

TEN CENTS

ISSUE #2

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE

OF THE WORKERS LEAGUE FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

A DISCUSSION WITH THE SOCIALIST WORKERS LEAGUE OF GREAT BRITAIN

CORRESPONDENCE WITH A REPLY

—GEORGE MARLEN

COMMENTS ON OUR LINE

FROM THE FRENCH BORDIGUISTS

AN ANSWER

—ARTHUR BURKE

ABSTRACTS OF A POLEMIC

ON THE PATH TO A NEW PARTY

A NEW SPLIT IN THE R.W.L.

PUBLISHED BY

THE BULLETIN

P. O. BOX 67

STATION D

NEW YORK CITY

P O L I T I C A L C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

of the

WORKERS LEAGUE FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Number II

December 1946

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POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE is designed to serve as a supplementary organ to THE BULLETIN of the WORKERS LEAGUE FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY. POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE contains discussion articles on important issues, polemics on our position both pro. and con, and letters of political interest from groups abroad and in the United States.

The immediate aim of the WORKERS LEAGUE FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY is to arm the revolutionary workers with an understanding of the pseudo-revolutionary organizations now controlling the proletarian vanguard and to organize these workers into a new party. POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE will endeavor to serve as a vehicle for clarification and discussion toward the solution of this problem.

*
* On Building A Revolutionary *
* Movement In Britain. *
*

Editorial Note:

On May 3, 1946, the Revolutionary Workers Association of Great Britain (affiliated to the Oehlerite International Contact Commission) dissolved and ceased publication of the British supplement of International News. A new unaffiliated organization was formed, the Socialist Workers League, with whom we are corresponding. We print below an open letter inaugurating the new group by J. Thomas, its Secretary, on the aims and purpose of the new organization and a reply by George Arlen.

Dear Comrade

July 1946

Arising from discussions between militant workers active in the transport, building, engineering and other industries, on the problems confronting the working class both in Great Britain and throughout the world, we have reached the conclusion that none of the existing parties in the working class movement serve the interests of the working class. They all- even those claiming to be revolutionary- serve in greater or lesser degree the interests of the capitalist class and objectively stand in the way of the working class in its struggle to conquer state power and establish Socialism.

The Labour Party's home and foreign policy during its first year of office has clearly demonstrated the bankruptcy of social democracy, even if this had not been clear before. The working class is paying dearly for having given its support at the General Election to this reformist party, whose whole history since its inception has been one betrayal after another of the class whose interests it claims to represent.

The Independent Labour Party is laying claim to the title of being the socialist opposition and alternative to the Labour Party. This pretence will hoodwink no one who has carefully examined its policy and organization since it was founded. Its "centrist" role, its position "betwixt and between" social democracy on the one hand and revolutionary marxism on the other, offers no alternative whatsoever to the militant workers looking for a "revolutionary" lead.

Nor does the policy of such so-called "revolutionary" parties as the Communist Party (Stalinists) and Revolutionary Communist Party (Trotskyists) provide us with an alternative. The C.P.'s policy is decided for it by the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow. Its unprincipled fluctuations from left to right and from right to left, confirm that it plays no independent revolutionary role and that it serves neither the interests of the working class in this nor any other country. The R.C.P. follows the equally false line of Trotsky- critical support for the Labour Party- the policy of the "lesser of two evils"- and it has as its perspective its own liquidation sooner or later into the ranks of the reformist Labour Party.

Many workers, disgusted with the anti-strike policy of the Labour Government and its supporters, its defence of the interests of British Imperialism in the colonial countries and on the continent of Europe, hope nevertheless that between now and the outbreak of the third "atomic" world war to reform these parties from within. These tactics have been tried time and time again and they have demonstrably failed.

The only alternative is the building of a new, independent, marxian, revolutionary party. The Socialist Workers League is a propaganda organization for the building of that party. As a militant, we invite you to send for a copy of our "Manifesto" (price 7d. post free) which we believe briefly outlines a principled position on the major problems confronting us. We ask you to study it closely. If you are in agreement with it, your duty is clear. If you are not, then we ask you to let us have your criticisms. Send for your copy now to the Literature Secretary, whose address is given below.

Yours fraternally,
J. Thomas
Secretary
Socialist Workers League.

Editorial Note:

Our reply to the above letter appears on the following page.

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J. Thomas
Sec'y. Socialist Workers League

Sept. 26, 1946

Dear Thomas,

We gather from your open letter of July 1946 that a number of workers, including yourself, after some discussion, "reached the conclusion that none of the existing parties in the working class movement serve the interests of the working class," and that "the only alternative is the building of a new, independent, Marxian revolutionary party."

We arrived at this conclusion many years ago. At the same time we discovered that our group was only one of many which reached this conclusion. We were confronted with the fact that there was a great variety of groups with many disagreements, but with one common point of agreement- that the existing parties were anti-working class.

From the fact that every group had a different program, despite agreement on that one point, it became obvious that mere rejection of the existing parties, though important as the first step in the correct direction, does not constitute Marxism. Something more was needed.

It would seem that it was sufficient for our group to proclaim the need of Socialism to place itself on Marxist grounds. But all the other groups, and the big anti-working class parties too, professed to strive for Socialism. Evidently that was not yet the line of demarcation separating Marxism from opportunism.

Our discussions brought us to the realization that the first requirement for building a new revolutionary party was to give a correct evaluation of all the basic political forces operating within the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Without this evaluation the workers would have no guide to distinguish between opportunism and Marxism. It is precisely because the workers mistake opportunism for Marxism that the international working class remains bound to reaction. If the revolutionary workers did not mistakenly identify Stalinism with the force which overthrew the Russian bourgeoisie they would never fall into the Stalinist trap. And if the revolutionary anti-Stalinist workers did not believe the Trotsky leaders to be a genuine opposition to Stalinism than the Cannons and Hastons could never retain their hold and influence.

Realizing that scientific differentiation between Marxism and opportunism to be the central task facing the revolutionary workers today we began to conduct an investigation of the cause and character of the degeneration of the Bolshevik leadership and made an attempt to uncover the origin, role and function of the Stalin and Trotsky currents and the various other tendencies. The facts we have unearthed gave us a Marxist foundation for knowing who the internal enemies of the proletariat are, and how they function.

But that too was not enough. A Marxist must understand not only the nature of the political forces which mislead and betray the masses but also the present historical period in which the proletariat finds itself. He must grasp the policy of imperialism and Stalinism, otherwise he won't be able to furnish guidance in the class struggle, and, despite all the correct information about the past, will only becloud the minds of the workers on questions which have a direct bearing upon the immediate course to pursue.

Now, in your letter we read that you have published a "Manifesto" and that you welcome criticism. This is very commendable. Unfortunately we have not yet come into possession of your Manifesto, but we have received the first issue of your publication, Workers News, accompanied with a letter from Tom Cowan, the distributor. We shall take advantage of your open and friendly attitude and make a few critical remarks regarding some ideas contained in his letter, in yours, as well as in the Workers News.

Cowan, in his accompanying letter of Aug. 25, 1946 says that the Trotskyite line is centrism:

" I have read a lot of your publications including " The Trotsky School of Falsification " Parts I and 2, which are to my mind very good expositions of Trotsky's Centrist tendency line."

We think that this evaluation is politically erroneous and can only confuse the workers with regard to the basic nature of the Trotsky movement. Centrism is definitely the left wing of Social Democracy, and is a product of the degeneration of the Second International. The Centrists are national groups tied to the social democracy as a whole and through that connection to the respective bourgeois-democratic countries. The centrist line is always hinged to the policy of imperialism.

The post-Lenin Trotsky movement stems from an altogether different ground than Centrism. Trotsky was a loyal Stalinist bureaucrat prior, and during the 12th Congress of the Bolshevik Party in April 1923 where he helped Stalin to conceal Lenin's anti-Stalin documents and stood politically and organizationally united with Stalin. Trotsky's "oppositionism" was born in the Fall of 1923 not because of a conflict with bureaucratism but as a result of an intrigue against him cooked up by Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev. He never went beyond some gestures of defense behind the thick walls of Stalin's Central Committee. Despite the relentless drive against him, Trotsky pursued a policy of shielding Stalin from exposure (disavowal of Lenin's Testament), of giving Stalin at first uncritical (1924-26) and eventually "critical" backing. This line of "critical" support Trotsky pursued to the last period of his life. (The 1940 proposal to support Browder.)

The Trotsky movement is a Stalinist branch which was separated from the parent trunk through compulsion, and not on Trotsky's part! Politically it is riveted to the Soviet bureaucracy and the proletarian state on which the entire Stalinist movement thrives.

