

B U L L E T I N

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"NATIONAL LIBERATION" - A NEW TRAP!

A Static Approach to the Length of the War and the "Victories" of German Imperialism.

"Between the present day and the day the masses rise up against the beneficiaries of the war, a considerable period of time will in all probability elapse". Thus reads the National Committee resolution on "The National and Colonial Struggles."

To give this perspective a certain concreteness Lund, writing in the September 1943 issue of the New International on "The Theory of the Long War and the Coming Invasion of Europe", says: "Our perspectives on the war have had as their central axis the concept of the 'long war'. This concept was adopted following America's entry in December, 1941. It was based on the view that the production and military potentials of the Allies and the Axis, considered from the standpoint of logistics, sufficiently balanced each other to make a military knockout highly improbable until after a war of attrition of unforeseeable length. (Estimates ran from ten to fifteen years). However, we added, this military appraisal must be complemented with a revolutionary appraisal of the warring nations. The latter led us to the conclusion that it is likewise HIGHLY IMPROBABLE (our emphasis) that the masses would permit such a protracted reign of blood-letting, starvation, and destruction without intervening to bring it to a revolutionary end."

Between Lund's statement of high probability of the masses intervening to cut the "long war" short and that of the National Committee's estimate of a considerable period elapsing before these uprisings take place we must conclude that the intervention of the masses should take place some time toward the end of the "long war." This estimate is all the more valid since Lund in his article, by means of "logistics" and exaggerations of the antagonisms between Russia and her Allies which can be summed up in his quite categorical statement, worthy of the Cannonites, that "The Allied policy for post-war Europe will therefore be based upon a strategy to exclude Russia", once more restates his conviction that it will be a long war.

In any case for the struggle for national freedom in Europe to have any plausibility at all the Nazi domination of Europe must appear in terms of an "epoch". Only this can give sense to the thought in the National Committee resolution: "...it must be borne in mind that fascism is reactionary precisely because it throws society backward, and compels it to take up 'outlived' tasks all over again, even if not in the same form and by the same methods..."

"In a whole series of countries of Europe, the advance of fascism has not only made the struggle for freedom necessary once more - a century and more after the period of the formation of the great national states! - but has made this struggle an indispensable prelude and part of the struggle for socialism."

It is no light matter for us to declare that the struggle for national freedom is necessary "once more - a century and more after the period of the formation of the great national states!" - and that we have to take up 'outlived tasks all over again.

We must conclude that the extended time estimate of Nazi domination of the European national states had something to do with the National Committee stand on the National Question. Would the National Committee, for example, have taken the position of "national liberation" if the present Allied hammering at the German European "fortress" had taken place in 1940? We doubt it because under such circumstances the occupation of Europe by the Germans would have assumed an extremely transitory and subordinate character, much like its occupation of Belgium and the Austrian occupation of Serbia in World War I. It is perhaps this "delay" in time, this sense of a relatively stable German "new order" in Europe which obscured for the National Committee the dynamic concept of the coming shift in the status of the European national states.

What the National Committee has done is to take a fluid situation and declare it to be a finished one. We are today engaged in an incontestably imperialist war and not a national war even if there are movements for "national liberation" in a series of European countries. The predominant character of the war is imperialist and that is what determines our attitude toward the various "national movements" just as it determined the attitude of the internationalists toward the Belgian and Serbian "national movements" in the last world war despite their equally underground and even heroic activities.

We do not say that national wars in Europe are impossible or that the present imperialist war is impossible of transformation into a just national war. We agree with Lenin when he wrote in his critique of the Junius Pamphlet in 1916:

"It is nearly improbable that this imperialist war of 1914-16 will be transformed into a national war, because the class that represents progress is the proletariat, which, objectively, is striving to transform this war into the civil war against the bourgeoisie; and also because the strength of both coalitions is almost equally balanced, while international finance capital has everywhere created a reactionary bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that such a transformation is impossible: if the European proletariat were to remain impotent for another twenty years; if the present war were to **END** in victories achieved by Napoleon, in the subjugation of a number of virile national states; if imperialism outside of Europe (primarily American and Japanese) were to remain in power for another twenty years without a transition to socialism, say, as a result of a Japanese-American war, then a great national war in Europe would be possible. This means that Europe would be thrown back for several decades. This is improbable. But it is not impossible, for to picture world history as advancing smoothly and steadily without sometimes taking gigantic strides backward is undialectical, unscientific and theoretically wrong."

In this quotation we have capitalized the word "END" in order to emphasize that Lenin considered the possibility of a transformation of the imperialist war into a national war only if it were to **END** in an imperialist victory of one of the camps that would lead to the subjugation of a number of virile national states, among other things. We believe that Lenin's speculation and his conclusion regarding the improbability of such a transformation is at least

as applicable to the present imperialist war.

We have said that the National Committee has drawn its conclusions on what is still going on and not what may be the state of affairs at the END of the war. Moreover, it should be underlined that not only is the situation with regard to the subjugation of "virile national states" undecided and fluid but the reverse process has actually set in - that of the clearing out of the German conqueror from the occupied areas.

"National Liberation" As An Afterthought For The Asiatic Colonies

It seems that the National Committee has been carried away by the "national movements" in occupied Europe. But then it is difficult to understand why it pays such scant attention to other "national movements". The Japanese conqueror has its occupied areas too. Japan has overrun China, the Philippines, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, Burma, etc. It is true that we do not have much information on the native struggles against the Japanese overlord but it is incontestable that, at least in occupied China and in the Philippines, movements exist which struggle for freedom from Japan. What is the analysis of National Committee with respect to these movements? In Part I of the resolution on the national question, which deals with "The Asiatic Colonies and the War", not a single word is devoted to this question. One is almost ready to believe that perhaps this question bears no similarity to the National Committee's position on National Question in Europe until, dragged in toward the end of Part 2 - "The National Question in Europe" - as an afterthought, to plug up a gaping hole apparently, we find this lone sentence: "The third thing to understand is that just as the main enemy of the people in occupied China is Japanese imperialism so the main (not the only, but the main) enemy of the people in occupied Europe is Hitlerite imperialism."

Though we are disappointed to find so important an omission in analysis in the resolution, which bears on the national movements in Japanese-occupied territories, we do find that there is at least one reference to the Philippines and this appears in Part 1. Anyway, let us examine this contribution. In answering the question - what shall be the position of the Chinese proletariat given the tieup of China and the Allies in the imperialist war? - the National Committee replies:

"There can be only one answer, and in this answer is contained the key to the problem of the colonial struggle amidst the conditions of the present imperialist war in the East. The colonial proletariat, and above all the revolutionary vanguard, must persistently and patiently declare: 'Our bourgeoisie has concluded a reactionary, imperialist alliance with one set of enemies of the colonial peoples. Our strength, our will to struggle, are being subverted to the interests of an inter-imperialist struggle. To gain our national independence, we must abrogate the secret agreements with imperialism, we must break off all imperialist alliances. We must make an al-

liance instead with the anti-imperialist masses of the oppressed countries of the East, primarily of India, Burma and Indo-China. Only in that way can we resume the struggle for national independence which the bourgeoisie has betrayed. But to do this, we must overthrow the bourgeoisie and establish the democratic rule of the workers and peasants. Once that is done, we can decide for ourselves what practical agreements we can and will enter into with this or that imperialist power in the struggle against another power. We can then decide how to maneuver between rival imperialisms, how to utilize their differences and difficulties for our own benefit, but without making an alliance with one of them against the other.'

"Such a declaration, the only one corresponding to the national interests of the colony and the socialist interests of the proletariat, is equivalent to the following basic political conclusion: Under the conditions of the imperialist war in the East, the only class capable of re-launching the war for national independence of the colonies is the proletariat. Under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, the national struggle is brought inevitably into one or another of the warring imperialist alliances. This was already amply clear during the First World War. It has been confirmed again and again by events in the Philippines, in Indo-China and Malaya in Eastern and Western China, in Burma, and is being confirmed currently in India."

This is a rather long quotation but as you see we did finally get to the Philippines. Besides, this very good and correct declaration is necessary for our analysis of the Chinese and Filipino "national movements" which we know exist in Japanese occupied China and the Philippines.

Now as far as we know the only "national movements" that exist in occupied China and the Philippines and which are struggling against the Japanese are those which consider themselves a part of the Chinese Nationalists in alliance with Anglo-American imperialism and of President Quezon in alliance with American imperialism. After such splendid advice to the Chinese and Filipino proletariat to break with the bourgeoisie and their imperialist allies, what is this proletariat to do in face of the National Committee's other declaration that "the main enemy of the Chinese (and we presume also the Filipino) people is Japanese imperialism"?

At the risk of being "sectarian" the National Committee correctly counsels the colonial proletariat to struggle equally against both of the imperialist camps and their bourgeois supporters and to establish the third revolutionary camp and at the same time for the occupied territories, where we see no real difference, it designates Japanese imperialism as the main enemy. The contradiction is, unfortunately, the National Committee's.

THE "NATIONAL MOVEMENTS" ARE BOURGEOIS IN CHARACTER
AND PART OF THE IMPERIALIST WAR CAMPS.

For ourselves, we agree with the National Committee that there is no difference in substance between the "national liberation" movements against Japan in the Japanese occupied territories and "national liberation" move-

ments against Germany in the German occupied territories. All of them are tied up with the Allied war camp and we defy the National Committee to show that this is not so. Is this not true of France, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece in addition to occupied China and the Philippines? Even where there is a struggle within the "national movements" as in Greece and Yugoslavia, the opposing factions bid for Allied recognition and consider themselves a part of the allied war camps. Even the most "leftist" of these movements, that of the Partisans of Yugoslavia, are staffed with Allied military leaders who act as liason officers and whose function it will be to facilitate the juncture of Partisan and Allied military forces. We are not speculating when we say this. This is to be found in the press where it is stated that the Partisan leaders were hopefully waiting for the earliest military intervention of the Allies.

The National Committee deceives itself when it imagines that only on the day that the Allied armies make physical contact with the forces of the "national liberationists" does the "national" struggle cease to be progressive. There is even some physical contact even now but it suffices that ideologically these movements are in the Allied war camp and that they therefore hopefully await the morrow of Allied intervention.

and is this really surprising? Does it not flow logically from the bourgeois character of the European national movements despite the masses that may be in them but who are duped with patriotism, national unity, and support of the Allied side of the imperialist war? It is not that behind the chauvinism the workers do not think and feel in class and social terms but it is precisely the ideology of the "national movement" which obscures such thinking and feeling.

