutionary party and international on the basis of the real progressive movement that the masses are involved in today.

The plenum resolution recognizes this as the central problem, and if you read it you will find how logically it conceives of the struggle for national liberation as the instrument through which the working class can be put into motion against capitalism and thus ripen the conditions for the reestablishment of the revolutionary party.

.Doesn't it occur to you that the mere fact that the question of national liberation arises in Europe after we had "closed the doors" to such a development, means that some kind of upheaval must have occurred? The upheaval is itself the expression of the insoluble nature of the capitalist crisis. The committee, I believe, understands the significance of this development. Its approach to the problem is dialectical, i.e., scientific. Johnson's is a mechanical and automatic conception without appreciation of class forces and class relations. As usual, he lives in an abstract world. The world of reality is beyond him, and thus we have a partial explanation, at least, why his approach to the really crucial question is primarily literary. It doesn't do any good to indicate to Johnson what he should write, how he should construct his resolution, or to speak for him in trying to discover that he means something altogether

different from what he has written. That is the reason why your own position is so anomalous, because it places you in a position where you have no point of view. You have yourself hopelessly dangling in mid air, awaiting something or other from Johnson to bring you down to the ground once more.

Trotsky and Lenin

I have, however, additional evidence from Johnson's own words to prove that his position is in fundamental opposition to the committees. He ought to be more forthright about it, to be sure. For example, on page 117 of the April issue of the NI, he quotes from Trotsky re the Czech situation and the possible reintroduction of the national question if and when Germany seized that country. Trotsky rejected that idea but cited a number of ifs which might raise the national question in Europe once more. Trotsky did not regard these ifs as likely developments (defeat of proletariat, conquest of Europe by a conquerer, etc.) And Johnson asks: "Is one of those historical conditions to be considered as fulfilled? Most obviously not." But if none of these conditions have been fulfilled, why is Johnson for the slogan of national liberation - even formally? Do you think I do him an injustice? Well, on that very same page, he says: Behind any proposal to make a change in the application of the socialist slogan (who is proposing a change, and what has that to do with the problem?), undoubtedly lurks some variant of the idea that Lenin put forward in 1915. Given certain conditions of continued reaction and domination of Europe by a single power, a great national war is once more possible in Europe. No such situation as Lenin envisaged is visible in Europe today (emphasis mine)." Yes, Lenin outlined some conditions whereby the national question might be reintroduced. It might be the failure of the working class to take power, the continued existence of imperialism, the rise of a new Napoleonic power in Europe. Have any of these conditions, in whole or in part, with similarities to Lenin's postulations, taken place? We say, yes! Johnson says, no. Then again, I ask you: Why should he be for the slogan of national liberation? The only understandable explanation is that he does not actually accept it. He gives it lip-service support, and that is why the emphasis throughout his article is for the SUSE, a slogan whose origin he does not know, and whose history and application are a mystery to him.

You say J. is driving for a "swifter turn of the efforts of the masses from the primarily national freedom struggle into the socialist struggle" and that this cannot be accomplished if our "dominant emphasis are in regard to the democratic objectives."

I should like to use the word "bunk" in reply to this statement. But perhaps it would be better if I say a word about the whole matter of where our emphasis should be. I say the emphasis must be placed on support to the slogan for national liberation. It is on this question that we have to educate the party and through the party the layers of advanced workers. I am afraid you have hold of the wrong end of the horse. The fact of the matter is, that we are

not in this national movement. The fact of the matter is, that we have not yet even convinced all the Marxists that they should be in this movement. The fact of the matter is, that we have not yet convinced them that the slogan of national liberation is correct, and that it is an instrument through which the struggle for socialism can be developed.

We are confronted with a situation where the bourgeoisie and the reformists have greater domination, control and influence over the national movements than we, and, left unchallenged, they can and will turn them into reactionary channels for the realization of their imperialist aims. The real fear is that we will not hasten the socialist struggle because we shall be isolated from these movements and their struggles. You forget that the party has not yet adopted the point of view of the NC - although I am certain that it will. Then, who else holds the views of the NC? The Cannonites? No, they stand, more or less, with Johnson. We are alone on this question, except for agreement from a couple of the sections of the 4th International. And our problem is to educate the movement to an acceptance of this new proposal. You, however, already have jumped to the conclusion of the struggle in Europe. But only in your head.

One important difference between the two slogans is that the agitational slogan permits of immediate participation in the living movement of the masses within each conquered country, that is, movements as they exist at the present time. The propaganda slogan is a generality which has no serious content unless there has been established the subjective conditions whereby it may, can and must be employed. When you have that latter situation, the slogan of the SUSE begins to mean something. Otherwise, it has only a general, theoretical, programmatic value.

Again, Belief and Fantasy

Somewhere in your letter you say that the political resolution declares that the workers will proceed quickly to put their own stamp or program on the national struggle, but that you do not see this in the national resolution. What kind of talk is this? The national resolution flows out of the ideas of the political resolution. The two documents are politically one document; they are not contradictory. Johnson regards the two documents as unrelated. The point is that what you find omitted from the national resolution is contained in it, as you must acknowledge when making reference to the section on the dual power. But this brings us to the question of the "democratic interlude." In your opinion, the resolution foresees this stage as a protracted one, of "years and years duration." It does not say that. Johnson makes that change, but changing does not make it so.