The Trotsky tendency is the traditional target and scape-goat of the Soviet bureaucracy and the chief prop of that bureaucracy because Trotsky and his lieutenants snare the subjectively anti-Stalinist workers and retain them within the Stalinist orbit. This function Trotsky has been performing since he was secretly framed-up by his erstwhile ally, Stalin, in 1923.

The Trotsky sections are not national groups. They comprise an international body pivoting itself on the Stalin-ruled Workers State. Just as the Comintern during the extreme Rightist swing appeared to an uninformed eye as an organization similar to the Second International, an erroneous impression accentuated by the Stalin and Social Democratic talk about "organic unity", so the Trotsky branch of Stalinism during its French Turn days appeared to be left social democratic. In historic origin and political function the Trotsky tendency and centrism are as far apart as glass and ice although at times in superficial aspects Trotskyism and Centrism may seem quite alike.

Unless the workers know the precise function of the Trotsky movement they won't be able to combat it. The Trotsky leaders will continue protecting the Stalinist bureaucracy against destruction unless they are counter-acted by Marxist exposure.

Our investigation has led us to the conclusion that the degenerated Bolshevik leadership, including Trotsky, having usurped power in the Workers State and captured the vanguard of the international proletariat, has been acting as the chief betrayer of the toilers of all countries. We hope that we find this thesis in your Manifesto.

*** *** *** *** *** ***

In your publication Workers News we read the following announcement:

"This is the first number of Workers News- a monthly news-sheet devoted to short political comments on the most important news items of the previous month. These comments have but one purpose- to break through the mass of lies, half-truths and distortions which pour out from the capitalist controlled press- and at the same time to present a positive line of action for the working class." (Vol. 1 No. 1)

You speak here about breaking through the lies of the bourgeois press. This is good, necessary and elementary. But it is not sufficient to solve the basic tasks confronting the working class today. Today a revolutionist must not only expose the capitalist press but the frauds pouring from the Stalin and Trotsky press. Indeed, on many points the Stalin and Trotsky leaders show up many of the lies and distortions appearing in the capitalist press. This is their bread and butter and misleads the workers into believing them to be serious antagonists to capitalist slavery. The revolutionary Marxist must not confine himself to the repetition

of the ABC's of Marxism which ^{you} can find in the Trotsky press on many points. (surplus value, etc.) The essential point must be a differentiation from the opportunists and that can only be done through an uncompromising exposure of the opportunist press. How can you present a positive line of action to the proletariat if you do not combat the treacherous deceptions of the most formidable, conscious enemy within the ranks of the working class.

We think that our tendency, represented by The Bulletin of the Workers League for a Revolutionary Party, is the only one which has taken the Marxist road. Our evaluation of the Stalin and Trotsky movements is being inexorably confirmed at each turn of history. Ours is the only tendency which has uncovered the cold fact that Trotsky is a Stalinist bureaucrat and not only did not fight Stalin but actually collaborated with him. The fundamentally Stalinist nature and ingrained dishonesty of the left Trotskyites has been fully established in The Bulletin.

In closing we shall take up the question of exposure of the lies of the capitalist press which you say is your purpose. This leads to the question of the current international situation. In this connection our group has conducted an internal discussion for some time. The Bulletin of June-July 1946 which we sent to you presented the two main lines of thought in our group. The leading ideas of the "Thesis on the International Situation" presented in that issue and the article "The Truth Behind the European 'Peace' Crisis" in the Sept.-Oct. 1946 issue has been accepted by a majority of our comrades. We would like to submit these views in relation to the current capitalist lies which the Workers News has not as yet discussed.

One of the big est capitalist lies today is that Stalin wrung concessions from Churchill and Roosevelt at Teheran and Yalta and compelled them to agree to his entry into the Far Eastern and other territories. The lie is transparent because during Teheran in Dec. 1943 the Nazi army was deep inside Russia and Stalin had his army concentrated against the Nazi forces and was in no military position to bring pressure upon the two mighty capitalist powers, Britain and America. And it was precisely when the British and American empires attained the height of their naval, military, air and war production strength, during Yalta in Feb. 1945, that they "secured" a promise from Stalin that he enter the Far Eastern situation. In return they agreed to hand over to him, North Korea, Manchuria, Sakhalin, and most fantastic of all, give him the Kuriles Islands which Stalin could never have taken otherwise because he virtually has no navy in general and practically nothing in the Pacific. If you examine the whole matter more closely you will find that the imperialists conducted a deliberate policy of agreeing to Stalin's entry into the Balkans (except Greece), into Manchuria, Korea, Sakhalin and the Kuriles. Nobody forced them nor could have forced them to do that - except the necessity

to prepare a charge of aggression against Stalin and on that basis to build up a war atmosphere. Stalin on his part, having accepted all those "gifts" from the imperialists is lying that he actually secured them by force of arms.

The imperialists lie about Stalin pushing into the Balkans, Manchuria, Korea, Sakhalin and the Kuriles supposedly against their will is refuted by another fact. Today, as almost everybody can see, the American and British imperialists follow a course of "get tough with Russia." But in the present period, contrary to the days of Teheran and Yalta, Stalin's hands are free, he has auxiliary forces composed of native armies in Yugoslavia and other puppets. The imperialists, on the other hand, have greatly reduced their active military, naval and air forces in Europe, and even at home. The absurdity of the idea that in 1943-45 when Stalin's whole war machine was locked in battle with the war machine of the Nazis, he wrung Manchuria and other territories from the imperialists is quite obvious.

The masses are fed with capitalist lies which are not exposed in your magazine. On the contrary, it carries an article on the present situation entitled "Second Versailles." This title and the contents of the article throw the reader's mind completely off the correct track. He will imagine that the "victors" are dividing the "booty." In reality the Paris "peace" show is a phase in the whole imperialist scheme and represents the reversal of "appeasement" which formed the basis for the policy of building up a war psychology against the Soviet Union. The imperialists are meeting many difficulties in creating an anti-Russian war psychology. But if after Stalingrad they had adopted a policy of confining Stalin within his old borders, instead of agreeing and even inviting him into various territories, they would have had no case against Russia at all. Stalin's prestige among the masses as the victor over the Nazis would have been unshakable, and the imperialists on the basis of Stalin's tyranny over the Russian masses could not have aroused even the most backward layers of the workers for a crusade into the Soviet Union.

Objectively, your magazine is aiding both Stalin and the imperialists to conceal the true state of affairs. As matters stand, the Stalinist bureaucrats make their victims believe that Stalin logically and rightfully penetrated the various territories of Asia and Europe by way of the military struggle against the Nazis and the Japanese imperialists. On the other side, the masses who are tied to imperialism are told the opposite story, that Stalin caught Churchill and Roosevelt in a difficult moment and squeezed concessions out of them, and, like Hitler, entered upon the road of aggression and seizure of territories. The only possibility to prevent a terrible catastrophe is for the Marxists to explain to the workers the true situation which will really expose both the capitalist and Stalinist lies. Only such an exposure can wrest the masses from Stalin and the imperialists. Otherwise the division of the world toilers between Stalin and the imperialist camps will continue and the disastrous consequences will follow.

So this is the criticism we offer with regard to your line as we see it thus far. We should like to hear your reaction to our criticism. A discussion on the question of the nature of the different political forces and of the present situation will be of great value. Such an interchange of ideas often leads to the unearthing of more facts and tends to clarify the respective positions.

George Marlen,
for The Bulletin of the W.L.R.P.

Editorial Note:

We print below extracts of a letter by a member of the British Socialist Workers League giving some comments on our material and some observations on the dissolution of the R.W.A.

Dear Comrades,

May 19, 1946

Thank you very much for the literature which I received some weeks ago and have now had time to digest. I think that the "Bulletin" contains the only correct line in the world today.

When I broke with the C.P. (on the dissolving of the Comintern) I turned to the R.C.P. (Trotskyists) but left them because I disagreed with the slogan "Labour to Power." At about this time the Leninist League of Gt. Britain (consisting of one person-...) "fused" with the Communist Workers Group (consisting of two people-...) The new fused organization became the British section of the I.C.C. (the R.W.A.) Two or three other people joined (incl. myself) & formed an active group of some half dozen or so comrades.

The I.C.C. sent a representative who by bureaucratic methods and lack of understanding of the British workers movement split the group. Thomas and Co. are forming a new group based on advanced militant workers in the London Docks to be known as the Socialist Workers League. ...

With very best wishes and comradely greetings to the Leninist League, U.S.A. I assure you of my close sympathy and look forward to even closer co-operation in the future.

Yours fraternally,
Arthur Priest.

We print below a Resolution introduced in the Socialist Workers League by Arthur Priest on Sept. 18, 1946.

