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RESOLUTION ON PROLETARIAN MILITARY POLICY

(Drafted by the Political Committee for the Plenum-Conference)

1. Capitalism has plunged the world into a horrible vortex of war and militarism. This testifies not to the vitality of capitalism but to its fatal weakness, its incapacity to regain stability. The epoch of the death agony of capitalism and the beginning of social transformation is an epoch of universal militarism. It can be brought to an end only by the definitive military victory of the proletariat. This is the essential feature of the present world situation.

2. The intervention of the United States in the present war, or its clash with a victorious Germany or Japan at a later date, is predetermined by all the circumstances. All the realistic leaders of American capitalism clearly understand this. Only a few pacifist fools have the slightest doubt about it. The two main groups in the camp of U.S. imperialism -- interventionist and so-called isolationists -- differ only in regard to military strategy. Both are agreed on the policy of preparing to fight and grab. The stupendous arms program adopted by congress has and can have only one meaning: military aggression in the near future on a world scale.

The question whether German Fascism, having conquered Europe, can or cannot "attack" the United States has nothing to do with the real issue. The very existence of one aggressive and expanding imperialist power in the modern world is an "attack" on the others. The United States, as an imperialist power having its foundations throughout the world, is "attacked" anywhere a rival power attempts to seize a market, a piece of territory or a sphere of influence.

Whether the United States directly intervenes in the present European war, or defers open military action for another point of attack,

is only a secondary consideration in evaluating the perspective. The real course is clear: U.S. imperialism is preparing with all possible speed to put its strength and its weakness to the test of war on a colossal scale.

3. In the epoch of militarism great questions can be decided only by military means -- this is the fundamental lesson of the developments of the present war.

The agents and apologists of democratic imperialism -- the social democrats, the centrists, the trade union reformists and the pacifists -- fill the air with lamentations over the smashing military victories of Hitler and spread the sentiments of pessimism and prostration.

We Fourth Internationalists thrust aside these traitors and panic mongers with hatred and contempt. Our task is to ascertain what has been destroyed and what has been proved by the momentous events in Europe and to draw the necessary conclusions for the future struggle.

In the first place the victories of the fascist war machine of Hitler have destroyed every plausible basis for the illusion that a serious military struggle against fascism can be conducted under the leadership of a bourgeois democratic regime. The war in Europe, as previously in the Spanish rehearsal, has shown up the hollowness, the rottenness and the contemptible cowardice and greed of the whole ruling stratum of the bourgeois democrats. They are unwilling to sacrifice anything but the lives of the duped masses. To save their personal lives and their property they were ready in one country after another to capitulate to fascism and seek its protection against the wrath of their own people.

No loss complete and devastating has been the destruction of the traditional reformist labor movement. At best, this traditional

movement -- the parties and the trade unions -- was pacifist in character. That is, it was designed for peace, not for war. Parties which confined themselves to protests against the horrors of war, and did not seriously conduct a struggle for power to end the system which causes war -- such parties were completely helpless when submitted to the test of war. The same proved true of the outwardly imposing trade unions. All concepts of peaceful, gradual, reformistic progress within the frame-work of capitalism, and all parties and organizations which represented these concepts in any degree, were smashed like a house of cards.

The war in Europe has once again, and more categorically than ever, posed the fundamental alternative of the epoch of wars and revolutions: Either the dictatorship of fascist capitalism, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. The attempt of the European workers, under the influence of the reformist labor bureaucracies, to find a third alternative in democratic capitalism, led to catastrophe. The third alternative has been destroyed in blood and fire. But the program of the workers' fight for power with arms in hand has not been destroyed. When the workers of Europe rise again -- and rise they will -- that program will be their banner. These are the fundamental lessons of the war.

4. Bolshevism alone, which aims to direct the workers' movement to the seizure of political power by revolutionary means, stands up and gains strength under the test of the great new events. War and militarism which crush all other organizations and discredit all other programs, only provide a new verification of the premises of Bolshevism. The military epoch has room only for parties which inspire the workers to scorn all half measures, to stop at nothing,

and to carry their struggle through to the very end. These are parties of a new type having nothing in common with the reformist-pacifist parties of the traditional labor movement. Such a party is the SWP. Its program can be described in one phrase: dictatorship of the proletariat.