You state that Johnson sees the possibility of workers' governments or workers' power as nearer than does the plenum resolution. And where did you get that? In the plenum resolution? How much nearer does he see it? Here again, you are accepting an assertion for reality. You couldn't prove such a charge. It is merely a case once more of an impression, or a feeling! That is not enough to go

on, and it is certainly odd grounds upon which to support a political position. Suppose I ask you: How near? When will we see workers power? In a few months? A few years? 1945?

The question you should concern yourself with is the matter of the organization of the revolutionary party. You will not have a socialist victory if you believe that it will come automatically, spontaneously and naturally in the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Socialism is not guaranteed because we live in the epoch of "barbarism or socialism." It can only come if we have a party organized and steered in the ideas of Marxism, in Bolshevism and the lessons of the Russian Revolution, a party which can take power, hold it and know what to do with it.

You say elsewhere: "Johnson's document endeavors to describe the conditions or factors that can turn the workers' struggles in an offensive direction."

Is this supposed to mean that the struggle for national liberation is not an "offensive" struggle of the workers? The problem remains, how to utilize this struggle for socialist purposes. On the basis of Johnson's document, you can forget all about this problem. All you have to do is shout the slogan of SUSE, talk about historical necessity and impulses from now until the end of time. No one will listen to you. What is needed are instruments which can give power and direction to the slogan. These we do not yet have! But this is exactly what J. does not understand, nor does he desire to understand it. What follows thereafter in his articles is, in my opinion, crucial. J. says: "powerful barriers between the workers of Europe no longer exist." (page 153). If this is true, the slogan of national liberation loses its force and applicability. He says that the social democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies no longer exist in Europe! Isn't this nonsense? But you find yourself incapable of saying so. What you do, is say, I'll wait until he writes a resolution and see if this is really his point of view. It is not necessary to wait. The view is integral to his whole outlook. He says further on that our hypothetical half dozen Lyon revolutionists have an opportunity a hundred times greater than in 1939--so long as they do not counterpose theories and slogans to action. Not less than a hundred times greater!

To continue this absurd view, he writes: "But it is urged the proletariat in the occupied countries is sluggish, it is not organized; the revolutionary movement is non-existent, etc. But how much bigger was the revolutionary movement yesterday than it is today?" (Emphasis mine) You cannot get around this question. Johnson lives in the clouds. The mass movements, the struggles of the proletariat, the tasks of organization, the creation of a party, of activizing the masses, of engaging them in struggle - these are not within his view of the world situation, nor do they make up an integral element of his program, or outlook. But I used to think you are an old hand at this game and you know that everything is dependent precisely upon the existence, the strength or weakness of the revolutionary vanguard.

Without seeing this problem, how can J. see any problem in Europe? This is the alpha and omega of the whole question.

You say a determination by the party of the role of Stalinism in Europe should be easy to arrive at. We arrived at that some time ago. But Johnson hasn't begun to appreciate the question because he has already solved it the easy way. He dismissed and dissolved the Stalinists with one scribble of the pen. Is it an important question? Does it effect the reorganization of the workers' movement? Does it make our task harder or easier?

The Great "German Question."

A word about Germany. An impression is being created that this is the central problem in Europe. I don't think so. But assuming that the resolution does not treat the question fully, is it not possible to rectify this omission, which, by the way, does not effect the main orientation of the resolution? As a matter of fact, it was not J. who first raised the question, it was another member of the committee. But J's insistence on Germany arises from his opposition to the main line of the resolution. Why? Because in his mind the national question in Europe would be automatically solved by what happens in Germany. We say: Not so fast. What he overlooks is a whole struggle taking place now. What he overlooks is the military struggle between the bourgeois powers in Europe. What he fails to see is that the national struggle for a series of countries in Europe is the question now and not in 1945, in Germany, as he writes. Even if the problem of Hitler is resolved in Germany soon, the main slogan there would not be, as he insists, the SUSE, but the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the workers power. Germany, the conqueror, may become Germany the conquered, and then another series of ideas will have to be put forth by the Marxist vanguard to meet that problem. It is much easier to settle the whole question by the pen than it is in life, and J's views on Germany are likewise unreal and totally without relation to the living movement and the existence of a revolutionary party. The hue and cry raised about Germany is only another way of avoiding the immediate question of national liberation. Whatever one might say on Germany, it would in no way invalidate but strengthen the views of the resolution of the plenum. This is a simple matter to correct, if correction is needed; but it cannot be done by hysterical shrieking, by inciting young people who do not know the things necessary to know to understand fully the implications of such large questions. Do you help to clarify these issues? I don't think so. You take this relatively subordinate question and also try to make it the main question.

A Poor Model for a Leaflet

What better proof do you want for everything I have said above than the manner in which J. "concretizes" his views and the resolution's main slogan. Read his leaflet to the German oppressors. All Europe hates you, he says, forgetting all about the absence of barriers, of which he wrote previously. Get out or we will shoot you, he thunders, and then concludes with the DeGaulist slogan: Long Live Free France! (By the way, this is not our slogan). But as I pointed out in my article, who is supposed to be the author of this

resolution? French workers? Then why is the programmatic slogan, the SUSE tacked on without logic to the end of the resolution? Is this leaflet the product of a revolutionary organization? Then it is good for nothing, for it is tainted with reactionary nationalism, and not with the spirit of socialism, which places the national question in its proper context.

If the revolutionary Marxists do not participate in the movements for national liberation, and become the champion of national freedom, then there will be no force in a position to raise the class issues, the socialist issues, and to influence the direction of these progressive movements. The plenum resolution is calculated to hasten the class differentiations which must emerge from the conflict, to hasten the struggle for socialism, and to lay a solid foundation for the creation of the revolutionary parties.

