

# Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

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PART I

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## ERBER STATEMENT OF RESIGNATION

To the National Committee and the Membership of the Workers Party:

Dear Comrades:

As most of the party has come to know from my participation in both organized and informal discussions, my views have been increasingly at variance with the official positions of the organization. Since my differences obviously compose a definite pattern of thought, I have occupied myself at length, in the course of the last year, in an effort to think those differences through to their source. As I studied the evolution of the party's theoretical program, and sought to understand our tasks and role in the context of the new problems, the more did I find it necessary to probe those concepts we have regarded as fundamentals of our movement.

The July Plenum of the National Committee, in its reversal of the Political Committee's position on the Marshall Plan, has brought my differences to a head. This action, combined with the current efforts to convert the party into a politically-exclusive propaganda group, have ended the hope I had that the WP would pioneer a new Marxist approach, free of the outlived dogmas of the past. It has become clear to me that this is impossible without a recognition that the old movements are dead, and that it is necessary to cast up a balance sheet of historical experience since the Russian Revolution. Without the latter, every attempt at a new approach to the totally different problems presented by the world of today will bog down in the dogmas of the past.

Unlike the official Trotskyist movement, the Workers Party has not closed its eyes to the vast changes that mark off our world from that of the early Comintern. Yet, it has been unable to comprehend clearly the new situation because its vision is obscured by blinders which prevent the WP from considering those solutions that contradict its fundamental doctrines. The great merit of the WP has been its contribution toward an understanding of the phenomenon of Stalinism, which opened up the possibility of seeing basically new problems.

We have defined the Stalinist social order as a form of collectivism which is not only anti-capitalist, but also anti-Socialist. The possibility that capitalism could be replaced by a new social order other than Socialism was never conceived of by Marx or Lenin.

Trotsky, who devoted himself to a study of the new phenomenon, admitted the theoretical possibility of a bureaucratic collectivist society in his article The USSR in war, written on the outbreak of World War II. However, Trotsky took the position that it was necessary to suspend judgment of the future of Russia pending the outcome of the war, which he expected would end in proletarian revolutions. In his opinion, the failure of the proletariat to take power would lead to its further decline, the triumph of world totalitarianism, the eclipse of civilization, and with it the recognition that scientific Socialism, based on the contradictions of capitalism, had ended as a utopia. The struggle would then be reduced to a "defense of the

totalitarian bureaucratic society" on the basis of a "new 'minimum' program."

The end of the war saw Trotsky's fears of a totalitarian world half realized. The totalitarian slave empire advanced into the very heart of Europe. As a consequence, a large part of the world is now organized on the basis of a social order whose internal laws of motion remain, by large measure, an enigma to us. The old theories of the movement, based upon capitalist production, with its conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat, have no validity in this part of the world. The Communist Manifesto tells us that "... the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property." Today, such "Communist theory" is not viewed as a "spectre" in the lands ruled by the Kremlin. Tito's resistance to the Russian demand that he abolish private property on the land has given new hope to socialists and democrats everywhere. Under the new social order of bureaucratic collectivism, some of the most basic tenets of Marxism have lost their meaning.

If scientific Socialism was based on the internal contradictions of capitalism, on what are the perspectives for Socialism to be based in the bureaucratic collectivist world? In view of our ignorance of the laws of motion of this new society, we can rest our hopes only on the historical truth that man will never be content in slavery. In short, the hope in this part of the world rests upon man's age-old struggle for freedom.

Yet what is the nature of the struggle for freedom under bureaucratic collectivism? It certainly can no longer be thought of in terms of the traditional class struggle, i.e., in terms of the old Marxist concept that the proletariat is the only progressive class in society. In a sense, the very nature of the proletariat has undergone a fundamental change. Under capitalism, the proletariat is the class that has no property and can only live by the sale of its labor power. But in terms of this definition who is not a proletarian in Russia? It is necessary to discard the whole bag and baggage of traditional class formulae in reference to a completely developed bureaucratic collectivist country, and long with it, the concept of a dictatorship of the proletariat, and Soviets. Where state property has replaced private property, the conquest of democracy and freedom equates the realization of socialism. In these countries the struggle for democracy is the struggle for socialism. The opposition to the totalitarian regime will take the form of a people's movement, the nation against the police state. Its rallying cry will be "Freedom and Democracy."

Yet the WP position on Russia, bowing to sacrosanct formulae of the past, opposes the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, and sees the anti-Stalin revolution in the classical Trotskyist terms of a return to the Soviets of the early 1920's. Fearful of questioning old fundamentals, the party has shied away from recognizing that there can be no return to the Russia of 1917. But a recognition of the new realities leaves little room for the old cliches.

The world of capitalism has also undergone great changes that challenge many of our fundamental concepts. The state has undertaken increasingly wider economic functions to prevent disintegration and

chaos. These efforts have modified many of the contradictions of capitalism. The concept of a "final crisis" in the economic realm becomes ever less tenable. European capitalism was dealt a blow by wartime destruction and dislocation, from which it has managed to survive only due to American aid. Without the latter, a total collapse would have been unavoidable and Stalinism would have rushed in to fill the void.

Meanwhile, contrary to our pre-war prognoses, bourgeois democracy has had a rebirth in Europe in the post-war period. This development stems from a number of factors: the widespread desire of the masses for freedom after the hell of Naziism, the influence of England and the United States, the inability of the bourgeoisie to constitute themselves as sole rulers in the face of the Stalinist mass movement, and the need of the bourgeoisie for a free labor movement as a counterweight to Stalinism. However, in the long run, the trend toward state intervention in the economy through a bureaucratic machinery will increasingly restrict the sphere within which democracy can be effective. The nationalization of economy in a well-established democracy like England, requires the most careful and unprejudiced study by Marxists to determine the relations between nationalization and democratic processes.

The post-war period demonstrated how far the proletariat has declined from the position it held after the First World War, when its offensive was the dominant factor in European politics. No new Bolshevik movement has arisen to replace the vacuum left by the Stalinization of the old Communist movement, while the reformist parties have sunk even deeper into the swamp of parliamentarism. This led us to conclude that Socialism has disappeared from the top of the agenda for the European working class. The WP's resolutions stated that the hope of the proletariat rests upon its ability to defend the democratic arena against Stalinism and capitalist reaction, while it re-establishes itself as a force capable of understanding and achieving its historic role.

Yet the party's thinking in specific crises tends to shy away from solutions dictated by this perspective and revert to lessons from Lenin's book of strategy of 1917, as revealed in our demand that the MRP be ousted from the MRP-SP-CP government during the crisis of 1946, instead of demanding the ousting of the CP. (The minority, which opposed the slogan of "CP-SP to Power," dared not even think of the latter alternative, and therefore had no political proposals whatsoever.) Here too, the WP cannot seek answers in directions that lead to reopening what it considers to be closed books.

Our tasks in the democratic countries is the defense of the democratic arena against the internal pressure of the Stalinist mass movement on the one side, and capitalist reaction on the other, and against the external threat of totalitarian military force. In this process we seek to re-establish the proletariat as an independent force that will eventually prove strong enough to take the political power necessary to replace capitalism with Socialism. This is an exceedingly complex and difficult task. It has become so because the struggle for Socialism has been hurled back so far that a whole range of historic gains which were achieved in successive stages by the rising working class movement, must be re-established under ex-

ceedingly unfavorable circumstances.

Enough of the old world has survived to make the Socialist perspective valid. But what kind of strategy is necessary to realize it? In what books will we find it outlined? From which fundamentals do we begin?

It is only out of mental laziness and nostalgia that we call ourselves Trotskyists; laziness, because we have not taken the trouble to define just what Trotskyism is, and nostalgia, because it affords us a tie to the glorious past.

Trotskyism existed as a program for the salvation of the Russian Revolution from Stalinist degeneration. This mission came to an end when we declared that there was nothing of the Russian Revolution left to be saved; it had been transformed into totalitarian counter-revolution.

The last hope for the Trotskyist perspective was that the Second World War would end as the first one had, with a successful proletarian revolution. Trotsky, as did all of us, firmly believed it would. In this event, Stalinism would have been crushed, and the Trotskyist perspective would have been vindicated in the reconstitution of a Leninist international. As it was, the Second World War, instead of unleashing a new revolutionary tide, only served to reveal to us how far the prospects of revolution had receded since its high tide. In gauging the extent of this retrogression, we honestly and soberly declared that the struggle for power was removed from the head of the agenda. We viewed all talk of "revolutionary situations" and "struggle for power" in the context of the present situation as the blabbering of incurable romantics, or the ritualistic recitations of theoretical ignoramuses who could not understand that the Second World War had produced a world vastly different from that in which their textbook - the resolutions of the First Four Congresses of the Comintern had been written.

These self-avowed orthodox Trotskyists, who keep at the original Trotskyist mission of saving the Russian Revolution, have degenerated with it. Trotsky's description of the London Bureau as the international of "squeezed-out lemons" is exceedingly appropriate for them.

Trotskyism was the last living ideological link with the Russian Revolution and the old Bolshevik movement. If both the workers' state and the old movement are dead, with what are they to be replaced? The Trotskyists (both the official Fourth and ourselves) have aimed to call back to life the old Comintern - "that of the First Four Congresses" - as it was always put with great exactitude. The Trotskyist movement has occupied itself with this task for the last fifteen years, in which period countless tactical moves - fusions, entries, splits, reunifications - have been tried and exhausted. This has produced nothing beyond what the WP has now come to recognize as the caricature international - the Fourth - which does not have sufficient life to be mistaken for the old Comintern's ghost. Worn out by their efforts, the European Trotskyist groups are rapidly crumbling, while in this country the WP and the SWP (despite the fanfare of the latter) are in an impasse.