So long as this is so and the masses are prey to nationalism and patriotism, the "national movements" have no difficulty in orienting toward the Allies and to make them appear as the "liberating" armies from German oppression. And for the various national bourgeoisies under the heel of Hitler this is indeed so. It is indisputable that at least for Anglo-American imperialism the aim in Europe is to restore it insofar as it is possible, given Russian claims and whatever "plen" they have for Germany, to the status quo ante bellum.* If, therefore, the slogan of national liberation is no longer "outlived" for the national states of Europe as the National Committee claims, then it should also declare that the imperialist war has been transformed into a just national war and that we should support not only the various national military movements but also the Anglo-American "liberators" coming to their aid. Even if they fail to draw this conclusion this is the logic of the National Committee position on the national question!

^{for}
* They are for this very good imperialistic reasons- among which are included their substantial economic stake in the European national states as well as the desire to see the perpetuation of a system of national states which serves their political ends and which enables them all the more to maintain their own imperialistic systems.

THE BOURGEOISIE CAN REALIZE "NATIONAL LIBERATION"!

We repeat that the bourgeoisie and their followers in the "national movements" not only seem to have but do have a truly realistic policy for achieving "national freedom" from Hitler. They are not content with opposing to the formidable German armies their own inadequate guerrilla forces. Let us be honest about it. The tremendous Allied armies are expected to do the main job of clearing out the German divisions. It is perfectly logical therefore for the various national bourgeoisies, whether they be of a reactionary or "liberal" hue to consider themselves a part of the Allied war camp and this not only for the purpose of winning the war but also of winning the peace.

The National Committee resolution has things turned on its head. It says: "The Marxists seek, first of all, to establish the hegemony of the proletariat and of the proletarian policy in the general movement. They must therefore agitate for the incorporation of progressively bolder economic demands for the workers into the program of the national movement and into its daily activity. If the bourgeois elements, against whom such demands would be directed, at least in part, threaten to desert the national movement, if the workers press their own class demands, it is only proof of the Marxian contention that the bourgeoisie holds its property interests higher and dearer than its devotion to the cause of national freedom."

Alas, notwithstanding the hopes of the National Committee, it is not the bourgeoisie but the workers who will be put on the spot once they are forced into the pattern of "national freedom". Unfortunately, the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists, will have far more potent arguments. They will insist that, in the interests of the united struggle for "freedom" and the common fight on the side of the Allies, the class issues be subordinated, that there be national unity and that the war be prosecuted until the final victory of the United Nations. If "national freedom" is the first thing that must be achieved and if the intervention of Allied arms and support of its war contributes to this achievement, are not the workers who oppose both camps of the imperialist war, who wish to turn the latter into a civil war for socialism, and who put forth class demands, the real deserters from the front of the united, national and Allied fight for "national freedom"?

ANGLO-AMERICAN IMPERIALISM -"OPPRESSORS" OR "LIBERATORS" OF THE EUROPEAN NATIONAL STATES?

"Wait a minute!" we hear some supporters of the National Committee resolution exclaim. "How dare you say that Anglo-American imperialism is for 'national liberation'? Is it not true that as they drive the Germans out of the occupied territories, they establish themselves in turn as the national oppressors of these countries? Do they not set up their own machinery of oppression, like the Angot, backed by their occupying armies?"

Allow us to examine these objections. We insist that the aim of Anglo-American imperialism in Europe is the status quo ante bellum. In this it

differs from German imperialism. The National Committee resolution points out correctly that the late arrival of the latter as an imperialist force upon the world scene, minus colonies of its own and unable "to break out of the rim of Europe and into the classic lands of imperialist exploitation" has forced it to seek its "colonies"* in Europe. Hence the reduction by the German conqueror of a number of national states to the status of oppressed "colonies". In its most reactionary form - fascism - German imperialism carried through this aim with savage barbarism. However this tendency was inherent in the warring oppressor nations even in the first World War. We believe that is what Lenin had in mind when he speculated on the possibility, but not the probability, of the transformation of the imperialist war into a national war, if among other things, the last imperialist war "were to end in victories achieved by Napoleon, in the subjugation of a number of virile national states.."

The Amtot is the administrative instrument of the Anglo-American powers in the reconquered territories. Besides having a military function it operates also politically. However in the latter capacity it does not oppose but supports the reestablishment of the national state. In that sense the Amtot fulfills its "nationalist" aims - that of restoring the "nationalist" status quo. It is for the class status quo as well. Its purpose is to prevent and oppose any development toward workers' power and to see that the bourgeoisie is safely installed as the rulers of the nation. Our opposition to it is therefore not of a "national" but of a class character.

It does not change the substance of things if the Amtot and the Allied armies stay on for some time within a reconquered country until their military and political tasks are completed or if, having already driven out the Germans from the country and restored the reactionary bourgeoisie to power, it and the armies move on to their next objective. In either case one can be sure that they have no desire to maintain the "colonial" status imposed upon these nations by the Germans.

**"NATIONAL FREEDOM" OF A COUNTRY IS NOT INVALIDATED
BY ITS REACTIONARY REGIME**

But what if Anglo-American imperialism supported by Russia imposes a Badoglio on the people as they did in Italy? Is not this a violation of "national freedom"? No, it is not, at least not in the way Marxists have used the conception of "national freedom". To use the absence of "national freedom" or national autonomy is a state of affairs wherein an oppressor nation as a matter of national policy imposes in every sphere directly, or through a Quisling backed by the occupying forces of the oppressor nation, its rule upon the oppressed nation. In other words the oppressed nation has no independent life of its own and is in fact incorporated into the empire of the oppressor nation.

It should be superfluous to point out that the social content of a regime of any country has no bearing on its status as a nation. It does

* See note at conclusion of article.

not matter how reactionary the government is for it to be a "free" nation. We know, for example, that the British were responsible for imposing the tyrant, King George upon the Greek people, against their wishes and their active opposition, and yet before the war no one questioned the "national freedom" of Greece. Ethiopia achieved "national freedom" from Italy by means of British arms even though Haile Selassie is an absolute despot. In fact most of the "free nations" of Europe before the war were ruled by despots. Historically also Marxists have supported nations in genuine national wars regardless of their ruling regimes.

NOR IS IT INVALIDATED BY A "DEMOCRATIC" REGIME

Besides to imagine that the Allies will impose upon the peoples only the most reactionary and compromised rulers is to underestimate their "flexibility". The imperialists do not confine themselves to so limited a repertoire of tricks. It is true that they would prefer to install those regimes which do not open the door, ever so slightly, to democratic vistas. Once the masses are allowed to view the pleasant roads before them they may set out upon them, and surge on with a motion so elemental so powerful as to override and obliterate altogether the capitalist obstacles in their way.

Nevertheless, when stark necessity stares them in the face, when the Badoglio's, and Girauds, and the Greek King Georges are unable, any longer, by any means, to stop the flood of popular disapproval, the capitalists and the imperialists, may be compelled to produce their "liberal" and "democratic" decoys in the hope that they will succeed in taking the fight out of the masses and enable the capitalists to weather the storm.

What other meaning is there to the fact that Anglo-American imperialism has permitted and even facilitates exiled representatives of the "liberal" bourgeoisie and "leftists" of the safe variety including Stalinists to return to their native lands? Is it only in order to allow them to use their "talents" to mobilize the masses of their respective countries to support the war of the Allies? Is it only to make the despotic regimes more palatable to the masses? To think that only this will be their function is to leave ourselves open not only to "unpleasant" surprises, but to a solid blow on the back of the head.

THE ITALIAN EXAMPLE - "NATIONAL FREEDOM" AND A REGIME OF THE "DEMOCRATIC" SFORZA TYPE.

We must be prepared if the necessity should arise, for "democratic" leaders of the type of Sforza and others of the "left" brand to present themselves, blessed by the Anglo-American-Stalin trinity, as the government of Italy. In such an eventuality - the replacement of the military dictator Badoglio by the "democrat" Sforza - there ought to be no question of the "legitimacy" of the government, not of a worker's Italy, it is true, but of a capitalist Italy.

If it is not clear today to those who blind themselves with "national liberation" that Badoglio the "tyrant" is the government of the Italian nation then it cannot be doubted that the Sforza government will certainly appear in that light -- unless, of course, we yield to the absurd unMarxian conception, that in a bourgeois state only that government can be recognized as the representative of the nation which is chosen by the fullest and genuine democratic methods, a condition that is impossible under capitalism.

AN UNDIGESTED THOUGHT - THE THEORY THAT THE ITALIAN
BOURGEOISIE CANNOT ACHIEVE "NATIONAL LIBERATION"

But as our discussion is, we hope, among Marxists we will ignore what is absurd and proceed to say again that in our example the Sforza government will represent the Italian nation. How do matters then stand with "national liberation"? Let us first see how Fehan "the national liberationist" deals with this question in his article "The Fight for National Independence of Italy Still Has to be Won" in the September 20, 1943 issue of Labor Action.

"All bourgeois nationalist movements", our novel theoretician declares, "are by their very nature - the necessary and inevitable dependence upon Allied imperialism - incapable of achieving the aims they professedly desire. National liberation today for Italy is therefore a profoundly revolutionary task; it can come only as a product of a struggle against all foreign imperialist domination and the domestic agents and partners of that domination. For the revolutionary socialists, by virtue of their independence from all foreign imperialism, are the only consistent democrats in Italy today."

Now let us examine what we in our charity will call an "undigested thought". So that even the simple can understand we will continue with our example of the "democratic" government of Sforza. This government - the "legitimate" government of the Italian nation -- will be the new war ally of Roosevelt-Churchill-Stalin and, true enough, dependent upon them.

ARE THE ALLIES AGAINST ITALIAN "INDEPENDENCE"?

Now do the Allies want to make a "colony" of Italy, a role in Europe which even the National Committee resolution limits exclusively to German fascism "which throws society backward and compels it to take up 'outlived' tasks all over again..."? Obviously the answer is no. Do the Allies plan to eliminate, or subjugate, or oppress capitalist Italy? Again, the answer is no. Then what do the Allies want to do with Italy? Really, this too should be obvious. They are for a "free" capitalist Italy who will be on their side in the imperialist war in return for which the capitalists of Italy may be partially forgiven what Churchill calls "their stab in the back". Also for the aid that repentant Italy may give to her new Allies, the Italian capitalists hope for not too harsh treatment at the Allied peace table.

If the Allies do not intend to rob Italy of her "independence", her "national freedom" then who is the "national oppressor"?