I think I have quoted enough from Johnson to show that he does not in truth accept the need for placing the agitational slogan in the forefront. You say you will wait and see if this is the case when and if he presents a resolution on this question! Do you see why I say you have an anomalous position? Let us accept that you wish to withdraw your support to the plenum resolution. But you have given no concrete reasons for such an action. Is it because you agree with J? But you state that you will wait until he presents his resolution. What will that resolution be like? You don't know, so your whole letter is written for the purpose of advising him on how to become more muddled.

Clear Thinking is Indispensable

Then why don't you write a resolution of your own? Why are you waiting for someone whose views you are not certain of, whose ideas are not wholly clear to you, whose essential aims you question, to write a resolution, hopefully praying that you may be able to vote for it? If Johnson's resolution is the same as the Committee's, only better written (!), you will vote for his. In that case, what is this whole discussion about, and why are you equivocating now - if you leave free the possibility that you will vote for a resolution that will be fundamentally the same as the present resolution of the NC, only "better written." And if it is not better written? You will vote for the NC resolution, I take it?

A curious position, to say the least. Almost every section of your letter and every major point you make is equivocal and so qualified that it is impossible to make heads or tails of it. You agree with Johnson and at the same time disagree with him. You agree with the resolution and at the same time disagree with it.

If I have written emphatically about this matter, it is because I feel strongly about the whole question. I see the possibility that the party may be thrown into an aimless discussion. And therefore I feel that in the interests of arriving at a definitive point of view, it is necessary to take the issues as they really are and to nail them to the cross. This discussion can be very educational for all of us, but only on the condition that it is a forthright discussion of the issues, not a skirmish on false issues, literary

points, pointless diatribes on the "historical epoch," or, disputes on hidden polemics against unnamed "violators" of Marxism, people who, it is charged, wish to dilute and despoil the revolutionary prospects in Europe.

Albert GATES.

NOTE: Page 6, **third paragraph**, read 1945 for 1943.

HOW NOT TO HOLD A FRUITFUL DISCUSSION

Every man has a right to his opinion. One of my friends has hammered that into my head so often that I am now a thoroughgoing supporter of the idea. All that needs to be added to it is this: Every man has a right to combat an opinion he considers wrong or dangerous to the cause.

Every man has a right to be in doubt or even to be a confused muddlehead. I acknowledge even this right. But here, too, I would add: Every man has a right to combat confusionism.

We are engaged in the party now in a discussion of the national question in the old colonies and in Europe. The question - especially as it relates to Europe, because it appears there in a new and unexpected form - is of first-rate importance. Our party's greatest strength lies today not in the masses of workers who follow it, but in the clarity of its theoretical and political line. The aim of any such discussion as we now have should be first of all the achievement of the greatest clarity. That will make it possible, as always in the past, to enhance the knowledge and therefore the effectiveness of the party membership; to educate newcomers to our party in the fundamental principles on which it stands and in the method of objective political thinking by which it seeks to resolve current problems; and so to equip the party that the potential recruit knows the political line of the organization which is appealing for his support.

This is the same as saying that every contribution to the discussion must pursue the same aim: To teach, clarify, orient and solidify the opinions of comrades, and not to stultify, muddle, disorient and bewilder them with uncertainty.

This generalization of course applies differently to different people and in different situations. You do not expect the same thing from an irresponsible person that you have a right to expect from a responsible person. You do not expect the same thing from a comrade who is new to the movement, to its ideas and its history, that you have a right to expect from a leading comrade who has years in the movement to his record.

With these commonplaces in mind, the May 5th letter of Allen on the national question is simply a monstrosity. If it were not for the fact that Gates' otherwise adequate reply is so unjustifiably restrained on the specific matter that requires comment, these additional notes would be superfluous. But inasmuch as nine-tenths of the great educational value of the discussion on the national question might easily be lost if the discussion is not properly organized and conducted, these notes seem to me in place; in fact, they are mandatory. The only pity is that the comments have to be made on a document which is a model of how not to hold a fruitful discussion. Let us see why.

Our last plenum adopted the resolution on the national question as a draft. The Political Committee was unanimously authorized by the plenum to present the resolution to the whole party after it had been strengthened by a series of amendments. At the plenum, the reporter asked that the amendments, and all other suggestions for changes in the resolution which had been received favorably by the body, be submitted in writing. Any number of comrades responded: Ernie, Joe, Al, Manny, Dave and a number of others, including Allen and two or three others who presented oral proposals for amending the draft. For the most part, their proposals were incorporated into the document as it finally appeared. It is no exaggeration to say that this resolution, more than any other political document of our movement in years, is a collective product of the leadership. That it was so "easily" adopted by the leadership is due to the fact that the subject matter had been discussed in its ranks periodically for almost two years, and the developing views set forth during that same period in just as unanimously adopted convention and plenum resolutions.

One comrade asked to withhold his vote on the resolution at the Plenum. That was Johnson. He had a couple of reservations or doubts on a couple of points; he mentioned them briefly, and did not participate actively in the general (and very active and comprehensive) discussion. So far, so good; everything is in order.

Conditions beyond anyone's control made it impossible for Johnson to participate directly in the redrafting and final adoption of the resolution by the Political Committee. But, like the other leading comrades, he had the first draft in his possession. On the basis of this or that disagreement with this draft, many other comrades formulated their proposals for amendments, additions, changes, etc., and submitted them; in most cases, let us repeat, the proposals proved highly valuable and were incorporated into the document. Of the outstanding members, only one failed to follow this course; only one failed to give the slightest indication of how, in his view, the resolution had to be altered to make it satisfactory, or more satisfactory than it was originally. That, again, was Johnson.

