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THE AMERICAN NEGRO AND THE WAR

The war intensifies all problems facing the fifth national party convention. In most phases of party work, the war has necessitated a concrete analysis of changes in the objective situation, but as yet the party has not put under the programmatic x-ray the relation of the Negro masses to the imperialist war. Of the 63 sections of the N.C. resolution, only the following brief paragraph is devoted to the Negro question: "Labor with a white skin cannot be free so long as labor with a black skin is branded. The great contribution of the Negro workers to the growth of unionism -- in Ford's and other auto plants, in the packing-house plants, in the coal mines, in steel, etc. -- is but the beginning of what can be done if the workers of all races firmly unite. All workers must speak up; against all forms of jim-crowism! Equal rights for Negroes in the armed forces and war industries!"

While all this is correct, a few generalizations are totally inadequate as political analysis or as a directive for the party. A resolution dealing with the role of the Negro masses in the imperialist war must start from the following premises: that the Negroes do not accept the war; that the war has not only precipitated the dissatisfaction of the Negro people with their present plight, but provided them with an opportunity for struggle; and finally, -- that the Negro people have taken the path of independent action. We wish to initiate a discussion on the relation of the party to the Negro struggle with these ideas as our point of departure.

Being at the bottom of the economic and social scale, the Negro masses have no illusions that this is a "War for Democracy." The creation of a war economy struck a severe blow at an already subnormal standard of living. Many who found their only revenue in the relief and works program of the Administration in recent years saw this source of income dried up by the Administration's program of "economy." Seeking new means of sustaining themselves, they have been denied the opportunity of sharing in the prosperity which the opening phases of the war-boom offered the working-class. Their economic misery has been still further aggravated by the continued denial of all the democratic rights which the white workers have won for themselves through decades of bitter struggle.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the South where the majority of Negroes are held in bondage by an arrogant ruling class. The poll-tax, crude racial discrimination, lynchings, and the doctrine of white supremacy are burning reminders to the Negro that he is still the pariah of American society. Even when fighting for "Democracy" in the armed forces, he is denied any share of it. The Negro cannot believe in this "War for Democracy" since he stands outside the framework of this same "Bourgeois Democracy."

The above factors, however, are negative, serving to increase the "normal" dissatisfaction of the Negro masses. What objective conditions convince the Negro people they can conduct a successful struggle? One reason for their self-confidence is the ever-growing shortage of man-power. The capitalists must use Negro workers on an increasing scale. Their importance in the war economy is something

of which the Negroes are very much aware and which they intend to utilize.

Secondly, their role in industry is no longer that of imported scabs but of trade union militants and even trade union leaders. Many have learnt the lessons of the class struggle on the picket line. They are applying their knowledge in the battle for equality. The trade unions lend strength to the struggle of the Negro people by taking up the demands of the Negroes for equal opportunity in industry. One manifestation of this concern with Negro problems is the organization by the CIO of a national committee to combat discrimination in industry. The CIO is forced to consider the question of organizing the South to protect union standards. The necessary inclusion of Negroes on an equal basis in these unions will help sharpen their awareness of the connection between their struggle and the struggles of the working class.

A real source of inspiration to the Negroes is the fight of the colonial peoples. They see the British Empire, greatest slaveholder of the epoch, crumbling. The successes of the Chinese, the opening phases of the Indian Revolution, serve as a source of confidence for the Negro masses. Their sensitivity* to the struggle of the colonial masses against the imperialist yoke flows from the fact that their role in American society is partially analogous to that of a colonial people. They are comparable to a colonial people in this respect -- that not having as yet achieved the normal democratic rights won by the white workers they are pushed to the forefront in the struggle against the regime that denies them these rights.

The March-on-Washington Movement

The continued existence and growth of the March-on-Washington movement is irrefutable proof that the Negro masses have taken the path of independent action. The March-on-Washington movement had its inception in the early part of 1941 with A. Phillip Randolph as its leader. The aim of the M on W movement was to have local groups from all over the country converge on Washington on July 1st and demand an executive order ending discrimination. The response was enthusiastic. Roosevelt alarmed at the scope of the movement came to an agreement with Randolph. In exchange for an Executive Order devoid of real content, Randolph arbitrarily called the March off. The Negro masses voted with their feet. They left the organization. Yet a year later when Randolph called upon the Negro masses to resume the struggle and staged a series of mass meetings, the response was complete. Mass meetings of 25,000 in New York and meetings of comparable size in other parts of the country were held. In one state close to the Mason and Dixon line, thousands of Negroes massed for a march on the State capital.

Today, Randolph continues to temporize and the March has not as yet materialized. But the masses continue to push their recalcitrant leaders to more and more militant statements and on a local scale to militant action. There can be no doubt that the Negro masses are eager to struggle and are willing to follow a militant leadership.

* See footnote at end of document for proof of Negroes' sensitivity to international events.

Roosevelt and the Negro People

The militancy of the Negro masses makes the role of the present leadership more difficult since they act primarily as salesmen for Roosevelt's "liberal" promises. It is doubtful today whether Roosevelt can even pay lip service to the struggle of the Negro people. Certainly he can make no real concessions. Were Roosevelt to even attempt the abolition of Jim-crow in the armed forces, he would lose the support of the Southern ruling class whose economic privileges rest largely on the segregation of the Negro. Under the attack of the Southern Oligarchy, Roosevelt is constrained to scuttle the Committee on Fair Employment Practices. Alarmed at the militancy of the Negro people, and at the incursion of the CIO into the South, the Southern reactionaries are preparing a bloody revenge upon the Negro people of the South. The present wave of violence, the truculence of two Southern Governors towards the Federal Government, the proposed organization of a "League to Maintain White Supremacy", are the defiant answer of the Southern capitalists and landlords to Roosevelt's so-called "Liberal policies." Roosevelt remains silent. The Negro people must defend themselves. All indications point to an intensification, not a weakening, of the struggle.

The Present Leadership

Only a militant leadership can withstand the blows of the imminent reaction. The present leadership, as symbolized by Randolph, has not distinguished itself by any militancy in action. Instead, the present leadership strives to restrict the energies of the Negro people within the channels of "peaceful protest." They are petty-bourgeois in outlook and suffer from all the vices of their white brethren -- vacillation, indecisiveness, and a dislike of concrete action. They employ the classic methods of the reformists, in dissipating the energy of the masses by ineffectual actions (i.e. The present petition campaign of Randolph substitutes for organized militant mass action.) They seem to suffer from a premature political senility. Either they must move leftward or be replaced by a new leadership if the March-on-Washington movement is to go forward.

Parties of the Working Class and the Negro People

The Negro masses have experienced complete disillusionment with the only radical party they knew, the C.P. The opportunistic zig-zags of the Stalinist party over a period of years culminating in their present servility to Roosevelt cuts them off today from any chance of leadership. Their betrayals compelled the Negro vanguard to create its own organization with Negro leadership.

The creation by the Negro people of their own organization under Negro leadership, poor as that leadership may be, represents a step forward in the political development of the Negro people. The movement finds one of its mainstays in the Negro trade unions. The seeds of a program of "racism", should it be advocated, would fall on barren soil. The inclusion of class-conscious militants prevents any such backslidings toward chauvinism. The speeches of Frank Crosswithe, a polished demagogue, clearly reflect the pressure of these working-class elements. Crosswithe refers constantly to the struggle of the Negro people as part of the class struggle;

to the need for unity of white and Negro workers. In such an atmosphere, a program of class struggle will receive sympathetic hearing.

Perspectives for the Party

The Negro masses have remained immune to the virus of patriotism. Striving to attain the same level of social and political development as the white workers, they are compelled to make the first principal breach in National Unity. It is their historic backwardness which compells them to leap to the forefront of the class struggle. Their struggle cannot fail to have a salutary effect upon a working class which is being deprived of its democratic rights. The working class must become more and more restive under the restrictions of a war dictatorship. We cannot exclude the possibility that the Negro masses will be the spearhead in the initial stages of the struggle against the offensive on the part of the ruling class to regiment and impoverish the working class.

Organizational Tasks of the Party

This general perspective when translated into organizational steps cannot and does not mean that we are for rushing in and trying to win leadership overnight. A bid for leadership cannot be made until the party has fashioned a Negro cadre capable of playing a role in the Negro movement. The fact that we still do not have this cadre is our main problem today. The preparation of a cadre is also preparation for entry into the only field where there is a basis for mass work in a period of general retreat. The following practical steps must be taken if we are to attract to our ranks the most militant elements of the Negro vanguard.

1. The National Negro Committee must be revitalized and broadened. In order to coordinate the work on a national scale, at least one comrade active in Negro work in each of the large Negro centers, Harlem, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, etc., will be in constant communication with the committee and whenever possible will sit in as an active member.
2. The Committee will conduct research on Negro problems, publish theoretical and agitational articles and pamphlets on the Negro question.
3. The recent policy of the Militant in giving prominence to Negro features and articles is wholeheartedly endorsed by the convention. We believe this policy should be continued.
4. Whenever possible, clubs on the pattern of the Harlem Workers Club should be organized in large Negro centers. This applies particularly to Detroit, a proletarian center, whose 150,000 Negroes not only represent a larger percentage of the population than do the Negroes of New York City, but have a greater weight in the revolutionary scale because of their trade union background.