A TRIPLE TIEUP - THE "NATIONAL MOVEMENT" - "LEGITIMATE" GOVERNMENT - ALLIED
FOR "NATIONAL LIBERATION" OF ITALY

Clearly if anyone is the "national oppressor" it can only be the German Nazis who occupy Northern Italy for only they, according to the National Committee can make of Italy a "colony" and rob her of her national "freedom". Then where are the "national movements" in Italy and whom do they support? If they are really for the "nation" they will be found only in German occupied Italy, fighting against the Germans and their "Quisling" Mussolini. They will be partisans of the "legitimate" government - the one backed by the Allies - fight to secure the integrity of the Italian nation against their would be "colonizers" the Germans. They can therefore only be bourgeois in character and, according to Fahan - and in this we agree - "are by their nature" necessarily and inevitably dependent upon Allied imperialism.

However, our "theoretician" Fahan who is alert to all situations including Italy for trying out his "national liberation" slogan, affirms not only that "All bourgeois nationalist movements are by their nature" necessarily and inevitably dependent upon Allied imperialism. He follows hard upon this, in the present situation, correct statement with the absolutely false conclusion that because of this the bourgeois Nationalist movement is "incapable of achieving the aims that they professedly desire. National liberation today for Italy is therefore a profoundly revolutionary task; it can only come as a product of a struggle against all foreign imperialist domination and domestic agents and partners of that domination. For the revolutionary socialists, by virtue of their independence from all foreign imperialism, are the only consistent democrats in Italy today".

We insist that not only can and do the bourgeois partisans of our "legitimate" Italian government in German occupied Italy fight consistently for "national liberation" but they and the "legitimate" government which they support are capable of achieving this aim. Moreover it is precisely because of their dependence upon and support by Allied imperialism that this is more readily achieved. The Allied armies and the Angot, whatever else you may say about them, are in unoccupied Italy as an ally of the Italian "nation" and as they move forward against the Germans, clearing them out of Italy! And, yes, it is just because of that, because they are for a "free" capitalist Italy, that they and their national bourgeois allies, who are bleeding the Italian workers and peasants by the imperialist war, who are for perpetuating the capitalist slavery of the Italian worker - it is just because of that that they are the class enemy - not the "national" enemy but, we repeat, the class enemy. Is it not clear now why the "outlived" task - the struggle for the decadent bourgeois "nation" - remains an "outlived" task.

"NATIONAL LIBERATION" HAS PROVEN TO BE A NEW TRAP.
IT IS TIME TO REJECT IT!

The "innovators" are contributing nothing new. With their outlived "national liberation" they can have no clear contemporaneous class program against reactionary imperialism and capitalism which mobilizes the working class (who are on the eve of revolution, mind you!) for reactionary aims precisely under the slogan of "national liberation"!

Comrades of the National Committee and of the party! It is not too late to set aside what is false. Let us not be served up with (and that at the top of the bill of fare!) the malodorous, though newly ^{seasoned} dish of "national liberation" which has been decomposing in the garbage pail of history. Study the Italian situation. Do not try, mechanically and falsely, to fit it into a preconceived pattern of "national liberation". Remember, the great coming events have cast their shadow before!

San Francisco.
November 1, 1943

SCOPA.

(In our discussion of the National Question we have come to the limit of the space allowed for an article contributing to this discussion. And yet, there are many important aspects that remain for discussion, including the nature of the present period, the struggle to transform the imperialist war into a civil war for socialism, the strategical outlook and the Socialist United States of Europe, the tactics, "democratic" and revolutionary, arising out of such a strategy, the attitude toward the "national movements", the creation of the revolutionary party and the struggle for workers' power, and finally out of all this, the positive revolutionary program for the present period. Such important questions cannot be ignored in this discussion and we hope that we shall be given the opportunity to discuss them in a later article or resolution. - SCOPA)

* (Page 7) The National Committee uses the term colonies in this context without including it in quotation marks. Because we feel that this term requires considerable clarification and elaboration we have put it in quotes. If not in a literal then in a figurative sense it can be employed since the basic argument remains the same.

In our article "National liberation -- A New Trap!" we tried to establish what we believed to be the "genesis" of the National Committee rehabilitation of the "outlived" slogan of "national liberation". We showed that this resurrection stemmed from a panicky estimate of German domination of Europe which apparently was so complete and "finished" as to throw Europe back to a lower stage, necessitating the revival of old and outlived tasks. We pointed out that the mistake of the National Committee was in assuming as "finished" that which was still fluid and in transition, and moreover unwinding in the opposite direction. In short, the National Committee did just what the Fourth International adjured its followers not to do when it declared in its thesis on the imperialist war, "War and the Fourth International", that it was "necessary to follow not the war map, but the map of the class struggle."

We showed also that in the circumstances of the unstable character of German domination and the imperialist war, "national liberation" was not only justifiably outlived as a slogan for the proletariat but that for the bourgeoisie of the dominated nations it was a "proper" and realistic slogan, something for which they could be with enthusiasm, for to attain "national liberation", the bourgeoisie need only make use of "good" bourgeois methods, the principal one being to tie up with those "national liberators", the Allied armies.

Because of this, we said, it was inevitable that all of the movements struggling for the "nation" --the "national movements"--come under the ideological domination of the bourgeoisie and for these movements to be sucked into the Allied war camp.

"National Liberation" and the "Impotency" of the Workers

The National Committee not only based its policy on the changes in the war map, on substituting the "finished" for something that was still in doubt and is even more so today. It not only assumed as a fact Lenin's hypothetical speculation of the imperialist war ending like those "victories achieved by Napoleon, in the subjugation of a number of virile national states", but it apparently overlooked Lenin's other condition, linked to the above, that for the national war to be on the order of the day it was necessary that the "European proletariat remain impotent for another twenty years."

This second condition of Lenin's was not accidental. In his hypothetical example, which we have quoted more fully in our article "National Liberation - A New Trap", it was not sufficient for him that the imperialist war end with conclusive military victories of an oppressor nation resulting "in the subjugation of a number of virile national states." It was

necessary that the proletariat also be impotent for a long time, for this domination to assume a stable character. Without this condition the crystallization of the "new order" could be prevented by a fighting proletariat. Furthermore, it is not excluded that, in the "shattering" of the "new order", the latter might not "return" to their respective "outlived" states, but, taking a "lesson from the oppressor", they might be impelled to find their solution directly in a socialist United States of Europe.

In any case, though Lenin's hypothetical figure of twenty years may differ somewhat from the National Committee's, it is indisputable that the latter estimated a long period of working class "impotency" in the present real situation. It is impossible to interpret the following in the National Committee's resolution in any other way.

"First, it is not reasonable to believe, and past experience does not warrant the belief, that the masses of the 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 overthrown the Hitlerite despotism will in all likelihood demand 'democracy in general', that is, bourgeois democracy." (Our caps.S)

Trotsky on "Fascism and Democratic Slogans" Misapplied

One would think that the National Committee is referring here to the masses of people in Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy (the National Committee resolution was written before the fall of Mussolini), since only in these countries have the masses of people "been ground into the dust for years" (in Germany 11 years and in Italy 21 years). But no, aside from the fact that these countries receive no attention by the National Committee, it does not hide from its readers, that, in this connection, it is talking about the masses of Hitler-dominated Europe. It is for them that the National Committee poses a long perspective of "Hitlerite despotism".

To make this clearer let us see where the National Committee "derived" the idea that "...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."

In the N.I. of July 1943 there is contained an article by Trotsky on "Fascism and Democratic Slogans" which he wrote in 1933, not long after Hitler's coming to power in Germany. In this article Trotsky explains,

correctly in our opinion, that German fascism, like Italian fascism, strengthens rather than destroys democratic illusions among the mass of its victims, and that it is therefore fatal "to renounce beforehand the use of democratic slogans and of bourgeois parliamentarism" as a means of awakening the proletariat and its allies for the struggle towards socialism.

One of the arguments which Trotsky presented for this idea revolved around the problem of reaching and educating the generation who have grown up under fascism and who have no connections with socialist traditions. Says Trotsky: "Have 'democratic illusions' disappeared in Italy during the ten years of Mussolini's despotism? This is how the fascists themselves are inclined to picture the state of affairs. In reality, however, democratic illusions are acquiring a new force. During this period a new generation has been raised up. Politically, it has not lived in the conditions of freedom, but it knows full well what fascism is; this is the raw material for vulgar democracy. The organization Giustizia e Libertà (Justice and Freedom) is distributing illegal democratic literature in Italy, and not without success. The ideas of democracy are therefore finding adherents, who are ready to sacrifice themselves."

Trotsky foresaw as against the Stalinist "Hitler will not last six months" brainstorm that German fascism, just like Italian fascism, will not be so easily removed from the scene. The idea of a new generation growing up under fascism conveys this sense of "prolongation" and the National Committee quite mechanically makes this transfer for the European masses under German domination in the swiftly changing conditions of an imperialist war where German and Italian fascist domination is not only extremely unstable outside of its "native" borders, but inside as well. And this is considered a new contribution to Marxism! Let us add that this "contribution" did not survive the test of events by more than seven months. Even our "national liberationist" Fabian reports in his article ("The Fight for National Independence of Italy has still to be won" in the Sept. 20, 1943 issue of Labor Action) "the rise of Soviets in Milan."

An Error in Two Chapters

Some of the comrades who have quite a different and far more correct estimate of the European situation than has the National Committee, are nevertheless at a loss when they contrast in the National Committee resolution its era of "national liberation" and "democracy" with its references to "dual power" and "power...in the streets". They conclude that the National Committee must be confused. In reality this is not so. The National Committee "deserves" credit for being consistent but -- wrong.

A careful reading of the National Committee resolution will show that according to it there are two distinct chapters in Europe. The first one is: a more or less lengthy period of Hitlerite domination of Europe during which the fighting power of the masses is more or less crushed and during which they can be aroused by "national liberation" and slogans of "democracy". Long afterwards, when the masses have been sufficiently "starred"

by the "outlived" slogan to the point of Hitler's overthrow, the National Committee "islers" in the period when "the power will, so to speak, lie in the streets". To this the National Committee adds: "The first period after the overthrow of German rule will undoubtedly be the period of 'democratic illusions' to one extent or another, in one form or another. Certainly, the slogan of "national liberation", which drags the masses behind the bourgeoisie and the Allied imperialist war camp, will help to make it so.

Their Strategy: "National Liberation", Not the Socialist United States of Europe!