5. The certainty that the U.S. also will be dominated by militarism confronts the party with the categorical necessity to purge itself of all remnants of liberal, petty bourgeois pacifist tendencies and conceptions carried over from the past, in particular from the left social-democratic movement. Pacifism is a debilitating poison in the workers' movement. Pacifism, in all its forms, is no more than a protest against war in time of peace; in the face of actual war it thrusts the workers like sheep, unarmed and defenseless and without a program, into the slaughter. In our epoch, which is completely dominated by militarism, negative protests against war are of no avail whatever. The proletariat requires a positive program which takes the facts of war and militarism, the characteristic features of decaying capitalism, as the starting point for practical actions.

The first impact of the war in Europe revealed a petty-bourgeois centrist tendency in the SWP which took shape as a faction. Under the leadership of Burnham and Shachtman this minority faction waged a disruptive struggle in the party and attempted to overthrow the Marxist doctrines in favor of journalistic improvisations. The disruptive struggle of the Burnham-Shachtman faction culminated in their desertion of the party in a typical petty bourgeois recoil against the discipline of the proletarian majority of the party. The open repudiation of socialism by Burnham within less than two months after he had deserted the party was only the logical sequel to the course he followed in the party struggle. Burnham's betrayal of socialism confirmed to the hilt

the party's characterization of this pretentious montebank and the petty-bourgeois faction he organized and maneuvered into a split.

Since the party convention the seceding faction has evolved consistently in the direction of traditional left socialist anti-militarism which at bottom is only a form of pacifism. The resolute struggle of the party majority against the Burnham-Shachtman faction, and its decisive victory in the struggle, were the necessary conditions for the survival of the party. An unrelenting antagonism to the deserters on every point is no less necessary. The party cannot have the slightest reason for conciliation on any point with the faction of deserters inspired by petty-bourgeois fright before the stern realities and complexities of the developing war.

6. The imperialist war is not our war and the militarism of the capitalist state is not our militarism. We do not support the war and militarism of the imperialists any more than we support the capitalist exploitation of workers in the factories. We are against the war as a whole just as we are against the rule of the class which conducts it, and never under any circumstances vote to give them any confidence in their conduct of the war or preparation for it -- not a man, not a cent, not a gun with our support. Our war is the war of the working class against the capitalist order.

But only with the masses is it possible to conquer power and establish socialism; and in these times the masses in the military organizations are destined to play the most decisive role of all. Consequently, it is impossible to affect the course of events by a policy of abstention. It is necessary to take capitalist militarism as an established reality which we are not yet strong enough to abolish, and adapt our practical tactics to it. Our task is to protect the class interests

of the workers in the army no less than in the factory. That means to participate in the military machine for socialist ends. The proletarian revolutionists are obliged to take their place beside the workers in the military training camps and on the battlefields in the same way as in the factory. They stand side by side with the masses of worker-soldiers, advance at all times and under all circumstances the independent class point of view, and strive to win over the majority to the idea of transforming the war into a struggle for their socialist emancipation.

Under conditions of mass militarization the revolutionary worker cannot evade military exploitation any more than he can evade exploitation in the factory. He does not seek a personal solution of the problem of war by evading military service. That is nothing but a desertion of class duty. The proletarian revolutionist goes with the masses. He becomes a soldier when they become soldiers, and goes to war when they go to war. The proletarian revolutionist strives to become the most skilled among the worker-soldiers, and demonstrates in action that he is most concerned for the general welfare and protection of his comrades. Only in this way, as in the factory, can the proletarian revolutionist gain the confidence of his comrades in arms and become an influential leader among them.

The total wars waged by the modern imperialists, and likewise the preparations for such wars, require compulsory military training no less than the appropriation of enormous funds and the subordination of industry to the manufacture of armaments. As long as the masses accept the war preparations, as is indubitably the case in the United States, more negative agitation against the military budget and conscription cannot, by itself, yield serious results. Moreover, after congress has

already appropriated billions for armaments and will in all probability pass a conscription bill without serious opposition, such negative agitation is somewhat belated and can easily degenerate into mealy-mouthed pacifism. This is the case with the organizations (Thomasite Socialists, Lovestonites, etc.) affiliated with the preposterous conglomeration which calls itself the "Keep America Out of War Committee" -- a vile and treacherous tool of the "Western Hemisphere" wing of imperialists. Under the rule of a modern imperialism which is already arming to the teeth, an abstract fight against militarism is at best Quixotic.