That this group (not being affiliated to any international organization and not bound by such obligations) should maintain fraternal contact with the Workers League for a Revolutionary Party of the U.S.A. (Marlenites.)

That this contact should be established with a view to determining within the S.W.L. whether we accept Marlen's or Oehler's line on Trotsky.

*
* FROM A CRITIC IN FRANCE. *
*

Editorial Note:

The following letter evaluating some of our political positions was written by a member of the French fraction of the "Left Communist International." (Bordiguiste) The Bordiga international fraction publishes a paper called L'Etincelle in France, L'Internationaliste in Belgium, and La Battaglia Comunista in Italian.

Dear Comrade,

June 6, 1946

I excuse myself for not having answered sooner your letter of February. At the end of January I recommenced my work... which has obliged me to furnish a great effort of readaptation, and that at the moment where I began to renew militant activity. Result: during all the rest of the winter I have had to preserve my energies, for my health bothers me yet from my 3 1/2 years of detention in prison and concentration camp. Now, that is better, and I can assure with more regularity the international correspondence with which my organization has charged me.

I hope that you have received our newspaper "L'Etincelle" and that of our Belgian comrades "L'Internationaliste" Do you receive also "La Battaglia Comunista" of Milan? If these papers do not reach you inform me, and I will do what is necessary for you to receive them.

As for me, I have received the whole collection of your Bulletin since 1938, and I have begun to read some copies.

Your long letter of the 17th of February details your positions and permits one to measure the divergences that we have with you. For us, Russia is not a Workers State, the proletarian revolution of 1917 having been followed by a counter revolutionary process made possible by the check of the revolutionary wave which unfurled over Europe and Asia after the war of 1914-18. This counter revolutionary process ended in making Russia an imperialist state. The Soviet bureaucracy, as the bourgeoisie of all the other imperialist states, intervenes in the international class struggle as a factor in preserving the regime. In the battle between imperialisms, she acts as the bourgeoisie of other states, that is to say, allies herself sometimes with such a group of countries, sometimes with some other, without taking count evidently of the form of government of these states. (Democracy, dictatorship, fascist) It is necessary to add that in the international class struggle, the Russian bureaucracy utilizes the national communist parties, at times for its Russian imperialist interests and for a counter revolutionary action.

I only want to state the divergence with you on this point. In our papers and documents you will find some articles on this

question, already prior to the war and in "L'Internationale", organ of L'Union Communiste, we had taken a position very clearly.

It is evident that your estimation of the proletarian character of the Russian state leads you to consider the Second World War as a masquerade. The events of the war will suffice alone to demonstrate that your idea is erroneous. The imperialists fought among themselves for the same reasons as in 1914-18, and if a difference is to be made, it is precisely in an opposite sense to that which you affirm; the struggle became more bitter, more total, as it developed in the condition of a general crisis of the regime. This time the beaten rival will be crushed, erased in the inter-imperialist competition. However, as I wrote it in my letter of Dec. 1945, in this war as during the preceding one, the class solidarity between the bourgeois directors of the states manifested itself when the proletariat showed some tendencies to budge. In the Fractions of the GCI (Bordiguist groups-Ed.) before the war, some comrades had issued some hypotheses on a kind of organization of "localized wars" by "international capitalism." Other small groups or militants had developed some analogous ideas, considering the war as a systematic enterprise of extermination of the proletariat. But there does not exist an "international capitalism," there exists some rival imperialists linked by a class solidarity which comes only into play when the proletariat raises its head in some corner of the world. It is not at all the same thing. In the historical period in which we live, that of wars and revolutions as was so well said by Lenin, the two fundamental antagonisms of the regime interlace: class antagonism and inter-imperialist competition. When the first dominates, the other is erased and reciprocally, with this rule it is always the antagonism between the proletariat and capitalism which is decisive for from its solution depends most immediately the type of regime.

In that which concerns our position on Trotskyism, I recall to you that the Bordiguist tendency very early combatted Trotsky, because it considered him as one of the principals responsible for the bureaucratic degeneration. We have, on this subject, read with much interest the important studies that you have made, notably on the preparation for the 12th Congress of the P.C.R. You apply some very interesting summaries. I have made known to my comrades that which has appeared to me the most useful in your documents against Trotskyism.

The Trotskyite party has presented some candidates for the election to the new Constituent Assembly. In the sector of Paris where they have already presented some candidates in October 1945, they have lost some votes. But having presented some lists in the new sectors they have obtained 45,000 votes, being 1.5% of the expressed suffrage in these sectors. This meager result is explained by the fact that as a consequence of the referendum of the last month, the workers have taken fear before the "victory of the reaction", and have blocked their votes on the lists of the national Communist Party. This despite a discontent copiously baited.

You are entirely right when you affirm that the Trotskyite tendency has been the principal obstacle for the creation of the true revolutionary parties. It is a reality which we have experienced in France for fifteen years. ...

We have been very occupied these last months by a discussion with the small group, "Contre le courant", a discussion as a consequence of which the comrades of this group have adhered to our G.C.I. It is a small stage towards the reinforcement of the vanguard. We are going to be able to have our newspaper appear more regularly and to enlarge our propaganda.

I do not think it necessary to speak to you at length on the elections of last Sunday. They have not modified the fundamental factors of the political situation in France. The following issue of our newspaper will contain an article on this question....

Cordially yours
Gaston D-----
for the G.C.I.

Translated by M. Lane.

Editorial Note:

Our reply to this letter is printed on the following page.

H A V E Y O U R E A D T H E S E P A M P H L E T S ?

Pages from Trotsky's Political History
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Dear Comrade D.,

Sept. 15, 1946

...Now for some of the main criticisms of your letter of June 9, 1946.

Briefly you seem to feel that our conception of the class character of the Soviet Union led us to the conception of a sham war. In your opinion the relations among the imperialists were of the same character as that which led to the World War of 1914-18, the only difference, if any, being that the war of 1939-45 was even more total than the World War of 1914-18. Your view is that the solidarity of the world bourgeoisie is evident only when the proletariat shows signs of upsurge; otherwise it is the economic antagonism of the imperialists which come to the fore and which dominated the scene from 1939-45.

We did not evaluate the character of the war by any a priori conceptions. As a matter of fact, we never imagined, predicted or conceived of anything like the sham war prior to 1939 even in our wildest nightmares. When Germany declared war on Poland, for example, and tore through that country we looked at that war as real. The declaration of war by England and France in Sept. 1939 for the moment gave rise to the idea that the 1914 situation might be repeated. It was after the striking events showing the conduct of the war between England, France on one hand and Germany on the other that gave solid basis in fact to the idea that the war between them was not of the character of the 1914 at all. We will recapitulate some of these facts which led to our conclusion. However, there is also this point to bear in mind. There are other fundamental political tendencies which hold to the idea that Russia is some form of Workers State. From each of their political angles Stalinism, Trotskyism and all the varieties of left-Trotskyism hold to this conception in one form or another. Yet not a single one of those tendencies was led from this conception to the idea of a sham war. Quite the contrary, every group without exception propagated the idea of a new imperialist war as in 1914 and continued to spread this line until the wind-up in August 1945. If the Workers State analysis leads automatically to the conception of a sham war then we would have had a considerable amount of company in the sharing of our analysis. But our views on this question developed in sharp opposition to all other tendencies who hold that Russia is some form of Workers State.

What were the facts which led to our analysis?

The first fact which sharply came to view after the declaration of war was the Anglo-French policy of no aid to Poland. As a matter of fact, the only "aid" which Poland received from the "democratic" imperialists was advice to abandon its border fortifications. (N.Y. Times, Sept. 12, 1939) The explanation to cover the imperialist policy was that geographical obstacles prevented direct military aid to Poland. Presumably, the "democratic" imperialists would develop their war in the West where they faced a portion of the German

Army directly.

The first British troops arrived on the "western front" on Oct. 7, 1939, two weeks after the Nazis announced the completion of the destruction of Poland. Ten days later, the small trench force that had captured the Warmdt Forest without a battle abandoned that sector overnight- also without a battle. In his book "Berlin Diary", the war correspondent W.L. Shirer commented that he was informed that on a hundred miles of the "Western Front" not a shot had been fired for weeks after Chamberlain and Daladier declared their war on Hitler Germany. The correspondent summed up the situation by noting the "Queer kind of war." (p. 234)

The situation dragged on for months, without apparent changes, with no actual fighting at all and shooting kept down to a ridiculous minimum. The soldiers on the Western Front occupied themselves with nothing more strenuous than checker games and mystery novels. During the period of so-called war Nazi military vehicles rolled along in full view of the "enemy" but they were unmolested by any of the French guns:

"German military trucks and trains could be seen rolling by undisturbed under easy range of the French guns." (N.Y. Times, April 24, 1940)

The entire Winter passed with no military action. This situation was later described as "almost peace-time quiet." (N.Y. Times 6/7/40) This continued largely into the Spring of 1940. On Easter, March 24, 1940 Nazi soldiers dropped flowers into the French lines.