Is it not time to ask whether a resurrected Comintern, i.e.,

Bolshevism, is really the instrument that corresponds to the needs of the Socialist struggle in our world, one which differs so vastly from that in which the Russian Revolution was such a prime factor? We have stated repeatedly that after their experience with fascism, the workers of Europe wanted freedom, and were opposed to all dictatorial governments, including a dictatorship of the proletariat. What reason have we to believe that workers who reject Stalinism as anti-democratic, will rally to the party that is identified with the Leninist version of dictatorship? And does not the same apply to the English and American workers whose attachment to political freedom has been reinforced by having witnessed the consequences of dictatorship in Germany and Russia? And is it not possible that these workers are right in identifying their aims with the preservation and extension of those democratic processes and institutions that already exist?

In trying to answer these questions for myself I found it necessary to re-examine the Russian Revolution and the Leninist principles which it established. I concluded that it is necessary to reject the Leninist teachings on the relationship of democracy to socialism, and the road to power.

Until the Russian Revolution, Marxists viewed the struggle for democracy as an integral part of the struggle for socialism. The achievement of socialism was "to win the battle of democracy," in the words of the Communist Manifesto. It is unnecessary to establish this by reference to the authoritative documents and programs of the Second International, including the 1903 program of the Russian party. Lenin's writings before the Russian Revolution provide the best proof. In 1915, two years before the revolution, Lenin wrote:

"As to Comrade Parabellum, he, in the name of a Socialist revolution, scornfully rejects a consistently revolutionary programme in the realm of democracy. This is incorrect. The proletariat cannot become victor save through democracy, i.e., through introducing complete democracy and through combining with every step of its movement democratic demands formulated most vigorously, most decisively. It is senseless to contrast the Socialist revolution and the revolutionary struggle against capitalism to one of the questions of democracy, in this case the national question. On the contrary, we must combine the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary programme and revolutionary tactics relative to all democratic demands: a republic, a militia, officials elected by the people, equal rights for women, self-determination of nations, etc. While capitalism exists, all these demands are realizable only as an exception, and in an incomplete, distorted form. Basing ourselves on democracy as it already exists, exposing its incompleteness under capitalism, we advocate the overthrow of capitalism, expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a necessary basis both for the abolition of the poverty of the masses and for a complete and manifold realization of all democratic reforms. Some of these reforms will be started prior to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, others in the process of the overthrow, still others after it has been accomplished. The Socialist revolution is by no means a single battle; on the contrary, it is an epoch of a whole series of battles around all problems of economic and democratic reforms, which can be completed only by the ex-

appropriation of the bourgeoisie. It is for the sake of this final aim that we must formulate in a consistently revolutionary manner every one of our democratic demands. It is quite conceivable that the workers of a certain country may overthrow the bourgeoisie before even one fundamental democratic reform has been realized in full. It is entirely inconceivable, however, that the proletariat as an historical class will be able to defeat the bourgeoisie if it is not prepared for this task by being educated in the spirit of the most consistent and determined revolutionary democracy." (Collected Works, Vol. 18, p. 368.)

The classical statement of pre-war Marxism on the relationship of democracy to the struggle for socialism was contained in Rosa Luxemburg's Reform or Revolution, a pamphlet directed against the opportunist wing of the movement:

"In view of the fact that bourgeois liberalism has given up its ghost from fear of the growing labor movement and its final aim, we conclude that the socialist labor movement is today the only support for that which is not the goal of the socialist movement - democracy. We must conclude that democracy can have no other support. We must conclude that the socialist movement is not bound to bourgeois democracy, but that, on the contrary, the fate of democracy is bound with the socialist movement. We must conclude from this that democracy does not acquire greater chances of life in the measure that the working class renounces the struggle for its emancipation, but that, on the contrary, democracy acquires greater chances of survival as the socialist movement becomes sufficiently strong to struggle against the reactionary consequences of world politics and the bourgeois desertion of democracy. He who would strengthen democracy should want to strengthen and not weaken the socialist movement. He who renounces the struggle for socialism renounces both the labor movement and democracy."

The Bolsheviks rose to power in the Russian Revolution on democratic slogans: "Down with the Kerensky Dictatorship! Only the Soviet Power Will Convene the Constituent Assembly!" However, after the Bolsheviks dissolved the Constituent Assembly, democratic slogans became a weapon of their socialist opponents, while they tried to give the relationship of democracy to socialism a new interpretation: Not through political democracy, but through its overthrow would socialism be achieved, ran the new Bolshevik doctrine. Democracy was considered the fortress of the bourgeoisie, dictatorship the weapon of the working class. Democratic processes and institutions were described as bourgeois weapons to blind the masses. The Communist movement began to speak with contempt of such democratic rights as freedom of speech, press, assembly, and organization. However, since the bourgeoisie was foolish enough to "grant" these rights, they were to be "made use of," in order to overthrow the bourgeois democratic state. Parliaments were to be entered in order to "blow them up from within." Political freedom and democratic institutions which the masses had forced upon the bourgeoisie in 1789, 1848, and in the early 1900's, through the great general strikes for universal suffrage, were now denounced as traps set to ensnare the proletariat.

In Lenin's report to the Second All-Russian Trade Union Congress

in 1919, he said:

"The question has to be put in this way, that so long as property remains in the hands of the capitalists any kind of democracy is only a hypocritically concealed bourgeois dictatorship. All kinds of talk about universal suffrage, about plebiscite, about equality in voting, is only utter deceit so long as there is no equality between exploiters and exploited, between the owners of capital and property and the modern wage slaves."

In a set of theses which Lenin prepared as the basis for a reply to the German Independent Socialists, who were negotiating for affiliation to the Comintern at the time, Lenin posed in succinct sentences his new approach to socialism and democracy:

"The dictatorship of the proletariat means the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by one class, the proletariat, to be precise, by its revolutionary vanguard (my emphasis, E.E.). To demand that this vanguard should first win over to its side the majority of the people by means of elections to the bourgeois parliaments, to the bourgeois constituent assemblies, and so on, i.e., by means of elections while wage slavery still exists, while the exploiters exist, under their yoke, while private ownership of the means of production still exists - to demand this, or to expect it, means in reality the renunciation of the standpoint of the dictatorship of the proletariat and actually the adoption of the standpoint of bourgeois democracy."

This new explanation of the role of democracy in the struggle for socialism met with sharp opposition from Rosa Luxemburg, at the time in the midst of the revolutionary struggle of the German workers. In her pamphlet on The Russian Revolution, she sought to re-establish the classical Marxist approach:

"'As Marxists,' writes Trotsky, 'we have never been idol worshippers of formal democracy.' Surely, we have never been idol worshippers of formal democracy. Nor have we ever been idol worshippers of socialism or Marxism either. Does it follow from this that we may also throw socialism on the scrap-heap, a la Cunow, Lensch, and Parvus, if it becomes uncomfortable for us? Trotsky and Lenin are the living refutation of this answer.

"'We have never been idol-worshippers of formal democracy.' All that that really means is: We have always distinguished the social kernel from the political form of bourgeois democracy; we have always revealed the hard kernel of social inequality and lack of freedom hidden under the sweet shell of formal equality and freedom -- not in order to reject the latter but to spur the working class into not being satisfied with the shell, but rather, by conquering political power, to create a socialist democracy to replace bourgeois democracy -- not to eliminate democracy altogether.

"But socialist democracy is not something which begins only in the promised land after the foundations of socialist economy are created; it does not come as some sort of Christmas present for the worthy people who, in the interim, have loyally supported a handful of socialist dictators. Socialist democracy begins simultaneously with the beginnings of the destruction of class rule and of the construc-



tion of socialism. It begins at the very moment of the seizure of power by the socialist party. It is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Though the great prestige of the Russian Revolution called forth a mass following in Europe, Lenin's new doctrine could not convince the majority of the workers to follow the Bolshevik road. The mass base of Social Democracy held firm and the revolutionary wave exhausted itself trying to smash it. As a result the workers' movement divided into two extremes and engaged in bitter internecine warfare. The isolation of the revolution in backward Russia resulted in its speedy degeneration, beginning in its second year. The Social Democracy, drained of its most class conscious and militant cadres by the split, swung far to the right and sunk ever deeper into the swamp of parliamentarism, which became the sole centre of its political activity.

Social Democracy and Communism proved exceedingly effective in checkmating (and living off) each other, but neither knew how to resolve the impasse. Meanwhile the crisis matured and brought, not socialism, but fascism to power. The forward march of socialism, which the pre-war generation of socialists had calmly and confidently believed would proceed steadily to complete victory, ended in the shambles of concentration camps and mass bombings.

Where assess the blame? Where find the errors? We have always taken the answers to these questions for granted. The sole blame lay with the "traitorous leaders" of the Social Democracy who refused to act like Bolsheviks. But what of the millions of German workers, the decisive majority, who consistently supported their leaders despite the ceaseless, year-in, year-out, efforts of the Communists to convince them otherwise? Were not they, rather than Ebert-Scheidemann, the real obstacle to the victory of Bolshevism? Russia, Lenin and Trotsky freely admitted, was not ripe for socialism, but it was ripe for the revolution. Western Europe, everyone granted, was ripe for socialism, but was it ripe for revolution?

History has established that Rosa Luxemburg's estimate of the revolutionary tasks in Germany were far more realistic than Lenin's. She stressed the need of building from the bottom up and implied a long perspective in the struggle against reformist views in the German working class movement. The interpretation which Paul Frohlich, her biographer and comrade-in-struggle, gives of her views is borne out by the content of her writings and speeches during the weeks following the November 9th revolution in Germany. Frohlich writes: "She saw a long road ahead, a road with many twists and turns, as she prophesied in the Spartakus Programme: the proletarian revolution could advance by stages only, step by step along a road of bitter and often heart-rending experience, through defeat after defeat, to final maturity and complete victory."

