

SUPPLEMENT TO THE RESOLUTION ON THE
NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTION

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(The following statement was adopted by the recent Plenum of the National Committee as a supplement to the Resolution on the National and Colonial Question adopted by the National Committee at its preceding Plenum and published in the New International of January and February, 1943. This supplement, together with the two documents which appeared in the NI, are now presented for discussion as an integral whole.)

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November, 1943

1. World events occurring since the adoption of our resolution have confirmed its fundamental line. They also afford the opportunity to develop and strengthen the line of that document.

2. In the two most important colonial or semi-colonial countries, India and China, the course of development has emphasized the correctness of our analysis. In China, the "national" struggle, in so far as it is under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, is paralyzed by its complete dependency upon the Allied imperialist camp. The bourgeoisie makes no attempt, and in the nature of the situation it cannot make such an attempt, to arouse a genuine popular movement against either the main occupying forces (Japan) or against the steady encroachments of the Anglo-American forces. The task, as the resolution indicated, falls exclusively upon the shoulders of the masses of workers and peasants under the leadership of the former. Given the predominance of the inter-imperialist war in Asia and the Pacific, the Chinese bourgeoisie continues to demonstrate that its struggle against Japanese imperialism is in fact subordinated to the interests and domination of Anglo-American imperialism.

The national bourgeoisie of India no longer even makes a pretense of organizing and launching a struggle against British imperialism. In fact, it has withdrawn entirely from the (to it) dangerous game of seeking to arouse the masses against their imperialist oppressor. Just as it confined itself yesterday to threatening British imperialism with a flirtation with Japanese imperialism unless it received concessions, so today, given the militarily less favorable position of the Japanese, the Indian bourgeoisie now confines itself to appealing for American imperialist aid ("protection") against British imperialism. The task of reorganizing and launching the mass struggle against imperialist rule devolves upon the shoulders of the young Indian proletariat at the head of the nation.

3. The popular national-revolutionary movements in Europe, described in our resolution, have acquired further scope and depth and demonstrated their durability and seriousness as decisive political phenomena. They remain the key to the revolution in Europe. In Yugoslavia the movement has already become a power of first-rate military significance, and in war and revolution military power decides the basic question of political powers. If the growth and consolidation of the national Yugoslavian "Partisan" movement is a confirmation of our analysis of such movements, and of the tasks of the revolutionary Marxists who must find their place in them, as well as the main field in which to unfold and win support for their own independent program, - it shows, however, all the perils that threaten these movements in other European countries. On the one side, Anglo-American imperialism has been making frantic attempts to acquire both military and political domination of the movement so that it may be integrated completely into the imperialist camp and its revolutionary social potentialities nipped in the bud. On the other side, Stalinism

which has evidently made considerable progress in strengthening its hold upon the movement, also endeavors to thwart its revolutionary potentialities and to make it an appendage of Stalinism.

Genuine national independence, and all other democratic rights, as well as socialist freedom, are threatened by both these forces. The task of the revolutionists is to explain these facts to the masses, not, of course, as outsiders, but as active and devoted participants in the movement. Pedagogy alone, however, is not sufficient. The menace of capitalist imperialism and Stalinism can be counteracted effectively only if the revolutionists present their own positive program: ardent championing of full national independence, free from the control of reactionary foreign powers; championing of all genuine, elementary democratic rights, the advancement of which will help weaken the influence of the imperialists in all camps; championing of the special economic and social demands of the workers and peasants at the expense of the bourgeoisie; championing of the slogan of a democratic workers' republic as the surest guarantee of national and social freedom; championing the slogan of a free union of socialist republics of Europe as a guarantee of peace, freedom and security.

4. The increasingly unfavorable position of German militarism brings steadily closer the hour of the overthrow of Fascism in Germany. Although Fascism in Italy never had the strength, and could not have the pretensions, of Fascism in Germany, the collapse of the former helps put an end to the myth of the durability and invincibility of the shoddy "new order." While the war in Europe still shows all signs of continuing for some time, the military collapse of the central and most powerful oppressive might in Europe, Germany, would immediately put an end to the system of national enslavement that the Nazis have established on the continent. But this would hold true on one condition only: if the European, and especially the German, proletariat and peasantry proved strong enough to prevent the substitution of either Anglo-American or Russian domination of the continent, or a combination of both.

The active intervention of the Italian masses in the political scene, after more than twenty years of totalitarian Fascist domination, shows the high degree of recuperative power inherent in the proletariat and a high degree of resistivity to the doctrines that Fascism seeks systematically to inculcate into the minds of the people. A similar intervention by the German masses may be expected when its ruling class faces a crisis similar to that undergone by Italian Fascism. If the German proletariat succeeds in raising itself to the height of a revolutionary consciousness and leadership adequate to a solution of the crisis that will inevitably break out in Germany, the fundamental problem of Europe is as good as solved.

A triumphant workers' socialist power in Germany would immediately make the prospect of an invincible socialist Europe a practical and easily realized possibility. To reach this power, however, indispensably requires a revolutionary program and a revolutionary party, neither of which yet exists in Germany or elsewhere on the continent. In Germany, the working class has not yet even reconstituted itself as a politically independent class, with its own organizations and aims. Germany remains the key to the European (and therefore the world) socialist revolution, in the sense that it is the decisive country for the socialist reorganization of Europe. But at the given moment, the key to Germany lies outside that country -- in the Nazi-occupied countries of Europe. That is how the situation and the problem stand concretely. It is outside of Germany that the masses are already in motion and in a revolutionary mood, even though they are still steeped in social-imperialistic and democratic illusions, and nationalistic "prejudices." The growth and successes of the movements of the masses in the countries outside of Germany, the demonstration by them that the struggle against Hitlerism can be conducted in the face of great difficulties, cannot but have a stimulating effect upon the redevelopment of the class-consciousness and courage of the proletariat inside Germany.