(The Harlem Workers Club is a group organized a few months ago by the Harlem Branch, N.Y. local, as an intermediary step to the party. It conducts educational lectures, forums, debates and provides a social center for its members. It supports and distributes

the Militant. It actively supports all progressive Negro movements-- the March-on-Washington, Odell Waller Committee, etc.

In its brief existence it has already proven itself successful. A party member of excellent quality has been recruited from its ranks; several more may be recruited soon. It has a contact list of about 200 Negroes who have expressed interest or attended meetings.

To conclude: It might be argued by a few formalists who think in terms of statistics that a ten percent minority cannot have such weight as we attribute to it. The answer was given in something the Old Man said in 1939, which is even more applicable today:

"If the worker's aristocracy is the basis of opportunism, one of the sources of adaptation to capitalist society, then the most oppressed, most discriminated class, of which the Negroes are the most oppressed and discriminated, are the most dynamic milieu of the working class. We must say to the conscious elements of the Negroes that they are convoked by historic development to become a vanguard of the working class. What serves as the brake on the higher strata? It is the privileges, the comforts that hinder them from becoming revolutionists. It does not exist for the Negroes. What can transform a certain strata -- make it more capable of courage and sacrifice? It is concentrated in the Negroes. If it happens that we in the S.W.P. are not able to find the road to this strata, then we are not worthy at all. The permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie."**

The analysis, perspectives, and program are herein presented for discussion and approval by the delegates to the National convention.

** Note -- discussion in internal bulletin, No. 9, June, 1939.

-- On Negroes' Internationalism - and sensitivity to colonial questions. In 1938-39 the Communist Party lost 79% (1,579) of its N.Y. state Negro membership largely as a result of the C.P. attitude on the Ethiopian question. The Soviet Union sold oil to Italy. The C.P. did not agitate for defense of Ethiopia.

S. Russel
B. Lenz
A. Stein

ON REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM

By M. Morrison

We shall, I am afraid, never be rid of the problem of revolutionary defeatism until socialism is firmly established all over the world. For there will always be comrades who will read Lenin for the first or the tenth time and confront us with quotations which apparently prove the sectarian's position on revolutionary defeatism, namely, that a revolutionary party must take a position in favor of a defeat of its own imperialist government at the hands of an enemy imperialist government.

The question of the meaning of revolutionary defeatism has not been a serious one in our ranks. A party that is not affected by a strong ultra leftist tendency, a party that is concentrating its efforts on work in mass organizations, has nothing to fear if any one does raise the question. The experience of the Trotskyist group in England shows, however, how avidly the ultra-left sectarians seize upon this question and what havoc it can create in a party if the problem is not correctly analyzed and understood.

It is necessary in the first instance to state the basic position of a revolutionary Marxist party on imperialist war and then see if the formulation of Lenin on revolutionary defeatism adds anything to that position.

A revolutionary party, in the first place, must reach a conclusion as to the character of the war; if it is a reactionary war then it refuses any kind of support for that war. An imperialist war is of course a reactionary war and a Marxist cannot give any support to such a war. Furthermore, a revolutionary party, during such a war, carries on the struggle for socialism just as it did up to the time when war broke out. Naturally the party utilizes the war and the sufferings it brings to the people to emphasize the need for socialism. In that way the party takes advantage of the war to further the interests of socialism. In a general way, however, it is correct to state that the position of the party with reference to an imperialist war is that it does not support it and carries on the struggle for socialism.

This was the basic Leninist position on the First World War. He refused to support any government in that war because they were all waging a reactionary imperialist war. It did not matter to him whether the governments were monarchies or republics, autocratic or democratic. So long as they were waging a reactionary war no support should be forthcoming on the part of a revolutionary socialist.

In the present war any one who refuses to support an imperialist government and advocates the continuance of the struggle for socialism is adopting the essence of Lenin's position towards an imperialist war. A formally correct attitude on the war is not sufficient, of course, in and by itself, to make one a Leninist. There are other essential factors of Leninism but we are not concerned with them in this article.

What, if anything, do Lenin's formulations on revolutionary defeatism add to his essential position on imperialist war as indicated above?

Let us first present three of these formulations:

1. "A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot help wishing the defeat of its own government, it cannot fail to see the connection between the government's military reverses and the increased opportunity for overthrowing it!"
2. "Under given conditions, it is impossible to determine from the standpoint of the international proletariat which is the lesser evil for Socialism; the defeat of one or the defeat of the other group of belligerent nations. For us Russian Social-Democrats, however, there cannot exist the least doubt that from the standpoint of the working class and the labouring masses of all the peoples of Russia, the lesser evil would be the defeat of the tsarist monarchy, the most reactionary and barbarous government oppressing the greatest number of nations and the greatest mass of the populations of Europe and Asia." (The Imperialist War, p.81)
3. "For us Russians, from the point of view of the interests of the labouring masses and the working class of Russia, there cannot be the slightest doubt, absolutely no doubt whatever, that the lesser evil would be, here and now, the defeat of tsarism in the present war. For tsarism is a hundred times worse than Kaiserism."
(The Imperialist War, p. 74)

As is well-known, Lenin did not propose to bring about the defeat of any imperialist government by supporting another imperialist government. Not even in the case of Russia which he wanted defeated because tsarism was more reactionary than Kaiserism. In fact Lenin specifically warned against sabotaging the war or committing an individual act of terror against any officer, in order to bring about the defeat of the tsarist army.

By his sharp formulations on defeatism he did not propose an iota more than is implied in the basic position of revolutionary socialism on war: not to support an imperialist war and to continue the class struggle. If he had not said anything about defeatism it would not have changed his essential position; having said the things that he did about defeatism, he has not in any way added to or modified the basic position of revolutionary Marxism on imperialist war.

Whatever actions Lenin proposed for the revolutionary socialists during the war were a result of his basic position to continue the class struggle and not to bring about the defeat of their own government.

Lenin's desire to see the defeat of his own imperialist government was altogether platonic insofar as that desire did not lead him to propose any action other than that which flowed from the basic position of non-support to the war and carrying on the class struggle.

If then Lenin's formulations on revolutionary defeatism add nothing to the basic position of revolutionary Marxism on imperialist war they are, to say the least, unnecessary. They are indeed dangerous because only those who read all of Lenin intelligently understand their real meaning. They can easily be distorted by our enemies and especially by vicious prosecutors. If the formulations added anything to our basic position we would have to adopt them, but since they do not, only a narrow sectarian who pays homage to formulas and does not attempt to arrive at their essential meaning will insist on their adoption.

It is not difficult to understand why the formulations used by Lenin are so sharp. One has to consider only the nature of the problem confronting him and the circumstance under which it arose to understand the sharpness of the formulations.

The leading parties of the Second International had adopted a position in favor of supporting their capitalist governments in the war. They proclaimed it as their duty to defend the fatherland and to forget the class struggle. Lenin was confronted with the task of hardening the most advanced socialist workers against the ideas of the leaders of the Socialist parties.

Against the insistence of these leaders for the defense of the capitalist fatherland, Lenin counterposed the idea of defeat. When the reformists argued that to continue the class struggle would mean the defeat of the army, Lenin sharply answered in several ways: a revolutionary class must want the defeat of its own government in a reactionary war; defeat is the lesser evil, etc. To educate and steel revolutionary cadres at a time when the official leaders of socialism betrayed socialist internationalism was Lenin's aim. The sharpest formulations were justified. Sectarian dogmatists who have no conception of time, place and circumstances, insist on the formulations and not on understanding them. Leninism, to them, is not a guide to action but a dogma, every sentence and every word of which must be repeated.

The motives advanced by Lenin for his statement that a revolutionist must want the defeat of his own imperialist government lead one to the conclusion that whereas the revolutionary party as such should ignore that question, a revolutionary Marxist, as an individual, can very well think about the question and have his own individual opinion about the desirability of a defeat for this or that particular imperialist government.

The correct attitude for a party is that historically the victory or defeat of one or the other imperialist camp leaves the masses in the same position -- slaves to capitalism and, at the present period, to fascist capitalism. This must under no circumstances be construed to mean that the working masses should be indifferent to a possible victory of the fascist imperialists. Our approach to the masses on this question is clear. We urge them to struggle to defeat the fascists but we add: to struggle under the control of a capitalist regime is not to struggle against fascism; to struggle against

fascism effectively demands the substitution of a socialist for a capitalist regime.

Our contention that the victory or defeat of either camp in the imperialist struggle does not change the status of the masses is correct because without socialism fascism will ultimately be in power even if the democratic imperialists should win the war. It is on the basis of this correct premise that we ask the masses to struggle against fascism by fighting for socialism and not by supporting one imperialist camp against the other.

The party as such carries on its propaganda on this basis hoping to convince a majority of the people to its viewpoint.