Anthony Rhodes in his book Sword of Bone (p. 180) tells of a Scotch major who termed a shelling by the French of a Nazi outpost "a mistake." The French major retorted according to this writer:

" ' And what, may I ask', said my major sarcastically, 'is the purpose of the French artillery if it is not directed towards killing Germans?'

" ' Ah,' said the Scot, 'that is just what you people don't understand when you come down here. You see there's a gentlemen's agreement between the French and the Germans by which they don't shell one another. It has worked very well up to now.' ")

This point about a secret agreement between the Nazis and their "democratic enemies" is mentioned by the same author in a remark of a French captain concerning the situation where the Nazis refrained from shelling a wood filled with French soldiers:

" ' It is mysterious,' he said, 'but after a month here we have come to the conclusion that there must be some sort of secret agreement between Jerry and the French not to molest one another.' " (p. 129)

The Sitzkrieg became a joke even in the capitalist press.

The common appellations of the "war" were "static war", a "second bore war", etc. Most common was the term "phoney war." Of course there was no hint in all of this that there was an intrigue behind the scenes against the toiling masses of the world and that the "war" was just a front concealing this from view. Be that as it may, the astounding fact that there was no war was established on the basis of bedrock reality.

In the spring of 1940 the amazing Sitzkrieg was lifted and then unfolded a series of events which were even more flabbergasting and forever dispelled any idea of a similarity in character with the war of 1914-18.

In April 1940 the Nazi leaders officially broke the Sitzkrieg by racing into Denmark and taking over the country without firing a shot. Then they crossed a wide stretch of water into Norway unhampered by the British Navy whose warships were conspicuous by their absence. (Churchill's speech, N.Y. Times, June 19, 1940) In no time at all the Nazi soldiers took over the major portion of the country meeting a sham resistance organized by the British leaders. A handful of British boys and raw recruits were dumped virtually without equipment in Norway and it was this that was heralded as the "Battle of Norway" :

"Here is the first and only eyewitness report and the opening chapter of the British expeditionary troops' advance in Norway north of Trondheim. It is a bitterly disillusioning and almost unbelievable story. The British force which was supposed to sweep down from Namsos consisted of one battalion of Territorials and one battalion of the King's Own Royal Light Infantry. These totalled fewer than 1,500 men. They were dumped into Norway's deep snows and quagmires of April slush without a single anti-aircraft gun, without one squadron of supporting airplanes, without a single piece of field artillery. Ill-equipped, they were thrown into the snows and mud of 63 degrees north latitude to fight crack German regulars- most of them veterans of the Polish invasion- and to face the most destructive of modern weapons. The great majority of these young Britishers averaged only one year of military service." (Leland Stowe, N.Y. Post, April 25, 1940)

These betrayed raw recruits were left behind to be futilely slaughtered by the Nazi forces. After some fanfare of battles the remnants of this force were withdrawn... and in a most typical fashion. Here is the revealing report from a Swedish News Agency correspondent:

"The people who knew most about the British withdrawal were the Germans. The Norwegian officers were not told until the last minute." (N.Y. Times, May 3, 1940.)

That was the British "defense" of Norway! The British rulers, it must be remembered, possessed enormous material resources, a huge

fleet commanding the waters to Norway, and an army numbering nearly two million men, equipped with the modern weapons of war built up through decades since 1918. In addition there was the French army, of which nothing was heard in this "defense" of Norway. The French rulers commanded also a gigantic fleet, large air forces and a much bigger land force.

The same pattern continued. In May-June 1940 the Nazis began to pour through the Low countries. Again a Nazi fleet of troop transports appeared, this time off the Dutch coast, and again they moved unopposed by the gigantic British Navy. (N.Y.Post, May 10, 1940) In Holland itself only a pretense of aid was forthcoming from the British imperialists, consisting of 700 troops of whom 300 were engineers and a total of three planes. (N.Y. Post, May 23, 1940) General Winkelman, the commander of the Dutch Army bluntly stated: "We were left to ourselves." In Belgium it was the same story with the world witnessing the spectacle of key bridges left intact for the German troops to march at a parade pace. And we now come to the most unbelievable feature in the sham war manipulations- the Nazi occupation of France. Let us recall that in 1914 there was a titanic struggle with the Kaiser's army who reached the Marne at the beginning of Sept. 1914. The French imperialists of that day hurled in every possible man and gun, put up a ferocious fight and drove back their foes leaving a battlefield drenched with the blood of a fantastic number of soldiers. Who can ever forget the momentous battle of Verdun in 1915 where the respective armies battled toe to toe contesting every inch in a horrible slaughter for many months. Was there even in a hint in all history that the 1914 war was but a sham? There could not even exist a vague hint along these lines because the facts of the Battle of France in the World War of 1914-18 have been irrefutably established by reality. But in the so-called "Second World War" there is a remarkable difference. Only a few weeks after the so-called Battle of France in 1940 a most respectable organ of the American bankers and capitalists was able to make this statement without contradiction:

"It now seems quite clear that there never was a Battle of France, a battle for Paris, or whatever it was called in the days before the country's collapse." (N.Y. Herald Tribune, July 23, 1940 my emphasis- A.B.)

What were the facts that gave rise to this astonishing statement? First of all the date of the Nazi invasion, May 10, was well known and whispered around Paris for at least ten days before. (N.Y. Post, May 10, 1940) The preparation of the French rulers consisted in demobilizing two war classes. As the Nazis began their unhampered race through France one got the impression that the French Army was totally without weapons. What happened to the French 75's, famous for years for both quality and quantity? Where were the tanks, of which France was a leading producer? Where were the French planes which Air Minister Cot later admitted numbered some 5000 in May 1940? All were mysteriously absent from the scene. Key bridges were

conveniently left intact and the ludicrous picture of unopposed occupations of such fortresses as Metz, Sedan, Verdun and others was presented to the world masses. Will history ever record a more absurd picture than the 60,000 Nazi motorcycle cops who "captured" France and chased a million Anglo-French soldiers clear to the channel? (N.Y. Times, May 22, 1940) Quite unlike the Norway situation, the British force this time brought to France the best equipment of the British Army. Only it was never used by the British Army and left at Dunkerque for the Nazis to pick up. The New York World Telegram estimated that at Dunkerque the Nazi forces gathered in enough equipment to supply 40 divisions.

What was behind the whole fantastic affair? Why was it necessary to install the Nazi gendarme to terrorize the French masses? In June 1941, after the Nazi occupation of the Balkans, the real purpose of the imperialist machination emerged in full view. This was the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. The Nazi army represented the spearhead for the second imperialist intervention against the form of socialized economy existing in Russia. To facilitate this intervention, almost all Europe had to be geared to the Nazi regime and the rear protected by the terror in France. The war in the Soviet Union was quite real, in fact it was the bloodiest war in history. The sham war among the imperialists was a cover to their fundamental unity behind the Nazis in the real war against the Soviet Union.

The defeat of the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union scrambled the plans of the imperialists and forced the liquidation of the sham war among themselves. The territories temporarily handed over to the Nazis in Europe and Africa and to the Japanese in the Far East were now handed back still under the cover of the sham war. We have published voluminous documentary material on the various phases of the sham war from the beginning to end and for your convenience we attach a list of Bulletin articles on the subject.

In considering our material, there are some points to bear in mind. If our views were so completely fantastic and so out of line with reality on the question of the "Second World War" it would have been a simple matter to refute our material and disprove our conclusions.

Another amazing feature to bear in mind in evaluating the material is the sharp distinction with the published facts on the war of 1914-18. In the latter there is an absolute identity between the information carried in official communiques and the stories of eye-witness participants and correspondents. The real war which was officially the basis of the government communiques found an echo in the colorful stories of the war correspondents. Yet in the "Second world War" we have published most of our material from correspondents and eye-witness participants whose reports are in absolute contradiction to the official imperialist story. If the "Second World War" were of the same character as the war of 1914-18

there wouldn't have been even a scrap of evidence substantiating our views.