This time, everything is not in order; far from it. It is the elementary duty of a leader to collaborate in the working out of the party's political line. This line is usually expressed in political resolutions. A leading comrade must seek, according to his lights and his feeling of responsibility, to make these resolutions as flawless as it is generally given to us mortals to make them. That is, if the basic line - not this or that word, not this or that point, but the basic line - is acceptable. If it is not acceptable, then, in the first place, you do not dally by merely withholding a vote on it - you vote against it and begin preparing a counter-resolution which, in turn, has a basic line contrary to the resolution you voted against. In the "intermediate" case, you may content yourself with an important amendment (or amendments)

which are required, in your view, to round out or to correct the main resolution, while still conforming to its basic line.

Is this procedure merely some ceremonial ritual, without important meaning, like the opening up of trade-union conventions with prayers? Or is it the very A B C of the movement, which it would be painful to have to explain to a novice, much less to the comrades in question? We follow this procedure because all experience shows that it is the only way to organize a fruitful discussion; it is the only way to establish clearly before the membership whether or not there are real differences, just what the differences are, just how much weight is to be attached to them. That makes possible the organization of an intelligent (and intelligible) discussion, or, if you wish, an intelligent (and fruitful) fight. That is the responsible as well as the democratic way of organizing a discussion. I know of no other.

There is another aspect of the matter, and it is just as important. A resolution is presented. Most comrades agree with it. One comrade disagrees with it. Why is it his duty to bring his disagreements to his fellow-leading-members first? Because it is so ordained bureaucratically and hierarchically? Nonsense! It is his duty to do so because as part of the leadership he has the obligation to strengthen that leadership and its course. That cannot be done if the leadership is allowed to "go wrong" when he is in a position at least to try to correct it. That is why his first obligation is to seek to convince the rest of the leadership that its views are wrong and his are right; in other words, to convince them, or as many of them as possible, to adopt his point of view. If he succeeds, his views gain thereby, they are stronger and enjoy more authority; the leadership gains (at least from his standpoint); the party gains. If he fails, then of course he has the right and the duty to proceed directly to the membership (in our party, thank God, he has the fullest opportunity to do so, too) with this statement: "I tried my best to turn the leadership from the wrong course, to have it adopt the correct line, so that it could educate the membership, and through it, the working class. But I failed, despite all my efforts, and now I must appeal to the membership against the leadership." That would be proper, profitable, and no serious and honest party man could say a word against it.

That is not what happened, however, Johnson never presented his views to the Committee, not to this day. He never felt sufficient responsibility to his own title of leader and to the leading body of which he is a member, to put forth his views in its midst. He submitted no proposal for altering the original resolution. He proposed no discussion of the resolution - or of his counter-views, whatever they may be - in the leading committee. He made no effort at all to convince the committee that it was wrong and he right. What are these trifles to a man of wide ideas?

Instead, he informed the committee in two lines that he now votes against the national resolution, followed it by dropping in our laps the article on the Socialist United States of Europe,

which was promptly printed in the magazine, and then plunged right into a membership discussion meeting with a counter-report to the committee reporter. A counter-resolution? No, a counter-report. Only a week after this membership meeting, following a barrage of criticism directed against such unprecedented irresponsibility; he blandly informs the committee (more exactly, two of the committee members) that he is now contemplating the writing of a counter-resolution and hopes there will be no objection! There is no objection. But so far (two months have since elapsed), there is no resolution, either.

One would think that this is enough for one season. But not comrade Allen. He finds himself impelled to intervene in the discussion. Very laudable. Just the thing a leading comrade, a leader, should do, especially when a discussion has been muddled up or is in danger of being muddled up. But does he intervene for the purpose of straightening things out, of clarifying the issues? No, not he. What the discussion really needs most urgently, in his opinion, is a little more muddling and confusion. A "little more" of that might be tolerated by tolerant people, but Allen has outdone himself. Proof? It is here, overwhelming and irrefutable, in his May 5th letter to Gates.

Allen, believe it or not, voted for the national resolution at the plenum. He voted along with the others to authorize the Political Committee to amplify the draft (without, of course, changing the basic line) and to adopt it in the name of the plenum. He long ago reached the voting age and the age of consent, and he must have known what he was doing.

But hasn't a man the right to change his mind? Of course, of course. Not once but a hundred times. We live in a free country, and, as stated at the outset, a man has a right to his opinion in the party or even to two different ones each day.

With rights, however, comes an obligation or two. This is especially true in the case of a leader, whose obligations are of a very clear-cut kind. What, in the case of a "change of mind," is Allen's first obligation to the leadership of which he is a part and to the membership as a whole? Again, let us see.

It must be assumed that if Allen changes his mind, he is changing to a better position, to one more satisfactory to him, and consequently, better and more satisfactory from the standpoint of the interests of the party, from top to bottom. The first thing to be done - especially since we are not in one of those old-fashioned, knock-down and drag-out factional fights, especially since we do not have a Stalinist leadership to deal with, or even a Cannonite leadership (although this would be the proper first step even with a Cannonite leadership!) is to come to the leading committee of which he is a member and for whose resolution he voted, and say: "I have some new ideas on the subject, new and better ideas. The resolution needs alteration or modification or amendment or deletion or amplification. The committee must correct its line. I didn't think of these ideas at the outset, but I have thought of them since, or else I have been impressed by the correct-

ness of some other comrade's ideas. I therefore propose that we reopen the question in the committee. I will set forth my views, argue for them, try to convince you. The resultant changes will make the resolution better, stronger, more correct, more easily defensible before the membership and the radical workers, more effective in the Marxian education of the ranks. If I fail with you, I will of course exercise my party rights and bring it to the membership over the head of the leadership to which I belong. As you see, I am acting like a responsible leader and teacher."