A revolutionary Marxist, as an individual, need not ignore the question of the defeat of a particular imperialist government from the point of view of the probability of a revolution or a revolutionary situation arising as a result of a defeat. Lenin's formulations on this question necessarily raise that point and it would be silly to ignore or deny it. While we insist that for the party there can be no other position than non-support for an imperialist war and continuing the class struggle, and while the party should unalterably reject the idea that it should come out in favor of a defeat of its own imperialist government, the general question of the relationship of a military defeat of a particular imperialist government to a possible revolution against that government remains open and a revolutionary Marxist can have his own ideas about that question.

Lenin gave two reasons for his desire to see the tsarist army defeated. One is that such a defeat would furnish a greater opportunity to overthrow the government and the other that tsarism was more reactionary than Kaiserism. The first reason is a general one and can be applied to all countries; the second is a specific one and is applicable only where a particular government is more reactionary than its enemy government.

With the understanding that wanting or desiring a particular imperialist government defeated by another imperialist government in no way involves support of any imperialism and under no circumstances leads to sabotaging the war, a revolutionary Marxist as an individual can determine his position or, better, his desiring the defeat of a particular imperialist government by the answer to the question of whether or not a defeat would lead to a revolution and whether a particular government is more reactionary.

It is certain that not in all cases does a defeat lead to a revolution. The defeat of Poland, France and other European countries by Hitler did not lead to a revolution. It can be taken almost as axiomatic that a military defeat inflicted on a country by Hitler's armies and occupied by those armies cannot increase the opportunity for a revolution. This is not to be understood as meaning that a Hitler victory destroys the possibility of revolution forever or for a very long period. Since Hitler cannot solve the problems confronting the masses, he cannot suppress forever the revolutionary movement.

A victory for Hitler and the occupation of a country by his armies can prevent a revolution only for the time being. But we are certain that a defeat at the hands of Hitler and the occupation of a country by his armies cannot increase the opportunity for a revolution in the defeated country nor in Germany.

It would certainly be absurd for the individual revolutionist, in a country threatened with actual occupation by Hitler's troops to contend that a defeat administered by Hitler's armies will increase the opportunity for revolution.

The contention that no revolutionary situation is probable in a country threatened with being occupied by Hitler does not mean that a revolutionary party will support the imperialist war waged by such a country. It simply means that not even the revolutionary Marxist, as an individual, can want the defeat of his own government at the hands of Hitler.

One can readily understand why in India a revolutionary worker can be completely indifferent to, and actually want the defeat of the British imperialist army. When one takes into consideration the terrible conditions under which the masses of India are compelled to live and that a defeat of the British army furnishes an increased opportunity for the revolution in India it would be strange if an Indian revolutionary Marxist would not desire the defeat of Great Britain in India. He would not of course support Japanese imperialism just as Lenin did not support the Kaiser because he wanted a defeat of tsarism.

The German revolutionary worker has a very easy problem in determining whether he should want the defeat of his own government. Unable at present to lift his head he cannot help but want the defeat of the German army. For, in the immediate future, there are only two possibilities for a revolution in Germany -- a military defeat of the German army or a workers' revolution in England or the United States.

A military defeat for Hitler does not necessarily mean a workers' revolution in Germany. It may well be that if the German staff sees defeat staring it in the face it will invite the English and American armies to march into Germany and prevent any kind of a revolution. The likelihood, however, is that military reverses for Hitler's armies mean a revolution in Germany and once a revolutionary movement begins there is always a chance for its development into a workers' revolution.

One thing is certain. A military victory for Hitler makes any kind of a revolutionary movement in Germany, in the immediate future, extremely unlikely.

And in addition to the probability of a revolution resulting from a military defeat of Hitler, the German revolutionary worker can easily paraphrase Lenin's statement to the effect that Kaiserism is worse than tsarism.

Basing himself on both of Lenin's propositions, that a defeat affords greater opportunities for a revolution and the more reaction-

ary character of Hitler's regime, a German revolutionary worker, without in any way supporting the democratic imperialists, would want a defeat of Hitler.

The same reasoning would not justify a revolutionary party, if it existed in Germany, in coming out for the defeat of its own imperialist government by the democratic imperialists. The task of a revolutionary party, even in Germany, is not to speculate about the possible benefits that may result from a defeat of Hitler but to prepare the forces of the revolution in order to take advantage of a possible revolutionary situation.

It is not worth while to examine the situation in every imperialist country in order to determine whether a revolutionary Marxist, as an individual, should want the defeat of that country.

The purpose of this article is simply to establish the following propositions:

1. That the formulations of Lenin on revolutionary defeatism add nothing to his essential position on imperialist war, that of non-support for such a war and the continuance of the class struggle.

2. That a revolutionary party must take the historically correct position that the victory or defeat of one of the imperialist camps does not alter the economic base of present-day society and therefore does not solve the essential problems of the masses. The masses cannot find a solution to their problems in victory or defeat of either of the imperialist camps.

3. The wanting or not wanting a defeat of a particular imperialist government by an enemy imperialist government is a question for the revolutionary Marxist as an individual and his attitude on that question, if he wants to have an attitude, can be determined by the criterion laid down by Lenin: whether a defeat will increase the opportunity for a social revolution. A subsidiary criterion is whether or not a particular government is more reactionary. It follows that a revolutionary Marxist can have different opinions with reference to different imperialist governments.

4. That under no circumstances can wanting the defeat of one's own imperialist government or of another imperialist government lead to the support of any imperialist government.

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AMENDMENT TO THE TRADE UNION SECTIONS OF THE POLITICAL RESOLUTION

By E. Henry

With the entry of the United States into the Second Imperialist World War the most critical and basic single field of activity of the proletarian revolutionary party is the trade unions. Unless the party becomes deeply rooted in the trade unions, the basic economic organizations of the working class, and becomes inseparably associated with the working class in its daily struggles, it can only be, at best, a propagandistic sect but not a dynamic revolutionary party of the working class, capable of leading the working class in the decisive struggle for power. The party that is isolated from the labor union movement or divorced from its daily work and struggle, is doomed to impotence and disintegration. The participation of the party in the trade union movement is of utmost importance. The labor unions are the fundamental instrument for the organization of the working class and its subsequent struggles. Through its activity in the day to day work and struggles of the labor union movement the party is able to and must demonstrate that it understands the immediate problems confronting the workers, and how to fight for a temporary solution, every bit as thoroughly as it comprehends the higher political struggle for the total social emancipation and economic liberation of the proletariat from the rule of the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, it must be understood that the trade unions in and of themselves cannot provide the proletariat with a finished revolutionary program. Their most fundamental function is to serve as the instrumentality for the organization of the proletariat on the basis of the struggle for immediate demands and the defense of their class as a whole. Precisely this provides the conflict through which social and economic contradictions are sharpened, and provides the workers with the opportunity to learn important political lessons through their own experiences, lessons which cannot be learned in any other way. To subordinate the opportunity to draw these lessons to the workers in favor of a super-cautious policy to "protect the party position" in the trade union movement is opportunism. To do this for the protection of a personal position or post is an out-right betrayal of revolutionary principles. On the other hand, proper caution must be exercised against phrase-mongering super-radicalism which can only result in the loss of party contact and prestige in the trade unions.

Through practical demonstrations in day to day work and in the struggle for immediate demands within the labor unions, the workers select their spokesmen for the present and begin the process of finding and choosing their leaders for coming battles. By participation in the day to day work and in the struggle for immediate demands, proletarian revolutionists are able to convince their fellow-workers of the correctness of their ideas and of their ability as leaders. At the same time they are able to aid in opening the eyes of the workers to the traitorous conduct of the present bureaucratic officialdom, and in so doing make themselves candidates for the power and the authority now held by the reactionary officialdom.

There are no formulas or patent policies for the handling of trade union questions. Policy in the trade union movement must flow from a careful consideration of the general conclusions resulting from a general policy and a careful analysis of specific conditions within a given situation. That which applies in one case may and often does work with the opposite effect in another. Careful consideration must be made of each specific industry, its geographic location, the specific mood of the masses and their past experiences, and the tempo of their development, as well as the relationship of forces in the given industry and locality. The many-sided factors in every situation must be given careful consideration in order to determine the extent and kind of participation. The law of uneven development applies with equal right and force to the immediate struggles of the workers in the trade unions as it does to the world revolution.

The blueprint of the strait jacket which the bourgeoisie hoped and planned to place upon the labor union movement has failed of realization. We must not hesitate to draw the necessary lessons and conclusions from this experience; namely, that the events have failed to recognize our thesis. Our party anticipated a replica of the tremendous waves of patriotism, repressions, against labor, and long-lived national unity that swept the United States in the first World War. However, the last World War is too green within the memory of great masses of workers, the havoc wrought by the increasing cost of living, plus the contradictions within the ruling class itself and the exploding fiascos and squabbles in the government apparatus have dealt staggering blows to the conception of national unity within the minds of the workers. Pearl Harbor produced a great passivity and complete national unity by the working class; but this state of affairs did not endure more than three months. Since the first of the year strikes in basic mass production industries have been on the increase, while strikes in non-defense industries have been three to four times as numerous.