War is a continuation of politics by other means. The dominant feature in the period prior to 1914-18 was the development of international imperialist antagonisms which finally exploded in a test of arms. But in 1917 a new factor appeared; the first successful proletarian overthrow of the bourgeoisie in history which tore a huge and important chunk of territory out of the hands of imperialism. People who mechanically repeat the Lenin analysis of 1914 forget that there is an entirely new feature in the world today which completely altered the class relationships in capitalist society. The October Revolution loosened the props beneath the entire capitalist system and posed a threat to the continued existence of imperialism as a whole. The failure of the first imperialist intervention did not erase the antagonism between the form of economy of the capitalist world and the economic foundation of the Soviet Union but posed it all the more sharply. Observe closely the pattern of world imperialist politics as it developed in this new historical period which features the fundamental instability and permanent crisis of capitalist society. Quite in contrast to the pre-1914 period the Allies of 1914 adopted the policy of pumping millions into Germany to bolster up this weak link in the capitalist chain. The inter-imperialist cleavage of "Allied Powers" and "Central Powers", the two contending camps in 1914-18 was now eliminated while the British, French, and American bankers and industrialists introduced the policy of bolstering the power and rule of their former German rivals. This imperialist unity to stabilize German capitalism was the second specific manifestation of the new line of the rulers in the imperialist world. The economic antagonisms among the various imperialist powers were not eradicated; indeed, they can not be eliminated as long as capitalism exists. But the fundamental crisis in capitalist society in this historical period forced the subordination of these antagonisms to destroy the threat to their system as a whole. The antagonism between the form of economy in the capitalist world and that in the Soviet Union was not determined by the political policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy which was counter-revolutionary. It is the contradiction in the form of economy which is always decisive and that is what history teaches us in the struggle of the capitalist form of economy against feudalism and in the Civil War in the United States between the capitalist North and the slave-holding south.

The accession of the Nazi regime to power in Germany in 1933 gave the imperialist rulers their first real battering ram in a strategical geographical position against the walls of the Stalin-ruled Workers State. The political line pursued by the leading imperialist powers toward the Nazi regime was the third concrete example of the new policy of imperialism. Under the smokescreen of "appeasement" the imperialists began turning over territories to the new Fascist policemen who crushed the German workers as a preliminary to the working out of the second intervention. The Rhineland was remilitarized and then Austria and Czechoslovakia

were turned over by the imperialist rulers to the expanding Nazi military power. But the imperialist policy toward the Nazis aroused resentment among the world masses. A more effective form of demagoguery was necessary to put over the new policy and the solution was found in the cover of war. Those who hold to the analysis of the "Second World War" would have us believe, as the imperialist propagandists asserted, that in Sept. 1939 the democratic rulers completely reversed their political policy and declared war. Quite the contrary—^{the} type of "war" launched in 1939 was only a continuation of the political line which the imperialists had been following before and which was most vividly brought to view at Munich in 1938.

The declaration of "war" in Sept. 1939 temporarily concealed the organic continuation of the imperialist line toward Nazi Germany. But even this proved to be insufficient to cloak the collaboration which was involved. The "Sitzkrieg" policy could not be continued indefinitely. If the imperialist rulers continued the "Sitzkrieg" on the Western "Front" even a child would see what was truly taking place. As a cover for their policy, staged battles were organized and all the other paraphernalia of war put into operation. In this connection it is well to recall some features of the Crimean war. In that epoch the Anglo-French imperialists were plotting with the Czar to divide up the Turkish empire, "the sick man of Europe". When a real war broke out between Russia and Turkey, the Anglo-French rulers, unable to pursue their plot openly and directly, formed an "Alliance" with Turkey and pretended to be at war with the Czar. This "war" between the Anglo-French leaders and Russia was a sham as Karl Marx pointed out in his analysis of the Crimean war. Scores of thousands of French, British and Russian soldiers died in the sham Crimean war, and there were staged bloody battles with huge destruction. In the Marxian view this did not alter the fundamental character of that war:

"Despite the million lives and the millions of funds which the war cost, both Marx and Engels regarded it as a pseudo-war as far as France and, in particular, England was concerned."
(Franz Mehring- Karl Marx p. 267)

There have been other sham wars in history. After the French revolution of 1789, during one period the monarchist clique conducted a sham war against the foreign interventionist forces of Austria, Prussia and their allies. There were war speeches by the king, troops sent to the frontiers, battles conducted and soldiers killed. But behind the scenes this French ruling clique had a secret agreement with the foreign "enemy" to open the French gates to the Austrian and Prussian forces who were to enter and crush the revolutionary development. The war began in April 1792, and until the Jacobins seized the power in August of the same year the "war" against ^{the} foreign monarchist coalition was a sham, concealing the secret collaboration of the French king with the monarchs of feudal Europe. In his History of the French Revolution, Kropotkin writes:

"And, moreover, the people, guided by their unfailing instincts, knew perfectly well that the King was conniving with the Germans, and inviting them to march on Paris." (Vol. I p. 270)

The spread of the knowledge of this sham war was one of the features which led to the overthrow of the monarch and the rise of the Jacobins just as a similar knowledge on the part of the proletariat in 1939-45 would have led to the collapse of the inter-imperialists sham war.

The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 began as a real war but was transformed into a sham war after the rising revolutionary tide culminated in the Paris Commune. This too was analyzed by Marx and Engels. We cite all these examples to show that we have not manufactured anything, that in the development of the class struggle in capitalist society the use of the sham war tactic was employed by the exploiters at various intervals in the development of their class rule.

One last point. It may be argued that perhaps the French imperialists did not fight their German "enemy" because they found a common solidarity of interest against an upsurge of the proletariat. But the upsurge of the French workers came not in 1939-40 but in 1936-37. After the defeat of the general strikes due to the betrayal of the opportunist forces leading the French workers the period of ebb began which found its reflection in the continual rightist direction of French political rule. Such an explanation is sometimes used by some of the opportunists today to conceal the entire development of the war and to cover up the imperialist-Stalinist fiction of a "Second World War." The crushing of the French and other workers in Europe under the cloak of the sham war was a general historic necessity which occurred within the context of an entire period of imperialist politics designed to launch a second intervention against the Soviet Union.

The failure of the second intervention makes a third one historically inevitable, but due to the defeat of the Nazis the new intervention must be carried out by the forces of the democratic imperialists. The present phase of imperialist politics is designed to launch precisely such an attack. This is the meaning of the present phase of imperialist politics which is only an integral continuation of the line which gave rise to the events we have analyzed.

On the Workers State. We have published a complete document giving a full exposition of our position which takes up the points you raised on the question. We are sending under separate cover "On the Class Nature of the Russian State" by George Marlen.

Fraternally,
Arthur Burke
Corres. Sec'y.

 * ABSTRACTS OF A DISCUSSION *
 * ON THE PATH TO A NEW PARTY *

Editorial Note:

In the previous issue of POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE we published some material dealing with a group of workers in Detroit who were setting up a new organization. The following document and our answer was the product of a discussion held in Detroit on October 7, 1945. The Detroit group is known as the WORKERS EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY while our organization is referred to as the LENINIST LEAGUE or L.L. On May 8, 1946, the members of the LENINIST LEAGUE changed the name of the organization to the WORKERS LEAGUE FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY and published this resolution in the June-July 1946 issue of THE BULLETIN.

THE PATH TO BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

The Workers Educational Society, Detroit, Michigan

It is well to begin this discussion with a brief history and the basic purpose of the formation of the Workers Educational Society. Not only will this dispel much of the confusion existing among people outside of Detroit on the nature of the grouping, a confusion necessarily forced upon us because we ourselves were groping around but also the very manner in which the WES was established supplies a basis, or formula, if you please, by which members of the Society believe the movement will be built in the future.

The WES was formed for one purpose--to bring together in one group workers who believe in, and act for, the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. The elements who initiated the group had diverse origins. They brought with them from organizations from which they had split different ideas, different traditions and concepts. For this reason, it was impossible and impractical to draw up a complete political program on which all could, or should have to, agree upon before uniting in a single grouping. Nor was this necessary.

On what could we agree? We agreed first on the imperialist nature of the war that was being waged at that time, and of the need to conduct a struggle against it to the best of our forces. However, the termination of the war has shoved this point to the background, at least temporarily. But there were five other cardinal principles on which we also had unanimity, and in the brief course of our development, we have come to regard agreement on these points as being prerequisite for adherence of other workers to the WES. These are:

1. A correct understanding of capitalist economy. This means a knowledge of the origin of surplus value, of the workings of capitalism- in short, basic agreement on the validity of Marxian economics.

2. The need for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Certainly a worker who believes at this late date in history in reforming capitalism through the ballot automatically excludes himself from the WES, and would find better companionship in other organizations.

3. The necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In essence, this means the belief in the need of the workers to rule society, after the overthrow of capitalism, to the exclusion of bourgeois and pro-bourgeois elements. A lack of conformity may exist on the exact nature of this rule-- whether more than one party of workers is to be permitted under it, etc.--or on the use of the term dictatorship of the proletariat in our present day propaganda because of the abuse it suffered at the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy. But these are not decisive questions in relation to the position as a whole, and can be worked out within the framework of the group.

