

# Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

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## INTRODUCTION

The document which follows has been submitted by its authors to the membership of the British section of the Fourth International as material for the preconvention discussion period of the British section. The authors are the leaders of the Irish section of the Fourth International. As many of our comrades are aware, it was on the initiative of Comrade Armstrong that the Irish section some months ago adopted a firm resolution in favor of the general position taken by our Party and the then minority of the SWP on the question of unity between the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party. Since then, it is evident, the leading Irish comrades have devoted themselves to a further study of our theoretical and political positions. It is a most gratifying and welcome development that they are among the first in the International to come out in support substantially of our position.

The document is published here for the information of our comrades. It is necessary to point out however, that while we are in agreement with the line of development on the Russian question of the Irish comrades, it is not possible for us to subscribe to everyone of the formulations and ideas that they put forward. For example, in our opinion, their formulations on the law of value by virtue of the fact that they are loosely applied to the Stalinist state, are much too rigid. The formulations on the possible transformation of bureaucratic collectivism into state capitalism are not as precise as Marxian theory and Marxian analysis of the evaluation of Stalinism require. The statement that the Fourth International Executive "stands unambiguously for the withdrawal of Russian troops" (from the occupied territories), is unfortunately not true - what is true is that the Executive Committee is ambiguous on this score.

However, these are minor points in comparison with the importance and validity of the document as a whole. The points of disagreement that still exist between us and the Irish comrades can, we are confident, be cleared without much difficulty. The points of agreement which are the important ones in the document, establish the Irish comrades, in our judgement, on the side of our tendency in the International and in opposition to the present prevailing tendency. Their firm declaration that "a war between Anglo-USA imperialism and Russia would inevitably be a war of plunder and conquest on both sides," is entirely in harmony with the position taken by our Party and establishes a solid base for political solidarity between us. This position and all its implications are decisive for the political course and tactics that the Trotskyist movement must employ in the coming period.

The British section has suffered more than any other, except the SWP itself, from the catastrophic theory of the "Workers State" and the even more catastrophic policy of "unconditional defense". Through the 4th International as a whole the British section can free itself for the fullest development as a revolutionary organization only by ridding itself of these now utterly reactionary dogmas whose persistence in the 4th International are a guarantee of further degeneration. From this standpoint the initiative of the Irish comrades is doubly welcome. With all the strength at our disposal we will assist them and all their comrades in their task of rearming the Trotskyist movement in Great Britain so that it may deal correctly and effectively with the political problems that face them.

## IN DEFENCE OF "REVISIONISM"

Since the formation of the Workers Party the theories of the Shachtmanite comrades have reached the average party member in the Fourth International only at second hand; and, even then, chiefly in the form of excerpts published with the aim of discrediting them. The majority of comrades interested in questions of theory are introduced to Shachtman's ideas through the pages of "In Defence of Marxism" or Cannon's book on the Proletarian Party. True, these contain material written by Shachtman and others (including Burnham), but no material outlining the developed position of the Workers Party. From a purely formal angle no party leadership is obliged to circulate the writings of the Workers Party among its membership. However, the British Party in the recent past set the excellent example of publishing material submitted by the IKD which, though in flesh a part of the International, is nevertheless, in the eyes of the comrades, a heretical revisionist influence.

We feel that the British leadership should circulate the main programmatic documents of the Workers Party among its membership. This is especially incumbent upon them in view of their recent fusion resolution. As is known, Comrade Cannon postponed (actually rejected) a united front agreement with the Workers Party - proposed as a preliminary step towards fusion - on the grounds that first the theoretical points in dispute had to be sifted. The British leadership rejected this standpoint. It would have been logical if, at this stage, the British leadership had published the leading programmatic statements of the Workers Party with a view to showing the membership in Britain that Comrade Cannon had taken a wrong position; that, in fact, the theoretical divergences were not incompatible with fusion.

### "International Catastrophe"

However, in the British fusion resolution there was inserted a queer remark, contradicting the sense of the general statement; namely, that it would be an "international catastrophe" if the views of the Shachtmanites prevailed in the united organisation. Now, if Trotskyist groupings merge to form a common party it surely means that there is sufficient solidarity on programmatic fundamentals to permit either tendency to become the majority without a fresh split being thereby precipitated. Yet, supposing the Shachtmanites obtained a clear and stable majority inside the fusion over a lengthy and critical period. How, then, could Comrade Cannon and his followers react to this "international catastrophe" otherwise than by splitting? - unless for a period, they remained inside in the manner that Trotsky remained within the C.I., hoping for a reversal in the balance of power. But if there is a serious possibility of the Shachtmanite tendency gaining adherents within a united party, and if the victory of this tendency would lead to an international calamity, then Cannon is right. It is correct to deny the Shachtmanites the possibility of expansion.

Otherwise, your support for fusion rests on the assumption that the Shachtmanite comrades will inevitably remain the minority within the united party: that the programmatic superiority of Comrade Cannon's tendency will finally exert its weight, disintegrating the followers of Shachtman and re-educating them along orthodox lines.

If this is your case for fusion then you are employing the same tactic which Cannon suspects Shachtman of employing. Comrade Cannon rejects your optimism and with justification. For, while the SWP has the perspective of advance through the winning of fresh adherents, the W.P., much weaker in influence among the T.U. masses, aims at growth largely through the winning of SWP militants. Towards this end the cadres of the workers Party arm themselves with a thorough knowledge of the SWP positions. It can be taken for granted that the SWP membership's knowledge of the Workers Party position is much more fragmentary. In fact, Comrade Cannon freely conceded this point when he called for a campaign of theoretical clarification. Consequently, there are no valid grounds for assuming that within a common party the ideas of the Shachtmanites would gradually wither away.