There is nothing more pitiful in the resolution of the National Committee than its attempt to proclaim, on the basis of its estimate and analysis, that: "The revolutionary socialists must now more than ever before lay stress upon this point of view. (the Socialist United States of Europe. S) which is the strategical key to the fundamental problem of Europe today.

This example of eclecticism, this "parade" --for that is all it is-- follow just as logically from the National Committee position as wine from a stone. If German fascist domination has thrown Europe backward by an era, if it is once more permissible to put as point No. 1 on the agenda the struggle for the "nation", if it is valid "to take up 'outlived' tasks all over again", then this conception, and not the Socialist United States of Europe, "is the strategical key to the fundamental problem of Europe today."

It is from the strategical conception of the "new" era of "national liberation" that the National Committee derives the slogan of "national liberation", which it makes into an action or agitation slogan just because the struggle for the "nation" is going on today. We consider the whole conception and the slogans flowing from it to be false. Listen to the words of the 1934 draft thesis: "War and the Fourth International":

"The defense of the national state, first of all in Balkanized Europe-- the cradle of the national state--is in the full sense of the word a reactionary task. The national state with its borders, passports, monetary system, customs and the army for the protection of customs has become a frightful impediment to the economic and cultural development of humanity. Not the defense of the national state is the task of the proletariat but its complete and final liquidation.

"Were the present national state to represent a progressive factor, it would have to be defended irrespective of its political form and of course, regardless of who 'started' the war first. It is absurd to confuse the question of the historic function of the national state with the question of the 'guilt' of a given government. Can one refuse to save a house suited for habitation just because the fire started through carelessness or through evil intent of the owner? But here it is precisely a case of the

given house being fit not for living but merely for dying. To enable the peoples to live, the structure of the national state must be razed to its foundations.

"A 'socialist' who preaches national defense is a petty bourgeois reactionary at the service of decaying capitalism. Not to bind oneself to the national state in time of war, to follow not the war map but the map of the class struggle, is possible only for the party that has already declared irreconcilable war on the national state in time of peace. Only by realizing fully the objectively reactionary role of the imperialist state, can the proletarian vanguard become invulnerable to all types of social patriotism. This means that a real break with the ideology and policy of 'national defense' is possible only from the standpoint of the international proletarian revolution."

"National Liberation" - A Cure but Not a "Preventative"

The supporters of the National Committee resolution may object that all this is true up to the actual conquest and domination of the European national states by German fascist imperialism but that once this happens the "special" character of the "fascist oppressor" as the "colonizer" of Europe must not be overlooked, and in fact changes the whole situation.

But the thesis "The War and the Fourth International" was written after Germany became a fascist state and it pointed precisely to Germany as the main threat to "peace". "Driven by its unbearable contradictions and consequences to defeat", says the thesis, "German capitalism has been forced to tear off the strait-jacket of democratic pacifism and comes forward as the chief threat to the Versailles system."

Moreover, how can one say that as the German fascist armies advance on the European bourgeois states we cannot defend them in order to "prevent" fascist domination but as soon as these states are dominated it is correct to "cure" them of such domination? This is exactly what is meant by following the war map and not the map of the class struggle! This is what the National Committee has done!

"The Socialist United States of Europe"
As a Strategy and as a Tactic

The strategy of the "Socialist United States of Europe" is not possible and would not be proposed, at least not in this period, if we believed in the stability of the German "domination" and the passivity of the working class as the National Committee resolution does. We would have to come forward with such a strategy only in its second period --when, after a long travail, the "Hitlerite despotism" is finally overthrown, the national states resurrected, and the power will, so to speak, "lie in the streets".

But the strategy of the "Socialist United States of Europe" is based on the view that Europe is ready for socialism and the respective European

states are houses "fit not for living but merely for dying". Does this mean that we raise today the "Socialist United States of Europe" as a slogan for action? No one claims this, for, in order to propose that the socialist states of Europe be united in a European federation, it is first necessary to have socialist states to which such a proposal can be made. This is ABC and Gates! "crudite" attempt to "teach" this to others must be understood only as an endeavor to obscure what they comprehended far better than Gates: the strategical efficacy of the "Socialist United States of Europe" at the present time.

A Poor Teacher in the Wrong School

It would have been more fitting for Gates to begin his classes first in his own home --the house of the "national liberationists"--where instruction on this point is so badly needed, before trying to "teach" elsewhere. "...The slogan (the action slogan is meant here.S) of the 'Socialist United States of Europe', says the National Committee resolution 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."

Here, indeed, is fertile ground for the seeds of pedagogy! Gates should tell the National Committee that only uninformed and half baked "Marxists" could have put forward the "Socialist United States of Europe" as an action or agitation slogan "under conditions where the European proletariat was only ready for the socialist struggle for power", that is, before having achieved workers power and while Europe was still "divided into a number of independent (bourgeois --for that is all they could be--S) states."

Elaborating this error, the resolution of the National Committee goes on to say: "Before the masses can see the 'Socialist United States of Europe' as a realistic slogan (again action slogan is meant.S) 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."

If the European proletariat has not yet achieved power but is only "ready for the socialist struggle for power" then how can we, assuming that the independent national states are re-established, suppose that the masses in these bourgeois states have them "at their disposal" and how can they, moreover, decide "freely whether or not they want to be federated into a continental union"? This is a question that the National Committee can ask not the masses, who have no say at all in these states, but only the bourgeoisie which rules them. Besides, if such a federation were possible, it could only be a "Capitalist United States of Europe". We cannot believe that the National Committee went through all its painful "labor" of "national liberation" in order to bring forth such a monstrosity!

Do the Workers Have to Fight for the "Nation" Before They
Can Have "The Socialist United States of Europe"?

All this incredible confusion is, of course, accompanied by the worst kind of static thinking. The National Committee prides itself on being "concrete" and alert to new situations. How is it possible then that it "overlooked" not only the "sudden" collapse of fascist Italy under the impact of the war, but also the probable collapse of Nazi Germany, which is under terrific pressure, and whose collapse may come upon us at any time, and very likely within a year or two? In any case such a variant is not excluded, or does the National Committee rigidly hold to its "long" perspective, backed as it is by its experts on "logistics" and their exaggerations of Russian and Anglo-American antagonisms?

But if Hitler does collapse, is it not possible and also probable, that this will signify a revolutionary situation not only within Germany but also in those countries that will still be under German "domination" at that time? And as the first probable victim of such a situation will be German "domination", what should the masses in those countries do before they are entitled to the wisdom of the "Socialist United States of Europe"? Shall they first reestablish the independent capitalist states, as a prerequisite and a necessary stage, for the "Socialist United States of Europe" or shall they fight not for the "nation", but for workers power, so that they could then have something "at their disposal" in which they could decide "freely" whether or not they want to be federated into a continental (socialist .S) union?

Blindness Toward the German Revolution, the Key
to the European Situation

If the National Committee were not so blinded by its "national liberation fixation" this is how they would have seen the problems and, in that case, it would have been impossible for them to leave out of their resolution an analysis of the Italian and, primarily, the German situation! They would then have seen that precisely the German situation is the key to Europe and is at the core of the strategy of the "Socialist United States of Europe"!

Posed this way, the strategy of the "Socialist United States of Europe" is real, and not a caricature and a phrase. From this strategy would flow naturally the appropriate tactics and slogans. Inconceivable from this, however, is the slogan of "national liberation".

A Class Approach to Oppression

For those who view matters this way, everything else should fall into line. Unfortunately, however, there are some people, who, though agreeing with our overall estimate of Europe, cannot see how we can avoid, as long as the German oppressor has not collapsed, from taking part in all the "liberation movements" and in every struggle to oust the German invader. What intensifies this feeling, of course, is the utter brutality and ruth-

lessness with which the German conqueror foists himself upon the conquered peoples.

So as not to obscure the question politically let us deal first with this quite understandable feeling against the brutality and horrors of the invader.

The peoples of Coventry and Hamburg, the soldiers on the battlefield who have just seen their buddies killed have no less a feeling of hatred toward the "enemy" than the tortured peoples in the German countries. And yet we are obliged to combat this feeling of hate against the Germans or the English and to place the blame for these horrors upon the bestial capitalist system where it rightfully belongs. More than that, we try to educate the peoples and the soldiers on the battlefield that the workers and workers in uniform of the "enemy" countries are their class brothers, and no less the victims of the capitalist war than they are. In short, what we try to, and must, do is to combat national feeling by class feeling and reason. Amid the raging inferno of war and the poisonous, chauvinistic fumes which emanate from it, our task is far from easy, but we do it because we are confident that on the morrow of disillusionment with the war the masses will understand the truth we teach them. So also must be our approach in the hapless countries of the German invader.

The Difference Between Conquest and National Oppression

The task of the advanced workers in an invaded country is an especially difficult one. No one is more onerous and more hated by the people of a conquered country than the foreign invader. Witness the persistent struggle of the Belgian "underground" and the Slav guerillas which lasted throughout the entire period of the last World War. Naturally the "fascist" character of the German conqueror makes it even more onerous and more hateful, but for this oppression to assume the character of "national oppression" it is necessary for it to have the stability which it lacks and which the National Committee resolution tries to give it.

Otherwise the struggle for the "nation" is not once more on the order of the day and the installation of the German conqueror in the economic and political life of the conquered country must be combatted not by national but by class means. True enough that the universal feeling will be "national" and will express itself in an intense desire to be rid of the German oppressor, but the failure of the advanced workers to be stamped and go "national" affects their place in the factories just as little as the universal chauvinism "evicts" from the factories the advanced workers of uninvaded or invading warring nations.

The Class Fight Against the Foreign and Native Exploiter

To the extent, therefore, that the invaders replace the native exploiters in the country, the workers direct their class opposition against them

while remaining the class antagonists of the native capitalists who may still be on the scene as exploiters, and this is so, regardless of the relationship between the native exploiters and the foreign exploiters, whether they be openly "collaborationist" or secretly opposed to the foreign conqueror. The opportunities for class opposition against the exploiters both foreign and native will be innumerable on the economic field and also politically against the German Gauleiter or his Quisling. Under the severe repression and intensified exploitation the struggle will take place for wages, against long hours, against labor "drafts" for German industry, against disbanding the trade unions and other workers organizations, for better food rations, for fuel, for housing, for the right to organize, for democratic rights, for free speech and press, right to assemblage, for the right to political organization, for the freedom of political prisoners of war, for an end to war, etc. etc.