4. A correct knowledge of the nature of the state. Briefly, a worker to belong to the WES must understand the state as an instrument in the hands of the exploiting class, and that the workers cannot take power within the confines of the present state, but must replace this state machinery with their own rule. This question is interwoven with the two previous points, but for clarity's sake demands single emphasis.

5. A belief in a working and workers' democratic centralism. Perhaps no other question has been so upheld in theory and practiced in the breach as this one. It became essential, therefore, to have agreement on the need for seeking a solution to this problem in life itself, and in doing so, drawing from the rich experiences of the past. In other words, the WES did not first adopt a position on democratic centralism-- although several months ago it erroneously** issued the position of the REVOLT group (the Stamm group which ceased functioning several years ago-- Ed.) as its own-- and then demand 100% agreement on it. Instead, a recognition of the importance of the issue, and of an honest effort to practice democratic centralism was deemed enough for unity.

In the WES we are witnessing a new development in the construction of a revolutionary movement in this country. All previous groupings have been formed by splitting away from other organizations and by adopting the program of that parent organization plus or minus the differences that led to the separation.

The WES proposes a return to fundamentals, always a good idea in times of confusion, and when clarity in the ranks of the Marxist

**Note: Erroneously in this sense: Basically the WES holds to the REVOLT position on the right and the duty of Marxists to violate centralism when it is exercised to the danger of excluding, actually or potentially, democracy in the organization. But the document itself should be brought up to date and restated. It was written for a special set of circumstances, and the latter are no longer present.

movement in the US is conspicuous by its absence. For this reason, but also for the important reason that none of the existing political organizations of the working class have a program which can be called revolutionary Marxist, our first step was to disassociate ourselves from all existing tendencies and groupings.

It was important that we strike out alone, and with only the few numbers we possess, not in the hopes of achieving martyrdom through being small- but because as workers we instinctively desire unity among our class- but in the hopes of being able to discuss every question from its fundamentals, and with complete freedom of discussion. This would have been precluded had we bound ourselves to the organizational discipline of any other group, and further, would have been precluded had we established their organizational discipline at this time.

Perhaps the most encouraging thing about the WES was the basic agreement among its organizers on the manner in which they thought the movement could be built. Once agreed on basic principles, what next? Should we, as revolutionary workers active in the class struggle every day by virtue of being workers in the shop, confine ourselves to working out more positions by discussion, until we would become the best and most "positioned" workers in the movement? Or should we take our basic program (the five points) seek to apply them directly to the class struggle itself, leaving "momentous" questions, such as the precise nature of Trotskyism before 1928, and of Stalinism today, to be worked out in life itself?

Unhesitatingly and irrevocably, the WES chose the second course as the only path to the building of a movement. Tremendous developments are in store for the labor movement of this country in the immediate future, as the contradictions of the system have been accentuated, rather than mitigated as a result of the war. American imperialism has emerged from the conflict as the dominating capitalist country of the world, but analysis shows this seeming strength to be a source of considerable weakness.

The members of the WES will be able to act as Marxists in these struggles to come, not by turning their backs on the class struggle because they have not been able to agree on every question under the sun, but by actually participating in the struggle itself. We recognize that the phrase "action in the class struggle" is in itself vapid. It must be filled with content. The WES proposes to give it content by application, not by eternal discussion.

The class struggle is not a smooth path, lighted all the way. Mistakes will be made, wrong evaluations of personalities and events are bound to occur. But out of this experience and with the correct theoretical foundation, correct policy will result, just as temper of metal is tested in the fire itself and not on the drafting board.

Again and again, the WES finds itself on this question of the road to building a movement diametrically opposed to the Leninist League. Constantly, the latter shakes the warning finger, "If the

WES does not abandon the line of leaving political questions in abeyance, it will degenerate into opportunism."

We would like to raise two points in reply. First, what does the LL mean by "political questions?" The answer is found copiously in their documents and in "The Bulletin." All talk of a political line and of "political questions" simmers down to (a) the nature of Trotskyism prior to 1928, (b) the characterization of Stalinism and Trotskyism today, and (c) an analysis of Russian society. (Perhaps the League will deny this, so much the better, especially, if they will reflect the denial in their actual work in the class struggle.)

Is clarity, is complete agreement on these three points a prerequisite which must precede action in the class struggle? The WES answers firmly in the negative. In the building of a revolutionary movement, such questions cannot be ignored, but they are not fundamental. A movement organized on such a basis would degenerate into a "study circle" into a League of non-actionist Marxists, the latter a contradiction in terms, to say the least.

The second point deals with opportunism. Certainly every organization contains the possibilities of opportunism. There is no sure-fire guarantee against this. But what better place to reveal this opportunism except in the class struggle itself. As long as an organization contents itself with placing a program down on paper, just so long does it stand a fair chance of retaining its "purity", but once it acts in the struggle, then it is a different matter. Correct policy implies the correctness of the theory behind it. The WES by participating actively in the class struggle has better possibilities of arriving at correct theory, than by abstaining from participation and answering theory by more theory. The solution of philosophy lies in its being merged with the masses, and not in more philosophy apart from the masses.

Another warning finger: "Action in the class struggle will be meaningless until the advanced workers are broken away from their opportunist leaders. This is the struggle against capitalism. By exposing the enemies in the ranks of labor, we are simultaneously struggling against the system." Once more the WES begs to dissent. We recognize the necessity for exposure of opportunists and traitors, but we believe this can be done best, not by issuing wordy polemics, but by illustrating in action a correct line. If we put forth a correct program, then the opportunists must either fight it openly, agree with it in words and sabotage it in practice, or ignore it completely. In any case, they reveal themselves in their true light to the workers.

The workers constantly, and correctly too, want to see your program in action to find out for themselves whether it is or is not better than the program of those you attack. This is an important aspect of the workers' psychology, and to ignore it is to fool ourselves and invite disaster.

In short, we do not abstain from exposing the opportunist elements as part of the war against capitalism, but believe the best place to hit these opportunists is at their weakest link- the class struggle.

It is possible to participate correctly in the working class movement even without exposing the opportunistic tendencies, once the idea of waging the struggle against capitalism is accepted. The present Kelsey-Hayes strike is a case in point. In this situation, the WES intervened to the best of its forces, and was able to attract workers favorably to its propaganda without dragging in Stalinism and Trotskyism because the latter groups were not involved in the situation themselves. If the WES had held the oppositionist line of the LL, we would not have been able to aid the workers in their struggle against their own leaders, the capitalists and their government. We would have been immobilized, even before we started, in the very tasks the Marxists must perform, and still call themselves Marxists.

It is not accidental, therefore, that the WES additionally parts company with the Leninist League on the question of orientation. Once the WES adopts the position that the main emphasis of its activity should be in the class struggle, and not in the "theoretical annihilation" of the opposing tendencies, then its orientation must perforce be towards the masses of workers. In particular, here in Detroit, this means the militant unionist, whose political consciousness must be brought to the point where he is ready to enter a revolutionary group of his class. This does not exclude workers outside of unions by any means, but experience has shown that in general the best elements of the working class are to be found in the unions covering the basic industries.

What about the so-called "advanced worker," the elements of the vanguard on whom the LL advocates concentration? The WES does not intend to ignore these workers, but once again, we believe the most effective way of winning these workers over to our side is by demonstrating in action the correctness of our policy as against that of their organization. Further, the bulk of these advanced workers today are coming directly out of the ranks of the workers. Is not this proof of the assertion made by the WES that it expects to gain its recruits from the same source?

To concentrate on these vanguard organizations would be tail-ending Stalinism and Trotskyism. It would play directly into the hands of the leaders of these two tendencies, because these opportunists will be able to maintain their leadership as long as there does not exist another force to give the workers the correct guidance in their struggles against capitalism. Once the workers begin to follow the proper leadership and program, they will sweep aside these opportunists, and the cries of the latter will fall upon deaf ears. An opposition group by its very character shunts itself off from the independent road to building the revolutionary party, the only way it can be built.

To repeat, the WES is basically a force organized against the capitalist system. It regards workers in other organizations as potential allies in the ultimate struggle, and in the day to day struggle, seeks to unite with them on trade union issues, anti-Fascism, etc. Wherever possible, the WES will point out to these workers the opportunism of their leaders and the treachery of their program.

This line for building the party, and this orientation will be reflected in our press Clarity, which we intend to issue regularly as soon as our forces permit. Clarity will seek in so far as possible to show our connection with the labor movement. It will speak out of the heat of the class struggle itself. The paper must take the day to day struggles of the workers and link them up with the ultimate goal of the overthrow of the capitalist system. It will present a clear line to the workers, a way out of the confusion and opportunism which plagues us on every side today.