Still bearing in mind the British majority fusion resolution, it is astonishing to read in the resolution of the British CC majority on the Russian question that the theory of Bureaucratic Collectivism inevitably leads to a complete rejection of communism. Does the record of the Workers Party over six difficult years lend any credence to this surmise? True, many of the intellectual deserters - most notorious among them, Burnham - reject the idea that Russia is a degenerate Workers' State. It is axiomatic that out of false theoretical positions can come the degeneration of cadres. By adopting the position that a stable bureaucratically managed economy is possible, and even inevitable, both inside the USSR and internationally, Burnham decisively severed theoretical connections with Shachtman, and with all tendencies which hold that the next historic stage will be the stage of proletarian dictatorship ushering in the socialist system. What led Burnham to desert? Clearly, a complete loss of faith in the international socialist revolution. However, the onus is on the British CC majority to show generally in what way the Shachtmanite theory of Bureaucratic Collectivism leads to the abandonment of a communist perspective. Comrade Haston links Shachtman and Burnham together as though they hold a common theoretical position on Russia. But, apart from a use of the term bureaucratic collectivism, what is there in common?

### Wrong Label For Healy

Thus far, we have mentioned only the British majority. However, the minority comrades are, if anything more vehement in their denunciation of Shachtmanism. According to Comrade Healy, revisionist tendencies among some British comrades are derived from the existing tension between British Imperialism and Russia. Comrade Healy, as befits a representative of the "finished programme school" of theoreticians, applies Trotsky's 1940 appraisal of Shachtman - a totally false appraisal as Shachtman's whole subsequent record shows to British comrades in 1946. The minority leader does not suspect that, among comrades of revolutionary thought and temperament, it was most probably the period of Anglo-Russian collaboration which supplied the thought germ leading to a reconsideration of the "Degenerate Workers' State" theory.

Comrade Healy must have writhed with mingled indignation and astonishment when he studied Haston's article, which attributed to him a common position with Shachtman on the question of the nature of Russian distribution. We must confess that we did some writhing ourselves. However, Comrade Healy deserves to be made to writhe ;

for while his theory leads nowhere to Shachtman, it does lead straight to Burnham's "Managerial Revolution".

### Dictation of the Law of Value

Since the period of its inception, in 1917, the USSR has existed under the dictation of the law of value. In Lenin's day, following the termination of the extraordinary regime of War Communism, control over the bourgeois mode of distribution was exercised by the workers' committees and the Soviet Government.

In the period leading towards the consolidation of the Stalinist reaction the levers of control were altered. Control was slipping from the hands of the tired and bewildered masses. Heavily engaged in an offensive against the Left Opposition, preliminary to a showdown with the Rightists who reflected Kulak capitalist pressure, the bureaucracy was still compelled to countenance at least the formal functioning of working class control over production and distribution. As yet the bureaucracy lacked an independent point of support. This was the stage when Trotsky still held reform of the party and state machine to be possible. It was the stage - the Degenerate Workers' State stage - best answering the analogy with a degenerate T.U. machine: the stage when, in magnitude and nature, the crimes of Stalin corresponded to the crimes of the Moske-Ebert regime.

It required forcible collectivism to justify before the proletarian masses the building of a civil armed force of sufficient size and strength to provide an independent base for the bureaucracy. It required the huge industrial expansion and the organization of the collective farm system to provide the bureaucracy with the necessary dimensions, cohesion, and economic power to smash decisively the remnants of working class control.

The political expropriation accomplished during the five year plans signified at the same time an end to all proletarian control over conditions of work, production plans, and over the mode of distribution. The Moscow Trials were the final act in this drama of expropriation; and, at the same time, police measures designed to stifle the emergence of a new layer of Bolshevik revolutionaries. Henceforward, the Red Directors and the Stalinist Party functionaries held exclusive command over the economy and the state in general; thus constituting a new ruling class. Henceforward the drive of the Stalinist rulers to augment their power, prestige and revenue was the sole determining human factor involved in investment plans and commodity distribution.

Yet, while the Stalinist totalitarians established their rule over the bones of the dictatorship of the proletariat there was no dictatorship over which they could not triumph - the dictatorship of the law of value, supreme law-maker and law-breaker in any exploitive society.

The theories of the "stable, managed economy" school rest upon a lack of understanding of the law of value. Socialism permits a harmonious expansion of productive forces, and a constant increase in material well-being, precisely because the command of society as a whole over the economy annuls the law of the minimum wage - the

cornerstone of capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism. A planned, nationalized economy is one of the basic attributes of socialism but by no means the whole essence. It is when exploitation of man by man ends that socialism begins, and the crises inherent in previous rounds of accumulation disappear. In the Workers' State, transitional to socialism, wage labour still exists, but the dictatorship of the proletariat withers away precisely as wage-labour withers away. The nationalized economy is a dying commodity economy.

Planning and nationalisation cannot, therefore, absolve bureaucratic collectivism from crises and social revolution. Thus, the distinction between the Stalinist State and a hypothetical state capitalist regime relates not to the essence of the system but to the superstructure. Within a society of state capitalism the rentiers would possess the right to buy and sell shares and bonds within the limitations imposed by the planning commissions. Freedom from the interference of investors no doubt endows the bureaucratic collectivist administration with a greater resilience than the capitalist system, in whatever shape, possesses; but it provides neither the guarantee nor even the possibility of escaping crises and disintegration.