Of course the struggle will, for the most part, have to be organized illegally and will many times assume a violent character in which it will be necessary to organize armed workers' detachments for the purpose of self-defense which form the basis of the Red Guards and the Red Army of tomorrow. The weapons can be gotten from all kinds of channels; disarming of the fascists and the police, raiding of arsenals, from the factories in which they are made, and from the vehicles which transport them. It is even correct to accept arms supplied by the Allies providing no compromising conditions accompany such acceptance. Such a condition would be the imposition upon them of an Allied Military Mission for the purpose of controlling the distribution and purpose for which the arms are to be used.

"National Liberation" and Fraternization

Whatever the means and forms of struggle the criterion must always be that they are of a class and not "national" character. The foreign and native oppressor must be undermined by class and not "national" means.

It is therefore significant that nowhere in the National Committee resolution do we find a class approach to the soldiers of the occupying forces. Yet revolutionary propaganda is one of the principal means for undermining the army of the oppressor! Such a gap is inevitable when questions are posed on a national rather than an international class plane. To approach the German soldier on a "national" basis is impossible since this will only reinforce his own "national" prejudices. Undermining the German army and fraternization which the German soldier is possible only on the basis of international class brotherhood. The same is true of the 12,000,000 foreign workers who have been conscripted for work in Germany and who form a terrific medium for international class solidarity. How else can one proceed if he has in mind the German revolution and the Socialist United States of Europe?

"National Liberation" plus "Social Liberation" equals
Cannon's "Telescoping" Theory

It does not improve matters for the National Committee to combine "national liberation" with "social liberation". This is no different from Cannon's famous contribution to "Marxism" of "telescoping" our tasks by a judicious mixture of nationalism and the class struggle. When, on the Saar question, the Stalinists committed a like crime the 1934 thesis "War and the Fourth International" insisted that "The slogan of 'national liberation', advanced side by side with the slogan of 'social liberation' grossly distorts the revolutionary perspective and leaves no place whatever for 'defeatism'. That is exactly our position.

Directing the Peasant Struggles away from "Nationalism"

Also with regard to the movements of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry, it is the example and leadership of the proletariat in the factories, which will bring the lowest strata of them behind it in the fight for socialism and away from "nationalism". Their struggle must be directed against landlords and the bankers whether they be native or foreign and those struggles must be closely linked with the struggle in the factories.

Combatting the Allied "Liberators"

The class approach is the only one if we have in mind the struggle not only against German imperialism but the Anglo-American-Russian bloc as well. Events are moving rapidly and the proletariat and peasantry stand in mortal danger of being strangled by the reaching "embrace" of the Allied "liberators" and their native bourgeois supporters.

Attitude toward Participation in the "National Movements"

For all these reasons, how we participate in the struggles that go on in the occupied countries is of paramount importance. Bearing in mind the class approach --and only that--it would be fatal for us to participate in movements of a pure or predominant "nationalist" character. We would have nothing to do, for example, with underground organizations whose purpose is assassination or sabotage. On the other hand, movements that have a basic class character and which, let us say, organize strikes or demonstrations against the conscription of labor would merit our support and we would be in them as the most active participants. At the same time, we would strive to eliminate from them their "national" aspects in order to give them a completely class character. What united fronts are possible would therefore depend upon the nature of the participating organizations and the specific action that was planned. Suffice it to say that there are and will be no end of class issues to eliminate the fear that we will be merely "bystanders?"

With our program the advanced workers cannot fail to be completely immersed and the most active participants in the smallest and largest struggles. That is not the only question. Transcending everything else is the socialist and independent class direction that we will give to these struggles in order that, stage by stage, the proletariat and peasantry are prepared for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the "Socialist United States of Europe."

The Paramount Task - Creating the Revolutionary Party

We must never forget that not activity per se but activity and education in a socialist direction will solve our greatest problem --that of creating the revolutionary party --without which, we all agree, a revolution is aborted. "The slogan of national liberation, advanced side by side with the slogan of 'social liberation', grossly distorts the revolutionary perspective" --this is the warning of the movement of the Fourth International: This "telescoping" can never build revolutionary parties, nor a revolutionary Fourth International! Only the clearest differentiation, independence from, and fight against all the tendencies, groups and parties advocating "national liberation" and the "struggle for democracy" can forge the party of the socialist revolution.

The Tail-endist "Struggle for Democracy"

The National Committee is "tail-endist" all along the line, not only with regard to "national liberation" but also with respect to the struggle "for democracy". "Fascism is reactionary," says the National Committee resolution, "(among other reasons) because it removes from the top of the order of the day, the direct struggle for the proletarian, socialist power, and to put in its place the historically, outlived, anachronistic struggle "for democracy".

The only trouble with this idea, besides its crude formulation, is that it applies to a fascism which has consolidated itself, which is "stable" and where it is a question of the revolutionary awakening of the masses. That is how Trotsky formulated this question. "...In the revolutionary awakening of the masses," he wrote in 1933, "democratic slogans will inevitably constitute the first chapter." ("Fascism and Democratic Slogans" July 1943 N.I.)

Apparently the National Committee doesn't know that a war is raging, that under its terrific impact German fascism is crumbling, just as Italian fascism crumbled, that everything has been brought to the sharpest point, that far from the masses being passive and having to be awakened with "democratic slogans" they will pour through the first cracks and just as they set up soviets in Milan they will set them up in Berlin tomorrow.

"Democratic Slogans" : Within what Framework -- "The Struggle for Democracy" or the "Struggle for Socialism"?

The blunder of the National Committee is not just in its advocacy of "democratic slogans," for we know that, in a revolutionary situation, agitation for "dictatorship of the proletariat" is the culminating point and very likely preceded by various "democratic slogans". It is the framework -- "the historically outlived, anachronistic struggle for democracy" -- within which these slogans are advocated that reveals the insolvency of the National Committee position. Within the framework -- the struggle for socialism -- "democratic slogans" can be correct in the present period and they will have a qualitative character and direction altogether different from those advanced within the framework -- "the struggle for democracy".

The Perspective: The Socialist Revolution in Europe:
Not "National Liberation" and "The
Struggle for Democracy"

No, the National Committee cannot be accused of inconsistency nor even of "sectarianism". It is quite caught up with the prevailing moods of "democracy" and "national liberation". It has not followed the inescapable conclusion of history: "that it is necessary to learn to swim against the current", and has consequently landed ... in a swamp. The tragedy is that it is impossible to create a revolutionary party in such a swamp. For the National Committee, the big thing is "THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN EUROPE" after which comes "Its Relation to the Socialist Revolution". Unfortunately it has things turned upside down. The Socialist Revolution can never result from the National Committee position on the National Question. We see as the big thing THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN EUROPE and then its relation to the National Question. Posed this way, the National Question is no longer a problem. It is necessary to turn things right side up. This we have tried to do.

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JOHNSON ON THE FLYING TRAPEZE

The Party is once more trying to solve theoretical problems that history has presented to us. And Johnson has once more mounted his theoretical trapeze to fly through the party discussion proclaiming new ideas and discoveries, and all done, true to form, with "the greatest of ease." However, an examination of his ideas on the European question today will reveal, as was the case in the Russian discussion, nothing original. On the Russian question, Johnson's contribution was a little of Martov mixed with a little of Mattick. In the present discussion, his contribution is a classical example of the sectarian's failure to distinguish the historical trend from the concrete situation. This, plus wish-thinking, unreal analysis, a mixture of sectarian and opportunistic conclusions, all saturated in enough intoxicating rhetoric to make one's head spin.

Setting himself up as Hegel's latter-day disciple, Johnson again demonstrates that the dialectical approach cannot be learned out of a book, not even out of the original German. At one place or another in his so-called amendment, Johnson manages to mention all the components of a revolutionary period -- parties, classes, Soviets, slogans, etc., but as in a jig-saw puzzle, nothing is in its proper place.

Johnson cannot distinguish the historical from the immediate, the general from the specific, the economic basis from the superstructure, the strategy from the tactic, the analysis from the solution, the aim from the probability of achievement, the actual situation from the tendency, and the tendency from the culmination. Since he cannot distinguish them, he cannot possibly find their proper relationship to each other.

It is thus that Johnson confuses the economic base of the bourgeoisie with its political influence, the historical role of the petty bourgeoisie with its concrete manifestations, the proletariat as a category in economic relations with the proletariat as an organized political force, the socialist consciousness of the vanguard with the class consciousness of the advanced workers, and the latter with the democratic illusions of the class as a whole, the revolutionary period with the insurrection, and the convention resolution with an agitational manifesto.

Johnson errs in so many of the elementary questions of the revolution that it is almost painful to find it necessary to turn the pre-convention discussion of the vanguard party into a pedagogical review of the ABC's of Marx's and Lenin's teachings. That this should happen at this late date in the history of our movement and that it should involve no less than three members of the NC makes it all the more painful. For it causes one to reflect upon what theoretical level the discussion might begin in the new revolutionary parties in Europe, if our discussion is any token. Let us only hope that these parties will be spared contributions by indigenous Johnsons and motions to second by indigenous Allens.

Such harsh judgments call for painstaking confirmation. The indictment will be more than sustained. For the evidence will show that Johnson is guilty of additional stupidities.

What Johnson's Thesis Consists Of

Johnson is greatly impressed by the "historical sweep" of Marxism. That is good. But like the sectarian generally, Johnson too often substitutes the "historical sweep" for concrete analysis. Or more accurately, Johnson seeks to force all concrete phenomena to mechanically conform to the "historic sweep" without understanding that the "historical truth" applied abstractly can easily be a lie in a concrete situation.

But upon closer examination, we will see that Johnson is more often impressed by the "historical sweep" of a well-turned phrase. (He in turn impresses people like Harry Allen, whom one would hardly suspect of being at the impressionable age in politics.) One such phrase is "Socialism or Barbarism". As a dramatic summation of the historical alternatives of our epoch, established by our theoretical analysis, "Socialism or Barbarism" deserves a prominent place in our propagandistic literature and manifestoes. But for Johnson, as witness his very first article in the N. I. on the national question, "Socialism or Barbarism" becomes the key to understanding and solving the problem of Europe today. Upon it he bases not only the strategy for a period of history, which would be entirely correct, but also in the most mechanical way, the tactics of today.

"Socialism or Barbarism", chants Johnson as he wades into the complexities of the European scene and then re-creates that scene in the image of his slogan. Here the Fascist Barbarians -- there the Socialist proletarians, Johnson's "historical sweep" sweeps the Continent clean of all intermediate groupings and contradictory phenomena, leaving nothing to mar the majestic simplicity of his theoretical construction.