In her speech at the founding congress of the Communist Party of Germany, Rosa sought to counteract the impatience and to undo the illusions of the ultra-leftists, who had rallied to the party's banner:

"History is not making things easy for us as it did for bourgeois revolutions; then it was sufficient to overthrow the central govern-

ment and replace the old rulers by a few dozen new men. But we must work from below to the top, and that is in exact accordance with the mass character of our revolution and its aims, which involve the fundamental nature of our present social order... Below, where the individual employer faces his individual wage-slaves, where all the organs of political class power directly face the objects of this class power, the masses, we must work step by step to wrench power from the hands of the ruling class and take it into our own.

"As I describe it the process probably appears longer and more difficult than you feel inclined to believe at the moment, but it is a very good thing that we should realize as clearly as possible the difficulties and complications of our revolution. I shall not venture to prophecy how long the whole process will take, but what does that matter so long as our lives are long enough to bring it to its end?"

This stands in marked contrast to the views Lenin kept expressing until he became convinced in 1921 that the Comintern faced a long and slow task of winning a mass base sufficient to take power in Europe. Three months after Rosa made the speech we quoted, Lenin wrote in Pravda, in an article that summed up the significance of the First Congress of the Comintern, as follows:

"Only four months ago it would have been impossible to say that Soviet power, the Soviet form of state, is an international conquest. There was something in it, and moreover something essential, which belonged not only to Russia, but also to all capitalist countries. But it was still impossible to say, until it had been tried in practice, what changes, what depth, what importance the further developments of the world revolution would bring.

"The German Revolution has given this trial. An advanced capitalist country immediately after one of the most backward, has shown the whole world in a short period, in some hundred or so days, not only the same main forces of revolution, not only its same main direction, but also the same main form of the new, proletarian democracy -- the Soviets.

"At the same time in England, in a victorious country, in the country which is richest in colonies, in the country which has been to the greatest extent in and served as an example of 'social peace,' in the country of the oldest capitalism, we see a wide, unstrainable, boiling and powerful growth of Soviets and of new Soviet forms of mass proletarian struggle, the Shop Stewards Committees.

"In America, in the strongest and youngest capitalist country, there is immense sympathy of the working masses towards the Soviets.

"The ice has broken.

"The Soviets have conquered throughout the world."

Yet addressing the First German Congress of Soviets in Berlin in December, 1918, Ernest Daeumig, a leader of the left-wing of the Independent Socialists, expressed his disappointment at the true nature of the German Soviets in the following words:

"No revolutionary parliament in history has revealed itself more timorous, more comradely, meaner, than the revolutionary parliament here congregated.

"Where is the great breath of idealism that dominated and moved the French National Convention? Where is the youthful enthusiasm of March, 1848? There is not a trace of either."

Ernst Heckert, addressing the same Soviet Congress as a spokesman of the Spartakus Bund, placed the blame for this situation, not on a few leaders who had betrayed the workers, but on the masses themselves:

"The Constituent Assembly will be a reactionary institution even if it has a socialist majority. The reason for this is that the German people is completely apolitical. It asks to be led. It has not as yet made the smallest act that might be evidence of its desire to become master of its own destiny. Here in Germany people wait to have liberty brought to them by leaders. Liberty is created at the base."

But if Luxemburg was right in holding that the revolutionary perspective in Europe was for a slower tempo of developments and a more gradual maturing of the working class, what would happen to the Russian Revolution in the meantime? How long could the Bolsheviks rule this vast peasant mass, which would become more actively hostile as the threat of a landowners' restoration diminished? How long could terror serve to keep the Soviet regime in power without converting it into a police apparatus that would stifle the last vestiges of Soviet democracy?

The evidence is pretty conclusive that Lenin made a bad miscalculation in believing the German workers would make a successful revolution. Yet, he had staked his whole course in Russia on this gamble. If Lenin won, history would absolve the Bolsheviks of all the charges their socialist opponents made against them. But if he lost? The awesome consequences of Lenin's miscalculation are written in the last thirty years -- the whole tragic story of Social Democratic sterility, Stalinist degeneration, fascist victory, a Second World War, and our world of Stalinist totalitarianism and capitalist decay.

The October Revolution is an imperishable page in the history of the great movements of the masses to take their destiny into their own hands that began with the French Revolution. It was the second stage of the elemental upsurge of the Russian masses that began in February. The Kerensky regime had done its utmost to block its further advance by frustrating the efforts of the masses to end the war and divide the land. The regime sought to stretch out its undemocratic authority as long as possible by repeatedly postponing the elections of a Constituent Assembly. If the revolution was to advance, Kerensky had to go. Only the Bolshevik Party was able to show the way to the teeming, creative, democratic Soviets of 1917. The revolution broke through the impasse and opened a road toward a solution of the land and peace questions. Far from carrying out a coup d'etat, as their opponents charged, the Bolsheviks rode to power on the crest of an upsurge that sought to realize the long-promised objectives of land and peace.

It is one of the unquestioned myths of our movement, that the Bolsheviks, once they were in power, had no other alternative but the course they pursued. With the European revolution in mind, the Bolsheviks determined to hold power at all costs, including the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, the convocation of which the Bolsheviks had made one of the strong points in their agitation. This step was necessary, in the traditional view of our movement, because it was a bourgeois institution, and the socialist revolution expressed itself through a "higher type" of democracy, the Soviets. If this was clearly understood by Lenin, it proved unacceptable to some of the leading Bolsheviks and others regarded it with misgivings. As for the masses who constituted the Soviets, Lenin held that they would be won to the idea in time. It was for the vanguard to act and explain later. Those of the workers who refused to accept this concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat had to be handled firmly, for their own good. The novelist Gorky, whose honesty as a reporter of the events can be accepted, wrote in his paper at the time:

"Pravda lies when it says that the demonstration of January 18 was organized by the bourgeoisie, by the bankers...and that those who marched to the Taurida Palace were 'burzhui' and 'Kaledins.' Pravda lies, for it knows that the 'burzhui' have no reason for celebrating the opening of the Constituent Assembly. What is there for them to do among 246 Socialists and 110 Bolsheviks? Pravda knows that those in line were workers of ... factories and that those workers were shot. No matter how much Pravda lies, the disgraceful facts remain.

"It is possible that the 'burzhui' rejoiced to see the soldiers and Red Guards snatch the revolutionary banners from the hands of workers and drag them through the mud and burn them."

Gorky is quite correct in asking what the bourgeoisie had to cheer about in the convocation of a Constituent Assembly in which the bourgeois party, the Kadets, held only fifteen seats out of 520, and in which the extreme right Social Revolutionaries, who had been identified with Kerensky, were thoroughly discredited. The SR party, which held 50% of the seats, was rapidly shifting to the left. The problems of land and peace, which had led to the October overturn, were in process of solution by the direct action of millions of peasants in seizing the land, and of millions of soldiers in fraternizing with the Germans. The SR delegates were forced to recognize this fact, and the Constituent Assembly, in its single session, unanimously passed the decree to divide the land and authorized a continuation of the armistice and negotiations with the Germans.

A government that was responsible to the Constituent Assembly, either an SR government or a coalition of the worker and peasant parties (Bolshevik, Menshevik, Left SR and Right SR parties) would certainly not have found it possible to act with the dispatch the party dictatorship of the Bolsheviks made possible. It would have experienced many internal crises and may have found it necessary to refer the disputes to the people in the form of new elections. However, such a government would have had a much wider base than the Bolshevik regime and the victory over the Tsarist and bourgeois counter-revolution would have been far easier, quicker and less costly. Above all, it would have avoided the need for the secret police

and the terror and would have again made Russia the "freest country in the world," as Lenin found it possible to describe it in the first weeks after the February Revolution.

What would have been the nature of the state that would have emerged under such a regime, and what would have been its social basis? In its essentials it would have been what Lenin had in mind for Russia until February 1917, under the formula of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry;" a state which would have cleansed Russia of the vestiges of feudalism and curbed the power of the big bourgeoisie through the nationalization of monopolies and trusts, while leaving private enterprise and the market undisturbed. The participation of the workers in economic life through collective bargaining and measures of workers' control of production would have been far more extensive and democratic under such a regime, despite capitalist economic relations, than was the case after a year of Bolshevik rule when they found it necessary to replace the factory committees with one-man management to save the economy, torn by civil war and sabotage, from complete collapse.

Lenin subjected to merciless ridicule Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution right up to the outbreak of the February Revolution. He kept insisting that the proletarian party could only come to power by sharing it with the representatives of the peasantry and that the tasks of such a regime could not go beyond the framework of capitalist property relations. In outlining the tasks of the Bolsheviks in Russia in a manifesto issued after the outbreak of the war in 1914, Lenin wrote:

"In Russia, because of the greater backwardness of this country which has not yet completed its bourgeois revolution, the tasks of the Social Democrats should consist, as before, in the establishment of the three fundamental conditions of a consistent democratic reconstruction: a democratic republic (with complete equality of rights and with self-determination of all nations); confiscation of landowners' lands; and an eight-hour working day. But in all advanced countries the war puts forward the slogan of a socialist revolution..."