The expansion of Russian industry has taken place within the framework of a potentially huge, and politically integrated, market. The planned, nationalised economy has undoubtedly exempted the Russian state from the cyclical crises of relative overproduction which were a marked feature of expanding capitalism, and which continued to shake the capitalist system in its period of degeneration. Hitherto, the Russian economy has experienced its own peculiar type of crises, consequent upon the chronic shortage of producers' goods. It is this difference in production levels in relation to their respective markets, which lies at the root of the opposing forms of imperialist plunder pursued by Stalinist imperialism and finance-capital imperialism. Those who consider the main distinction to be in opposing property forms overlook, or do not understand, that a chronic crisis of relative overproduction is ultimately inescapable within any social order resting upon the capitalist law of value. Assume, hypothetically, that history grants time enough to the Stalinist system to expand the production of producers' goods to the limits imposed on the market by the minimum wage law. What will then happen? An unsaleable flood of consumers' goods and an unemployable surplus of producers' goods will appear, forcing <sup>the</sup> bureaucratic collectivist state into the forms of expansion typical today of the finance capital states. Those who, forgetting about the law of value, imagine that the managed, nationalised nature of the economy is a guarantee against this are Burnhamites, or Stalinists, but not Marxists.

Students of Trotsky are familiar with the social contradictions which prevented the emergence of the old Russian bourgeoisie as the successor of Czarism. A Kulak seizure of state power at the end of the 1920's would undoubtedly have found the new bourgeoisie more favorably situated from the standpoint of expanding capitalist production, primarily because, thanks to the Revolution, the landlord class had disappeared permanently. Yet the foreign trade monopoly would have been broken, collectivisation would never have been undertaken, and the level of production would have remained extremely low.

Without the planned, nationalised economy no comparable expansion of industry would have taken place. This is the main proof advanced by most comrades that Russia is a "Degenerate Workers' State" resting upon a progressive form of economy. Yet, if tomorrow the Stalinist Red Directors were to arm themselves with stocks and bonds a regime of state capitalism would prevail. The planned, integrated form of economy would remain, and there are no valid economic grounds for assuming that the efficiency of production would be greatly lessened.

### Towards Capitalism?

Trotsky held that the Stalinist bureaucracy was more than a dishonest plundering servant. He held it to be the undisputed master of Russian society. He considered it would be monstrous for comrades to break with one another over the concepts class or caste. He rejected the concept of class mainly on the grounds that it did not correspond to the "arbitrary, shut-in" character of the bureaucracy. It was against the defeatists who held that the bureaucracy could dominate over an epoch that Trotsky polemicised so bitterly.

In his article, "The USSR and War", Trotsky reviewed in passing the theoretical possibility of a world system of bureaucratic collectivism, arising out of a further prolonged series of failures on the part of the international working class. Trotsky was polemicising against a former comrade, Bruno R., who had grown convinced of the coming triumph of the bureaucratic collectivist system on a world scale, owing to the congenital incapacity of the workers to determine their own fate. Moreover, Bruno R. seemed to regard the bureaucracy as a viable instrument of history answering the inner needs of the productive forces. Such a standpoint contains a double fallacy (1) a totally false theory relating to the weaknesses of the workers and their vanguard, (2) the untenable theory that bureaucratic collectivism can function over an epoch as a stable, workable alternative to either capitalism or socialism.

However, when Comrade Shachtman correctly seized upon this passage in Trotsky's article to show that Trotsky had theoretically conceded the possibility of a planned economy, which was no longer a Degenerate Workers' State, some witty polemicist made the reply that such a possibility about equals the possibility of the moon turning into green cheese. The sense of humour of this comrade is unquestionably superior to his logic: for, while there is nothing in the composition of the moon to give anyone but a madman the right to advance the hypothesis that it may turn into cheese, it is quite otherwise with planned, nationalised economy. Modern, large-scale industry contains the inherent possibility of providing the material basis of various social formations - "free" monopoly capitalism, state monopoly capitalism, bureaucratic collectivism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and socialism. "Free" monopoly capitalism, state capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism are social regimes of crisis.

To predict the possibility, or even the probability, of an extension of bureaucratic collectivism to territories outside of

Russia betrays no greater degree of pessimism concerning the eventual triumph of the workers than, for instance, to warn against a recurrent fascist menace in the areas of "free" monopoly capitalism. Both would be temporary, although tragic, developments consequent upon further unfavourable turns in the class struggle. Comrade Haston believes that Czechoslovakia has become a state capitalist regime, which means that all major investment is in the hands of the government and civil service. If the new ranks of capitalist bondholders are expropriated, Czechoslovakia will have exactly the same social system as Stalinist Russia. Will it thereby have become a Degenerate Workers' State? To ask is to answer: No! And if, in the interim, United States imperialism vanquishes its Russian rival, then the Czechoslovakian state will revert to "free" monopoly capitalism.