We must vigorously combat the idea that strikes are impossible and victories excluded during war-time, and specifically during this and coming periods. Undoubtedly although the present strikes are not only defensive in character but also sporadic, the fact is that the inclination is towards a deepening and continuation of class struggle by the workers. All recent reports indicate the trend of strikes and struggle is upward. The convention of the United Automobile Workers was a reflection of the awakening of the workers and the beginnings of a new mood. At the same time it must be clearly understood that the present period and the period immediately ahead does not turn or equalize 1942 into 1937 and the situation and mood that prevailed then.

It is necessary to learn that all is not black and that all is not white; but that there exists an intermediate shade of gray, in which the policy under neither black nor white is applicable as a whole but a dialectical unity of certain features of both. We must learn to apply to trade union situations the same dialectical analysis and comprehension and clarity that our party has mastered on the great international questions before the world proletariat; such as the role of China in the war, the present situation in India, the nature of the Soviet Union, and all the implications that flow from such a comprehension and mastery.

While recognizing that the masses are for the war and for the Roosevelt administration, and that their participation in struggle is of a defensive character and of a sporadic nature, our conceptions of the present period and the period immediately ahead must necessarily be of continued movement upward, or continued slow rise. It must be understood, however, that the early stage of the participation of the United States in the shooting war means that a major military defeat could and probably would arrest and hurl the workers back into the passivity and back into the arms of the "Union Sacre" which prevailed in the months immediately after Pearl Harbor. As dialecticians we know that the long range perspective of defeat can only serve to discredit the ruling class; but precisely because we are dialecticians we understand that a major military defeat entailing huge casualty lists during what is still the early stages of American participation would arrest and delay the awakening of the workers. On the other hand we have the most favorable perspectives that the unfolding of the struggle of the masses of India for their freedom, and the developing tempo of the revolutionary class consciousness of the workers of England will have the most favorable kind of repercussions within the minds of the American working class. A unified conception of these two alternatives must be the basis of our participation in the present struggles. The struggle in India cannot help but tend to reveal the entire world bourgeoisie in all their naked rapacious greed. The example of the English workers, to whom the American masses are bound by tradition, heritage, a common tongue, and close sanguinary bonds will place revolutionary independent class action in an entirely new light in the minds of the American masses.

Our party, while recognizing the dangers inherent in the unauthorized strike, must not take beforehand a position of absolute non-participation and abstentionism, but must seriously consider participation on the basis of the specific situation. Our position is not based on moral considerations but rather by the grim necessities of the present period. All the conditions which must be observed in time of peace when considering the unauthorized strike or any strike -- degree of solidarity among the workers involved, the nature of the issues involved, etc., etc., etc., -- must bear triple weight and consideration in time of war. Inasmuch as the unauthorized strike is practically the only possible strike in large scale industry at the present time, sufficient care must be given to the organization of the strike, and to the selection of the best time. On the one hand careful guard must be maintained against any tendencies of opportunistic adaptation to the "no strike policy" of the reactionary trade union officialdom; and on the other hand we must guard with equal vigilance against any ultra-left tendencies towards strikes by small minorities whether within a given plant, or even in an industry should the objective conditions point to its decapitation by the forces of reaction due to the unfavorable relationship of forces.

The crux of the entire trade union question for our party on the basis of the Political Resolution during the war is the conduct and the role of the proletarian revolutionists in the trade unions and the present struggles of the workers, limited and circumscribed as these struggles are at present. Any tendency within the party toward abstentionism which seeks to hide its opportunistic character under the idea that because the workers as an entire class are not

now engaged in mass offensives, and that therefore participation in day to day work and the struggle for immediate demands, despite the defensive and sporadic nature of these struggles, is to demonstrate a super lack of caution and super ultra-leftism, must be corrected or rooted out wherever it manifests itself. Proletarian revolutionists do not mistake a series of sporadic strikes for a mass offensive but neither do they abstain from all struggles because they are not yet mass offensives. Under no conditions can people claim the name of proletarian revolutionists who desert their class when it is in danger or under attack, or because the boundaries of a struggle are limited. Quite the opposite, proletarian revolutionists exercise a double vigilance in perilous time, but not for a single moment do they go into hibernation in order "to save themselves for the revolution." While to follow the latter policy will result in the preservation of this type of "revolutionist" it will serve doubly to preserve the forces of reaction and its leaders.

Only by fighting with the workers in this dangerous period of defensive struggle will we be in the position to provide leadership in the great offensive struggles which lie ahead. The masses pick their leadership from those who are loyal during defensive periods to lead them in offensive periods. A party armed with the ideas that there must be no casualties in the class war from its own ranks, and that to abstain from the class struggle because of its limited character, and that such a course is the highest kind of revolutionary tactics and strategy, is doomed to an arrest of its growth and to its actual and complete degeneration.

It must be clearly understood also that under no condition is it possible to fight the battles of the workers for the workers without the workers' participation. Such actions as this must be left to those who are most skilled and trained in them, in other words, the ultra-left sectarians who will wisely confine such "glorious" principles and tactics to journalistic bouts on paper. Absolutely no concessions must be made or permitted in this direction! The entire history of the world labor movement has demonstrated time and time again that the first time such "heroes" singe their finger tips or are confronted by a genuine mass offensive they are almost invariably converted into the worst kind of opportunists. On the other hand it is necessary to understand that where action is impossible for this or that consideration, or where there is no action or struggle or movement, or where all the movement is in the direction of reaction, that to force participation in such impossible situations can only result in opportunistic maneuvers, and adventuristic actions which inevitably bring only isolation or decapitation.

The crisis of capitalist economy in times of peace force the growing together of the bureaucratic trade union apparatus and the bourgeois state. The resultant suppression of democracy within the trade unions by the bureaucratic lackeys of the bourgeoisie necessitates the building of a progressive or left wing by the revolutionists and class-conscious militants. Consequently the conditions of war not only sharpen and quicken the growing together and hasten the suppressions, but also the war produces the most fertile field and conditions for the creation of a left wing movement within the unions. The party and its trade union members must take the initiative upon

themselves for sponsoring such groups, not for the purpose of securing posts, but in order to provide a means of reaching, of expressing, and channelizing the discontent of the workers in the proper direction.

Only with our party armed with this perspective for participation in the struggles of our class can we recruit new workers to our party, win the support of the masses to our program, and prepare ourselves to take advantage of the inevitable opportunities which will present themselves for the solution of the historic tasks of our class.

September 6, 1942

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ON THE APPLICATION OF OUR TRANSITION PROGRAM

By G. Clark

Basing itself on irreconcilable opposition to capitalist rule the fundamental strategy of our party is the mobilization of a majority of the proletariat for the conquest of state power. This strategy has not been altered by the outbreak of the 2nd imperialist war nor by America's entry into the war. On the contrary, the explosion of imperialist contradictions only emphasizes our analysis of capitalism in its death agony and points more sharply to our revolutionary program as the only way out of the terrible crisis.

Before the masses in their decisive majority adopt our program, by showing a willingness to participate in decisive economic and political actions that will overthrow capitalism, it is necessary for them to understand by their experiences that there is no other way out. Above all they must learn through these experiences that the capitalist state is an instrument for class oppression. So long as the American workers are filled with illusions that the capitalist state is an impartial body mediating between the classes and can be relied upon to extend social reforms or fight a war against fascism so long will the socialist revolution remain a task of the future.

It is therefore the duty of our party to facilitate the experiences of large sections of the workers in their relationship with the state with the object of breaking down their present illusions. The party must estimate the relationship of class forces and basing itself on the present level of political development of the class must approach the workers with a propagandistic line that helps them take the next step forward.

The problem of working out a line that meets the current needs and development of the class must naturally be distinguished from the task of building party cadres, a process that goes on at all times on the basis of an exposition of our full program both by individual

party agitators, the press, classes, lectures, etc. Obviously these two tasks are interconnected: the winning of a large following for a partial program enhances interest in the full party program and helps recruiting; likewise the winning of new recruits gives the party more forces to carry its partial program to ever larger sections of workers. But for the purposes of propaganda it is necessary to distinguish between these two tasks.

The 2nd World War like the first is an imperialist conflict for redistribution of the markets, colonies and raw materials of the earth. In the eyes of the masses, however, the character of the present war is beclouded by the degree of political degeneration of the rival nations -- on the one hand the continuing though precarious "democracy" of England and the United States, and on the other the open fascist reaction of Germany and the military dictatorship of Japan crushing underfoot all democratic rights, smashing the trade unions, exterminating minorities, etc. This difference, temporary as it may be, has deeply entered the consciousness of the masses of Britain and the U.S., imbued them with a fierce hatred of fascism and preserved their loyalty to the "democratic" states.

The ruling class of the "democratic" countries is faced with deepgoing contradictions: on the one hand it is compelled to profess its devotion to democracy in order to gain the support of the masses, and on the other hand it must take a totalitarian course which undermines the organizations and rights of the masses and worsens their conditions. The bourgeoisie can wage a total war in this period only by concentrating enormous power in the hands of the state which is more and more openly directed by the dominant group of monopoly capitalists to the great disadvantage of consumers goods industry, small manufacturers, the middle class and the workers.