As the war progressed and accumulated the pent-up discontent of wide sections of the population, Lenin gave thought to the possibility that the class relations may be affected by the war in the direction of pushing the proletariat into the leading position in a revolutionary regime, as actually happened in 1917. In dealing with this possibility in 1915, Lenin again reiterated that such a regime would confine itself to carrying out the minimum program of the Bolsheviks:

"The question as to what the proletarian party would do, should revolution place it at the helm in the present war, we answer thus: we would propose peace to all the belligerents on condition of liberating colonies and all the dependent, oppressed peoples without legal rights. Neither Germany nor England with France under their present governments would accept these conditions. If so we would have to prepare and lead a revolutionary war, i.e., we would not only carry out in full and by the most drastic means the whole of our minimum program (my emphasis, E.E.) but would systematically arouse to insurrection all the peoples oppressed at present by the Great Russians, all the colonies and the dependent countries of Asia (India, China, Persia,

etc.) and likewise and first of all -- would arouse to insurrection the socialist proletariat of Europe against its governments and in spite of its social chauvinists."

However, in 1917 Lenin cast aside the perspective he had defended for thirteen years. Against the Menshevik policy of subordinating the aims of the Revolution to the imperialist program of the bourgeoisie, Lenin advanced the policy of subordinating the Revolution to the full or maximum Socialist program of the proletariat. Instead of a regime of the Constituent Assembly, which would also have given an impetus to the revolution abroad and then advanced in step with its progress, Lenin chose a regime of the Bolsheviks based on "war communism" and ruling through dictatorial measures, staking everything on a successful revolution in Germany. Once the Bolsheviks had dispersed the Constituent Assembly and decided to rule alone, they had set foot on a course from which there was no turning back. The suppression of the socialist opposition, the terror, the secret police and the long, bloody, destructive Civil War, were now inevitable. As the latter developed, all intermediate solutions became impossible, and all forces that could help bring them about were ground to bits. It became a choice, in the end, but not at the beginning, of either the Bolshevik regime or Tsarist restoration.

On the eve of the fateful decision, some Bolsheviks drew back and for a fleeting interval sought to call the party back to Lenin's earlier and wiser policy. Kamenev, Zinoviev, Ryazanov and Rykov resigned their posts in the Soviet government in protest against the new perspective and defended their action in a public declaration:

"We cannot lend our support to a policy which is opposed to the will of the majority of the proletariat and the army, and we demand the formation of a socialist government composed of all the Soviet parties. We are convinced that there is only one alternative to this, and that is the maintenance of a purely Bolshevik government in power by means of political terrorism. But we cannot and will not adopt this course, being of the opinion that it can only lead to the alienation of the proletarian masses from political life, to the establishment of an irresponsible regime, and the downfall of the Revolution. We cannot accept responsibility for such results, and hereby regard ourselves as relieved of the duties of Commissars of the People."

The reference to a "purely Bolshevik government" has always been challenged in our movement on the grounds that the government was really controlled by the Soviets and even existed as coalition with the Left SR's for a period. If some Trotskyists continue to believe that decisions were really made by the Soviets after the first year of the Revolution, and not merely rubber-stamped by them, this misunderstanding is not due to any attempt of the Bolsheviks to falsify the real relationship. Trotsky made this amply clear when he wrote his Dictatorship vs. Democracy in 1920:

"In the hands of the party is concentrated the general control. It does not immediately administer, since its apparatus is not adapted for this purpose. But it has the final word in all fundamental questions. Further, our practice has led to the result that, in all moot questions, generally -- conflicts between departments and personal con-

licts within departments -- the last word belongs to the Central Committee of the party. This affords extreme economy of time and energy, and in the most difficult and complicated circumstances gives a guarantee for the necessary unity of action. Such a regime is possible only in the presence of the unquestioned authority of the party, and the faultlessness of its discipline."

As for the coalition with the Left SR's, this did not survive the first serious crisis, that of Brest-Litovsk. According to Trotsky, this was inevitable since the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible on the basis of a coalition of Socialist parties:

"The exclusive role of the Communist Party under the conditions of a victorious proletarian revolution is quite comprehensible. The question is of the dictatorship of a class. In the composition of that class there enter various elements, heterogeneous moods, different levels of development. Yet the dictatorship pre-supposes unity of will, unity of direction, unity of action. By what other path then can it be attained? The revolutionary supremacy of the proletariat pre-supposes within the proletariat itself the political supremacy of a party, with a clear programme of action and a faultless internal discipline.

"The policy of coalitions contradicts internally the regime of the revolutionary dictatorship. We have in view, not coalitions with bourgeois parties, of which of course there can be no talk, but of a coalition of Communists with other 'Socialist' organizations, representing different stages of backwardness and prejudice of the laboring masses." (ibid)

This kind of thinking led Trotsky to the theory that since the dictatorship of the party equalled the rule of the workers, everything the regime did was done with the sanction of the workers and in their name. One consequence was Trotsky's position during the dispute over the role of the trade unions in the Soviet state, in which he maintained that since the state represents the workers, they have no need of trade unions that would have the function of protecting them from their own state. Lenin, less given to such mechanical formulations, and already fearing where things were going in Russia, pointed out that the workers' state was not a perfect institution, especially not in backward Russia. The workers, he said, were in need of unions that would defend them against abuses by administrators of the state economy.

However, far worse was Trotsky's defense of compulsory labor, a preliminary stage of what we have come to call slave labor:

"I read you a telegram from Ekaterinburg dealing with the work of the First Labor Army. It says that there have passed through the Ural Committee for Labor Service over 4,000 workers. "hence have they appeared? Mainly from the Third Army. They were not allowed to go to their homes, but were sent where they were required. From the army they were handed over to the Committee for Labor Service, which distributed them according to their categories and sent them to the factories. This, from the Liberal point of view is 'violence' to the freedom of the individual. Yet an overwhelming majority of the workers went willingly to the labor front, as hitherto to the military, realiz-

ing that the common interest demanded this. Part went against their will. These were compelled. (My emphasis, F.E.)

"Naturally, it is quite clear that the state must, by means of the bonus system, give the better workers better conditions of existence. But this not only does not exclude, but on the contrary presupposes, that the state, and the trade unions -- without which the Soviet state will not build up industry -- acquire new rights of some kind over the worker. The worker does not merely bargain with the Soviet state: no, he is subordinated to the Soviet state, under its orders in every direction -- for it is his state." (ibid)

The same fatal concept that it is only necessary for a state to be called a workers' state to assure its operation in the interest of the workers led Trotsky to dismiss the problem of workers' control of production as merely a technical question of organization:

"It may be correct or incorrect from the point of view of the technique of administration, but it is not imposed upon the proletariat, it is dictated by its own will and pleasure. It would consequently be a most crying error to confuse the question as to the supremacy of the proletariat with the question of boards of workers at the head of the factories. The dictatorship of the proletariat is expressed in the abolition of private property in the means of production, in the supremacy over the whole Soviet mechanism of the collective will of the workers, and not at all in the form in which individual economic enterprises are administered." (ibid)

The collective will of the workers, however, was represented by the Bolshevik party, according to Trotsky's own explanation. When the party first decided a question like one-man management vs. factory committees and then imposed its "faultless discipline" upon its members in the Soviets, unions and cooperatives in carrying out the party position, there was slight chance that the "collective will" of the workers would differ from that of the party.

I have no desire to engage in that fruitless pursuit of cataloguing the "crimes" of the Bolsheviks which has become so popular in certain quarters in recent years. Neither Lenin nor Trotsky (nor even Stalin) fought in the ranks of the November revolution in order to carry out criminal designs against the working class. Rarely in history has a political leadership appeared that was so thoroughly motivated by a selfless idealism or so completely dedicated to the lofty mission of liberating mankind. But the course they chose had a terrible logic of its own. Once they embarked upon it, they became its prisoners and there was no turning back. This course could not be traversed without the suppression of the socialist opposition, without the Cheka terror, without one-man management of the factories, without compulsory labor. They are all fatal links in a chain that began with Lenin's revision of the traditional Marxist concept of the relationship of democracy to socialism in favor of the anti-democratic view of the party ruling on behalf of the masses, as was expounded by Lenin on the eve of taking power in his essay Will the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?:

"After the 1905 Revolution, Russia was ruled by 150,000 landowners. They ruled by means of constant force over 150,000,000 people, by pouring unlimited scorn on them, by subjecting the vast majority to



hard labor and semi-privation.

"And yet we are told that Russia will not be able to be governed by the 240,000 members of the Bolshevik Party -- governing in the interests of the poor and against the rich."

The accumulated events of the last 30 years provide us with a towering vantage point from which to look back and reassess the role of Bolshevism in the Russian Revolution. It remains a vastly rich experience which no serious movement of social change can ignore, no matter how different the conditions under which it operates are from those of Russia. Despite its tragic outcome, there remains much in the Russian Revolution that fills one with hope for the future of mankind and, above all, with faith in the ability of the masses to participate creatively in social reconstruction from below, and in their readiness to suffer and even die in behalf of their own emancipation, once they have glimpsed the possibility of a better future.

But the most important lesson which the Russian experience teaches us is that a movement of talented and selfless idealists cannot substitute itself for the workers' lack of understanding of where they are going and how they will get there. Daniel DeLeon was a thousand times right in stressing -- a point that was first made in The Communist Manifesto, and was a favorite theme with Engels -- that the Socialist Revolution was the first conscious revolution in history; the first one in which the participants will not be manipulated toward obscure goals under the guise of a new religion, or the ephemeral slogan of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," or even the slogan of "Land, Peace and Bread." Debs stood upon firm Marxist doctrine when he said that if he could be a Moses who could lead the working class out of the wilderness, he would refuse to do it because someone else could lead them back.