Whether changes will occur in the social superstructure inside Russia leading to a transformation into state capitalism is, we hold, an open question. Here, no one can dogmatise. The new inheritance laws would seem to point in this direction. Trotsky cited earlier modifications of the inheritance laws as evidence of the proprietary yearnings of the individual bureaucrat. On the other hand, the social ambitions of the bureaucrats do not necessarily fit into the same psychological pattern as the bourgeoisie, notwithstanding their common position as exploiters. And, further, it must be borne in mind that while the transition from "free" monopoly to state monopoly capitalism may be accomplished almost painlessly, owing to the impotence of the bourgeoisie to resist, the Stalinist bureaucrats, on the contrary, feel themselves to be a strong, victorious class. A transition towards a system based on proprietary rights is, therefore, inevitably beset with dangers to the solidarity and cohesion of the exploiters. A direct transition to "free" monopoly would create unbearable tension among the bureaucrats, aside from the fact that the whole tendency of modern industry is towards state integration. In our view, a transformation towards capitalism would almost certainly be in the direction of state capitalism, but this would be accomplished slowly and cautiously, leaving open the possibility of backslidings at each stage. We repeat, however, that the whole question of a transformation remains problematic.

### Defencism or Defeatism?

Three main arguments are advanced to support the prevailing line of the Fourth International on the question of the defence of Stalinist Russia against the capitalist powers. (1) The struggle of the Red Army serves as an inspiration to the workers of the world to intensify the class struggle. (2) The subjugation of Stalinist Russia would lead to the economic consolidation of finance-capitalism over a lengthy period. (3) The main defence of the USSR is the international class struggle; but the Red Army, and the Stalinist war effort in general, must be upheld as a major weapon in the defence of nationalised property. Points 1 and 3 can be discussed separately only in the interests of literary convenience, since the fighting spirit, relatively progressive mission, etc. of the Red Army emanate from its role as the guardian of nationalised property.

(1) As is understood by all of us, war furnishes an impetus to the revolutionary struggle; especially when the weaker states begin to go to the wall. Thus, the disintegration of the traditional authorities



in Eastern Europe led to the formation of the working class committees. The advance of the Red Army, which the workers regarded as the defender of working class interests, provided a further impetus to the struggle for control. We may, in this connection, regard the weakness of the established forces of coercion and ideological pressure as the "cause" of the formation of committees of control, and the Red Army as an "impetus."

In other words, the change in the balance of class power within the country is by far the more basic impetus. In Greece, where the class battle reached a higher pitch of intensity than anywhere else, the support furnished by the Red Army was purely platonic. In Italy, where it was the Allied capitalist armies which were advancing, the struggle was more advanced than in any of the territories fought over by the Red Army. Further, in the territories scheduled for Kremlin occupation the situation was complicated by the presence of the Stalinist parties, standing ready to react to the Red Army "impetus" in whatever manner they were ordered.

None the less, it remains indisputable that the Red Army advance did serve to accelerate the socialist class struggle, whereas the advance of the Axis armies only served to darken hope. The partition of Poland in 1940 provided a laboratory proof of this. Hopes in the Allied capitalist armies, in turn, were confined to the belief that there would be a restoration of bourgeois liberties, and more food.

The capitalists live daily and hourly on the backs of the working class. Every worker knows that a foreign, conquering, capitalist power will preserve the basic relations of exploitation. On the other hand, Russia is as remote from the orbit of the workers of the world as is the fabled land of Tibet. And Russia is accepted generally as the land of socialism. The capitalists, of course, harbour no illusions concerning "socialism" in Russia. Roosevelt and Churchill preserved the alliance with Stalin throughout the period of the spectacular Red Army advances because their knowledge of the real nature of the Russian regime convinced them that Stalin would rivet fresh claims on the Balkan and German workers: that, in short, he would effectively destroy an emerging revolutionary situation, and later, owing to their material preparedness, they in turn would crush him in a purely military contest. On the other hand, the Balkan and German capitalists, faced with annihilation by Stalin, depicted the wretched reality of the Russian regime in their propaganda sheets - the Germans with some effect, but the Balkan bourgeoisie with more modest results. The bourgeoisie, reasons the workers, lie about every strike. Moreover, they lied about Lenin's government, so why not about Stalin?

However, what capitalist propaganda could not accomplish is accomplished by the occupation regimes installed by the Kremlin. Russia is now seen to be a predatory oppressive power. The myth of "socialist" Russia is destroyed. The Kremlin despotism is swift in liquidating every active movement, right-wing and left-wing alike, except those which may be utilized as bait to trap and crush the masses. Social democrats and trade unionists, who follow the tactic of Zinoviev and Radek, by diplomatically capitulating to Stalin, will be soaked dry of influence and then sent to a similar fate.

Non-conformists among the class-conscious workers are stamped out by police measures. Following the footsteps of the Babylonian rulers - described by Kautsky in the "Foundations of Christianity" - Stalin roots out not only the active elements of opposition but even the potentially active; sending them to rot in the frozen wilds of Siberia.

Under such circumstances it is incredibly naive to cite the existence of workers' committees as evidence of the relatively progressive character of Stalinist rule. Wherin lies the relatively progressive character of the regime when, on the one hand, a balance is drawn between the division of the land - frequently at the expense of nationalist minorities - and, on the other, the plundering of exchequers to pay the huge war damage indemnifications and costs of occupation? - between, on the one hand, the statification of industry, managed by a privileged layer of civil servants - and, on the other, the wholesale robbery of precious machinery and fixed capital; the restriction of industrial output to an unbearably low level under the Potsdam terms; the press-ganging of skilled labour into the Russian industries, and the deportation of all potential oppositionists to regions from which escape, or even long survival, is virtually impossible?