The workers, and particularly their advanced section, who support "the war against fascism", perceive this contradiction and are deeply disquieted by it. Their discontent is a long way from the stage of direct opposition to the imperialist war but they are nevertheless compelled both by a desire to maintain their living standards and by a desire to "beat Hitler" to enter upon forms of struggle that will place them in conflict with the monopoly capitalist state. They are groping for a program and the forms of struggle that will provide them with a means of organizing their opposition within the framework of "winning the war against fascism." It is the duty of our party through its propaganda and agitation to provide the workers with those forms of struggle which will utilize this situation to raise the masses to a higher stage of understanding and development and thereby prepare the ground for the next stage of the struggle which will break out of the narrow confines of support of the "anti-fascist war."

1. The party must find a method of approaching the militant workers who support the so-called war against Hitlerism. For this it is necessary to give our main line (This is an imperialist war) a propagandistic form, which utilizes the progressive aspect of this hatred of fascism but at no time identifies the party's position with support of imperialist war. At the same time the party does not take an indifferent attitude towards the struggle against fascism: it correctly asserts and constantly reiterates that only through a

revolutionary program and revolutionary methods is an effective and successful struggle against fascism possible. (Only a Workers and Farmers Government can wage a genuine war against fascism). On the other hand the party loses no opportunity to expose the glaring contradiction between the aims and methods of the "democratic" ruling classes and the claims of their lackeys that this is a war against fascism. Here then is one of the most effective means not only of demonstrating the imperialist character of the war but of winning the sympathy of the anti-fascist worker.

To repeat; (a) the tradition and program of the revolutionary party places it in the forefront of the struggle against fascism and decisively demonstrates that fascism cannot be defeated except by the program and methods of the revolutionary party; (b) the "democratic" bourgeoisie and its military hierarchy have nothing in common with the struggle against fascism but on the contrary carry on the war for imperialist objectives, and are prepared under unfavorable conditions to make a deal with the fascist enemy regardless of the fate of democracy and at the expense of their own working class (Petain and the French bourgeoisie).

2. On the home front, no less than on the international arena, the fraud of the bourgeoisie assaying the role of leadership in the struggle against fascism becomes ever more apparent. Far from extending democratic rights the bourgeoisie resorts to totalitarian methods. Trade unions are being reduced to helpless appendages of the state while the leading monopolists take open charge of the government. The cost of the war is unloaded on to the backs of the masses while the 60 Families reap a golden harvest from war production. Strikes are declared to be treasonable but the industrialists brazenly sabotage and disorganize the war industries in order to preserve their present rates of profits and to protect their monopolistic control against any competition during and after the war. To combine the hatred of the worker towards fascism with his long list of grievances against the 60 Families is an essential propagandist task in raising the class consciousness of the workers and in exposing the true nature of the war.

The basic contradiction facing the entire organized working class was expressed most dramatically in the recent convention of the auto workers union, whose democratic conventions are a forum for the militant rank and file rather than a mere rubber stamp for the bureaucracy as is the case with most other unions. Exasperated by the never-ending run-around by government boards, by unfavorable decisions on wages, by daily encroachments on working conditions and firing of leading union militants from the plants, the convention acted almost as a unanimous bloc in its condemnation of the bureaucratic leadership of the union which in the eyes of the rank and file is responsible for present miserable conditions. Yet the rank and file never got beyond the stage of oral protest: they neither offered a counter-program to that of the bureaucracy nor did they sweep the bureaucracy from office. Why?

Despite its unpopularity the bureaucracy carries out its policies and maintains power because the rank and file, and especially its most militant and advanced sections, continue to support the war.

The only effective method of defending working conditions and wage standards against attack in war-time, no less than in peace-time, is the utilization of the strike weapon. Those groups of workers who believed that government arbitration boards would assume a benevolent character during the war and act as a substitute for independent class action have by this time been sadly disillusioned by bitter experience.

Yet the bureaucracy voluntarily surrendered the strike weapon "for the duration" without any appreciable protest from the ranks of the unions. This surrender has not been challenged in any important union, including the militant UAW. The number of outlaw strikes is too small to indicate that even the vanguard of the workers are prepared to take matters in their own hands in open defiance of the bureaucracy. The harsh truth is that the workers do not as yet consider the "no-strike" pledge as a betrayal; on the contrary, with many misgivings they support it as a necessity. Believing this to be a war against Hitlerism they are loath to be accused of "obstructing" or "sabotaging" war production.

Like their French counterparts in the pre-Hitler days, the American trade union bureaucracy has capitulated to the bourgeoisie, surrendering the strike weapon and acting as labor agents of the government in its drive against the living and working conditions of the masses. But unlike the French labor movement, which was defeated and broken two years before the Nazi invasion with thousands of leading worker militants driven off their jobs and thrown into Daladier's jails, the American trade unions entered the war fresh from a series of the greatest strike victories in the labor history of this country. The last bastions of the open shop represented by the Ford and Bethlehem empires were conquered by powerful strikes. Wage increases were wrested from Big Steel and GM by threats of strike action. Partial victories were won by strikes that defied government intervention and even the use of troops as in the case of Allis-Chalmers and west coast aircraft. On the very eve of Pearl Harbor, the mineworkers under Lewis openly challenged Roosevelt and shut down the "captive" mines and forced the government and operators to capitulate to their demands.

The workers entered the war with a self-confidence that persists to this very day despite the temporary shock caused by the Pearl Harbor attack. Unlike the French proletariat, demoralized by the Popular Front betrayal of Stalinists, reformists and trade union bureaucrats, the American workers had lived through a period of undefeated struggles which cemented a feeling of class solidarity and aroused widespread hostility towards the big corporations and monopolies. The antagonism of the workers towards "big business" has since been sharpened by the high-jacking attitude of the monopolies towards the war production program, by innumerable demonstrations that the capitalists place profits before patriotism.

The impact of international events -- the capitulation of the French bourgeoisie, the defeats of the British, the heroic resistance of the Russian workers against Nazi invasion, the struggle for Indian independence -- have left a deep imprint on the consciousness of the masses and has been reflected in a lack of patriotic hysteria and enthusiasm for the war. A deep unrest pervades the workers' ranks; supporting the war, they are nevertheless reluctant to quietly accept the sacrifices imposed upon them while the capitalists continue to

pile up huge profits. The bureaucracy of the unions is uneasy about this dissatisfaction and a thousand incidents -- from the open protest at the UAW convention to the most recent AFL wildcat strike -- constantly remind them it cannot be ignored.

Basing themselves upon the pro-Roosevelt position of the majority of the workers, the bureaucracy believed at the outset of the war that through their alliance with the administration they would be able to easily keep the unions under control. But now pressure from the ranks is forcing them to take a critical attitude (within very definite limits, of course) towards the administration and to propose seemingly radical measures. Outstanding among these has been the attack on the \$-a-year men and the proposals that labor be given a voice on production councils and that profits be curtailed and individual incomes be limited to \$25,000 per annum.

The proposals of the bureaucracy reflects in a confused and distorted way the sentiments of the workers. More than that, they are only one of many symptoms revealing that all questions have a more fundamental character today, that trade union questions require a political answer. War production "organizes" the separate industries on a national basis. the government assumes the role of "organizer" and "planner" of production, the struggle for wages and working conditions is no longer a struggle between a local union and the management of a plant but between the workers as a whole and the government, profits and prices become issues affecting the whole people rather than an inevitable phenomena more or less taken for granted in pre-war days. There have been many signs that this changed situation is entering the consciousness at least of certain sections of the workers: outstanding among these have been the demand by the Kearny shipyard workers and the Bayonne General Cable strikers that the government take over their plants, and above all the dilemma of the most militant workers in the Chicago UAW convention.

The party cannot cope with this changed situation merely by attacks on Roosevelt or by the obvious truth (to us) that so long as the workers support the imperialist war they will be forced to make ever greater sacrifice and will not be able to justify the use of the strike weapon. Nor can the party merely urge that the workers resist all encroachments against their working and living conditions. This propaganda is necessary, but it is not adequate. We must seek for common ground with the pro-Roosevelt militant worker who is dissatisfied with the War Administration but has no substitute program of his own.

That common ground can be found in our transitional program which provides a political solution to pressing economic questions. Against the program of wage freezing and rising prices we counterpose the program of a rising scale of wages and the confiscation of war profits; against the program of war production run by monopolists for huge profits at the expense of working conditions we counterpose the program of the expropriation of industry and their operation under workers' control; against the program of "labor's participation" in the capitalist government we counterpose the program of a labor party and a labor congress.