That the majority of the industrial workers in Russia were conscious Socialists is undoubtedly true and it may even be possible (though I doubt it) that a majority of them understood Lenin's strategic concepts and accepted them. However, it remains a fact that the Russian proletariat was a tiny minority of the population, so tiny that even in the Soviet system it was necessary to give each worker five votes to the peasant's one. When Marx wrote "... that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy," he certainly did not have in mind the rule of a few million proletarians over a population of 150 million.

But if the Bolshevik road led to catastrophe, did not the Social Democratic road lead to the same end? If Bolshevism led to Stalin, did not Social Democracy lead to Hitler? It is one of the worst follies -- and one of the most fatal of our movement -- to have reduced the road to power for the working class to a choice between the road of Lenin-Frotsky and that of Ebert-Scheidemann. It is doubly foolish to pose the question in this manner -- typical of our tendency toward dogmatism -- 30 years after the Russian Revolution when we have behind us a rich and varied experience, and confront a world that is so markedly different from anything known in the past. The task before us does not consist of a search for some brand-new, hitherto-unheard-of formula by which to achieve Socialism. I am quite certain that none such will be found. If it is, it will come from new experi-

ences and will certainly not be "sucked from the thumb." What is necessary is to re-evaluate, with an open and unprejudiced mind, the many theories that have battled for acceptance in the past, and check them anew against the experience of the past decades.

But before we can take the smallest step forward, it is necessary that we free our minds from the paralyzing notion that Bolshevism has provided us with all the answers -- the notion that is responsible for the sense of infallibility which Demaziere notes among the ills of Trotskyists. This notion has been undermined considerably in the ranks of the Workers Party in recent years. In large measure, this has been a consequence of our effort to see the world as it is and not as we would like it to be. This has been one of our greatest assets.

Yet we have been severely handicapped in really seeing things as they are, and even more in deciding what must be done, by the heavy weight of Bolshevik dogma. However, the political line of the party has been kept tied to Leninist principles only by an increasing strain upon logic. The result has been that our thought has developed a certain duality. The latter consists of enshrining the sacrosanct principles of Leninism in a glass case as an educational exhibit for our members, especially the new ones (and for ancestor worship by the old ones), while modifying or obscuring these principles to a point just short of renouncing them in answering the great questions of the day. Yet, a political party can drift only so far from its anchor of principles. Either the anchor-chain is broken, or the party is pulled back toward its point of origin. The Workers Party has already reached the extreme limits of the anchor-chain. The Czech events could only be understood in its full implications and the Marshall Plan could only be answered consistent with the direction of our ideological trend if we made a serious breach with Leninist principles. The leadership sensed this and drew back. The current direction of the WP is toward greater orthodoxy. Consistent with this trend is the proposal to revert to a new version of the old Communist League of America, a politically-exclusive propaganda group. By becoming politically exclusive, by closing the doors to political currents that challenge the basic concepts, the Leninist anchor is left undisturbed. However, I fear, the same will apply to the party's thinking.

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We have always insisted that the bedrock difference which distinguishes Leninism from reformism (and from all "centrist" currents) was the attitude toward the state; specifically, toward the bourgeois democratic state. It was this, we said, which determined the overall strategy, i.e., the road to power. A different strategic approach leads generally, to different tactics in specific situations. I completely accept this view on the key importance of the theory of the state.

A movement cannot proceed from Lenin's concept of the state without following the strategy and tactics outlined in the basic documents of the early Comintern. We have attempted to cling to the Leninist theory of the state while making major adjustments in practice as required by the reality of politics in a bourgeois democracy. The resulting inconsistency is one from which the SWP has suffered to a lesser extent at the price of greater sectarianism. The most con-

sistent attempt to apply the Leninist theory without modifications in a bourgeois democracy is represented by the Cehler group, whose existence is significant less as a political than a psychiatric phenomenon.

Lenin first began a systematic study of the Marxist theory of the state during the course of the First World War in an effort to trace the social patriotism and opportunism of Social Democracy to its theoretical roots. The latter, he concluded, were to be found in the distortion of Marx's teachings on the state on the part of the Social Democratic theoreticians, especially, Kautsky. Lenin wrote State and Revolution with the aim of restoring what he held to be Marx's original doctrine on the question. This study was destined to become the textbook of the Leninist school, if any single work of Lenin's could be given this distinction.

Lenin's theory of the state became the foundation stone of the Communist International. The main documents of the first and second congresses of the Comintern were devoted to its elaboration in the sphere of strategy and tactics. Lenin gave his theory and its political meaning its classic form in his These on Communism, the Struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and Utilization of the Bourgeois Parliament, adopted by the Second Congress:

"1. Parliamentarism as a state system, has become a 'democratic' form of the rule of the bourgeoisie, which at a certain stage of its development needs the fiction of national representation, that outwardly would be organization of a 'national will' standing outside of classes, but in reality is an instrument of oppression and suppression in the hands of the ruling capitalists.

"2. Parliamentarism is a definite form of the bourgeois state. Therefore it can in no way be a form of Communist society, which recognizes neither classes, nor class struggle, nor any form of the State.

"3. Parliamentarism cannot be a form of proletarian government during the transition period between the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat. At the moment when the intensified class struggle turns into civil war the proletariat must inevitably form its State organization as a fighting organization, which cannot admit any of the representatives of the former ruling classes; all fictions of a 'national will' are harmful to the proletariat at this period, and a parliamentary division of authority is needless and injurious to it; the only form of proletarian dictatorship is a Republic of Soviets.

"4. The bourgeois parliaments, which constitute one of the most important apparatus of the State machinery of the bourgeoisie, cannot be taken over by the proletariat any more than can the bourgeois order in general. The task of the proletariat consist in blowing up the whole machinery of the bourgeoisie, in destroying it, and all the parliamentary institutions with it, whether they be republican or constitutional-monarchy.

"5. The same relates to the local government institutions of the bourgeoisie, which theoretically it is not correct to differentiate from State organizations. In reality they are part of the same apparatus of the State machinery of the bourgeoisie which must be

destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat and replaced by local Soviets of Workers' Deputies.

"5. Consequently, Communism repudiates parliamentarism as the form of the future; it renounces the same as a form of the class dictatorship of the proletariat; it repudiates the possibility of winning over the parliaments; its aim is to destroy parliamentarism. Therefore it is only possible to speak of utilizing the bourgeois State organizations with the object of destroying them. The question can only and exclusively be discussed on such a plane."

The appearance of Lenin's theory of the state in practical politics, in the form of the Bolshevik regime in Russia and the political line of the Comintern, led to a series of extensive polemical exchanges between the theoreticians of Leninism and of classical Social Democracy, with Lenin and Trotsky writing a defense of the former and Kautsky and Martov defending the latter. (The latter two, however, differed considerably between themselves, since Martov's views were closer to those of Luxemburg, whose sharp differences with Kautsky were related to this question.) Each side sought to prove that their views found sanction in the writings of Marx. The latter were placed under a microscope to be analyzed and re-analyzed. Though Marx, and especially Engels, had written extensively on the origins and historical development of the state, they had not set forth their views concretely on the relationship of the bourgeois democratic state to the workers' struggle for power, nor on the specific form which the latter took. Among their references to the problem are some which can be quoted, with considerable interpretation on one side, while others, which can be quoted, with an equal amount of interpretation, on the other. If one side found it possible to cite Marx and Engels to the effect that the bourgeois state had to be "shattered" by the proletariat, the other side found it possible to cite Marx and Engels to the effect that the proletariat would confine itself to "lopping off" the "worst features" of the bourgeois state. If one side found it possible to cite quotations to the effect that the proletariat would establish its own organs of power with which to replace the bourgeois state, the other found it possible to cite quotations to the effect that the proletariat of England and America, at least, could take over the existing state institutions and adapt them to their own class needs. As fruitful and as necessary as the study of Marx and Engels on this question is, such a study must yield the regrettable conclusion that they cannot, by themselves, provide us with the finished answer. This is especially true in view of the fact that fifty years of history since the death of Engels provide us with materials on this subject infinitely richer than that on which the founders of scientific socialism had to base themselves.

Various forms of representative assemblies have appeared under every social order since antiquity. History has known the Athenian democracy, the Roman Senate, the Diets and States Generals of the feudal orders, the common councils of the town burghers, the cantonal democracy of the Swiss mountaineers, the mercantile city-states of the Hanseatic League, the British House of Lords and House of Commons, the Dutch Republic of the merchant families, the legislatures and town meetings of colonial America and the representative governments established by the French and American revolutions. That these institutions were the products of classes and class conflict, a conception first generalized upon by Marx, is today accepted by nearly every

modern school of historical theory.

However, the recognition of this fact is not grounds for the acceptance of Lenin's simplistic theory that every representative institution was the weapon of a single class for domination over all others. Wherever the rising class had access to existing institutions, they entered them, converted them into an arena which gave concentrated expression to their struggle as a whole and fought to conquer them for their own aims. Sometimes they proved successful in the latter, more often their partial success caused the struggle to spill over into extra-parliamentary channels with the resulting rupture of the common arena. The English bourgeoisie eventually conquered Parliament and subordinated the Lords and the throne to it, but not without the Cromwellian interlude. The French bourgeoisie found its first organized base of resistance in the meeting of the Third Estate of the States General. The American bourgeoisie waged a political struggle for 20 years to capture control of the Federal government and when they succeeded through constitutional means, it led to secession and civil war. The German bourgeoisie was fated never to establish its control over the state apparatus; its control passing from the Junker domination to reformist labor domination to Nazi domination.

The modern bourgeois democratic state, based on universal suffrage is an exceedingly complex mechanism. Like the British Labor Party, which the Marxists have defined as a "third capitalist party," a "petty bourgeois party" and a "working class party," the bourgeois democratic state defies simple definition. If it is an instrument for the bourgeois domination of the working class, it is also an instrument for the workers' struggle against that domination. To add to the complexity, the bourgeois state is forced to intervene in the economy against the resistance of the bourgeoisie and develops a momentum of its own which conflicts now with the one and now with the other of the two basic social classes.