What is the perspective of the WES? What does it set itself forth to accomplish in the coming period? First, it intends to continue the work in the class struggle, participating in union work as unionists, and from the outside, as a political force, seek to intervene in situations wherever the Society feels it can utilize them to transform the trade union consciousness of the workers into political consciousness. Next, the WES has the perspective of issuing a regular press, as mentioned above, and finally, never losing sight of the need for theory to summarize our experiences and to serve as a guide for a long range program, the WES will debate and draw up its positions of the various questions which are important to the movement, as it moves along in its development.

On the basis of the five cardinal principles, and using the three objectives listed in the preceding paragraph, it should be possible for revolutionary workers throughout the country, and outside (even inside) of existing organizations to collaborate. Out of this collaboration and joint activity wherever possible, the WES believes a solid front of revolutionists is destined to appear.

The Detroit group cannot build this movement by itself. For one thing, it realizes the limitation of the emphasis on trade union work, but this is inevitable due to the nature of the industry in Detroit, and the location of every one of the comrades in it.

We need allies. If the movement is to be built it will be by the formation of various nuclei of workers throughout the country. The WES is only one of these nuclei. It calls upon all revolutionary workers agreeing on the five basic points, and on the path to building the movement set forth in this document, to collaborate with it to the end that sooner or later a conference of all those elements can be called. This conference, when it is held, will not be a coming together of people on formal agreement, but confirmation of what has already transpired.

THE PATH TO BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

Report for the Leninist League, U.S.A. (J.C. Hunter)

1. We are faced here with two concepts of how to form a new revolutionary group as the nucleus of a new revolutionary party. One concept is that of the Workers Educational Society and the other, that of the Leninist League, U.S.A.

2. The comrades of the W.E.S. broke with the Revolutionary Workers League (Oehlerites) on some organizational question. They have never given the workers a political accounting of that break, a political evaluation of their former organization, and from all appearances they neither have the intention of doing so nor see any necessity for it. It is easy enough to say as the comrades of the W.E.S. do that " I am through with the R.W.L." The workers, however, are entitled to know whether there is a principled political basis to that split. Such a basis can consist only in fundamental programmatic differences. It is the duty of the comrades of the W.E.S. to formulate such differences, otherwise in the very act of the split from the R.W.L. they are not on Marxist grounds.

3. The methodology of the W.E.S. group in its general formulation of its position is quite in keeping with the manner of its split with the R.W.L. The founding members of the W.E.S. have adopted the course of holding important questions of political principle in abeyance for the reason that a hard and fast agreement might alienate some possible contacts and adherents. The concern of the founders of the W.E.S. seems to be first with gathering members and only later with formulating principles. In its statement called THE OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKERS EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY it excuses members or new adherents from the immediate acceptance of " a full Marxian program." It must be kept in mind that the W.E.S. does not consider itself a political party, but only a group, a nucleus, in a word the cadres of a new party. However, according to the W.E.S., even the cadres do not have to accept a full Marxian program.

4. The W.E.S., therefore, stands before the working class as a group which asks them for a blank check which it promises to fill in in the future with Marxian principles. Workers would have to be very naive indeed to ally themselves with any one who asks them for a political blank check. Any one who is not obligated to accept a full Marxian program is free to adopt opportunist politics. Between a full Marxian program and opportunist politics there is no middle ground. It is an "either-or" proposition.

5. The basis on which the W.E.S. has been established is in itself, objectively speaking, a non-Marxist one. It is concerned entirely too much with numbers and leaves that "little" matter of a full Marxian program hanging by the weakest of all threads, a promise for the future. Such a political basis will be found

very attractive by all sorts of opportunists, like T. Stamm, for example, who are scouting around for a new "home." Such people will be only too glad to "cash in" on the formation of a new group, especially if it has some trade union connections, provided that Marxian principles can be conveniently left to be settled "in the future." The comrades of the W.E.S. may have the best intentions in the world to keep such wiseacres out, but a wrong political basis is more powerful than the best of intentions.

6. While the comrades of the W.E.S. have far to go before they reach the point of formulating a Marxian foundation for their group, they make some very enormous claims. For example, in their document THE OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKERS EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY, they state that they most definitely do not want Stalinism and that they do not intend to work for something they do not want. Nevertheless, the W.E.S. has not even begun a scientific analysis of the basis, origin, nature and growth of Stalinism. Why should workers believe that such a group is capable of combatting Stalinism? Stalinism, or any other form of reaction cannot be fought without some preliminary scientific spadework. A blind fight against any form of reaction is no fight at all; a blind fighter is not a fighter, but a victim of reaction. Without scientific, Marxian knowledge, the best intentions do not mean a thing.

7. The attitude of the W.E.S. toward a very basic problem faced in practical, concrete trade union work is an exact reflection of the non-Marxian foundation on which it stands. The members of the W.E.S. (with one expressed disagreement) find it quite correct to support a known Trotskyite swindler for the position of Chairman of a Progressive Caucus in a certain trade union. The excuse given for this opportunist line is one of the most fantastic on record, namely, that as a rank-and-filer, this Trotskyite bureaucrat would monopolize the floor, whereas as Chairman he will have to be democratic. Supporting him for Chairman is supposed to be a way of gagging him! Is that how Marxism "gags" opportunists? Most certainly not! Marxism "gags" opportunists by politically exposing them so that the majority of the workers will break with them and oust them from their ranks. Marxism does not engage in such a naive "tactic" as that of the W.E.S. Observe that this Trotsky bureaucrat is not at all afraid of being "gagged" by being made Chairman of the Caucus. He grabs at that post as a stepping stone to becoming President of the Local. Another excuse given for not starting a principled political fight against the Trotskyite bureaucrat is this, which is quoted verbatim from a leading member of the W.E.S.: "Well, if you want to throw out all the phoneyes, you won't have any caucuses at all." This is an outright opportunist position which amounts to holding the line of hanging on to a Caucus in a union simply for the sake of having a Caucus to talk about. The Marxist policy is: Break with and expose the opportunists. The W.E.S. policy

appears to be "Capitulate to the opportunists, or where are you?" Trade union work does not exist in a vacuum. It is a derivative of political lines. The confused work of the W.E.S. in the trade union sphere is an accurate measure of its political confusion.

8. When the Leninist League, U.S.A., was formed it took exactly the opposite line from that of the W.E.S. The first thing the Leninist League did was to give a thorough political accounting of the reasons for its break with its former allegiances. Marlen published a whole book which was a big step in the direction of analyzing the nature, origin, growth and methods of the Stalinist System, including its various wings, the Trotskyites and Left-Trotskyites. In making that analysis, fundamental Marxian principles had to be hammered out. Indeed, the first and only concern of the Leninist League in coming into existence was to re-establish the Marxist System of politics. We placed the task of establishing principles above any concern with numbers. Our line was first and foremost to establish the correct policies and to win adherents only on that basis. We completely repudiated any such concept as that of our members not being obliged to hold to a full Marxian program. We did not ask the workers to give us a blank check. We said, Here is where we stand. On this basis we initiated a struggle to oust the opportunist forces from the proletarian vanguard and thus to reconstitute the vanguard on a Marxist line.

9. The Leninist League stands on the Marxist principle that the proletarian vanguard is the key to the whole working class and that unless the proletarian vanguard is led by Marxists, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie is impossible. The proletarian vanguard for more than two decades has been in the grip of Stalinism, the most powerful and deadly opportunist force ever known. It is not an accident that the Leninist League is the first and only group to create a scientific analysis of the origin, nature, methods and growth of Stalinism. Without such an analysis, the proletarian vanguard can never be rescued from the grip of Stalinism and hence can never be set on a Marxist line. The Leninist League is the only organization which has produced the necessary scientific Marxist knowledge for the present-day struggle to reconstitute the proletarian vanguard on a revolutionary foundation for the overthrow of capitalism.

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 * / *
 * A NEW SPLIT IN THE R.W.L. (OEHLERITES) *
 * *

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO THE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE R.W.L.

From 1928 to 1932 the International Trotsky movement stood on the position that the Stalinist Comintern was basically a revolutionary body. The consciously counter-revolutionary line of the Stalin leadership was labelled by Trotsky as "false policies" which he promised could be "corrected." When the Stalin gang turned over the German workers to Hitler, the Trotsky leadership could no longer foist this thinly veiled pro-Stalinist line on its aroused followers and thus proclaimed a policy for a Fourth International amid much fanfare in 1933.

However, soon after the Stalin leadership switched from ultra-leftism to a proposal for united front with the Social Democracy, Trotsky, in 1934, suddenly demanded that his French section enter the S.F.I.O. (French Socialist Party.) An international division was recorded in the Trotsky movement on this question as many Trotskyite workers rejected this outright piece of opportunism. As the policy of the French Turn began to be extended to the parties of the Second International in other countries, a world wide split occurred in the Trotsky "Fourth International" movement.