Not Allen. The idea, so elementary, so normal, evidently did not occur to him. Immediately after Johnson's conduct at the New York membership meeting, I wrote to Allen about the affair, its meaning from a party standpoint, and of the intention of the whole committee to combat such dilletante irresponsibility which vitiates any discussion in which it is displayed. Allen never bothered to answer this letter. Instead of setting an example for Johnson, he decided to let Johnson set the example for him. Unbelievable, but true.

Let me repeat: Allen never presented the committee, either in writing or orally (he had the opportunity to do both), with his revised or new or modified views, whatever they are. On one occasion, during lunch, Gates, he and I discussed Johnson's views for about ten minutes - that is, Gates and I spoke and Allen listened. At that luncheon, he showed us the first few pages of the document that appears in this bulletin as the May 5th letter to Gates. That is all, that and nothing more. Allen never discussed his views with the committee, nor the committee with him.

--But what in heaven's name is wrong with sending a letter to Gates or anyone else? Nothing, absolutely and positively nothing. Quite the contrary. That is normal and proper. What is not normal and proper is the failure to discuss the question first among the leading comrades, and then Allen's insistence that his letter be published immediately in the internal bulletin.

--But again in heaven's name, doesn't a man, even a leader, have the right to get his views published in the internal bulletin? Is that the stage we have reached in the party?

There is no need for excitement. Of course, Allen and anyone else in the party has this right, a hundred times over. But we are not concerned with this right, for the simple reason that it does not even occur to anyone to challenge it. What we are concerned with has already been stated. We add to it now our concern with the contents of the letter.

What is the purpose of the letter? That is the question to consider if we want to continue pondering the problem of how to organize a fruitful discussion.

We have in the party two different lines on the national question. That is very good, especially if they are stated clearly and unambiguously and thus make possible a clear and unambiguous discussion.

It is obvious that these views are reconcilable or they are not. Either they agree on basic line and differ only on formulation, or on nuances, or on omissions of a secondary nature. -- in which case no serious fight is necessary or justified, in which case it should be very easy to compose the differences or at least put them in their properly subordinated place, subordinated, that is, to the main task of rallying the ranks of the party and of the militant workers in general to the basic line. Or they do not agree on basic line -- in which case an irreconcilable struggle of opinions is inevitable and helpful to the movement (not mayhem and murder, not tricks and organizational battles, but simply an irreconcilable struggle of opinions)*; in which case any attempt to compromise between the two lines, to identify or merge them, is sheer opportunism at best and muddleheadedness at worst, neither one of which does the party any good.

Allen's historic achievement is to ignore the "either" and the "or"! More accurately, he seems to want (it is not always clear what he actually wants) both.

Are there two lines? Well, says Allen, "For my part, I do not regard Johnson's present article as a resolution or document necessarily in itself in opposition to the Committee's." What the "in itself" is supposed to mean, especially when underlined by Allen himself, is not clear - but then, that applies to most of the rest of Allen's letter. If Johnson's article is not "in itself" in opposition to the Committee resolution, then in what capacity, in what connection - historical, political, moral, psychological, pathological, astrological or otherwise - would it be in opposition to the Committee resolution? We will not pursue this painful question any further. We will merely ask:

If Johnson's article - the only expression of opinion we have had from him on the subject to date - is not in opposition to the Committee resolution, what possible or reasonable purpose can Allen have in urging the same Johnson to write a new resolution?

Let us put it differently: If Johnson does agree with the basic line of our resolution (that is, if his views are not "in opposition to the Committee's"), why is it not possible to use that resolution as a basis - to be amplified, to be enriched with what Allen calls Johnson's "broader historical scope and analysis" (Oy!), to be strengthened by this famous and mysterious reference to Germany (not Japan, however?), to be improved in style and texture, but nevertheless to remain the basis because its basic line is correct? Why is it necessary to write a new resolution, which could not but appear before the membership (and be in reality) a counter-resolution?

*
It proved impossible to have such an irreconcilable struggle of opinions without organizational tricks, maneuvers and expulsions under the Cannon regime. But we have already demonstrated, in the discussion two years ago on the Russian question, that in our party such a struggle is possible.

I venture to reply to the questions myself: Allen doesn't know and doesn't care. He has a platform of his own, the planks of which are Doubt, Uncertainty, Doubt and More Uncertainty. And this, he feels, is what it is mandatory upon him, as a leader, to present to the membership in the present discussion, with all the confusion that has already been created.

Exaggeration? Let us see. There are no less than a dozen references in Allen's letter to his ignorance of Johnson's position, all of which can be summed up by saying: "I don't know where the question stands on this question, on that question, on the other question. The article with which Johnson plunged so hastily into the discussion leaves unanswered one question after another. But I am a patient and hopeful man: He will, or he may, or he has the opportunity to, answer these questions when his resolution comes out." Read Allen's utterly amazing letter, which I politely called a "monstrosity" above, and see if this does not summarize his "views." A few direct quotations will emphasize the point:

"If (!) and when (!) Johnson's resolution appears, I'll understand definitely its relation to the Plenum resolution." (P.1)

"But whether (!) and to what extent (!), significantly different perspectives of an immediate or ultimate kind are involved in the different approaches to the national question in Johnson's article and the Plenum's resolution, I shall know better when Johnson's resolution emerges." (P.1)

"Johnson says that the slogan is a propaganda slogan. Good; but granted that saying so is not enough. This depends on how he explains or what he does with the slogan, and here I wish clarification or elaboration." (P.3. And as elsewhere, word for word!)