The revolutionary strategy can only be to take this militarism as a reality and counterpose a class program of the proletariat to the program of the imperialists at every point. We fight against sending the worker-soldiers into battle without proper training and equipment. We oppose the military direction of worker-soldiers by bourgeois officers who have no regard for their treatment, their protection and their lives. We demand federal funds for the military training of workers and worker-officers under the control of the trade unions. Military appropriations? Yes -- but only for the establishment and equipment of worker training camps! Compulsory military training of workers? Yes -- but only under the control of the trade unions!

Such are the necessary concrete slogans for the present stage of the preparation of U.S. imperialism for war in the near future. They constitute a military transitional program supplementing the general political transitional program of the party.

7. U.S. imperialism prepares for war, materially and ideologically, without waiting to decide in advance the date when actual hostilities shall begin or the precise point of attack. The workers' vanguard must likewise prepare for war without dependence on speculative



answers to these secondary questions. The militarization of the country in preparation for war is taking place before our eyes. All our work and plans for the future must be based on this reality.

The first stages of militarization and war present enormous difficulties to our party because we have to swim against the stream. The party will be tested in a preliminary way by its capacity to recognize these difficulties and hold firm when the struggle is hard and the progress slow. Only a party fortified by the great principles and world associations of the Fourth International will be able to do this.

We are not a party like other parties. We alone are equipped with a scientific program of Marxism. We alone retain an unshakable confidence in the socialist future of humanity. We alone are ready to meet the universal militarism of decaying capitalism on its own terms and lead the proletarian struggle for power accordingly.

The war in its course will utterly destroy all other workers parties, all half-and-half movements. But it will only harden the bona-fide party of the Fourth International and open the way for its growth and eventual victory.

The future belongs to the party of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the party of the Fourth International. It needs only to be true to itself, hold firm, dig in and prepare the future.

EXCERPTS FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH LUND

(Rough stenographic draft -- uncorrected by participants)

Lund: Militarization now goes on on a tremendous scale. We cannot oppose it with pacifist phrases. This militarization has wide support among the workers. They bear a sentimental hatred against Hitler mixed with confused class sentiments. They have a hatred against the victorious brigands. The bureaucracy utilizes this to say help the defeated gangster. Our conclusions are completely different. But this sentiment is the inevitable base for the last period of preparation. We must find new realistic base for this preparation. We must oppose sending untrained boys into battle. The trade unions not only must protect the workers in peaceful times and protect their industrial skill but they must now demand the possibility of learning the military art from the state.

For instance in the trade union we can argue like this: I am a socialist and you are a patriot. Good. We will discuss this difference between us. But we should agree that the workers be trained at government expense to become military experts. Schools should be set up in connection with the trade unions -- at government expense but under the control of the trade unions. This kind of approach would give us access to the workers, who are 95 to 98 percent patriotic even at the present time.

Only with this perspective, not abstract opposition to militarism can we have success in the trade unions and the military organizations. We can find in this way new routes and sympathies for illegal situation. Of course the technical side of underground activity is important but it is only a small part of illegal activity.

As for the Stalinists. They flatly oppose the entrance of the United States until Moscow switches. But meantime there is an important distinction between them and us. Abstract slogans have a similarity. They with their larger organization shout louder than us. We must seek to create a very clear distinction in the matter of militarism. Naturally we are against all these things in general but we have particular differences over the matter of militarization. It makes the most important difference in the matter of preparing for illegality.

Everything indicates that Moscow is preparing a switch. In Mexico, where these shifts are often indicated first, the CP has the right to place Hitler on the same level as Churchill. On the day that Moscow makes a half turn toward the democracies as a half friend, there will be a new explosion in the ranks of the CP. We must be ready to gain from it. I consider the possibilities in the CP very good despite the transitory radicalness of the CP which cannot be for long. Likewise in general despite the CP radicalness possibilities are very good. It is possible that the U.S. will enter during the next six months. It will enter as a military machine. We must learn how to handle arms. All things will now be decided on the military front.