Far from being an instrument consciously designed by the bourgeoisie to serve solely its own class needs (a view which is acceptable only to those who view history as a series of plots), the bourgeois state is the product of a long historical development in which it has been subjected to the most varied forces. It bears the marks of dozens of great social conflicts which have contributed to its present form and content and we have no grounds for believing that this form and content is final.

Political institutions reflect the needs of the economic system upon which they rest. But this is only true in the long run and on the basis of relative social stability. We must never forget that "force (i.e. the state authority) is also an economic power!" (Engels) Its reciprocal action upon the economic base can often be opposed to the interests of the economically-dominant class. In periods of social crisis, and most acutely in periods of revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary) change, the state can be wrenched loose from its economic roots and used against the economically-dominant class, with the result that the state, in turn, undergoes vast internal changes in the process. This is above all true under capitalism.

During the rise of capitalism, economic power and political power were separated to an extent not known in pre-capitalist societies. In slave society and under feudalism, the holders of economic power oc-

cupied themselves directly with the exercise of political power. The feudal lords, for instance, functioned as the directors of the estates, as the local government (executive, legislative and judicial) and as the military commanders. The only questions beyond their authority, theoretically at least, were those pertaining to the Church.

In contrast, the bourgeoisie occupied itself with business and left the administration of the state to those who, in time, made a profession of it. The result was the development of a special body of men -- functionaries, bureaucrats, civil servants, or "politicians" as we call them in this country -- who, while identifying themselves with the status quo did so primarily through an identity with the state and only secondarily through an identity with the economic system. The result was the development of a state apparatus which, while under the influence of the bourgeoisie in greater or lesser measure, was not under its complete control.

The bourgeois democratic state was nowhere a political monopoly of the bourgeoisie. Even the Dutch Republic, which was organized like a federation of joint-stock corporations and came closest to being a purely bourgeois affair, was not completely so. The bourgeoisie in the earliest capitalist states (England, USA, France, Belgium, Netherlands) had hardly eliminated the pre-capitalist ruling class (nobility, slaveocracy) from a role in the executive side of the state, when the proletariat began to "intrude" in the legislative side. In the late arrivals among the capitalist states (Germany, Austro-Hungary, Russia) the bourgeoisie never managed to rid itself entirely of the feudal forces before they were confronted with the political power of the proletariat.

The only method by which the bourgeoisie could freeze the proletariat out of participation in the institutions of government, while still keeping democracy for itself, was through the limitation of the suffrage on the basis of property. The bourgeoisie everywhere strove for such a "property-holders" democracy when it achieved political power. The "founding fathers" of the American Republic made this aim abundantly clear, as soon in The Federalist essays of Hamilton, Madison and Jay. The attempt to achieve this objective in the French Revolution led to the overthrow of the bourgeois party -- the Girondins -- by the plebian masses represented by the Jacobins.

Wherever the bourgeois democratic state was based upon an extensive electorate -- above all, where the suffrage became universal -- it became an arena in which the other classes fought to bend the powers of government to their own purposes. Witness the history of the American government in this respect: the struggle of the mercantile-financial interests against the agricultural interest (Hamilton vs. Jefferson); the struggle of mercantile-financial interests against the rising working class (Biddle vs. Jackson); the struggle of the capital-labor-farmer bloc against the slaveocracy (victory of the Republican Party and the Civil War); the struggle of the capitalists against the farmer-labor-Wage bloc on Reconstruction (Johnson vs. Stevens); the struggle of the Western and Southern farmers and merchants against finance capital (Populism).

It is argued that the main contenders in these struggles were various sections of the propertied class. However, when organized la-

bor appeared upon the scene, it, too, made its impact upon the state. Federal and state legislation for workmen's compensation, abolition of child labor, protection of women workers, and such specific legal safeguards for organized labor as the Clayton Act and the Norris-La Guardia Act were not enacted by clever and far-sighted bourgeois for the purpose of spreading "democratic illusions." They were enacted by politicians, against the resistance of the bourgeoisie, because even the politically backward American working class was making its weight felt.

The bourgeoisie did not "give" universal suffrage to the masses, especially not in Europe. The masses broke into the democratic arena by their concerted pressure, often through violent struggles. Universal suffrage was the first great political conquest of the modern working class. In many countries it was the issue around which the workers organized as a class. The Chartist movement in England and the LaSallean movement in Germany underscored the importance the workers attached (and correctly) to the right to vote. They made the latter their prime demand because it was the weapon with which they could fight for their other demands, like the right to organize and strike. The workers of Belgium and the Austro-Hungarian empire won the right to vote through mass strike actions. They did not regard it as "all kinds of voting, democracy and suchlike bourgeois deceit," as Lenin was to call it. The workers used their newly won political power to secure the adoption of laws for their economic welfare and the strengthening of the legal position of the free labor movement.

Lenin readily admitted that bourgeois democracy had a progressive function during the rise of capitalism. However, in the these we quoted above, Lenin concluded:

"The parliament at present can in no way serve as the arena of a struggle for reform, for improving the lot of the working people, as it was at certain periods of the preceding epoch. The center of gravity of political life at present has been completely and finally transferred beyond the limits of the parliament."

In Lenin's view, the reforms had all been window dressing for bourgeois dictatorship, a luxury it could not longer afford. The bourgeois state was now stripped down to its real function as "nothing else but a machine for the suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie, of the mass of toilers by a handful of capitalists."

Yet in the midst of capitalism's worst crisis, one that shook it down to its very depths, the bourgeois democratic state in the United States passed as much pro-labor legislation in a few years as took the European workers decades to win. I refer, of course, to the New Deal. The latter remains incomprehensible from the Leninist theory of the bourgeois democratic state, and is the reason why our movement remains content to this day with such infantile and vulgar explanations of this phenomenon. This is another example of how a false theory leads its adherents to ignore so completely the appearance of things in the search for the deeply hidden meaning, that those shun all theory stumble upon the answers that lie near the surface, and consequently, come far closer to the truth. (This does not prove that a lack of theory is superior to its presence. It does prove that

a bad theory can be worse than none at all.)

Those liberals and labor leaders who have referred eclectically to "labor, industry and government" in dealing with power relations in this country have been closer to the truth than those who were captives of the rigid doctrine that there were only two forces, labor and capital, and that the state is but the handmaiden of the latter. The WP is only now beginning to deal with the possibility that the state may intervene in the economy and consequently in class relations, in a manner that undermines the bourgeoisie, rather than strengthens it. I refer to the possible political consequences of statification. Had we not been blinded by Leninist dogma on the role of the state, our recognition of this phenomenon would not be so belated. The theoretical basis for such understanding was laid down by Engels many years before Lenin began his study of the state. In contrast to Lenin's simplistic, crude and static formulation, Engels gave us an insight into the relations of the bourgeoisie and the state apparatus from which we can understand such politically diverse trends toward statification as the New Deal and the Nazi state:

"There is a reciprocity between the two unequal forces; on the one side, the economic movement; on the other, the new political power which strives for the greatest possible independence and which having once arisen is endowed with its own movement. The economic movement, upon the whole, asserts itself but it is affected by the reaction of the relatively independent political movement which it itself had set up. This political movement is on the one hand the state power, on the other, the opposition which comes to life at the same time with it." (Letter to Conrad Schmidt, Oct. 27, 1890. Emphasis in original.)

This concept was either entirely incomprehensible to Lenin or he viewed it as a strange aberration on the part of Engels that had best be simply ignored, as a reading of Chapter I of State and Revolution will reveal. Engels' concept on the reciprocal relationship of state and economy was based upon his theory that the state evolved out of the organized community, i.e., the organized maintenance of communal functions in pre-class society. Those charged with these public functions "separated" themselves from the community, i.e., freed themselves from its control, and used their strategic position to dominate over society: "... the exercise of a social function was everywhere the basis of political supremacy;..." The increase of productive forces added to the social functions of these communal officers and increased their special status and independence from control. The same increase of productive forces made possible an accumulation of wealth, the exploitation of labor and the division of society into classes. The communal officers developed into the nominally dominant class. The latter continued to serve a social function but they now had an additional function - a strictly class function, - to preserve the new class division against attack from the exploited class. This new class function required the establishment of a special apparatus - a body of "armed men," assisted by "material appendages, prisons and repressive institutions of all kinds." It is this apparatus that Marx and Engels called the state.

The social function of the public authority did not end when it had the added function of an organ of repression. On the contrary,



it could maintain its supremacy only as long as it carried out this social function. "However great the number of despotic governments which rose and fell in India and Persia, each was fully aware that its first duty was the general maintenance of irrigation throughout the valleys, without which no agriculture was possible." (Engels, Anti-Duhring, p. 199). The state under capitalism, likewise, can only survive if it takes steps to keep society from disintegrating, regardless of the needs of the economically dominant class.

Whenever the state safeguarded the needs solely of the ruling class at a time when these needs ran counter to those of the economy, i.e., when the state no longer fulfilled its social function, it lost its "political supremacy," it was overthrown. The French Revolution is the classic example of this.

However, not all feudal states were overthrown. The feudal-monarchic-bureaucratic state in Germany adapted itself to the needs of the economy and ruled on behalf of the bourgeoisie, while keeping them at arm's length from the state apparatus itself. (This was the real content of Bismarck's policy.) The English state apparatus underwent the same process of adaptation, only more gradually and over several centuries. The Russian state apparatus began this process after 1905, but it was already too late, and the February Revolution cut it short.