"Your comment on his article is to the effect that Johnson fails to see or does not accept the need for placing the slogan for national liberation in the forefront in this period. I believe it will be possible to know easily if this is the case when Johnson's resolution on the national question in its various ramifications is presented. It is difficult for me to see this in his article, (A microscope would help.--M.S.) - and I have several questions to ask in regard to it." (P.5)

"Therefore, within reason, Johnson must demonstrate or prove more concretely the probability, that he envisages, of a fairly rapid development of the subject forces (masses and party) toward the socialist struggle and goal." (P.6)

"What I ask from comrade Johnson, therefore, is a political reply (Oh, so that is the bagatelle omitted by Johnson up to now! - M.S.) arising from Johnson's historical analysis and perspective." (P.7)

"This means that Johnson has to make clear in his resolution that the propaganda slogan is not to be regarded as the immediate central slogan for setting the masses into motion against the Fascist oppressor and for socialism." (P.7)

"Certainly, instead of settling my mind on the basis of impressions, I will await his own full resolution on the National Question." (P.8)

"In his forthcoming resolution, Johnson has the opportunity to set forth precisely his attitude on what is the agitational slogan or program of action for today; to indicate the course the workers must take now to bring closer the objective of the SUSE." (P.8. Things look bad. Didn't Johnson have that opportunity in his article? And the famous leaflet of the six Lyons workers, didn't that "indicate the course the workers must take now," etc.?)

"Therefore, it seems to me, all that is required of comrade Johnson, is for him to indicate more clearly and precisely where and how he would place the immediate program (liberation slogan and other democratic demands) within the confines of his historic and political analysis - specifically in relation to the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe." (P.9. That, you see, is "all that is required of Comrade Johnson." Just that little item for which he did not find space in his article.)

"All that Johnson must establish in his resolution is what slogan or program does he propose for the immediate stage of struggle - in the transition from the democratic struggle to the socialist struggle or their merging." (P.10. Nothing else, only that. And what about what has been established in the National Committee resolution on the "slogan or program...for the immediate stage of struggle"? That's not important. It is Johnson who must "establish," and then Allen will have a winner.)

"I want to see more precisely how he fits the immediate program (liberation struggle, etc.) into his general perspective. Then I, for one, will know which resolution is correct or superior." (P.10)

"Johnson, then, should make more clear in what organizational and political light he views the Stalinist menace in the coming period" (P.13. Johnson should do nothing of the sort! He has already written that the Stalinist bureaucracy no longer exists in Europe. The dead are not a menace.)

"Hence, in view of all the foregoing, I have decided to wait the issuance of Johnson's resolution on the entire question before I adopt a final position. P.S. Since my visit to New York and the brief talks with you, Max and Jimmy, I have only been confirmed in my present attitude." (P.19.)

"I have only been confirmed in my present attitude." What attitude? Why, of uncertainty, of doubt, of "I-don't-knowism" and "I'm-not-clearism." That is not an "attitude," that is a hopeless, self-avowed muddle. Harsh-tongued people would say that it is a disgrace for a leader to come before the membership with such an "attitude," but I will not.

--But hasn't a man a right to have doubts, to be uncertain and unclear? Does everybody have to be so damned cocksure on every question? No, no, no. Doubt and uncertainty are the inevitable

and necessary bridge from one position to another. One could rule out doubts as "criminal" only if he ruled out the possibility of a person changing his point of view. Rarely does one change directly from one full-fledged position to another; he shifts in stages; these stages are characterized by "doubts" and "uncertainties" about both the old position he is in the process of abandoning and the new one he is in the process of adopting. That is easily understandable and rational. Nobody objects or can object to doubts and uncertainties in this sense.

It is an altogether different matter, however, when a leader, whose job it is to teach and to clarify, comes before the party ranks in the midst of a discussion and says: "My contribution to this discussion may be summed up as follows: I don't know; I am not clear; I am in doubt; there is some good in this side but also in that side, but I cannot say for sure; and anyway I can't do anything myself but I intend to wait for somebody to write a resolution which I hope will clarify its author, whom I defend before reading his resolution, and which I hope will answer all my questions which he hasn't answered yet. As for what you should do, the rank-and-file member, who are not yet a leader and who look to me for leadership, guidance and clarification, I really couldn't say."

That is precisely what it means, in this discussion, to present a "platform" of doubt and uncertainty. A leading comrade, who already voted for a resolution, comes before the party membership and says that he does not know where he stands today in the dispute, or where he will stand tomorrow. He simply must wait for someone to write another resolution in order that his "questions" be answered - although every single one of his questions has already been answered in the N.C. resolution for which he voted. What is the rank-and-file comrade to do in the meantime if that is how a leader acts? Hasn't he, in light of this conduct, the fullest right to say: "The discussion, for me, is over. In fact, it hasn't even begun. I cannot adopt a point of view. If a man like Allen has to wait, then surely I, too, must wait for the new resolution. All these months of discussion have been lost months. We must have patience, we must wait."

Must the whole party now suspend the present "fruitless discussion, and stand by while the mountain labors? It seems that the first mouse it produced wasn't a very clear mouse, not a very "precise" mouse, not a very complete mouse; most of its organs were missing and it had a few other minor defects. But silence in the house! Another mouse is coming! And if it's a real, first-class mouse, "then I, for one, will know which resolution is correct or superior."