The state is now organizing tremendous military machines with millions of men. No longer do we have just the small possibilities of

Defense Guards but the wide possibilities given by the bourgeois state itself.

Martin: Can this take the form of resolutions in the trade unions? Do we demand military equipment, training, etc.? What about the possibility of confusing us with the patriots?

Lund: Partial confusion is inevitable, especially at the beginning. But we place our whole agitation on a class basis. We are against the bourgeois officers who treat you like cattle, who use you for cannon-fodder. We are concerned about the deaths of the workers, unlike the bourgeois officers. We want workers' officers.

We can say to the workers: We are ready for revolution. But you aren't ready. But both of us want our own workers' officers in this situation. We want special workers' schools which will train us to be officers.

At first the bourgeois press will hesitate. It may even support the idea. But with the class lines sharply drawn they will be disquieted and then launch an attack.

Martin: The New York Times just printed an editorial advocating universal military training. Do we agree with that?

Lund: Yes. That is correct -- but under control of our own organizations. We reject the control of the Sixty Families. We want an improvement of conditions for the worker-soldier. We want to safeguard his life. Not waste it. Yes, Mr. Bourgeois, you must depend on the workers. You train them for your own aims. We want them trained for their own aims. We don't want them trained for the command of stupid indifferent bourgeois officers who will use them for cannon-fodder.

Smith: On the technical side there is an abundance of material for such agitation. Men were drafted in May and within two or three months were dead in France. They were not properly trained to take care of themselves. We can compile factual material in relation to past experience. In advocating that workers be trained as officers we can compile material on how officers have wasted material. Also it is a good point in arguing against the patriots by showing how the workers lost their lives because they weren't trained. It is a very impressive argument with workers.

Martin: Doesn't this line make a very sharp break with the pacifists such as Norman Thomas and the Keep America Out of War outfit? For a long time our agitation has been abstract. It was against war in general. Only revolution can stop war. Hence we favor universal training. The difficulty is to make clear that we are really against war. We need very clear and precise formulations.

Smith: We can attack the pacifists. Wouldn't that solve it? It is inevitable that we have to fight. You must train yourselves. Whether in the Red or the Bourgeois army you must train yourselves.

Martin: It signifies too a re-education of our own movement. The youth has been impregnated with an anti-militarist and es-

capist attitude toward war. Already many have asked about going to Mexico in order to hide out. Our propaganda is not sufficiently separated from that of the pacifists. We say there must be no war! At the same time we say we can't avoid war! There is a link missing somewhere. All questions will be solved with war. Mere opposition can't signify anything. But the problem which requires clearest formulation is making ourselves distinct from the patriots.

Kay: What about our slogans such as "not a cent for war"?

Lund: Suppose we had a senator. He would introduce a bill in favor of training camps for workers. He might ask 500 millions for it. At the same time he would vote against the military budget because it is controlled by class enemies. We can't expropriate the bourgeoisie at present, so we allow them to exploit the workers. But we try to protect the workers with trade unions. The courts are bourgeois but we don't boycott them as do the anarchists. We try to use them and fight within them. Likewise with parliaments. We are enemies of the bourgeoisie and its institutions, but we utilize them. War is a bourgeois institution a thousand times more powerful than all the other bourgeois institutions. We accept it as a fact like the bourgeois schools and try to utilize it. Pacifists accept everything bourgeois but militarism. They accept the schools, the parliament, the courts without question. Everything is good in peace time. But militarism, which is just as much bourgeois as the rest? No, they draw back and say we don't want any of that. The Marxists try to utilize war like any other bourgeois institution. It is clear now that in the next period our opposition to militarism will constitute the base for our propaganda: our agitation will be for the training of the masses.

Our military transitional program is an agitational program. Our socialist revolutionary program is propaganda.