In his thesis the bourgeoisie of the occupied countries are already swept away and those of the Axis countries are "about to be" swept away. (Page 1) The petty bourgeoisie can only be servant of the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. Since Johnson has swept away the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie now follow the proletariat. (page 9) "In over one-half of Europe, the proletariat is the class which represents the nation." (page 1) "From end to end of Western Europe at the war's close, there will be no European social force with any claim to the state power except the proletariat." (page 7) The proletariat will "almost automatically", but spontaneously create special committees, factory committees, soviets, soldiers councils, etc. (page 1). "The European proletariat in the oppressed countries is in proletarian revolt now." (page 10) The great masses of the French workers want an "abstract, ideal, proletarian republic". (page 12) The proletariat of 1943 is immeasurably more advanced than the proletariat of 1939 in respect to its political consolidation and consciousness as an independent class.

(page 12) "Unlike the proletariat of Britain and America, for instance, the proletariat today in the occupied countries no longer listens to the bourgeoisie for directions as to its participation in the international conflict." (p. 15) The growing consciousness of its class position drives the proletariat towards recognition of the fundamental objective unity of the European proletariat. (page 12) There are 12 million foreign workers in Germany. "There in the very heart of bourgeois barbarism the Socialist United States of Europe is taking shape." (p. 26) British intervention in "the class struggle of Europe would infallibly redound to the benefit of the revolution, not only on the continent but in Britain itself". (p. 4) Fascism has wiped out the Social Democratic bureaucracy and they won't be able to rescue capitalism as in 1918. (p. 7) "...The revolutionary torrent will burst forth in a flood uncontrollable by those organizations which exist today." (p.23) And after all the above, "The vanguard raises the slogan of national independence and makes this the main political slogan of the day." (!!!) (p.17)

How Johnson Wipes Out The Bourgeoisie

Johnson begins his analysis by wiping out the bourgeoisie of one-half (occupied countries) of Europe and dooming the others (Axis countries) to a speedy end. From this he proclaims the non-existence of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the leading class in the nation and the direct heir to the power upon the crash of the Hitler regime. We will begin at the same point in unravelling Johnson's fantastic constructions.

"...the bankruptcy of the European bourgeoisie, already (or about to be) so ruined and disgraced that in over one-half of Western Europe the proletariat is the class which represents the nation." (Page 1)

"The ruling classes of Europe have lost not only the right but the power to rule." (page 2)

"The fact that stares us in the face is that in France and in Poland the native bourgeoisie as an independent force does not exist." (P. 8)

"And even the German bourgeoisie, for a fleeting minute master of Europe's capital, now faces the prospect of becoming a militarized dependency of American imperialism as the only means of escaping destruction by the German workers." (Page 3)

"From end to end of Western Europe at the war's close, there will be no European social force with any claim to the state power except the proletariat." (Page 7)

From what "Marxist" Olympus does Johnson get these astounding revela-

tions? Is it mere wish-fulfillment? Thus it appears at first reading. But upon closer examination, the Johnson construction will reveal the root of his error in relation to the bourgeoisie of Europe. He writes of the bourgeoisie in the occupied countries:

"The Germans have taken away their titles and even where the titles are retained, they have no power in the production or distribution of capital." (Page 3)

Speaking specifically of the French and Polish bourgeoisie he writes:

"But no class in any period of modern history can escape the consequences of so complete a removal from all its functions, least of all a class which for thirty desperate years has faced the fully mature proletariat of countries like France and Poland." (Page 8)

For Johnson this is sufficient. We now have the "proletariat without the bourgeoisie" and the proletariat's relations with the "non-existent bourgeoisie." The resolution seeks to answer the political problems posed by an impending social revolutionary crisis, by eliminating the bourgeoisie as a political power due to their changed economic status in the last four years. That the latter has political repercussions of the first order goes without saying. The N. C. resolution fully takes them into account, particularly where it discusses the struggle for control of factories and the dual power generally. But this hardly satisfies Johnson's "historical sweep". He must begin by sweeping the bourgeoisie out of the picture.

Johnson has studied Marx and learned that the social power of the bourgeoisie is based on their role in production. If the bourgeoisie has suffered a "removal from all its functions" and has "no power in the production or distribution of capital", thinks Johnson, it follows that they have suffered a loss of political power. But Johnson has not only read "Capital". He has surely read (even if not recently) many of the Marxist contributions to the history of Europe from 1917-1936. A study of this period will reveal that no such mechanical connection exists between the economic role of a bourgeoisie and its political power as Johnson assumes. It is a typical case of his confusing the historical law with the concrete reality and the economic base with the super-structure of society.

A study of the revolutionary crises of the period since 1917 will reveal that bourgeois political power not only survived loss of economic power but has even increased after such loss. Upon what does its political power rest now that it is "removed from all its functions"? Its strength in such moments of supreme danger lies in the fact that the social revolution must take place in a society weighed down and saturated with centuries of bourgeois ideology, i. e., thought, habits, morals, etc. All classes, including

the proletariat, are products or parts of bourgeois society. They are distinguished, among other things, by the degree to which they have liberated themselves from bourgeois ideology. The proletariat is the revolutionary class because its economic role throws it more sharply and more constantly into conflict with the capitalists specifically and the institutions of bourgeois society generally (state, church, family, property rights, etc). But these conflicts weaken bourgeois ideology in the proletariat and replace it with a growing proletarian ideology (class consciousness) only partially. The American proletariat is still in the very primitive stage of this process. It is the classical example of a proletariat that has failed to translate its class struggle experiences into anything more than the rudimentary trade union consciousness.

But what of the European proletariat? Johnson refers to the German proletariat as the most advanced in Europe. (Whether he means today or only in pre-Hitler Germany is not clear. If the former, one can only throw up one's hands in despair. Where even to begin to refute such fantasies staggers one. We shall assume for sanity's sake that he means only the latter.) But this proletariat in its big majority remained in the Social Democracy after it supported the imperialist war in 1914, it served as the mass base for the Social Democratic government that decapitated the revolution in 1918, it permitted the establishment of the Weimar Republic and cast the majority of its votes for the right wing Social Democrats in the first election under the Weimar Constitution. (Recall but the fact that the majority of the German Soviets had right wing SDP majorities.) This proletariat went through the experiences of the post-war period and the agonized existence of the Social Democratic coalition governments and remained Social Democratic in its majority until Hitler smashed its class organizations.

Was it not reformism (which is another word for bourgeois ideology in the ranks of the proletariat) and not its "power in the production and distribution of capital" that saved the German bourgeoisie in 1918-19, in 1923, in 1931-33?

(If for no other reason, Daniel de Leon is to be awarded his place among the great contributors to Marxist thought for his understanding this problem before 1914 and for his classic term of "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class.")

Johnson will argue that reformism was only possible because of the economic power of the bourgeoisie. Yes, true, but only in the historical sense, not in the immediate situation. The Krupps, Stinneses, and Thyssens were no longer even master in their citadels, the factories. Here the real power rested, during the first months of 1918-1919 events, with the committees of "vertrauungsmannern" (shop stewards). But the tragedy was that in their majority these committees did not free themselves from bourgeois control.

They remained supporters of Scheidemann and Ebert.

Or to deal with a more dramatic illustration of this point. Where did the power of the Italian bourgeoisie come from in 1920 when the workers seized the principal industries? It found many points of support. When the liberal government of Giolitti failed to take a firm hand to protect the capitalist properties (it even sanctioned the right of the workers to examine the companies' books), the industrialists found extra-state support in the form of the Fascist gangs of Mussolini.

Or again, let us take Loyalist Spain, especially Catalonia, in 1936-37. We continually emphasized against the centrists of the S.P. that Loyalist Spain was neither Workers Spain nor Socialist Spain, even under Caballero. Yet who controlled the factories? There, too, the bourgeoisie fled. The big villas stood empty until converted into hospitals and children's homes. The CNT in Catalonia went about organizing production. The number of big bankers and industrialists who could have been found in Loyalist territory after July, 1936 were insignificant (i.e. those not in hiding.) Let there be no error. The Spanish bourgeoisie was on the side of Franco, fighting against the Loyalist government. Yet the latter remained as much a bourgeois government as that of Kerensky when it fought Kornilov or the Ebert government when it fought the Kapp putsch. Yes, in Spain we had the bourgeoisie, "removed from its function in production" as Johnson would put it. Yes, in Spain we had the proletariat not only "without the bourgeoisie" but facing it across a battlefield. When the bourgeoisie fled (and with them many of its more open agents like the priests, conservative political figures, editors, etc.) its power was exercised by its agents of the second and third rank, the political parties of petty bourgeois democracy and proletarian reformism, including the anarchist trade union bureaucracy.

The organization of a strike (and even a general strike against the capitalist class as a whole), is one thing. The seizure of power in order to uproot and destroy bourgeois society is another. The former still revolves in the orbit of capitalist relations. It seeks to better the situation of the proletariat within the frame-work of bourgeois society. The latter, however, requires swimming against the century-old bourgeois saturated society in which we live. This requires a fierce and uncompromising struggle possible only by a party completely conscious of its historic goal, steeled with an unbending will, and skilled with the strategical and tactical experience necessary to achieve the final victory.

Not only is the proletariat continually dragged back by the pressure of bourgeois ideology against its class consciousness, but the bourgeois ideology penetrates into its most advanced ranks, into the very party of the revolution itself. Did not the juncture of economic and political crises impel the German proletariat toward a break with bourgeois ideology in 1923 as revealed in the shift from Social Democracy to the Communist Party and in the

readiness of the masses for a revolutionary solution only to find the leadership of the C.P. unable to summon the revolutionary courage to make the break? What was the source of their timidity? Was it merely political incompetence on the part of Brandler and Thalheimer? Hardly. For Brandler boasted to Trotsky in Moscow that he was sure they could take the power and it was only the problem of holding it that worried him. The German leaders were competent enough to recognize what kind of crisis faced the Party. But to assume the responsibility before world public opinion for having launched such a gigantic and uncertain project as an overturn of bourgeois power in Central Europe with all its world-shaking international ramifications required men of a stature greater than those who headed the German Party in 1923. Brandler faltered and went, hat in hand, to Moscow to knock at the doors of various and sundry bureaus seeking advice. What he really was seeking was someone upon whom to unload the historic responsibility he felt incapable of bearing.