Logan and others have pointed out that whereas forcible collectivisation, notwithstanding its trail of brutalities, advanced the level of production to new heights, the transformation of property forms in the Occupied countries are carried through amidst a systematic destruction of productive forces. The political policy pursued in the overrun territories, however, follows the precise pattern of suppression practised against the Soviet masses. How, then explain the high "soviet morale" in the war? The limitless cannon-fodder, the huge expanses, the powerful Allies, the huge labour force, and the integrated production apparently do not sufficiently explain the survival of the Stalinist regime. It is necessary to attribute to the Soviet soldiers a morale higher than, for instance, the German troops possessed. However, accusations against the peoples of the Crimean Republic are lifting the veil on the real level of morale among sections of the Soviet people. But suppose it is conceded that the Russian resilience was due nine-tenths to the reasons we have enumerated and one-tenth to the especially high quality of the morale; The question remains, what sort of morale? And the answer is a nationalist morale; and among the Red Army soldier even a chauvinist morale; as the abundant evidence of journalists and British troops stationed in Austria and elsewhere confirms. Nor could it be otherwise among a people deprived for years of the right to think and act independently.

General Casado's "Last Days of Madrid" is worthy of study for the revealing light it sheds upon the political state of mind of the Spanish troops, so recently imbued with a revolutionary morale. When Casado was estimating how many regiments would join him, and how many oppose him, in abandoning the fight against Franco it was sufficient for him to think in terms of the probable reaction of the several commanders. "This commander was a communist, and therefore he would oppose me. This other would support me, for he was a follower of Azana." The rank and file soldiers, deprived of all Army democracy, could be treated as men without either the right, or the power, or even the inclination, to influence the verdict.

Unquestionably, it is imperative to cement bonds of solidarity between the Russian troops and the European workers. But towards what end? Towards the destruction of world imperialism, of course, but more urgently towards the destruction of the immediate oppressors of the occupied peoples and Russian peoples themselves. The Stalinist regime grew upon the Russian people like a painful cancer. On the other hand, Stalinist imperialism jumped upon the backs of the European workers. There is quite a difference there. An alien yoke is always harder to bear. The occupied territories will become the first focal points of revolutionary struggle against the regime.

The declaration of the Fourth International Executive that it stands unambiguously for the withdrawal of the Russian troops can only be welcomed. This can only mean that the main policy of the Fourth International parties in Central and Eastern Europe must be oriented towards shaping unity between the workers and the troops of the Russian Army around the programme of the revolutionary overthrow of the Stalinist regime. A defeatist policy in the event of war follows with inescapable logic from this position. An unambiguous declaration should be added that, in this event, no "shift in emphasis" is contemplated.

2) The theory that the workers of the world should stand for the defence of colonial countries against imperialism, irrespective of the class nature of a native government or resistance movement, rests upon the following main propositions:-

(a) Finance-capitalism stabilizes the regime at home by utilising a part of the super-profits derived from colonial exploitation to give concessions to restricted sections of the workers.

(b) Imperialism upholds the most reactionary elements of the native ruling classes; prevents the emergence of a clear-cut class struggle between the workers and the native bourgeoisie; holds the colony in a state of artificial backwardness by confining the development of the productive forces to complementary industries; supports feudal relations in agriculture, etc., etc.

(c) Imperialist super-profits are derived from super-exploitation.

(d) The rule of imperialism violates the right of nations to self-determination.

Comparisons drawn between the position of Stalinist Russia and the position of the colonies in relation to capitalist imperialism overlook the essential difference that Stalinist Russia, already occupying vaster territories and more highly developed economic areas than Czarist imperialism, is a main contender for the conquest of two continents. Stalinist Russia, owing to its cohesion, vast resources, and the mass movements it utilises beyond the confines of its state authority, is a world power of the first magnitude. The conquest of Asia and Europe would lead to the consolidation of bureaucratic collectivism - though not, naturally to consolidation in the Burnhamite sense! A war between Anglo-USA imperialism and Russia would inevitably be a war of plunder and conquest on both sides. A victory for Anglo-US imperialism would lead to the elimination of the nationalised property forms and would throw the production level a

long way back. Victory for the Stalinist regime would lead to the enslavement of Europe and Asia, and to the uprooting of productive forces as a preventive measure aimed at frustrating the resurgence of the bourgeoisie, or the emergence of a proletarian power.

(3) The defence of the planned economy is unquestionably the leading argument advanced by the defencist majority in the ranks of the Fourth International. The British majority comrades believe, however, that Russia is evolving more or less rapidly towards state capitalism. But a transition to state capitalism would represent, we repeat, purely a superstructural shift in property relations. The state-centralised economy would remain; and, beyond question, would have a higher efficiency than the existing "free" monopoly capitalist forms of organisation. Would our comrades then stand in favour of the defence of state capitalist organised production and commerce? It cannot be argued that a basic property transformation would have taken place, for working-class ownership of the means of production in the USSR long ago became a mere legal fiction. It is the superiority of state centralised production and commerce, and not the fiction of working-class ownership, which provides the defencists with their most serious argument in favour of defending the USSR. In other words, the defence of the material bases of a future workers' state.

If a military front with Stalin is justified on these grounds, however, then equally justified would be a military agreement with German nationalists, who, irrespective of their political and social ends, were fighting for the economic and political re-unification of Germany. For today, under the Potsdam terms, the accumulated skill of the German people is running to seed, and the heavy industries - material prerequisites for socialism - are being destroyed. What, however, would be our attitude towards national liberation fighting formations under a chauvinist leadership? If substantial sections of the masses were rallied behind them we would enter these organisations to wrest the masses away from them. We would strive for the formation of proletarian organs of struggle. Between proletarian military organisations and the bourgeois, chauvinist formations, purely military agreements might conceivably be concluded without a breach of socialist principles.