The possibility of adaptation to capitalist society by feudal states was based on the peculiar nature of the bourgeoisie - a class that confines itself to economic functions and demands only that the state be in friendly hands, that is that the political power is not used to obstruct, but to facilitate the economic operations of the bourgeoisie. This peculiarity of bourgeois rule was observed by Engels who stated that in a democratic republic "wealth wields its power indirectly, but all the more effectively." (My emphasis, E.E.) That Lenin never grasped this point is apparent from what he says in the paragraphs that follow his quoting it on page 13 of State and Revolution.

We now live in the epoch when capitalism proves ever less able to fulfill the needs of economic development. It has definitely become a brake upon the economy with the result that crises threaten all of society with social chaos. A state which operates solely to safeguard the interests of the bourgeoisie, i.e., which fulfills no social function, would accumulate against it the pent-up antagonisms of all other classes and would in the end lose its "political supremacy." This has not happened to date because the states of the capitalist world have taken measures to fulfill their social function. To protect society as a whole from economic dislocation and general impoverishment, the state has intervened increasingly in the economic sphere, to regulate the economy in order to secure its more normal operation.

The trend toward stratification of production, foreseen by Engels and observed by every prominent Marxist theoretician since, is nothing else but the effort of the state to fulfill its social function. It has succeeded in fulfilling it to a remarkable degree despite bourgeois opposition. It was able to do this because of the purely economic role of the bourgeoisie and the consequent limitation of their political power to indirect control of the state. This ability of the state

to adapt itself to economic needs in the face of the wishes of the bourgeoisie, is what Engels was describing in the passages cited from the letter to Conrad Schmidt when he referred to the state having "its own movement" and that it "strives for the greatest possible independence."

The state is adapting itself to the needs of the economy. But as Engels notes, this is a reciprocal relationship. "Force (i.e., the state authority) is also economic power." In which direction and in whose interests does the state direct the economy? Lenin could conceive of only two states - a bourgeois state and a proletarian state. The former directed the economy in the interests of capitalism, the latter in the interests of socialism.

Had Lenin not been blinded by the simplistic notion that a state is merely an instrument of one class for the suppression of another, he may have conceived of the possibility that the state apparatus could free itself from class control, wield its power over the economy against both classes, and constitute itself the new ruling class, based upon state ownership of property. We have already seen the state escape from the weak grasp of the Russian proletariat. Can the state slip out of the hands of the bourgeoisie in like manner? Not only can it, but it has in a number of countries (Nazi Germany being the best example). However, to date, this loss of political control has nowhere resulted in any serious conversion of capitalist property into state property. The latter development is excluded from the point of view of Lenin's theory of the state. If the WP clings to Lenin's theory of the state but believes that capitalism can evolve into bureaucratic collectivism - which it says is a system hostile to capitalism - it will only add a new inconsistency to its theoretical program.

If one concedes that state intervention can lead to the nationalization of the economy and that the underlying trend in the United States is in this direction, it must then be admitted that the measures of the Roosevelt administration -- the New Deal and the war economy -- were the first stage of this process.

The New Deal resulted from the following factors: public confidence in the economic and political leadership of the big bourgeoisie, which reached its peak during the '20's, collapsed completely during the crisis. The popular masses (workers, farmers, small business) rejected the leadership of the big bourgeoisie (Wall Street, Big Business) and looked toward their government for economic leadership. The Roosevelt administration took over at a time when the ability of the bourgeoisie to control public opinion was less than at any time since the Civil War. Roosevelt had a relatively free hand vis-a-vis the bourgeoisie. He took over at a time when widespread state intervention in the economy was the only means of restoring social and economic stability. Such intervention was firmly resisted by the big bourgeoisie, despite their weakened political power, which reached its low point in the 1930 elections. As a counter-force to the bourgeoisie and as a mass base for themselves, the New Deal bureaucracy encouraged and facilitated the organization of labor, especially the CIO. With the power of labor increased, and the power of the bourgeoisie weakened, the two fundamental classes were more evenly balanced and the "Bonapartist" position of the state enhanced.

Yet this "Bonapartism" was unlike the regimes to which Marxists have traditionally applied the term. These regimes were invariably dictatorial and relied upon police measures. The New Deal, on the contrary, was overwhelmingly popular with the masses. When it lost the support of the farmers and urban middle class (the men of small property) beginning in 1940, it continued to receive the support of the working class, and such an important oppressed minority as the Negroes. The New Deal encroached upon the freedom of property and expanded the freedom of organized labor. While the bourgeoisie organized the Liberty League to defend the "freedom of property" against state intervention, the rights of labor to bargain collectively were written into law and enforced through the National Labor Relations Board.

Yet a contradictory trend was at work in the New Deal. The executive powers of the government were vastly increased in relation to the legislative. The Supreme Court was given a New Deal majority. (A curious result has been that since 1942, when the tide of bourgeois reaction began running strong, the executive and judicial branches have continued to be liberal, while Congress has become the stronghold of reaction.) The social framework as a whole was subjected to a process of regimentation which effected all classes since it left no sphere of the economy untouched. The enforcement of such regimentation brought with it greatly enhanced police powers, both through the authority of innumerable boards, bureaus and agencies and through the establishment of a national police force, the FBI, on a scope not previously known in this country. A huge state bureaucracy was developed which accounted for one out of every ten gainfully employed persons in the United States by 1948, totaling 5,900,000 jobholders.

Yet this process had no adverse effect upon political liberties. Even the war brought no serious curtailments of civil liberties. To the extent that restrictions took place in some fields, gains were registered in others. It is necessary to conclude that, to date, there is no evidence that state intervention in the economy has resulted in the curtailment of political democracy. It is necessary to record that state intervention in Great Britain, where it is far in advance of this country, has likewise shown no evidence, to date, of a curtailment of political democracy.

If state intervention remains purely bureaucratic and unaffected by the labor movement, its expansion will pit the workers economic struggle increasingly against the state. The bureaucracy will seek to defend its own interests by restricting the freedom of the labor movement. Even here the attack will be against labor's economic rights since an attack upon political liberty must necessarily effect that of all other strata of the population and confront the state with a united people. Unless a mass fascist movement appears, the conversion of the democratic state into a police state can only be a slow process punctuated by struggles. The likelihood is that it would erupt, at some crucial point in a violent struggle.

But there are no grounds for believing that state intervention must inevitably take a purely bureaucratic form. Such a perspective is valid only on the assumption that the working class will not rise above a trade union level and will prove incapable of entering the political arena as an independent class force to fight for its own program. The latter development cannot but have a tremendous impact

upon the government's role in the economy. This is what Engels' meant when, in dealing with the effect of politics upon economics, he wrote: "This political movement is on the one hand the state power, on the other, the opposition which comes to life at the same time with it."

It may be argued that even if the bourgeois democratic state is amenable to various class pressures, this does not prove that it can be "pressured" into solving any basic problems in accordance with the workers' needs and certainly, could not be taken over by a working class parliamentary majority to establish socialism.

It is quite true that this has not been proven. However, neither has it been disproven. No one can say over what road, or combination of roads, the struggle for power and socialism will lead. What is necessary for us is to establish that both Scheidemann's road and Lenin's road were failures. Both must be rejected.

Marxists have understood from the beginning that the struggle of the workers for socialism must follow two lines of attack, political and economic. While both the Bolsheviks and the Social Democrats accepted this concept in general, they each gave it a specific content that negated it in practice. Social Democracy came to view the struggle entirely as a parliamentary one, with the economic organizations of the workers limiting their role to improving the lot of the workers under capitalism, until a parliamentary majority would introduce socialism from above. The Bolsheviks viewed the economic organizations as auxiliaries of the party which would serve the function of disrupting and disintegrating capitalist control of the economy through mass strikes and workers' control of production. "The (workers') control is a transitional measure, under the conditions of the highest tension of the class war, and conceivable only as a bridge to the revolutionary nationalization of industry." (Trotsky: Germany -- What Next?, page 168)

Having wrested the control of the industry from the capitalist proprietor, the workers are now to entrust (it may be more accurate to say -- surrender) its management to the functionaries of the new workers state. "On the contrary, the workers' management of industry, to a much greater degree, even in its initial steps, proceeds from above, for it is inseparable from state-power and the general economic plan. The organs of management are not factory committees but centralized Soviets." (ibid, p. 171) To speak of workers' control in a non-revolutionary situation, adds Trotsky, means to conceive of it in a "purely reformist" manner.

But the socialist order, like all previous social transformations, must first take form within the womb of the old society. Workers cannot, like the bourgeoisie under feudalism, achieve a hold in the economy through ownership of productive property. They can only achieve it through the exercise of an expanding power over the economy under capitalism. In the last analysis, the strength of the working class in the parliamentary arena will only be a reflection of its real strength -- that which is rooted in the economy itself. The basic strength of the working class is, therefore, economic. Its political strength has real meaning only in terms of its economic strength. The latter cannot be given to it by socialist parliamentarians nor can it suddenly appear "under the conditions of the highest tension of the class war." What is wrong with a "purely reformist" participation of

the workers in measures of economic control in a non-revolutionary period? The achievement of Reuther's program in the GM strike would have been "purely reformist," but it would have led to a tremendous stride forward in both the maturity and power of the auto workers.

The IWW's concept of workers' management of industry, which was that of revolutionary syndicalism, was not wrong because they maintained that the power of the workers must be rooted in the workshop, but because they held that this dispensed with the need of a political instrument of power, the state. This is the Leninist concept turned inside out. The organized power of the workers must seek means of asserting itself in economic controls on the level of the department, plant and industry. Without such economic power as its base, the political victories of the workers rest on very frail foundation.