The function of a leader is, among other things, to teach. That's generally why the membership selects him for that responsible post. If, when a new question arises, and a dispute breaks out, the leader is not sure of his ground (that has happened a thousand times to people and will happen a thousand times more, and there's nothing really terrible about it), he has no business muddling up a situation with doubts and doubts and doubts. The least he can do is to try himself to acquire a more-or-less clear-cut point of view in the discussion, and then seek to have his point of view prevail by educational means.

I permit myself a personal reference here, which may illustrate the point. During the Russian discussion prior to the split in the S.W.P., there were two more-or-less definitive standpoints on the class character of the Soviet state. There was Trotsky's view, supported by the Cannonites; there was also the Carter (or Carter-Burnham) point of view that Russia was not a workers' state. As some comrades know, the war and Russia's role in it helped to upset my own views on the working-class character of Russia. I did not, at first, adopt the standpoint that Russia was not a workers' state. I simply began to have doubts about the old position, to be uncertain of it. The only correct word Hansen ever said in that factional fight was that Shachtman represents the "Doubtist faction" on this question. He was essentially correct.

But, I took my responsibility as a leader seriously enough, if I may say so, not to engage at that time in a discussion of the class character of the Russian state. What could I contribute to a discussion on that question between Burnham and Cannon, or Carter and Trotsky? Only one thing: "I am in doubt; I am not sure of my position." How would such nonsense have helped make a discussion on the class character of the Russian state fruitful? The membership would have been 100 percent right in telling me: "If you don't know, if you have nothing but doubts, then be silent and don't mess things up until you know where you stand!" I didn't wait for anyone to give me this counsel. I deliberately avoided that discussion; I refused to be dragged into it, at least so far as I was concerned. (There were, of course, other reasons of a more general group nature which indicated to us the wrongness of such a discussion at that time, but they had nothing to do with my personal case.) I waited. I discussed time and again with comrades holding all sorts of views on the question. I reexamined the question to the best of my ability by studying all the available material, re-studying it, checking and re-checking. If I finally appeared before the party membership with a position of my own, it was only after I knew where I stood and that I could defend (or try to defend) my views before the party membership and the radical workers in general. I like to think that this procedure and conduct helped to make the fundamental discussion that ensued a more fruitful and positive one.

In this personal reference - the reader will surely understand - there is no element of boastfulness or self-commendation. I, least of all, feel like boasting about having conducted myself, in such a matter, in accordance with the A B C rules of the movement, which I always assume are the common knowledge and property of all. It is a source of the keenest disappointment to realize that there are among us leading comrades who either never knew and understood these rules that make for intelligent and profitable discussion, or who, having long known them, unlearn them over night.

M.S.

June 25.

THE CONCRETE TASKS OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENTS IN EUROPE

The 2nd national convention of the Workers Party adopted a resolution which summarized its position on the national problem in Europe. That resolution presents in less than a page (page 175, July NI, reprinted from Labor Action, Oct. 20, 1941) three-fourths of the material chewed over in the recent Plenum resolution. (Really, only the prophecy of a "democratic interval" is added.) In addition, the question of the manner of participation is raised more clearly.

There can be no question of participating or not participating in the underground movement. Every word whispered, every leaflet smuggled, is "participation". What would Europacus do, without the Gestapo stopping him, "against the current" of the underground movement?

The question is how to participate. Do we keep our own organization entirely separate, seek to form united fronts, or simply join one or more of the existing organizations? Do we publish our own propaganda, or seek to form a "coalition editorial board"? How do we differentiate in practice between the imperialists, the reformists-socialists, and the Stalinists? What type of military action do we direct against the Nazis? What is our attitude toward the troops of occupation? What are the concrete tasks?

Naturally, no blue-print can be produced in answer to these tactical questions. But the Plenum resolution is a far, far cry from a blue-print. It is a political description of occupied Europe, an analysis of the laws of motion of the national movements, and a bare outline of a program. Brilliant, but inadequate.

I do not attach deep significance to the omissions of the resolution, as Johnson does, but I say there are omissions which should be remedied. A lengthy analysis that does not give any idea of how the national movements, or the Marxists within the national movements, are to carry out their program is not adequate. The stand-patters on the resolution cannot justly say, "The resolution does not try, nor need it, to answer tactical questions." The fact is that the discussion has been unnecessarily confused, airy, and abstract; and that those who support the resolution interpret it, and can interpret it, in very different ways when questioned as to concrete situations.

Scratching around through the 8½ pages, we find little to start us toward an answer to the concrete questions. Under the heading, "What is to Be Done?" we find -- nothing.

Under "The Threat of Stalinism" we read: "The revolutionary Marxists must seek to organize the firmest and bitterest proletarian resistance to the seizure of power by the Stalinists in the present national movements as well as to the seizure of power by Stalinist reaction. The triumph of Stalinism can only result in the gutting of the movement for national freedom

or proletarian socialism." Farther along, under "The International Character of the Struggle": "Everywhere on the continent its (the Kremlin's) representatives and agents penetrate the underground and fighting movements...The Russian bureaucracy does not for one minute intend to surrender these prizes of war to its Anglo-American partners without a struggle!" These statements mark a change from the perspective presented by Comrade Shachtman at the 2nd national convention in his summation remarks (rebuttal) against the Carter position. Shachtman, at that time, emphasized that Stalinism was living solely due to a fluke of history, and that it was absurd to imply as more than a mathematical possibility, a widespread European Stalinist expansion. However, this is somewhat aside from the concrete problems of the national movement. The resolution implies here, however, that we make no practical distinction between the Stalinists and the imperialists within the national movements.