We must be terribly categorical in the next period. We must brand Thomas as the most perfidious enemy. We must say the war is inevitable. Bureaucrats! this war signifies the death of your trade unions. We must make the most categorical predictions in the darkest colors. We must come out categorically for the dictatorship of the proletariat. We must make a complete break with the pacifists. A short time ago everyone was against the war. Any confusion with the pacifists is a hundred times more dangerous than temporary confusion with the bourgeois militarists. We prepare the new arena to overthrow the militarists. The pacifists help to lull the workers to support the militarists. Thomas, we must predict, will support the war -- war is inevitable. We must learn the art of handling arms. As for the escapists -- including those in our own party -- we must speak about them with full contempt. They are deserters. Likewise with the conscientious objectors who accepted everything in peacetime but don't want to accept war. Escapists are deserters from their class and their revolution.

Job: I believe that the rapid militarization among the broad masses will aid in putting over this program and make it easier than among the radicals, where anti-militarism has a long tradition. Men such as Debs are their heroes. This tradition still exists in the labor movement. Just how to get around it is not yet clear in my mind.

Lund: Not even Debs had the perspective of taking power and launching the socialist society. He proclaimed his aversion to war and went to prison. He was brave and honest but he did not have the perspective of revolution.

Martin: It was a protest and not a revolutionary approach. Our movement is infected with it, contaminated, especially the youth who had the socialist tradition of protest but not the tradition of entering the armed forces and conquering them.

Lund: It is no longer the slogan "Jobs not guns". In a military situation we need new slogans. It would be good to have a party discussion, possibly a small conference to elaborate a good start for this agitation. We could try out a small experience in Minneapolis or St. Paul and see. We should have articles in the magazine on military questions. Likewise in the Socialist Appeal. In four or five weeks we can make a re-orientation. Even those in the majority with an old trade union background can be reeducated at an extremely rapid tempo. All Thomas and his ilk will become ridiculous in a short time and lose their audience. In order to fight the real enemy, we must enter his land which is now militarism.

Martin: Can we be called militarists?

Lund: Yes -- in a certain sense -- we are proletarian socialist revolutionary militarists. Possibly we should not use it at first. Wait until we are called militarists by Thomas or someone like that, and then make a polemical reply. Thomas has called us militarists. Yes, we can be called militarists in a certain sense. Then we can use it with this explanation.

Kay: We started to discuss this in our branch but were afraid to bring it out on account of spies. We don't want to bring about the conditions where they will put our young men in concentration camps instead of the army. We were almost afraid our members would be excluded from the army. How can we agitate so as not to be stamped in advance as traitors?

Lund: We will have victims. It is inevitable. There will be carelessness and so on. But the general line will protect us. In the union I can say I am for the Fourth International. I am against war. But I am with you. I will not sabotage the war. I will be the best soldier just as I was the best and most skilled worker in the factory. At the same time I will try to convince you that we should change our society. In court my fellow-worker would say, 'he said that he would be a disciplined soldier, that he wouldn't provoke rebellions. All he asked for was the right to give his opinion.' We can make a similar defense in court from our prediction regarding the doom of bourgeois society. If the bourgeoisie could preserve democracy, good, but within a year they will impose a dictatorship. We are against dictatorship. We will fight arms in hand against such a dictatorship. Naturally in principle we would overthrow so-called bourgeois democracy given the opportunity, but the bourgeois won't give us time.

Smith: Just as in the factory one must be a very good worker in order to influence the other workers, so in war he must be a good soldier.

Kay: We must use caution in our agitation.

Martin: To what extent can we use the analogy of the army and the factory? Can we use it as categorically as you have expressed it here?

Lund: Yes, I think so. In the factories now more than half of their produce is war goods.

Smith: Whether we enlist or wait for conscription or avoid entering is a practical question isn't it? Whether we join voluntarily, wait conscription or evade conscription -- that's a practical day to day question.

Lund: We must be for compulsory military training for the workers under the control of the workers. It is an approach to the workers' militia. As to entry into the army that is an individual question. Obviously we don't agitate for entry!

Smith: In Texas a Congressman proposes appropriations for the creation of military combat units against the Fifth Column. These workers are to be trained by officers to be selected by the employer. That appears to be an ideal case, one we should pick up and show how it should be turned around and used.

Lund: There will be dozens of such examples.

One more point: We must polemize against the stupid argument that the U.S. cannot be attacked. Of course the U.S. is attacked. Any modern empire is attacked by changes in the military powers of other countries. Germany threatens the empire of the United States. Capitalism is international.