This exceedingly important concept was one of DeLeon's contributions to Marxist thought. Unfortunately, his tactical errors, like dual unionism, and his theory that the political state is unnecessary for the rule of the working class, has obscured its real essence. It is among the concepts which a re-evaluation of the past must take into consideration.

The existence and expansion of workers economic power is directly dependent upon the preservation of political freedom and democratic processes. It is not merely a matter of civil liberties or "democratic rights," a term we have chosen to use because it permits a negative attitude toward existing democratic institutions of government. In essence our struggle for "democratic rights" is confined to a demand for "non-interference" by the state. Yet the question of "interference" or "non-interference" and against whom and what the "interference" is aimed, is directly related to the nature of the state. It is necessary to have a positive attitude toward the state in relation to democracy. It is true that in a class society the labor movement can rely, in the last analysis, only upon its own strength. But it is one of the follies we have derived from the Leninist concept of "their state," that "independent working class action" means that the working class must not demand support from governmental bodies in its defence of democracy except in order to "expose" the bourgeois democratic state. Our sectarian approach reached one of its heights of absurdity when we refused to demand from the Los Angeles School Board that it deny Gerald Smith a meeting place on grounds that this would signify collaboration with the "bourgeois state," when it is considered our task to expose "beurgeois democracy" and mobilize the workers against its state institutions. We demand a law that would make discrimination against racial minorities a criminal offense. But would we insist that only the "workers" should arrest the criminals and that they be incarcerated only in a "workers' jail?" We criticized the Nuremburg Trial, but beyond the demand that the Nazis should be tried by a German revolutionary workers' government (which we knew was out of the realm of the possible, at present) we washed our hands of any responsibility for more practical demands.

The view that it is "their state," that we make demands only to expose it, that we expect nothing from it, that we will "utilize" it since the bourgeoisie is stupid enough to permit us to, creates a frame of mind in our movement which is alien to the workers of a

political democracy and isolates us from them. This approach robs the Leninist of a moral basis for his struggle in a democratic arena, and consequently, makes his agitation devoid of the moral indignation over violations of democracy by the bourgeoisie. How could a Leninist party be morally indignant when it publicly refers to its elected representatives in governmental bodies as "scouting parties" and says: "The Communist Party enters such institutions not for the purpose of organization work, but in order to direct the masses to blow up the whole bourgeois machinery and the parliament itself from within..." (Lenin) This approach at least had the merit of a frank avowal of aims. Its acceptance by Leninists functioning in the democratic arena of this country, today, can only create guilt feelings. This is in marked contrast to the American worker who considers himself a citizen and a taxpayer and resents being pushed around by police who are paid out of the public treasury.

Democracy is not the property of the bourgeoisie. They find it increasingly uncomfortable and eventually will find it unbearable. Whatever is democratic in our government and in the social pattern as a whole, belongs to us and we must be its resolute defenders. What is bourgeois about our present democracy is specifically its limitations, its shortcomings, and, above all, its exclusion from the economic sphere. The evolution of society makes capitalism and democracy increasingly incompatible. The attachment of the bourgeoisie to freedom does not stem from the fact that it "deludes" the workers with freedom of speech and "suchlike deceit," but because it guarantees freedom of property. If the latter is threatened, he may risk entrusting the defense of this property to a fascist dictatorship. But after the Nazi experience, he is not so sure that this will not be merely another road to expropriation.

There is no assurance, whatsoever, that the workers' party can achieve state power through constitutional means. Its very progress may mobilize the forces of reaction against the democratic institutions. This is precisely what we mean when we say that capitalism and democracy are incompatible in the long run. Even the most perfect organization of the workers in industry, transport, communications, etc., will not guarantee a non-violent accession to power. Since the working class may be challenged by force on the democratic road to socialism, let it be prepared to take up arms not to overthrow a democratic state but to "win the battle of democracy." Standing as the defenders of the best traditions of American democracy, its cause will be immeasurably strengthened. A Marxist in the United States today can commit no greater folly than to view the workers' road to power as culminating in an armed insurrection against a state that rests on political democracy.

I therefore reject the Leninist concept of the state, democracy and the road to power. I consider the pre-Leninist views of Marxism on these questions as sounder doctrine and the basis for more realistic practice.

"No absolute and general relation can be constructed between capitalist development and democracy .... Democratic institutions - and this is of the greatest significance -- have completely exhausted their function as aids in the development of bourgeois society.... We must conclude that the socialist movement is not bound to bourgeois democracy, but that, on the contrary, the fate of democracy is bound

with the socialist movement." (Rosa Luxemburg: Reform or Revolution.)

"If there is anything that is certain, it is this, that our party and the working class can only come to power under the form of a democratic republic. This is, what's more, the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the great French Revolution has already shown." (Frederick Engels, Neue Zeit, XX, 1901)

It had been my aim in outlining this statement to devote as complete a treatment to the question of the conflict between Russia and the United States and the position of Socialists in reference to it, as I have to the Russian Revolution and the Leninist theory of the state. I find it necessary, however, to confine myself to the barest statement of my views, without argumentation to support them, since this statement has grown to greater proportions than I had planned. As important as it is for a party to know the views upon which a member breaks with it politically, I fully recognize the technical limitations of a small organization and have no desire to tax them unduly. An added consideration is the fact that had I continued to accept the party's view of the Russian Revolution and Leninism, it may have been possible to remain in the party and fight for the acceptance of my position on the international conflict, though I now recognize that the latter would be inconsistent with the former. In brief my views on the international scene and the tasks of the socialists are as follows:

1. Imperialism is imperialism, abstractly considered. However, there is a difference between the imperialism of a totalitarian state and that of a political democracy. The victory of one or the other makes a difference for the future of civilization, specifically for the socialist perspective. We must prefer the victory of the camp that permits us to survive and struggle, unless there is a genuine third alternative -- our own victory over both camps.
2. Basing ourselves upon the expectation that the Second World War would end in the defeat of both imperialist camps at the hands of a successful proletarian revolution, we were logical in refusing to give support to either side. However, our perspective for a revolution, as we have admitted since, was an illusion. Had our perspective been a realistic one, we could not but have preferred the defeat of Germany, and consequently taken an attitude toward the war generally like that of the SP or the ILP, minus their pacifist deviations.
3. There is no Third Camp at present. It must be the aim of the socialists to build one. The basis for the latter exists in the free labor movement of the capitalist world. The free labor movement functions at present as a sub-division in the capitalist camp. Our strategy must strive for the independence of labor from the foreign policy of capitalist imperialism, but in such a manner as does not weaken the latter vis-a-vis totalitarian imperialism. This concept is expressed in my discussion article in Labor Action on the Marshall Plan.
4. The struggle between Russia and the United States is more than an imperialist struggle. It is a struggle for survival between two social orders. The importance of the latter aspect overshadows the imperialist content.

5. No one is required to give a pledge in advance to support the United States in a war against Russia. This war may come next month, next year, or not for ten to twenty years. The course of events may follow one of a dozen alternatives. What is important is that socialists do not exclude in advance and in principle the possibility of supporting the bourgeois democratic states, despite their imperialism, against totalitarian states.

6. The conversion of bourgeois democratic states into police states or totalitarian regimes is not excluded theoretically. When this possibility becomes the actuality, our approach to their defense in war against other totalitarian states, would of course change accordingly.

7. Socialists can capitalize on war-time discontent and crisis only when their own attitude toward the war is correct. An anti-war party cannot gain when the masses support the war for sound reasons. Once war has broken out with Russia, the American workers in the absence of a third camp, will oppose peace through appeasement. A socialist policy can only be to say, "Place us in power, and we will wage a consistently democratic and revolutionary war against the totalitarian bloc." But while socialists follow this line, they cannot say that the military fortunes of the bourgeois democracies in the war are of no concern to them. The enemy is at home; but the main enemy is abroad.

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In conclusion, permit me to deal with the question, which I am sure will be raised in the minds of many comrades, as to why I chose to resign rather than attempt to remain in the WP to fight for the adoption of my views. The WP is a political organization that is distinct from other organizations because it rests upon certain basic principles, evolved over many years of history. It represents a continuity of ideas from the Russian Revolution and the Comintern and their application in the political crisis of the years since. To accept my views means to wipe out its past and to call into question the need for the party's existence. What basis for membership is there for one who adheres to the view that the party's basic concepts are false and its future doomed? Were I a member of a broad, Marxist educational society, without a program, without a "line," and based upon more than one historical tradition, where all views have equal status, the struggle for my ideas would have an educational significance aimed toward the crystallization of a programmatic grouping at a later stage. But the WP is already a programmatic grouping, and its trend at present is to become more politically exclusive, not less. Lacking a common basis in fundamentals, I have no alternative but to resign.

Whether I shall affiliate to another party in the near future or not, I am not prepared to say now. I have no intentions of withdrawing from the struggle to which I have given seventeen years of my life even if I do not affiliate to a party in the near future. The struggle is broader than we are; a fact easily lost sight of in our little corner of the world. The Workers Defense League, the NAACP and numerous other organizations provide ample opportunity to carry on the fight, not to speak of the organized labor movement, the most



important arena of all. However, one needs first to get rid of the view that such activity has value only to the degree that one's own influence grows or that one secures converts to one's own ideas.

I desire to add one last comment, of a personal nature. Though I am convinced intellectually that my views leave no alternative but resignation, all the emotional and psychological ties that have bound me to the party, and above all, to the individual comrades, makes this step a difficult one. I leave without rancor or bitterness and shall continue to regard the members of the Workers Party as fellow-fighters in the great struggle for human liberation, regardless of the sharpness with which I may find myself compelled to combat the party's political views.

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September 28, 1948

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