The resolution comes closest to the concrete problems under "Likely Developments in Europe": "To overthrow the regime of national oppression, armed struggle was needed. Even assuming that the burden of this struggle is borne by advancing Allied imperialist troops, a good deal of it will have been accomplished by armed, organized workers who have not been incorporated into regular imperialist formations. There...is the core of the future proletarian army." Here is something concrete, albeit only implied. We must organize a proletarian armed force, and it must fight the Nazis, with or without the Allies. The resolution concludes: "...the main (not the only, but the main) enemy of the people of occupied Europe is Hitlerite imperialism."

The Plenum resolution cannot come to any closer grips with the concrete problems of the national movements because it does not consider the situation these movements face, that is, the presence of the German troops of occupation. There is not one word about them in the entire resolution. You cannot talk of tactics until you understand the form of struggle that is dictated.

The resolution states; "The Marxists seek, first of all, to establish the hegemony of the proletariat and of proletarian policy...for the incorporation of progressively bolder economic demands for the workers into the program of the national movement and into its daily activity." But how? In leaflets to the workers? Or in slow-downs and strikes? Similarly, we are left in the air in approaching the peasants, "...destruction of the big landed estates, the land to those who till it, and a moratorium on all debts." Here it is obviously not immediate action that is meant.

But what other meaning can there be than that the main concrete task before the revolutionary Marxists is the organization of a proletarian military force. It is only through organized military resistance that the economic demands can be implemented. We can get some ideas along this line from the history of the Irish Republican Army.

To renounce active resistance is to tie the national movements to the chariot of the Allied armies. And conversely, an independent proletarian military force is the only conceivable guarantee of political independence. The revolutionary Marxists can only assume the leadership of the national movements by boldness, not alone by leaflet passing.

As their strength grows, the revolutionists must take on more and more the aspect of an armed people, and less and less of a band of isolated fighters. They must guard against sporadic outbreaks, against irresponsible bombings, against indiscriminate assassination of Nazi officers, against purely wanton sabotage. The Workers' defense of Warsaw points the correct road. The military acts must precipitate mass action, not substitute for it. They can only accomplish this purpose if they go hand in hand with agitation and propaganda. As in preparing for a strike, agitation is the indispensable preparation for mass military action.

Is it possible for the revolutionary Marxists to organize and build such a military organization jointly with Stalinists and/or imperialists? Assume they did: an Allied army invades -- and they either "co-operate", or pack up and leave. It is not possible to fight in the 2nd and the 3rd camp at the same time. Any military or political collaboration means support of the imperialist war.

The task of the revolutionary Marxists, in general, is to accelerate the differentiation within the national movements, to force the incipient dual power into an open schism. The Marxists must not champion any reformist movement to re-establish a Weimar Republic or its equivalent. A democratic interval is probable, but it will be a transitional period of dual power.

A revolutionist would not betray a Stalinist or an imperialist agent to the Nazis (nor trust them to be equally high-minded). It is legitimate to swap elementary "services" such as message delivery systems, to accept material aid, etc., but a united front involving any degree of political collaboration would be suicidal.

Suppose there are 100 DeGaullist in a town, and only two revolutionary Marxists. Should the two join? Absolutely not. They cannot support any group which is dominated or controlled by imperialists or Stalinists. As the resolution points out, it is the heterogeneous character of the national movements, which are objectively aiding the Allied military efforts it should be remembered, which is a vital pre-condition for our organizational participation.

How about "deals" with other groups? That depends entirely on the situation. But in general, unless there is a perspective of winning large blocs away from the other organization, a cool

friendliness will probably be found the wiser course.

What attitude towards the troops of occupation? It is not enough to let loose a planned terror upon them. Hand in hand with a growing "respect" the troops will feel for the nationalists, there must be a campaign of fraternization. "Why are you here? What is happening to your family in Germany? Free Germany as we are freeing ourselves -- you have the guns already in your hands." There is only one thing more demoralizing to troops than to be stationed among a hostile population, and that is when they are stationed among a population that is already showing them the road to freedom. Not sickly outbursts, but an advancing movement which means to win, and looks like it.

These then are the concrete tasks outlined by the resolution: Organized military resistance, ever bolder, ever greater. No political collaboration with imperialists or Stalinists, but constant and unsparring agitation against them. Fraternization with the troops of occupation, not to the exclusion of military resistance, but side by side with it. Independent military organization, the boldest fighters for democratic rights today, the clearest leaders to socialism tomorrow.

Finally, a word on Johnson's position: It seems to me that Johnson cannot help talking of the Socialist United States of Europe as an agitational, action slogan (instead of a propaganda slogan - for education, for future action after the immediate task has been at least partially solved) because he assumes that the Nazi occupation has, in effect, eliminated the national differences which formerly divided the now-occupied countries. The Nazis have become the main enemy of each of these countries, therefore, thinks Johnson, their struggle is the same; that is, they are united by adversity.

"As the Plenum resolution says, "Short of a socialist union, it is no exaggeration to say that Europe is headed for sure doom."; that is, objectively a Socialist United States of Europe is more urgent than ever before. But socialist unity is not forged by defeats and dispersals, but by victories, which today can only be won under separate banners."

Germany has turned the clock back for the oppressed nationalities, both the newly oppressed and the old ones; they now have to fight an old fight first; socialist unity is further, not nearer.

Joe LEONARD