Need one extend this by dealing with the collapse of Lenin's two leading lieutenants, Zinoviev and Kamenev, when faced by the problem of power in 1917? And that after the power was seized and the Bolsheviks became the object of the fiercest bourgeois hatred and fury these two suffered another collapse which now spread to several other members of the Central Committee, including Lunacharsky? Yes, eight days after the bourgeois state was overthrown, Bolshevik members of the new workers' government capitulated to bourgeois pressure and resigned their posts in an attempt to force Lenin into a coalition with the overthrown bourgeois agents, the Mensheviks and S.R.s! And Johnson sees the European scene today as one in which the bourgeoisie is "already (or about to be) so ruined and disgraced that in over one-half of Western Europe the proletariat is the class which represents the nation." Is there any reason to wonder why some of us become furious when such stuff is taught to new comrades under the heading of Marxism? May we never live to see a party -- any party -- educated in the ideas of Johnson.

The Russian Revolution added yet another lesson to the textbook of Marxism drawn from the experiences with the bourgeois counter-revolution during the Civil War. "Ruined and disgraced" and "removed from their function in production" by the clean sweep of the proletarian revolution, the Russian bourgeoisie continued to be a formidable political force that caused the workers' power to hang by a thread more than once. But for Johnson the bourgeoisie of France and Poland is today already a zero. And as soon as Hitler falls, we are told, it will create a great vacuum into which only the proletariat can rush. We fear that such a vacuum will not exist outside of Johnson's document.

Before leaving the question of the source of power of the bourgeoisie, let us add one more observation. Bourgeois ideology stems not only from the concrete economic relations established by capitalism and the specific institutions of bourgeois society. The economic relations (mode of production) and social institutions (state property, law, church, etc.) are them-

selves but the reflection of an economy of scarcity. No matter what the mode of production and the social institutions established by a social revolution, until scarcity has been replaced by abundance such a new mode of production and such a new set of social institutions must adapt themselves to bourgeois norms. And from this flows inevitably the poison of bourgeois ideology to weaken and hamper the growing socialist ideology. If the new social order cannot replace scarcity with abundance, it will in time be submerged by the mounting tide of bourgeois ideology. What else, but this, happened in Russia?

The above was known to Marx already in theoretical form. The creation of the workers state in Russia concretized it for Lenin so that he could go further and say that not only would the laws of bourgeois society prevail in the distribution of objects of consumption in the workers state, that the workers state itself would thereby assume also a bourgeois character. Lenin even referred to it as a "bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie." To which Trotsky, knowing what manner of people set themselves up as dispensers of Marxism, adds: "Such a contradictory characterization may horrify the dogmatists and scholastics; we can only offer them our condolences." (Revolution Betrayed -- page 54).

The struggle against bourgeois ideology will be the task of an entire generation after the triumph of world socialism and perhaps much longer (above all when we consider the low level of production that still prevails over Asia, Africa and other parts of the world.) But for Johnson the important question is not bourgeois ideology which even an expropriated bourgeoisie knows how to exploit, but whether they have the factories or not.

How argue against the man? Where to begin and where to end other than re-writing for his sake the collected works of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky? Would a concrete question or two help, even if absurdly simple during a pre-convention discussion? Let us try.

Who is de Gaulle? He is a military man with former political ties among the monarchists and other such reactionary circles. Today he leads a movement predominantly proletarian and peasant and therefore assumes a demographically "democratic" coloration.

Whose real interests does de Gaulle represent? He represents the French bourgeoisie.

Is de Gaulle an important political factor in France? Johnson indicates that he is. No one has yet brought evidence of any sizable underground movement that is not nominally pro-de Gaullist..

Then: (a) if de Gaulle is an important political factor, (b) if de Gaulle represents the interests of the bourgeoisie, (c) if, above all, the bulk of the active workers in the underground are still more or less pro-de Gaulle --

Then, please Brother Johnson, please tell us just what you are talking about when you say the bourgeoisie is "non-existent"?

Let us add to everything said before about the real source of bourgeois

strength in a crisis, that we argued on the basis of Johnson's assumption that the factories have really been taken over (and in Poland, Johnson claims the land too is in German hands.) We sought first to demonstrate the utter falsity of Johnson's views about the influence of the bourgeoisie in politics even if they were completely expropriated. We wish now, for the sake of accurate evaluation of the European scene, to deny that any expropriation of the scope Johnson speaks of has taken place. That the interests of French capital have been subordinated to German capital goes without saying. The Germans did not go to France to gaze at the Eiffel Tower. But sources that have come to our attention (material is not at hand to be quoted) indicates that the large enterprises have been subordinated to the control of German banks and monopolies by means of "buying" controlling shares through German bonds that really represent bookkeeping transactions. They therefore become enterprises of mixed capital. That this was mechanically applied to the myriad of small enterprises that have characterized French economy is highly doubtful. That, in Poland, large estates have been broken up and divided among German settlers (mostly farmers from the Baltic States) is believable. But that a wholesale expropriation of the small and middle peasants was carried through sounds fantastic. For what purpose? To destroy an important source of food for Germany?

Nor can we assume that any capitalist who remains in business in the occupied countries thereby becomes a "collaborationist" in the eyes of the masses. The active political collaborators with the German authorities will be marked and remembered. But is it not sound to assume that many capitalists will stick to their business and put up with German regulations, pay only the homage required of everyone, (maybe even secretly contribute to the de Gaulist groups in the underground) and join the frenzied crowds (if they do not lead them) in the streets on the day of liberation. Many a bureaucrat of the Czarist state apparatus did the same in February, 1917.

(Note: I started writing the above article on November 25. Lack of time has prevented me from completing it. Still in my notes to be written are sections on:

2. How Johnson Endows the Proletariat with Mystic Powers
3. How Johnson Understands a Proletarian Revolution
4. How Johnson Wipes Out the National Question
5. How Johnson Holds Back His Revolution with "National Liberation"
6. How Johnson Places the German Proletariat in Power
7. How Johnson's Rhetoric Replaces Democratic Demands
8. How Johnson Proposes a Coalition Government with de Gaulle

9. How Johnson Finds Some Use for a Vanguard
10. How Johnson's Proletariat Learns More Quickly Under Hitler Than When it had its Own Parties

The second half of Gate's article in the N. I. and Temple's piece cover many points in the above. It may prove that so few people take Johnson seriously that I may put my time to better use than finishing the above ambitious project.)

E. LUND

535-F

ON DEMOCRATIC SLOGANS

By Albert Gates

One of the most revealing aspects of our dispute is Johnson's attitude to the question of democratic slogans. His position on this question flies in the face of the historical position of our movement. Johnson, as everyone now knows, favors the use of democratic slogans in Fascist Germany, but he is opposed to their employment in the occupied countries where there is a living movement of the masses. Why?

In Germany, democratic slogans (even though it is now impossible to raise them) would hurl the masses into opposition to the state. In the occupied countries, democratic slogans are reactionary, because the national struggle against the German oppressor is, according to Johnson, a "proletarian revolution", against the only capitalists remaining in Europe (the German) i.e. a socialist revolution. In fighting for the national revolution, the masses are really engaged in a proletarian revolution. Bear this in mind, for Johnson does not say that the national revolution and the socialist revolution are not necessarily antagonistic (in certain respects they are); he does not say that they are not the same thing although related (which would be correct), he says they are identical.

Therefore, says Johnson; to advocate democratic slogans in the national movement in the occupied countries is... reactionary! The next task, says he, is...the proletarian revolution, or, workers' power. It would appear then, that the struggle for democratic demands is perfectly all right in the struggle against fascism, but quite reactionary when fighting for workers power. Says he:

"The vanguard in the occupied countries refuses to make any of the traditional political demands upon the oppressing government. It mercilessly castigates and ridicules those political organizations (the Workers Party, no doubt - AG) which propose that the proletariat raise the slogans of the right to organize and the right to free speech." (Emphasis mine - AG)

Not bad, eh? It is all right for the German workers to make democratic demands upon Hitler, but not the masses of the occupied countries! Risking repetition, I should like to quote the exact contradiction to this assertion by Johnson, On page 26 he writes:

"For every concrete demand - food, clothing, conditions of labor, right of free press, right to organize, etc., which it (the vanguard) makes on behalf of the German working class it specifically includes the workers of the nationally oppressed countries, demanding for them special national privileges, such as right to make their own press, assembly, etc., and encouraging them to make the same demands." (Emphasis mine - AG)

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Let us try to approach it from another angle.

Johnson acknowledges - although God alone knows why, considering the analysis he has made - that the masses in the occupied countries should raise the democratic slogan of national liberation. But no other democratic demand is admissible; in fact, it would not only place us at the tail of the movement if we were to raise, at the proper time, such demands as the right of free speech and free press and assembly, etc., but it would be reactionary. And why this severe judgment against us sinners? Because - Johnson has explained in the discussion, with withering irony -- "Of whom are the masses in the occupied countries to demand the right of free speech and free press? Of Hitler? Of the Nazis?"

And inasmuch as Hitler and the Nazis are not staunch partisans of the idea of free press, free speech and other democratic rights, it is obviously idiotic, and reactionary, to advocate the raising of such demands upon them.

It would take us too far afield here to go into a detailed exposition of the political infantilism revealed by such an argument. We will have to be content with asking Johnson:

"If it is ridiculous and reactionary and creative-of-illusions for the masses to demand these democratic rights 'of Hitler' in the occupied countries, why is it sane and progressive and destructive-of-illusions for the masses to demand the same rights 'of Hitler' in the occupying country, namely, in Germany?"

In Germany, you see, the vanguard, according to Johnson, demands the "right of free press, right to organize, etc." not only for the German working class but "it specifically includes the workers of the nationally oppressed countries" who are working in Germany. And pray, upon whom does the German vanguard make these demands? Upon the same Hitler and the same Nazis who rule the occupied countries where, however, the making of the same demands is strictly prohibited by...Johnson. Why is it not ludicrous, and productive of ironical comment, to make these demands on the same Nazis in Germany? Can it be because in Germany Hitler will listen more attentively to the demands because they are made by high-blooded Aryan Germans, instead of by the low-blooded Latins in France or by the low-blooded Slavs in Poland? Or can it be that democratic slogans are all right for Germany, where there is no mass movement, be it democratic or socialist, whereas they are reactionary in the occupied countries where the workers and peasants have already been set into motion as a mass under the inspiration, in large part, of democratic ideas and slogans? In other words, is Johnson standing on his head, on this question, too, like Hegel?