In essence this policy represents an attempt to secure a united front with the pro-Roosevelt but militant worker on the basis of his present level of political development. To him the transitional program will not mean the same thing as it does to us; that is, for us the transitional program is a weapon against Roosevelt designed to set the masses into motion against the capitalist state and against the war; for the advanced worker the transitional program will not bring him into conflict with the Roosevelt government and can be used against Big Business and for the prosecution of the "war against fascism" without placing all the war burdens on the workers. Just as the social democratic worker who wishes merely to preserve bourgeois democracy will enter a common struggle with us against fascism despite our intention to raise the struggle to the plane of socialist revolution, so the pro-Roosevelt worker now can be won over to a struggle for the transitional demands even though he disagrees with our revolutionary aims. In the course of the struggle for these transitional demands he will learn from his own experience that Roosevelt serves the bosses as a class and that a war against fascism cannot be conducted by an imperialist bourgeoisie.

Naturally, the struggle for the transitional demands will remain for the present primarily on the propaganda level. A pre-revolutionary situation will be necessary before the workers will write into their strike demands the demand of expropriation or of workers' control. In those few cases, like Kearny or Bayonne, where the workers see the only way out of their impasse by calling upon the government to take over their plants, the party will pound home the lesson that unless government seizure is accompanied by expropriation and workers' control of production the workers will suffer under even more intolerable conditions than they did under private management. By and large the propaganda for the transitional demands will be carried on by the party press and on an individual basis among worker contacts. Where it is presented before a union local or a union convention careful attention must be given to all considerations that determine the manner of our trade union work in this period. In these cases the resolution for the transitional demands will be presented in an educational form, for example: urging that legislation be enacted to expropriate the industries and place them under workers' control -- rather than a demand that the unions call a general strike to force the adoption of these measures. Such instances where we can get our transitional demands before the unions will be the exception for this period: the bulk of the propaganda will be carried on through the party press, pamphlets and the work of individual party members.

The struggle for the transitional demands is not intended as a substitute for nor in opposition to the struggle for immediate demands. Rather it is a complement to the struggle for immediate demands and will enrich these struggles with class purpose. The strikes of the next period will naturally be struggles for higher wages, against speed-ups, against the firing of union militants, etc. In most of these strikes the leading militants will find that, above all, they need justification for their strike against the charge that they are "sabotaging" the "war against fascism." The program of transitional demands will do more than provide a justification for the strikes; it will give the workers the defensive cover they need by throwing the onus and responsibility for the strikes on the capitalist managers

of war production.

A strike leader in this period cannot say that this is an imperialist war and that therefore he is not concerned with production for that war. But he can say that the present capitalist management which runs the war industries at the expense of the workers and therefore forces the workers to strike as a last resort, and that if the government expropriated the industries and operated them under workers' control there would be no need for strikes.

Similarly in the present period, for us to carry on a one-sided agitation for a revival of the use of the strike weapon is entirely inadequate; the militant workers by and large appreciate the need of employing the strike weapon. What they want and what we must show them is how to justify the recourse to the strike while they support the so-called "war against fascism." (Dobbs' discussion article has already correctly dealt with the problem of adventurist actions). We must supplement and enrich our agitation for the use of the strike as a weapon to gain immediate demands by consistent and forceful propaganda for our program of transitional demands.

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In conclusion: The correct approach to the question of fascism combined with a vigorous propaganda for our transitional demands is a necessary task for the party in this period. Such propaganda, of course, has no magical properties and will not by itself set the masses into motion -- that depends upon the course of the war and the imposition of greater burdens upon the masses. In England the higher political development of the workers, particularly as a result of the defeats suffered by the Empire, has given the British Trotskyists a very receptive audience for their transitional demands. In the U.S. we cannot expect as favorable a reception. Nevertheless the events of the war in this country will move rapidly towards producing a situation that will give the party a wider arena for its political slogans. The first signs of this new situation have already appeared. Vigorously conducted, such propaganda can have an appreciable influence on the mass movement and bring a larger circle of sympathizers into the periphery of the party and ultimately into the party itself.

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A FEW NOTES ON THE JOYCE ARTICLE

By Joe Hansen

On reading "Recent Tendencies in Our Party" by Comrade Joyce, one's first inclination, perhaps, is to dismiss the article as lacking in serious preparation and as not representing the viewpoint of any section of the party membership outside of its author, who apparently is not distinguished by the precious gifts of modesty of demeanor and brevity of utterance. Inasmuch as the article has appeared in the Internal Bulletin, however, it would be an error in my opinion to let it pass without challenge; a tendency alien to Marxism, no matter how weak its appearance in our ranks, can have potential political importance. Comrade Trotsky set an example for us in this respect too by the care with which he from time to time answered the attacks of the smallest groups, including some outside our movement who were obviously destined to early oblivion. Nevertheless, to analyze all the errors which appear in the Joyce article would prove rather tedious and not too productive. I shall try to indicate only the main faults as briefly as possible.

I

Comrade Joyce views with alarm what he terms a "definite revisionist tendency" in our party which "leads to reformism." First on his list is advocacy of the "formation of a Labor Party" by the Socialist Workers Party. This "revision" in our "previously accepted documents" was introduced -- Comrade Joyce informs us -- by Trotsky. Advocating the formation of a Labor Party violates the principles of Bolshevism, in the opinion of Comrade Joyce, because "a reformist labor party based on the trade unions is a bulwark of capitalism."

Our present policy on this question, along with our entire Transition Program, was indeed proposed by Trotsky in 1938. The SWP had but recently emerged from the Socialist Party with an accretion of new Trotskyists who had received their political training in the school of Norman Thomas. A part of this section of our membership was won over the question of revolutionary politics versus reformist labor party politics as it was formulated in our movement up to the time the Transition Program was adopted. A warm polemic naturally developed over Trotsky's proposal, particularly over what appeared to these newly revolutionized comrades to be an unwarranted reversal in principle in regard to reformism and Bolshevism. Trotsky presented weighty reasons for the proposed change, basing his analysis on the new stage of capitalist economy revealed by the depression of 1937. Those who supported his position elaborated these reasons. All branches discussed the question. Our Internal Bulletin carried lengthy analyses. Even our public press was opened to the discussion. The question was finally decided by referendum when the overwhelming majority of the party adopted the new position. The decision has met no serious challenge since that time. At this date it should scarcely seem necessary to re-open the discussion.

New comrades who might still be unacquainted with this highly important question and its development can refer to the following

articles for detailed information:

"Discussion with Crux on the Transitional Program." (Internal Bulletin, No. 6, July 1938. "Crux" like "Lund" is one of the pen names used by Trotsky).

"Resolution of the Political Committee of the N.C. on the Decline of American Capitalism and the Revolutionary Transitional Program for the Next Period." (Internal Bulletin, No. 2, June 1938).

"Problem of the Labor Party." (loc. cit.)

"Discussion with Crux upon the Labor Party." (loc. cit. -- This is a very important discussion on this question).

"The Labor Party -- 1938." (The New International, March 1938).

"The Trade Unions in Politics." (loc. cit.)

"Crisis and Reform Labor Politics." (The New International, May and June 1938).

"The Question of a Labor Party." (The New International, August 1938).

"For the Present Party Position." (loc. cit.)

"Labor Party and Progress." (The New International, September 1938).

"The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International." (Program and Resolutions of the Founding Conference of the Fourth International, September 1938).

It is quite true that the above articles far from exhaust the question of the participation of our movement in the formation of a labor party. But they at least indicate the main outlines of the problem in sufficient detail for the present. It is also true that it is perfectly in keeping with the tradition of Trotskyism to re-open old questions if a comrade or a group of comrades believe that they have a new contribution. That is precisely what Trotsky did. When something new developed in the world situation which in his opinion necessitated a re-orientation on the labor party and other related questions, he asked the party to re-consider its position. It is possible now that Comrade Joyce has discovered something new since 1938 that is worthy of the party's consideration. But if he has discovered something new, he failed to indicate it in his article. If he wishes to be taken seriously then it seems to me he must fulfill the following conditions:

1. Determine why it was specifically in 1938 and at no other time that Trotsky worked out our present viewpoint on the formation of a labor party.

2. Analyze the arguments that were brought forth at that time and attempt to refute them -- if he finds that he does not agree

with them after reading them -- by demonstrating either (a) that the arguments of Trotsky and the majority of the party were false, or (b) that something new has developed in the world situation which requires us to reconsider our position on the labor party.

If Comrade Joyce will fulfill these conditions, he will at least convey the impression that he is familiar with the labor party question.

II

Comrade Joyce likewise views with alarm the "present military policy of our party" which he believes constitutes nothing less than "objective support of the imperialist war." What sticks in his craw is our slogan favoring military training under trade union control. If we judge his article correctly -- it is somewhat obscure on this point -- he likewise believes that our demand that this training be at government expense constitutes support of "military appropriations" and hence support of imperialist war. (Joyce, we presume, would conclude that Lenin supported imperialist war in October 1916, when he demanded: "The right of every hundred, let us say, inhabitants of the country, to form voluntary associations for the learning of the military arts, the free selection of instructors, their payment out of government funds, etc." The essence of our military policy is contained in this formula of Lenin's. In contrast to the line of Trotskyism, Comrade Joyce refers favorably to the Stalinist line of 1940 which "correctly" opposed imperialist war, it would seem, because it "opposed conscription."