But supposing the formation of independent working-class organs of struggle proved a slow and difficult task. Would we then adopt the standpoint that since the victory of the bourgeois nationalists would lead to economic re-unification - socialism's material prerequisite - therefore, pending the emergence of socialist organs of struggle, we should strive to be the best soldiers within the existing formations? Of course we wouldn't. To fight within the nationalist military formations, while refraining from striving to disintegrate them with revolutionary socialist propaganda, would mean to hold back the emergence of a revolutionary movement, and would help make inevitable an ultimate renewal of German Imperialism's war of conquest.

Lenin advised the Bolshevik cadres entering the Czarist army to become skilled in the trade of war:

- (1) to prevent victimisation on the grounds of alleged inefficiency;
- (2) because military skill is a necessity in the proletarian struggle for power.

But was the Bolshevik the best soldier from the angle of the general war effort? Of course not. His revolutionary propaganda speeded the disintegration of the Czarist Army.

To urge comrades conscripted into the Russian Army to acquire proficiency in the military art is correct. To counsel them to refrain, in wartime, from forms of activity calculated to speed the Red Army's disintegration would amount to giving political aid to Stalin. It would amount to turning away from the primary tasks of the revolution; for the soldier and worker masses will only begin to turn towards our programme when they are heading for revolution.

Our hypothetical military agreement between German workers and German chauvinists cannot be applied to the Stalinist regime. For while the underground chauvinist forces would be powerless to vent their hostility against the working-class units of government, except in the form of sporadic murders, betrayals, etc., the Stalinist government, on the contrary, wields the strongest, most highly concentrated apparatus of repression in the world. Proletarian fighting units can come into being only amidst a life and death struggle with the Stalinist state machine. Without proletarian units of struggle the overthrow of Stalinism is impossible. Without pursuing the policy of undermining and disintegrating the Red Army by means of revolutionary propaganda no proletarian units can come into existence.

Naturally, only a few scattered adherents will be won to our programme until decisive shifts occur in the consciousness of the masses. The Bolshevik fighting formations will arise alongside the factory committees and the soviets. But whether the revolutionary events unfold in peace or during the war, the policy must be the same: to disintegrate and smash the Stalinist state machine, irrespective of the military situation of the USSR.

Marx and Engels supported the Prussian war against France before it became a war of conquest. The stage of development of Prussian economy did not make a war of conquest inevitable. Today in the struggle waged between the major powers wars of conquest, followed by the suppression of productive forces, are unavoidable. The victory of either Stalinist Imperialism or finance-capital imperialism in a future war would lead to industrial suppression and political enslavement. Should the proletariat be too weak to prevent the outbreak of a third world war then the task of the workers on both sides of the military frontiers will be the revolutionary overthrow of their own immediate oppressors..

R. Armstrong  
M. Merrigan.

4th September, 1946

Ireland.

REPORT ON FRENCH PARTY CONVENTION

September, 1946

The Third Convention of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste French Section of the 4th International, was held from September 7th to 11th. Considerable progress was manifested since the previous convention in February. A large majority of the 102 delegates, however, felt that the progress would have been much greater if the leadership elected in February had been more capable - organizationally and politically.

The organization report of the old Secretary-general, Favre-Bleibtreu, was considered highly inadequate. Not only had it not been presented for pre-convention discussion, but it wasn't even presented to the Central Committee nor even to the Political Bureau. It was therefore considered a personal report, or at best a report of the Frank tenency. It received only 38 votes, amidst some confusion about voting procedure, and a substitute report, presented <sup>mainly</sup> by Craipeau and Marcoux was adopted. This report also carries a separate postscript approving the "Yes" stand taken in the May referendum.

The progress of the PCI since February, 1946 was considerable in several fields. The party increased its membership by between "50 and 75 percent" (Bleibtreu report). (Note that this group's organizational inadequacy has since long ago impeded their giving exact figures.) The increase was by no means localized at the center. On the contrary, the increase was notable at the opposite ends of France. Where groups existed they grew, e.g. the Eorzeaux region doubled. Entirely new regions came into being where before there were one or two comrades or none at all. From Alsace-Lorraine to Corsica, from the Italian to the Belgian frontier regions there are now groups of the PCI.

The tireless campaign of the June elections, with over a million francs raised, 45,000 votes rolled up and millions reached for the first time with our propaganda, was a real achievement.

Another big gain was the legalization of "La Verite" in which the pressure of left wing groups all over the world, including sections of the SP in France and the SWP and WP in the US, played a part. This was followed by the enlargement of the paper from a tabloid size two-pager into a full size four-pager much closer attuned to the life and struggles of the masses.

Of great importance was the role of the PCI in the development of the revolutionary left wing in the unions and in the recent strike actions. The left wing workers grouped around the paper "Front Ouvrier" played a good part in the recent Teachers' and CGT (Labor Federation) conventions as well as in the printers and Postal-telegraph-telephone strikes. Not only did "Front Ouvrier", in which our comrades

collaborate, increase its strength, but the PCI itself made a good name for itself. Particularly in the PTT strike, where a special issue of "La Verite" was put out and well received. There was a valuable discussion of this strike by the delegates.

The Craipeau-Marcoux motion, after recording these gains, pointed out the need of a leadership that would: 1) Give a permanent political impulsion to the party, 2) carry out the necessary educational work (a theoretical revue, cadre schools), 3) Systematically organize propaganda and agitation and 4) push the development of a fighting party in which revolutionary workers and peasants can feel at home.