Lenin on the Democratic Struggle

Here again, I must invoke the "authority" of Lenin. Naturally, any quotations from the outstanding Marxist on the national and democratic struggles, do not by itself prove a case, but it illustrates what is the tradition of the Marxist movement on such questions. Experience shows

that is the only intelligent point of view on this problem. Lenin's polemics on the national question are quite applicable to the dispute in our party, for what we face in Johnson's views is a poor and less intelligible reproduction of the views of Pyatakov, who was, however, in most other respects, a trained and outstanding Marxist.

In his thesis, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," written in March 1916, Lenin stated :

"The socialist revolution is not one single act, not one single battle on a single front, but a whole epoch of intensified class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e., battles around all the problems of economics and politics, which can culminate only in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It would be a fundamental mistake to suppose that the struggle for democracy can divert the proletariat from the socialist revolution, or obscure, or overshadow it, etc. (Emphasis mine - AG)

Isn't this written against Johnson? Doesn't anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear, know that Johnson's opposition to the use of democratic slogans is precisely because in his muddleheaded view, they would "divert," "obscure," and "overshadow" the struggle for workers' power? Mindful of Johnsonian objections, Lenin goes on:

"On the contrary, just as socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces complete democracy, so the proletariat will be unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a many-sided, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy." (Page 48, Lenin, Collected Works - Vol. 19)

Isn't this good enough? Well, there's lots more.

Integrated into Johnson's ideas about democracy is actually the belief that it is incompatible and "infeasible" with the present epoch of imperialism and the new present "proletarian revolution". But Lenin says:

"Generally speaking, political democracy is only one of the possible forms (although, theoretically, the normal form of 'pure' capitalism) of the superstructure that rises over capitalism. Facts have proved that both capitalism and imperialism develop under all political forms, and subordinate all of them to their rule. It is therefore a fundamental theoretical mistake to speak of one of the forms and of one of the demands as being infeasible." (Emphasis in original - AG) ("The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up" by Lenin, Autumn, 1916).

This quotation merely leads into several others to completely summarize the whole question, and conclusively reveals the utterly hopeless point of view held by Johnson, and the manner in which he educates his followers. In "A Caricature of Marxism," an annihilating reply to Pyatakov (read: Johnson) Lenin wrote:

"Only those who are totally incapable of thinking, or those who are entirely unfamiliar with Marxism, will conclude that, therefore, a republic is of no use, that freedom of divorce is of no use, that democracy is of no use, that self-determination is of no use! Marxists know that democracy does not abolish class oppression, but only makes the class struggle clearer, broader, more open and sharper; and this is what we want. The more complete freedom of divorce is, the clearer will it be to the woman that the source of her "domestic slavery" is not the lack of rights, but capitalism. The more democratic the system of government is, the clearer it will be to the workers that the root of the evil is not the lack of rights, but capitalism...." (Emphasis in the original - AG)

Note the type of thinking by Lenin, his all-sided, broad conceptions which take into consideration the contradictory nature of the social order and his ever-present consciousness of the struggle of the classes. Here is what follows:

"'Democracy' is nothing but the proclaiming and exercising of 'rights' that are very little and very conventionally exercised under capitalism. (Emphasis mine - AG) But unless these rights are proclaimed, unless a struggle for immediate rights is waged, unless the masses are educated in the spirit of such a struggle, socialism is IMPOSSIBLE." (All other emphasis by Lenin - AG)

Proclaim! Exercise! ... unless the masses are educated in the spirit of such a struggle, socialism is IMPOSSIBLE! And Johnson? To proclaim, to exercise and to struggle for such rights is.....reactionary! Again, Lenin declares:

"Socialism without democracy is impossible in a double sense: 1. The proleteriat cannot achieve the socialist revolution unless it is prepared for this task by the struggle for democracy; 2. Victorious socialism cannot retain its victory and lead humanity to the state when the state withers away unless it establishes complete democracy." (Emphasis mine - AG)

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Lenin was not arguing about any special situation or thinking of the application of these ideas to any isolated problem. He was presenting the Marxist view, in general, and analysing its applicability under any and all circumstances of the class struggle.

Johnson doesn't make things any better when he says that he is against the use of democratic slogans in the occupied countries but favors the struggle for economic demands. Anyone who has the slightest understanding of the class struggle knows that the struggle for economic demands is inseparable from the struggle for democracy, as well as the struggle for socialism. And, if this is true in Great Britain and the United States, it is a thousand times more true in the occupied countries of Europe.

We do not doubt for a minute that Johnson's pseudo-radicalism on the problem of the relationship between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism, will impress some comrades, to whose most primitive kind of thinking Johnson appeals. It is not the first time in the Marxian movement that people who have no genuinely revolutionary perspective, based upon a sober estimate of the objective situation from the Marxian standpoint, present a substitute for it in the form of declamatory, verbal revolutionism. It is not the first time that a program of struggle calculated to set the masses in motion towards the struggle for proletarian power, is ridiculed as opportunistic (to say nothing of "reactionary"), and countered by the "uncompromising" and "unattractive" phrasemongering about R-R-R-Revolution, with many "R's" and all of them capitalized. With this kind of self-agitation, let us repeat, Johnson may sway the hearts of a few people. Why not? He has already swept Allen off his feet and into the higher reaches by his "superior analysis." He may do so with others -- for a time, and not only for a time. The solid teachings of our great masters, and a desire as well as an ability to see a situation as it really is and as it is really developing, plus a program that will help it develop in the socialist direction, is all we have and all we need. With its aid, the comrades blown off their feet by emotional agitation can find their bearings again.

December 10, 1943.

ON QUOTING TROTSKY

It has become the fashion amongst the exponents of the National Committee Majority Resolution to quote Trotsky "in support" of their non-revolutionary appraisal of the European situation. The quotations all relate to Trotsky's analysis of Fascism in 1932-3. I'm referring in particular to: (1) Com. Shachtman who, in his most archive-ish manner, republishes the Trotsky articles in the July 1943 issue of The New International, and (2) Com. Gates, the new discoverer of politics of other planets, in his most polemical style in the October 1943 issue of the N.I. A decade divides the quoters from the quotations. But time and circumstance seem to be the least essential elements for a historical appraisal to these National Committee spokesmen for the Majority N. C. Resolution. This decade has been analyzed most effectively in the Minority N. C. Resolution on the national question.

Trotsky is not here to cry out against the misuse of quotations from his writings. It is easy enough, however, to determine what his attitude would be. I will cite but a single instance to prove my point. That single instance is the "Old Man's" authorship of The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. We must remember that long before fascism came to power in Germany, Trotsky warned of its coming. The Stalinists laughed: there was nothing to worry about; fascism victorious was a Trotsky mirage. When fascism did triumph, the Stalinist apologists had a ready answer: after Hitler, we come. Trotsky hammered away: either the fascist dictatorship or the proletarian dictatorship is true only in a historic sense. Meanwhile, the triumph of fascism has thrown the proletariat back by destroying its organizations, has sown democratic illusions, and we shall again have to put forward democratic slogans in fascist countries.

However, when fascism triumphed in Spain, Trotsky was asked: does this then mean that the proletariat cannot win except when a war is raging. The "Old Man" answered: Not at all. The objective conditions are rotten ripe for socialism; the key to the international situation lies in the hands of the subjective factor: the vanguard of the proletariat. But the vanguard is wrecked by a crisis in its leadership. To overcome that crisis, and help the proletariat bridge the difference between the maturity of the objective circumstances and their own political immaturity, he had elaborated a Transitional Program. That was 1938. Fascism was still triumphant, but Trotsky already noted:

"Those layers of the population which at one time were intoxicated with fascism, i.e. chiefly the middle classes, have had enough time in which to sober up."*

The program of transitional demands in Fascist countries then continues:

"One thing can be stated with conviction even at this point: once it breaks through, the revolutionary wave in fascist countries will immediately be a grandiose sweep and under no circumstances will stop short at the experiment of resuscitating some sort of Weimar corpse."

Had Trotsky written thus because he had forgotten his 1933 thesis which the proponents of the N. C. Majority Resolution are now "defending"? Not at all. Neither was Trotsky in need of lessons from Gates on the role of the vanguard party. This was his 1938 interpretation of his 1933 thesis. It did not ignore, but was based upon, the fact that it was most difficult for the vanguard to function in fascist countries, where the proletariat was deprived of all democracy, that is, of all experience in choosing a revolutionary program:

"It is very likely, that a genuine proletarian success in one of the 'democratic' countries will be necessary to give impetus to the revolutionary movement on fascist territory."

But Trotsky then added:

"A similar effect is possible by means of a financial or military catastrophe."

That similar effect which Trotsky could foresee when fascism was the unchallenged victor in Germany and the challenged victor in Spain, the Majority N.C. cannot see even after:

- (a) the Fascist Army is suffering defeats, the greatest of which was at Stalingrad
- (b) the German General Staff had seen the handwriting on the wall and had sent peace feelers to Russia
- (c) Churchill promises that the European war will see its "climax" in 1944
- (d) the fall of Mussolini had released the pent-up energies of the heroic Italian masses who, in many instances, moved straightway to the formation of soviets
- (e) the German workers went on strike: "If the Italians can do it, so can we."
- (f) French masses refused to be herded into labor battalions for Germany
- (g) and the European masses throughout display both restlessness and militancy

And what is the majority of our N.C. busy doing? They are busy quoting Trotsky's analysis of fascism when fascism was the unchallenged victor. Not only do they, in 1943, reiterate the 1933 analysis, but they elaborate, in a most original manner, upon Trotsky's description of the destruction that fascism has wrought upon the proletarian organizations. They state

that the European proletariat is "impotent" at the very time when it is so militantly awakening! In 1938, when the proletariat had not yet shown these tremendous recuperative powers, Trotsky already saw:

"...factory committees, it may be supposed, will appear before the old routinists rush from their chancelleries to organize trade unions; soviets will cover Germany before a new Constituent Assembly will gather in Weimar..."

Whereas the N. C. Majority, in 1943, wish us to accept a program based on that "impotence". Had they really wished to expound Trotsky, they should not have forgotten so easily what Trotsky said a program in fascist countries should be based upon:

"A revolutionary program should base itself on the dialectics of the class struggle, obligatory also to fascist countries..."

The leader of October must indeed be turning in his grave at the strange phenomenon that his analysis of triumphant fascism is used by revolutionists to screen the revolutionary upsurge of the European proletariat as fascism heads toward its doom.

Nov. 10, 1943

--F. FOREST

*All quotations are from The Founding Conference of the Fourth International, pages 42-5