Are we correct in concluding that Comrade Joyce is still under the influence of the zig zag in Stalinist foreign policy during the Stalin-Hitler Pact, and that it has not yet occurred to him to take the trouble to read the Internal Bulletins containing the discussions on our military policy? Our public press is likewise filled with articles and speeches elucidating our policy which are completely disregarded by Comrade Joyce. He does not even seem aware that such a phenomena as pacifism exists and that a great deal of our agitation has been directed specifically against this danger in the labor movement and against those who foster or have fostered pacifism, as for instance the Stalinists of 1940.

Indeed consideration of only one of Comrade Joyce's arguments will reveal that he is seriously infected with this political disease.

"Finally it should be asked:" declares Comrade Joyce, "Why are we against sending the workers into battle untrained? This is presented as a program for saving the lives of the workers. But, although it is true that their training may save their lives on the battlefield, it is equally true that their lack of training would save the lives of worker-soldiers on the other side. The adherents of the military policy seem to forget that we are internationalists. They forget also that there is only one program that will save the lives of the soldiers, and that program will save the lives of the soldiers on all sides. That program is: Stop the war!"

This argument against supporting military training derives from the type of pacifism which advocates disarmament. It is not new.

"Stop the use of gun powder to save lives," cried the feudalism with an "international" viewpoint; "the broadaxe is bad enough!" Stop the use of poison gas to save lives! cry their modern descendants. These people can accept all the bourgeois institutions except war. It would never occur to them, for instance, to consider how the institution of bourgeois education maims the minds of defenseless children and then cry out, "Stop the schools to save our children!" Merely to apply this viewpoint to any of the bourgeois institutions besides war reveals its stupidity.

Despite all the humanitarian cries, the development of technology in war proceeds -- indeed war greatly heightens its tempo; witness the machine gun, siege artillery, tanks, airplanes, submarines, torpedoes, etc. And these constitute only the more spectacular side of war. Modern military science concerns not only steel and explosives but radio, photography, engineering, fortifications and their reduction, land and marine transport, hundreds of trades such as printing, plumbing, carpentry, etc., even making of films for training purposes. In modern war not the least important factor is generalship, the organization and coordination of mass armies and the strategy of their use to greatest advantage. "Military training" consists of training in any of the infinitely complex and varied fields or branches of modern militarism.

It is untrue that "lack of training" in the military arts "would save the lives on the other side." A few offhand examples will prove that our press does not lie, as Joyce indicates. The sailor who is well trained in handling life boats and who knows navigation has a better chance for survival in a life boat than one who does not. Nor does his survival mean greater loss of life on the other side; the submarine crews who attend wounded survivors in the Atlantic sinkings and give them directions to port understand that. Take the case of two snipers in opposing positions; Each will score maximum hits on men untrained at hiding themselves; each will kill fewer of those who are expert at camouflage -- thus skill at camouflage counteracts skill at marksmanship. The well trained soldier knows when resistance is futile and when he can save lives on both sides by admitting defeat. The soldier who knows how to protect himself from infectious disease through purification of his drinking water, etc., can even save lives on the other side through the simple fact that the chances of his becoming a germ carrier are lessened. A soldier trained in first aid can save not only his own life and that of his comrades but wounded worker-soldiers on the other side who have been taken prisoner. Does Joyce believe that sending "untrained" military surgeons and nurses on the battlefields will save lives on the other side because their ignorance raises the mortality rate of worker-soldiers on this side? What about the wounded prisoners?

The truth is that a gigantic contradiction exists in war -- to save the maximum number of lives under the given conditions; and to destroy the maximum number. The trench counteracted the effect of the rifle, the tank that of the trench, the airplane that of the tank, etc. It is noteworthy in this respect that all the major defensive measures to save lives such as the trench were developed by the ranks against the opposition of the bourgeois officers, who in the dialectic of warfare retain the outmoded military traditions of

the past and send tens of thousands to useless deaths even under the conditions of imperialist war.

We can add to this that Joyce does not even consider the possibility that a skilled worker-soldier, not easily panic-stricken, confident that he will at least be able to utilize what opportunities there are for survival, will be far more likely to lessen the slaughter by fraternization than an untrained man, especially if his training were conducted under control of the trade unions. The tremendous slaughter in imperialist war is a direct resultant not of the greater or lesser degree of "training" of the worker-soldiers but of the misuse to which the bourgeoisie subject the armed forces of the nation.

But Comrade Joyce mistakes the main purpose of our slogan on military training. We take no responsibility for the bloodshed of imperialist war. That responsibility rests exclusively with the bourgeoisie and their agents. Our program is not designed primarily to ameliorate the horrors for which the outlived class is responsible. Our military program is designed as a transitional step towards ending these horrors forever. The question is, how are we going to achieve this end?

In peacetime the bourgeoisie keep the masses untrained and unarmed. This policy is designed to place the masses at a disadvantage in relation to the standing bourgeois army which is highly trained and thoroughly armed with the most modern weapons. As taught by the great Marxists the standing army is a pillar of the bourgeois state and consequently the bourgeois property system. Since historic experience shows that the bourgeoisie will not voluntarily give up power even when the overwhelming majority of the people has pronounced its verdict against them, but will on the contrary organize, we predict, a "slave-holders" rebellion, it is necessary to prepare the workers for that eventuality. This means, if our prediction is borne out by events, that the workers will face highly trained and thoroughly armed minions of the capitalists. If the workers followed the politics of pacifism, they would then be caught in the conflict unprepared and untrained. Even Joyce must admit that in this case the greatest slaughter would occur in their ranks, with the possibilities considerably increased that the rebellious capitalist minority would manage to save their capitalist system with its imperialist wars. The conclusion is inescapable; the pacifist who would avoid slaughter by leaving the workers untrained in military science and tactics is preparing nothing but the most terrible of all slaughters. On the other hand, the Marxist who supports military training for the masses helps forge one of the most important links in the chain leading to the triumph of socialism.

The danger is not that the capitalist state will no longer impose conscription if we do not favor conscription but that the van-guard of the workers will reject military training to the extent of hiding out or becoming conscientious objectors, as in the last war, thereby separating themselves from the masses. Our support of military training under control of the unions is not support of the bourgeois state -- it is embarrassing that this need even be mentioned in view of the discussion which has already occurred in our party-- but is directed to the most advanced workers who will lead the coming

revolution in America: "Don't separate yourselves from the masses who have been plunged into another imperialist war by the bourgeoisie. Don't stand aside as pacifists; prepare yourselves instead to lead the class struggle in the military arena!"

Comrade Joyce agrees that the working class should be armed. Apparently he believes that "arming the masses" consists of providing them with the physical instruments of defense. But how is it possible to make a distinction between physical possession of modern armaments and knowledge of how to use them? The one is useless without the other. It is precisely because the bourgeoisie not only provide the masses with armaments but also train them in their use that war becomes the mother of revolutions. For the bourgeoisie thereby destroy their own peacetime superiority on the military field and thus destroy one of the strongest pillars of their state. What are we as the revolutionary party of the vanguard to say to backward workers who do not understand this, who are infected with pacifist illusions, who, as we mentioned above, hope to escape the war by rejecting military training or who mistakenly believe that heroically going to jail will help "stop" the war? Shall we foster their illusions and thereby facilitate slaughtering them? Or shall we oppose these illusions and at the same time attempt to utilize the bourgeois institution of war itself to direct the working class on to the road to a socialist society that will end imperialist war forever? Any attempt to "stop" the bourgeois institutions, including education, in peace time or war time is doomed to miserable failure. It is our task to oppose the bourgeoisie subverting education to their ends and to propose instead that such institutions be utilized to further the progress of society. In applying this same principle to imperialist war, we say, turn it into its opposite! Not stop the war, as the imperialists "stopped" World War I only to prepare for the still worse slaughter of World War II, but turn the war, as the Bolsheviks did in 1917.

When we say turn the war in contradistinction to stop the war, we are talking of course of a program. We expose the program of "peace" of the bourgeoisie when they become satiated and wish to digest their loot. We expose every demagogue who calls for war to "stop." On the other hand we support the confused yearnings of the masses for peace and a stop to the slaughter. Undoubtedly we will at the opportune time raise the slogan for peace -- but peace with a socialist content and the slogan itself interlinked with a program of action. That, however, is still in the future when the masses of the United States themselves recover from the war intoxication and themselves begin to seek expression for their yearnings for peace. Meanwhile we must constitute ourselves as watchdogs against the danger of today -- pacifism in whatever form or place it crops up. It is easy to see why superficial observers can find "contradictions" in the Marxist slogans. But the basic program remains the same. It is solely a question of applying our program to the varying necessities of different periods.

"The adherents of military policy," declares Joyce, "seem to forget that we are internationalists." Comrade Joyce is mistaken. It is precisely because we did not forget that we are internationalists that we developed our military policy. There is no way to end imperialist war and slaughter forever except by the socialist revolution.