In the U.S. the revolutionary-minded workers opposed to the "French Turn" were under the leadership of Hugo Oehler and Tom Stamm. In 1935 the Oehler-Stamm leadership formed a new organization, the Revolutionary Workers League, with a sizable membership, with sympathizers throughout the world and even sympathizing workers within the ranks of the official Trotsky organization. But while Oehler and Stamm separated themselves organizationally from Trotsky, they remained attached to the Trotsky movement politically by proclaiming the "left Opposition" a Marxist current until the French Turn in 1934. In short, the Trotsky line of collaboration with Stalin, shielding him from exposure, and helping put over the momentous Comintern betrayals, was given a coat of revolutionary paint by Oehler-Stamm.

When Cannon-Shachtman led their followers into the fold of the American S.P. in June 1936, the R.W.L. was given a clear field among the advanced revolutionary workers. However, the R.W.L. leaders already had their eyes set on a mirage which they thought would bring quick and easy returns. Oehler and Co. established a line and policy of dodging a head-on collision with Stalinism and other opportunist forces and set their sights on the backward workers. The Oehler leadership distorted the fundamental truth that the historical class enemy, capitalism, was protected by the opportunist forces within the proletariat who prevented any revolutionary struggle against the class enemy without. Instead of

adhering to the Marxist line that proletarian dictatorship was impossible without a preliminary destruction of the influence of opportunism dominating the vanguard workers, Oehler pushed the line of argument that the opportunist obstacle would be removed as a by-product of what was called a fight against capitalism directly. The workers in the R.W.L. swallowed the idea that they could leap over the heads of the opportunists and approach and recruit the backward workers directly and build a party along these lines. A "Great Lakes Orientation" to the industrial centers of the United States was proclaimed and an Oehlerite "gold rush" was begun for the American "masses." Only a tiny few, led by George Marlen, set a line toward a scientific investigation of the origins, mode of operation and fundamental nature of pseudo-Bolshevism dominating the revolutionary workers with the goal of spreading this understanding among the advanced workers as the basis toward building a new movement.

But while the R.W.L. leaders sought to escape the fundamental tasks of history with their "get rich quick" scheme of building a party, life itself intervened with a successive series of powerful blows. When Oehler-Stamm held that affiliation to the opportunist London-Amsterdam euro was permissible although this International was fundamentally attached to Social Democracy, some R.W.L. workers, seeing no basis for independent political existence, drifted back to Cannon-Shachtman. Other R.W.L. workers simply dropped out entirely or combined in new Left-Trotskyite grouplets while the international contacts steadily faded away. Soon Stamm and Oehler split, each claiming the R.W.L. banner. After a period Stamm decided to call the whole thing off and liquidated his group and then Oehler quietly effected an exit from all activity in "his" group. Reduced to a shell, the R.W.L. fell into the hands of the Okun-Cowan leadership who claimed to be leading the organization in accordance with secret directives from Oehler.

In 1945 T.F. Harden, organizational secretary of the R.W.L., and Ann Wilcox, alternate to the Central Committee, perceived an opportunist position in the R.W.L. line. Delving deeper, they became convinced of the authenticity of our material exposing the R.W.L. as a Left-Trotskyite branch in the Stalinist political system and accordingly put up a political fight all along the line against the opportunist politics of that organization. In the course of this political struggle, the R.W.L. leadership revealed itself as a typical Stalinist bureaucratic clique, engaging in personal slander, distortion and suppression of views. As a consequence of this struggle, Harden and Wilcox came over to our organization. Meanwhile, the entire Detroit branch of the R.W.L., seeing a piece of organizational bureaucratism, split away from the parent body and formed a group of their own. One by one other members of the R.W.L. began to drop out or discontinue active work. Now a new major organizational split has occurred among the few R.W.L. remnants.

Neither the R.W.L. nor any other Left-Trotskyite group ever

did or could get to the "American masses " behind the back of the present day opportunist forces as our tendency explained from the outset. All revolutionary workers who harbor the illusion that you can escape the problem of Stalinism and other forms of opportunism which prevent any real struggle to overthrow the system of wage slavery should take heed of the decline and fall of the R.W.L. and of the similar fate which crushed all the other Left-Trotskyite groups which plagued the movement a number of years ago.

We print below the document of the new R.W.L. majority group which details the forces and issues involved in the new split.

A.B.
Nov. 1946

Chicago, Illinois
23 October, 1946

Dear Comrade:

At the September 19 meeting of the Chicago Unit, the struggle originating in May over the question of orientation was concluded when Comrade Okun and six other comrades left the meeting and severed their relationship with the organization.

Since May of this year there has been a growing conviction that the R.W.L. has ceased to exist outside of Chicago. It was recognized that there were individual members who subscribed to the program of the organization, but these individuals, even when a number of them existed in one city, failed to function in units. The Cleveland unit, it is true, did function, but it has maintained no relationship with the center, and does not consider itself a part of the League.

The events since May have strengthened this conviction. First, there was Comrade Drone's extended trip to Springfield, Ill., St. Louis and Kansas City, Mo., and the West Coast. Her report made clear that no units functioned or even existed west of Chicago.

Secondly, the Plenum of the CC scheduled for the week-end of Labor Day failed to materialise. Comrade Reese was the only member outside of the city who arrived. The dissolution of the units, the dissolution of the CC signified that the R.W.L. as a national organization was no more. Acting upon these facts, the Executive Committee of the Chicago Unit introduced on September 12 a series of motions which provided essentially that:

1) Henceforth the Chicago Unit is the R.W.L. All physical properties including files, equipment and money shall, therefore,

become the property of the RWL as so constituted.

2) The decision-creating body is, consequently, the Chicago membership, and the constitution of the RWL has validity solely with respect to discipline and membership, with the exclusion of the provision for members-at-large.

3) The central task of the League is the publication of LABOR VIEWS and the immediate task is the printing of the paper.

4) In addition, a monthly theoretical organ shall be published which shall strive to be the medium for the development of similar revolutionary groups in other cities.

5) The comrades outside the city who were former members of the League and other worker-revolutionists who wish to assist us in our work shall be encouraged and aided in the publication of weekly local agitation papers.

When the majority of the membership, after two meetings' discussion, accepted these motions, the minority led by Comrade Okun declared that it would not recognize the discipline of the majority. The majority, desiring to avoid the expulsion of these comrades, passed a motion which removed the vote of these comrades for one month. At the end of that period, further disciplinary measures were to be considered. However, if any comrade, during this month, rescinded his statement and accepted the authority of the majority, his vote would be immediately restored. When this motion was passed, the comrades of the minority departed at once.

The comrades in Chicago who now constitute the League want their attitude and actions clearly understood. Toward that purpose, a compilation of the three essential documents which appeared in the struggle and the motions of the September 19 meeting will soon be prepared and forwarded to you. It is also the League's ambition to make the theoretical organ help illuminate the problems of rebuilding a revolutionary movement.

It cannot be stressed too forcefully that the action of the Chicago group in constituting itself the RWL was not motivated by petty factionalism or an attempt at retaliation against comrades outside the center who have consistently refused to assume their share of maintaining the organization. Our attitude has been simply: The League has dissolved- a physical condition. Why has this disintegration come to pass? And lastly, on the basis of this experience, how can the revolutionary movement be regenerated?

Briefly, the RWL has been preoccupied with the theoretical aspects of the revolutionary problem. The need to win leadership of workers in their struggles was always a secondary matter. The

post-war situation has undoubtedly been favorable for revolutionary growth, and the degeneration of the organization can only be due to faulty understanding and methods.

The task today is to rebuild. The first layer of brick must come first. If a national organization will come once again into being, it will have stability only if it is based on a number of strong local organizations. The building of such local groups will only be the result of revolutionaries digging in where they exist in the struggle. The central tool, the indispensable weapon, is the weekly agitational paper. Only with such a paper can revolutionaries organize themselves and organize workers.

Therefore, do not for a moment consider that the Chicago group has turned its back on the movement outside of the city. It is acknowledged that the work here is part of a broader responsibility, and the organization here, it is hoped, will some day be a strong section of a revived national movement. But the responsibility of building a group in New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Los Angeles and the other cities, is for the most part that of the revolutionaries there. The responsibility has not been assumed in the past. That is why the League has collapsed. When revolutionaries throughout the country start building where they are, a national movement will be reconstituted.

Enclosed you will find the latest issue of LABOR VIEWS. We will appreciate your comments and criticism.

Comradely yours,
B. Bessler
City Organiser, Chicago.

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