The second and third days of the convention were given over to the political report and its discussion, in which 80 delegates took part. The following tendencies manifested themselves:

1) The Frank tendency- heart of the old majority - centered around the old Molinier group which fused with the party during the war. This group, supporting and supported by the SWP and the International Secretariat, had one third of the delegates. Its position is based on its wish that we be in a revolutionary crisis (second wave), and therefore calls for what amounts to organs of dual power, the creation of an extra-parliamentary CP-SP-CGT government. "The revolutionary crisis engendered by World War II is of a depth and extension far superior to that of the years 1917-1923," i.e., to that which produced the Russian October, a Soviet Hungary and Saxony and various Soviet revolts in Germany, Finland, Bulgaria, etc., if one believes the Frank resolution. The fact that IF the Stalinists weren't in existence or weren't Stalinists and IF the parties of the Fourth were mass parties THEN things would be different-that is the sort of bases on which to build castles in the air or blow bubbles but not on which to achieve the socialist revolution. Not believing that the offensive of the bourgeoisie against the Socialist-Communist bloc for the May Constitution with its virtual abolition of the reactionary Senate posed any serious danger of a defeat for the working class, the Frank group cling to its opposition to the "Yes" stand taken by the PCI. However, part of the group, (Frank) was for a "No" answer and most of it for a blank ballot.

2) The Marcoux tendency, a half dozen delegates, was formerly with Frank but considers him sectarian. Marcoux, former editor of "La Verite" broke with the Frank group over the referendum, thus giving a majority to the "Yes" stand. While believing that we are at the beginning of a revolutionary crisis and supporting the extra-parliamentary CP-SP-CGT government, they disagree with Frank who sees the Stalinist and reformist leadership overrun by the workers at every turn.

3) The Montal-Chouhieu tendency 6 delegates - also springs from the Frank group. Its main difference, outside of the Russian question (see below) is its opposition to the slogan of "CP-SP-CGT govt." which it believes furthers mass confidence in the traitor leadership and therefore prefers the slogan "Workers and peasants govt." They also reproach Frank for his "automatic" notion of the (to both Frank and Montal) rising revolutionary wave and for failure to see that the masses are weaker than in 1917 after 25 years of defeats epitomized by Stalinism.

4) The Geoffroy-Demaziere-Craipeau group, the former minority, had a slight majority at this convention, 52 delegates. For them the situation is characterized by a reconsolidation of bourgeois rule and a getting into motion of capitalist economy, accompanied by a series of defeats of the working class and a lowered level of class con-

ness due to the war, the occupation and those defeats (speedy liquidation of militia, factory committees and all other workers organs since August 1944, transfer of the struggle to purely parliamentary forms due to the CP and SP leaders, parliamentary defeats and retreats - Constitution) and a corresponding rebirth of parliamentary and democratic illusions. The economic lift opens up new perspectives of labor struggle although necessarily at a lower level to start with, due to those defeats and illusions. The Party can play a decisive role by applying its economic and democratic slogans so as to help set the masses in action and to generalize and raise the level of such action.

This group no longer considers the CP-SP-CGT govt. slogan timely, for 2 reasons. Firstly, because as a concretization of the idea of "oust" the bourgeois (MRP) ministers it no longer has sense since the SP and CP no longer have a majority in parliament. Secondly, because considering it as a concretization in immediate agitation of the slogan "workers and peasants govt." means posing the problem of extraparliamentary power organs, obviously not sensible today. They therefore replace it in agitation with "Break the coalition with the bourgeois ministers" and relegate "Workers and peasants govt." to general propaganda.

The other groups accused this one of opportunistic formulation of the question of nationalization, forgetting workers control, in their previous resolution, in which, after saying that these nationalizations "do not impair the bases of capitalist profit but on the contrary try to reanimate the economy by creating a stable sector," they went on to say, "The nationalizations will be justly demanded by the working class because their realization on a large scale would modify the basis of social relations between big capital and the working masses in a revolutionary direction." They did not repeat that idea in this convention's resolution and recognize the importance of workers control.

5) The Lucien Magneux - R. Guerin-Darbout group started as part of, or blocked with, the old minority in February. More recent adherents however, come from the old majority. They received 3 votes more than the Montal group in the membership and therefore should also have had 6 delegates. However, a mistake in arithmetic by the National Office gave them only 5. They gave one of these to Marchesin, a former Frank member of the Central Committee who had come over to them because of their Russian defeatist position. On the political report vote he went back to vote for Frank, so the group's French resolution got only 4 vot

Their position was that rather than a revolutionary wave there are heightened parliamentary and democratic illusions which they hope to overcome by advancing no democratic slogans but only economic slogan. They are against CP-SP-CGT govt. because it provokes illusions about the leaders and because in the unlikely event, given the present situation of such a govt. coming to power its first act would be to suppress physically the revolutionary movement. They also oppose the "Yes" stand in May, preferring the blank ballot (although some of them had been for the "Yes".) For them the central slogan of this period is: Workers Control. They are therefore for the use of the nationalization slogan only with the greatest care...

The discussion which showed the Geoffroy resolution far ahead of the 4 others, led the Frank, Marcoux and Montal groups (the old majority) to reunite. But in vain, for the vote was 52 for Geoffroy to 46 for them and 4 for Guerin.