Our military policy is designed to further the socialist revolution in the period of the second imperialist world war. To be still more concrete, our slogan of military training under trade union control was a specific application of our Transition Program to the United States of today. It is an attempt to meet our international duty by bridging the gap between the present understanding of the masses in the United States and the objective requirements which they must fulfill if society is not to go down into utter barbarism. It is not a substitute for the slogan of a workers militia which Comrade Joyce offers as a suitable replacement here and today for the slogan of trade union control of military training. The slogan of a workers militia remains in the arsenal of Marxism for use at the proper time. Our present slogan is precisely a proposal to the working class of the United States to take one of the first steps on the bridge to socialism. Does it violate Marxist principles to point out the advantages of workers control of military training as compared to the disadvantages of bourgeois control of military training? The slogan is not at all promulgated as a panacea, we repeat, but as a first step forward, the first step toward a definite goal -- that of turning a bourgeois institution into a proletarian institution, i.e., imperialist war into its opposite.

From another side this slogan constitutes a challenge to the trade union bureaucracy to meet the burning political and social problems facing the working class during the war; and in so far as they fail to meet this challenge it offers further evidence of their betrayal of the workers, thereby helping to clear the path for the revolutionary party.

Perhaps it is useless to refer Comrade Joyce to our Transition Program for the basic explanation of our slogan. He does not seem to have made the slightest effort to understand it, much less to apply its principles. He has failed to grasp the idea that Marxist opposition to imperialist war does not consist solely of generalized statements pointing out the horrors of capitalism and the beauties of socialism. Marxist opposition to imperialist war must start from the actual realities of the class struggle and plan step by step -- even the smallest partial steps -- how it can appeal to the working class to utilize in action the contradictions that exist in the arena of struggle. We can neither choose the field of battle nor manufacture out of day dreams ideal class-conscious proletarians who will follow perfect blueprints of correct political actions. The material we have to work with is the patriotic, backward, stupefied, endlessly betrayed product of bourgeois society. This material faces the most stupendous task in history. It must be lifted up to the height of Marxist comprehension of events. It is a life or death issue. What can we do as our part? Trotsky offered the Transition Program as his contribution in the light of 40 years experience as a Marxist. How does Comrade Joyce deal with this Program? He picks out a slogan here or there and considers it in complete isolation from the dynamics of the class struggle as it exists before our eyes today. He takes a slogan in and of itself and measures it against the slogans in and of themselves of a previous period in a different situation. He cannot understand the contradiction that exists between these slogans when they are hacked a way from living reality and hung up in cold storage. How changed you are from what you were,

he concludes, if that was Bolshevism then this is not. The dialectic interconnection of means and end does not exist for this formalist.

It would seem that history does not exist for him either; not once does he pose the problem of the origin of the slogans with which he disagrees. Yet this should be the first question considered by a dialectical materialist. Our slogans on the labor party and military training did not issue like rabbits from a magician's hat. Trotsky specifically anticipated those like Joyce when he cautioned concerning the authorship of the Transition Program: "This program is not a new invention of one man. It is derived from the long experience of the Bolsheviks. I want to emphasize that it is not one man's invention, that it comes from long collective experience of the revolutionaries. It is the application of old principles to this situation." (Internal Bulletin, No. 2. May 1938, "Remarks on the Transition Program.")

It would be well for Comrade Joyce or any others who might agree with him to probe into the meaning of this remark of Trotsky's.

III

Comrade Joyce views with alarm some articles in which Albert Goldman attempted to explain to anti-fascist workers that American imperialism does not and cannot wage a real struggle against fascism. Joyce believes that these and similar articles prove our party has replaced Lenin's slogan "turn the imperialist war into a civil war" with a new slogan, "turn the imperialist war into a war against fascism." But Comrade Joyce is simply constructing a straw dummy in order to knock it down.

There is no violation of Marxist principles in meeting patriotic workers where they stand today and explaining to them that only a Workers and Farmers Government can really end world fascism forever. What danger exists -- where is there politics without danger? -- lies solely in the proportion and emphasis it is given in our propaganda as a whole. It is possible that by placing undue stress on how really to battle fascism we could inadvertently create the impression among some backward workers that Hitler is the main enemy of the American working class. In that case we would have to admit a tactical error. The question that must be asked, however -- the question which Joyce does not ask -- is one of fact: does our press lay too much stress on its appeal to the patriotic worker to join the real fight against fascism? It is possible that single issues of our press did give such an impression to comrades anxious to avoid pitfalls. We lay no claim to infallibility in our attempts to meet the political issues of the day. But as a whole over the entire past period it seems to me that this question has been handled with due respect for proportion. It has not been given a prominent agitational character, but has remained principally in the columns devoted to exposition of our principles and theory. Moreover our press has persistently seized upon every item which would indicate that the real danger of fascism, the real source springs of fascism, so far as the American workers are concerned is right here at home. All the exposes of ties between the American and German monopolies, for instance, were designed to emphasize just this fact.

Certainly Mr. Schweinhaut, the Federal prosecutor at

Minneapolis, did not seem in accord with the theory that our press in its explanations of how really to fight fascism gave political support to Wall Street's war.

IV

Comrade Joyce views with alarm the role of our comrades in the Minneapolis trial. In an enigmatic section of his article he seems to hold the defendants at fault for not having made the most violent and bloodthirsty statements. One even feels a note of regret that the prosecuting attorney did not succeed in his objective of making out our party as terrorists, saboteurs and smugglers of arms. We shall not attempt to answer Joyce in these brief notes -- his principal arguments were answered in advance by Comrade Cannon in the pamphlet, Defense Policy in the Minneapolis Trial. We note only that Comrade Joyce does not learn easily. In a footnote to this section of his article he mentions that after it was written he received the Cannon pamphlet but "all in all" decided to "let the section stand as written." Such an attitude does not bode favorably for the future development of Comrade Joyce.

V

Comrade Joyce views with alarm the fact that since Pearl Harbor our party has "issued no statement on the war." This he considers is evidence that we have given up our agitation against the imperialist war. Again Joyce approaches the question from a purely formal viewpoint. When an imperialist war breaks out, the Marxist party is automatically required to respond with a statement! Our party did not automatically respond with a statement; therefore it has departed from Marxism. Q. E. D.

If memory serves us correctly, Professor Burnham raised this same point on another occasion. When World War II broke out in Europe on September 1, 1939, the Fourth International did not issue a statement on the war. Trotsky did not even issue a personal statement. Burnham seized upon this as proof that the Fourth International was on its last legs and that Trotsky was losing his political grasp. These criticisms however did not move Trotsky. The stand of the Fourth International had been clearly enunciated in a number of documents. His personal stand on imperialist war was not unknown. The record was clear. He preferred to wait for a more favorable opening. Not until the Emergency Conference of the Fourth International on May 19 to May 26, 1940, did Trotsky draw up a comprehensive statement, and this was not printed in our press until June 29, more than nine months after the outbreak of World War II. For Trotsky a manifesto was not a ritual performed on pre-ordained dates, but a weapon in the class struggle, a weapon subject to tactical variations in its use.

What was the situation when the United States entered the war on December 8, 1941? Not only had the Manifesto of the Emergency Conference been issued, but for some months the eyes of the entire radical movement had been fixed on Minneapolis where the leaders of the SWP were on trial for the party's opposition to imperialist war. The Marxist position on war had received greater publicity than a thousand Manifestos could have given it. By coincidence sentence

was passed on the defendants the same day Washington declared war. But not one of the defendants standing before the bourgeois judge succumbed to the war pressure and abjured his opposition to the war! What "statement on the war" could be clearer than this action of the party leaders?

The leadership of our party deemed it unnecessary to add anything at the moment to what they had said at the trial. Neither friend nor foe had or has any doubt of our position. Those who pretend otherwise -- like Shachtman and the Oehlerites -- are liars and provocateurs. On December 22, two weeks after the declaration of war, Comrade Cannon issued a statement on the war re-affirming our principled opposition. This was printed in the January issue of the Fourth International. When the first favorable opportunity was presented to gain the attention of a section of the working class in the St. Paul municipal elections, Grace Carlson, candidate of the SWP, issued a statement re-affirming our position on war. The forthcoming convention of the party will no doubt formally state the party position once again.

The facts certainly do not bear out the contention of Joyce that our party has sacrificed agitation against the war and made a "fetish of legality." Unless I am greatly mistaken the party will not take an indulgent attitude toward such loose and irresponsible talk. In my opinion our national leadership, at the entry of U.S. imperialism into the war and afterwards, acted in a sober and responsible manner with complete loyalty to the principles of Marxism.

VI

But enough of Joyce's document. The balance of it repeats and develops previous alarms and includes fresh alarm over such transition slogans as the demand for a sliding scale of wages. The article can be characterized in a nut shell as ultra-left alarm at the Transition Program. Joyce is not the first one to reject this program. Professor Burnham in his letter of resignation from the Workers Party bared similar inability to comprehend living Marxism: "The 'transition program' document seems to me -- as it pretty much did when first presented -- more or less arrant nonsense, and a key example of the inability of Marxism, even in the hands of its most brilliant intellectual representative, to handle contemporary history." "Burnham's Letter of Resignation from the Workers Party," Fourth International, August 1940). Burnham left footprints in the sands of time. We should look well where they lead.

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