Thus, support of the national-revolutionary anti-Hitlerite movements is at the same time a means of stimulating, preparing and supporting the coming revolution in Germany. This revolution, in turn, can acquire strength both inside and outside Germany only if the proletariat of that country inscribes on its banner the solemn promise to fight for the untrammelled right of self-determination for all the people and nations subjugated by the common oppressor, Fascism. The clear-cut and prominent adoption of this slogan by the German proletariat will serve, more than any other single deed, to counteract the nationalistic and chauvinistic moods generated among the non-German masses by Hitlerism and shrewdly maintained by the Allied imperialists and social-patriots.

The struggle for national independence is thus revealed as being primary and indispensable for the development of the revolution not only in the oppressed countries of Europe but also in the oppressor country, Germany.

The adoption of the slogan of national independence for the countries oppressed by its "fatherland," while indispensable for the internationalist education and re-education of the German proletariat and revolutionary movement, is not, of course, sufficient by itself either for the reconstitution of the proletarian movement or for its victory.

5. The Italian experience has already shown the paralyzing effects of the absence of an organized working class and an organizing working class vanguard. But it has also shown the revitalizing significance in the Fascist countries, particularly as they approach the crisis of collapse, and es-

pecially when they enter the period of collapse, of the struggle for democratic demands "at home." After years of totalitarian rule, in which the masses are forbidden all political activity and intercourse, the people emerge into the days of comparative freedom that follow the collapse of Fascism without an organized or tested leadership. This was conclusively revealed in Italy after the fall of Mussolini. It will most likely be the situation after the fall of Hitler. Since all the "anti-Fascist" parties have functioned in exile, or in conditions of extreme illegality, the masses have had little or no direct experience with them, and are unable fully, if at all, to judge their programs. Furthermore, in most, if not all, cases these parties have been reduced pretty much to bureaucratic machines or top committees without organized mass following. The masses do not have an authentic revolutionary party of their own.

In such situations, consequently, the workers and peasants have no way of verifying, judging and deciding for or against a party (and therefore a program, and therefore a course of action), unless they have the benefit of democratic rights and institutions, the right of free speech, free assembly, right to organize, right to vote, and right to popular, democratic representation. Even if the masses should begin spontaneously the formation of Soviets, as is possible and as seems to have been done in isolated instances in Italy, the need for democratic rights and institutions is not rendered superfluous but only more urgent.

Soviets, without parties contesting for leadership within them, which means parties enjoying the possibility of freely working out their programs, agitating for them in the press and assembly, and submitting them to popular judgment and decision, are meaningless.

Soviets without a revolutionary party at their head inevitably degenerate and facilitate the reconsolidation of the bourgeoisie, as was shown in Austria and Germany in 1919. The revolutionary party cannot come to the head of the Soviets, or similar organizations, even assuming that they are spontaneously created in the very first stages of the collapse of totalitarianism, without the opportunities afforded it by the enjoyment of democratic rights or by successes obtained in mobilizing the masses in struggle for these rights.

The first task of the revolutionary Marxists in the situation of crisis of Fascism is, therefore, to advance and fight militantly for these democratic rights. This is one of the most important lessons freshly re-taught by the Italian events; it will be surely confirmed by the coming events in Germany.

The championing of the struggle for democratic rights is all the more valid and revolutionary in all its implications, in view of the fact that the restoration of these rights is

not only resisted by the turncoat Fascists (example: Badoglio), but also by the "democratic" imperialist invaders (example: Amgot). Its revolutionary value is further emphasized by the fact that the home-turning bourgeois democrats are prone to reject the struggle for these rights by urging "patience" upon the masses, and reliance upon the democratic imperialists. The Stalinists and social-patriots tend to take the same position.

An aggressive struggle for these rights is therefore calculated to help liquidate the illusions the masses entertain about their various bourgeois, social-democratic, imperialist and Stalinist "liberators," and to show them, in action and on the basis of their own concrete experiences, that it is only the revolutionists who fight for genuine democracy and that only by taking revolutionary power can they assure genuine democracy. In this sense, as in all others, the revolutionary struggle for democratic demands is inseparable from and an essential preliminary to and part of the struggle for workers' socialist power.

What is indicated already in our resolution requires re-emphasis in the light of the concrete record of Anglo-American imperialism in Italy (in which record Stalinism is directly associated), namely, the specific tasks which American revolutionary internationalists have in this country to aid their class brothers in Europe.

It is necessary to multiply our efforts in exposing not only the anti-revolutionary and anti-socialist aims and activity of our own imperialism in Europe, but particularly its downright anti-democratic role. The American collaboration with Badoglio and the House of Savoy, coupled with the cold-blooded refusal to permit the exercise of elementary democratic rights by the people in the "liberated" sections of Italy, are characteristic of this role.

It is the special task and duty of the American working class and revolutionary movements to expose mercilessly, to denounce and combat the reactionary work of the hypocritical imperialists in the interests of the working people of all countries and in the name of international proletariat solidarity and true democracy.