In the Russian discussion, Geoffroy, Frank and Marcoux held variants of the defensist line, while Montal and Guerin presented defeatist positions. The Geoffroy group presented a resolution written by Laurent Schwartz which said that the bureaucracy has shown itself, during the war, "more stable than the Bolshevik-Leninists of the entire world thought", more stable "than any classical Bonapartist regime". BUT, it has "no historical stability" between capitalism and socialism. The Russian occupation, "brought about for diplomatic and military reasons, has brought a whole series of considerable progress" (nationalizations, agrarian reform), but has also "discredited Socialism by its crimes". As for the slogan of the retreat of Russian as well as Anglo-US-French troops, they're for it - in principle but not so fast, - they don't believe it should always be used in practice. In Austria, where there is a large non-Stalinist labor movement, yes, but in Hungary and Poland (!) no. In fact that would be "a triumph for the parties of reaction" and the party might even denounce such a retreat as a capitulation! Here we see the effect of Leblanc's idea of the bureaucratic revolution though his position itself was not presented and he himself said to have watered down his extreme pro-Stalinist position.

The resolution of the old Frank majority takes the traditional line while declaring that the occupied countries remain capitalist and attacking the Leblanc position, but at the same time they say that in the unlikely case "of the Soviet occupation continuing for years and bringing about a structural assimilation (which they say elsewhere is the tendency), that would result in a development of the productive forces far surpassing all that those countries have known during 30 years of capitalist evolution". They further say that they oppose the Stalinist methods of struggle against the local capitalists "not because they are inhuman, but because they are ineffective". They also attack "Wachtman and now Lucien, et c." who, in "isolating" Trotsky's prophesy (that the war, won or lost, would finish Stalin), show that they "didn't understand its meaning." The only error was of "dogmatism and limit and not of analysis", they say, and to say otherwise one must "prove that the direction of Russia's evolution has changed."

The Marcoux group bases its defensism primarily on its fear of a capitalist victory opening up new areas to exploitation, but continues to call Russia a workers state.

The newly formed Montal-Gaulieu group is defeatist and considers Russia a bureaucratic collectivist state, but opposes the use of the term "imperialist" because they say it leads to confusion with capitalist imperialism.

The Guerin group is defeatist and its resolution holds that Russia is imperialist but not capitalist "in the same sense as the others.". The resolution takes no stand on the problem of State capitalism or Burocratic collectivism, but Lucien and Guerin lean toward the former and Darbout toward the latter position.

The multitude of positions convinced everyone that further discussion is necessary in the party and it was decided to open that discussion after the convention with a special conference on the Russian question to be held in six months, i.e. just before the projected World Conference.

The election of the new Central Committee was a heated affair. The new majority took 13 places of the 25. One place each went to Montal and Lucien Magneux. The remaining 10 were given to Marcoux and Frank, but Frank had the majority of that grouping he took 9 of the 10. Which the Marcoux people did not like, and called Frank some names on the convention floor. Gabriel of the I.S. intervened, on Frank's side.

The new C.C. headed by Ivan Craipeau, general secretary, and with Max Geoffroy and Albert Demaziere as the two other members of the secretariat consists of 10 others of the new majority; two Russian defeatists; Marcoux and nine others.

The trade union secretary remains Lambert, one of the Frank people who was for the "Yes" in May but has apparently returned to the fold. He is a good man in the union field.

The immediate post-convention period saw a Paris regional convention at which the Frank group broke its united front with Marcoux and the old minority advanced to get a slight plurality. The Marcoux group, holding the balance of power, got the Paris secretaryship for its Michele, after a hot session in which the Frank group took to the maquis of parliamentary procedure.

Richard

INTERNAL HISTORY OF THE GREEK MOVEMENT

Since 1937-1938 a growing portion of the Greek Trotskyist movement has come over to a defeatist position with respect to Stalinist Russia. This discussion was carried on until very recently in the totalitarian darkness of the Metaxas and then Nazi dictatorships, isolated from the rest of the Fourth International and without knowledge of its discussions, documents and splits. As a matter of fact, it wasn't until the end of 1944 that the Greek comrades found out that the entire International had not, as they imagined, developed towards defeatism as they had and that the defeatists in the SWP had been expelled, etc.

Originally based on the necessity of overthrowing Stalin, even in time of war, in order to defend nationalized property, etc. against him, the position of the Greek comrades developed during the war. In 1945 they dropped (that is the defeatist section did) the concept of "workers state."

From 1938 to 43 most of the discussion went on in isolated fashion, in jail. With the Italian collapse in 1943 most of the comrades escaped from jail, and a unification convention was held.

At this convention the defeatist wing led by comrade ST., had the majority, and the defensist or Pouliopoulos wing, led since his murder by AN and GU., split. This split was based on two questions. Defeatism or defensism in Russia. And the attitude towards the civil war in Greece. The ST. wing felt and still holds to this day, that the ELAS movement was chauvinistic rather than progressive (and later that the outbreak of Dec. '44 was a fight between two sections of the bourgeoisie). The other wing held that the ELAS struggle was progressive. However, neither group took any active part because of their small and disorganized forces at that time in the December 44 uprising in which the Athens masses themselves played a role only for the first two or three days, after which they largely quit and left the fighting to the organized maquis troops of ELAS.

A year after the 43 split, the Pouliopoulos group proposed unification. The ST group which was larger, refused, but a part of the group was very strongly for unity. So strongly that they soon quit and joined with the P. group, thus bringing to the party an organizational but not a political majority.

In the summer of 45 unity was again proposed, and again there was a difference of opinion with ST. himself opposed to it. However, this time the partisans of unity stuck it out and finally unity discussions began and at last this summer the two groups were reunited. In the new party the partisans of defeatism and of the "left" line on Greece have the majority, but they have refused to accept the leadership of the party at least until after the World Congress to be held next Spring, because of the line imposed upon the party convention by the representatives of the IS,

Richard.

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